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Politics

Minister says Liz Truss ‘enjoying’ new policy direction and welfare cuts are needed – as it happened

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Tax and spending

‘Cruel and greedy’: high earners on Kwasi Kwarteng ditching top tax rate

Seven people in 45% tax bracket that chancellor is abolishing share how they feel about decision



The highest income tax rate will be 40p from April 2023. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

[Jedidajah Otte](#)

Sat 1 Oct 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Oct 2022 01.43 EDT

International markets, voters, members of the Conservative party and experts [have reacted with dismay](#) to [Kwasi Kwarteng](#)’s “fiscal event” last Friday, when the chancellor announced that the top tax rate of 45% would be abolished.

Here, seven high earners who will benefit from this tax cut share how they feel about it, and what they will do with the money.

‘I feel sick and ashamed’

“I’m furious! I grew up in a poor household and have never forgotten it. I have worked hard to be a good earner, but this doesn’t mean I believe I’m better than those who aren’t doing so well. This – at a time when people are already suffering so much. [Energy prices](#). NHS. Education. Transport. All problems which need urgent attention. Not to mention the lack of legal aid. The low fees paid to legal aid practitioners. Lack of affordable housing, childcare, etc.

“Truss and Kwarteng seem to have no understanding or sense. How can the basics be paid for? How do they think the economy will grow? Why don’t they care about poverty? I feel sick and ashamed. I will give it to charity: to the NSPCC, because more children will be neglected, and others. I didn’t ask for this. I don’t need it. I don’t want people to think I’d vote for such a stunt. It’s appalling. I am so sorry for our country. It’s being ruined.” **Claire, 60, a solicitor from Dorset**

‘I will give it away to charities’

“I’ll be at least £50k better off – a gigantic pile of free money that I didn’t ask for, don’t need and which doesn’t affect my lifestyle. And incidentally, because I earn in dollars, and my pension stocks are in dollars, I have been given another pile of money because of the weak pound. It’s obscene and personally embarrassing. Give £5k to 10 poorer people instead. Imagine having to explain to someone on £30k, what I’ve just received.

“It’s laughable. I don’t understand what I’m meant to do with this boon, to help the economy. Spend it? I don’t need more stuff. My business doesn’t need it. Put it in my pension? Surely that doesn’t help anyone. I will give it away to charities, but I don’t know how that’s an efficient routing of the money.” **James, 48, a strategy consultant from London**

‘There will be no “trickle down” coming from me’

“The net impact of the chancellor’s announcement to my finances is highly negative, because interest rate forecasts have jumped from 4% to 6% and

like many higher rate taxpayers I have a huge mortgage. For every pound I am saving as a result of the drop in the top rate of tax, I am expecting to pay three extra to my mortgage provider when I refix next year.

“Our personal reaction to this will be to take the savings we were planning to use for a home extension and use it to pay down the mortgage. There will be no “trickle down” coming from me, just a transfer of capital from the exchequer back to the banks.” **Neil, 40, a software engineering manager from Twickenham**

‘It’s like being force-fed cake I didn’t want’

“I am horrified. When I heard the top tax rate would be abolished I gasped in astonishment and felt a bit sick. It’s like being force-fed cake I didn’t want, while fellow citizens are having to choose between eating and heating, unable to get healthcare. I don’t think I have ever felt less deserving of anything. I think it’s a cruel and greedy action by a misguided government.

“Many higher rate taxpayers like me believe that paying tax is a civic duty and a privilege, and many of my high-earning friends are also appalled at this unnecessary, pointless and damaging giveaway and find it repulsive.

“I will give it to a charity. I would like to see a 5% charity set up on JustGiving like Captain Tom’s, so that people can donate their savings from the 5% reduction to the NHS.” **Anna, a retired wife of an investment banker from London**

‘I would like to see well-funded public services’

“While I believe taxpayers should get value for money and higher rate taxpayers already contribute a vast proportion of all tax receipts, I would like to see well-funded public services – social care, the NHS, well-maintained roads and local services to name just a few. This is not possible in the current climate without increasing the tax take and it is right those with the most shoulder the cost. I am bewildered. Even if you believe in trickle-down economics, this is unlikely to work in the time frame necessary to rescue Britain from a deep economic recession.

“I will use the money to increase savings contributions. With the current levels of economic uncertainty and gloomy financial predictions the last thing I will be buying is more unnecessary trinkets and baubles.” A CEO at a marketing firm from Hertfordshire

‘High taxes disincentivise hard work’

“I think it’s excellent the Tories scrapped the top rate, it felt like Christmas. On its own a 45% rate is already high, but once national insurance, council tax and student loan repayments are factored in it is one of the heaviest tax burdens in the world. Such a system disincentives hard work and financial success, discouraging people from taking business risks that would benefit the economy. At the same time, the efficiency and quality of public services is laughably bad. I’ll invest most of it, spend some on the increased cost of living, and put the rest towards a new house.”

Patrick, 36, a risk manager from Surrey

‘Sign me up for more taxes, not less’

“I work with a whole host of people who earn above this threshold and no one has spoken about the 45% level at all. It very much makes me feel queasy that I get a benefit I didn’t ask for and ultimately will now just go on my mortgage and there’s nothing there for the vast majority of people.

“Accordingly, I’ve increased my charitable giving significantly to attempt to address – NEA, FareShare, Shelter etc. To me, being a patriot (a perceived lack of which is so often a criticism levelled by the Brexit cult at its detractors) is supporting the people of this country, not its vanity projects. Sign me up for more taxes, not less, and I will sleep more soundly knowing the people who need help get it, and those who are fortunate enough not to worry won’t feel any pinch beyond a slightly smaller Dom Pérignon budget.” **Alex, 35, a corporate financier from London**

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[Protest](#)

Britons to burn their bills in weekend wave of cost of living protests

Dozens of rallies planned from Plymouth to Aberdeen as £150bn energy price guarantee comes into effect



Demonstrators march from Downing Street to Trafalgar Square earlier this month to protest against rises in energy bills. Photograph: Guy Smallman/Getty Images

[Robert Booth](#) Social affairs correspondent

Sat 1 Oct 2022 01.01 EDT

UK householders are poised to set fire to their utility bills on Saturday, in a wave of cost of living protests timed to coincide with the jump in gas and electricity unit prices that will cause bills to soar.

In what organisers forecast will be the largest nationwide protests against an economic crunch, which got worse this week with money market chaos and mortgage rate rises looming, dozens of rallies will be staged from Plymouth to Aberdeen, while [postal](#) and [railway workers](#) also strike.

On the day the government's £150bn energy price guarantee comes into effect, which allows average household bills to hit £2,500 a year, up from £1,971, people are expected to torch bills in Birmingham, Bradford, Brighton and London.

Those wielding lighters include the backers of Don't Pay UK, a grassroots movement that has received almost 200,000 pledges from householders prepared to cancel their direct debits unless the government does more to protect the poorest families.

The protests are being coordinated between multiple community organisations and trade unions in a bid to maximise impact. They come as night-time temperatures dip into single figures and families debate whether firing up the heating is affordable.

Enough is Enough, a campaign backed by the postal workers' union, CWU, is staging 28 rallies. Don't Pay, which is spreading virally through more than 400 WhatsApp groups, is running events in 18 towns and cities, while campaign groups including Insulate Britain, Just Stop Oil and Extinction Rebellion are also taking part.

"People are completely outraged about how severe and immediately material the effects will be on their living standards and how transparently unfair they are," said Franklin Dawson, 29, a graduate student and part of a Don't Pay group in Lewisham that has run a street stall in recent weeks. "People are upset about what this is doing to communities around them."

But while the chaos in currency and bond markets triggered by Downing Street's higher-rate income tax cuts has galvanised protest, whether the movement can create political pressure akin to the successful 1990 poll tax protests remains less clear.

Don't Pay intends to trigger a utility payment strike once a million people sign up, but so far it is only 20% of the way to its target. Some of the organisers are union or leftwing political activists, but the protests are also attracting people who have never attended a rally before. Thirty-three thousand people have offered to help as organisers, one campaign source said.

Paul Bentick, 65, a carpenter from Liverpool, is planning to attend a protest for the first time when he joins the Enough is Enough rally in Liverpool. He said he was financially comfortable but was protesting because "I feel for other people". He heard about Enough is Enough from a taxi driver.

"The working class gets pushed further and further," he said. "It's like Dickens' days for some people. When they announced the tax cut it was the straw that broke the camel's back."

Others, like Dan Manville, 48, a welfare lawyer in Manchester, are veterans of the 2010 anti-austerity protests. He said: "There is such a massive divide developing being stoked by our government that I think it is time to take to the streets."

But asked about those planning to burn utility bills, he said: "All strength to their arm, but my other half is a bit queasy about not paying our gas bill. If you stop paying ... you just don't know what's going to come down the line. She's more than happy for me to wail at the sky though."

Facebook pages and Twitter feeds promoting the protests share tips on how not to pay bills without wrecking your credit ratings and articles with headlines such as "Is the UK heading for a winter of civil unrest?"

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Michael Chessim, who is involved in Cost of Living Action, a group seeking to draw campaigns together, said the array of protest groups was “what happens when a movement explodes into life”.

“A lot of this is going to be won and lost in the industrial disputes, but you have to build a big social movement, a mass mobilisation, too,” he said. “That’s what we’ll see on Saturday.”

At the Wickham Arms in Brockley, south London, on Wednesday evening, a teacher, a pensioner, a social worker and a trainee psychotherapist gathered to plan Saturday’s events for the local Don’t Pay group.

“It’s a frightening prospect for many families in Lewisham,” said Kirstie Paton, who said she has agreed with her husband to cancel their energy direct debit. She stressed the protests were also in solidarity with poorer people who are likely to be hit hardest. She is particularly worried about the more than 4m households using prepayment meters who will have to “self-disconnect” if they cannot afford the tariffs.

As for bill burning, she was coy: “We’ve asked people to bring their bills. What they do with them is up to them.”

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[UK news](#)

Truss admits mini-budget caused disruption, but says there is ‘clear plan’

‘Not everyone will like what we are doing’, PM says of tax cut pledges but says she is determined to see them through



Truss defended her mini-budget, which caused a series of seismic economic shocks, saying ‘the status quo is not working’. Photograph: Ian Vogler/AFP/Getty

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Sat 1 Oct 2022 02.41 EDTFirst published on Fri 30 Sep 2022 18.45 EDT

Liz Truss has admitted that the mini-budget delivered by her government last week did cause “disruption”, after it was followed by a series of economic shocks, including the pound falling to an all-time low against the dollar.

The prime minister said the government had a “clear plan” and acknowledged that the policies may be unpopular.

Announcements by [Kwasi Kwarteng](#) a week ago included a cut in income tax from 45p to 40p in the pound for the highest earners. Other taxpayers received a 1p cut in income tax and will get money from a U-turn in the rise in national insurance. The chancellor said they would all help to increase growth.

However, there was a strong market reaction to the package, which amounted to the biggest tax cuts in 50 years. The Bank of England subsequently spent billions of pounds buying government debt to shore up pensions schemes. It has also indicated that interest rates are likely to rise significantly, which has led to jumps in mortgage rates and lenders pulling many deals.

[Writing in the Sun](#), Truss failed to address the changes to the 45p rate, or the scrapping of bankers’ bonuses, which was also included in Kwarteng’s announcements. She said: “For too long we have been stuck debating how to divide up the economic pie, rather than grow the pie so everyone has a bigger slice.

“The status quo is not working. For too long we have been held back by low growth and high taxes. We need to get things done in this country more quickly.

“So I am going to do things differently. It involves difficult decisions and does involve disruption in the short term.

“Not everyone will like what we are doing, but I want to reassure the public that the government has a clear plan that I believe is right for the country.”

She insisted she had an “iron grip” on the UK’s finances and resisted calls to reverse the tax cuts.

She said: “I am determined to take a new course to unleash Britain’s potential, get our economy growing and deliver a better future for everyone.

“None of this will happen overnight but it’s the right thing to do. We will see it through.”

Earlier on Friday, she had told broadcasters: “I recognise there has been disruption but it was really, really important we were able to get help to families as soon as possible.

“What is important to me is that we get Britain’s economy back on track, that we keep taxes low, that we encourage investment into our country and that we get through these difficult times.”

Her comments were echoed by Kwarteng, who said the government must “stick to the plan”.

“Cutting taxes boosts growth. Reforming the economy to increase the amount of goods and services we produce lowers costs,” [he wrote in the Telegraph](#).

“Not all the measures we announced last week will be universally popular. But we had to do something different. We had no other choice.”

He said new policies would be announced on 23 November on how ministers will reduce public debt and restore fiscal credibility, along with a forecast from the Office for Budget Responsibility. The prediction will be sent to the government on 7 October, but it will be six weeks before it is made public.

Meanwhile Simon Clarke, the levelling up secretary, , indicated there could be big cuts to welfare spending.

[He told the Times](#): “My big concern in politics is that western Europe is just living in a fool’s paradise whereby we can be ever less productive relative to our peer, and yet still enjoy a very large welfare state and persist in thinking that the two are somehow compatible over the medium to long term. They’re not.

“We need to address that precisely because in the end, if we want those strong public services then we are going to have to pay for them. I think it is important that we look at a state which is extremely large, and look at how we can make sure that it is in full alignment with a lower tax economy.”

This article was amended on 1 October 2022. An earlier version described Simon Clarke as chief secretary to the Treasury, which was his previous role. On 6 September he became the secretary of state for levelling up, housing and communities.

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‘Out of the inferno, into the shark attack’: Marina Hyde on capturing six years of political chaos

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[Surrogacy](#)

‘We are expected to be OK with not having children’: how gay parenthood through surrogacy became a battleground



Styling: Victoria Twyman. Make up: Corinne Robinson. Models: Evans N, Rupert F and Victoria P from Hired Hands. Photograph: Felicity

McCabe/The Guardian

In New York, a gay couple fighting to make their insurers pay for fertility treatment have found themselves in the middle of a culture war. What happens when the right to parenthood involves someone else's body?

Jenny Kleeman

Sat 1 Oct 2022 04.00 EDT

Corey Briskin and Nicholas Maggipinto met in law school in 2011, were engaged by 2014, and had their 2016 wedding [announced](#) in the New York Times. They moved to a waterfront apartment block in Williamsburg, Brooklyn, with a bright playroom for families on the ground floor.

“We got married and then we wanted all the trappings: house, children, 401K [retirement saving plan], etc,” Maggipinto, 37, tells me in their building’s shared meeting room, tapping the table in sequence with the progression of each idea.

Briskin, 30, grew up assuming he’d have children. He came out in college. “Once I had come out to myself and others, I don’t think my expectation of what my life would look like changed all that much.” With marriage equality won years ago, they expected to be able to have a conventional married life.

Six months before their wedding, a targeted ad from an organisation called Gay Parents to Be landed in Maggipinto’s Instagram feed, offering free consultations with a fertility doctor who’d give them “the whole rundown” on how they could start a family. “We had the appointment and we were 100% on the same page – let’s move forward with this,” says Maggipinto.

That’s when they first became aware of the eye-watering cost of biological parenthood for gay men. Maggipinto reels off the price list in a way that only someone who has pored over every item could. There’s compensation for the egg donor: no less than \$8,000 (£6,600). The egg-donor agency fee: \$8,000-10,000. The fertility clinic’s bill (including genetic testing, blood tests, STD screening and a psychiatric evaluation for all parties, sperm testing, egg extraction, insemination, the growing, selecting, freezing and

implantation of the resulting embryos): up to \$70,000. And that's if it all goes well: if no embryos are created during a cycle, or if the embryos that are don't lead to a successful pregnancy, they would have to start again.

Then there's the cost of a surrogate (called a "gestational carrier" when they carry embryos created from another woman's eggs). Maggipinto and Briskin were told agency fees alone could stretch to \$25,000, and the surrogates themselves should be paid a minimum of \$60,000 (it is illegal for surrogates to be paid in the UK, but their expenses are covered by the intended parents). "That payment doesn't include reimbursement for things like maternity clothing; lost wages if she misses work for doctors' appointments or is put on bed rest; transportation; childcare for her own children; [or] lodging."



Nicholas Maggipinto, left, and Corey Briskin, met in law school, married five years later, and knew they wanted children. Photograph: Mark Hartman/The Guardian

It takes 15 minutes for Maggipinto to run me through all the expenses they could incur if they tried to have a child genetically related to one of them. The bottom line? "Two hundred thousand dollars, minimum," he says, tapping his index finger on the table with each word in disbelief.

They couldn't afford it. Maggipinto earns a corporate lawyer's salary but is saddled with student debt. Briskin used to work for the City of New York as an assistant district attorney, earning about \$60,000 a year. His employment benefits had included generous health insurance. But when they read the policy, they discovered they were the only class of people to be excluded from IVF coverage. Infertility was defined as an inability to have a child through heterosexual sex or intrauterine insemination. That meant straight people and lesbians working for the City of New York would have the costs of IVF covered, but gay male couples could never be eligible.

This isn't an oversight, it's discrimination, Briskin says. "The policy is the product of a time when there was a misconception, a stereotype, a prejudice against couples that were made up of two men – that they were not capable of raising children because there was no female figure in that relationship."

Briskin was working alongside colleagues who were happily availing themselves of the benefits he wasn't entitled to. One of his co-workers – an older, single woman – became a mother using donor sperm, IVF and surrogacy. "It was hard," he tells me quietly. "You want to be happy for people." Their frustration at not being able to have their own children turned to anguish. "My sister – who is more than six years younger than me – just gave birth to her second baby," Maggipinto says, twisting his wedding ring. "I was OK with not being a parent at 30, I felt that was very normal for our generation and the current work-life balance ethos. But seven years later, I'm really not happy."

High-profile gay men from Brian Dowling to Tom Daley have been accused of exploitation, 'womb rental', even 'child abuse' for using a surrogate

In April, Briskin and Maggipinto filed a class action complaint with the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) against the City of New York, suing Briskin's former employers for unlawful workplace discrimination. If they win, employers and health insurers across the US will be under pressure to change their policies to give gay men the same access to fertility benefits as anyone else. But their case has become much bigger

than one couple's drive to start a family: they have become figureheads in the battle for fertility rights for all gay men.

Maggipinto and Briskin braced themselves for some kind of backlash when news of their claim broke. But there was a deluge: on Instagram and Facebook, in audio messages and in their work email inboxes, on Reddit and beneath news articles. Wherever you could post public comments, there was condemnation.

A much-liked response to one piece about their story read: “Not having a uterus because you are male, does not make you ‘infertile’ – it makes you MALE. No one – and I do mean no one – has the right to rent another human’s body and womb to use as an incubator. That is not a human right.”

The international response was even more scathing.

“There was one article in a German outlet that was about how surrogacy is a form of slavery. We were being portrayed as people who were enslaving gestational carriers,” Briskin tells me, wide-eyed.

Most critics were wilfully missing the point of their case: it’s about access to IVF, and equal rights to employment benefits, not their right to surrogacy. But in bringing a fertility equality claim that took eventual surrogacy for granted, they had unwittingly stumbled into the line of fire of one of the great culture wars of our age: whether anyone – but gay men in particular – should be able to pay to use a woman’s body.

Advances in reproductive technology mean that pretty much anyone can become a parent so long as they can get hold of the requisite gametes and access to fertility treatment, but people with male bodies face specific challenges: someone has to do the gestating. In the years since same-sex marriage has been legalised across the western world, demand for surrogacy has soared. In England and Wales, the number of parents using a surrogate has quadrupled over the past 10 years, but it is always controversial: high-profile gay men from [Brian Dowling](#) to [Tom Daley](#) have been accused of exploitation, “womb rental” and even “[child abuse](#)” when they go public about creating their families with a surrogate.

Surrogacy always comes with serious legal and ethical challenges, whether it is traditional (using the surrogate's eggs) or gestational; altruistic or commercial; gay or straight. Surrogates have been asked to abort babies against their will when intended parents split up, when too many embryos implant successfully, or when the baby they are carrying is [found to have birth defects](#). Commercial surrogacy is banned in almost all of Europe, leading some to seek it abroad. After India and Thailand closed their doors to fertility tourists in 2015, Ukraine became the go-to destination; when war broke out in February, thousands of [women pregnant with other people's children](#) were in turmoil while the panicked intended parents tried to work out how to get them and their precious cargo out of the country. In 2020, hundreds of surrogate babies were [left stranded in Kyiv](#) because of Covid travel restrictions. Surrogacy is legal to some degree in almost [every US state](#). American women have died in recent years [during surrogate pregnancies and deliveries](#), while egg donors have been left infertile and seriously ill after their eggs were harvested.

Nobody asks someone having children naturally why they did it instead of adopting. I help others in other ways – but that's not how I choose to do it

So why not adopt?

Briskin and Maggipinto pause before answering this. “I have never been opposed to adopting, [or] even to having a foster child to see where that leads,” Maggipinto says, eventually. “But as a couple we’ve come to a decision that having a child that’s biologically connected to us is important.”

“I’m not wringing my hands here,” Briskin says. “It really feels like such an affront to be asked this question. I find it deeply offensive. Nobody asks the person who’s having children naturally why they did it instead of adopting. I help others in other ways – but that’s just not how I’d choose to do it.”

“Private adoption is overwhelmed with religious-affiliated organisations,” adds Maggipinto.

“Who would exclude us.”

“By definition.”

They never claimed any right to surrogacy, Maggipinto says. “I think a woman willing to do this is enormously generous. In the same way that I feel like I’ve been robbed of time in my life because I don’t have a child yet, I feel like the sacrifice a woman makes to be pregnant for someone else is an enormous chunk of time out of her life that she’ll never get back, and the compensation really is a token for that.”

“I am pro-autonomy,” Briskin says. “I believe that people should be able to make decisions about their lives, their bodies. This is so relevant now, with the decision from the supreme court [[overturning Roe v Wade](#)]. For me, it goes into the same category as sex work: there’s this puritanical belief that sex workers are being forced to sell themselves. There are many, many sex workers who do not view their line of work that way.”

Of course, there are many women who are forced to sell themselves, I say – those who are trafficked and exploited. Briskin knows this well: he was a sex crimes prosecutor. “Those who are being trafficked are not being compensated for their sex work; any compensation is going into the hands of their pimp,” he replies. “That is not the case for a willing surrogate.”

There’s a stark contrast between American and Ukrainian surrogates, Maggipinto says. “Here you have to be a woman who has already had children, who is over a certain age, who can prove that she is independently financially capable of sustaining herself without her surrogate compensation. You effectively cannot be a poor surrogate.” He is referring to the [American Society for Reproductive Medicine’s guidelines](#), but with no official regulation in the US, there’s no compulsion for anyone to follow them.

When it comes to the fear that gay surrogacy erases mothers, Maggipinto is defiant. “Our family will be a motherless family,” he says, tapping his finger on the table again, “I won’t tiptoe around that.” But the creation of that family doesn’t depend on the exploitation of women. “We’re not using a woman’s body. We are accepting a woman’s generosity to use her own body in a way that she agrees with.”

‘Let me go on record – I am not homophobic,’ Phyllis Chesler tells me. ‘I live with a woman. I am very progressive, but not in the way defined by those who think it’s just peachy keen to have a commercial industry based on the exploitation of impoverished women.’

Chesler is an author and a professor of psychology and women’s studies. She has been a critic of surrogacy ever since she campaigned for the rights of [Mary Beth Whitehead](#), the New Jersey surrogate who fought for custody of the baby she carried in 1986. (Whitehead’s case was ultimately unsuccessful.) When New York state voted to legalise commercial surrogacy in 2020, Chesler was one of the most vocal campaigners against it. The fight was still fresh in her mind when she heard about Briskin and Maggipinto’s claim.

“Gay men now want insurance companies to treat being born male as a disability or as a protected category, one which requires paid compensation,” she wrote in an [article for a feminist website](#) published a few days after the men filed their complaint. “They are protesting the ‘unfairness’ of not having been born biologically female.”



Author and psychology and women’s studies professor Phyllis Chesler says ‘genetic narcissism’ makes gay men want surrogacy instead of adoption.
Photograph: Mark Hartman/The Guardian

We sit at the dining room table of her Upper East Side apartment, surrounded by books and papers. Chesler has printed off Briskin and Maggipinto's wedding announcement, and she triumphantly taps her blue fingernail on the text that says Briskin's mother is a senior vice-president at Merrill Lynch.

"One of them comes from a wealthy family. The wealthy know the world's their oyster: they can buy whatever they want and if the poor are ill-served, well, so be it, it's the way of the world. This way of thinking is involved in surrogacy. Nobody is saying: 'I would rather give up this longing if it means harming another human being.' The types of people who opt for surrogacy are entitled, used to getting what they want. Here I include celebrity women who do not want to ruin their figures." She rejects the idea that adoption agencies would refuse to take on Briskin and Maggipinto. Gay men want surrogacy instead of adoption, she says, because of "genetic narcissism".

Also among Chesler's papers is a copy of Maggipinto and Briskin's legal complaint. She has read it closely. "This particular case, yes, I have to concede, it *is* discrimination. It is! But let's balance it all out. The desperate egg donors and the surrogates who have to do this – they were discriminated against. [Women](#) don't get the same educations ... Women are discriminated against everywhere, but especially those who become gestational carriers."

The women who say: 'Oh, we're happy surrogates'? Like the so-called sex worker, she has to dissociate from what's happening to her body. This is not healthy

Fracturing the role of mother into egg provider and gestator obfuscates and minimises female input in reproduction, making it easier for the intended parents to control the process, Chesler says. "The disappearance of womankind has been ongoing – this is another kind of disappearance. It is a land grab." This will sound familiar to anyone who has followed arguments made by gender-critical feminists over recent years: that women are being erased, and their biology is being appropriated.

Where Briskin invokes the right to choose an abortion alongside the right to choose whether to carry a child for another person, Chesler sees

reproductive compulsion. “We’ve lost the right to control our bodies, to refuse to be mothers, and at the same time – given economic realities of impoverishment – we are then forced to bear children for the wealthy.” She shakes her head.

“The women who say: ‘Oh, we’re happy surrogates’? Like the so-called sex worker, she has to dissociate from what’s happening to her body. This is not mentally healthy. If it was such a wonderful thing to do, then why don’t the wealthy do it for the poor, who are as infertile? As for the woman who thinks this is the most productive or significant or powerful thing she can do – this tells me everything I need to know about her alternatives, which are zilch.”

Chesler is a mother and a grandmother. She has been married several times – most recently to a woman. Their wedding certificate is framed on the wall. “If you balance the women who could die in pregnancy, the women who could become infertile because of their eggs being harvested, who must endure pain and loss of time in a way not commensurate to what they are being paid, against this new desire of a gay male couple to use surrogacy as their first option, I think the balance of suffering is more on the female side.”

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More than 200 miles away from New York, on a leafy cul-de-sac in Columbia, Maryland, Lisa Schuster is curled up in an armchair with her elderly terrier who is deaf and blind and bewildered by the smell of my presence. The hum of family life surrounds her. Her 15-year-old son is on

the computer upstairs, her 13-year-old is on his way home from camp, and her daughter, 11, is clattering around in the kitchen.

Schuster, 38, has given birth five times: three times for herself and her husband, and then twice for a gay couple from France. She had her first child when she was 23, just after she got married. “And it was so easy. We just said we wanted to have kids – nine months later we had a baby,” she tells me. “My mother passed away very young. I stepped back and thought, who knows how long anybody has in the world? I wanted to prioritise what I wanted to accomplish. I picked family.” Schuster has a college degree and has always worked, but is the primary caregiver, choosing jobs that fit around her family life.

Growing up, surrogacy was part of family folklore. “My mom would always tell us a story about a very close friend who, in a very unofficial way, was a surrogate for somebody else in their family. It had a happy ending – it worked out well.” When Schuster came to have her own kids, she realised how lucky she was: while her sisters-in-law went through fertility struggles, she conceived easily, and all her pregnancies and births were straightforward. [Surrogacy](#) was a way to “recognise the blessing that I had in my own children and being able to pay that forward”.



Lisa Shuster with her children in Maryland. She has carried two children as a surrogate for a gay couple in France. Photograph: Jared Soares/The Guardian

She knew her family was complete when her daughter was born. “I was like: ‘I know I’m done; I’m ready to do this again’.” She Googled “surrogacy agency Maryland” and filled out a questionnaire with basic medical information. A case manager contacted her for more details: she had to provide character references and her previous pregnancy and delivery records for them to review. Then someone came out to inspect her home. “They checked everything looked good, that it didn’t smell of smoke and was safe, that whatever future parent I might be carrying for would feel comfortable with the environment I was gestating in.”

So far, all of this sounds like it’s for the benefit of the intended parents, not her. She says she also met with a mental health provider, both with her husband and in a group session with the intended parents, before they went ahead. “There were so many things I hadn’t thought about. She asked how I would feel if I had to terminate the pregnancy or if the baby had any health issues when they were delivered. She asked what my family thought about it and how it would impact friendships. She also asked about my plans for the compensation to get to what was motivating me.”

Schuster received \$25,000 for the first surrogate pregnancy, and \$30,000 for the second, paid in instalments at embryo transfer, positive blood test, confirmation of heartbeat and delivery. She carried on working at her day job during both pregnancies, and used the surrogacy fee to pay off student loans and to fund a trip to France for her entire family – during which she paid a visit to the family she had carried for. (The girl and boy are now eight and six.)

She breaks into a broad smile as she describes meeting “the guys” for the first time. “They’re just really lovely people that you would meet and be friends with outside of this strange circumstance that brought us together. I was a little bit afraid that I would feel some sort of class division or inequity there, and it was absolutely not the case. They were just regular people.” They don’t have an ongoing relationship with the egg donor, which Schuster says is “the norm”. She knows nothing about her.

Her surrogate pregnancies were “easy, uneventful”. Schuster didn’t worry about the toll they might take on her body. “What’s a few more stretchmarks? It never even crossed my mind.” She enjoyed feeling the baby kick and move around, and would film it and send the videos over to “the guys”, but she assures me she never felt a connection with the babies that grew inside her. “You go into a different mental capacity from the start. For me, the relationship that was growing was actually with the dads as opposed to the baby. That’s where the bonding energy transferred to.”

I don’t want the surrogate daughter I carried to question if she’s here because someone was taken advantage of. It added to my life in so many positive ways

They were by Schuster’s side when she delivered their daughter. “As soon as she was born, they put her on my belly while they cut the cord and cleaned her up.” Then one of the dads held her. “His father had passed away before they started their journey, and she has a little dimple in her chin like his father did.” Schuster is suddenly overcome with tears. “That was part of our connection too, because I had lost my mother before I became a parent. Seeing it there, seeing his father’s chin in his daughter, seeing them together was just the culminating moment of everything. It was just such a happy moment.” Where Chesler sees genetic narcissism, Schuster sees family continuity.

“I was a little taken back – not taken aback, but surprised – when the guys left. We had got so used to seeing each other every day – they were here for about four weeks around delivery – so making that transition … ” she shrugs. “I didn’t expect to feel that sadness.” But it was easier the second time around, when she gave birth to their son. “I knew what to expect, and how we had fallen into the rhythm of our relationship. I could prepare for the sadness of their leaving, but I knew it wasn’t the end.”

Schuster says we “shouldn’t sugarcoat” the potential problems. “Surrogacy does have the capacity to exploit women, and certainly is currently practised in ways that do. We need to ask, what things are in place that make it exploitative for women? Is that true for all cases? You need to make that distinction.”

Doesn't payment create an inducement that exploits women? "That's certainly a very relevant thing to think about, especially if you're looking at countries where the compensation has a life-changing effect on a woman. In the US, as compensation rates continue to increase, at what point does it become incentivising? The financial compensation should never be the primary benefit. That's the line where it can become exploitative."

The critics who argue that surrogacy fragments the reproductive role of women and reduces them to body parts are the same people who refer to what Schuster has done as "womb rental", she says. "All of those other things that I was doing have no value in today's society: the time that I missed caring for my children or taking care of my household, that mental load I carried. If you don't value all the work that's going into it, you're going to assign that value to the womb." She has been paid for the time and effort it took to be pregnant for someone else, she says, not for the use of her womb.

Schuster tried to carry again for a local gay couple, but the embryo transfer failed. Almost as soon as she gave up being a surrogate, she saw a job advertised at the advocacy organisation [Men Having Babies](#), where she now works as director of programming. Campaigning for ethical surrogacy matters to her on a personal level, she says. "I don't want the surrogate daughter I carried to ever question if she's here because someone was taken advantage of. I always want her to feel that I benefited from that process too – it added to my life in so many positive ways. It was a really joyous experience for me."

Heather Breault, 30, is also married with three children, and has carried two surrogate pregnancies, most recently giving birth in November 2021. Breault thinks of surrogacy as a kind of voluntary service. "I had my kids young, so I couldn't volunteer or donate money: I didn't have the money; I didn't have the time. What I did have was my body," she tells me over Zoom from her home in East Haddam, Connecticut. She signed up to donate bone marrow, then offered to carry a baby for a friend who was struggling with fertility issues; when her friend declined, she went online and found a surrogacy agency who matched her with a gay man from the Cayman Islands.

It didn't matter to her that he was single. "I was very open-minded." She and her husband spoke to him over FaceTime. "You could tell that he really wanted to be a parent, and this was the only chance for him to do that," she tells me, with tears in her eyes. Like Schuster, Breault has no idea who the egg donor was, or the criteria used to choose her, but tells me there are good reasons for separating donor and carrier: egg donors need to be young, whereas surrogates should ideally have already given birth to several children of their own before they carry for someone else. The separation helped her detach herself from the babies she carried. "It was none of my DNA – I'm more like a babysitter." She was paid \$40,000 for the first pregnancy, and \$45,000 for the second. The money went on a downpayment on their house, on furniture and into savings. "But I would have done it without the money. You have to go into it wanting to do it for other reasons."



Heather Breault with her family in Connecticut. She has carried two children for a gay man in the Cayman Islands: 'It was none of my DNA – I'm more like a babysitter.' Photograph: Angela Strassheim/The Guardian

Unlike Schuster, Breault had complicated deliveries. She had pre-eclampsia for the first birth, which meant the baby had to be delivered a week early, while she was heavily medicated. "I didn't do the research I feel like I should have done. But I still wouldn't take it back for anything – the delivery was the best feeling ever." Almost immediately, the intended parent

wanted her to carry for him again. “He requested it. He was like ‘Can we hurry up and get started?’” she laughs. “He would have done it right away if he could.” Breault was anaemic after the first birth, and the agency said they needed to wait at least nine months between pregnancies anyway. As soon as she had the green light, she was happy to try again.

“We ended up having a C-section for the very last one,” Breault tells me. “I didn’t really know much about C-sections. I knew that they cut you open, they take the baby out and they stitch you back up, but the healing process wasn’t really explained to me. I wasn’t prepared for how much I would not be able to move after.” Her husband took a week off to help her with their three young children while she recovered but, after that, she was on her own. I feel uneasy hearing this: Breault comes across as so earnest, so determined to help others, and it feels manifestly wrong that she wasn’t adequately forewarned of what might happen to her. But she shrugs it off. “It was OK, but it made me feel like my body couldn’t handle it any more.” She’s no longer on the agency’s books.

Less than a year after she gave birth, Breault gets news through her Facebook feed of the children she carried. “It’s not like he and I talk any more, but we still can see into each other’s lives. I’m fine with that.” She smiles. “It’s nice to see them growing up. They look just like their dad.”

‘More and more people in the male gay community are thinking of parenting at a younger and younger age,’ says Ron Poole-Dayan, executive director of [Men Having Babies](#). “After the demographic disruption of the Aids pandemic, gay people have become more able and likely to form stable relationships, that increasingly got more social recognition. They started being exposed to more examples that negated the narrative that you shouldn’t be sad about not having a family. It was almost cruel to have a lot of these people realise ‘I can do that; I just can’t afford it’.”

Poole-Dayan is the father of 21-year-old twins conceived using eggs donated by his husband’s sister and gestated by a surrogate. “Surrogacy is a gay issue,” he tells me. “It’s not just that we are more visible when we do it, it’s that we’re more dependent on it. The surest way to ensure that gay men don’t have children is to be against surrogacy.”

What about adoption? “We consider adoption [to be] a form of volunteering. It is not a way to become parents,” he says. “As a society, we should use whatever power we have to ensure there are no children that require adoption. Telling us that we should depend on the failing of society, and that’s a solution for us – it’s unacceptable. Why should we step up to volunteer before any other group?” Because your path to biological parenthood involves asking for great sacrifices and a physical toll from women, I say. “If you can’t have ethical surrogacy, don’t do it. Nobody says you have to become parents. It comes down to the simple notion of, are we all willing, autonomous, of the right mind, and protected.”

Gay men are expected to be OK with not having children. This is the kind of discrimination we’re trying to fight the most

Where Chesler and Briskin draw parallels with sex work, Poole-Dayan talks about men in uniform. “Do we know that the people who are dying for us in most professional armies are not doing it because they didn’t have any other career choice? Firefighters are doing something that degrades their body and could lead to irreversible harm. We pay them less than they deserve because we assume they are patriotic or somehow motivated altruistically.” They have no one fighting for their rights like the people who criticise surrogacy so vociferously. “It could be legitimately asked, what are their motivations?”

Poole-Dayan sees the “situational infertility” gay men face as equivalent to medical infertility. “We define infertility as not just a condition or a disease but also a status that defines our inability to procreate with our partner.” It doesn’t matter if you have healthy sperm, eggs and wombs; if you can’t make a baby with your chosen partner, you are infertile, by this definition. “Situationally, we are the most infertile, by measure of the level of intervention that is required to achieve a pregnancy. We’re also expected to be OK with not having children. This is the kind of discrimination we’re trying to fight the most.”



‘If we could have afforded to have a child out of pocket, we would,’ says Briskin, left, with Maggipinto. Photograph: Mark Hartman/The Guardian

Today, biological fatherhood only exists for rich gay couples – or poor ones. Men Having Babies’ [Gay Parenting Assistance Programme](#) gives out more than \$1m a year in discounted and free medical services and cash grants to those in serious financial need. But Briskin and Maggipinto don’t qualify.

“I want to be really clear – if we could have afforded to have a child out of pocket, all of these costs, we would,” Briskin says.

“We have looked into different subsidy programmes, loans – we’ve entertained the idea of doing a crowdfunding type of thing. We’ve talked about asking family for financial support,” says Maggipinto. “We’re not willing to foreclose any of those options, because we are at a point of desperation.”

The EEOC will rule on whether the terms of Briskin’s health insurance were discriminatory within a few weeks. The City of New York has so far defended its policy. The couple’s attorney, Peter Romer-Friedman, tells me: “They say their healthcare plan doesn’t provide surrogacy for anyone, so it’s not discrimination to deny it to Corey and Nicholas.” Just like everyone else, the city’s first response was to assume this was all about access to surrogacy.

While they wait for a decision, Maggipinto and Briskin must endure the heartache of watching the children of their wealthy gay friends grow up. We meet the day after Father's Day. "We just took care of my nephew when my sister needed help," Maggipinto tells me. "It's so awkward for me to wish my brother-in-law Happy Father's Day."

"Not everybody wants to have children, and I get that; it's not a necessary part of one's existence on this Earth," Briskin says. "But if you are among those who do have the desire to procreate, no one wants to be told there is no way to achieve that."

Maggipinto nods. "Especially if there is."

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Jason Derulo: ‘What happens when we die? I am going in a first-class seat to heaven’

[Rosanna Greenstreet](#)



Jason Derulo: ‘The greatest love of my life? My son.’ Photograph: Rex/Shutterstock

The singer on a wardrobe malfunction at Wembley, being told he has a dad bod and his love of chocolate lava cake

Sat 1 Oct 2022 04.30 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Oct 2022 05.55 EDT

Born in Florida, [Jason Derulo](#), 33, attended the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in Los Angeles. In 2009, his debut single Whatcha Say was a huge hit, and other chart-toppers include Wiggle, Take You Dancing, Acapulco, Savage Love and this year’s Slidin’ (ft Kodak Black). Derulo has sold more than 200m records worldwide and has more than 52.5 million TikTok followers. He lives in Los Angeles.

When were you happiest?

When my son Jason King Derulo was born.

What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?

I dislike my relationship with food. I wish I didn’t love food so much.

What is the trait you most deplore in others?

The need to put other people down.

What was your most embarrassing moment?

When I couldn’t take my jacket off while performing at Wembley. It was hot and I had a leather jacket on, and it just wouldn’t peel off my skin. One of the guys had to come and help me.

Aside from a property, what’s the most expensive thing you’ve bought?

A restaurant called Catch LA.

Describe yourself in three words

Relentless, headstrong and giving.

What would your superpower be?

Outworking anybody in any room.

What makes you unhappy?
When I'm not able to be creative.

What does love feel like?
Like a true connection – if you are away, you feel an aching, and when you're together, you feel complete.

What scares you about getting older?
Not being able to move the way my mind tells me to move.

What is the worst thing anyone's said to you?
That I had a dad bod. People say that to get under my skin, and it works.

Would you choose fame or anonymity?
Fame.

What is your guiltiest pleasure?
Chocolate lava cake and vanilla ice-cream.

What or who is the greatest love of your life?
My son.

Have you ever said 'I love you' and not meant it?
For sure.

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Which words or phrases do you most overuse?

“That’s a vibe.”

What has been your biggest disappointment?

That I haven’t done a film I love yet.

If not yourself, who would you most like to be?

My son.

When’s the last time you changed your mind about something significant?

I had a thought that I wouldn’t dance any more onstage and then I changed my mind.

How often do you have sex?

Very often.

What do you consider your greatest achievement?

Deciding what and who I wanted to be early on in life.

What keeps you awake at night?

The studio. I work late.

Would you rather have more sex, money or fame?

Sex.

How would you like to be remembered?

As one of the greatest entertainers.

What happens when we die?

You either go to heaven or hell. I am going in a first-class seat to heaven.

[The watcher](#)[Television & radio](#)

The Bear: television so good it might actually kill you

Some of the best – and most intense – TV in years, Jeremy Allen White turns up the heat as a world-class chef forced to take over his brother's sandwich shop



Hot in here ... Jeremy Allen White as Carmen 'Carmy' Berzatto in The Bear.
Photograph: FX Networks

[Joel Golby](#)

Sat 1 Oct 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Oct 2022 05.05 EDT

I am always thinking of fun and interesting new ways to kill people and get away with it. My current favourite method is this: I invite someone with a weak heart to my house with the promise of a quality TV show. I put on the first two episodes of The Bear. If they do not die of that, I'll put [Uncut Gems](#) on for a bit, which has roughly the same tempo. At this point even I am thinking I might die. If they are still alive (flushed, puce, asking for water), I

will show them the penultimate episode of The Bear), which nobody who has ever had to switch to a plant-based spread because of their cholesterol can survive unaided. I flop the body out of the window to the flat downstairs. That is a downstairs problem now.

This might sound like I do not think [The Bear](#) – a show about a very intense sandwich shop, essentially – is one of the finest TV shows of the last five years, which it is, but we cannot tiptoe around the fact that it starts out stressful. Even Jeremy Allen White’s head chef Carmy is stressed by the whole affair: here he is, look, waking at 6am; here he is frantically chopping an onion then shouting for “hands!”; here is he reliving a personal trauma; here he is reliving a family one; the doorbell buzzes, a pan is on fire. The best food in the world is made by people with tattoos and scars they refuse to explain, who are all operating on three feverish hours of sleep and are yelling, and The Bear sinks you into the hot oil of that, skin-side down. Watch the first two episodes and know what it is like to be hissed at because you boiled a stock on too high a heat. Watch The Bear to know what working back-to-back shifts in hospitality feels like. Watch with a snack, because somehow it will still make you hungry.

Again, this might sound like I do not think The Bear is one of the ... etc, etc, etc. Let’s look at the cast, who are impeccable: the aforementioned White, a Gene Wilder regen who looks like the only thing he eats is cigarettes, plays the perma-frazzled Carmy, always a hand pulled through his hair, always spinning nine plates and eyeing up a 10th. His foil is Ebon Moss-Bachrach’s Richie, one of TV’s great assholes, who delights in walking in late in sweatpants and making everyone else’s day louder. Matty Matheson has the electric charisma to carry the whole show on his own but is played with perfect scarcity. Ayo Edebiri’s Sydney is a revelation, a sweet ask-the-teacher-for-homework sous chef with secretly sharp teeth. Lionel Boyce’s storyline, “What if a man could fall in love with a cake?”, is told almost without dialogue, and acts as a sweet side dish to the richness of the main. Even Liza Colón-Zayas’s Tina, who’s only there to say she doesn’t want to be there, is played with perfect aplomb.

By episode three the hot kitchen yelling has calmed down, and what unfolds is a tightly plotted, nose-to-tail, no-scaps story that brings in unexpected themes from every direction. Every character on TV has to have a tragedy behind them, and *The Bear* is no different (Carmy, a world-class chef on the edge of burnout, was left the failing sandwich shop following his brother's suicide). But there's other stuff going on, too: the bizarre class system in the world of food; snobbishness pitched against the basic human desire of hunger; hierarchy and respect; mob debt and toxic masculine rage; caulk. It remembers to be funny, too – a cold open where Richie tries to fit a T-shirt over an inflatable hotdog is a particular highlight – and plays the heartfelt beats with just the right balance of fat and acid: none of that American corn-syrup saccharinity. It has a great soundtrack and does that thing good TV shows do where they make you feel the murky underside of a city you don't really know (in this case, Chicago). It'll also make you buy a double-pack of tea towels and start to say "Heard!" whenever someone says anything to you.

It's great, then. Sorry, but this column has been on a good run of TV shows lately. I know this is not what you want. You want me to have to watch whatever Gino D'Acampo is doing so you don't have to. This is how you get your kicks, isn't it. Hey, crazy idea: do ... do you want to come to my house? Do you want to come and watch a couple of episodes of *The Bear* with me?

The Bear is on Disney+ from Wednesday.

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2022.10.01 - Opinion

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OpinionMini-budget 2022

Trickle-down Truss is carrying on the dirty work of Thatcher, Blair and Osborne

[Yanis Varoufakis](#)



Britain has endured 40 years of decline thanks to this faulty economic theory. Will Keir Starmer finally kill it off?



Prime minister Tony Blair (centre) in the pit at the City of London's LIFFE (London International Financial Futures and Options Exchange) in 1997.
Photograph: Sean Dempsey/PA Archive/Press Association Images

Sat 1 Oct 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Oct 2022 07.49 EDT

If Kwasi Kwarteng's mini-budget survives [the storm it triggered](#), a banker on a million-pound annual salary stands to receive £50,000 of income tax relief – on top of the extra bonuses the bank can throw in, now that the Liz Truss government has removed the cap on them. Meanwhile, a Deliveroo rider gets a pep talk on the emancipatory value of aspiring to be wealthy, presumably as an incentive to pedal harder. This is the gist of the government's growth strategy or, according to former Brexit minister [David Frost](#), its antidote to stagnation and defeatism.

While it's tempting to draw the obvious analogy between zombie ideas such as the [trickle-down growth effect](#), and the classic Hollywood horror film Night of the Living Dead, a more appropriate response to the seriousness of the situation is to follow the banker's extra cash. The government claims the banker will invest it, thus promoting growth. If it were not a blatant lie, it might have passed as a touching example of unfounded faith. But unlike Adam Smith's bakers, butchers and brewers, who would invest any spare cash into better and more bread, ale and meat, the banker will buy into some fund that will, in turn, purchase shares, derivatives and bonds.

These recipients of the banker's extra money have a long track record of not investing in actual productive capacity. Why would they, when the masses out there can't afford to buy new, high-value products? Instead, big businesses use any funds that come their way either to buy back their own shares (to boost their share price and, consequently, their bonuses) or to speculate in the derivatives market or in real estate. The dirty secret behind the zombie idea of trickle-down economics is that only one thing can prevent the vicious financial cycle from spinning out of control: the government's (and, sometimes, the central bank's) power to feed it.

Margaret Thatcher, whom Liz Truss pretends to idolise, understood this dirty little secret. She learned the hard way that tax cuts for the wealthy merely shifted income to the ruling class without delivering growth dividends. For her neoliberal policies to deliver a semblance of growth, she had to throw into the vicious financial cycle pre-existing public wealth: [council houses](#) and public utilities (gas, electricity, [water](#)) in particular. In short, Thatcher's policies boosted growth not because trickle-down worked, but because swathes of society's common wealth was liquidated at cutdown prices and thrown into the City's cauldron.

Thatcher's business model for the UK has remained more or less the same ever since. While the last Labour government did use its revenues from taxing the City to fund the NHS and social services, the UK's productive capital base continued to shrink. Tony Blair and Gordon Brown not only maintained the financialisation cycle that Thatcher had begun, but boosted it in two ways: by removing all [remaining regulatory constraints](#) on the City, and by throwing into its circular flow the proceeds from deregulated public services.

Then, in 2008, under the weight of its hubris, the financialisation vicious cycle had its famous collapse. At once, the Bank of England combined forces with the government [to re-float it](#). To that splendid example of socialism exclusively for the financiers, George Osborne added [austerity](#), which, by suppressing aggregate demand further, eradicated any remaining drive toward actual investment in Britain's productive base.

Four decades after the neoliberal experiment began, the evidence is in: trickle-down economics is dangerous make-believe. Growth is in fact

impervious to the top income tax rates. Paul Krugman recently [showed](#) that neither Ronald Reagan's tax cuts nor Bill Clinton's tax hikes affected the US's income path significantly. Similarly in the UK, the data dispels the Tory conviction that Thatcher put Britain on to a brave new path to higher growth. We find that in 1979, the output per hour worked in the UK [was trailing](#) France and Germany by 17% and 18% respectively. Did the UK catch up after four decades of trickle-down tax policies and assorted deregulation measures, which never happened in France? No, in 2019, France's productivity remained 18% higher than the UK's, and Germany's 17%.

From this historical perspective, the recent backlash against Liz Truss seems almost unfair. Sure enough, the new prime minister and her chancellor blundered monumentally. Nevertheless, it is disingenuous of the Truss trashers to try to pin on her the sins of a business model inspired by Thatcher, modified by Blair, shored up by Osborne, undermined by Brexit and neglected by Boris Johnson. The hapless new PM's rookie mistake was to try to beat Rishi Sunak (while also jettisoning Johnson's levelling up agenda) by doing ... a Thatcher. Alas, because she lacked Thatcher's access to plentiful public assets to be injected into the financial sector, and with the [Bank of England](#) too spooked by inflation to print more money to revitalise financialisation, Truss ended up trying to achieve the impossible: to do a Reagan, but without the mighty dollar in support.

The problem with zombie ideas that refuse to die is that, once they re-emerge, they encourage other deadly undead ideas to rise up too. There are already signs that Kwarteng, instead of killing off the trickle-down zombie, will instead revive the austerity zombie. Impervious to the fact that tax cuts never generate growth, and austerity never arrests the growth rate of public debt, the UK is destined to be haunted by these two zombies for two more years.

The silver lining is that Trussonomics has almost guaranteed the Tories' defeat in the next election. And then? Does Keir Starmer's Labour have a plan to break up the doom-loop of state-maintained wealth appropriation centred upon the City? The UK's future, and any hope of undoing four decades of unnecessary damage, will depend on it.

- Yanis Varoufakis is the leader of MeRA25 in Greece's parliament, a former finance minister of Greece, and author of [Another Now](#)
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OpinionArts funding

The great British sell-off: why are we allowing our arts to be privatised by stealth?

[Charlotte Higgins](#)



Gallery by gallery, museum by museum, the public stake in our cultural institutions is shrinking



Illustration: Sébastien Thibault/The Guardian

Sat 1 Oct 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Oct 2022 05.30 EDT

There is a frequent complaint from the right that that the deep-rooted ideological position of the BBC, universities, theatres, museums and other arts and cultural organisations is a long-uncontested leftiness.

The paranoia about this is extreme: consider that the prime minister, Liz Truss, complained to the journalist Tom Newton Dunn during a party leadership hustings that he had framed a question “in a leftwing way”. The sheer insanity here – though her words were doubtless carefully chosen to seed distrust in the media in general – is that Newton Dunn is the former longstanding political editor of the Sun, and not notorious for his raging socialism.

The Tories’ fightback against this supposed hegemony of “cultural Marxism” (purely imagined, given the actual small-c conservatism of so many British cultural institutions) has been waged in all kinds of high-profile ways, notably through appointing ideological fellow travellers to the (in theory) politically independent boards of national cultural organisations, and purging those seen as dissenters. See Tory donor Richard Sharp, now chair of the BBC. See [Aminul Hoque](#), an academic who occasionally

expressed views not wholly supportive of the British empire's every last move, who was removed as a trustee of the Royal Museums Greenwich.

But a quieter, more subtle – and perhaps, in the end, more effective – rightwing revolution has been in progress for years. This has not been the bombastic culture war pursued by the former culture secretary Oliver Dowden. This has been something much more insidious and far-reaching, and it relates not to about how people think but about the fundamentals of how many cultural organisations are run.

The change is the result of what happens when you radically reduce the public stake in the arts. For many cultural organisations, the Arts Council or their local authority is often no longer the major funder – and as a result, the taxpayer is no longer the ultimate stakeholder. The balance has shifted fundamentally. “For years I thought I worked in the public sector,” one director of a gallery told me. “Then I realised that I worked for a charity to which the government is just a minority donor.”

The real author of this neoliberal shift is no culture warrior, and he's now the chair of the British Museum: George Osborne. Under his 2010 austerity measures, with Jeremy Hunt as culture secretary, Arts Council England was cut by 30% – hugely significant for the cultural organisations on the receiving end, and yet a risible figure saved for the exchequer ([the projection at the time](#) was £457m over four years – absurdly and tragically just one-third of 1% of the government's intended budget saving).

The arts in England have been on standstill funding ever since, which in real terms comes in at somewhere between a 30% and 50% cut over the past decade; and local authorities, also hit hard by austerity measures and then by the pandemic, have very often cut their funding too. Arts organisations have since been forced to look elsewhere for money, and have got much better at being commercial bodies: at creating a great shop and cafe; at hiring themselves out for events; or, like the Hepworth in Wakefield, charging those outside their local authority area for entry. Newer institutions put this commercial side of their existence firmly into their plans: the freshly redeveloped Museum of Making in Derby, for instance, has a huge groundfloor space designed for hires from local businesses such as Rolls-Royce.

And then there is the fundraising, from charitable trusts, often run by extremely wealthy individuals (media executive Elisabeth Murdoch is one relatively new player on this scene), or from high-net-worth individuals themselves. I vividly remember one director of a public gallery, off-guard one night at the Venice Biennale, telling me how they had gone into working in museums and galleries to change the lives of kids in the deprived parts of their city – not to spend so much of their working life smilingly handing glasses of champagne to very rich people who might, or indeed might very well not, be minded to contribute to renovating the gallery.

This is privatisation. No one uses this term to describe what's happening in the arts, but it's not so different from the stealthy privatisation that's unfolding in the another field established in its current form after the second world war – healthcare. For the NHS, privatisation involves contracting out services and selling GP practices to US conglomerates. The means in the arts may be different, but the trend away from the public realm is just the same. In the maniacally tax-cutting world of Trussonomics, it's likely to happen even faster.

You might wonder whether it actually matters. Being forced to raise revenue from shops and cafes and rich people often makes institutions more fun to be in than the slightly dowdy civic museum of previous decades – who doesn't enjoy a nice cafe, a nice shop? Most people who work in such organisations would passionately argue that just because there is less reliance on the public purse, it doesn't mean that they feel an iota less responsibility to the public, less desire to reach as broad an audience as they possibly can, less desire to change lives for the better – just as NHS healthcare workers are still passionately devoted to doing their absolute best for their patients.

But there is a difference, subtle as it may seem from the outside. It's to do with to whom institutions are accountable. It's about hierarchies and power. (Are you a “friend”, with “friends’ room” privileges? Are you a donor towards whose priorities or whims the gallery has felt it necessary to adjust its programme? Have you effectively bought a seat on the board, which will allow you to help set the direction of the organisation?).

It's also to do with the moral and practical problems that set in when money an organisation has been obliged to seek is widely seen as tainted. Exhibit A

would be the scandal around the owners of Perdue Pharma, producer of the opioid painkiller OxyContin. Tate said in 2019: “We do not think it right to seek or accept further donations from the Sackler family.” But it had already pocketed a great deal from Perdue over the decades, and couldn’t in a million years pay it back.

You know those little well-kept parks that developers sometimes have to provide as part of their deal with the local authority? They are often better looked after than public parks, with better planting. Their grass is still freshly green even in a drought, and skilled gardeners keep them looking spruce. There are no chewing-gum stains on its paths. These places are public, in a way – in that you can go there and eat your lunch on the grass, no problem (though you’d certainly get moved on if you were homeless and tried to sleep there). But the fact is, you, the ordinary citizen, do not own this park. And on some absolutely fundamental, cellular level, you can feel that you don’t.

- Charlotte Higgins is the Guardian’s chief culture writer
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OpinionMini-budget 2022

Keir Starmer can lock the imploding Tories out for a decade – if he gets the message right

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



Labour has a brief window to sear a narrative into the public's mind, so the Conservatives are saddled with this crisis for years



Keir Starmer delivering his speech to the Labour party conference in Liverpool this week. Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

Fri 30 Sep 2022 12.29 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 15.10 EDT

We are in the golden hour. That may sound warm and pleasant – as if we have entered those long-promised sunlit uplands – but you need only look around at the economic devastation wreaked by Liz Truss and Kwasi Kwarteng in the past week to know that's not what I have in mind. Rather, I am using the phrase in the sense deployed by police: [the golden hour](#) refers to the period immediately after a crime has been committed, when evidence is in abundance and detectives need to move fast to collect it. We are in the political equivalent of that period right now, and it's Keir Starmer who cannot afford to waste a second.

Of course, the Labour leader begins with an advantage denied to most investigators: the identity of the perpetrators is already known. Hence the epic shift in the opinion polls, with the Conservatives now a staggering 33 points behind Labour, according to [YouGov](#). If that swing were uniform across the country (which it won't be), there would only be [three Tories left](#) in the next House of Commons. *Three.*

But Starmer still has work to do if he is to make the current mood last. He has to convince the court of public opinion that there are no mitigating circumstances, that blame lies entirely with the prime minister, her chancellor and the party that has governed this country for 12 long years. He has to do much more than simply point a finger at those in charge. He has to craft a narrative that sticks in the public mind, one that endures even when the shock of the current havoc is no longer fresh.

In that effort, he's helped by the fact that the British economy now resembles a crime scene. The pound tanked, the cost of borrowing for both government and homeowners has leapt and the latter is only going to get higher. The Bank of England had to make a [£65bn intervention](#) on Wednesday, to deal with the fallout of a fiscal statement that, as one [online wit](#) put it, departed from the norm: usually an emergency budget solves an emergency rather than causes one. [The International Monetary Fund](#) has put the UK on economic suicide watch, anxious that its serial acts of self-harm could start hurting others.

But making it stick, that's the challenge for Starmer. The model here is the response of George Osborne and David Cameron to the financial crash of 2008-09. Swiftly, they told a tall tale in which an increased deficit was the consequence not of a global credit collapse rooted in the US property market, but of Gordon Brown's supposed profligacy. Brown had been incontinent with public money, they claimed. That – rather than the emergency measures required to plug the hole in the global financial system – was to blame for the deficit.

Blessed with a rightwing press eager to amplify that fairy story, and admirable message discipline, the Tory duo seared that narrative into the public mind so effectively, it won them not one election but at least two. It saw off Brown in 2010, while the accusation of [Labour](#) economic incompetence hobbled Ed Miliband in 2015 too. It remained a staple of Tory rhetoric. Labour had crashed the car into the ditch: it should never again be trusted with the keys. Rinse and repeat.

From mini-budget to market turmoil: Kwasi Kwarteng's week – video timeline

With that, the Tories were only building on a message their predecessors had crafted decades earlier. Think of the years of valuable service put in by that workhorse of a political slogan: the “winter of discontent”. The narrative the [Conservatives](#) constructed out of the events of 1978-79, again faithfully sustained by their Fleet Street cheerleaders, similarly suggested that Labour ineptitude and misrule disqualified the party from power – and it served the Tory cause for more than a generation. (Brown and Tony Blair tried to perform the same trick on the Conservatives with Black Wednesday but, with fewer media allies, it enjoyed a much shorter afterlife.)

At this moment, when we’re in the midst of the crisis, it can seem as if Labour need do nothing: let events themselves be the message. And there’s no doubt that, when it comes to political communications, voters’ own experience is the most potent copywriter. Right now, it is the experience, and fears, of middle-class Britons with pensions and mortgages that should prove the Tories’ undoing: Kwarteng’s mini-budget aimed a torpedo at the interests of the Conservatives’ core voters.

But the intensity of this moment will pass. Which is why it’s now, during the golden hour, when people are paying attention and when views are still fluid and mouldable, that Starmer has to ensure the account of what’s just happened – and who caused it – that becomes fixed in the folk memory is the one shaped by him.

Truss and her ministers are already pushing their alternative narrative. Now, when the evidence is strewn all around the ground, it seems laughable. Derision is surely the only suitable response to Truss’s insistence to a string of [BBC local radio interviewers](#) on Thursday that the man to blame for turmoil on the markets is Vladimir Putin for his invasion of Ukraine, and that her greatest sin was wanting to help hard-pressed Britons with their energy bills. That won’t wash because – at this moment – we all remember the sequence of events. Sterling didn’t crash when Truss announced her action [on energy bills](#). It wasn’t that move, on 8 September, that panicked the markets. It was Kwarteng’s statement on 23 September – handing out tax cuts that were [economically illiterate as well as morally indefensible](#) – that did that.

That's clear to us now, because memories are fresh. But as every detective knows, recollections become hazy with time. Especially if the culprits and their vocal friends are spreading a false, but compelling, story of their own. There'll be talk of global shocks and international volatility, as if Truss is defending Britain against that storm rather than having recklessly exposed us to it. They'll keep saying it; front pages will keep repeating it and, before you know it, there will be a body of voters who lament the fate that has befallen the UK economy but can't quite name the guilty party.

To head off that danger, Starmer has to do to Truss what Osborne and Cameron did to Brown and Labour. This is on you, he has to say. You and your crazed ideological experiment, which treated Britain as a laboratory, and its people – their homes and their savings – as guinea pigs. Kwarteng's kamikaze budget was the culmination of 12 years of similarly failed Tory experiments, starting with the cruelty of austerity. (If Starmer wanted to be completely honest, he'd include Brexit – but I understand why he won't.) So never again lecture us on economic competence. Forget driving into a ditch: you drove the car off a cliff.

Starmer can choose his own words and his own metaphor. But he needs to tell the story of this crisis so that it hangs around the neck of Truss and the Tories for a decade at least. The golden hour is short – and the time to strike is now.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist. To listen to his podcast Politics Weekly America, search “Politics Weekly America” on Apple, Spotify, Acast or wherever you get your podcasts

OpinionRussia

A new series immerses us in Russia's 90s trauma – and the human cost of economic shock

[Marina Hyde](#)



Adam Curtis's BBC project, TraumaZone, show us extraordinary events through the eyes of ordinary people, and how ideologues betrayed them



Vladimir Putin meeting a Russian police officer in 1999, the year he came to power. Photograph: AP

Fri 30 Sep 2022 10.47 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 12.15 EDT

One of the many glitteringly clever quotes circulated in the [wake of Hilary Mantel's death](#) last week was something she said about history. The [longer version](#) is wonderful (what did she ever say that wasn't?), but we'll clip this bit: "Facts are not truth, though they are part of it ... And history is not the past – it is the method we have evolved of organising our ignorance of the past. It's the record of what's left on the record." Yet using these fragments – "a few stones, scraps of writing, scraps of cloth" – Mantel could transport you so completely that you felt you were breathing the air of another century, feeling the emotions of other people, moving through other times.

This has an intense value. And yet, there is a certain type of historian who concerns themself – or himself, let's face it – very little with emotion, even though that is all anyone ordinary who was forced to live through events was feeling at the time. Anger, shock, hope, bewilderment, laughter, exhaustion, betrayal – these are the trifling human offcuts of some loftier story, largely unmentionable byproducts of the grand machinations of greater men than them.

I'm glad this isn't an affliction suffered by the documentary maker Adam Curtis, perhaps the BBC's last great maverick, whose landmark [series on Russia](#) between 1985 and 1999 arrives on iPlayer in two weeks. Last year, Curtis was handed a treasure trove: every piece of raw footage shot by the BBC in Russia since the 1960s. Tens of thousands of hours, only the tiniest fraction of which had ever made it to air. Out of this hoard and other material lying in the BBC archive, he has created seven brilliant and deeply empathetic films that cover what happened to Russia between 1985 and 1999 (the year Vladimir Putin took power). It's called TraumaZone: What It Felt Like to Live Through the Collapse of Communism and Democracy.

The films bring that world right up against your eyeballs, and prove themselves essential to our understanding of the [Russia](#) we have now, of the Russia from which Putin emerged, and of the staggering human cost of it all. And, perhaps, of what it feels like on the ground when ideologues with a plan decide to jolt the people towards a new utopia. Anyway, more on the UK's week in economic shock therapy in a minute.

We already know the historical facts of the Russia story: the hideous iniquities of communism, its tumultuous collapse, the grotesque corruption and betrayal that followed, the vast scale – both ideological and geographical – of the various cataclysms. These films take us from the Kremlin to the Siberian mining villages, from the Chechen frontline to people's apartments, immersing us in every layer of Russian society. I showed Curtis the Mantel quote this week and he loved it. "I found this extraordinary material – tens of thousands of fragments of experience," he explained. "What I'm doing is taking these fragments and I'm trying to create a world for you to get lost in, a sense of what it was like to live through that world. At the end of it, I hope you think and feel differently about what Russians went through – and understand how Putin could emerge from that strange cataclysm."

This I can definitely confirm. I watched the films in early summer, yet seeing last weekend's mostly female [protest](#) against Putin's Ukraine mobilisation in Moscow, I was immediately transported back to Curtis's agonising footage of the mothers whose sons are conscripted into the Chechen war. The women in TraumaZone are what will stay longest with me – the struggling babushkas, the sex workers in Moscow's Cosmos hotel, the

state toothbrush factory employees, the reformatory teens, the idealistic first Avon ladies, the extraordinarily charismatic young girl who begs at car windows in the Moscow traffic ... the women break your heart.

TraumaZone is a definite departure from Curtis's previous style. There is no "Adam Curtis voiceover", no music unless it's part of the original footage itself, no provocative central thesis. He feels the hot-take industry has swallowed up everything since 2016 – "and I'm one of the worst offenders!" – and what the series offers instead is much more compelling and unusual. You can hear the flies buzzing on the steppes. You are in the middle of riots brutally suppressed by state police. You are watching as gangsters loot cars straight off the production lines. You are in the queue to be told there are still no potatoes in all of Moscow. It's difficult not to conclude that the hardline free marketeers had about as much empathy for the ordinary people as the Marxist intellectuals.

Which I accept might be starting to sound familiar closer to home. Don't worry, this isn't some glib bollocks about how we're all the same underneath. Russians are not similar to us, because they have been through a totally different experience. In the 90s, they had the accelerated and frequently catastrophic collapse of not one but two of the dominant ideologies of the 20th century. We had Britpop.

Not that that stops some pointed jokes. A Russian journalist who recently fled Putin's regime reflected sardonically to Curtis: "You in Britain are Moscow in about 1988. Everyone knows the system isn't working. Everyone knows that the managers are completely looting it. They know that you know that they know, but no one has any concept of a possible alternative. The only difference is you've already tried democracy. You've got nothing else left."

Ouch. It has certainly felt like a rather idiosyncratic form of democracy this week, watching a government without a mandate pursue radical economic shock policies on the basis of pure dogma, no matter the forecast human fallout. Over the course of TraumaZone we get to know Yegor Gaidar, the ultra-free marketeer architect of the shock therapy designed to radically remake Russia's economy, who became despised by the Russians who bore

the brunt of his malfunctioning ideals even as the oligarchs used them as cover to steal an entire country. There is an arresting closeup of Gaidar's face at the funeral of Galina Starovoitova, the democratic reformer [assassinated in her apartment building in 1998](#). What is his expression? Is it a flicker of an epic personal reckoning?

I kept wondering if I saw a flash of it on Kwasi Kwarteng's face this week, when the [cameras followed](#) the chancellor on some no-comment walk out of the Treasury as the financial crisis he caused was playing out in real time. Or whether we'll see it when Kwarteng or Liz Truss is forced to encounter an ordinary victim who experiences their ideology as a reposessed house or hungry child, rather than something that sounds good in a pamphlet.

But perhaps these are the fleeting emotions we wish ideologues to feel, and not the ones they do. The one thing we can say with a general election possibly more than two years away is that no one but a tiny electorate of 81,000 voted for this radical experiment. Is that democracy? Is that what keeps people believing in politics? Or are we entering a trauma zone of our own?

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
 - Marina Hyde will join Guardian Live for events in Manchester (4 October) and London (11 October) to discuss her new book, What Just Happened?! For details visit theguardian.com/guardianlive, and order the book from [Guardian Bookshop](#)
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US gun control

Gun reformers feel history is on their side despite bleak outlook in Congress

The few Republican supporters of gun restrictions have faced backlash from the party faithful



Crosses with the names of shooting victims outside Robb elementary school in Uvalde, Texas. Photograph: Jae C Hong/AP

Joan E Greve in Washington

[*@joanegreve*](#)

Sat 1 Oct 2022 05.00 EDT

When Joe Biden [signed](#) the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act into law this summer, he and congressional Democrats celebrated the enactment of the first significant gun control policy in decades in the US.

The US president also acknowledged that the law, a bipartisan compromise brokered after the [Uvalde tragedy](#) that left 19 children and two adults dead, did not go nearly far enough to address the devastation caused by gun violence.

“I know there’s much more work to do, and I’m never going to give up,” Biden said in June.

Although Democrats and activists agree that much more needs to be done to combat gun violence, legislative progress on this lightning-rod issue could soon become even more difficult. With crucial midterm elections looming, the prospect of meaningful progress on gun reform now looks unlikely – despite widespread domestic revulsion at continuing gun violence and bafflement overseas at the US gun problem.

If Republicans regain control of the House of Representatives after the midterm elections this November, as they are [favored](#) to do, proposed gun regulations will probably be dead on arrival in Congress. Despite those obstacles, anti-gun violence activists and their allies on Capitol Hill insist they are not giving up on their goal to see more desperately needed change in the months and years to come.

The Democratic senator Chris Murphy, who played a leading role in negotiations over the BSCA, said on Tuesday that he considers the law to be proof of potential bipartisan cooperation on gun regulations.

The compromise secured by Murphy and the Republican senator John Cornyn expanded background checks for firearm buyers under the age of 21, and it enacted new gun restrictions for those previously convicted on domestic violence charges. The legislation also provided financial incentives for states to enact “red-flag laws”, which help keep guns away from those deemed to be a danger to themselves or others, and it provided funding for more mental health services to children and families.

Speaking at an event in Washington organized by the Common Ground Committee, Murphy credited the anti-gun violence movement and an

engaged citizenry in forcing Congress to finally act nearly a decade after the shooting at Sandy Hook elementary school in his home state of Connecticut.

“The reason that we found common ground this summer is because the American public had had enough of inaction,” Murphy said at George Washington University. “While Sandy Hook shook this country to the core, it’s really been the cumulative impact of mass shooting after mass shooting, as well as suicides and homicides continuing to spiral upward, that brought the public to a point this summer where they just weren’t willing to accept Congress retreating to their corners.”

But while the passage of the BSCA offered some hope for supporters of stricter gun laws, the negotiation process also displayed the sharp partisan divides on this polarizing issue. Just [14 House Republicans](#) supported the bill, while 193 opposed it. After playing a leading role in the negotiations over the bill, Cornyn was [booed and heckled](#) at a Republican convention in his home state of Texas.

Former Republican congressman Will Hurd, who joined Murphy at Tuesday’s event, acknowledged the political pressure that members of his party face from some voters when they back new gun restrictions. Nodding to the [widespread public support](#) that policies like universal background checks and a higher age limit for gun purchases enjoy, Hurd encouraged his former colleagues to take proactive steps to prevent future tragedies.

“This is something that people want to see happen and so don’t be afraid of some of these issues that might have had a different political constituency in the 90s,” Hurd told reporters after the event. He added, “It always requires political courage to do something that’s difficult and that is not embraced by everybody.”

As of now, House Republicans have shown little interest in taking up new gun regulations if they regain control of the chamber in November. Even if Democrats retain control of the Senate, Republicans would be able to block any gun control bill in the House if they have the majority.

But Hurd, who previously represented the Uvalde community in the House, said political pressure could change the calculus for Republican lawmakers

if a similar tragedy occurs again.

“If a terrible action like this happens in the future and there’s not going to be a response, I think you’re going to see a public backlash,” Hurd said.

That grim possibility is a near certainty in the US, as Tuesday’s event vividly demonstrated. One audience member who posed a question to Murphy and Hurd said that he was a survivor of the [Highland Park shooting](#), which left seven people dead. The attack unfolded just days after Biden signed the BSCA into law.

In the face of such tragedy, anti-gun violence activists have doubled down on their commitment to push for more reform, regardless of who controls Congress after November.

Murphy echoed that commitment, even as he conceded that Congress was unlikely to pass another gun control bill this year. Praising the anti-gun violence community as “one of the great social change movements in the history of this nation,” Murphy said he and his allies were just getting started.

“All of those great social change movements that you read about in the history books, they failed a whole bunch of times before they ever changed the world,” Murphy said. “My hope is based upon the history books, which tell you – when your cause is right and you choose not to give up, in this country, in a democracy – you eventually prevail.”

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[Fashion](#)

Victoria Beckham chooses glamour over fireworks for Paris fashion week

Presence of daughter-in-law in front row draws a line under gossip after rumours of a feud



Beckham believes that her customer wants what she herself wants: 'A sexy dress that's easy to wear.' Photograph: Julien de Rosa/AFP/Getty Images

[Jess Cartner-Morley](#)

[@JessC_M](#)

Fri 30 Sep 2022 15.58 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Oct 2022 00.10 EDT

Can a Spice Girl pull off French-girl chic? [Victoria Beckham](#) has won over fashion sceptics in New York and London, but for her first catwalk show in almost three years she upped the ante with a jump to the quintessential style capital.

“Paris is the ultimate dream,” said Beckham before a show staged in the honeyed stone cloisters of the baroque Val de Grace church. “It’s a pinch-me moment to be here.” Although the designer insisted she was more excited than nervous, this is a challenging time for her brand. A work-from-home zeitgeist has been an ill wind for a name which trades on jet-set glamour. Prices have had to come down in order to boost sales. And the celebrity circus around the Beckham name – invaluable for bringing allure and piquancy to a relatively small fashion label – had threatened to overshadow the show with rumours of a ‘feud’ between Beckham and her daughter-in-law.

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Models present creations for the Victoria Beckham Spring-Summer 2023 fashion show during the Paris Womenswear Fashion Week. Photograph: Julien de Rosa/AFP/Getty Images

The designer chose quiet glamour over catwalk fireworks for her Paris debut. Satin dresses were cut on the bias for a slinky walk, suspended on delicate spaghetti straps for drama, and fringed with silk tassels to kiss bare shoulders. Beckham believes that her customer wants what she herself wants: “A sexy dress that’s easy to wear. That’s what I like best, and I’m not going to agonise over it.” All was tasteful and serene in the front row, too, where the support of Beckham’s son and daughter-in-law, Brooklyn and Nicola Peltz Beckham, drew a line under gossip.



Brooklyn Beckham, Nicola Peltz Beckham, Romeo Beckham, Edward Enninful, Harper Beckham, David Beckham and Anna Wintour at the Victoria Beckham show. Photograph: Darren Gerrish/WireImage for Victoria Beckham

“A year ago, we weren’t in a position to do a show,” said Beckham. “We had to build a whole new team. As an independent brand, to have come through the pandemic and to be here, accepted by the French fashion community, feels like a big deal.” Marie Leblanc, who joined the brand as CEO in 2019, forecasts break-even for next year.

“It feels more modern not to bury myself under wardrobe now,” said Beckham. This is fashion week speak for the oldest of adages: sex sells. A body-conscious aesthetic now runs through the Victoria Beckham brand, from a lower-priced VB Body line of stretch, block-colour jersey dresses to the lingerie styling on the [Paris fashion week](#) catwalk, where love-heart shaped cutouts reveal flashes of bare skin or black latex.



One of the lingerie-styled pieces in Victoria Beckham's Spring-Summer 2023 collection. Photograph: Julien de Rosa/AFP/Getty Images

Lara Barrio, previously at Salvatore Ferragamo, was recently appointed design director at the brand, but Beckham said she was “still there in the studio all the time. I work on the collection every step of the way. This look is what I want to wear.” For the show, she wore a black version of a green draped and slashed gown worn on the catwalk by Bella Hadid.



US model Bella Hadid on the catwalk. Photograph: Julien de Rosa/AFP/Getty Images

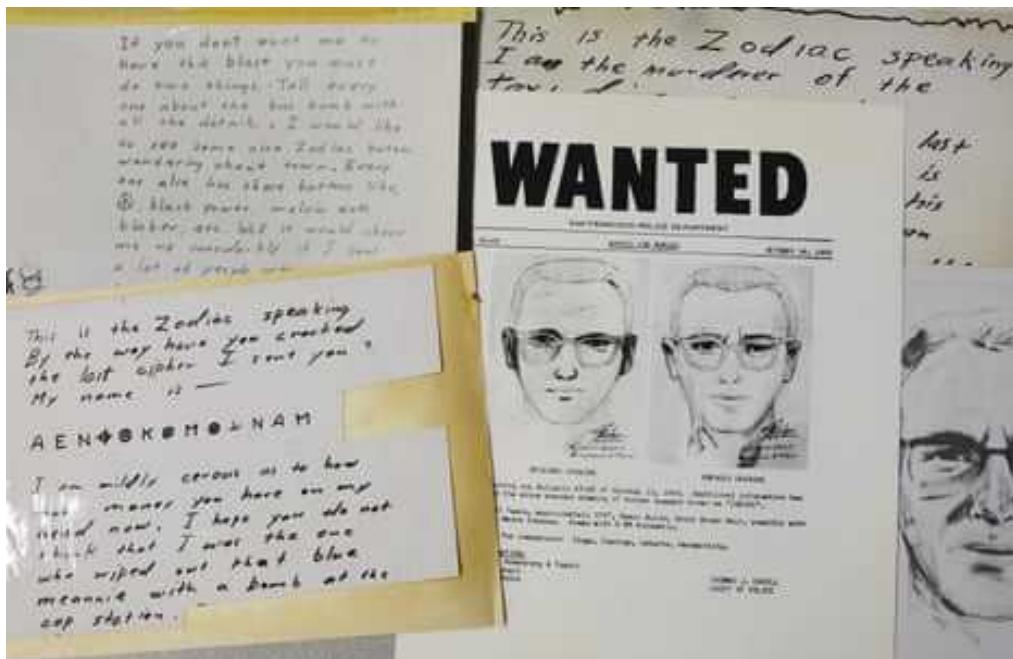
Although Beckham credits spending time in Miami “where women with all different body shapes love to show them off” with reigniting her love of eye-catching dresses, she did not embrace the move toward body diversity that has been a feature of much of fashion month. Backstage, the designer defended her decision to cast only sample-sized models by saying that a show “is all about creating that character for the season,” and insisted that the casting was “diverse and interesting” in other ways.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/fashion/2022/sep/30/victoria-beckham-chooses-glamour-over-fireworks-for-paris-fashion-week>

California

‘It’s not an unsolvable case’: has the Zodiac killer finally been found?

Author Jarett Kobek never intended to make the case the focus of his book but he may have solved the 50-year-old mystery



The identity of the Zodiac killer, who terrorized San Francisco Bay area communities more than 50 years ago, has remained unsolved. Photograph: Eric Risberg/AP

Dani Anguiano in Los Angeles

@dani_anguiano

Sat 1 Oct 2022 01.01 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Oct 2022 01.43 EDT

When author Jarett Kobek started researching the Zodiac killer for a book during the pandemic, he didn’t want to become just another amateur sleuth claiming to have finally solved the case that’s gripped America for decades.

Yet, that's more or less what happened. Kobek came across Paul Doerr, a [San Francisco](#) Bay area man who died in 2007, who he thinks is likely responsible for the killings and is the subject of his book: How to Find Zodiac.

"There was never any intention to do one of these books where [I'm] like hey everyone 'I found Zodiac,'" Kobek told the Guardian in an interview.

But unlike other suspects put forth in recent years, his research on Doerr – an abusive father and prolific writer who shared remarkably similar interests with Zodiac – is gaining traction.

[Los Angeles Magazine](#) laid out Kobek's findings in a recent cover story, and [SF Gate](#) called Doerr the "most compelling Zodiac killer suspect in decades". Paul Haynes, a researcher and co-writer of [I'll Be Gone in the Dark](#), which chronicled the long-unsolved [Golden State Killer](#) case, described Doerr as the "best Zodiac suspect that's ever surfaced".

In the more than 50 years since the Zodiac terrorized communities around the Bay Area, killing at least five people and sending taunting letters and cryptograms to news media, interest in the case has only intensified. The killings, which police continue to investigate, have been the subject of numerous documentaries, the 2007 thriller film *Zodiac*, and multiple books.



At least five people were murdered by the Zodiac killer, who sent taunting letters to the media. Photograph: Bettmann/Bettmann Archive

Even amid a true crime boom that's birthed countless documentaries and podcasts, Zodiac stands apart for the intense interest it garners. The unsolved case continues to attract new theories from people claiming to have unmasked the killer once and for all. Haynes points to the role of Zodiac's extensive body of written work in fueling fascination with the case.

He inferred that "Zodiac was someone who created a mythology around himself and crafted this real world supervillain seemingly inspired by pulp fiction and comic books".

Kobek is aware of his work as part of the frenzy around the killings. "It's annoying. Zodiac as a topic is kind of exhausting," he says. "I think everyone is haunted by the fact that every week there's another Zodiac."

But the story found him nonetheless. Kobek's journey into the Zodiac started while he was researching an entirely different book he hoped to write on [California](#) in the 1970s. Ideas for the project shifted and eventually led him to look at the culture of speculation that characterized much of the hunt for Zodiac. The author began examining the killer's case, looking closely at Zodiac's writings, noting his cultural references that suggested he was a fan

of pulp novels and comic books. That path eventually led Kobek down a rabbit hole to local Bay Area fan zines where he discovered the writings of Paul Doerr, a naval documents clerk from Fairfield. As more eerie clues emerged about similarities between Doerr and Zodiac, the focus of his book shifted.

Doerr shared niche interests with the Zodiac, such as how to make a bomb with ammonium nitrate and fertilizer. Both Doerr and Zodiac outlined the formula for such an explosive in their writings, instructions that contained the same error, Kobek found.



The Zodiac killer sent a cryptogram to the San Francisco Chronicle in 1969. Paul Doerr was knowledgeable in cryptography as well. Photograph: Anonymous/AP

The author also learned that the formula for that technique was published in a newsletter by a rightwing group called the Minutemen, an organization Doerr was a member of and that sometimes used a gunsight symbol that bears a resemblance to a symbol used by Zodiac in his writings, writer Aaron Gell [noted in LA Magazine](#). Both Zodiac and Doerr used feathered directional arrows in their diagrams.

Doerr worked in a naval shipyard in Vallejo at the time of the killings and both his age, height and physical appearance matched the description of Zodiac. Some of the attacks took place at local “teen hangouts” Doerr’s daughter visited, according to LA Magazine. Like Zodiac, Doerr was knowledgeable in cryptography, the magazine noted, and created a puzzle for his daughter each week, which she’d have to answer in order to find her hidden allowance.

Doerr’s daughter was initially skeptical of the claims and read Kobek’s book intending to file a lawsuit against him. But his findings, as well as the childhood abuse she suffered at the hands of her father, convinced her that her father may have been responsible for the killings.

Although Kobek acknowledges the evidence is circumstantial, he found it convincing. “After a certain point of really researching this dude I couldn’t really see what else to do,” he said. So he sent his findings to law enforcement, and turned them into a book.

“I think he’s a pretty good shot at it. I can’t blame law enforcement if they ignore it, these guys get, like, 10 tips a day about how someone’s cousin or whatever is Zodiac,” he said.



Cpt Don Townsend of the Napa county sheriff's office displays a car door collected as evidence in a murder linked to the Zodiac killer. Photograph: Bettmann/Bettmann Archive

Kobek has never heard back from police, but his work has captured the attention of others. One of those is Haynes, the researcher who spent years investigating the Golden State Killer.

In a recent Twitter thread, Haynes [laid out](#) the “compelling” evidence against Doerr compiled in Kobek’s book. Haynes says its strength prompted him to push the information through channels that have direct connections with investigating agencies, a point he never reached in the years he spent working on the Golden State Killer case.

“I feel there’s a higher probability of Doerr being Zodiac than any other [publicly named] suspect,” he said, given the data points presented in the book and developed since its publication.

Determining if Doerr was, in fact, responsible for the crimes could be as simple as obtaining his fingerprints through military records and comparing them with those of the Zodiac, Haynes said.

“It’s not an unsolvable case,” he said.

The San Francisco police did not respond to a request for comment.

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[European Union](#)

UK isolated as EU agrees windfall tax on energy firms

Levy could raise €140bn, and energy ministers also set targets to cut electricity use



Gas pipes in Ihtiman, Bulgaria. EU countries remain at odds over proposals to cap the price of gas. Photograph: Nikolay Doychinov/AFP/Getty Images

[Jennifer Rankin](#) in Brussels

Fri 30 Sep 2022 10.41 EDTFirst published on Fri 30 Sep 2022 08.01 EDT

EU energy ministers have agreed to levy windfall taxes on energy companies' profits, and to cut electricity use, but remain at loggerheads over proposals to cap the price of gas.

Meeting in Brussels on Friday, the bloc's 27 energy ministers signed off on [proposals](#) to levy a "solidarity contribution" on fossil fuel producers that have benefited from soaring energy prices.

Revenues of renewable energy and nuclear power companies will be capped in response to the “unexpectedly large financial gains” made in recent months, as a result of their profits being linked to the price of expensive gas and coal, according to an EU statement.

The measures, which together could raise €140bn (£123bn) to help lower consumer bills and fund the switch to green energy across the EU, contrast with the British government’s approach. Liz Truss, the UK prime minister, has ruled out extending the £5bn energy tax introduced by the former chancellor Rishi Sunak.

Unlike the UK, the EU is also moving ahead with plans to reduce demand for energy. Ministers agreed on a voluntary target to cut electricity use by 10% and a mandatory energy savings target of 5% during peak hours. The mandatory peak hours target was deemed necessary to avoid power being simply moved from most to least efficient countries in the EU’s shared electricity market.

The 10% cut in electricity use is meant to be achieved between 1 December and the end of March. A 15% voluntary target for cutting gas consumption over the winter was agreed in July.

EU officials said if the demand-reduction plans were successful, governments would earn less than the estimated €140bn from windfall taxes, but consumers would benefit from lower bills.

The emergency measures were agreed after a 37% decline in gas supplies from Russia to the EU between January and August, following the invasion of Ukraine. The risks to EU energy supply were further exposed this week when four leaks were found in two Nord Stream gas pipelines, believed by EU leaders to be acts of sabotage.

European leaders blame sabotage as gas pours into Baltic from Nord Stream pipelines – video report

Despite the consensus on a windfall tax and energy savings, ministers remain divided over plans to cap the price of gas. France, Italy, Spain and Poland were among 15 countries this week urging the European

[Commission](#) to table a price cap as “the one measure that will help every member state to mitigate the inflationary pressure, manage expectations and provide a framework in case of potential supply disruptions, and limit the extra profits in the sector”.

The Czech Republic’s industry minister, Jozef Síkela, who chaired Friday’s meeting, called on the commission to table additional measures targeted at reducing gas prices as soon as possible. “The households and businesses need the help now. We are in the energy war with Russia and we need to act. Now means now ... Now is not in a week and definitely not in a month,” he said.

Germany, the Netherlands and EU officials, however, are sceptical about a price cap, fearing it could harm the EU’s ability to secure scarce supplies of liquified natural gas in a competitive global market.

Critics also say the system would require an EU authority to allocate and ration gas to member states, a politically fraught task never done at EU level. Luxembourg’s energy minister, Claude Turmes, said capping the wholesale price of gas had risks. “What happens when the clearing is not happening? Who will then decide where gas goes? [Is the] European Commission to decide? ... Look, I think this is a system that can be very, very difficult to administer.”

The commission continues to favour capping the price of Russian gas, a measure that has the support of only the Baltic states and is unlikely to pass.

Kadri Simson, the EU energy commissioner, said the commission was “ready to develop a temporary EU-wide measure to limit the price of gas in electricity generation”, which she described as a far-reaching step.

“A wholesale gas price cap is a legitimate option,” she told reporters, “but it requires a radical intervention in the market which means several non-negotiable conditions have to be met before this cap will work.” One of those conditions, she said, would be a gas-savings target going beyond the 15% already set.

Riina Sikkut, Estonia's infrastructure minister, rejected suggestions that Europeans faced a choice between heating and eating. "We can't forget that we are in a situation of war," she said. "Ukrainians are paying with their lives. So we may temporarily pay higher bills or prices in the food store."

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Hurricane Ian

Hurricane Ian moves into South Carolina after rampage in Florida

Twenty-one people dead with toll expected to rise after mega-storm carves wide path of devastation and moves north



A worker clears a tree downed by Hurricane Ian in Charleston, South Carolina. Photograph: Scott Olson/Getty Images

[Richard Luscombe](#) in Miami and [Oliver Milman](#) in New York

Fri 30 Sep 2022 21.20 EDTFirst published on Fri 30 Sep 2022 11.19 EDT

The coast of South Carolina was hit on Friday with a direct strike from Hurricane Ian, the deadly mega-storm that carved a [wide path of destruction](#) on its earlier rampage through Florida.

The eye of the hurricane crossed over land at Georgetown, between Myrtle Beach and the historic city of Charleston, after strengthening overnight in

the Atlantic.

The National Hurricane Center (NHC) in Miami warned of the danger of a ["life-threatening" storm surge](#) and hurricane force winds all the way from North Carolina to the north-east Florida coast.

In [Florida](#), meanwhile, the death toll from the storm that arrived on Wednesday with 150mph (240km/h) winds and a storm surge of up to 18ft (5.5m) had risen to at least 21 by Friday morning, but was expected to grow further, Kevin Guthrie, the state's director of emergency management, said.

Officials fear it will end up being the biggest natural disaster in Florida's history, despite a track record of the state being hit intermittently with devastating hurricanes over the centuries.



Hurricane Ian makes landfall over Georgetown, South Carolina. Photograph: Getty Images

Early Friday evening, National Hurricane Center forecasters said Ian had weakened to a post-tropical cyclone after its [South Carolina](#) landfall, but surge, flooding and wind threats would persist.

The storm had appeared to have largely spared the historic South Carolina city of Charleston from the worst, but Charleston's mayor said the city was

expecting flooding, and more than 200,000 customers across the state lost power.

Rescue teams had reached 3,000 wrecked or flooded homes, Florida's governor, Ron DeSantis, said at a Friday morning press briefing, while almost 2 million remained without power, and in Lee county, where Ian made landfall near Fort Myers, there was no running water.

Footage of the aftermath in Lee county showed a trail of destruction, including the partially collapsed Sanibel Causeway. The coast guard has staged rescue missions on Sanibel Island, and rescued two people and three cats to safety by helicopter.

This morning Sheriff Carmine Marceno took a tour of Lee County to begin assessing damage caused by Hurricane Ian.

We are devastated. Our hearts go out to every resident who is impacted. The Lee County Sheriffs Office is mobile and will stop at nothing to help our residents. pic.twitter.com/S4OsB8ajRv

— Carmine Marceno - Florida's Law and Order Sheriff (@SheriffLeeFL) [September 29, 2022](#)

Parts of south-west Florida looked, in the words of one resident, like someone had dropped an atom bomb. DeSantis described Fort Myers Beach as “ground zero” for the destruction, with vast expanses of flattened buildings, and boats tossed into piles, wedged high up between houses or floating down flooded streets.

Many who evacuated have lost everything except their lives and officials warned that they had “literally nothing to come back to”.

With massive devastation and flooding from Fort Myers on the Gulf of Mexico, through central areas including Orlando, to Cape Canaveral on the Atlantic coast, officials warned the recovery from what Joe Biden said on Thursday “could be the [deadliest hurricane in Florida's history](#)” would be lengthy.

People and pets airlifted from Hurricane Ian floodwater in Florida – video

“We’re going to be here until the recovery is complete. It may very well take years, but we will be there,” the homeland security secretary, Alejandro Mayorkas, told CNN on Friday.

Biden approved a major disaster declaration for the nine worst-hit Florida counties on Thursday, freeing billions of dollars of government resources to help fund recovery efforts.

“The impacts of this storm are historic, and the damage that was done has been historic,” DeSantis said late on Thursday after an aerial tour of Fort Myers Beach and neighboring communities pummeled by the storm.

While [Ian’s center](#) came ashore near Georgetown, South Carolina, on Friday with much weaker winds than when it crossed Florida’s Gulf Coast earlier in the week, the storm left many areas of Charleston’s downtown peninsula under water. It also washed away parts of four piers along the coast, including two at Myrtle Beach.

The end of the Pawleys Island pier has collapsed & is floating south.
pic.twitter.com/ajJsWeXWfN

— Pawleys Island PD (@PawleysIslandPD) [September 30, 2022](#)

Online cameras showed seawater filling neighborhoods in Garden City to calf level. As Ian moved across South Carolina, it dropped from a hurricane to a post-tropical cyclone.

Ian is the [third hurricane to make landfall](#) in the state in six years, after Matthew in 2016 and Isaias in 2020 both caused significant damage.

Governor Henry McMaster declared a state of emergency ahead of the storm’s arrival, and thousands of residents evacuated from areas around historic Charleston.

“We really do not want our residents out and about because eventually the storm winds are going to get up so high where our first responders are going to be recalled back to the stations,” Joe Coates, director of emergency management for Charleston county, told CNN.

The Carolinas will continue to face a dangerous and “life-threatening” coastal storm surge this evening, according to the National Hurricane Center. Tropical storm force winds are also expected, which authorities have warned could lead to downed power lines and trees.



A volunteer cuts away a felled tree in Charleston, South Carolina
Photograph: Jonathan Drake/Reuters

On Friday afternoon, McMaster said the storm hadn't hit the state has expected, but advised residents to remain alert.

“A lot of prayers have been answered – this storm is not as bad as it could have been, but don’t let your guard down yet,” he said. “We are not out of the woods, there is water on the roads, still heavy winds and it is still dangerous in many parts of the state.”

John Tecklenburg, the Charleston mayor, said the climate crisis had worsened the flood risk to his city, with Nasa recording an average ocean rise of [one inch every year since 2010](#).

“Sea rise is real, it’s happening, we are preparing but it takes time,” he said.

And US climate experts estimated that climate change increased the rainfall in [Hurricane Ian](#) by more than 10%.



Rain from Hurricane Ian floods a street in Charleston, South Carolina.
Photograph: Scott Olson/Getty Images

Areas of South Carolina under a hurricane warning were already being lashed with high winds and torrential rain hours before the arrival of Ian, which blew up into a category 1 hurricane again overnight, shortly after exiting Florida's east coast as a tropical storm.

The NHC said that by midnight on Thursday the storm's maximum sustained winds increased to more than 80mph (128km/h), and governors of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia declared states of emergency.

The death toll so far of 21 and rising included confirmed and unconfirmed deaths but not yet the reported drowning of an unknown number of family members found in their home in Lee county and other unfolding tragedies elsewhere, including vehicle deaths.

Guardian reporter Dani Anguiano and the Associated Press contributed to this report

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- [Live UK bonds slump after sterling plunges to record low against dollar](#)
- [Sterling Pound hits all-time low against dollar after mini-budget rocks markets](#)
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Business live**Business**

Sterling slides back towards record low as Bank of England and Treasury fail to reassure markets – as it happened

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/live/2022/sep/26/sterling-record-low-tax-cuts-investors-kwarteng-truss-ftse-stock-markets-business-live>

Sterling

Pound hits all-time low against dollar after mini-budget rocks markets

Odds of sterling hitting parity with dollar jump, as analysts say UK bond market ‘getting smoked’ by giveaway

- [Pound’s plummet underlines Kwarteng schoolboy error](#)
- [Q&A: what does the pound’s slump mean for the UK?](#)
- [Business live updates: sterling plunges](#)



The pound has plunged to its lowest value against the US dollar since Britain went decimal in 1971. Photograph: Daniel Sorabji/AFP/Getty Images

[Graeme Wearden](#)

Mon 26 Sep 2022 03.06 EDTFirst published on Sun 25 Sep 2022 10.30 EDT

The pound has hit an all-time low against the dollar after the bonanza of tax cuts and spending measures in Kwasi Kwarteng's mini-budget threatened to undermine confidence in the UK.

The pound plunged nearly 5% at one point to \$1.0327, its lowest since Britain went decimal in 1971, as belief in the UK's economic management and assets evaporated. Even after stumbling back to \$1.05, the currency was down 7% in two sessions, after the [UK chancellor pledged over the weekend to pursue more tax cuts.](#)

City economists suggested the slump in the pound could force the Bank of England into an emergency interest rate rise to support the currency.

Paul Dales, the chief UK economist at Capital [Economics](#), said the Bank could come out with "tough talk" supported by a large and immediate interest rate hike.

"That could involve something like a 100bps or 150bps hike in interest rates (to 3.25%/3.75%), perhaps as soon as this morning," Dales told clients.

The shadow chancellor, [Rachel Reeves](#), told Times Radio she was "incredibly worried" by the market reaction to the mini-budget.

As Asia-Pacific markets opened on Monday, Ray Attrill, National Australia Bank's head of currency strategy, said: "It's a case of shoot first and ask questions later, as far as UK assets are concerned."

Marc Chandler, chief market strategist at Bannockburn Global Forex, called the currency's record plunge "incredible" and said there was bound to be speculation of an emergency Bank of England meeting and rate hike.

[The pound hit an all-time low against the dollar](#)

Chris Weston, the head of research at the brokerage firm Pepperstone, said the pound was "the whipping boy" of the G10 foreign exchange market, while the UK bond market was "getting smoked" thanks to [Kwarteng's £45bn debt-financed tax-cutting package.](#)

“Investors are searching out a response from the Bank of England. They’re saying this is not sustainable, when you’ve got deteriorating growth and a twin deficit.”

“The funding requirement needed to pay for the mini-budget means either we need to see far better growth or higher bond yields to incentive capital inflows,” Weston said.

Not a promising start to the week for sterling in Asian trading: a new low versus the dollar below \$1.0770, down about 0.8% from Friday
pic.twitter.com/WjvElpLipN

— David Milliken (@david_milliken) [September 25, 2022](#)

The pound is in free fall. It hits a new record low and is quickly heading toward parity with the US dollar. pic.twitter.com/bRjZgY1xoT

— Lisa Abramowicz (@lisaabramowicz1) [September 26, 2022](#)

Kwarteng’s mini-budget caused a rout in UK financial markets on Friday. [Sterling](#) shed four cents to hit a 37-year low of \$1.0856, while the jump in the cost of government borrowing was the biggest in a single day in decades.

“The price of easy fiscal policy was laid bare by the market,” said [Sanjay Raja](#), chief UK economist at Deutsche Bank. He said Kwarteng’s tax cuts were adding to medium-term inflationary pressures and were “raising the risk of a near-term balance of payments crisis”.

“A plan to get the public finances on a sustainable footing will be necessary but not sufficient for markets to regain confidence in an economy sporting large twin deficits,” Raja said.

The UK current account deficit, which includes the trade balance and the net income from foreign investment and transfers, had already widened to a record level this year. The jump in the cost of imported energy is adding to this deficit, which is pushing the pound down towards levels that make UK assets attractive to foreign buyers again.

On Friday afternoon, Bloomberg's options pricing model showed there was a 26% chance the pound and the dollar hitting parity within the next six months, up from 14% on Thursday.

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UK FX and bond markets crashed...

GBP lowest since 1985

"According to Bloomberg's options pricing model, the pound holds a 26% chance of touching parity versus the greenback in the next six months..." pic.twitter.com/1HvC2uPKYM

— Caroline Hyde (@CarolineHydeTV) [September 23, 2022](#)

Nouriel Roubini, the economist who predicted the 2008 financial crisis, warned bluntly that the UK was starting to be priced like an emerging market, and was heading back to the 1970s.

"Stagflation and eventually the need to go and beg for an IMF bailout ... Truss and her cabinet are clueless," he tweeted.

But Paul Krugman, a Nobel economics laureate, pointed out that the pound's depreciation actually improved Britain's net international investment position.

Krugman said a 1970s-style sterling crisis was unlikely to occur unless the Bank of England chooses to monetise the debt, rather than offsetting the fiscal stimulus with tighter monetary policy.

I've been getting emails from City economists who agree that balance sheet effects won't be a problem, but are worried that the BoE will not, in fact, offset the fiscal stimulus — that it will in effect monetize deficits 1/ <https://t.co/2ybbKV1Suo>

— Paul Krugman (@paulkrugman) [September 25, 2022](#)

Kwarteng tried to play down the financial reaction to Friday's mini-budget, telling BBC One's Sunday with Laura Kuenssberg he was focused on boosting longer-term growth, not on short-term market moves,

"As chancellor of the exchequer, I don't comment on market movements. What I am focused on is growing the economy and making sure that Britain is an attractive place to invest," he said.

Kwarteng also indicated that [Liz Truss plans to radically reshape the UK economy](#) with even more tax cuts and fewer regulations.

The Bank of England is expected to raise interest rates higher to combat the inflationary impact of the mini-budget, as a weakening pound drives up costs of imports. The money markets are pricing a doubling of UK interest rates to more than 5% by next summer.

After the mini-budget, the UK Debt Management Office plans to raise an additional £72bn before next April, raising the financing remit in 2022-23 to £234bn.

"Sterling is in the firing line as traders are turning their backs on all things British," said David Madden, a market analyst at Equiti Capital. "There is a creeping feeling the extra government borrowing that is in the pipeline will severely weigh on the UK economy."

The [FTSE](#) 100 tumbled 2% to a three-month closing low on Friday. So far this year, the index of blue-chip companies has lost 5% – much less than European or US markets – helped by oil companies, and exporters boosted by the weak pound.

“The chancellor’s high-risk strategy could entail a larger FTSE 100 correction before the year is out,” [said Charles Archer, a financial writer at online trading platform IG](#). “As monetary policy tightens, mortgage and debt defaults rise, while investment in growth falls. This could render the mini-budget entirely ineffective.”

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Sterling

Analysis

Pound's plummet underlines schoolboy error by Kwasi Kwarteng

[Larry Elliott](#) Economics editor

Chancellor added to market worries by pledging further tax cuts in full budget planned for later this year

- [Pound hits all-time low against dollar](#)
- [Q&A: what does the pound's slump mean for the UK?](#)
- [Business live updates: sterling plunges](#)

'No comment,' says Kwasi Kwarteng after pound plunges to record low – video

Mon 26 Sep 2022 04.25 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 11.34 EDT

The [savage sell-off in the pound](#) in east Asia overnight was further evidence – should any be needed – that confidence in the new Liz Truss government is rapidly draining away.

Sterling fell to its lowest level against the dollar, and despite an attempt at a rally in early London trading, the likelihood is that parity against the dollar will be tested before long. September tends to be the month for a sterling crisis – and so it has proved again.

Part of the story of the pound's weakness is a function of dollar strength but that does not explain why sterling has fallen so rapidly since the end of last week. There are three UK-related factors behind the fall.

First, once a currency hits the skids it is hard to stop it. Momentum trading took over in the aftermath of Kwasi Kwarteng's mini-budget and it has

proved hard to halt.

The financial markets don't really know how the Bank of England will respond to the events of the past three days

Second, Kwarteng committed a schoolboy error by pledging further tax cuts in a full budget planned for later this year. If the markets are worried about the state of the government's finances and the increase in borrowing needed to fund your plans, it is not the wisest course of action to add to those concerns. Kwarteng's inexperience has been exposed.

Third, the financial markets don't really know how the [Bank of England](#) will respond to the events of the past three days. Threadneedle Street raised interest rates by half a point last Thursday but there has been speculation of an emergency meeting of the Bank's monetary policy committee as early as Monday.

Paul Dales, the chief UK economist at Capital [Economics](#), says a rate rise of one – or even one and a half – percentage points would give the markets some reassurance that the Bank was committed to returning inflation to its 2% target.

While that would look like the Bank passing judgment on Kwarteng's tax cuts, the alternative would be for the governor, [Andrew Bailey](#), to give a strong statement that the MPC will raise rates again at its next meeting in November.

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However, as Dales points out, November looks a long way away in the context of what has become a disorderly rout for the pound. Kwarteng would also need to show the Bank and the Treasury were of one voice by making clear he was committed to financial discipline, which would be seen as a U-turn by the chancellor after his weekend comments.

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Sterling

[Explainer](#)

What does the pound's slump mean for the UK and its consumers?

How the currency crisis affects imports, prices, investors and the Bank of England

- [Pound hits all-time low against dollar](#)
- [Pound's plummet underlines Kwarteng schoolboy error](#)
- [Business live updates: sterling plunges](#)



The pound has plunged to an all-time low against the dollar. Photograph: Dado Ruvić/Reuters

[Phillip Inman](#)
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Mon 26 Sep 2022 03.38 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 13.41 EDT

The pound has hit a record low against the dollar after the sweeping tax cuts announced by the chancellor on Friday. Here we explain why sterling is falling so steeply, and what it means for households and businesses.

What is a currency crisis?

When the pound suddenly begins to lose value against rival currencies in a steep decline. A sudden and sharp drop in the pound creates uncertainty, throwing the plans of UK businesses that import and export goods into disarray. They expected to pay a specific sum for imports and get a certain price for goods and services they sell abroad. All that changes when the currency falls. If the pound is worth less, the cost of importing goods from overseas goes up.

What does it mean for the UK and consumers?

A weaker pound means the cost of goods and services that are imported to the UK are more expensive. That means price rises for UK consumers who buy foreign goods, and it means your money won't go as far if you travel, in this case to countries that use the US dollar.

Oil is one of the key goods Britain imports and it is priced on international commodity markets in dollars. A weak pound will make filling up your car with diesel or petrol more expensive. Gas is also priced in dollars.



A weak pound will make filling up your car with diesel or petrol more expensive. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

The UK also imports more than 50% of its food, so the cost of everything from courgettes to bananas goes up. There will also be pressure on companies that sell electrical goods such as iPhones to increase the retail price. The headline rate of consumer price inflation, which recently dipped slightly to 9.9%, would start to go back up again.

Why is it happening?

International investors appear to have been panicked by the UK government's decision to make sweeping tax cuts, which are to be paid for by higher government borrowing. Households are expected to spend the extra money they have as a result of the tax cuts, increasing the demand for goods and services and driving inflation higher. Kwasi Kwarteng's pledge at the weekend to cut taxes further in the new year has only heightened fears of inflation shooting up again.

Investors are also concerned that the government wants to pay the bill for tax cuts with a huge amount of extra borrowing. Most economists do not believe tax cuts pay for themselves, leaving the UK with higher debts over the long term.

The former chancellor Rishi Sunak had pledged to bring down the annual spending deficit and the UK's overall debt. Now both measures are going in the opposite direction.

Part of the pound's weakness is the strength of the dollar, which has been rising as the US central bank, the [Federal Reserve](#), aggressively rates. The pound sell-off has accelerated, however, since the chancellor's mini-budget on Friday.

What can be done?



What will the Bank of England do after the pound's plunge? Photograph: Thomas Krych/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

The next step is likely to be taken by the [Bank of England](#), which could raise interest rates by more than previously expected. It is possible the Bank might announce an emergency increase – before its next scheduled policy decision on 3 November. Higher interest rates attract savings deposits to the UK and tend to increase the value of the pound. However, they also increase the cost of borrowing for households and businesses.

In the past, governments have sought to reassure markets by announcing how they intend to cut Whitehall spending budgets to balance the books.

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Claudia Roden: 20 of her best recipes from a 50-year career



Roast chicken with couscous, raisin and almond stuffing. Food and prop styling: Polly Webb-Wilson. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Cakes, kofte, couscous and roast chicken are among our favourite dishes from the revered food writer

[Allan Jenkins](#), compiled by [Molly Tait-Hyland](#), recipes by [Claudia Roden](#)
Mon 26 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT

A celebration of perhaps our finest food writer. But how to pick just 20 recipes from a stellar [career of more than 50 years](#). Some choose themselves: definitive chicken soup from *The Book of Jewish Food*; essential orange and almond cake from *A New Book of Middle Eastern Food*. But here, too, are apple latkes, tarte pissaladière, roast chicken with couscous, raisin and almonds. There's white haricot beans with clams from Spain, fish soup with saffron from the south of France, kofte kebab from Turkey. Even a perfect lemon tart from her latest book, *Med*. Just a taster from the wondrous world of Claudia Roden.

Roast chicken with couscous, raisin and almond stuffing (pictured above)

The stuffing has equal star billing with the chicken here

Chicken soup



Chicken soup. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

This classic, comforting soup is at the heart of any traditional Jewish meal

Pan-cooked fish with chermoula



Pan-cooked fish with chermoula. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

The hot, spicy marinade is perfect with every kind of fish – fried, baked, grilled

Vegetable couscous



Vegetable couscous. Photograph: Susan Bell

A classic vegetable dish given extra zing by a spicy Moroccan “jam”

Chicken and onion ‘pies’ with Moroccan flavours



Chicken and onion ‘pies’ with Moroccan flavours. Photograph: Susan Bell

A take on b'stilla, the Moroccan pigeon pie, using chicken and puff pastry

Potatoes with chorizo



Potatoes with chorizo. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

This comforting dish is the taste of Spain's Rioja region in a pan

Kofte kebab with tomato sauce and yoghurt



Kofte kebab with tomato sauce and yoghurt. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

A Turkish classic – well worth the effort of assembling

Birds' tongues – lissan al assfour



Birds' tongues. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

An Egyptian lamb stew with Italian orzo pasta

Roast belly of pork with baked apples



Roast belly of pork with baked apples. Photograph: Jason Lowe

Asturias, in the north of Spain, is the inspiration for this twist on a classic roast

Fish soup with saffron and cream



Fish soup with saffron and cream. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

Saffron adds a touch of luxury to this southern French dish

Red pepper and tomato salad



Red pepper and tomato salad. Photograph: Susan Bell

Adding boiled lemon gives this salad extra oomph

White haricot beans with clams



White haricot beans with clams. Photograph: Jason Lowe

A taste of the Atlantic in this Cantabrian seafood dish

Aubergine fritters with honey



Aubergine fritters with honey. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

A sweet and savoury treat from Córdoba

Pasta with black olive paste



Pasta with black olive paste. Photograph: Jason Lowe

As this dish is strong in flavour it works best as a starter

Tarte pissaladière



Tarte pissaladière. Photograph: Susan Bell

An irresistible tart, sweet with onions and salty with anchovies

Konafa



Konafa. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

A versatile Middle Eastern pastry that can have a variety of fillings

Apple latkes



Apple latkes. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

A French version, from Alsace, made with apples macerated in brandy

Lemon tart



Lemon tart. Photograph: Susan Bell

An intensely lemony dessert cooked to a Parisian recipe

Honey cake – lekach



Honey cake. Photograph: Romas Foord/The Observer

A beautiful cake with a long history

Orange and almond cake



Orange and almond cake. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

A delicious treat with Mediterranean/Middle Eastern origins

Some recipes have been updated by the author

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UK cost of living crisis

Not going out: how the cost of living crisis is destroying young people's social lives

After the curbs of lockdown, many young people are finding themselves stuck at home again – raising fears over loneliness and mental health



‘People feel ashamed to not be able to join in with the kind of social life friends are having.’ Illustration: Jamie Wignall/The Guardian

[Daisy Schofield](#)

Mon 26 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 06.19 EDT

When Beth thinks back to her pre-pandemic life, it feels almost unrecognisable. Between dinner parties, cinema trips, Sunday brunches and takeaways at friends' houses, the 28-year-old NHS nurse from the east Midlands usually had a calendar brimming with plans. That changed starkly with Covid-19 but, just as restrictions eased up, the cost of living crisis

began to bite. Beth's finances have been so squeezed, she sees friends only once or twice a month.

Partly, this is down to the extra shifts Beth has taken to cover her rocketing energy bills and the £530-a-month mortgage on her one-bedroom flat, where she lives alone. But even when she isn't working, she is often forced to turn down invitations, as socialising becomes increasingly unaffordable.

Consequently, friendships have become difficult to navigate, as she has to be a lot more selective about whom she spends time – and money – with. "I try to see those friends that would understand if I just order a starter or cancel last minute due to finances, as it's embarrassing," she says. She worries that less sympathetic friends think she's just making up an excuse for dropping out of plans. "Eventually, the more you say no, the more people stop inviting you to things."

"The one thing that helps in a job like ours is blowing off steam, but I'm now stopping socialising where necessary, whether it be meeting a friend because I have to save my fuel for getting to work or not being able to go out for dinner," she says. "I had to make sacrifices to own my flat and now it's getting harder to keep."

Beth adds that her work has been suffering. "If I felt like I was valued more at work, and that it was allowing me to have proper rest and fun, then I would work more effectively."

The real value of workers' pay in the UK has been falling at the fastest rate for 20 years as wage increases are outstripped by inflation, which has reached a staggering 9.9%. In August, it was reported that the average household's disposable income had dropped by 16.5%. As a result, two in five say they are cutting down on eating out, travelling and socialising outside the home.

Rising fuel costs make it difficult to travel to see friends, particularly for those living outside cities, who may not have access to frequent public transport. On top of this, pubs and restaurants have been increasing their prices, with the average price of a pint rising by more than 7% since 2020.

Beth is not the only one whose once vibrant social life has evaporated. “I’ve had to stop going to my pub quiz every week because I can’t afford the rounds,” says Anna, 33. “I started a new job last September and I’ve not once been able to go for Friday drinks ... I’ve definitely fallen away from my wider friendship circle.”

[Kate Pickett](#), an epidemiologist and [the co-author of The Spirit Level](#), says the fact that people cannot afford to socialise should be a serious cause for concern. “Our connections to one another are an enormous part of our mental and physical health,” she says. “There are long-term studies that show not having friends is as bad for your health as smoking.”

Big celebrations, such as birthdays and weddings, have also become harder to budget for. Beth couldn’t go to her niece’s birthday party because she couldn’t afford the fuel for the journey, and she had to miss the rehearsal dinner before her sister’s wedding because she didn’t have the funds for the hotel. According to a recent survey, almost one-third of Britons have declined wedding invitations because of the cost of living crisis. “My sister was really mad at me,” says Beth. “She couldn’t understand why I said I couldn’t go but, ultimately, it wasn’t affordable.”

For Connor Pope, a 23-year-old freelance photographer, rising costs meant missing out on graduation celebrations this year. “I don’t receive any money from my parents, unlike some of my friends, so I had to decline,” he says. “I have been more selective [with going out] – especially if I know someone will want to spend more money than myself.” Between going through a large part of university in lockdown and staying in to avoid pricey nights out, many young people have had their social lives drastically curtailed.

“We should be really concerned about teenagers and young adults, who had an isolating time through the pandemic and a very different experience of socialisation,” says Pickett. “The normal transition into adulthood is either going to be delayed for them, or it’s not going to happen.”

Dating is another expensive activity that people have been forced to cut back on as inflation takes a toll. “One date can blow a huge hole in the budget, and then they turn out to be completely unsuitable,” says Rachel, a 31-year-old civil servant from Exeter. On top of this, “it’s hard to make a connection

when you are doing mental maths”, she says. Having recently “wasted” £40 on a date buying a couple of rounds of drinks and bar snacks, Rachel is being far more careful. “Guys now have to pass a series of red-flag questions just to get to the first date.” This includes asking which way they lean politically, and their stance on LGBTQ+ – with an emphasis on the T – rights. “It narrows contenders and my spending considerably,” she says.

Usually, Rachel’s budget will account for seeing friends in the week or going on a date – doing both is no longer an option. “I’m at the age where I want to settle down fairly soon,” she says. “Finances do have a big impact on that and it does limit your options. I’m sure there are plenty of lovely people with similar backgrounds and interests to me stuck at home because they too are broke. It is a worry. I have joked with friends that I should just lurk in my local library and ask out whoever picks up an interesting book.”

The cost of living crisis has led to more [people speaking candidly](#) about finances with date partners. “I’ve been dating a lawyer and she kept suggesting meals out and cocktail bars,” says Amit, a 30-year-old teacher from London. “I just had to come clean and say I can’t afford it. We’re now going for a walk in the park for our next date.” Amit isn’t alone in feeling this way, with research showing that nearly half of people would [prefer modest date locations](#) to avoid any pressure or stress about money.

For others who struggle to talk about money, the cost of living crisis has led them to abandon dating altogether. Anna deleted all the dating apps from her phone in January after an unsuccessful date cost her more than £100 in drinks alone. “I could never tell someone I’m a bit skint before I met them,” she says. “I’d be terrified they’d think I was a gold-digger.”

For many, warmer weather over the summer months eased the strain. “Previously, I’d meet friends once or twice a month for a film or theatre, or some other activity, and dinner and the odd drink,” says Mohammad, a 38-year-old IT consultant. “That has changed to picnics in a park, where we each bring home-cooked food, and chip in to buy a cheap bottle of wine.” He says he has also had to adjust how he spends time with friends. Now, he’ll organise to see people as a group to save on the cost of meeting up one-to-one.

But he is concerned about the winter ahead – and not just because inflation is likely to rise. “We all live in small places so it’s hard to have people over,” he says. “I dread the impact it will have on those who are more isolated and introverted.”

With people understandably prioritising food and heating their homes over socialising, loneliness – which was already at epidemic levels before the crisis – is set to get much worse. “It’s important to remember that loneliness is not the same as feeling on your own,” says Pickett. “There might be quite a lot of young people who are unable to leave their family home at this point, and they’re not alone. But they might still be lacking the kind of contact that’s important for them to flourish.”

Feeling unable to speak about financial struggles with friends can also add to this loneliness. Connor, like many people, will usually make up an excuse if he can’t afford to do something. “I would say I’m only upfront with my friends who are in similar situations,” he explains. “Otherwise, it is quite awkward.”

Natasha Silverman, a counsellor with [Relate](#), agrees. “Money is notoriously difficult for people to speak about openly,” she says. “That’s because money worries are connected to lots of complicated feelings and emotions, such as guilt, shame and embarrassment, and feelings of not being good enough. For some people, it goes right to the root of their identity.”

As the crisis continues, she says, some people may find their social circles changing. “A lot of people talk about having ‘fun’ friends that they can have a good time with on an evening out, that might not really have much depth,” says Silverman. “And it might be that those relationships are more likely to fall away.”

Natalie Giles, a 28-year-old from Oxford who claims universal credit, says that instead of going to the pub once a month like she used to, she and her friends each bake a dish to take to each other’s house, which also means they can share the costs of hosting. “I definitely think we’re closer as friends being as open as we are about money,” she says. Maya, a 24-year-old graduate, has been doing car boot sales with friends to make extra cash. “We

can earn some money for stuff we don't use while we spend the day together," she says.

Others, however, will still struggle with peer pressure and social expectations. "There's a huge pressure on us to show we're having fun lives on social media," says Pickett. "People feel ashamed to not be able to join in with the kind of social life friends are having ... their self-worth might be threatened by feeling less well off."

As the cost of living crisis continues to bite, going out will increasingly be seen as a luxury. But it shouldn't be this way. As Pickett puts it: "Socialising is not a frivolous add-on in life – it's how we function and thrive as human beings."

- Some names have been changed.
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[Alan Rickman](#)

‘He got our tortoise a part in Taming of the Shrew’: Alan Rickman remembered by Emma Thompson, Eddie Izzard and more



Iconic villain ... as Hans Gruber in Die Hard. Photograph: AJ Pics/Alamy

Why did Rowan Atkinson infuriate him in Love Actually? Could he have started his own religion? And was Betty the tortoise any good on stage? Stars from Ruby Wax to Richard Curtis remember an acting colossus

Mon 26 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

‘From furnishings to sausages, his taste was impeccable’

Emma Thompson

The most remarkable thing about the first days after Alan died was the number of actors, poets, musicians, playwrights and directors who wanted to express their gratitude for all the help he’d given them. I don’t think I know anyone in this business who has championed more aspiring artists, nor

unerringly perceived so many great ones before they became great. Quite a number said that, latterly, they had been too shy to thank him personally. They had found it hard to approach him. Of all the contradictions in my blissfully contradictory friend, this is perhaps the greatest: this combination of profoundly nurturing and imperturbably distant.

He was not, of course, distant. He was alarmingly present at all times. The inscrutability was partly a protective shield. If anyone did approach him with anything like gratitude, or even just a question, they would be greeted with a depth of sweetness that no one who didn't know him could even guess at. And he was not, of course, unflappable. I could flap him like nobody's business and when I did he was fierce with me and it did me no end of good.

He was generous and challenging. Dangerous and comical. Sexy and androgynous. Virile and peculiar. Temperamental and languid. Fastidious and casual. My list is endless. There was something of the sage about him – and had he had more confidence and been at all corruptible, he could probably have started his own religion. His taste in all things, from sausages to furnishings, appeared to me to be impeccable. The trouble with death is that there is no next. There is only what was and for that I am profoundly and heartbrokenly grateful.



Commitment ... with Emma Thompson in Love Actually. Photograph: Working Title/Allstar

The last thing we did together was change a plug on a standard lamp in his hospital room. The task went the same way as everything we ever did together. I had a go. He told me to try something else. I tried and it didn't work so he had a go. I got impatient and took it from him and tried again and it still wasn't right. We both got slightly irritable. Then he patiently took it all apart again and got the right lead into the right hole. I screwed it in. We complained about how fiddly it was. Then we had a cup of tea. It took us at least half an hour. He said afterwards: "Well, it's a good thing I decided not to be an electrician."

'He suggested me for a David Mamet play'

Eddie Izzard

I first met Alan after a benefit show at the London Palladium in 1994. At that time, I knew and loved his work in Die Hard: the seriousness but lightness of touch. I remember chatting to him after and telling him that I really wanted to do dramatic acting, my first love. He said he didn't think I was crazy, which was nice of him, but we left it at that. Next, I was suddenly told Alan had suggested my name to play opposite Lindsay Duncan in a David Mamet play. It was a wonderful thing for him to do and Lindsay was a fabulous actor to be working with.

Trying to be sinister in the same film as him seemed pointless

Jason Isaacs

Later in 2003, I saw him in New York when I was doing a play. Afterwards, we all went to eat in a restaurant. Alan had started playing Professor Snape from the [Harry Potter](#) films. He portrayed him with an intense and brittle spirit. I asked if Snape continued in future stories. "Well," he said, "the latest book has just come out, Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince." Then he quietly added: "And I – I am the Half-Blood Prince!"

He went on to give classic and heartbreaking performances in the Harry Potter films that will live with us for ever.

'Our tortoise Betty starred in The Taming of the Shrew'

Ruby Wax

My mission in life was to make him laugh and when I did it was better than winning an Oscar. When I hit a comedy nerve, he would fold on to the floor and heave laughing, then he'd make me heave back until we were both on the ground, hysterical.

We had a tortoise called Betty, which was like our adopted child, when we were both performing at Stratford. (Alan played leads, I played seaweed along with Juliet Stevenson.) Alan promised he'd help me get Betty into a show. I had tried to get her into Antony and Cleopatra, telling Peter Brook, the director, in front of Alan, that I'd like to audition Betty for the role of the asp. Alan almost died, because he was playing Antony. I know he was partially upset because Betty would have upstaged him.

In the end, we got Betty on stage during The Taming of the Shrew. Every night, when I'd bring Betty on during a crowd scene, Alan proudly watched from the wings, both of us sick with laughing. He broke my heart by leaving and there isn't a day when I don't remember him.



With us for ever ... as Snape in Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire.
Photograph: Warner Bros/Allstar

'Rowan was taking his time while Alan was acting his socks off'

Richard Curtis

I wanted to cast Alan as the lead in Four Weddings and a Funeral – before we got stuck with Hugh Grant – because he'd been so perfect in a film called Close My Eyes, both tender and funny. So it was a great joy to me when Alan agreed to be in Love Actually. My strongest memory was when we were doing the shopping scene where Rowan Atkinson takes too long wrapping Alan's illicit gift. Rowan was taking his time, doing long, improvisatory takes, even chatting casually to me about ideas – while poor Alan was acting his socks off, in character, angry and impatient, sometimes for 10 straight minutes. It was a great example of true commitment. But also I'm pretty damn sure by the end Alan was actually, quite rightly, extremely angry and extremely impatient.

Another thing about his performance: the most memorable scene is probably Emma Thompson in her bedroom, listening to Joni Mitchell after she's discovered her husband's betrayal. I'm convinced that what makes it twice as strong is the subtlety and truth of Alan's performance with her before that moment. If their scenes hadn't completely captured a proper, long-term, adult marriage – if Alan hadn't been so solid, so cool, so not a person who would fall so far – it wouldn't have all hit so hard. It was an honour to know him and work with him.

'He turned down perfectly OK jobs because they were just OK'

Harriet Walter

One thing Alan couldn't do: he couldn't drive. And that was a blessing because it meant that I could give him a lift every night after The Seagull or The Lucky Chance, the plays we did at the Royal Court. We talked in the car and then he'd ask me into his flat and there I got to know his wife Rima and we'd talk politics and gossip into the early hours over bottles of wine.

In that flat, it struck me that every colour, every piece of furniture, every witty object, had been deliberately chosen and lovingly displayed and prized. Nothing was accidental or superfluous – just as Alan's jobs and his political causes were very deliberately chosen. Long before he was well known, he'd tell me how he had turned down this or that seemingly perfectly

OK job because it was just OK. It was as if he knew that life is short and must be filled only with the things that really matter to you.



Class ... with Lesley Manville in the RSC's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.
Photograph: Donald Cooper/Alamy

'Do what I do, he said during Quidditch – absolutely nothing'

Jason Isaacs

Everything that I did as Lucius Malfoy in the Harry Potter films was down to Alan. When they offered me a part in the second movie, I nearly turned it down because trying to be sinister in the same film as him seemed pointless. In the end, I came up with a Malfoy designed to avoid doomed comparisons with his effortlessly terrifying Snape: Malfoy had long blond hair, a pinched, high voice and as many props as I could hide behind.

In person, though, he put paid to my intimidation on my first day: we were shooting a sequence where we watched and reacted to a Quidditch match. "This is the quaffle," said a props man, waving a tennis ball on a stick. "And now, here come the beaters. Here they are, but the keeper blocks it and, watch out, here's the Gryffindor seeker. And ... he falls ... but ... HE'S GOT THE GOLDEN SNITCH!"

"I'm so sorry, Alan," I said. "But what's going on? What should I do?"

“No idea.” he whispered. “Do what I do. Absolutely fucking nothing.”

Who knew! The man behind the most distinctive and contemptuous drawl in theatrical history was actually completely accessible, anarchically funny, utterly in the moment on and off screen, and a consumer of music far, far more contemporary than my best-of-the-70s tastes – a point he made mercilessly in the makeup chair as my cheese-fest blasted out.

He was also passionately committed to making things better, whether through his many unwavering political and charitable commitments or by having, like me, busloads of kids visit the set every time he worked. It will continue to be one of the highlights of my professional life to have shared the screen, and the odd terrible gag, with him.

- Madly, Deeply: The Alan Rickman Diaries is published by Canongate on 4 October at £25. To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.
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I'm going to smash Strictly!' Jayde Adams on love, death, fat-shaming and disco dancing

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2022.09.26 - Opinion

- Hilary Mantel knew how corrosive deference to monarchy can be – and why we must resist
- The Kwarteng plan puts at risk the very poorest people in the UK – and growth
- No one in physics dares say so, but the race to invent new particles is pointless
- I shout at plants and browbeat the vacuum cleaner. I tell the dishwasher I hate it. What's wrong with me?

OpinionMonarchy

Hilary Mantel knew how corrosive deference to monarchy can be – and why we must resist

[Nesrine Malik](#)



Let us mark this year of royal death and accession by challenging the notion that a man with a crown is more important than everyone else



Illustration: Nathalie Lees

Mon 26 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 08.10 EDT

The sight of the Ka'bah, the black cube around which worshippers circle in pilgrimage, is overwhelming. The first time I visited Mecca, taken there by my parents as a teenager and expecting that the visit would be a chore to be sulked through, the sheer size of the site, from area to ceiling height, made it difficult to maintain a cool distance.

It wasn't just the dimensions. The details all combined to make the scene hum with an otherworldly energy. The floors were a white, gleaming marble, cool to the touch of bare feet. The lights seemed to bathe the site from the very sky. The sound of prayer streamed through every corridor and corner as if the voices of the imams had a supernatural reach. I felt small.

Then there were the people. So many people. All dressed in white. All moving in unison, rising, falling, circumambulating, chanting with one voice. The impact was almost hallucinogenic. The effect was not only that you were at the feet of a higher power, but that there was a swirling, rhythmic, natural order to that power – that the choreographed ritual of worship was a cosmic act.

I was moved not because some spiritual presence had made itself felt, but because architecture, technology, history and fable had all come together to produce that effect. Powerful physical structures had been raised, and powerful metaphysical structures built upon them. It was the microphones positioned strategically and recessed away from sight, the football stadium lights, the marble and black and gold. It was, above all else, the tremendous amount of money that had been poured into the pilgrimage site to create the impression of spiritual grandeur, so that the crowds flocking there could continue to come and feel small beneath it.

I felt an echo of that diminishment-by-design when watching the Queen's funeral – and I'm sure it will be felt again with King Charles's coronation next year. In a year that will now be marked out by the death and crowning of a monarch, that same combination of ritual, resources and performance will further establish the royal family as a guild that is of much greater importance than us mere citizens. When a crown is placed on a man's head and the nation asks God to save him, it reinforces the idea that royalty is a towering, natural phenomenon connected to a world that is far beyond us as individuals.

The [late Hilary Mantel](#) knew better than most how the appropriation of deference to sanctified individuals and religious structures helps to maintain the power of elites. The timing of her death last week only amplified the loss, gripped as the nation was at the time after the Queen's passing by a singular narrative of mourning.

Mantel's main body of work was occupied with revealing the legacy of over-empowered and unaccountable monarchs, and the courtiers and cardinals who serve their whims, be they sexual or political. She understood that historical mysticism about royalty helped us to make sense of the very modern trend of poring over the royal family's every move in the tabloid press. We can revere it and also kid ourselves that it is known and accessible to us by deciding who plays what in the cast: who is the comely princess, the Jezebel, the beloved but wayward son. At once "one superhuman", Mantel said, "and yet less than human".

I'm not suggesting that it is all a trick of the light, and there is no genuine affection for the Queen and support for the royal family. But dominant

institutions understand very well that it can feel good to feel small. That standing on a cliff and feeling reduced by the forces of nature and the aeons that are their minutes can be exhilarating and therapeutic. That in us there is a basic human impulse to feel that you are part of something larger, intricately connected and over your head. And they understand, too, that this can be co-opted. Because there is comfort in knowing that there are people who know better, who *are* better, and who in their beneficence have provided us with the spaces and rituals through which to get to know and commune with them.

There is another illusion: that of a nation galvanised by its royal family rather than marshalled towards it. The Queen's funeral, which many saw as a colossal moment of national collective mourning, looked instead like a longing for togetherness that has very few other outlets.

When funding for youth centres from local councils evaporates, libraries are [sold to property developers](#), and support for the elderly is slashed so that a carer can barely find the time to meet your basic needs much less take you for a walk, the result is atomised, lonely, fractured communities.

It is a comforting idea that we are one nation united beneath our betters. If you feel differently, you will feel completely in a minority and completely out of touch with the servile consensus of politicians and the media, who have either written you out of the story or sometimes, in the case of recent [anti-monarchy protests](#), physically ejected you from it. It is impossible to tell how many others feel the same as you, because the British media and the British government and [opposition](#) have overwhelmingly decided that your views don't matter, and that the royal family is too sacred to be violated by the blasphemy of neutrality.

The success of this monoculture and the fabrication of consent is passed off (or misread) as people only wanting a sense of unity and investment in a common noble idea. The salt in the wound is that it is precisely because there are no other avenues for people to feel that way on their own terms – because those avenues have been dismantled by the state – that they are so easily shepherded towards the safe, non-disruptive spaces the state and the elite approve of. While your [rights to peaceful protest](#) may be a little more

limited these days, you do have the right to join the queue for the lying in state and the coronation.

Often I feel a sort of homesickness for a time – not a physical place – when I could allow myself to be carried along and feel these moments of belonging, no matter how manufactured they were. There is a profound sense of loss in not being able to do so. But the Queen's elaborate death rites, and a new King whom we will be told to celebrate, are stark and unsettling reminders that these rituals establish a national account of ourselves that we do not create, merely consume. As Thomas Cromwell says to Thomas More in Mantel's Wolf Hall, a lie is no less a lie because it is a thousand years old.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionMini-budget 2022

The Kwarteng plan puts at risk the very poorest people in the UK – and growth

Mohamed El-Erian



The government's policy approach risks stagflation. It is making history for all the wrong reasons

- Mohamed A El-Erian was chair of Barack Obama's Global Development Council



‘The frontloading of tax cuts that favour the rich risks undermining economic activity and prosperity.’ The chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, delivers his mini-budget on 23 September. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Mon 26 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 05.44 EDT

Friday, the day of [Kwasi Kwarteng’s “fiscal event”](#), was a day for the economic and financial history books, a day of eye-popping one-day moves in UK financial assets that should be of interest to more than traders, economists and economic historians. If sustained, the [depreciation of the currency](#) and the surge in sovereign borrowing costs will have important broad-based implications for the economic outlook. And once again, it is the most vulnerable segments of the population who are most at risk.

What was a generally difficult day for global markets was also a brutal day for UK financial assets. The 2% [slump in stocks](#) was accompanied by a 3% weakening in the value of sterling against the US dollar, bringing the total depreciation this year to around 20% and to a level [last seen 37 years ago](#). Most historic of all was the [surge in yields](#) on UK government bonds, including the largest ever single-day rise in the five-year yield.

While consistent with what was happening elsewhere in global markets – the continuing asset price adjustments to the trifecta of declining growth, tighter financial conditions, and changing economic and financial globalisation with significant geopolitical risks – the moves in UK markets were turbocharged by the specific reaction to the government’s “fiscal event”.

The more traders digested the size and shape of the “[big bang](#)” policy announcement, the more they worried about the second-round economic and financial consequences – and the faster they rushed to reflect them in market pricing, resulting not just in large but also disorderly moves.

Traders did not need to wait for the exact specification of the overall cost of the package to decide that investors, both domestic and international, would insist on higher returns to fund hundreds of billions of unfunded tax cuts and energy price stabilisation. Nor did they require much time to figure out that this would force the Bank of England to be even more aggressive in [hiking interest rates](#). An inter-meeting emergency rate rise is no longer out of the question.

The resulting macro policy configuration would be equivalent to a car being driven with one foot on the brake and the other, “pedal to the metal”, on the accelerator – a method that increases the risk of both economic and market accidents. With that comes the realisation of a higher risk of a prolonged period of [stagflation](#) (that is, low/negative growth and high inflation), notwithstanding the government’s desire to enhance energy supplies, to put money in people’s pockets and, more generally, improve the functioning of the supply side of the economy.

In such a world, households would face the highly unsettling combination of more uncertain income streams, higher borrowing costs and a further erosion in their purchasing power due to greater imported inflation. Businesses already struggling to keep afloat in the midst of an energy and cost of living crisis would risk being tipped into bankruptcy. At the other end of the corporate resiliency curve, those with robust balance sheets, and who are able to invest in expanding their operations, would spend more time reflecting on the wisdom of doing so at a time when higher costs are accompanied with greater uncertainty about future demand.

This is a world in which the compensating and well-intended surge in economic growth being targeted by the government becomes a lot harder to deliver, especially in the face of strong and increasing global headwinds. Rather than being paid for by rapid high growth, the frontloading of [tax cuts that favour the rich](#) risks undermining economic activity and prosperity. The government would face the slippery slope of inadvertently resorting to higher inflation over the medium term to deal with surging debt and debt service. The likelihood of additional industrial action would increase as people sought to protect their already pressured living standards.

No wonder there are already so many comparisons to the [1972 Anthony Barber budget](#), which ended up fuelling inflation, a recession and a sterling and balance-of-payments crisis.

Fortunately, this is not about the UK facing a 1970s type of economic and financial turmoil that would have the government go, cap in hand, to the International Monetary Fund, as in 1976. The structure of the UK economy and its finances is a lot more resilient this time around. Nor is it about giving up on growth as a critical objective of economic policy. On the contrary: high, inclusive and sustainable growth is the answer to many of our economic, financial, social and institutional challenges. It is an economic and social necessity.

This is about calibrating the design and sequencing of the policy approach in a manner that ensures that the pro-growth and pro-productivity measures are not nullified by counterproductive large handouts to the rich, an overly frontloaded approach and imprudent defiance of global economic realities.

It is about much more targeted fiscal support, and paying greater attention to bottom-up measures that enhance productivity and sustainably deliver high and more equitable growth. It is about the government and the Bank of England working better together to deliver both economic growth and financial stability. And it is about the UK coordinating with the US in particular to enhance international policy cooperation and thereby help lessen the global headwinds to domestic prosperity.

Friday was historic for UK markets. Yet the numbers show us only part of the picture. Behind these numbers is the risk of even greater hardships for

millions of families. Indeed, it would be a tragedy if Friday were to end up marking the intensification of a stagflation that hits the most vulnerable segments of the population especially hard and renders the important objective of inclusive, robust growth even more elusive.

- Mohamed El-Erian is president of Queens' College Cambridge. He was chair of President Obama's Global Development Council (2012-17) and is author of *The Only Game in Town*

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OpinionParticle physics

No one in physics dares say so, but the race to invent new particles is pointless

[Sabine Hossenfelder](#)



In private, many physicists admit they do not believe the particles they are paid to search for exist – they do it because their colleagues are doing it



‘The Large Hadron Collider (LHC) hasn’t seen any of the particles theoretical physicists have hypothesised, even though many were confident it would.’ A technician works on the LHC, near Geneva, Switzerland.
Photograph: Laurent Gilliéron/AP

Mon 26 Sep 2022 04.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 13.44 EDT

Imagine you go to a zoology conference. The first speaker talks about her 3D model of a 12-legged purple spider that lives in the Arctic. There’s no evidence it exists, she admits, but it’s a testable hypothesis, and she argues that a mission should be sent off to search the Arctic for spiders.

The second speaker has a model for a flying earthworm, but it flies only in caves. There’s no evidence for that either, but he petitions to search the world’s caves. The third one has a model for octopuses on Mars. It’s testable, he stresses.

Kudos to zoologists, I’ve never heard of such a conference. But almost every particle physics conference has sessions just like this, except they do it with more maths. It has become common among physicists to invent new particles for which there is no evidence, publish papers about them, write more papers about these particles’ properties, and demand the hypothesis be

experimentally tested. Many of these tests have actually been done, and more are being commissioned as we speak. It is wasting time and money.

Since the 1980s, physicists have invented an entire particle zoo, whose inhabitants carry names like preons, sfermions, dyons, magnetic monopoles, simps, wimps, wimpzillas, axions, flaxions, erebons, accelerons, cornucopions, giant magnons, maximons, macros, wisps, fips, branons, skyrmions, chameleons, cuscutons, planckons and sterile neutrinos, to mention just a few. We even had a (luckily short-lived) fad of “unparticles”.

All experiments looking for those particles have come back empty-handed, in particular those that have looked for particles that make up dark matter, a type of matter that supposedly fills the universe and makes itself noticeable by its gravitational pull. However, we do not know that dark matter is indeed made of particles; and even if it is, to explain astrophysical observations one does not need to know details of the particles’ behaviour. The [Large Hadron Collider](#) (LHC) hasn’t seen any of those particles either, even though, before its launch, many theoretical physicists were confident it would see at least a few.

Talk to particle physicists in private, and many of them will admit they do not actually believe those particles exist. They justify their work by claiming that it is good practice, or that every once in a while one of them accidentally comes up with an idea that is useful for something else. An army of typewriting monkeys may also sometimes produce a useful sentence. But is this a good strategy?

Experimental particle physicists know of the problem, and try to distance themselves from what their colleagues in theory development do. At the same time, they profit from it, because all those hypothetical particles are used in grant proposals to justify experiments. And so the experimentalists keep their mouths shut, too. This leaves people like me, who have left the field – I now work in astrophysics – as the only ones able and willing to criticise the situation.

There are many factors that have contributed to this sad decline of particle physics. Partly the problem is social: most people who work in the field (I used to be one of them) genuinely believe that inventing particles is good

procedure because it's what they have learned, and what all their colleagues are doing.

But I believe the biggest contributor to this trend is a misunderstanding of [Karl Popper's philosophy](#) of science, which, to make a long story short, demands that a good scientific idea has to be falsifiable. Particle physicists seem to have misconstrued this to mean that any falsifiable idea is also good science.

In the past, predictions for new particles were correct only when adding them solved a problem with the existing theories. For example, the currently accepted theory of elementary particles – the [Standard Model](#) – doesn't require new particles; it works just fine the way it is. The Higgs boson, on the other hand, was required to solve a problem. The antiparticles that Paul Dirac predicted were likewise necessary to solve a problem, and so were the neutrinos that were predicted by Wolfgang Pauli. The modern new particles don't solve any problems.

In some cases, the new particles' task is to make a theory more aesthetically appealing, but in many cases their purpose is to fit statistical anomalies. Each time an anomaly is reported, particle physicists will quickly write hundreds of papers about how new particles allegedly explain the observation. This behaviour is so common they even have a name for it: “ambulance-chasing”, after the anecdotal strategy of lawyers to follow ambulances in the hope of finding new clients.

Ambulance-chasing is a good strategy to further one's career in particle physics. Most of those papers pass peer review and get published because they are not technically wrong. And since ambulance-chasers cite each other's papers, they can each rack up hundreds of citations quickly. But it's a bad strategy for scientific progress. After the anomaly has disappeared, those papers will become irrelevant.

This procedure of inventing particles and then ruling them out has been going on so long that there are thousands of tenured professors with research groups who make a living from this. It has become generally accepted practice in the physics community. No one even questions whether it makes sense. At least not in public.

I believe there are breakthroughs waiting to be made in the foundations of physics; the world needs technological advances more than ever before, and now is not the time to idle around inventing particles, arguing that even a blind chicken sometimes finds a grain. As a former particle physicist, it saddens me to see that the field has become a factory for useless academic papers.

- Sabine Hossenfelder is a physicist at the Frankfurt Institute for Advanced Studies, Germany. She is author of Existential Physics: A Scientist's Guide to Life's Biggest Questions and creator of the YouTube Channel Science Without the Gobbledygook.
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[Opinion](#)[Life and style](#)

I shout at plants and browbeat the vacuum cleaner. I tell the dishwasher I hate it. What's wrong with me?

[Emma Beddington](#)



I've started talking to household objects – and none of us are enjoying what we're hearing



'Plenty of people talk to plants, but not as rudely as me.' Photograph: Kseniya Ovchinnikova/Getty Images. Posed by model

Mon 26 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 13.17 EDT

There has been a flurry of debate about [whether people do or do not have an inner monologue](#). What none of us has, really, is an adequate vocabulary to explain what goes on in our heads, or convey it to others. We can't grasp how others experience their inner lives, just as we can't know what they see or hear.

Currently, though, my inner monologue is striving to bridge that gap by becoming an outer monologue. I have spent longer than usual – on balance, probably too long – alone recently, as various members of my family went away, and I have started vocalising the stuff that used to stay in my head. Talking to yourself isn't necessarily bad (one study found it [might help you find your keys](#), sort of, but talking to objects is revealing troubling things about me.

I'm nice enough when I talk to the dog, even though he is deaf and stonily indifferent. But when I moved on to inanimate things, I was alarmed to discover I am horrible to them. Plenty of people talk to plants, but not as rudely as me. "I'm very disappointed in you," I lectured a sickly sunflower

recently, then barked: “Come on, that’s pathetic!” at the raspberries, like a boorish gym teacher. The pest-ravaged brassicas came in for some egregious victim-blaming: “You must be doing *something* to attract them,” I said suspiciously. “Everyone else is fine and look at you!”

Indoors, I found myself addressing – well, bullying – the robot vacuum cleaner. “What the hell are you doing under the sofa? What would it take for you to do your actual job?” The useless dishwasher regularly gets a hissed: “I hate you and everything you stand for,” and last week I shouted at the shower: “I can’t stand it: you need to stop dripping or I’ll rip you off the wall.”

I thought I was the mild-mannered sort who would apologise to a bollard for walking into it, so this naked nastiness has shaken me to my foundations. What can the neighbours think? I’m taking some time for properly silent reflection.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist
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2022.09.26 - Around the world

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Rights and freedomIran

Death toll grows in Iran as Mahsa Amini protests continue for 10th night

At least 41 people have died in unrest sparked by young woman's death as judiciary warns of 'decisive action without leniency'



A police car on fire in Bojnurd, Iran, on Thursday. Protests have continued for a 10th night after the death of Mahsa Amini. Photograph: Reuters

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Sun 25 Sep 2022 21.23 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 10.06 EDT

Iranians have taken to the streets for a 10th consecutive night to protest against the death of Mahsa Amini in defiance of a warning from the judiciary.

Officially at least 41 people have died since the unrest began, mostly protesters but including members of the security forces, but sources say the real figure is higher.

Norway-based group Iran Human Rights (IHR) said on Sunday evening that the death toll was at least 57, but noted that ongoing internet blackouts were making it increasingly difficult to confirm fatalities in a context where the women-led protests have spread to scores of cities.

Images circulated by IHR showed protesters on the streets of Tehran shouting “death to the dictator”, purportedly after nightfall on Sunday.

Echoing [a warning the previous day by the president, Ebrahim Raisi](#), the judiciary chief, Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei, on Sunday “emphasised the

need for decisive action without leniency” against the core instigators of the “riots”, the judiciary’s Mizan Online website said.

Hundreds of demonstrators, reformist activists and journalists have been arrested amid the mostly night-time demonstrations [since unrest first broke out](#) after 22-year-old Amini’s death in police custody on 16 September. Amini was detained by the morality police for not wearing a hijab properly.

Iran’s largest protests in almost three years have seen security forces fire live rounds, while protesters have hurled rocks, torched police cars and set fire to state buildings.

Some female protesters have removed and burned their hijabs in the rallies and cut off their hair, some dancing near large bonfires to the applause of crowds that have chanted “zan, zendegi, azadi” or “woman, life, freedom”.

Web monitor NetBlocks noted “rolling blackouts” and “widespread internet platform restrictions”, with WhatsApp, Instagram and Skype having already been blocked. This followed older bans on Facebook, Twitter, TikTok and Telegram.

Speaking on behalf of the European Union, its foreign policy chief, Josep Borrell, said “the widespread and disproportionate use of force against nonviolent protesters is unjustifiable and unacceptable”. He condemned the internet restrictions as “blatantly violating freedom of expression”.

Iran has summoned the British and Norwegian ambassadors over what it called interference and hostile media coverage, while the foreign minister, Hossein Amirabdollahian, also criticised US support for “rioters”.

On Sunday, [the US national security adviser, Jake Sullivan, said](#) the US had taken “tangible steps” to sanction the morality police.

The UK was blamed for the “hostile character” of London-based Farsi media. The UK foreign ministry said it championed media freedom and condemned Iran’s “crackdown on protesters, journalists and internet freedom”.

Norway's envoy was summoned to explain the "interventionist stance" of its parliament's speaker, Tehran-born Masud Gharahkhani, who has expressed support for the protesters.

"If my parents had not made the choice to flee in 1987, I would have been one of those fighting in the streets with my life on the line," Gharahkhani tweeted on Sunday.

Pro-government rallies were also held on Sunday, with the main event taking place in central Tehran.

But one of the main teachers unions on Sunday called for teachers and students to stage a national strike on Monday and Wednesday.

Protests abroad have been held in solidarity with Iranian women in Athens, Berlin, Brussels, Istanbul, Madrid, New York and Paris, among other cities.

Iranian Oscar-winning director Asghar Farhadi called on activists and artists around the world to support the protesters, who he said were "looking for simple and yet fundamental rights that the state has denied them for years".

"I deeply respect their struggle for freedom and the right to choose their own destiny despite all the brutality they are subjected to," Farhadi said in a post on Instagram.

With Agence France-Presse and Reuters

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[Japan](#)

Shinzo Abe funeral: world figures fly in to political storm over state service for Japan former PM

More than 50 past and present leaders to gather amid domestic opposition to ceremony fuelled by links between Abe's party and Unification Church



Shinzo Abe in 2013. The state funeral for the assassinated former Japanese prime minister is to be held in Tokyo on Tuesday. Photograph: Toru Yamanaka/AFP/Getty Images

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Mon 26 Sep 2022 01.56 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 10.06 EDT

The US vice-president, Kamala Harris, the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, and British foreign secretary, James Cleverly, will be among foreign dignitaries arriving in [Japan](#) to attend a state funeral for the assassinated

former prime minister, Shinzo Abe, despite strong public opposition to the ceremony.

They will be among about 700 people from overseas, including 50 former and current leaders, who are expected to attend the funeral in Tokyo on Tuesday, almost three months after Abe was [shot dead](#) while making a campaign speech.

Public opinion was split when, six days after Abe's death, the prime minister, Fumio Kishida, said his predecessor would be afforded a state funeral.

But opposition has intensified in recent weeks, amid a torrent of revelations about ties between Abe's Liberal Democratic party (LDP) – now led by Kishida – and the Unification church.

The suspect in Abe's shooting on 8 July, Tetsuya Yamagami, has told investigators he targeted the politician because of his ties to the church, whose members are commonly known as Moonies.

Yamagami reportedly said he harboured a two-decade grudge against the church after his mother, a member, donated a huge sum of money to the organisation and [bankrupted his family](#).

Abe was not a member of the church, but sent a congratulatory [video message](#) to a church-affiliated event last autumn.

Founded in South Korea in 1954 by the self-proclaimed messiah [Sun Myung Moon](#), the church was encouraged to establish a presence in Japan by Abe's grandfather and postwar prime minister, Nobusuke Kishi, as a counter to communism and trade unionism. The organisation, known for its mass weddings, has been accused of pressuring believers into making donations they can't afford – claims it has denied.

After Abe's shooting exposed serious errors by officers responsible for protecting him, organisers have planned strict security measures near the funeral venue.

Roads around the Budokan will be closed and airspace will be restricted from Monday until Wednesday. Tens of thousands of police officers, including about 2,500 from outside the capital, have been deployed and sniffer dogs have been patrolling major railway stations and Haneda airport in recent days.

Japanese media revelations that other members of the LDP – and a much smaller number from other parties – had attended church events or sought help from their members has dominated the domestic news for weeks. A survey conducted by the party found that 179 of its 379 lawmakers had interacted with the church.

But a call by Kishida for party MPs to cut their ties to the church has done little to quell growing anger at plans to spend an estimated ¥1.65bn (\$12m) on the funeral, most of which will go on security and hosting foreign delegations.

Kishida has seen his approval ratings plummet, while opinion polls show a majority of people oppose Tuesday's ceremony. According to a recent poll by the Mainichi Shimbun newspaper, 62% of respondents said they objected to the ceremony. Some said Abe was not worthy of the honour, while others cited the cost.

Holding a state funeral was a “big miscalculation” by Kishida, according to Tomoaki Iwai, professor emeritus at Nihon University.

“When he originally decided on the funeral there were a lot of people in favour, but then there were the reports of Abe’s involvement with the Unification church, and so opposition grew.”

While Abe’s economic and security policies received largely positive reviews abroad, he continues to be a divisive figure at home.

Critics say he dragged the country to the right, treated the constitution with contempt and presided over an administration mired in cronyism and sleaze. Abe was [implicated in major scandals](#) but went on to become Japan’s

longest-serving leader shortly before he resigned, citing poor health, in 2020.

The 4,300 funeral guests will include the Australian prime minister, Anthony Albanese as well as three of his predecessors, Singapore's prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, and the European Council president, Charles Michel.

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[Belgium](#)

Four arrested over alleged plot to kidnap Belgian justice minister

Vincent Van Quickenborne says rule of law ‘will never fold to violence’ after Dutch nationals detained in the Netherlands



Belgium's justice minister Vincent Van Quickenborne. Photograph: REX/Shutterstock

Agence France-Presse

Sun 25 Sep 2022 22.40 EDT Last modified on Sun 25 Sep 2022 22.48 EDT

Police in the [Netherlands](#) have arrested four suspects over what Belgium's justice minister described as a plan to kidnap him.

Vincent Van Quickenborne, who is also the mayor of the city of Kortrijk in western Flanders, appeared to blame a “drug mafia” in a video message run by state broadcaster RTBF.

Addressing an audience at a local ball, he said that in a phone call on Thursday, a federal prosecutor had warned him of a kidnap plan targeting him.

On Saturday Van Quickenborne said: “I will be placed under strict security for the time being and will not be able to participate in some planned activities in the coming days. It’s not pleasant, but understandable.

“Let me be clear: the people behind this are achieving the opposite of what they aim for. It strengthens me in the belief that we need to keep fighting. The criminals feel trapped. That feeling is right. Because we will continue to fight organised crime, with more manpower and resources than before.

“In our democratic rule of law we will never fold to violence. Never.”

Federal prosecutors said on Saturday that police had beefed up security for Van Quickenborne, citing a serious “threat”. They said three people had been detained in the Netherlands and that Belgian authorities were seeking their extradition.

A spokesman for the Dutch prosecutor’s office in the Hague said the trio, all Dutch, were aged 20, 29 and 48. On Sunday, a judicial source said a fourth suspect had been arrested in the Netherlands.

Belgian prime minister Alexander De Croo tweeted on Saturday that the threat to Quickenborne was “totally unacceptable. But it must be clear: we will not be intimidated by anyone. The work continues.”

Following a report in the Flemish daily Het Laatste Nieuws, the source confirmed to AFP that an automatic weapon had been found in a vehicle spotted near the minister’s home in Kortrijk. Belgian news outlet VRT reported that the vehicle contained Kalashnikovs, other firearms and two bottles of petrol.

The prosecutor’s office said it had been informed last week of a “possible threat”, which led to an investigation. It would not provide further details.

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[Surfing](#)

Australian surfer Chris Davidson dies after punch outside pub

Man charged after 45 year-old former champion found unconscious on ground on NSW mid-north coast



Former surfing champion Australian Chris Davidson in Hawaii in 2009. Davidson has died after being punched outside a pub at South West Rocks in NSW. Photograph: Kelly Cestari/World Surf League/Getty Images

Australian Associated Press

Mon 26 Sep 2022 01.12 EDT First published on Sun 25 Sep 2022 19.34 EDT

A man has faced court over the death of the former surfing champion Chris Davidson who died after being punched outside a pub on the [New South Wales](#) mid-north coast.

Police said they were called to Sportsmans Way at South West Rocks just after 11pm on Saturday following reports a man had been punched in the

face, fallen and hit his head on the pavement.

Officers found 45-year-old Davidson unconscious on the ground. He was treated at the scene by ambulance paramedics before being taken to Kempsey hospital, where he died a short time later.

Police arrested a 42-year-old man at home in South West Rocks early on Sunday and charged him with assault causing death.

He was refused bail and appeared in Port Macquarie bail court on Sunday.

Davidson, who grew up surfing at North Narrabeen on Sydney's northern beaches, competed on the world professional surfing tour in 2010 and 2011.

Surfing Australia says the sport's community is mourning the loss of the man affectionately known as "Davo".

"Davo was an incredibly talented surfer and a true individual in our sport and community," the organisation said on Facebook.

"Our thoughts go out to his two children, friends and family at this time."

Eleven-time World Surf League champion Kelly Slater, who Davidson beat in two consecutive heats at Bells Beach as a 19-year-old wildcard entrant in 1996, called him one of the most naturally talented surfers he ever knew.

"Lost another soldier yesterday. #RipChrisDavo. Had many a good battle with this guy," Slater said on Instagram.

Davidson, who grew up surfing at North Narrabeen on Sydney's northern beaches, competed on the World Surf League championship tour in 2010 and 2011.

His best result was a tie for third at the 2010 Portugal event, when he was narrowly defeated by Slater, who won the event.

Australian surfer Chris Davidson ties for third in 2010 Rip Curl Pro event – video

“I felt like I surfed pretty well against Kelly, but when he goes and pulls a 360 Alley-Oop on a nothing wave, it’s hard to fight back,” Davidson told surfing magazine Tracks at the time.

Friend Nathan Hedge told Nine’s Today show Davidson’s death was tragic, and that Davidson was a unique character, kind-hearted, charismatic and the life of the party.

“He just wanted to make sure you had a good time as well,” he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2022/sep/26/australian-surfer-chris-davidson-dies-after-punch-outside-pub>

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Super Bowl

‘A generational talent’: Rihanna to perform Super Bowl half-time show

Singer declined to play the show in 2019, in solidarity with Colin Kaepernick. Announcing the news, Jay-Z praised her for surpassing expectations ‘at every turn’



Rihanna will perform the Super Bowl half-time show in February 2023.
Photograph: Angela Weiss/AFP/Getty Images

Associated Press

Sun 25 Sep 2022 21.14 EDT Last modified on Mon 26 Sep 2022 14.52 EDT

Rihanna will perform the coveted [Super Bowl](#) half-time show in February 2023, after declining an invitation in 2019 Super Bowl out of solidarity with Colin Kaepernick.

The announcement was made on Sunday by the NFL. [Rihanna](#) posted an image on Instagram of an outstretched arm holding an NFL football.

“Rihanna is a generational talent, a woman of humble beginnings who has surpassed expectations at every turn,” said Jay-Z in a statement; the hip hop artist’s entertainment agency, Roc Nation, is an executive producer of the half-time show. “A person born on the small island of Barbados who became one of the most prominent artists ever. Self-made in business and entertainment.”

The Super Bowl will take place at State Farm Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, on 12 February. After years of Pepsi’s sponsorship, the upcoming half-time show will be sponsored by Apple Music.

Rihanna earlier said she turned down a similar opportunity for the 2019 Super Bowl, which was ultimately headlined by Maroon 5. At the time, many artists voiced support for Kaepernick, the former San Francisco 49ers quarterback who protested police brutality against Black people and minorities by kneeling during the national anthem in 2016.

“I couldn’t dare do that. For what?” Rihanna told Vogue in 2019. “Who gains from that? Not my people. I just couldn’t be a sellout. I couldn’t be an enabler. There’s things within that organization that I do not agree with at all, and I was not about to go and be of service to them in any way,” she said of the league.

Kaepernick accused the NFL of colluding to keep him out of the league, in a case that was eventually settled in early 2019.

In 2019, the NFL partnered with Roc Nation (which manages Rihanna) to help pick performers for the Super Bowl, and strategize the half-time show. [The widely acclaimed 2022 show](#) featured Dr. Dre, Snoop Dogg, Eminem, Kendrick Lamar and Mary J. Blige.

With sales of more than 250 million records worldwide, Rihanna ranks as one of the bestselling female artists ever. Her last album was 2016’s Anti; Rihanna last performed publicly at the Grammy awards in 2018.

In the years since, Rihanna has occasionally teased her music return. Earlier this year, she had her first child with the rapper ASAP Rocky.

This article was amended on 26 September 2022. An earlier version described Rihanna as a “US singer”; she is Barbadian.

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- [Live UK warned ‘utterly irresponsible’ policy could drive pound below dollar and euro parity](#)
- [Kwasi Kwarteng Chancellor set for crisis meeting with bankers](#)
- [Mortgages 'Next 10 days crucial' in how much rates rise](#)
- [Business Bumper City bonuses expected from takeover frenzy](#)

Business liveBusiness

UK warned ‘significant’ rate rise is coming, as calls for mini-budget U-turn rise - as it happened

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[Financial sector](#)

Kwarteng tells City bosses his economic plan ‘will work’

Chancellor seeks to calm investors as government bonds continue to collapse

- [Business live: markets brace for further volatility](#)



The Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng meeting representatives of the Financial Services industry at the Treasury. Photograph: Simon Walker/HM Treasury

[Kalyeena Makortoff](#) and [Julia Kollewe](#)

Tue 27 Sep 2022 09.30 EDTFirst published on Tue 27 Sep 2022 03.26 EDT

Kwasi Kwarteng has insisted in a meeting with Britain’s top City bosses on Tuesday that the government’s economic strategy “will work”, despite a market meltdown that sent sterling to record lows a day earlier.

The chancellor issued the assurances during a planned meeting with asset managers, pension funds and insurers from big firms, including Aviva, Legal and General, Royal London, BlackRock, Fidelity and JP Morgan.

While the meeting was meant to drum up excitement for further deregulation, Kwarteng also took the opportunity to try to calm top investors after government bonds yields surged and the pound plunged in reaction to his tax-cutting mini-budget unveiled on Friday.

“We are confident in our long-term strategy to drive economic growth through tax cuts and supply-side reform,” Kwarteng told bosses, according to a Treasury readout of the meeting. “I’m confident that with our growth plan and the upcoming medium-term fiscal plan – with close cooperation with the Bank [of England] – our approach will work.”

The meeting comes days after the chancellor unveiled sweeping tax cuts in a City-friendly mini-budget, that involved scrapping the EU banker bonus cap and the top 45% rate of income tax, and cutting stamp duty to prop up the housing market. He also trailed “an ambitious package of regulatory reforms” to be unveiled this autumn.

However, the announcement sent the pound and government bonds plunging, as the scale of the tax cuts, which overwhelmingly benefit the better-off, shocked markets and prompted worries about how they would be paid for.

The chancellor assured City bosses and investors on Tuesday that the Treasury was “working closely together” with the Bank of England – which has been under pressure from the government to control inflation linked to surging energy costs related to the war in Ukraine.

Kwarteng, who said last week he would hold bi-weekly meetings with Bailey, was meeting with the governor “every day now”.

Both the chancellor and the financial secretary, Andrew Griffiths, are said to have reiterated support for the independence of financial regulators. “We’re

going to keep these institutions as they are but make them more effective and more nimble,” Kwarteng said.

However, that government is still planning to give itself intervention powers through the financial services and markets bill, which would allow it to “[amend or revoke” regulations](#) where there are matters of significant public interest”

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Chancellor [@KwasiKwarteng](#) met asset management & insurance firms where he reiterated the Government's commitment to fiscal sustainability.

Next month, he will set out a package of regulatory reforms for the UK's financial services sector to drive growth & incentivise investment. pic.twitter.com/GvKZcC1g49

— HM Treasury (@hmtreasury) [September 27, 2022](#)

Unusually, the Office for Budget Responsibility, the government's fiscal watchdog, was not asked to provide forecasts for how the package would affect government borrowing and economic growth in coming years. Kwarteng has requested that the OBR sets out a full forecast alongside the medium-term fiscal plan, on 23 November.

Kwarteng told City bosses that the government was “committed to fiscal discipline and would not reopen the spending review. “We have a medium

term fiscal plan coming on 23 November, alongside an OBR forecast. That will be a credible plan to get debt to GDP falling," he said.

'No comment,' says Kwasi Kwarteng after pound plunges to record low – video

But markets remain in turmoil. Jim Reid, a strategist at Deutsche Bank, said: "When it comes to the last 24 hours, UK assets have remained at the eye of the storm as the negative reaction to the government's mini-budget on Friday continued. The country's government bonds were completely routed for a second day."

Markets are braced for more volatility. [The pound hit an all-time low of about \\$1.035](#) on Monday morning and is now trading at about \$1.08, down 7% this month but up on the day on Tuesday.

[UK government borrowing costs](#) are on course for their biggest monthly rise on record, [going back to the 1950s](#), as international faith in Britain is battered by Kwarteng's borrowing binge to fund tax cuts. The yield on the 10-year benchmark gilt, or government bond, has jumped to 4.1%, from 3.1% before the mini-budget. Yields (the return on a bond) move up when prices go down.

Mortgage rates have also increased and [nearly 300 mortgage deals have been pulled](#), with economists predicting interest rates could rise to 6% by next summer. Banking and insurance stocks have also taken a hammering.

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Mortgage rates

UK mortgages: ‘next 10 days crucial’ in how much rates rise

Building society chief responds after stock market fell and pound plunged in wake of Kwarteng’s mini-budget



Experts predict that a typical two-year fixed-rate mortgage could go up from £850 a month to almost £1,500. Photograph: Matt Cardy/Getty Images

[Julia Kollewe](#)

Tue 27 Sep 2022 05.22 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Sep 2022 05.58 EDT

Mortgage rates in the UK will rise further in coming days, and the next 10 days in financial markets will be crucial in determining how high they will go, according to the head of Principality building society.

Experts are predicting that a typical two-year fix, which has cost borrowers £850 a month, could go up to almost £1,500 a month, after Kwasi [Kwarteng’s mini-budget on Friday](#) shocked markets and sent the pound

plunging, as well as triggering a government bond sell-off. Sterling [hit a record low of about \\$1.035](#) on Monday morning and has recovered slightly to \$1.08, but is still down 7% this month.

Julie-Ann Haines, the chief executive of the building society, which has 500,000 members, said: “This £6,000-a-year difference [in mortgage costs] is really dependent on whether the markets over the next two weeks continue to think that the Bank of England base rate will get to 6%.”

The pound’s slide, which makes crude oil, priced in dollars, and imported goods more expensive, threatens to push UK inflation, already at 9.9%, even higher and is expected to force the Bank of England to raise interest rates to 5% or 6% by next summer. It lifted its base rate [by a half a percentage point to 2.25%](#) the day before the mini-budget.

Haines told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “What we do know is over 2022 we’ve seen very significant increases. Even so far, what we’ve seen passed on in mortgage rates is resulting in about an extra £3,000 to £4,000 a year for an average £250,000 mortgage. What the markets do in the next 10 days is really quite important in determining how big the impact is.”

UK government bonds, known as gilts, are on track for their worst month on record, [going back to the 1950s](#). The sell-off has pushed the cost of borrowing for 10 years up to 4.1%, from 3.1% before the mini-budget. The slump in gilt prices has forced several mortgage providers, including Virgin Money and Skipton building society, to pull deals.

Haines said Principality had a “a slightly smaller range than normal” and, as a small lender, was affected by others pulling mortgage deals, but that the mutual was working hard to help customers. She stressed that building societies and other lenders needed to be able to make a margin to survive as businesses.

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“We no doubt see [mortgage] rates increase over the next 10 days,” she said. “If we can start to get a grip on what’s happening in the markets through building confidence from the Bank of England and the government then you are hoping that mortgage lenders will come back into the market.”

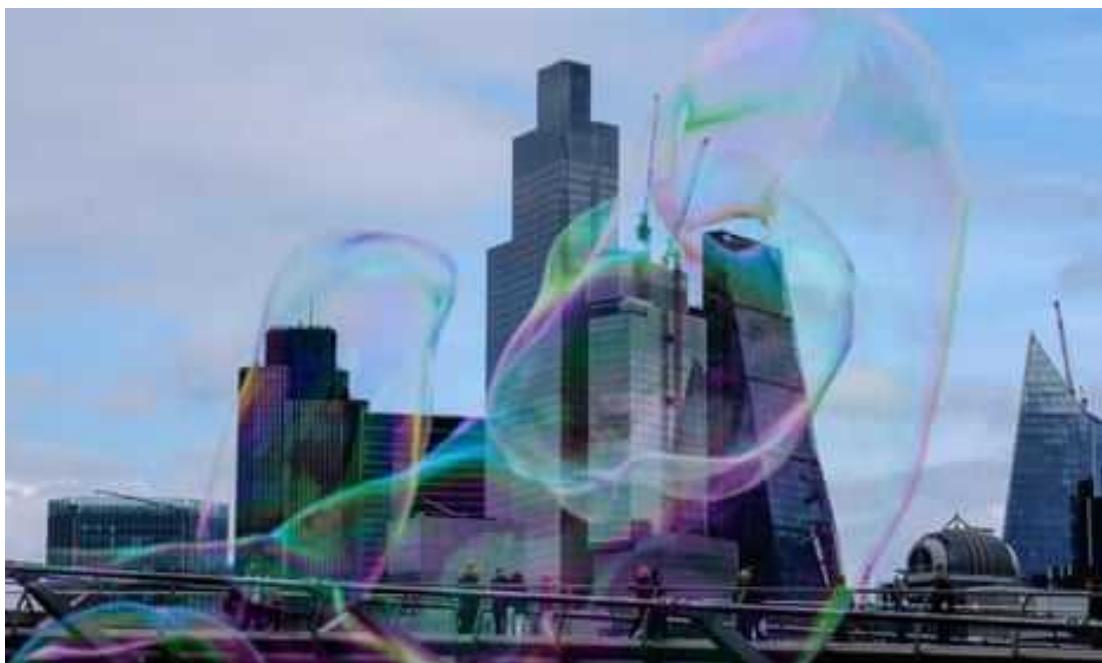
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Executive pay and bonuses

Bumper City bonuses expected from takeover frenzy after pound hits record low

UK firms now temptingly cheaper, with a ‘wave of bids’ from overseas buyers meaning payouts for bankers



The hedge fund tycoon Crispin Odey said the pound’s fall ‘obviously’ increased the likelihood of takeovers. Photograph: Carl Court/Getty Images

[Alex Lawson](#)

Tue 27 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

Bankers could rake in bumper bonuses from a “wave of bids” by overseas buyers for UK businesses made temptingly cheaper as a result of the plunge in the pound against the dollar. A fresh frenzy of merger and acquisition activity would mean a ramp-up in payouts for City dealmakers.

Sterling fell by nearly 5% at one point on Monday to \$1.0327, its lowest since Britain went decimal in 1971. The currency has fallen by more than a fifth against the dollar this year.

Richard Bernstein, the founder of the asset management firm Crystal Amber, said: “We can expect to see a wave of bids from overseas buyers for UK businesses. Their profits obviously won’t be worth as much in dollars, so asset-backed situations and brands are most valuable.”

In February, [British bankers collected some of the biggest bonuses since before the 2008 financial crisis](#) partly on the back of a cascade of takeovers from private equity firms and US corporate buyers triggered by the value of UK stocks plummeting because of Covid lockdowns.

Banks’ advisory fees were expected to have taken a knock this year after Russia’s invasion of Ukraine shook financial markets, notably denting confidence in stock market listings. However, Liz Truss’s decision to [remove the cap on bonuses](#) and the anticipated increase in takeover activity could provide a fillip for British bankers.

Bernstein said: “If the deals emerge, bankers could see much bigger bonuses, which feels hard to justify right now, when so many people are suffering from the cost of living crisis.”

The hedge fund tycoon Crispin Odey said the pound’s fall “obviously” increased the likelihood of takeovers. “We’re in the game where [the value of] assets remains up there, even if in real terms they’re going down,” he added.

Odey said the performance of UK stock markets relative to those in the US, where the tech-focused Nasdaq has slumped this year, showed British firms had retained their value.

City sources said consumer brands exposed to the impact of rising import costs and interest rates, as well the cost of living crisis, could be particularly vulnerable to a takeover. “Brands like Halfords, which has seen its share price fall from 350p to 145p this year, or Ocado, which has also seen a big

slump since its highs last year and has long been rumoured as a target for Amazon, look like prime candidates,” said one fund manager.

City advisers may also be hired from companies looking to shore up their defences against a hostile takeover from an overseas buyer. Robey Warshaw, [the boutique advisory firm that employs the former chancellor George Osborne](#), has landed several such mandates over the last year, including from BT and Sainsbury’s.

Both established British brands have overseas tycoons on their share register who some view as unpredictable: the French billionaire Patrick Drahi has become the majority shareholder in BT, while the Czech investor Daniel Křetínský holds stock in Sainsbury’s.

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“There’s now a strong case for a government wealth fund to acquire holdings in UK businesses at cheap prices at these depressed levels and then be prepared to bank profits for the UK taxpayer in the coming years,” Bernstein added.

However, buyers may be deterred by the National Security and Investment Act 2021, [which came into force this year](#) and is designed to closely scrutinise and intervene in foreign takeovers of key UK assets.

Peel Hunt analysts said takeover activity had cooled in August from its peak in June, but that “demand from overseas bidders has remained firm”.

Nearly half the new offers for listed companies were in the technology sector, including the Canadian company Open Tech Corporation's £1.8bn deal for the UK software firm Micro Focus International and the US private equity firm Thomas Bravo's early-stage talks to buy cybersecurity specialist Darktrace.

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‘I still blow my own mind!’ Uri Geller on spoon-bending, showbiz and the museum he built to his own life

[Elias Visontay](#)



Uri Geller with 2,000 bent spoons on a Cadillac at his museum.

The self-styled psychic spent five years turning a Tel Aviv soap factory into a fitting home for his collection of celebrity photos, diamond-studded walking sticks and, of course, wonky cutlery. He gives our writer a tour



[@EliasVisontay](#)

Tue 27 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Sep 2022 05.18 EDT

‘I will bombard you with interesting material,’ Uri Geller warns me on WhatsApp, before giving me a tour of his new museum. I expected a healthy amount of exaggeration from the self-described psychic, who has for decades claimed he can bend spoons with his mind. If anything, he is underselling the experience. A 16m (53ft) curved steel spoon – certified the world’s biggest by [Guinness World Records](#) in 2019 – sits in front of the Uri Geller Museum in the port city of Jaffa, at Tel Aviv’s southern edge. The giant spoon is a taste of what is to come.

Geller left behind the marble floors and silk-lined walls of his mansion in Berkshire in 2015 and moved back to his native [Israel](#) with his wife, Hannah. Soon after resettling, he spent \$6m (£5.5m) on an Ottoman-era soap factory, and more than five years renovating it and turning it into a museum.

The seemingly adrenaline-fuelled Geller, 75, runs every tour, answers every email sent to the museum – about 300 a day, he says – and, save for his

brother-in-law, is the sole employee.



The planet's biggest steel spoon, 16m long and certified by Guinness World Records.

Geller guides pre-arranged tour groups seven days a week but, to save money on security guards, does not accept walk-ins. At present, tours run for about 90 minutes. He guffaws when I ask if he makes money from the museum: “Come on, really? At 50 shekels [£13] per person? What do you think?” He adds that he donates any profits to a children’s heart charity.

Walking through the door, it becomes apparent that Geller has broken with the tradition of documenting his life in a linear manner. Rather, he tells his story through his possessions. He seems to have crammed every object he has ever owned into the cavernous gallery, and regales visitors with tales of how he acquired them.

Have you ever seen a walking stick studded in diamonds? Well, I got one from the king of Nigeria

“What makes this museum work is, it’s so eclectic,” Geller enthuses. “Have you ever seen a crystal that is 55m years old? No. Have you ever seen a

walking stick studded in diamonds? No. Well, I got one from the king of Nigeria. So that's what makes this museum tick."

Effervescent as he is, he can be frustrating to interview. Asked why he chose to return to Israel – his grown-up son and daughter live in the UK and the US respectively – Geller replies: "I believe in every Israeli's heart, if they leave Israel, there is some kind of burning desire to someday come back. I said to Hannah: 'Let's go back to Israel.' And, look, there is Lewis Hamilton's cap that he signed for me ..."



The Uri Geller Museum in Tel Aviv.

Visitors learn not just about his spoon-bending exploits and his friendships with celebrities and world leaders, but also about Geller's art of inserting himself into the centre of every story.

While images of Geller smiling with Michael Jackson and Salvador Dalí attest to genuine friendship, there are plenty who might be surprised to find pictures of themselves on these walls, such as Barack Obama, Bill Clinton and Nelson Mandela. Or Diego Maradona and Lionel Messi, who are pictured above their football kits, which Geller has also collected. Even the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi gets a mention.

Despite being the curator of his own museum, Geller cringes when he explains some of the photographs of himself with celebrities from his youth. “I was on an ego trip. I was after fame and fortune,” he admits. “I had chutzpah and I walked over to famous people and I said: ‘Here, I’m going to bend a spoon for you.’”



Geller shows off the tattoo on his arm – he bends it if fans on the street ask him to bend a spoon.

He claims to have bent more than a million spoons in his lifetime. It is impossible to stand at any point in the museum and not spot a spoon. In places, there are holes in the floor with piles of spoons bursting out of them.

These days, he has a tattoo of a spoon on his elbow so he can bend it if he is stopped by a fan in the street, but at the museum he gives an actual spoon-bending demonstration on every tour. So, in the hours preceding mine, I go to a store and pick out a sturdy-looking, restaurant-grade stainless steel spoon.

I had read that the secret to Geller’s trick is that he expertly distracts the viewer while he physically pressures the metal, so it appears to melt as he begins his performative rubbing of the weak spot he has created.

As I prepare to focus and hand the spoon to Geller, I am instantly distracted by a backward step he takes on to a platform. I lose sight of the spoon for all of two seconds – and from this point, I am putty in his hands. He holds the spoon by the bowl and rubs the neck. I could swear the handle looks ever so slightly bent, but he says that is because he has already started to bend it with his mind. Within seconds, the handle begins to curve backwards. He places it on a metal frame on the museum floor, and it bends even further. It's an impressive show – and frustratingly hard to argue with.



Geller spent more than five years and £5.5m restoring the old soap factory that is now his museum.

Geller has spent years concocting headline-generating capers that often fall flat, such as his vow to use the power of his mind to [help Scotland beat England](#) in their Euro 2020 group match, and to [stop Brexit](#). Recently, he even promised to use his [psychic powers to prevent the Russian leader, Vladimir Putin](#), from launching a nuclear strike.

Visitors should not expect to learn much about these stunts at the museum. They will see the folder containing the CIA study testing his psychic abilities, but will not be able to read the results. Nor will they learn about the work of the late magician and sceptic [James Randi, debunking](#) Geller's

claimed skills, or the Geller-inspired [Bent Spoon award](#), from the Australian Sceptics organisation.

So what is the purpose of his museum? “People say I did this for my legacy. Nonsense. I did this because a real-estate agent took me here and opened the rusted blue door, and I thought it was a great storage place,” he says. He describes himself as a hoarder. “I get a kick out of it – I’m inspired by seeing people astonished by my things.”

“People are forgotten very quickly … I certainly won’t be here in 20 years,” he says. “Someday, probably, I’ll hire an actor – they will learn my stories and speak and dress like me.”

Geller says he expects to do occasional shows and television work. He also lectures up-and-coming magicians, not about the secrets of his craft, but about how he has “managed to gain this longevity that I’m still relevant”.

“It’s crazy,” he says. “I still blow my own mind as to how I managed to instil spoon-bending into world culture.”

[*The Uri Geller Museum in Tel Aviv is open to groups for pre-booked tours*](#)

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/sep/27/i-still-blow-my-own-mind-uri-geller-on-spoon-bending-showbiz-and-the-museum-he-built-to-his-own-life>

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[Property](#)

From the £25,000 wreck to the £25m home with an indoor pool: what three house sales tell us about modern Britain



From left: the houses in Easington Colliery, County Durham; Didcot, Oxfordshire; and Belgravia, London Composite: Christopher Thomond, Jill Mead, Ryan Prince/The Guardian

Thousands of homes are sold each day across the country, and each has its own story, from the drug- and crime-ridden streets of a former mining town to the ever more bizarre demands of the super-rich

[Simon Usborne](#)

Tue 27 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 28 Sep 2022 03.51 EDT

Statistics tend to define the way we think about property. As a nation, we [buy and sell](#) more than 100,000 homes a month – more than 3,000 a day. House prices [went up](#) 7.8% in the year to June 2022, taking the average property value in the UK to £286,397. The [average deposit](#) for first-time buyers is now about £75,000. People aged over 65, who represent less than a quarter of the population, [own almost half](#) of England's housing equity.

But behind the numbers, each property transaction is a story with a cast of generally anxious characters. I set out to find properties worth £25,000, £250,000 and £25m – and speak to everyone involved in each sale and purchase. Taken together, the stories of three very different houses offer a snapshot of an industry that shapes all our lives and communities.

£25,000 – Easington Colliery, County Durham

‘When I tell my friends the prices of the properties I’m selling, they can’t believe places like this exist’

The house at the bottom of a street in Easington Colliery is in a sorry state. The windows have been boarded up, the front door padlocked shut. A rusting skip waits to be collected on the pavement. Inside, broken glass covers the carpets. Even the bannisters have been ripped out. “Requires modernisation”, the online listing had said.

A couple of weeks before my visit in August, I watch six people bid for the three-bedroom house in an online auction. Russell Taylor, the managing director of Taylor James Auctions in Birmingham, says it is unlikely that any of them has even been to Easington Colliery, a coastal former mining town between Sunderland and Hartlepool.

After 22 bids made over a few hours, the house sells for £27,000 – slightly higher than the £25,000 Taylor had predicted. “She was overjoyed,” he says of the buyer, a beauty salon owner from the Midlands (who prefers not to talk to me). The auctioneer says he sells more than 100 homes a year at about £25,000, the majority of them in County Durham, which was once the country’s leading producer of coal. He works in a rarely scrutinised sector of the market, where homes can cost less than cars, and rental yields can seem hard to resist. “When I tell my friends some of the values of the properties I’m selling, they can’t believe places like this exist,” Taylor says.



The boarded-up end-terrace house. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

The street is one of Easington Colliery’s A streets (their names all starting with the letter A) of terrace miners’ cottages. They were laid out in rows off Seaside Lane, a high street that was extended east of the old village of Easington after the pit was sunk in 1899. There are clusters of B and C streets, too, each built around the site of the former colliery.

Christine Wood lives a few doors up from the empty house. Her home of more than 40 years is immaculate. A painting of a pride of lions hangs above the mantelpiece, which supports porcelain figurines of siamese cats. Wood, who is 76, keeps her late husband’s miner’s lamp on a dresser. She grew up

in Easington, where her father was also a miner. “It was lovely here back then,” she says. “All the miners were working and everybody cared about each other. Everyone looked after the houses and everything was clean.” She can’t remember if their rent was £2 a week or a month.

As many as 2,500 miners worked here for decades. There were two schools, a cinema and a brass band. Easington was such an archetypal north-eastern colliery that the A streets served as the location for the 2000 film *Billy Elliot*. Yet the backdrop for the film – the 1984-85 miners’ strike – was the beginning of the end for the pit, starting a spiral of neglect that is still playing out on the street.

The colliery gates shut in 1993. Today, a miners’ cage lift stands as a monument on cliffs overlooking the North Sea. Mining families were offered the chance to buy their homes for £3,000. The Woods stayed put. “But anybody who could get out did get out,” says David Boyes, a driving instructor and Labour councillor for Easington Colliery. “And that left the houses prey to unscrupulous landlords.”

Boyes, who is 59 and the grandson of a miner, says several terraces have been demolished, including the streets that appeared in *Billy Elliot*. Other houses were sold off in lots. Taylor says landlords are now a mix of businesspeople with several properties and sometimes naive opportunists. None of them, including a Nigerian oil executive living in the US, are keen to talk. “We’ve got landlords living in Dubai, in Ireland – all over,” Boyes adds. “It’s all a bit mercenary.”

Graham (not his real name), an IT consultant from Surrey, bought the empty house more than 15 years ago as part of a batch of houses across the north-east. “It was the worst decision I ever made,” he says.

The birth of the buy-to-let mortgage in 1996 had triggered a boom, as amateurs took advantage of cheap borrowing, high rental yields and soaring property prices. Many saw property as a smarter bet than a pension. “If you had a reasonable income, you were able to borrow quite a lot with not very much scrutiny,” Graham recalls.

New landlords flocked to former mining towns. Auctions, which are standard at this level of the market, make it easy, Taylor says. “The highest bidder exchanges contracts on the day, and generally you’ll have completed within 20 working days,” he says. Spend another couple of thousand on a cheap refurbishment and find a lettings agent and you could very quickly be renting out a house for £350 a month.

But the symptoms of social deprivation are plain to see. Unemployment and crime levels are high. Wood, who has lived alone since her husband died in 2015, had to call the police after rocks were thrown at her windows. A man who answers the door next to the empty house describes the area as being “like Beirut”. He adds: “There are three problems in this area – no work, nothing going on, and drugs.”

Boyes says the town now has about 70 heroin users registered for treatment. He says many tenants flit between houses, moving on as rent demands and utility bills start to pile up. “We know for a fact that somebody’s had a leaflet in Durham prison saying if you need a house, come to Easington because it’s so cheap,” he says.



Screengrab of a YouTube video showing the interior of the Easington Colliery house. Photograph: YouTube

A cycle of vandalism and vanishing tenants meant Graham collected rent for about five months in the 15 years he owned the house. “About five years ago I just decided not to spend any more money on it,” he says. He sold the house at a loss, having spent thousands on refurbishments and repairs.

Graham, who has made money on his other properties, is keen to defend landlords. “I always took the approach that if you provide good homes for people, then it’s a public service,” he says. “There are a lot of shitty landlords out there, and I’ve never wanted to be that.”

Boyes is bracing for winter as the cost of living crisis deepens. Demand at the local food bank has gone up by 350% so far this year, he says. “We’re going to protect people the best way we can.” The council has invested in more CCTV cameras and this year introduced a selective licensing scheme, which legally requires landlords to maintain standards of homes and tenants.

A community spirit still binds Easington Colliery. Last year, hundreds of villagers marched down Seaside Lane in memory of 83 men who died in a pit explosion in 1951. Most are buried in Easington Colliery cemetery, which sits next to what used to be known as the Withering Hope allotments. “Mining heritage is embedded in this community and we’re determined not to lose it,” Boyes says.

On the street, Christine Wood is waiting to see who will move into the house on the corner. She sees little evidence of the old spirit as she goes to bed alone, fearing the crime on her doorstep. She has endured extraordinary loss: her mother and brother died in a motorbike crash when she was 12. Her son died by suicide when he was 29. She has lost her husband – and her community. She would move but her own house isn’t worth much more than £25,000, which wouldn’t buy her a place anywhere else, or even pay rent for long. She says her faith is all she has left. “I do still believe God is going to step in and put the Earth right,” she says. In her lifetime? “I hope so.”

£250,000 – Didcot, Oxfordshire

‘I looked at this plain red-brick house with a tiny garden and thought: how can this be worth a quarter of a million pounds?’

When Penny Cooke stepped on to the property ladder in her 20s, she remembers it being pretty easy. She had been leafing through the local paper when she spotted some flats being built in Didcot, the Oxfordshire town where she was born and lived. It was around 1980, and she bought her flat for “about £30,000”. [Average UK property prices](#) were then about £20,000. [Average wages](#) amounted to about £4,000 a year. So the average worker could buy the average house for about five times their salary.

“I also bought the flat on a 110% mortgage, so all my moving fees were covered and I didn’t even need a deposit,” says Cooke. Her first job was at a milk bottling plant in Didcot, which [was named](#) a few years ago as, statistically speaking, the most average town in England.

Cooke, who is now 63, continued up the housing ladder. In 2002, she bought a modest red-brick semi on a cul-de-sac in Didcot that is part of a sprawling estate built on farmland during the 70s. Many of its roads have aspirational names on a royal theme: Buckingham Close; Sandringham Road; Jubilee Way.

Cooke loved the small two-bedroom house, where she lived alone, latterly with her greyhound, Honour. She added a small conservatory. But the pandemic, among other things, shifted her priorities. It was time to leave Didcot for a different pace of life on the Hebridean island of Mull.

Warren Copping, a local estate agent at Hodson’s, came to value the house last year. Cooke, who now works as a remote personal assistant, was stunned to learn it had doubled in price in less than 20 years. “I looked at this plain red-brick house with a tiny garden in Didcot and thought: ‘How can this be worth a quarter of a million pounds?’” she tells me from her new home.

Yet, at the time, £250,000 was the average house price in the UK (it has since risen to above £280,000). Average wages, meanwhile, are now a little above £30,000. So the average worker must now pay almost 10 times their salary for the average house. “I’d hate to be trying to get on the property ladder today,” says Cooke.



Michael Harkness and Carla Martinez with Amaya, at their new house in Didcot. Photograph: Sam Frost/The Guardian

The house also seemed expensive to Michael Harkness and Carla Martinez, who are both 29. But after sinking more money in rent than they would care to calculate since they met in 2013, the couple were desperate to buy. At one point they had been paying £1,050 a month for a one-bed flat in Brentwood, Essex – and then not much less for a room in a shared house on the edge of Reading. “It just felt a bit pointless,” Martinez says

Harkness, who is a civil engineer, was working night shifts on the motorways to try to save up. Martinez, who grew up in a modest flat in Barcelona, was doing agency shifts on top of her full-time job as an NHS care assistant. The stakes then got even higher; after getting married last year, the couple had a baby, Amaya, in June.

Almost half of first-time buyers rely on the “bank of Mum and Dad”, [according to recent analysis](#) by the estate agent Savills. “We have this absurd situation where parents are lending money to kids who can’t afford the prices the parents’ mates are charging for their homes,” says Henry Pryor, a veteran estate agent and property expert.

Beyond funds for a new fridge, neither Harkness nor Martinez had access to family money. A mortgage adviser set their maximum price at £275,000, just under the £282,000 average for first-time buyers in 2021, according to [analysis by Barclays](#). They applied for a government help-to-buy Isa (now discontinued), which would give them an extra £3,000 towards a house worth up to £250,000 – if they could save up to £12,000 themselves.

Harkness started online searches for two-bedroom homes with good transport links not far from his workplace in Wokingham, Berkshire. Cooke's house ticked lots of boxes, with a spare room upstairs for Amaya and space in the conservatory for a desk. They quickly made an offer.

The Isa helped with the deposit, which the couple managed to negotiate down to £20,000 – almost a third of the UK average for first-time buyers. Their mortgage payments of £840 a month are only a little higher than their previous rent. They also escaped some of the effects of soaring inflation on mortgage deals, which are now making life even tougher for first-time buyers. “Had we waited even a couple of months, it would have been a real struggle,” Harkness says. Martinez was gleeful when she got the keys. “It felt like such a big thing to have our own place.”

While it’s harder than ever to get a foot on the ladder, Copping says demand in Didcot has actually risen among first-time buyers this year, partly due to a pandemic-related exodus from London. Buy-to-let landlords have also been less active in the town. Selling to young couples rather than landlords involves a lot more work, Copping says. “But we get real satisfaction from it. They’ll forget us but we won’t forget them.”

The couple made some modest improvements (it helps that Harkness is handy) and bought a cheap barbecue for the tiny garden. Sitting in their small living room in late July, five-week-old Amaya asleep on Martinez’s lap, they are aware that they are ahead of the game. Their friends are still mainly paying ratcheting rents for rooms in shared houses, with no obvious way out. Others are leaving the south-east to move to cheaper areas in Scotland and south Wales, aware that in some cases they will unlikely be able to afford to return. “It’s really hard,” says Martinez.

The couple are now trying to make friends in Didcot, where they are a 20-minute walk from the high street and train station. But they feel lucky, and are naturally positive. “You have to go for what you can get and make lemonade out of lemons,” Harkness says.

£25m – Belgravia, London

‘If I were to say that refrigerated bathroom cabinets were becoming standard now, you might think I’m a little crazy’

You won’t find anything so vulgar as a “for sale” sign outside a grand house on a coveted square in Belgravia. But the owner of the property, a Scandinavian businesswoman who declined to talk but kindly let me look around, certainly wants to sell it. Just don’t even think about offering her anything less than £25m.

I’m greeted at the triple-locked front door by [Simon Deen](#), the estate agent tasked with finding a buyer for the Grade II-listed 19th-century house. Six floors rise from the basement in a layer cake of gleaming stucco.

Deen offers me a Mini Magnum from an enormous freezer a few days after the marketing launch. It had been a hot evening, and the ice-creams had felt like a nice touch. At this level of the London “super-prime” market of £10m-plus properties, houses become brands, with their own social media accounts and expensively produced digital content. Or they’re quietly sold “off-market” – the seller’s preference in about half of such sales, Deen says.



Yours for £25m – or more ... Photograph: Ryan Prince/The Guardian

Either way, London's super-prime market is buoyant. Relaxing travel restrictions and a weak pound have helped it return towards its 2015 peak, about the time the then mayor Boris Johnson boasted at a real estate conference in Mayfair: "London is to the billionaire as the jungles of Sumatra are to the orangutan. We are their natural habitat."

There were 155 sales above £10m in the capital in the year to April 2022 – the highest number for six years, the estate agent Knight Frank [reported in July](#). Forty-six of these transactions were above £20m. And after a slight cooling prompted by tougher planning, higher taxes, Brexit and the pandemic, foreign buyers are back in force, accounting for [80% of the latest sales](#) (if not the Russians, although Deen says they have not been very active for years).

The leafy squares and avenues of Belgravia, which border Kensington and Chelsea, are at the heart of super-prime London. This particular house has always been home to the very rich, including naval commanders and sons of baronets.

To the casual viewer not in possession of a spare £25m (the asking price is actually £27m at the time of writing), the 10-bedroom house looks to be in

excellent condition. The marble floors and stone fireplaces are buffed, the chandeliers sparkle and the basement swimming pool shimmers under a giant mural featuring a Greek temple and cedar trees.

But no major work has been completed here since the late 1990s, and Deen knows that any prospective buyer will want to bring it up to the standards of the 21st-century super-rich. He persuaded his client to wait for almost a year so that he could commission designs and get planning permission for a total refurbishment.

The owner is abroad when I visit, and personal effects have largely been stripped away, bar a few family photos and a bedside copy of Melinda Gates's memoir, which Malala Yousafzai described as "an urgent manifesto for an equal society". In each room, computer-generated images of the new scheme stand on easels. There'll be a new wine cellar and a hammam, and the existing gym and cinema will switch places. There will be air-conditioning throughout and eight suites as finely finished as those of a five-star hotel. Deen estimates the work would cost at least £6m to complete.

Graham Harris, the man behind the designs, is a founding partner at SHH Architecture and Interior Design, the go-to firm for the super-rich doer-upper. His other work has included a vast [mansion on Belgrave Square](#) that at one point had an asking price of £125m (its basement swimming pool turns into a ballroom at the flick of a switch). He also masterminded the restoration of Athlone House, [a neo-gothic pile on the edge of Hampstead Heath](#) that, even in its former derelict state, cost the Russian billionaire Mikhail Fridman £65m to buy in 2016. (Harris had finished the job long before Fridman was sanctioned [after Russia's invasion of Ukraine](#).)



A computer-generated image of the proposed informal dining area/orangery.
Photograph: Simon Deen Real Estate

Harris, who is 59 and set up his firm in 1992, says his job is to stay ahead of the mores of his “uber-prime” clients. “So if I were to say to you that refrigerated bathroom cabinets were becoming standard now, you might look at me and think I’m a little crazy,” he says. “But if you’ve got your Crème de la Mer tubs of moisturising cream at £150 a pop [for 30ml, or £1,780 for the 500ml tub], where are you going to keep them?” Harris has also recently completed several gin rooms, a 26-car basement garage and what he claims to be the largest private walk-in humidor in Europe.

This house is small by his standards at 9,000 sq ft, which is more than 10 times the UK average, but less than a quarter of the size of his biggest projects. “I always say to my clients that you can live very comfortably with 6,000 sq ft,” Harris says. “Beyond that, you’re going to kind of lose yourself.”

Deen, who is 41 and remembers drawing floor plans of his own modest home while growing up in north London, is aware that he operates in a world with a tricky reputation. Until money laundering laws tightened in 2017, buyers could hide behind offshore companies registered in tax havens. Pockets of super-prime London became stuccoed vaults for wealth of not

always impeccable origin, the homes themselves often being left empty. But today, Deen says: “I know who buyers are, where they live and that the funds are legitimate ... Apart from anything else, my clients want to know who they’re selling to because no one wants an issue down the line.”

Harris, who grew up in Leeds, where his father was a developer of leisure centres, says he thinks long and hard before taking on a client. “We still have a moral compass,” he says. He is hoping that whoever buys the house will proceed with his designs. Deen says interest has been high. He has a lot riding on the sale; while he is tight-lipped about his cut, a typical 2% commission would leave him with £500,000 or more. As we leave, and lock the door behind us before the next viewing, the estate agent rushes to wipe up a drip of ice-cream that has fallen on to an immaculate slab of marble flooring.

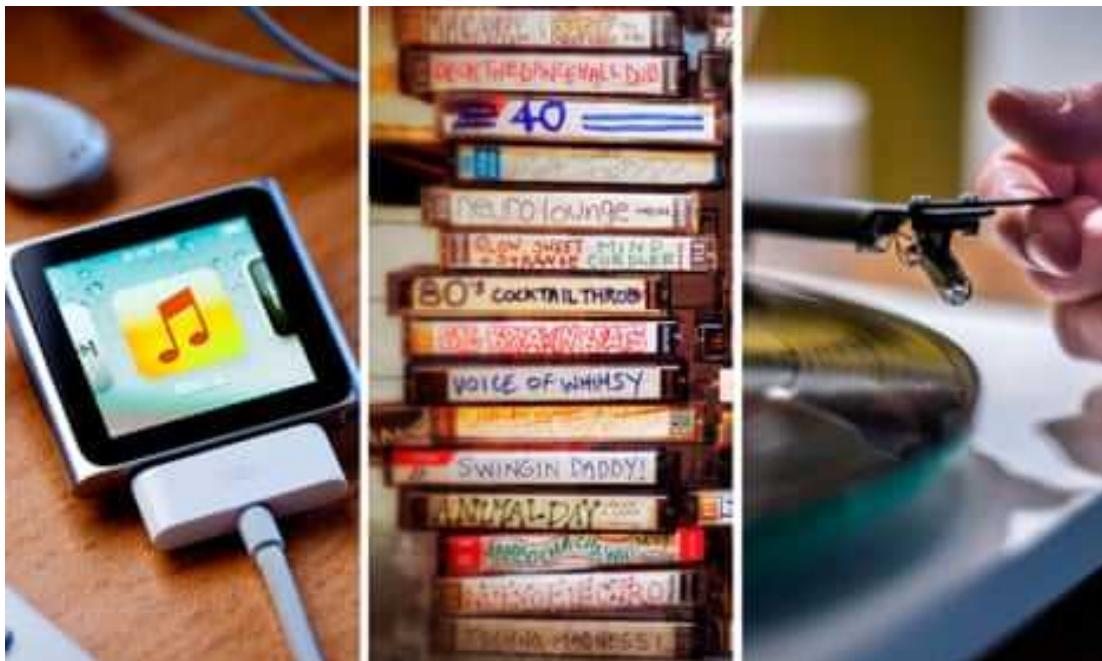
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Discovery channelsMusic

‘There’s endless choice, but you’re not listening’: fans quitting Spotify to save their love of music

Former streaming service subscribers on why they have ditched mod cons for MP3s, CDs and other DIY music formats



Back to the future ... many listeners are going back to pre-streaming means to enjoy music. Composite: Alamy/ Getty Images

Liz Pelly

Tue 27 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 10.35 EDT

Meg Lethem was working at her bakery job one morning in Boston when she had an epiphany. Tasked with choosing the day’s soundtrack, she opened [Spotify](#), then flicked and flicked, endlessly searching for something to play. Nothing was *perfect* for the moment. She looked some more, through playlist after playlist. An uncomfortably familiar loop, it made her realise:

she hated how music was being used in her life. “That was the problem,” she says. “*Using* music, rather than having it be its own experience ... What kind of music am I going to use to set a mood for the day? What am I going to use to enjoy my walk? I started not really liking what that meant.”

It wasn’t just passive listening, but a utilitarian approach to music that felt like a creation of the streaming environment. “I decided that having music be this tool to [create] an experience instead of an experience itself was not something I was into,” she reflects. So she cut off her Spotify service, and later, [Apple Music](#) too, to focus on making her listening more “home-based” and less of a background experience.

Such reckonings have become increasingly commonplace in recent years, as dedicated music listeners continue to grapple with the unethical economics of streaming companies, and feel the effects of engagement-obsessed, habit-forming business models on their own listening and discovery habits. In the process, they are seeking alternatives.

“With streaming, things were starting to become quite throwaway and disposable,” says Finlay Shakespeare. A Bristol-based musician and audio engineer, Shakespeare recently deleted his streaming accounts and bought a used iPod on eBay for £40. With streaming, he says: “If I didn’t gel with an album or an artist’s work at first, I tended not to go back to it.” But he realised that a lot of his all-time favourite albums were ones that grew on him over time. “Streaming was actually contributing to some degree of dismissal of new music.” Even with digital downloads, he tended to give music more time and attention.

Jared Samuel Elioseff, a multi-instrumentalist who records as Invisible Familiars and owns a studio in Cambridge, New York, also felt the streaming environment was generally hindering his musical curiosity: “I’ve been Spotify-less for two years now. My musical experiences definitely feel more dedicated and focused. It’s not as convenient. I’ll reluctantly admit that I listen to less music. Although on Spotify, I wasn’t necessarily listening to stuff. I was checking out the first 15 seconds and hitting skip. Now, I have to

work for it and I like that. I can use the internet as a search tool but I'm not using it as a means to listen. I really have to seek things out and research.

My musical experiences definitely feel more dedicated and focused ... I have to work for it and I like that

"Streaming makes the listening experience much more passive," he continues. "The word 'streaming' is one of those things that's gradually assimilated into everyone's vocabulary. Before there was streaming music, what else was streaming? This idea that you can just turn on a faucet, and out comes music. It's something that leaves everyone to take it for granted."

Conversations around how digital marketplaces shape listening have long focused on the unbundling of the album. For some, though, this has felt distinctly tied to streaming. Nick Krawczeniuk, a music fan and network engineer who recently moved away from streaming, felt his listening habits were being particular affected by Spotify's "liked songs" playlist: "I found myself selecting more and more just one-off songs from an artist, whereas before I'd been inclined to save a whole album."

And Milesisbae, a 23-year-old hip-hop artist from Richmond, Virginia, who recently cancelled all streaming subscriptions after learning how little musicians were compensated, noted something similar: "I will listen to one song 100 times in a row, but I won't give the rest of the album a chance. Before I used streaming services, I would listen to the whole thing."

Miles says he increasingly sees artists selling CDs and downloads at shows; indeed, for some who have deleted Spotify and Apple Music accounts, leaving streaming has meant a big-picture reimagination of their relationship to MP3s. For Shakespeare, downloads are now his primary mode of consumption: he has replaced his iPod's hard drive with a micro SD card dock to increase capacity, and loaded it with Bandcamp purchases and ripped CDs.

For Krawczeniuk, the move away from Spotify after eight years was partly inspired by the realisation that by using open source software, a home server

and a VPN on his phone, he could build something similar himself. He is now using a project called [Navidrome](#) to create a self-hosted streaming library that he can stream from any location, across various devices. “It’s a little box that sits on my desk, plugged into my router,” he explains. The server holds all his music, including Bandcamp purchases and ripped CDs: “It’s a simple music library.” He sees moving away from Big Streaming as connected to a broader movement towards small-scale tech projects and open-source services that are not resource- or energy-intensive.

Nearly everyone interviewed for this piece pointed out the need for systemic change across the music industry, from rethinking how royalties are paid by streaming services to expanding [public funding](#) for artists. Still, leaving streaming has led to a more meaningful daily experience of music.

Jeff Tobias, a musician and composer who finally pulled the plug on Spotify for good in early 2022 as the company was making headlines for its deal with podcaster [Joe Rogan](#), has an approach to streamless listening that’s uncomplicated: records, cassettes, Bandcamp, Mixcloud. When it comes to discovery, recommendations come from friends, Bandcamp editorial, and stuff he comes across at his job working at a local record shop. “It’s almost a pre-internet style relationship with music,” he says. “I am kind of going back to thinking, ‘Oh I wonder what that album sounds like’ until I really take it upon myself to actually seek it out.”

“I like music because it’s a communal artistic practice,” he adds. “And anything that I can do that allows me to listen to music in a way that connects me with either the artists or my friends, that’s what I want to be involved with. Spotify and streaming in general just has absolutely no connection with that relationship at all.”

Wendy Eisenberg, a musician and teacher who recently deleted their account with Napster Music (formerly called Rhapsody), put it this way: “The one thing I’ve noticed since divesting is that music sounds better to me because I’ve put in the work to either locate it on a hard drive or download it from a friend’s Bandcamp or something. And every time I listen to it, even if it’s just on the way to work, I can hear the spiritual irreverence of that choice. And so it doesn’t feel like I am just receiving music from some distant

tastemaker. But it seems like I have some relationship to the music, of ritual, which is where I come to it as a practising musician.

“Taking the extra step to load it on to my phone, or the extra step to flip over the tape, or put the CD on in the car, it feels like something that I’m doing, rather than something I’m receiving,” they continue. “And that sense of agency makes me a more dedicated and involved listener than the kind of passive listening-without-listening that streaming was making me do.”

Lethem reported something similar: she now listens mostly to records, Bandcamp downloads, and a little radio she put in her kitchen. “The choices are very limited. But it’s actually freeing. [With streaming] there’s endless accessibility, but you’re not really listening to anything. At least that’s what it started feeling like to me. I’m experiencing so much music, but am I really listening to any of it?”



Record stores are treasure troves ... and you can ask staff for recommendations. Photograph: Cristóbal Herrera/EPA

DIY discovery: Six ways to find new music ...

Shaad D'Souza

Bandcamp

Online music store [Bandcamp](#) is a key revenue driver for many artists, taking a scant cut of sales compared with streaming services. For fans and listeners, the Bandcamp Daily blog is a treasure trove of independent gems and curios, and a few hours spent trawling other users' profiles or the site's Discover function is always sure to yield a new favourite or two.

The human algorithm

A great way to discover new music can oftentimes be just dropping a message in your favourite group chat: "What's everyone been listening to lately?" Even if your mates have the exact same taste as you, there's bound to be some kind of variance, and those small differences are often where you'll pick up the kind of track that an algorithm could never show you.

Your local record store

There are few better ways to find new music than simply going down to your local record store, telling the staff member at the counter what you're into, and asking what they recommend. If you're shy, don't worry: many shops feature a staff picks section to trawl through.

Online radio

It's easy to be paralysed by the repetitive cycles of streaming services. Online radio stations such as [NTS](#), Worldwide FM, The Lot and Hope St Radio offer tailored, extraordinarily niche, and often mindblowingly good radio shows. Heavy hitters such as NTS have multiple channels and deep archives; newer, more DIY operations might only have a patchy, ultra-lo-fi stream and no tracklists. Either way, it's a great way to hear something you have never heard before.

Artist interviews

Musicians can often provide the best recommendations, and even if you don't have most pop stars on speed dial, interviews are generally the next best thing. A [Björk profile](#), for example, may lead you to wild techno experimentalists [Sideproject](#), while a [podcast chat](#) between Charli XCX and Rina Sawayama could lead you to discover your new favourite diva.

YouTube algorithm

If Spotify's algorithm is disarmingly tailored, [YouTube's](#) is shockingly

loose. You almost never know what's going to come next when you are listening to music on YouTube (which many people, especially among Gen Z, use as their sole streaming service). Sometimes, it will be another song by the same artist, at other times, it will be something extraordinarily unlikely, such as [this 1994 performance of Fade Into You](#) that, for about a year, was ubiquitous in many people's algorithms. Either way, it's a journey.

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No place like home: my bitter return to Palestine

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2022.09.27 - Opinion

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What is Kwasi Kwarteng really up to? One answer: this is a reckless gamble to shrink the state

[Adam Tooze](#)

In the US they call it ‘starving the beast’ – cut taxes and, as revenue decreases, you create irresistible pressure for austerity



‘Defenders of the government insist that the mini-budget was only the start.’
Photograph: Jeff Overs/BBC/PA

Tue 27 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Sep 2022 02.44 EDT

Markets have delivered a [devastating judgment](#) on Kwasi Kwarteng’s tax-cutting mini-budget. The pound has collapsed to [historic lows](#). And investors have sold UK government debt, driving the price of bonds down and the effective interest upwards at a rate not seen since the currency crises of the 1950s. The combination of the two is particularly worrying because it

signals what some fear could become a comprehensive loss of confidence in the pound and UK assets.

You might ask how it could be otherwise. How did the government expect the markets to react when it followed a [giant energy crisis-fighting package](#), roughly costed at £150bn, with a further £45bn in tax cuts that primarily benefit the rich? It also delivered this news at a time when inflation is running faster than at any point since the 1970s and flouted the need for vetting by the Office for Budget Responsibility. What did it expect?

Astonishingly, in the bubble of Downing Street, the answer seems to have been applause. Apologists for [Liz Truss](#) and Kwarteng insist that they are embarking on a new era of supply-side reform, in which taxes are set with a view to incentivising entrepreneurship and reviving the growth rate. If this contributes to inflationary pressure in the short term, it is the job of the Bank of England to counter that with higher interest rates.

You might wonder why anyone would want government economic policy and the Bank of England to pull in opposite directions. But that kind of division of labour is not unusual. In the wake of the banking crisis of 2008, we saw tight fiscal policy – in the name of austerity – flanked by ultra- loose monetary policy. That combination has not been a success. Growth has been lacklustre and booming financial markets have fed inequality. The basic idea of Trussonomics seems to be to invert the formula. And there would be a point to that if the £45bn were focused on renewable energy, or investment in education or the health service. But tax cuts for the rich are a terrible way to stimulate growth and one could hardly think of a worse time to deliver such giveaways.

As far as the Bank of England is concerned, it comes as a rude awakening. In the 25 years since it was given its independence the bank has been largely successful in controlling inflation, but it faces a surge in prices and a government pushing determinedly in the wrong direction. Though the Truss team has signalled that it wants to put an end to low interest rates, whether it really likes the medicine it is apparently asking for from the Bank remains to be seen.

In any case, the markets don't buy it. If they had found the Kwarteng vision of economic policy plausible, rather than selling off sterling in response to the mini-budget, they would have bought into sterling on the expectation of profiting from higher interest rates. Instead, investors simply want out of what looks to most analysts like a doomed experiment. To hold sterling assets they are now demanding what some are calling a "moron risk premium". To hold debts issued by such an incompetent government requires a reward.

There has been some talk that the UK is at risk of being relegated to the class of emerging market borrowers, whose creditworthiness has to continually be demonstrated to foreign investors. So far, at least, that is exaggerated. The UK has borrowed on a large scale from foreign investors, but unlike an emerging market, it has done so in its own currency. Furthermore, claims against the UK are offset by large British holdings of foreign assets. As a result, even a severe devaluation of sterling would not unleash a destabilising spiral of depreciating currency and rising debt burden.

But the Bank of England is under intense pressure, and the feeble statement it issued on Monday won't change that. Clearly, rates are going to have to rise and rise fast. The monetary policy committee no doubt regrets the decision at its last meeting to raise interest rates by only 0.5 percentage points. But though it is obvious that it must now raise rates, the Bank faces a serious risk. If it does not act, it will look weak and that may unsettle markets. But if it does make an emergency rate increase, and markets take that action as a sign of panic, the selling of sterling may intensify. That truly would put the UK in emerging market territory, where rate increases are seen as a sign of weakness, not strength. Furthermore, once the Bank of England has embarked on this course, it will have little alternative but to keep on hiking until markets calm down.

Far from reviving growth, the effect will be to deliver a body blow to the UK economy. Tens of billions are being pumped into family purses to help with energy bills. Tens of billions more are being dished out in tax cuts. But interest rate increases will squeeze anyone on a flexible rate mortgage or needing to re-finance. How buoyant does the government expect growth to

be when millions of homeowners who bought their homes expecting mortgage rates to be about 1% face interest rates of 6% or more?

And that is not even the last of the bad news. Defenders of the government insist that the mini-budget was only the start. Kwarteng promises [further tax cuts](#). But he also promises to bring the deficit under control. How is that to be squared?

The answer is public spending cuts. Among Republicans in the US, the tactic is known as “starving the beast”. Cut taxes and, as public revenues contract, this will create irresistible pressure for spending cuts. The argument is all the more urgent if you can invoke pressure from the financial markets.

In 2010, when David Cameron’s coalition government embarked on austerity, it invoked a bond market panic to justify its painful cuts. Then, the panic was more imaginary than real. The debt crisis in Greece served as the bogeyman. Now Britain has a bona fide homemade panic on its hands. Yields on UK bonds have now risen above those of the eurozone debt-victims Greece and Italy. The markets trust Britain’s Tory government less than the heirs to post-fascism in Rome.

Did the Truss government unleash this avalanche on purpose? That is hardly what the “moron premium” suggests. But we should certainly expect them to turn the crisis that they have created against the public sector in pursuit of their misbegotten vision of a small-state revolution.

- Adam Tooze is an economic historian at Columbia University and the author of *Crashed: How a Decade of Financial Crises Changed the World*
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How do Holly Willoughby and Phillip Schofield rescue their reputations? Get in line to hear my suggestions

[Zoe Williams](#)



The queue row has left the This Morning presenters fighting to survive as the nation's favourites. Here's how everyone can move on



Beleaguered ... Phillip Schofield and Holly Willoughby. Photograph: S Meddle/ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

Tue 27 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Sep 2022 02.40 EDT

Holly Willoughby and Phillip Schofield may have jumped the queue to see the Queen's coffin, or they may have been engaged in legitimate journalism, by which terms you are allowed to jump whatever queue you like – it's called "reporting". It may have come as a genuine surprise to their many This Morning viewers that what they do day to day is considered journalism at all (surely chatting?), and it may have come as a surprise to them that anyone would mind them queue-jumping (surely the other queuers would have been diverted and delighted to see them?). None of it matters any more, as they fight to survive. Not in their jobs, since there are surely employment rights surrounding "being fired for doing a thing that you were given to understand *was your job*", rather, in the public imagination. It is possible to be the bad guy – selfish, abrasive – and still make a good living out of that personality, hence Piers Morgan and Alan Sugar. What you can't do is change character-horse halfway through your race. You can't go from nation's sweetheart to queue-jumper, or guy-next-door to elbows-out pusher-in. They need to rescue their reputations, but they can't defend their own characters – that never works. And they can't defend each other's characters, because they have become one entity, Holly-n-Phillip, who think they're too important to wait in line.

What I would do, if I were them, is commission a YouGov poll: what punishment do you think is proportionate to this heinous crime? The answers would go on a sliding scale, from “None – it was fine and anyway, it’s now over”, through “They should be subtly but importantly diminished in the eyes of all right-thinking men and women, and for ever”, up to “They should be put to death, in some baroque but apropos manner, maybe by a knight or 50 hungry corgis.” However the results shook down, they would get to the root of the scandal: does this crowd have a sense of proportion? Is it possible for any crowd to have a sense of proportion, or once it has been scandalised, does it have to stay scandalised? I mean, who knows whether it would help the beleaguered pair, but at least I would find it entertaining.

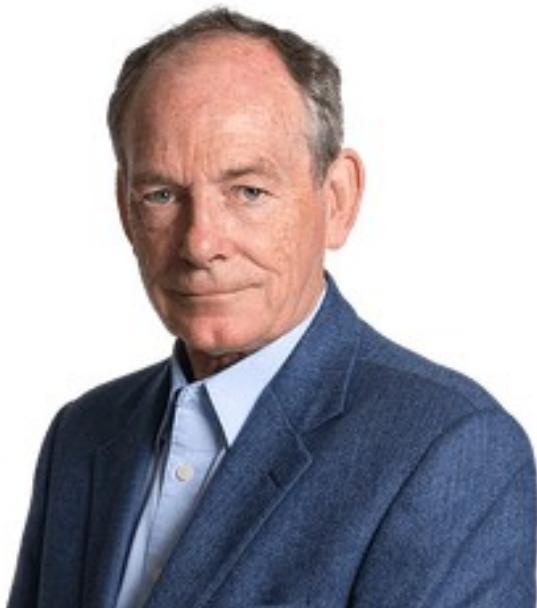
- Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist
 - *Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a letter of up to 300 words to be considered for publication, email it to us at guardian.letters@theguardian.com*
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Opinion**Mini-budget 2022**

Pouring cash into London to solve regional inequality? That's trickle-down Trussonomics

[Simon Jenkins](#)



The UK economy needs the rest of the country to help reverse decades of decline – even Boris Johnson knew that



‘Kwasi Kwarteng’s budget is blatant. He wants to make London ever more attractive to rich newcomers.’ The chancellor on the BBC's Sunday Morning television programme, 25 September 2022. Photograph: Jeff Overs/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 27 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Sep 2022 08.24 EDT

Traders in the City of London were punching the air at Kwasi Kwarteng’s [mini-budget](#) last week. It was small wonder. He had granted some of them hundreds of thousands of pounds. By way of contrast, “red wall” Tory MPs’ hearts were sinking. Kwarteng’s new tax measures might have had one aim in view: to benefit London’s economy at the expense of the rest of the country. His former boss Boris Johnson’s one sensible [policy ambition](#), to reduce the income gap between the capital and the north, lay in ruins. London was exulting.

The surge in bankers’ bonuses and the slashed rate for the [richest 5%](#) in the UK will go overwhelmingly to [residents of the capital](#) and its environs. The £45bn package is aimed at the wealthy, at corporate profits and at boosting the price of land and the private housing market. Of the 48 [English enterprise zones](#) to enjoy Treasury largesse, just 16 are in the north.

More serious is that if the cost of the tax cuts is not to be recouped merely by future tax rises, [f35bn must be found](#) in the next four years from public spending, according to the Resolution Foundation. With Scottish and Welsh budgets protected by the pro-union Barnett formula, the implication is a return to savage austerity in English regions heavily dependent on public funds.

Kwarteng and his boss, Liz Truss, clearly hold to the belief that Britain's economic growth depends on London and its primary industry, finance. In the quarter century after the Big Bang of the 1980s this was largely true. London's wealth surged to European preeminence and its taxes funded depressed northern provinces. From 2008 onwards that wealth stuttered. While south-east England remained among the richest regions in Europe, the gulf between it and other UK regions widened, making the country the most geographically [unequal major economy](#) in Europe. At least Johnson recognised this.

To suppose that tipping yet more money into London will reverse this divergence by "trickling down" is intellectually absurd. Yet Kwarteng's budget is blatant. He wants to make London ever more attractive to rich newcomers. He wants to inflate its banks, overheat its house prices, build over its countryside and indulge developers (and party donors) who are turning London's neighbourhoods into miniature Hong Kongs. He has yet to halt Heathrow's toxic expansion or end the HS2 railway, now little more than a massively subsidised commuter line into London. Such extravagances are unthinkable in the north. When a British chancellor waves money in the air, it is instantly snatched by London.

The limping productivity of provincial Britain is the greatest structural weakness of the UK economy. The insurer Legal & General now estimates that cities such as Manchester, Newcastle and Sheffield [contribute less per capita](#) to their nation's economy than do even cities in the former East Germany.

It is clear they must be helped to retain their talent and guard their quality of life. They need creative urban hubs rather than bleak enhanced investment zones. They must become attractive places in which to live and move about,

not dreary places from which to flee. The capital is not the issue. The British economy needs the rest of the country in order to reverse decades of decline. For once, London must take a back seat.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
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Opinion**Strictly Come Dancing**

Ellie Simmonds on Strictly smashes prejudices about what a dancer can be

Cathy Reay



The show's adaptations of dances for different types of bodies is powerful for those of us who never see ourselves represented



'My heart soared seeing her on screen, made up to the nines and looking absolutely incredible.' Nikita Kuzmin and Ellie Simmonds. Photograph: Guy Levy/BBC/PA

Tue 27 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Wed 28 Sep 2022 04.26 EDT

I really hyped up [Strictly Come Dancing](#) to my kids this year. In advance of the launch show on Friday, we bought popcorn, lit candles and piled the duvets on to the sofa. Maybe this sounds like overkill, but if you were watching a nationally televised dancing competition that, for the first time in its history, was featuring someone who looked like you, wouldn't you be a *bit* excited?

As the show blasted on to our screen with its familiar upbeat theme tune, I was immediately reminded of the [glitz and glamour of the production](#), and my heart soared seeing Ellie Simmonds on screen for the first time, made up to the nines and looking absolutely incredible. The genetic makeup of Strictly Come Dancing is heavily rooted in the beauty of bodies and their movement, and she so seamlessly fitted in from the moment she appeared. It felt like a huge moment for people like us, who aren't typically celebrated for being beautiful or rhythmic.

The shot switched to Simmonds speaking to camera and one of the first things she said was “I have dwarfism ...” – the rest of her sentence was obfuscated by my daughter excitedly yelling “I HAVE DWARFISM TOO!” Suddenly my kids were transfixed, cheering every time she appeared, and they haven’t stopped talking about it since. It lit a fire in their bellies I have rarely seen before.

People like to play down the impact representation has, but for those whose body types are never shown in certain contexts, it can be incredibly powerful to see someone like us participating in something we might have otherwise deemed impossible, because there are no prior examples to draw from.

Strictly Come Dancing has historically been pretty good at inviting disabled people on to the dancefloor. Lauren Steadman, JJ Chalmers and Jonnie Peacock all appeared on earlier series. Last year, Rose Ayling-Ellis went on to win the competition, [smashing any preconceptions](#) people may have previously had about Deaf people dancing.

Already, Simmonds has said that she has received abuse on social media from naysayers who appear to feel threatened by her presence on the show and take umbrage that she should be allowed to participate in a national competition alongside people of average height. These people are missing the point. Yes, Strictly is a competition centred on how well you can dance according to a set of pre-existing rules and conditions, which by nature automatically excludes many disabled people simply because our bodies don’t work in the same way. But it is also – as dance should be – a celebration of the freedom of expression. Adapting dances for [bigger bodies](#), disabled bodies and bodies that don’t move in the ways we expect them to is beautiful, meaningful and so impactful to those watching who may feel they don’t fit the mould of how a dancer should look or perform.

Speaking as someone with zero expert knowledge of dance, Simmonds’ performance seemed exceptional. But even if I didn’t think that, I would still feel the same sense of pride watching her. For me, it’s not about how well she dances, it is about the fact that she is even there, having a go. The awareness she brings in being a dancer that requires adaptations is fantastic,

and the inclusion she brings in being a person who is in her own right completely deserving of this space is long overdue.

Good luck Ellie – so many of us are rooting for you.

- Cathy Reay is a disabled author, editor and speaker on the subjects of disability justice, accessibility, relationships and single parenthood
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[Italy](#)

Italy's Salvini vows far-right alliance will last as Meloni heads for power

Leader of League seen as potential threat to stability of government after vote swing to Brothers of Italy



Matteo Salvini, Silvio Berlusconi, Giorgia Meloni and Maurizio Lupi celebrate their coalition's win. Photograph: Riccardo Fabi/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Mon 26 Sep 2022 12.33 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Sep 2022 00.12 EDT

Matteo Salvini, the leader of Italy's far-right League, has promised that his alliance with Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy will deliver a long-lasting government, as Italians begin to digest the outcome of an election that will bring about the country's most rightwing government since the end of the second world war.

Final results gave the coalition control of both houses of parliament with 44% of the vote and confirmed a swing in the balance of power in the Italian far right towards Meloni as her party made spectacular gains in the League's northern strongholds of Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia.

Meloni is expected to be given a mandate from the president, Sergio Mattarella, to form a government after 13 October, meaning she could take office by the end of next month.

Brothers of [Italy](#), a party with neo-fascist origins, scored 26% of the vote, while the League took 9%, an abysmal result for a party that in 2019 was polling at almost 40%. The third member of the coalition is Silvio Berlusconi's Forza Italia.

The outcome nonetheless makes Salvini, who enacted tough anti-migrant measures during his stint as interior minister in 2018-19, a key protagonist in a government that will be hostile towards immigrants, LGBTQ+ people and women seeking to [access safe abortions](#).

“There is a lot to be worried about, as for Meloni to respond to her electorate she will maintain her promises on things that will hit the weakest communities hard, such as immigrants,” said Paolo Branchesi, an activist for Refugees Welcome.

Early in the election campaign, Meloni called for the navy to turn migrants back to Africa, while Salvini, eager to return to the interior ministry, said last week that he “can’t wait” to resume a policy of blocking migrant rescue ships from entering Italian ports.

“They will bring many difficulties for migrants – in the phase of their migration and the conditions they find upon arrival in Italy,” Branchesi said.

The League and Brothers of Italy blocked a law in parliament last year that would have criminalised homophobia, arguing that it would have eroded freedom of speech. Meloni and Salvini have repeatedly made it clear that they are against gay adoption and surrogacy.

“We are facing an extreme right that is really worrying, especially if you look at their closeness with Viktor Orbán’s Hungary, Poland and Russia,” said Mario Colamarino, the president of the Mario Mieli Circle of Homosexual Culture. “We need to be better, more vigilant and unite against this nationalism and to protect civil rights. Meloni is not a phenomenon built in a day but a dark cloud that has been hovering over us these last 10 years, and now she’s in power.”

Given that Meloni, 45, is calling the shots in the coalition, one of the biggest threats to the stability of her government could come from Salvini, a political chameleon who will not only have to renounce his desire to become prime minister but could be stopped from returning to the interior ministry.

“He is arrogant, and you never know if what he says today he will repeat tomorrow,” said Sofia Ventura, a politics professor at the University of Bologna. “It will be a difficult relationship, but they need to stay in power, and so maybe their negotiations will be contained.”

Luisa Rizzitelli, a spokesperson for Rebel Network, a women’s group, said she was more angry with the leftwing alliance led by the centre-left Democratic party (PD) over its lacklustre campaign and failure to come up with a strong enough opposition to the right. The PD leader, Enrico Letta, said on Monday that he would step down at the party’s next congress, which he said would be held soon.

“It’s shocking for me that we’ve once again managed to vote for a political formation that doesn’t take a distance from those who deny human rights, like the Vox party [in Spain] and Orbán,” Rizzitelli said.

“But if you analyse it from the Italian political reality, it’s not so surprising because the PD is so far removed from civil society, and has distanced itself so much from part of a population that needed another response. Italy is not only made up of a cultural elite that sides with the PD, but of ordinary working people who more easily understood what Meloni had to offer.”

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New Zealand

‘It’s a murder scene’: feral pigs torment residents in New Zealand capital

Farm just minutes from centre of Wellington estimates it has lost about 60 kid goats in past few months



New Zealand’s feral pig population descended from pigs brought out on colonial ships in the late 1700s. They are now well established across about roughly a third of the country, including the capital, Wellington. Photograph: Geoff Marshall/Alamy

Eva Corlett in Wellington
[@evacorlett](#)

Mon 26 Sep 2022 23.11 EDT Last modified on Tue 27 Sep 2022 15.35 EDT

Marauding feral pigs have blighted a central suburb in New Zealand’s capital, killing kid goats at an urban farm, intimidating dogs and turning up in residents’ gardens.

The owners of a goat milk farm in the hills of the suburb of Brooklyn, 10 minutes from the centre of Wellington, has lost about 60 kid goats to pigs in the past few months. Often, all that is left of them are gnawed bone fragments and parts of the hooves or head.

“It’s a murder scene,” said Naomi Steenkamp, the farm’s co-owner. “If they find something they like eating, and it is a free feed – like a newborn kid – they are going to keep coming back.”

Wellington City Council has confirmed that the feral pig population in the suburb of Brooklyn – which backs on to farmland and re-generating bush with walking tracks – has been expanding and causing problems for locals.

New Zealand’s feral pig population descended from pigs brought out on colonial ships in the late 1700s. They are now well established across about roughly a third of the country and are known to damage native ecosystems and pastures, kill newborn animals such as lambs and carry bovine tuberculosis.



A boar killed on a goat farm in Wellington. Feral pig numbers have been increasing in suburban Wellington, killing kid goats, bailing up dogs and

emerging in residents' gardens. New Zealand 27 September 2022
Photograph: Naomi Steenkamp / supplied

Last month, Steenkamp's husband, Frans, shot and killed a boar that broke through their fence and came within 20 metres of their house. The 120kg animal was the largest they had come across in their five years of farming.

"You do wonder if it is a ticking time bomb," she said, adding that after she posted a photo of the dead pig to social media, many other locals contacted her with their own experiences.

"It was crazy how many people came out of the woodwork saying that they had pigs in their garden, pigs bailing up their dogs," she said. "One guy was feeding them and thought it was pretty cool, until it charged him."

Aside from wanting to protect her own livelihood, Steenkamp is desperate to see the pigs go, so that native bush can regenerate. "I want kiwi in my backyard eventually ...but we need to get on top of pigs – it is an isolated pocket that has got out of control."

It was difficult to put precise numbers on how many pigs were running wild in the area, but "there has clearly been an upsurge", said Richard Maclean, the council's spokesperson.

"Given that we're now getting complaints about pigs appearing in backyards, that gives an indication that the population must be burgeoning," he said.

"People tend to think of Wellington city as this pristine place where you couldn't possibly have pigs or goats," Maclean said, but the wild animals were hindering the council's efforts to regenerate native bush and bring back bird-life.

The council contracts a hunter to regularly cull pests in the hills around Brooklyn, but the combination of public and privately owned land makes it difficult for pest control to be thorough in their work.

"He does what he can, and he keeps the numbers down," Maclean said. "But

you can't go on to private land without permissions from the owner, so it is hard to control what is happening there.”

There was a long history of feral pigs in the area, Maclean said, adding that people might be stocking the area for hunting purposes.

“It is a bit of a wild scene down there. But [we don’t] want people to suddenly think they can get in there and start helping out, taking in guns and dogs ... We want to avoid total mayhem and conflict and keep everyone safe.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/27/its-a-scene-wild-pigs-torment-residents-in-new-zealand-capital>

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[Mexico](#)

Amlo promised to take Mexico's army off the streets – but he made it more powerful

Soon after taking office, Andrés Manuel López Obrador created a new force, the national guard – and handed control of it over to the army



A member of the national guard in Guadalajara, Mexico, in December 2021.
Photograph: Ulises Ruiz/AFP/Getty Images

Steve Fisher in Mexico City

Tue 27 Sep 2022 05.30 EDT Last modified on Wed 28 Sep 2022 00.28 EDT

For much of the past decade, Mexico's president, [Andrés Manuel López Obrador](#), was an opponent of military involvement in the country's so-called [war on drugs](#).

When then president Felipe Calderón [deployed the army in full force in 2006](#), López Obrador – best known as Amlo – called for the troops to return to their barracks. When Calderón’s successor, Enrique Peña Nieto, tried to codify the presence of the military into law, Amlo decried the move and said, if he became president, that would change.

“We will not use force to resolve social problems,” López Obrador said in 2017. “We are going to confront insecurity and violence by addressing the root causes, not as they have been doing.”

All that changed when López Obrador took power.

Soon after taking office in December 2018, [he created a new force, known as the national guard](#), to take over public security across the country. And then he successfully pushed his political party, and allied parties, [to hand the control of the national guard over to the Mexican army](#).

The Mexican senate voted the measure into law earlier this month despite López Obrador promising the newly created force would remain under civilian control.

The national guard was meant to replace the disbanded federal police as a public security force. Now, analysts say placing the force under the control of the military is a final step in the militarization of public security in [Mexico](#).

The move has sparked an outcry from human rights organizations who state that, rather than turn security over to the military, the government should instead reform state and local police forces.

“Nowhere in the world has the deployment of soldiers, armed to the teeth, pacified a country,” said security expert Catalina Pérez Correa.

Experts say the expansion of military powers often result in increased human rights violations. And the Mexican military has a long history of massacres in the country.

In 1968, soldiers and police forces gunned down what some estimates suggest was 300 students. In 2014, troops summarily executed 22 people in the state of Guerrero. The military has also been implicated in one of the most notorious atrocities of recent years: the disappearance of 43 student teachers who were pulled off a convoy of buses by corrupt police and cartel gunmen.

Earlier this month a retired army general and two other soldiers were arrested after a government truth commission announced that six of the missing students had been kept alive for days before being executed on the orders of the general, who was then commander of a local military base.

The national guard has also come under scrutiny.

In the state of Tamaulipas, members of the force are under investigation for the extrajudicial killing of six people. And troops are under investigation for killing a state prosecutor in the state of Sonora.

And the new force, numbering over 113,000, has had limited success in combating crime when compared to civilian law enforcement, according to security analyst Alejandro Hope.

The national guard is replacing police forces across the country, but its own statistics show few arrests and investigations, compared with other police forces, said Hope. Government statistics show the national guard arrested more than 8,000 people in 2021 compared with the federal police who, with 38,000 agents, arrested 21,702 people in 2018.

“It is an institution that patrols and does not investigate,” Hope said of the fledgling force. “There is a near total absence of investigative work.”

Critics of the plan say that the military deployment has done nothing to reduce the violence, and may well have contributed to Mexico’s spiralling death toll.

Quick Guide

Mexico's evolving war on drugs

Show

Calderón sends in the army

Mexico's "war on drugs" began in late 2006 when the president at the time, Felipe Calderón, ordered thousands of troops onto the streets in response to an explosion of horrific violence in his native state of Michoacán.

Calderón hoped to smash the drug cartels with his [heavily militarized onslaught](#) but the approach was counter-productive and exacted a catastrophic human toll. As Mexico's military went on the offensive, the body count sky-rocketed to new heights and tens of thousands were forced from their homes, disappeared or killed.

Kingpin strategy

Simultaneously Calderón also began pursuing the so-called "[kingpin strategy](#)" by which authorities sought to decapitate the cartels by targeting their leaders.

That policy resulted in some high-profile scalps – notably Arturo Beltrán Leyva who was [gunned down by Mexican marines in 2009](#) – but also did little to bring peace. In fact, many believe such tactics served only to pulverize the world of organized crime, creating even more violence as new, less predictable factions squabbled for their piece of the pie.

Under Calderón's successor, Enrique Peña Nieto, the government's rhetoric on crime softened as Mexico sought to shed its reputation as the headquarters of some the world's most murderous mafia groups.

But Calderón's policies largely survived, with authorities targeting prominent cartel leaders such as Sinaloa's Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán.

When "El Chapo" was arrested in early 2016, Mexico's president bragged: "Mission accomplished". But the violence went on. By the time Peña Nieto left office in 2018, Mexico had suffered another record year of murders, with nearly 36,000 people slain.

"Hugs not bullets"

The leftwing populist Andrés Manuel López Obrador took power in December, promising a dramatic change in tactics. López Obrador, or Amlo as most call him, vowed to attack the social roots of crime, [offering vocational training](#) to more than 2.3 million disadvantaged young people at risk of being ensnared by the cartels.

“It will be virtually impossible to achieve peace without justice and [social] welfare,” Amlo said, promising to slash the murder rate from an average of 89 killings per day with his “hugs not bullets” doctrine.

Amlo also pledged to chair daily 6am security meetings and create a 60,000 strong "National Guard". But those measures have yet to pay off, with the new security force used mostly to hunt Central American migrants.

Mexico now suffers an average of about 96 murders per day, with nearly 29,000 people killed since Amlo took office.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

In the past 15 years, the number of soldiers on the streets has more than doubled. In the same period, homicides increased by 240%, according to public records requests cited by the Mexican news outlet Animal Politico.

In giving the military greater control, Amlo is following the lead of other Latin American countries who have expanded the functions of the military. In Brazil, President Jair Bolsonaro ordered the military to do everything from monitoring the voting process to managing schools to combating deforestation in the Amazon. In El Salvador, President Nayib Bukele had soldiers march into parliament to demand an increase in security funds.

In Mexico, Amlo has ordered the military to do everything from building an airport to providing logistics to the Covid pandemic response to building a controversial new train network across several southern states. Such roles, the president's critics say, have little to do with enforcing the law.

“They want to create an addiction to the presence of the military” in Mexico, Hope said.

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[Nepal](#)

Hilaree Nelson, famed US mountaineer, missing on Nepal's Manaslu peak

Trek organiser says the US climber had an accident on Monday as bad weather hampers rescue efforts



Ski mountaineer Hilaree Nelson has gone missing on Manaslu mountain in Nepal. Photograph: Facebook/ Hilaree Nelson

[Lauren Aratani](#)

Tue 27 Sep 2022 13.02 EDTFirst published on Tue 27 Sep 2022 01.09 EDT

The renowned US big-mountain skier Hilaree Nelson has gone missing on a trek in the Himalayas after apparently falling into a 2,000ft crevasse.

Nelson and her partner, Jim Morrison, had scaled the 26,781ft peak of Manaslu mountain on Monday morning. Jiban Ghimire of Shangri-La Nepal Treks, which organised the expedition, told [Outside Magazine](#) that the pair reached the summit at 11:30am local time.

“About 15 minutes later, I got a call from our staff at base camp that her ski blade skidded off and [she] fell off the other side of the peak,” he said.

Nelson appeared to fall into a 2,000-foot crevasse as she and Morrison, along with their three Sherpa guides, skied down from the peak. Ghimire told the New York Times that weather delayed search efforts and “it takes three days to reach the incident site from base camp”.

Also on Monday, an avalanche in a lower portion of the mountain [killed](#) one climber and injured a dozen others.

A Nepali tourism department official told the Times that the effort to rescue Nelson may be unsuccessful.

“Based on the briefings and difficult terrain, it’s really hard to say whether we will be able to rescue her alive,” the official said.

North Face, a sponsor of Nelson, said in a [statement](#) on Monday that the company was “in touch with Hilaree’s family and [is] support[ing] search and rescue efforts in every way we can”.

On Thursday, Nelson wrote on Instagram of the challenging conditions she and Morrison were facing on Manaslu, with heavy rain and humidity making the climbing difficult.

“I haven’t felt as sure-footed on Manaslu as I have on past adventures into the thin atmosphere of the high Himalaya,” she wrote. “These past weeks have tested my resilience in new ways.”



Mount Manaslu, Nepal. Photograph: Amit Machamasi/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Manaslu, the eighth-tallest mountain in the world, has seen a busy climbing season in its high peaks. The Nepali government issued 404 climbing permits for the fall so far, up from 150 last year, according to [Outside Magazine](#). While the mountain is considered one of the easier high peaks to climb, its massive avalanches have proved deadly: in 2012, an avalanche [killed](#) eight climbers.

Nelson, 49, who has two children, is one of the highest-profile mountaineers, with a career spanning two decades. North Face describes her as “the most prolific ski mountaineer of her generation” on its website. In 2012, she became the first woman to climb both the summit of Everest and the peak of adjacent mountain Lhotse within 24 hours.

In 2018, the resident of Telluride, Colorado, was awarded the National Geographic Adventurer of the Year award after making the first ski down Lhotse that year.

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Russia

Gunman with swastika on T-shirt kills 15 at Russian school

Eleven children among dead in attack in Izhevsk in Udmurtia region

Children evacuate from Russian school after deadly shooting – video

Reuters in Moscow

Mon 26 Sep 2022 09.41 EDTFirst published on Mon 26 Sep 2022 04.28 EDT

A gunman with a swastika on his T-shirt has killed 15 people, including 11 children, and wounded 24 at a school in Russia, investigators have said.

The attacker, a man in his early thirties who was named by authorities as Artem Kazantsev, killed two security guards then opened fire on students and teachers at School Number 88 in Izhevsk, where he had once been a pupil. He then killed himself.

Russia's investigative committee, which handles major crimes, said it was looking into the perpetrator's suspected neo-Nazi links.

"Currently investigators ... are conducting a search of his residence and studying the personality of the attacker, his views and surrounding milieu," the committee said in a statement. "Checks are being made into his adherence to neo-fascist views and Nazi ideology."

Investigators released a video showing the man's body lying in a classroom with overturned furniture and papers strewn on the bloodstained floor. He was dressed all in black, with a red swastika in a circle drawn on his T-shirt.

The investigative committee said that of the 24 people wounded, all but two were children. The regional governor, Alexander Brechalov, said surgeons

had carried out a number of operations.

He said the attacker had been registered with a “psycho-neurological” treatment facility. Investigators said the man was armed with two pistols and a large supply of ammunition.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said President Vladimir Putin “deeply mourns” the deaths. He described the incident as “a terrorist act by a person who apparently belongs to a neo-fascist organisation or group”.

He said doctors, psychologists and neurosurgeons had been sent on Putin’s orders to the location of the shooting in Izhevsk, about 600 miles east of Moscow.

Russia has experienced several school shootings in recent years.

In May 2021, [a teenage gunman killed seven children and two adults](#) in the city of Kazan. In September last year, a student armed with a hunting rifle [shot dead at least six people](#) at a university in the Urals city of Perm.

In April 2022, an armed man killed two children and a teacher at a kindergarten in the central Ulyanovsk region before committing suicide.

In 2018, an [18-year-old student killed 20 people](#), mostly fellow pupils, in a mass shooting at a college in Russian-occupied Crimea, which Moscow seized from Ukraine in 2014.

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Russia-Ukraine war live: Putin annexes Ukrainian regions; Kyiv applies for Nato membership – as it happened

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Ukraine

Dozens feared dead after Russian strike on civilian convoy near Zaporizhzhia

Attack comes as Vladimir Putin prepares to publicly sign annexation orders for four Ukrainian regions

- [Russia-Ukraine war: latest updates](#)

Ukraine: footage shows aftermath of deadly Russian strike on civilian convoy – video

Peter Beaumont and Artem Mazhulin in Zaporizhzhia

Fri 30 Sep 2022 07.02 EDTFirst published on Fri 30 Sep 2022 03.21 EDT

A civilian convoy of cars heading to pick up relatives trying to flee Russian-occupied territory in [Ukraine](#) has been hit by Moscow's forces near the city of Zaporizhzhia, with initial reports saying dozens of people were killed and injured. That casualty figure could not immediately be confirmed.

Footage posted on social media showed a horrific scene with dead and injured people lying on a road on the south-eastern outskirts of the city. In one video, taken from inside a nearby building, a woman can be heard sobbing, saying repeatedly: "Dead people are lying there."

At least one crater was visible in other images showing cars that had taken the full force of the blast.

The attack on the convoy on Friday morning came amid a feared Russian escalation in its war in Ukraine, as the Russian president, Vladimir Putin, prepared to publicly sign annexation orders for four regions, which some fear will lead to an increase in attacks on Ukrainian cities.

[Annexation of Ukrainian regions](#)

Meanwhile, a large number of Russian forces in the strategic Donbas town of Lyman were reported to have been encircled in the latest setback for Putin.

The governor of Zaporizhzhia region, Oleksandr Starukh, said in a statement: “The enemy launched an attack on a civilian convoy and the outskirts of the city. People were standing in line to leave for the occupied territory to pick up their relatives and to deliver aid. There are dead and wounded. Emergency services are at the site.

“At the moment there are 23 dead and 28 wounded, all civilians,” he added. Those figures were later updated to 25 dead and more than 50 injured.

Kyrylo Tymoshenko, an adviser to the Ukrainian presidency, said: “The terror continues. The killings continue. Sixteen missiles were launched using S-300 air defence.”

Confirming the number of dead, he said four missiles hit near a sprawling car parts market where the convoy had gathered.

“There was a convoy of cars with civilians on their way to the temporarily occupied territory to pick up their relatives.”

At the site of the blast, in a wooded area just outside the city, police and military were clearing the scene after discovering another unexploded munition, with the dead and wounded removed to nearby hospitals.

Interactive

Even five hours after the attack it remained a scene of utter carnage with broken bodies spread around the site. Many, it appears, had been standing outside of their vehicles, not far from a registration point with white tents and a desk, when the missile flew in exploding about 10 metres from the cars and leaving a huge crater.

In one car, a man was still sat slumped dead with one hand gripping his steering wheel, the windows blown out. Another body was slumped on its knees covered with a blanket next to the luggage they were pulling a few metres away.

According to locals, 60 cars had gathered on a road in two lines after registering for a convoy that was due to take people back into the Russian-occupied territories in the south, some planning to return to homes in places such as Mariupol, others planning to fetch relatives and bring them to government-occupied territory for fear that Russia would prevent people from leaving following Friday's annexation ceremony.



Ukrainian police examine a minivan that was hit in a Russian strike on a convoy heading for Kremlin occupied territory. Photograph: Peter Beaumont/The Guardian

Standing on the road, Dalina Yakushava, 48, had arrived after the explosion to see if she could register for a convoy.

“This is where people are told to come and register by the authorities to join a convoy. You register online but I came to make sure my permission had been received. I live in Mariupol. We just drove our daughter to Poland but we need to go back because my parents are there. It’s terrible but it is our home.

“There were a lot of cars waiting to leave this morning because no one has been able to go into the occupied areas for the past week.”

Volodmyr Marchuk, a spokesperson for the governor's office, said the site was "a logistic hub to allow people go into the temporarily Russian occupied territories. The Russians only accept 150 cars a day so that's why we created a programme, where people could come register and get their number in line.

"So at 7.15 in the morning there were a large number of cars waiting for the turn to cross, mostly people who want to go to and drop off aid to relatives and maybe pick up people who want to leave on the way back.

"They hit that queue with an S-300 missile. There's no doubt it is a deliberate war crime. They always say they are aiming at a military object and hit something else. But there are no military objects near that site. That's why there's no doubt that's it's a terrorist act."

In the hours before the attack, Russia launched strikes on several cities, including the centre of the nearby city of Dnipro.

Putin was preparing to hold a ceremony on Friday for the annexation of four Ukrainian regions, while his Ukrainian counterpart said the Russian president would have to be stopped if Moscow was to avoid the most damaging consequences of the war.

Russia's expected annexation of the Russian-occupied areas of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia, which follow sham referendums in the territories, has been widely condemned by the west. The UN chief, António Guterres, said it was a "dangerous escalation" that would jeopardise prospects for peace.

The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, said in an address on Thursday evening: "It can still be stopped. But to stop it we have to stop that person in Russia who wants war more than life. Your lives, citizens of Russia."

The four regions cover about 35,000 sq miles (90,000 sq km), or about 15% of Ukraine's total area – roughly the size of Hungary or Portugal.

Russian government officials have said the four regions will fall under Moscow's nuclear umbrella once they have been formally incorporated into Russia. Putin has said he could use nuclear weapons to defend Russian territory if necessary.

Ukraine has said it will seek to take back its territory.

Mykhailo Podolyak, Zelenskiy's adviser, told the Italian newspaper *La Repubblica*: "Referendums have no legal value. Under international law the regions are, and remain, territories of Ukraine, and Ukraine is ready to do anything to take them back."

"They were sham votes, in which few people participated. To those who went to vote they pointed their rifles in their faces ordering: 'Vote!'. "

Zelenskiy promised a strong response to the annexations and summoned his defence and security chiefs for an emergency meeting on Friday, where "fundamental decisions" would be taken, an official said.

On the eve of the annexation ceremony in the Georgievsky Hall of the Great Kremlin Palace and a concert in Red Square, Putin said that "all mistakes" made in a mobilisation announced last week would be corrected, his first public acknowledgment that the call-up had not gone smoothly.

Thousands of men have left Russia to avoid the draft that was billed as enlisting those with military experience and required specialities, but has often appeared oblivious to individuals' service records, health, student status or even age.



Signs on Red Square reading ‘Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson, Russia’. Photograph: Alexander Zemlianichenko/AP

At Friday’s event, Putin will give a speech, meet leaders of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic and Luhansk People’s Republic as well as the Moscow-installed leaders of the parts of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia that Russian forces occupy.

The Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, did not say whether the president would attend the concert, as he did a similar event in 2014 after Russia proclaimed it had annexed Ukraine’s Crimea region.

A stage has been set up in the Moscow square with giant video screens and billboards proclaiming the four areas to be part of Russia.

The US president, Joe Biden, said the US would never recognise Russia’s claims on Ukraine’s territory, denouncing the referendums.

“The results were manufactured in Moscow,” Biden said at a conference of Pacific Island leaders on Thursday.

The Turkish president, Recep Tayyip Erdoan, pressed Putin in a call to take steps to reduce tensions in Ukraine.

Guterres told reporters: “Any decision to proceed with the annexation ... would have no legal value and deserves to be condemned.”

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[Russia](#)

Putin signs decrees paving way for annexing Ukraine territories of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia

Kremlin says decrees recognise two regions as independent, ahead of Friday's expected speech on annexation of four regions of Ukraine

- [See all our Ukraine coverage](#)



Threats from Vladimir Putin have been decried as ‘nuclear blackmail’ by Ukraine. Photograph: Gavriil Grigorov/Sputnik/Reuters

[Andrew Roth](#) in Moscow and [Isobel Koshiw](#) in Kyiv

Thu 29 Sep 2022 18.26 EDTFirst published on Thu 29 Sep 2022 06.45 EDT

Vladimir Putin has signed decrees paving the way for the occupied Ukrainian regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia to be formally annexed into Russia.

On Friday, the Russian president is expected to sign into law the [annexations](#) of four Ukrainian regions – Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Donetsk and Luhansk – where Russia held fake referendums over the last week in order to claim a mandate for the territorial claims.

Thursday night's decrees, made public by the Kremlin, said Putin had recognised Kherson and Zaporizhzhia as independent territories. This is an intermediary step needed before Putin can go ahead with plans to unilaterally declare on Friday that they are part of [Russia](#).

In February, Putin recognised the independence of the self-proclaimed republics of Donetsk and Luhansk.

The plan to sign treaties on Friday annexing the territories in occupied Ukraine will mark a major escalation of Russia's seven-month-old war. Putin has said he is ready to defend those territories using all available means, indicating he would be willing to [resort to a nuclear strike](#) in order to avert Ukraine's efforts to liberate its sovereign territory.

Putin is seen to be passing a point of no return that will prolong the war and scuttle even the remotest chance of negotiations by obliging Russia to fight in perpetuity for Ukrainian territory, some of which it does not currently control.

Volodymyr Zelenskiy said Russia would be annexing itself to a "catastrophe" and vowed that Moscow would get no new territory. "We know how to react to any Russian actions," the Ukrainian president said on the Telegram messaging app.

The Russian government spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, said the signing of the "treaties on the accession of territories into the Russian Federation" would take place at 3pm local time in the Kremlin's St George's Hall. Putin would deliver a "major" speech at the ceremony.

The announcement set off a fresh round of international condemnation. "Any decision to proceed with the annexation of Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson

and Zaporizhzhia regions of [Ukraine](#) would have no legal value and deserves to be condemned,” the UN secretary general, António Guterres, told reporters.

[Map](#)

Joe Biden said that the US would never recognise Russia’s claims on Ukraine’s territory, and denounced the fake referendums as an “absolute sham,” saying, “The results were manufactured in Moscow.”

“Putin is raising the stakes,” said Tatiana Stanovaya, a political analyst and founder of R.Politik. “It’s a demonstration that Russia is not ready to negotiate, not ready to make any concessions, and is ready to use any means at its disposal to achieve its strategic goals. Including nuclear weapons. The Russian leadership has said this directly without any hesitation.”

The territories were not named formally but Kremlin pool reporters said four treaties would be signed, corresponding to the four regions Russia has indicated it plans to annex.

Putin is expected to make a speech to members of the State Duma, Russia’s lower house of parliament, at the ceremony. By law, Russia’s Federation Council must approve the treaties before they are signed by Putin but it was not clear when the council was scheduled to meet.

Moscow officials have also begun preparing a venue for a major concert near Red Square on Friday evening. “Together forever,” reads a large banner hanging over a stage that also bears the names of the four Ukrainian regions. State television channels are also displaying a countdown to Friday’s event at the Kremlin.



Russian soldiers standing on Red Square where a banner on a stage reads: ‘Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhzhia, Kherson – Russia!’ Photograph: Alexander Nemenov/AFP/Getty Images

Putin’s decision was believed to be an attempt to halt a Ukrainian counterattack that has forced Russia to retreat from much of the Kharkiv region and is now threatening to retake more territory in Donetsk. He hopes that the threat of all-out war and a nuclear retaliation will reduce western support for the Ukrainian offensive.

Ukraine and its supporters have decried Putin’s threats as “nuclear blackmail”. In remarks earlier this week, the Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, vowed to defend and free Ukrainians in the occupied territories.

“This farce in the occupied territory cannot even be called an imitation of referendums,” Zelenskiy said on Tuesday in a video posted on Telegram. “We will act to protect our people: both in the Kherson region, in the Zaporizhzhia region, in the Donbas, in the currently occupied areas of the Kharkiv region, and in the Crimea.”

Ukraine’s presidential office said Zelenskiy had spoken to his Polish counterpart, Andrzej Duda, on Thursday about the international reaction to

Russia's illegal referendums. "We discussed specific steps and measures that we will work on in this context, military and defence cooperation," Zelenskiy wrote on Telegram.

The two leaders "agreed on the need for a powerful consolidated world reaction to the illegal actions of the Russian Federation, which destroy the foundations of international law", the statement from Zelenskiy's office read. "Specific steps and measures that the parties will work on in this context were discussed."

Zelenskiy also had a call with the outgoing Italian prime minister, Mario Draghi, on Thursday afternoon. According to Zelenskiy's office, the main topic of their discussion was the need for a firm reaction to the fake referendums.

"They are worthless and do not change reality. The territorial integrity of Ukraine will be restored. And our reaction to Russia's recognition of their results will be very harsh," Zelenskiy said, according to the statement from his office.

Zelenskiy also said he was convening an "urgent" meeting of the national security council on Friday, with details to be announced later.

The Kremlin does not have full control over many of the territories it is seeking to annex. It is likely it will lay claim to all four Ukrainian regions in their entirety, including several mid-size cities that are not under Russian control. For instance, in the Zaporizhzhia region, local occupation officials claimed that the recent "referendum" included the entire region, including the city of Zaporizhzhia, which had a prewar population of 750,000.

That would mean the Kremlin is obliging the country to fight in perpetuity to defend territories and make advances even while it is on the defensive on the battlefield.

The Kremlin may only reveal the details of which territories it is claiming to annex during the signing ceremony. A state budget revealed on Thursday showed that Russia had earmarked 3.3bn roubles (\$56.3m or £51.1m) to

rebuild the regions. The damage to the city of Mariupol alone was estimated by its mayor at \$14bn.

The annexation will make the chance of a negotiated settlement to end the war even more remote. Russia amended its constitution in 2022 to forbid ceding territory the country has formally annexed.

It was initially seen as a way to prevent a future Russian leader from ceding Crimea, which was annexed in 2014. But the law would also forbid Russia from ceding territories occupied since February or those not currently under Kremlin control.

Ekaterina Schulmann, a Russian political scientist, wrote that after annexation, the “Russian Federation as we knew it will pass into a new phase of its existence, having become a state with a delegitimised border, including fragments that not only won’t be recognised by any state or international organisation de jure, but won’t be controlled by its central administration de facto”.

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Russia-Ukraine war at a glanceUkraine

Russia-Ukraine war latest: what we know on day 219 of the invasion

Vladimir Putin formalises annexation of four occupied regions of Ukraine; at least 25 people killed as Russian missiles hit civilian convoy

- [See all our Ukraine coverage](#)



Ukrainian policemen check cars damaged by a Russian missile strike on a road near Zaporizhzhia. Photograph: Genya Savilov/AFP/Getty Images

[Léonie Chao-Fong](#), [Martin Belam](#), [Peter Beaumont](#), [Andrew Roth](#), [Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) and [Pjotr Sauer](#)

Fri 30 Sep 2022 10.12 EDTFirst published on Thu 29 Sep 2022 20.15 EDT

- Vladimir Putin has signed “accession treaties” formalising Russia’s illegal annexation of four occupied regions in Ukraine, marking the

largest forcible takeover of territory in Europe since the second world war. The signing ceremony, held in defiance of international law, took place in the Grand Kremlin Palace in the presence of the country's political elites, and comes on the heels of [Kremlin-orchestrated fake referendums](#) in the four Ukrainian regions – **Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Donetsk.**

- **Putin** kicked off the ceremony with a lengthy, combative and angry speech in which the Russian leader issued new nuclear threats, promising to “protect” the newly annexed lands “with all the forces and means at our disposal”.
- Kremlin spokesman **Dmitry Peskov** told reporters [Russia](#) would “de jure” incorporate parts of Ukraine which are not under the control of Russian forces. Of the four regions, Luhansk and Kherson are the only territories that Russia is close to having total control over.



The Moscow-appointed heads of Kherson region Vladimir Saldo and Zaporizhzhia region Yevgeny Balitsky, Russian President Vladimir Putin, Donetsk's pro-Russian leader Denis Pushilin and Luhansk's pro-Russian leader Leonid Pasechnik. Photograph: Mikhail Metzel/SPUTNIK/AFP/Getty Images

- President of the European Commission **Ursula von der Leyen** said “The illegal annexation proclaimed by Putin won’t change anything. All territories illegally occupied by Russian invaders are Ukrainian land and will always be part of this sovereign nation”. A statement issued by the **members of the European Council** said “We firmly reject and unequivocally condemn the illegal annexation.”
- The UN secretary general had warned Russia that annexing Ukrainian regions would mark a “dangerous escalation” that would jeopardise the prospects for peace in the region. António Guterres said any decision to proceed with the annexation of the Donetsk, Luhansk, Kherson and Zaporizhzhia regions “would have no legal value and deserves to be condemned”.
- US ambassador to Ukraine **Bridget Brink** has reiterated her country’s opposition to Russia’s planned annexations, saying “Russia’s sham ‘referenda’ were a spectacle, an effort to mask a further attempted land grab. We will never recognise Russia’s purported annexation of Ukrainian territory.”
- British prime minister, **Liz Truss**, has said that the UK will never accept the Russian annexations, and accused Putin of acting in violation of international law with clear disregard for the lives of the Ukrainian people he claims to represent.

Map of the annexed regions

- A civilian convoy of cars heading to pick up relatives trying to flee Russian occupied territory in Ukraine has been hit by Russian forces near the city of Zaporizhzhia, with initial reports saying at least 25 people were killed and 50 people injured. Footage posted on social media showed a horrific scene with dead and injured people lying on a road on the south-eastern outskirts of the city.
- The governor of Zaporizhzhia region, **Oleksandr Starukh**, said in a statement: “The enemy launched an attack on a civilian convoy and the outskirts of the city. People were standing in line to leave for the

occupied territory to pick up their relatives and to deliver aid. There are dead and wounded. Emergency services are at the site.

- According to locals, 60 cars had gathered on a road in two lines after registering for a convoy that was due to take people back into the Russian-occupied territories in the south, some planning to return to homes in places such as **Mariupol**, others planning to fetch relatives and bring them to government-occupied territory for fear that Russia will prevent people from leaving. In the hours before the attack, Russia launched strikes on several cities, including the centre of the nearby city of **Dnipro**.

Ukraine: footage shows aftermath of deadly Russian strike on civilian convoy – video

- A large number of Russian forces in the strategic Donbas town of **Lyman** were reported to have been encircled in the latest setback in the battlefield for Russia. The villages of Yampil and Drobysheve near the Russian-occupied Lyman “are no longer fully controlled” by Russian forces, **Denis Pushilin**, the Russian-backed leader of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic said.
- A Russian-installed official in the southern **Kherson** region of Ukraine has been killed in a Ukrainian missile strike, according to Russian state media. **Alexei Katerinichev**, who served as the first deputy head for security of the Kremlin-appointed administration of the Kherson region, was killed on Friday, **Kirill Stremousov**, the deputy head of the Moscow-controlled region, said.
- **Ukrainian forces have secured all of Kupiansk and driven Russian troops from their remaining positions** on the east bank of the river that divides the north-eastern Ukrainian city. Most of Kupiansk, a strategic railway junction, was recaptured earlier this month as part of a counteroffensive by Ukrainian troops. AFP reported that those Russian troops who held out on the east bank of the Oskil river have been driven out.

- The so-called “People’s militia of the **Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR)**” has stated that the first Russian troops from the partial mobilisation have arrived in Donetsk, and are undergoing training.
- The Kremlin has reiterated calls for an international investigation into the circumstances of the suspected attack on the **Nord Stream pipelines** in the Baltic Sea. Without providing any evidence, the head of Moscow’s foreign intelligence service, **Sergei Naryshkin** said “We have materials that point to a western trace in the organisation and implementation of these terrorist acts.”
- **Gas is likely to stop leaking from the damaged Nord Stream 1 pipeline on Monday**, according to the pipeline’s operator. A spokesperson for Nord Stream AG said it was not possible to provide any forecasts for the pipeline’s future operation until the damage had been assessed.
- **Finland is closing its border to Russian tourists after Putin’s partial mobilisation order** prompted large numbers of people to flee the country. From midnight Thursday Finnish time (9pm GMT), Russian tourists holding an EU Schengen visa will be turned away unless they have a family tie or a compelling reason to travel.
- **More than half of Russians felt fearful or anxious after Putin’s mobilisation announcement**, according to a new poll. The poll by the independent Levada Centre showed 47% of respondents said they had felt anxiety, fear or dread after hearing that hundreds of thousands of soldiers would be drafted to fight in Ukraine.
- **The European Commission president, Ursula von der Leyen, announced an eighth package of sanctions** – including a draft sanctions law seen by the Guardian – designed to “make the Kremlin pay” for the escalation of the war against Ukraine. Hungary “cannot and will not support” energy sanctions in the package, said Gergely Gulyas, chief of staff to the prime minister, Viktor Orbán. An EU official said an agreement on the next sanctions package was expected before next week’s EU summit, or at least major parts of the package.

- Russia is escalating its use of **Iranian-supplied “kamikaze” drones in southern Ukraine**, including against the southern port of Odesa and the nearby city of Mykolaiv.
 - **Oleg Deripaska**, one of Russia’s most powerful oligarchs, has been indicted by the US Department of Justice for criminal sanctions violations. Deripaska previously had deep links to British establishment figures.
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‘Today is a magic moment’: Bath’s 207-year-old lido reopens after four decades of neglect



Swimmers entered a prize draw to be the first to swim in the revamped Cleveland Pools

Opened in Jane Austen's lifetime and recently saved from demolition, Cleveland Pools will welcome swimmers for a short autumn season before making a big splash next spring

Rhiannon Batten

Fri 30 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 02.02 EDT

‘Enjoy your swim,’ says Cleveland Pools chair Paul Simon, and a wave of spray rises from the water as a small tide of people leap into this historic open-air pool in the centre of Bath. Almost 40 years since it closed, the site is reopening after a £9.3m renovation – and these swimmers, selected in a prize draw, are the first in the water. When they come up for air, they break into applause.

Among them are Jenni and Alan Hinds, who came by bus from nearby Bradford on Avon. Both remember swimming here as children. “Getting dressed in the changing rooms brought it all back,” says Jenni. “I remember visiting with my brothers. It’s wonderful. I want to come all the time!”

Built in 1815, the Grade II-listed Cleveland Pools is the UK’s oldest public outdoor swimming pool. The country’s many revamped lidos were mainly built in the 1920s and 30s, so are whippersnappers compared with this one. Hidden from general view, the pools (there are two – a main 25m pool and a children’s splash pool) are set within a walled garden and reached via an unassuming footpath between two houses on a quiet residential street. The feeling of otherworldliness is enhanced by a caretaker’s cottage and changing cubicles shaped like Bath’s Royal Crescent in miniature, and the pools’ lagoon-like position along the River Avon.



Cleveland Pools are in prime position by the River Avon – and the changing cubicles are shaped like Bath’s Royal Crescent. Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

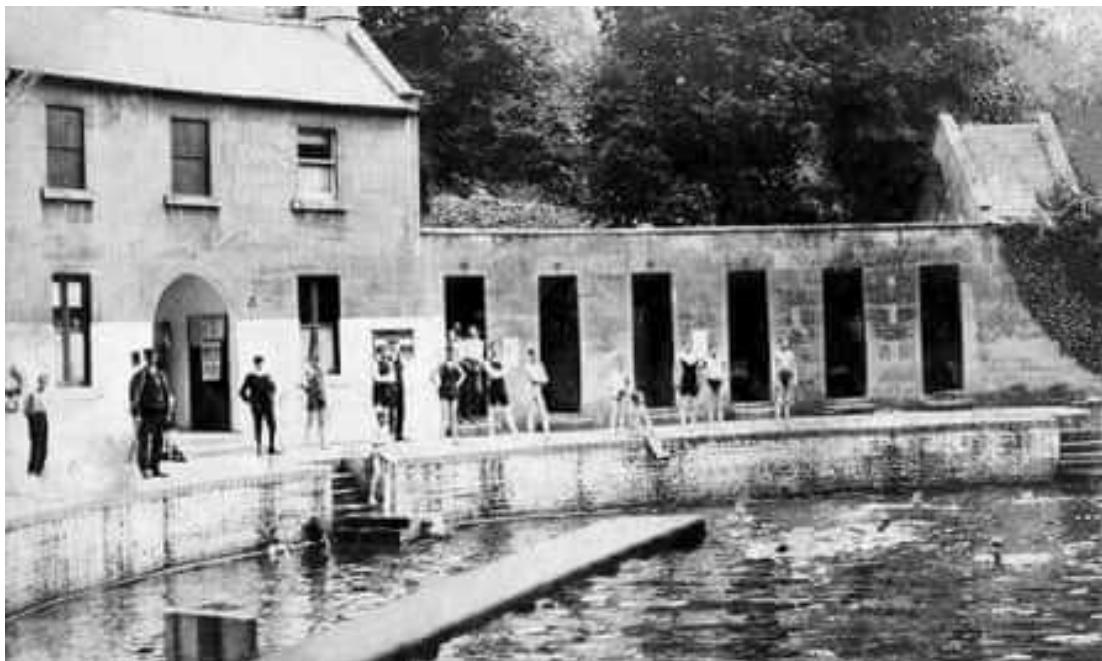
Seizing the chance to splash about in a piece of living history, I swim up and down amid a starburst of refracted sunlight. After our sneak preview – and a sold-out [Heritage](#) Open Day appearance this Saturday – the pools will open for a short time this autumn and fully next spring. A sense of euphoria ripples through the water, such is the warmth of feeling surrounding the pools’ reopening.

Until the early 1970s, Cleveland Baths, as it was then known, was one of the city’s prime social hubs, and had been since 1901, when it was bought by the local authority and went fully public. Before then, although ostensibly open to the public, high subscription fees would have excluded working-class swimmers. A carefully segregated ladies’ plunge pool was included from the start, but the main pool was men-only and the first subscribers were all male, fostering a distinct networking scene (Bridgerton location scouts seem to have missed a trick here).

Victorian manager William Evans would dive into the pool from 100 feet, wearing an outsize top hat to cushion his fall

In Victorian times, one “Captain” William Evans, keeper of a pet baboon, was in charge of the pools and the site was as much about spectacle as wellbeing. Evans taught swimming and performed Houdini-style stunts, diving into the pool from 100 feet up, wearing an oversized top hat to cushion his entry.

Given the pools’ remarkable history it seems unfathomable that this Georgian wonder was once threatened with demolition, especially in a spa town that sells itself on heritage and watery wellbeing. Yet when the pools closed to the public in 1984, the site was used as a trout farm before being put up for sale by the council in 2003.



Bathers at Cleveland Pools in 1910. Photograph: Bath Records Office

Fortunately, the development that would have seen the pools destroyed never materialised. After a long campaign by the Cleveland Pools Trust, and the backing of supporters, donors and funders (most significantly, the National Lottery Heritage Fund), restoration work finally started in May 2021. What had begun as a desire to preserve a piece of local history had, by then, become a mission to fulfil a need: dry robes may be as prevalent as reeds along the county’s riverbanks these days, as wild swimming continues to grow in popularity, but [questions over water quality](#) mean demand for outdoor swimming pools is also rising.

Knowing there would be demand helped see the trust through a renovation made more challenging by a lack of road access – materials all had to be brought in by river. However, visitors will be able to use this route next year when a riverside pontoon is added, rolling up by paddleboard, boat or (in keeping with the pools' early users) sidestroke.

"Everything leads back to the river," says project director Anna Baker, as we sit by the water's edge. "Originally the pool was just a diversion of the river. Then we used the river for access during the build. The next step is to add a water-source heat pump and use the river to heat the pools' water."



The author in the main Cleveland pool this week. Photograph: Richard Hammond

Around the site today there's a joyful, busy hum. It's late September and the unheated-for-now pool water is a brisk 18C but, in the sunshine, it feels like being dunked back into summer. The changing room doors, painted a dapper seaweedy blue, flip open and shut as people bob in and out of the water. Children huddle under the hot, outdoor showers. Non-swimmers gather in what was once the ladies' plunge pool to view a small exhibition. And the sound of splashing, laughter and conversation echo throughout just as they would have done 200 years earlier.

One person not in her swimming costume is Ann Dunlop. One of the three founders of the Cleveland Pools Trust, she's watching the day's proceedings from the terrace of the smart new cafe. "Today is a magic moment but I'm elderly and I have no desire at all to get in the water," she says. "I'm not a keen swimmer but when the council put the site on the market for development it didn't seem right. They didn't know what they had. I could see the pools from my house so I couldn't walk away. It was a constant reminder. We just kept going, kept badgering people."

After 18 years of work, isn't she just the tiniest bit curious to dip a toe in the water? "Next year, when the water is heated, I may be tempted," she admits. She won't be the only one.

Cleveland Pools will open this autumn (exact date tbc), with cold water swimming on Wednesdays and Saturdays (£6 adult, £4 child), then close for winter before reopening for the full season in spring. Swims will be timed, bookable sessions with a capacity of 200. From 2023, monthly swim passes and season tickets will also be available, clevelandpools.org.uk

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2022/sep/30/bath-cleveland-pools-lido-reopens>

Mini-budget 2022

Near the Greenwich pub where the mini-budget was born, Londoners share their fears

Citizens already describe feeling depressed, furious and highly anxious about the future



Chancellor Kwasi Kwarteng reportedly met with PM Liz Truss in the Richard the 1st pub in Greenwich to discuss the planned budget.
Photograph: Sean Smith/The Guardian

[Emine Sinmaz](#)

[@Emine_Sinmaz](#)

Fri 30 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT

“All the worst ideas happen at the pub, don’t they?” said Brett Lucas as he sat on a park bench in Greenwich Park, south-east London with his

girlfriend Becky Nolan, a 25-year-old nurse.

They are a few minutes walk away from the Richard the First pub, where the chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, and prime minister Liz Truss reportedly thrashed out the plan for a mini-budget that sparked turmoil on financial markets, and left a lot of ordinary people equally terrified.

“I’m pretty angry,” said Lucas, who works in telecoms sales. “I think they’ve completely lost touch with reality. They mentioned trickle-down economics but in reality I don’t think that’s going to work. They’re making the rich richer – it’s not like they’re going to invest it back into the bottom of society. I was saying to Becky earlier, it’s like walking past a homeless person, saying: ‘No, I’m going to post my £20 through a mansion instead because eventually it’ll trickle down to them.’ That’s how I’ve equated it.”

Like many others in the area, he is also concerned about how the government’s policies will affect his family. “I’ve spent a lot of time thinking about it,” the 25-year-old who lives in Swiss Cottage, north-west London, said. “It’s my parents I worry about. Combined, they earn less than me and they’ve got a mortgage to pay. It’s going to have a real impact. My mum texted me to say: ‘It’s ridiculous and dangerous, they don’t care.’”

Meanwhile, Paula Nuttall, an art historian and lecturer at the V&A, said she is worried about her two daughters. She said we’re living in a “strange and scary time”, adding: “Up until now I’ve been thinking it’s not as bad as the calamitous 14th century when you had the Black Death … but now I’m beginning to think maybe it’s getting to be.”

When asked about the impact of the mini-budget as she strolled through Greenwich Park, the 64-year-old said: “Deep depression actually, I can’t stop thinking about it. I never thought I would say maybe we were better off with Boris’s lot but I feel we now have a bunch of people in charge who are sending us into the abyss. It’s really frightening.

“Personally, I am lucky, in that I don’t have a mortgage and I’m nearing retirement age. I’m not like people starting out in life and people who are in poorly paid jobs but I have two daughters who are in their early thirties and

not in well paid jobs, and they need to find money for the mortgage and the rent. I'm really worried; it's the recklessness of the whole thing."

Labour Party member Sally Hughes, who lives a stone's throw from the pub, described the mini-budget as "complete rubbish".

"There's been a run on the pound and I don't believe what they say about other countries being in the same situation because they aren't. I see no reason to take off the higher rate tax rate when we need funds in the public purse," the 69-year-old retired legal aid lawyer said from the front garden of her terrace house.

"Although we've reached a point where we're comfortable, we still think the policies are wrong – it means our wider family is affected and the people we know in need are affected. I'm a church member and they're doing what they can do keep breakfast clubs, lunch clubs and food banks going."

Matt Shelley, 32, said the cost of living crisis has left him worried he may become homeless. His rent has increased by £100 a month, while his energy bills have shot up by £90.

"This government doesn't care, I've got no trust in them whatsoever. It seems the rich get richer and the poor stay poor," the hospital dispatcher from Gillingham, Kent, said as he played in the park with his nine-month-old daughter, Maya. "Everything's going up in price, it's crazy and I don't think there's any way out of it. Me and my partner are struggling now and we've had to apply for council housing because there's nothing we could do any more. We were told there's a massive waiting list. We said we've got a young baby and they said, 'You're housed so you're not a priority.' And I said: 'We won't be sooner or later because we're running out of money.'"

Car salesman Chris Price, from Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, said he felt the budget was "oriented around the richer paying less taxes". The 41-year-old pushed his two-year-old son, Jackson, through the park as he spoke of his concerns.

"I'm worried about my mortgage renewal in February and the thought of going from rates of 1.9% to 6%. It's going to drastically impact us, on top of all the other cost of living prices going up," he said. "I was also planning on

going to America and the pound has now dropped, and it's possibly going to be less than a dollar which has never happened around my lifetime.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/sep/30/near-the-greenwich-pub-where-the-mini-budget-was-born-londoners-share-their-fears>

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[**China**](#)

‘My life is wonderful on the road’: the Chinese woman who broke the mould

Feeling trapped amid the expectations of being a housewife and grandmother, Su Min set off, finding freedom and fame as she travelled around China

China's accidental feminist icon: The grandma who left an abusive husband for the open road – video



[Helen Davidson](#)

[@heldavidson](#)

Fri 30 Sep 2022 02.21 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 13.10 EDT

In late 2020 Su Min left her unhappy marriage behind and hit the road. The 58-year-old retiree had raised her family and done her duties, and her husband, she says, was treating her badly. So she studied online videos about road trips and set off across [China](#) alone in a VW hatchback with her pension and a rooftop tent.

As she travelled, Su filmed and posted videos and diaries of her journey, speaking candidly of her dissatisfying life of housework. She also marvelled at the beauty of the country she was finally exploring, and made new friends.

Su built a following of millions and regularly trended on social media, featuring in a Net-A-Porter advertisement for International Women's Day.

As Su travelled and her fame grew, many women saw her as an accidental feminist icon, for rejecting the traditional expectations of a housewife and grandmother and taking control of her life. She shyly dismisses the moniker and says she's not that famous, but enjoys how often she is stopped on the street, and how older women in particular have related to her story.

“As an ordinary housewife, someone who no one pays attention to on the street, to now have a lot of people see me and recognise me, this means there is an improvement in my life ,” Su tells the Guardian via Zoom. “I am at least acknowledged, and I think a life in which you are acknowledged is really good.”

Su had married in her early 20s. After growing up in Tibet and moving to Henan after high school she married after meeting her future husband just a few times. She says the marriage soon became unhappy, but she didn't leave, fearing the strong social stigma around divorces.



Su Min, a 58-year-old retiree from Henan, found fame in China after she left her unhappy marriage and spent two years driving around the country, documenting her experiences. Photograph: supplied by Su Min

Her husband has not spoken publicly about her trip or her accusations against him.

Change came in 2019 when Su saw an online video about someone living what has been popularised in the west as “van life”, and made a decision: when the grandchildren she was helping to care for entered kindergarten, she would leave, and she has barely looked back since.

“I met many like-minded travel pals, and fans who like me, so my life is wonderful on the road,” Su says. “I am very fulfilled, and so there is no feeling of loneliness or discomfort. On the road, my friends keep me company.”

Along her journey she upgraded the hatchback to a campervan. “I finally have my own home,” she told viewers in one post. “In the past, many things don’t belong to me in my family. There was not my name on those things. But my name is finally on this van now.”

Last month, after two years, 80,000 kilometres, 10 provinces and 200 cities, Su came home.

She returned to Henan province to spend the mid-autumn festival with her family, and to tell her husband she wanted a divorce. Su says her husband made no contact with her the entire time she was away.



Su Min has been on the road for two years, travelling through 10 provinces.
Photograph: supplied by Su Min

The reunion, filmed and uploaded to her social media, appears awkward and hostile. In the video her husband seems to make comments about her return, saying she couldn't survive out there any longer. One Weibo discussion hashtag about the video has been viewed more than 380m times, with streams of mostly supportive comments.

"I'm so happy for her! Su Min has changed," said one commenter. "She can finally be free, so she is changing her fate. Go, Su Min!"

Su says she has the support of her children in seeking a divorce, and hopes her husband will grant her one. But if he doesn't, she will just continue her travels.

"Divorce is just a piece of paper, it doesn't have much meaning," she says. "I won't have a second family or seek other partners anyway, I will rely on myself ... My husband did not interfere with my travelling, so if I go on the road again, he will just let me be."

Additional reporting by Xiaoqian Zhu and Chi Hui Lin

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/sep/30/my-life-is-wonderful-on-the-road-the-chinese-woman-who-broke-the-mould>

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You be the judgeMarriage

You be the judge: should my husband stop removing the sink strainer?

She says it prevents clogging up the pipes. He thinks it attracts unwanted pests. You decide who's responsible for this domestic blockage

- [Find out how to get a disagreement settled or become a You be the judge juror](#)



Illustration: Ilse Weisfelt/The Guardian



Interviews by [Georgina Lawton](#)

[@georginalawton](#)

Fri 30 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT

The prosecution: Clara

Using the sink strainer is simple and could prevent a big plumbing hassle

I live with my husband, Simeon, in a house that has a sink strainer, which I think is quite useful. It helps with collecting any sort of food debris and, for me, it's just an obvious thing to use. I've always had one in my home. But Simeon doesn't feel that way.

We've had this little running kitchen battle in the three years we've been married and lived together – . I put the sink strainer in the plug, and he takes it out. Round and round we go. I get irritated and so does he.

Simeon thinks the sink strainer is annoying and useless. He says it doesn't really have a function, that the sink and the pipes will actually take food and coffee grounds without any problem. But I think coffee grains and oats

should never go down the sink. Simeon says we should just let small food particles flow down the sink.

His stance assumes you don't clear out the strainer on a regular basis

He also says that, because we live in a hot climate in Australia, if food is left in the sink strainer, cockroaches or other insects may come along and cause problems. I kind of agree with that. I don't want more cockroaches around our home. But obviously, that stance assumes that you don't clear out the strainer on a regular basis. I would say I take the food out of the strainer three to five times a day. I clean it out and put the food remains in the bin. It takes about 10 seconds. For me it's not overly onerous but Simeon says it's a waste of time and an unnecessary action.

Simeon did say that, if the sink clogs up, he will pay for a plumber. But I think that's silly and extravagant. We have antiquated plumbing from the 1970s so I am worried that his habits will make things worse. And surely prevention is better than cure? If we have a sink strainer what's the point in not using it and spending money on a problem that we could avoid?

The defence: Simeon

Our pipes are big enough to cope with coffee grounds getting washed down the plughole

Leaving the sink strainer in the sink is annoying. It reminds me of the times I lived in a shared house and I had a flatmate who left the washing up in the sink. If I want to wash coffee grounds down the sink or something similar, I need to remove it first. I don't like having to deal with the food in the strainer before I can do my thing. The default function of a sink is to have an open drain. Things should just flow down whenever it is necessary. I see the strainer as totally devoid of purpose.

I think the main disagreement between me and Clara is where we leave the strainer

We also have a dishwasher, but I think rinsing things in the sink so that it prevents the dishwasher from clogging up makes more sense than trying to prevent the sink clogging up. The sink is designed to carry small bits of food away, whereas the dishwasher isn't and has an in-built strainer.

I think the main disagreement between me and Clara is where we leave the strainer. She likes it in the sink, whereas I would prefer it to be left outside the sink so you could just use the sink to rinse things down. The sinks where we live have drains that are 65-75mm wide. Basically anything that goes through that has been fine. Anything small enough – oats from porridge, muesli, small food particles, coffee grounds – it's fine. Clara hates that I let all that stuff go down our sink, but we've had no problems so far. I've spoken to plumbers and they affirm my stance: small food bits won't clog our drains, but fats and oils will. I never put those down the sink.

Clara is super tidy, probably tidier than me. We both keep the kitchen clean, we just disagree on this strainer issue. I think it should sit outside the sink unless she wants to use it and we should keep our sink in its default natural state. It's all pretty simple in my mind.

The jury of Guardian readers

Should Simeon stop removing the strainer from the sink?

Simeon needs to realise that putting anything other than water-based substances down the plughole is inviting a plumber to visit. A proper plumber, not the ones he's selectively spoken to. There are so many websites on this matter – it really isn't rocket science. Who wants a fatburger in their life!?

John, 68

A plumber may have given their view, but surely it's best to just avoid the risk by using the bin? Why not spend that potential money on a plumber on a nice day out as a couple, instead of offering to foot a bill because you're so stubborn?

Jamie, 33

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I hate fishing slimy food out of the sink strainer, but living with another means you must compromise. Prevention is better than cure and I'm not convinced sink drains are "built for it". It's not just about paying for a plumber. I'm also loath to chuck drain-busting chemicals down there.

Sarah-Jane, 31

Clara handles most strainer cleaning duties, so why should it bother Simeon that she does. When he uses the strainer as a "plug" that's a small compromise. He shouldn't be pouring food bits down the sink: yes, it can cause blockages.

Arabella, 40

Not guilty. Simeon is in that place of learning to live with someone who has very different domestic habits. Often what seems logical to one is infuriating to another. This isn't about the strainer, it's about the domestic communication that goes overlooked.

Henry, 21

You be the judge

So now you can be the judge. In our online poll below, tell us: should Simeon stop removing the strainer from the sink?

The poll will close Thursday 6 October at 9am BST

Last week's result

We asked whether [Fred should stop disappearing without telling his friends](#)

63% of you said yes – Fred is guilty

37% of you said no – Fred is not guilty

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/sep/30/you-be-the-judge-should-my-husband-stop-removing-the-sink-strainer>

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2022.09.30 - Opinion

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OpinionEnvironment

Environmental destruction is part of Liz Truss's plan

[George Monbiot](#)



The prime minister's ideology encourages the extraction of as much income as possible from nature before abandoning it



'Liz Truss is rushing through a bill that will delete 570 environmental laws inherited from the EU.' Photograph: Dylan Martinez/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 30 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 07.39 EDT

The ecological destruction Liz Truss plans to unleash on this country is not collateral damage. It is not a byproduct of her economic programme. It's a mark of true faith, a sign that she is following her ideology to the letter. For fundamental to this doctrine – neoliberalism – is the belief that everything on Earth can and should be turned into something else.

The founding father of neoliberalism is Friedrich Hayek. His frankly deranged tract *The Constitution of Liberty* enjoys almost biblical status among his disciples. Margaret Thatcher was perhaps the book's most famous advocate, and Truss now carries the flame. It inveighs against the protection of the living world. Rather than seeking to protect the soil – the delicate ecosystem from which 99% of our calories are produced – Hayek says it makes sense to extract as much value as it can produce, exhaust it “once and for all”, then abandon the land. The role of soil is to create a “temporary contribution to our income”, which we can then invest in other moneymaking schemes. For “there is nothing in the preservation of natural resources as such which makes it a more desirable object of investment than man-made equipment”.

Our destiny, according to this belief system, is to turn nature into money. If you point out that the ecological collapse this causes will destroy every aspect of our lives, including our economy, neoliberals reply that resources are, in effect, infinite: minerals will continue to be found, ecosystems will renew themselves. This summer, as the drought that now threatens our rivers and water supplies began, John Redwood MP stated: “The water regulators and companies want us to use less water in the years ahead. Why? Water is the [ultimate renewable resource](#), available in abundance on our planet. They should get on with putting in the capacity so we can use what we want.”

This mindset denies not only environmental crises, but material reality. If money – which is all they know – can be magicked into existence, why can’t everything else?

It is within this frame that we should understand what Truss proposes. She wants to rip down our planning controls, creating “investment zones” in which corporations and oligarchs can [build what they want](#). The policy is justified by trickle-down economics: let the housebuilders do their worst, and some of the homes they build might be affordable to the poor. But the industry uses endless ruses to avoid building affordable homes, and it carefully manages supply, sitting on its land banks to keep prices high. There are far better ways of getting the housing we need. A team of us proposed some of them in our report to the Labour party, [Land for the Many](#). But the [defensive ring](#) built around property by the billionaire press frightens almost everyone away.

Truss’s proposals, by contrast, solve nothing, while permitting [scarcely regulated urban sprawl](#) across some of the most beautiful landscapes in England. According to the Adam Smith Institute, one of the [dark-money lobby groups](#) that has shaped her thinking and supplied some of her key advisers, these zones are a step towards [dismantling the planning system](#) nationwide.

She is also rushing through parliament a bill that will [delete 570 environmental laws inherited from the EU](#). The speed of this programme ensures that, even if she intends to replace them with laws of equal strength, there would be a [regulatory hiatus in which anything goes](#). All experience

suggests that she will not replace them with laws of equal strength, but introduce weaker laws or none at all.

It was Truss who turned me vegan. In 2015, when she was environment secretary, I stumbled across a shocking case of river pollution: a dairy farm had built a pipe from one of its slurry lagoons into a river, reducing a beautiful ecosystem to a stinking sewer. I reported it to the Environment Agency, but it refused to take action. After I [expressed my astonishment in the Guardian](#), two separate whistleblowers from the Environment Agency contacted me. They told me, citing pressure from the government, that they had been instructed to disregard all incidents of this kind. If the government wasn't prepared to regulate the industry, I decided, [I wasn't prepared to eat its products](#).

Truss [volunteered her department for massive funding cuts](#). Against the advice of experts, she insisted on letting farmers dredge the watercourses passing through their land, without [oversight or regulation](#). An Environment Agency [report](#) showing how such dredging wrecks the ecology of streams and rivers while [increasing the risk of flooding downstream](#), was deleted from government websites. She was the worst environment secretary we've ever had, which is quite a feat when you [remember her predecessors](#).

Now her government [plans to ditch](#) the only genuine benefit of Brexit. The EU's common agricultural policy, which pays farmers for maintaining land in "agricultural condition", is one of the [most destructive policy instruments](#) on Earth, a giant perverse incentive to destroy wildlife habitats. This was going to be replaced in the UK with the payment of public money for public goods, such as the protection and restoration of habitats. But, to the delight of the National Farmers' Union and the [horror of the good farmers](#) that it fails to represent, the government will revert to the regressive practice of paying people to own land. It's another transfer of money to the rich and another incentive for destruction.

Truss has [reversed the ban on fracking](#) in England, though even the founder of the UK's first fracking company says [it's a waste of time here](#). Never mind the geology, it's the principle that counts. Truss gave the energy brief to Jacob Rees-Mogg, or Re-Smog as environmentalists call him. He has told his staff "we have to get [every cubic inch of gas](#) out of the North Sea": a

policy that, if replicated around the world, commits us to Earth systems collapse.

We should see Truss's government as an experiment: what happens when neoliberal ultras, schooled by the dark-money thinktanks, get everything they want? Result: the economy falls off a cliff, while the fabric of the nation is ripped apart. Conclusion: we should never again let such people near government.

At last, the [big conservation groups are stirring](#). The RSPB, the Wildlife Trusts and the National Trust, with a combined membership of almost 8 million, now talk of mobilising. It's about time: for far too long they have failed to use their power, while successive governments have laid waste to the land. But, in fighting it, we should stop interpreting Truss's vandalism as an accidental outcome of other policies. It is the policy.

- George Monbiot 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](#)[Fracking](#)

Watch for a political earthquake in middle England, as Liz Truss breaks up the Tory bedrock

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



In Surrey, the cost of living crisis could push voters away from the Conservatives and towards a progressive alliance



‘Jeremy Hunt’s majority shrank to 8,817 not because the Tory vote crumbled but because the anti-Tory vote got its act together.’ Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

Fri 30 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 07.14 EDT

Deep in the rolling hills of the Surrey commuter belt lies a narrow, winding lane overhung with trees. Halfway down the bridleway that leads off it, Sarah Godwin points out the barn one of her farming neighbours has converted into a wedding venue. Brides and grooms use this unspoilt view, over grazing sheep and ancient woodland to the beauty spot of Hascombe Hill, as the backdrop for wedding photographs. But soon, that view might include an oilwell.

This summer, [ministers granted permission](#) for exploratory drilling here, overruling objections from the Conservative-controlled county council and local Conservative MP Jeremy Hunt.

What is proposed just outside the village of Dunsfold [isn't fracking](#), since it doesn't involve fracturing rock by pumping water through at high pressure, although hackles still rose locally when Liz Truss [lifted the national ban](#) on fracking last week.

Villagers already rattled by plans to build 1,800 houses nearby now fear tankers rumbling down their narrow roads, pollution and potential impacts on house prices and the landscape. But they're also baffled by the logic of drilling for oil in a climate crisis. "We need to be looking at ways to cut back on fossil fuels, not spending time and money getting more out of the ground," says Godwin, a veteran of Greenpeace protests in her native New Zealand and co-founder of the action group [Protect Dunsfold](#), now seeking a judicial review of the drilling decision. UK Oil & Gas has offered the village a cut of the profits if it hits oil. But in affluent areas like this, does money trump peace of mind?

The illuminating thing about the deal on offer to Dunsfold – painful upheaval now, in return for vague promises of riches later – is that it's the one Truss is effectively now offering the whole country. In pursuit of growth that may never come, she has crashed the pound and forced up borrowing costs at a time when many are mortgaged to the hilt – especially in places like Surrey, where a post-lockdown exodus from London inflated an already overheated market.

Some City commuters on the morning trains from Godalming may benefit from her top rate tax cut but the mayhem unleashed in the process threatens the pensions, share portfolios and property wealth on which middle England is built. Boris Johnson's behaviour may have embarrassed Tory voters but Truss is essentially fracking her own vote, driving deep into Tory bedrock. The pollsters YouGov [now give](#) Labour an eye-watering 33-point lead over the Tories.

Hunt insists his constituents haven't taken against Truss as they ultimately did against Johnson, and cautions against reading too much into market volatility. But what his voters want to hear from next week's Tory party conference, he says carefully, is that there's a long-term plan for growth, public services and low taxes they can trust. "I fully accept that that's a necessary condition for the election of a Conservative government," he says. "That's why people vote Conservative, it's because we are trusted on the economy." His is, he warns, the kind of constituency "where people will vote Conservative if they think [Conservatives](#) are working hard enough for their vote", but won't be taken for granted. A marginal when he inherited it in 2005, Hunt expects it to be highly marginal next time round.

For in his South West Surrey seat and Dominic Raab's Esher and Walton, plus neighbouring Guildford and Woking, Lib Dems are snapping closer to Tory heels.

Seats like this only really wobble in a crisis, as happened in the mid-1970s after economic turmoil under Ted Heath, and in the 1990s after the last sterling crisis. The combination of economic chaos and threats to the green belt is theoretically a gift to them. But is it enough to collapse the “blue wall”, that small but strategically important set of Tory-held seats where Labour can't win but the Lib Dems just might?

Neil Sherlock, a former adviser to Nick Clegg, fought South West Surrey for the Lib Dems in 1992. He remembers the thrill of feeling the tide running his way, until the last few days when voters suddenly got cold feet. “They'd say, ‘I'd love to vote for you, but we're not having that Neil Kinnock’,” he recalls. The Lib Dems thrive under opposition leaders who don't scare their voters, a description that increasingly fits Keir Starmer. But still, though they came within a few hundred votes of snatching South West Surrey in 2001, it's always hovered just beyond reach.

The new Lib Dem candidate for the constituency is Paul Follows, the energetic leader of Waverley borough council. He cites the biggest local issues as oil exploitation (the council is challenging the Dunsfold decision in court) and the cost of living. People who have never previously needed help are turning up at Godalming's community food store – less a food bank than what his local Labour colleague Richard Ashworth calls a “supermarket without a till” – while fellow Godalming Green councillor Clare Weightman worries about “aspirational” lives built on cheap credit that's suddenly not cheap. The twist in the tale this time, however, lies in the way Follows, Ashworth and Weightman meet me jointly to explain it.

Hunt's majority shrank from over 28,000 in 2015 to 8,817 in 2019 not because the Tory vote crumbled – it barely blinked – but because the anti-Tory vote got its act together. Neither the Greens nor a previously popular independent stood against Follows at the last general election. Under a grassroots pact brokered by the local branch of the Compass thinktank, which promotes progressive alliances, Labour, the Lib Dems and the Greens stood aside for each other in Waverley borough council seats where the

progressive vote would otherwise be split; Follows now heads a rainbow coalition from which genuine friendships have seemingly blossomed. (Follows keeps a box of Lego in his office to entertain Weightman's three-year-old, while Ashworth jokes that the main bone of contention between them is that he's a pacifist, while Follows works in the defence industry.)

Increasingly, local activists help each other out – yellow-rosetted volunteers delivering Green leaflets are not unusual – and Weightman says voters appreciate the lack of squabbling. The alliance they're describing, built from bottom up not top down and helpfully under the radar, make [calls for a formal Lib-Lab pact](#) look almost old-fashioned.

That doesn't, of course, guarantee it will deliver general election seats. Truss theoretically still has time to change economic course, difficult as it is to see her abandoning the concept on which her leadership is founded. Floating voters may yet lose their nerve about Labour. But could something seismic be building beneath middle England? If not now, it's hard to see when.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
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[**Opinion**](#)[**Electoral reform**](#)

Why is Labour ignoring its own members on electoral reform?

[**Polly Toynbee**](#)



Liberal-left coalitions are the only way to overturn the right's unfair electoral advantage



‘What’s preventing Keir Starmer and his team from embracing what his party so demonstrably wants?’ Labour delegates vote at the party conference in Liverpool. Photograph: Adam Vaughan/EPA

Fri 30 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 12.14 EDT

Bravo for the Labour party and a new cadre of trade union leaders who this week showed unequivocal support for overhauling our archaic voting system. Labour conference delegates overwhelmingly [backed a motion](#) calling on the party to embrace proportional representation. How could it be otherwise when a fanatical cult of free-marketeers has seized power and [crashed the economy?](#)

Progressives almost always outvote the right, according to the Electoral Reform Society. But the right nearly always wins under the current first-past-the-post system because the centre and centre-left vote has been fatally split ever since the rising Labour party failed to kill off the remnant of the old Liberals. At the last local elections, in [85% of seats](#) just one rightist – a single Tory – confronted an anti-Tory vote split between two or three Labour, Lib Dem and Green candidates. Readers of these pages know the well-rehearsed reasons why the Guardian backs electoral reform. The political scientist Sir John Curtice says the system is now more biased towards the Conservatives than at any time since the 1950s, when [Labour on its own outpolled them but lost](#).

At the next election, the [Tories only need a five-point lead to win](#), while Labour needs to be 12 points ahead because the latter's voters are clumped in the same seats, while Tory supporters are spread more widely. According to political academic [Prof Robert Ford](#): "Citizens living in countries with more proportional electoral systems are more politically engaged and turn out more in elections", delivering "healthier democracies with happier voters".

And it's easy to see why: voters here are confined to holding their noses and choosing between one of two big, uncomfortable coalitions: far left and social democrats in Labour, or pro-EU traditional Conservatives and far-right Brexit free-marketeers in the Tories. There is no hope for new parties and no way for voters to express a particular opinion, causing a dangerous disillusion with politics that threatens democracy itself. [Roy Jenkins' compromise solution](#), commissioned by Tony Blair – combining constituency links with a proportional top-up – sits gathering dust on the shelf.

So what's preventing Keir Starmer and his team from embracing what his party so demonstrably wants and what the [majority of the public, for the first time, supports](#)?

Two things: one understandable, the other disgraceful. Starmer himself and most of those around him are instinctive reformers, for all the above good reasons. But they take fright easily, only newly arrived at believing they [could actually win the next election](#). Might the chameleon Tories reform and revive in the next two years? Might those eternal zombies spring from their political grave?

To do that, the Tories need to make the next election about anything except the economy, pay, the cost of living, sky-high mortgages and derelict public services. They will, no doubt, scramble for any culture war issue they can drum up, preferably a return to Brexity. They will grub up any phoney distraction – and a Labour manifesto pledge to reform the voting system might just fit the bill. The Mail has been [testing its teeth](#) on this already: "Tory election planners fear Labour will back bid to axe 'first-past-the-post' system next month – risking a 'coalition of chaos' that could lock Conservatives out of power for a generation."

This week they stirred up MP Maria Caulfield, whose Lewes seat will probably return to the Lib Dems, [to warn](#): “For all his bluster, Keir Starmer is keeping the door open to a grubby backroom deal with the Liberal Democrats because he can’t rely on running on his own record. And we know the price of Lib Dem support will be to renege on the referendum result and Brexit.”

Never mind that it’s nonsense: the Conservatives might manage to make the Brexit threat fly, pretending that it is the price the [Liberal Democrats](#) would demand. It is true that proportional representation would prevent the Tories in their current demented form ever again winning alone. Imagine how they might blow this up into an entirely mendacious “Labour gerrymandering threat to democracy”.

Look no further than the scandalous lies the no side told during the alternative vote referendum in 2011, preposterously claiming its cost would take money from [babies’ incubators](#), as they cut their teeth on how to lie in the Brexit referendum. Does Labour really want to commit to an electoral reform referendum consuming its first few months? The complex pro argument will be hard to make against the hailstorm of the Tory press defending their indefensible electoral advantage.

Fear that backing proportional representation could lose [Labour](#) the election is a genuine enough reason for concern. The disgraceful reason why a minority in the party, comprising tribal dinosaurs, reject it, however, is that it means Labour, too, would never win alone again, losing seats to the Greens and any new socialist party that may emerge. Since Labour rarely wins anyway, that’s a very bad reason. What matters is that progressives can coalesce to keep out the kind of right that has brought us to this crisis. A progressive coalition of well-defined parties commanding influence in government according to their strength would secure a progressive future. Letting extreme Tories win mostly is a rotten price for preserving the old Labour party.

If Labour needs Lib Dem support to get its budget and legislation through, Ed Davey has to show he is no [Nick Clegg](#) by refusing absolutely without proportional representation, with or without a referendum. Clegg threw

everything away, allowing a weak alternative vote system instead of proportional representation on the ballot paper, and failing to force David Cameron to back it. This time the Lib Dems will be wiser if they hold swing votes. They have learned bitter lessons.

But if Labour wins outright, never mind what they timidly said before the election, they must do it. Remember what happened in 2010 with George Osborne's first austerity budget: he swept away almost everything good Labour did in its 13 years because, aided by the folly of Lib Dems infatuated with red boxes, he could impose extreme policies. A proportional representation-elected Commons wouldn't be able to command a majority for such extremism. Why yet again toil to bring in decent policies, only for the political pendulum to swing back and knock them all away again? This is a risk worth taking.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
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[Opinion](#)[Environment](#)

Hurricane Ian is no anomaly. The climate crisis is making storms more powerful

Michael E Mann and Susan Joy Hassol

Ian is one of the five worst hurricanes in America's recorded history. That's not a fluke – it's a tragic taste of things to come



‘Many of the storms of the past years – Harvey, Maria, Florence, Michael, Ida, Ian - aren’t natural disasters so much as human-made disasters.’

Photograph: Ricardo Arduengo/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 30 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Sat 1 Oct 2022 10.41 EDT

Climate change once seemed a distant threat. No more. We now know its face, and all too well. We see it in every hurricane, torrential rainstorm, flood, heatwave, wildfire and drought. It’s even detectable in our daily weather. Climate disruption has changed the background conditions in which

all weather occurs: the oceans and air are warmer, there's more water vapor in the atmosphere and sea levels are higher. Hurricane Ian is the latest example.

Ian made landfall as one of the [five most powerful hurricanes](#) in recorded history to strike the US, and with its 150 mile per hour winds at landfall, [it tied with 2004's Hurricane Charley](#) as the strongest to ever hit the west coast of Florida. In isolation, that might seem like something we could dismiss as an anomaly or fluke. But it's not – it's part of a larger pattern of stronger hurricanes, typhoons and superstorms that have emerged as the oceans continue to set [record levels of warmth](#).

Many of the storms of the past five years – [Harvey](#), Maria, [Florence](#), Michael, Ida and Ian - aren't natural disasters so much as human-made disasters, whose amplified ferocity is fueled by the continued burning of fossil fuels and the increase in heat-trapping carbon pollution, a planet-warming “greenhouse gas”.

No amount of adaptation can shield [us] from the devastating consequences of the continued warming of our planet

This Atlantic hurricane season, although it started out slow, has heated up, thanks to unusually warm ocean waters. Fiona hit Puerto Rico as a category 1 hurricane (subsequently strengthening to a powerful category 4 storm), and hundreds of thousands of people there are still without power. The storm barreled on into the open Atlantic, eventually making landfall in the maritime provinces to become Canada's strongest ever storm. Then came Ian, which feasted on a deep layer of very warm water in the Gulf of Mexico.

Human-caused warming is not just heating the surface of the oceans; the warmth is diffusing down into the depths of the ocean, leading to year after year of [record ocean heat content](#). That means that storms are less likely to churn up colder waters from below, inhibiting one of the natural mechanisms that dampen strengthening. It also leads to the sort of rapid intensification

we increasingly see with these storms, where they balloon into major hurricanes in a matter of hours.

Too often we still hear, even [from government scientists](#), the old saw that we cannot link individual hurricanes to climate change. There was a time when climate scientists believed that to be true. But they don't any more. We have developed powerful tools to attribute the degree to which global warming affects extreme events. One [study](#) found, for example, that the devastating flooding from Hurricane Florence as it made landfall in North Carolina four years ago was as much as 50% greater and 80km (50 miles) larger due to the warmer ocean.

We can also draw upon basic physics, as we [explained](#) in Scientific American in 2017. Warmer oceans mean more fuel to strengthen hurricanes, with an average increase in wind speeds of major hurricanes of about 18mph for each 1C (1.8F) of ocean surface warming, a roughly 13% increase. Since the power of the storm increases roughly the wind speed not only squared but raised to the third power, that amounts to a roughly 44% increase in the destructive potential of these storms.

There is also evidence that human-caused warming is [increasing the size](#) of these storms. All else being equal, larger storms pile up greater amounts of water, leading to larger storm surges like the 12 to 18 feet estimated for Ian in some locations. Add sea level rise, and that's the better part of foot of additional coastal flooding baked into every single storm surge. If humanity continues to warm the planet, and destabilize the Greenland and west Antarctic ice sheets, we could see yards, not feet, of eventual sea-level rise. Think of that as a perpetual coastal flooding event.

Then there is the flooding rainfall, like the 20 inches (50cm) of it we're seeing across [a large swath of Florida](#) with Ian. Simple physics tells us that the amount of moisture that evaporates off the ocean into the atmosphere increases about 7% for each 1C of ocean surface warming. That means 7% more moisture to turn into flooding rains. But that's not the whole story. Stronger storms can [entrain more moisture](#) into them – a [double whammy](#) that produced the record flooding we saw in Philadelphia a year ago with Hurricane Ida, and the flooding we saw with Harvey in Texas in 2017 and

Florence in the Carolinas in 2018, the [two worst flooding events](#) on record in the US.

Tampa's wide shallow coastal shelf, low topography combined with rising sea levels and vulnerable infrastructure [make it particularly vulnerable](#) to a landfalling major hurricane. Tampa Bay [has dodged multiple bullets](#) in recent years in the form of major hurricanes that ultimately weakened or swerved away from the city. Ian is the latest example, as it passed to the east rather than to the west of Tampa Bay, sparing the sprawling urban population a devastating storm surge that would have flooded the homes of millions.

Unfortunately, Tampa's luck will eventually run out. We must prepare for the inevitable calamity that will occur when the city is at the receiving end of a losing roll of the weather dice.

It is important to take steps to increase resilience and adapt to the changes that are inevitable, taking all of the precautions we can to spare our coasts from the devastating consequences of sea-level rise combined with stronger, more damaging hurricanes. But [no amount of adaptation](#) can shield Florida, or anywhere else, from the devastating consequences of the continued warming of our planet.

Only mitigation – the dramatic reduction of heat-trapping pollution – can prevent things from getting worse. We've [seen some progress](#) on that front recently, both in the US and globally. The climate provisions of the recently passed Inflation Reduction Act are [a great start](#), but they're not adequate on their own for the US to meet its obligations to cut carbon emissions in half by 2030.

We need more aggressive climate action to pass Congress. And that means we need politicians who are willing to support that action, rather than act as apologists for powerful fossil fuel interests. That's something for all Americans to think about as they go to the voting booths in a matter of weeks.

- Michael E Mann is presidential distinguished professor of earth and environmental science at the University of Pennsylvania. He is author of [The New Climate War: The Fight to Take Back Our Planet](#)
 - Susan Joy Hassol is director of the non-profit [Climate Communication](#). She publishes [Quick Facts](#) on the links between climate change and extreme weather events
 - This article was amended on 1 October 2022 to clarify that Hurricane Ian was a category 1 storm when it hit Puerto Rico, and subsequently strengthened
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[Hurricane Ian](#)

Hurricane Ian: ‘catastrophic’ damage in Florida as storm heads to South Carolina



First responders with Orange county fire rescue rescue a resident from a flooded neighborhood in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian, on Thursday.
Photograph: Phelan M Ebenhack/AP

Biden says hurricane could ‘be deadliest in state’s history’ as storm regains strength and heads towards South Carolina

[Richard Luscombe](#) in Miami

@richlusc

Fri 30 Sep 2022 02.23 EDTFirst published on Thu 29 Sep 2022 10.37 EDT

The “catastrophic” scale of the damage wreaked by Hurricane Ian’s 150mph deadly rampage across Florida has become clearer as emergency crews rescued trapped residents from flooded homes, and authorities expressed fears of a growing death toll.

As South Carolina braced for Ian to make a second landfall on Friday, search and rescue crews in south-west [Florida](#) conducted hundreds of missions in areas that were submerged by a storm surge of up to 18ft after one of the most powerful storms to strike the US swept ashore on Wednesday.

With all of South Carolina’s coast under a hurricane warning, a steady stream of vehicles left Charleston on Thursday, many probably heeding officials’ warnings to seek higher ground. Storefronts were sandbagged to ward off high water levels in an area prone to inundation.

Along the Battery area at the southern tip of the 350-year-old city’s peninsula, locals and tourists alike took selfies against the choppy backdrop of whitecaps in Charleston harbor as palm trees bent in gusty wind.

[Hurricane Ian: 'Historic storm' wrecks havoc in Florida as trapped residents are rescued - video](#)

The Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, gave a briefing on Thursday night at which he said at least 700 rescues, mostly by air, had been conducted so far, involving the US Coast Guard, the national guard and urban search-and-rescue teams.

Joe Biden said Ian “could be the deadliest hurricane in Florida’s history”, adding at an afternoon briefing at the headquarters of the Federal Emergency

Management Agency (Fema) that he was “hearing early reports of what may be substantial loss of life”.

Local officials were more cautious. Chris Constance, commissioner of Charlotte county, said he knew of six confirmed fatalities, but was unaware of the circumstances. In Lee county, Sheriff Carmine Marceno said he was aware of “roughly five”.

[Hurricane Ian map - 18.23 BST update](#)

Authorities confirmed at least one Florida death – a 72-year-old man in Deltona who fell into a canal while using a hose to drain his pool in the heavy rain, the Volusia county sheriff’s office said. Two storm deaths were reported in Cuba.

Earlier in the day Ian had been downgraded to a tropical storm as it crept across the Florida peninsula and emerged over the Atlantic Ocean but regained hurricane level, category one, in the early evening as it span towards South Carolina where it was expected to makes its second landfall on Friday morning local time.

The National Hurricane Center said that by midnight the storm’s maximum sustained winds increased to more than 80mph (128km/h), and governors of Georgia, South Carolina, North Carolina and Virginia declared states of emergency.

Biden also declared a state of emergency in South Carolina, where some Charlotte residents had chosen to evacuate on Thursday afternoon.

In coastal south-west Florida, desperate residents posted to social media sites, pleading for rescue for themselves or loved ones. Helicopters were in the air at first light, assisting recovery efforts by coast guard and national guard troops.

“Time is of the essence and we’ve got a lot of people we need to help,” DeSantis said at a morning press conference.

“They’re focusing their rescue efforts on those areas that were most hard hit.”



Boats are partially submerged at a marina in the aftermath of Hurricane Ian in Fort Myers, Florida, on Thursday. Photograph: Giorgio Viera/AFP/Getty Images

DeSantis said Ian’s impact across Florida was widespread, caused by flooding from a deluge of three months’ worth of rain in 48 hours in some areas, the unprecedented storm surge, and category 4 winds.

Aerial video and photographs showed massive devastation and flooding in beach communities from Naples to Fort Myers, with homes and businesses reduced to matchwood, and other buildings, mobile homes, boats and vehicles totally wrecked or submerged.

More than 2 million people remained without power, DeSantis said, adding that some areas could be without electricity for weeks while power grids are completely rebuilt.

“The impacts of this storm are historic, and the damage that was done has been historic. And this is just off initial assessment,” he said.

“This storm is having broad impacts across the state, and some of the flooding you’re going to see in areas hundreds of miles from where this made landfall are going to set records.”



A resident at a mobile home park checks homes in Fort Myers, Florida, on Thursday, one day after Hurricane Ian made landfall. Photograph: Joseph Agcaoili/AFP/Getty Images

In an afternoon update, DeSantis spoke of a “biblical storm surge” sweeping across Sanibel island. “It’s washed away roads, washed away structures,” he said, referring to the partial collapse of Sanibel causeway, the only road route to the mainland.

Biden made a major disaster declaration for nine of the worst-affected counties, freeing federal resources to supplement local rescue and recovery efforts, and guaranteeing government money for an initial 30-day period for costs likely to run into billions of dollars.

“Many families are hurting today, and our country hurts with them,” the president said.

“We’re continuing to see deadly rainfall, catastrophic storm surges, roads and homes flooded, millions of people without power and thousands hunkered down in schools and community centers.

“They’re wondering what’s going to be left when they get to go home.”

Biden said federal funds would cover “the majority of the cost of rebuilding public buildings, like schools and fire stations, and folks in Florida who have destroyed or damaged homes”.

He said individual assistance payments of up to \$75,000 would be available for home repairs or to replace lost property.

Residents from Punta Gorda on the south-west coast to Orlando and Cape Canaveral, meanwhile, were assessing the damage from the massive flooding, rainfall and punishing winds.



Aerial view of damaged homes in Punta Gorda after Hurricane Ian moved through the Gulf coast of Florida. Photograph: Win McNamee/Getty Images

“I don’t think that we can quantify it yet. But I can tell you that it is going to be catastrophic,” Deanne Criswell, the Fema administrator, told CNN.

“The amount of impact to these communities is going to be significant. A number of these families are living in mobile homes. We are preparing for the potential of thousands of families that are going to need assistance.”

In Lee county, officials were attempting to calculate a death toll. Sheriff Marceno walked back an earlier claim of “hundreds”, but said he feared what rescue crews would find.

“There are people I know did not evacuate,” he told CNN. “They tried to take cover, they’ve gone to the second floor and the attic [but] the water got so high here with a surge of approximately 16ft give or take, that’s what’s going to compromise structures and also that’s the most deadly.”

Kevin Anderson, the Fort Myers mayor, said rescue operations were continuing and it was too soon for an accurate figure. “I just know there are several deaths related to the storm,” he said.

The storm surge flooded the lower-level emergency room of the HCA Florida Fawcett hospital in Port Charlotte, while fierce winds tore part of the fourth-floor roof from its intensive care unit, according to Dr Birgit Bodine.

Intensive care staff were forced to evacuate the medium-sized hospital’s sickest patients to other floors.

Bodine said incoming storm injuries could make things worse. “The ambulances may be coming soon and we don’t know where to put them in the hospital at this point,” she said. “We’re doubled and tripled up.”

The Associated Press and Reuters contributed to this report

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[Iran](#)

Iran puts pressure on celebrities and journalists over Mahsa Amini protests

Tehran says film-makers, athletes and actors who have backed demonstrations ‘fanned flames of riots’



Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi warned public security ‘is red line of the Islamic Republic of Iran’. Photograph: Iranian Presidency/AFP/Getty Images

Staff and agencies

Thu 29 Sep 2022 17.48 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 10.13 EDT

Iran has stepped up pressure on celebrities and journalists over the wave of women-led protests sparked by outrage over the death of Mahsa Amini, after she was arrested by the Islamic republic’s morality police.

Film-makers, athletes, musicians and actors have backed the demonstrations, and many saw it as a signal when [the national football team remained in](#)

their black tracksuits when the anthems were played before a match in Vienna against Senegal.

“We will take action against the celebrities who have fanned the flames of the riots,” Tehran provincial governor Mohsen Mansouri said, according to the ISNA news agency.

Iran’s judiciary chief Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei similarly charged that “those who became famous thanks to support from the system have joined the enemy when times are difficult”.

The warnings came after almost two weeks of protests across Iran and a deadly crackdown that, human rights group Amnesty International says, has been marked by “ruthless violence by security forces”.

Iran Human Rights, a Norway-based group, said on Thursday that at least 83 people, including children, had been killed during the repression.

Public anger flared after Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman, died in custody on 16 September, three days after her arrest for allegedly breaching Iran’s strict rules for women on wearing hijab headscarves and modest clothing.

“Woman, Life, Freedom!” protesters have chanted ever since, in Iran’s biggest demonstrations in almost three years, in which women have defiantly burned their headscarves and cut their hair.

President Ebrahim Raisi warned that, despite “grief and sorrow” over Amini’s death, public security “is the red line of the Islamic Republic of Iran and no one is allowed to break the law and cause chaos”.

Iran on Thursday slammed “interference” in its internal affairs by France over a statement in support of the protests, having earlier complained to Britain and Norway.

Solidarity protests with Iranian women have been held worldwide, and rallies are planned in 70 cities Saturday.

One protest erupted in Afghanistan's capital Kabul, where women rallied outside Iran's embassy with banners that read: "Iran has risen, now it's our turn!" and "From Kabul to Iran, say no to dictatorship!"

Iran on Thursday arrested the reporter Elahe Mohammadi, who had covered Amini's funeral, her lawyer said, becoming the latest of a growing number of journalists to be detained.

Police have also arrested journalist Niloufar Hamedi of the reformist Sharq daily, who went to the hospital where Amini lay in a coma and helped expose the case to the world.

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The Committee to Protect Journalists said on Thursday that three other journalists – Farshid Ghorbanpour, Aria Jaffari and Mobin Balouch – had been arrested, bringing the total behind bars to 28.

London-based [Amnesty International](#) criticised Iran's "widespread patterns of unlawful use of force and ruthless violence by security forces".

It said this included the use of live ammunition and metal pellets, heavy beatings and sexual violence against women, all "under the cover of deliberate ongoing internet and mobile disruptions".

"Dozens of people, including children, have been killed so far and hundreds injured," said the group's secretary general Agnès Callamard.

Iran has blamed outside forces for the protests and on Wednesday launched cross-border missile and drone strikes that killed 13 people in Iraq's Kurdistan region, accusing armed groups based there of fuelling the unrest.

On Thursday, German foreign minister Annalena Baerbock said she was "doing everything" she could to push for EU sanctions against those "beating women to death and shooting demonstrators in the name of religion".

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[Australia news](#)

Wife of Australian economist imprisoned in Myanmar says family is heartbroken by three-year sentence

Ha Vu pleads for Prof Sean Turnell's release after secret trial which Australian diplomats and journalists were banned from

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In a statement, Ha Vu said the Myanmar junta's sentencing of her husband, Sean Turnell, had devastated his family. Photograph: Ha Vu's Facebook page

[Ben Doherty](#) and [Rebecca Ratcliffe](#)

Fri 30 Sep 2022 03.03 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 03.43 EDT

The wife of Australian economist Prof Sean Turnell – who has been sentenced to three years in jail by Myanmar's military junta – says his

sentence is “heartbreaking” for his family and has pleaded for his release.

In a statement published in Burmese and English, Ha Vu said her husband’s sentence – imposed after a secret trial in which Turnell was denied proper legal counsel – had devastated his family.

“It’s heartbreaking for me, our daughter, Sean’s 85-year-old father, and the rest of our family,” she said.

“Sean has been one of Myanmar’s greatest supporters for over 20 years and has worked tirelessly to strengthen Myanmar’s economy.”

Ha Vu said her husband had already been held in a Myanmar prison for almost two-thirds of his sentence.

“Please consider the contributions that he has made to Myanmar, and deport him now,” she said.

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Imprisoned since the junta’s illegal coup in February last year, Turnell had served as an adviser to the democratically elected civilian government led by ousted leader [Aung San Suu Kyi](#), who also received another three-year jail sentence this week.

An economist at Sydney’s Macquarie University, Turnell was first detained on 6 February last year, less than a week after the [military ousted Myanmar’s elected government](#), and plunged the country into chaos.

Turnell was later charged with violating Myanmar’s Official Secrets Act, and over the past year has appeared alongside co-defendants including Aung San Suu Kyi and three of her former cabinet members.

The military had accused Turnell of possessing confidential documents when he was detained last year, according to the Irrawaddy news site.

Turnell reportedly denied the charge, arguing the documents were not confidential, but economic recommendations he had provided to Aung San Suu Kyi's government in his capacity as an adviser.

He pleaded not guilty in court.

But there is limited information available about court proceedings involving political prisoners in Myanmar, where more than 15,600 people have been arrested since last year's coup. Hearings are not accessible to journalists and lawyers are gagged from speaking with the media.

Turnell's trial was held in a closed military court in the capital Naypyidaw, with Australian diplomats and journalists banned from attending.

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Speaking in Adelaide on Friday, Australia's foreign minister, [Penny Wong](#), said her government "completely" rejected the charges laid against Turnell.

Wong said the government knew where Turnell was being detained and sought access to the court for his sentencing, but that bid was "disappointingly and regrettably" denied by Myanmar's authorities.

"We reject completely the charges against him and Australia will continue to advocate for all channels, public and private, for his return to Australia," Wong said.

"We will continue to take every opportunity to advocate strongly for him until he is returned to his family in Australia."

Wong said she would not discuss the “private details” of the case.

Turnell has worked on economic and banking issues in Myanmar since the early 2000s, focusing on promoting reform and growth. He has served as special economic consultant to Aung San Suu Kyi and as a senior economic adviser to the minister of planning, finance and industry. He previously worked for the Reserve Bank of Australia.

Last month, as the UN special envoy to Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer, met the junta chief, General Min Aung Hlaing, to call for a de-escalation in violence in the country, she conveyed a request from the Australian government appealing for Turnell’s release.

Junta-controlled media later published what it claimed was an account of their meeting, in which Min Aung Hlaing said: “With regard to the case of Mr Sean Turnell, should the Australian government take positive steps, we will not need to take stern actions. In the Mr Sean Turnell’s case, the evidence shows that severe penalties could be imposed.”

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New Zealand

Thumbs down to ‘middle finger’ health campaign in New Zealand

Hepatitis C awareness ads that feature smiling actors raising their middle fingers are deemed too offensive to be aired



One of the images from the New Zealand ‘Stick it to hep C’ ad campaign that has been deemed indecent and offensive. Photograph: Stick it to hep C website

[Eva Corlett](#) in Wellington

[@evacorlett](#)

Thu 29 Sep 2022 21.37 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 13.38 EDT

A [New Zealand](#) health campaign designed to help curb hepatitis C has hit a stumbling block after one of its advertisements showing people raising the middle finger was deemed too offensive to air.

The associate health minister, Ayesha Verrall, launched the “Stick it to Hep C” campaign in July, to raise awareness over the virus, which kills roughly 200 New Zealanders a year.

The campaign included videos, outdoor posters and online material featuring actors raising their middle finger to another person, while smiling. The [advertisement](#) then goes on to show an actor having his middle finger pricked for a blood test, to determine if he has the blood-borne virus.

But the Advertising Standards Authority has upheld a complaint describing the advertising imagery as “deeply offensive”.

“The gesture is long established as ‘sign language’ for a series of very rude words, in short “F*%\$ You!”,” the complainant said. “It has no place on a billboard nor where it can be seen by children.”

While the complaints board agreed that those watching the advertising were likely to understand that there is “an easy finger prick test to determine if you have been exposed to hepatitis C and a new effective treatment, meaning you can say ‘Fuck you’ to hep C”, the context would be missing for most people who were “likely to only focus on the hand gesture”.



An image from the ad showing a finger-prick test for hepatitis C.
Photograph: Stick it to hep C website

The gesture was “one of the most offensive gestures you can give to another person and always has negative connotations”, the board said, disagreeing with the advertiser that the smiling faces of the characters mitigated any aggressive intent.

It agreed the advertisement used an indecent and offensive hand gesture, and was a breach of standards.

The national director of the Public Health Service, Nick Chamberlain, told the [NZ Herald](#) the decision was “regrettable”.

“We had no intention of causing serious or widespread offence with our choice of campaign imagery and it is regrettable that the ASA considers we didn’t get the balance right on this occasion.”

The middle finger photograph has been removed from the main campaign image in favour of a double thumbs up, but the YouTube clip remains online, and the middle finger imagery is still featured on the [campaign’s website](#).

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Liz Truss

Liz Truss to attend first meeting of European Political Community

Inaugural summit of EU initiative that aims to unite Europe on issues such as security and energy to take place in Prague



Truss is said to be keen to ensure the new club does not cut across Nato or the G7. Photograph: Maja Smiejkowska/Reuters

[Jennifer Rankin](#) and [Pippa Crerar](#)

Thu 29 Sep 2022 16.34 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 17.14 EDT

Liz Truss will attend the inaugural summit of the European Political Community (EPC) next week, an initiative by the EU aimed at uniting the continent to work together on security and other common projects.

The prime minister plans to attend the first EPC summit in Prague on 6 October, a No 10 source told the Guardian, despite her scepticism about the EU-led initiative.

Truss, a former remainder who became an ardent convert to Brexit, is said to still be sceptical, but willing to engage and keen to ensure the new organisation does not cut across [Nato](#) or the G7.

She wants the club to focus on issues such as migration and security, rather than creating structures. Some of her aides were also concerned about the optics of joining another European club so soon after Brexit.

[Proposed by French president Emmanuel Macron in May](#), the EPC was later endorsed by the EU, which is now organising the event. Macron envisaged a club of European democracies working together on security, but also energy, transport, infrastructure and easier movement across borders for young people. Truss would like the organisation to focus above all on energy, migration and security, topics that are expected to be on the agenda next week.

EU officials have invited 27 EU member states and 17 non-EU nations. The non-EU nations include nine countries hoping to join the EU, including Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and six western Balkan states, as well as Norway and Switzerland, non-members that are deeply integrated into EU structures. Turkey, whose EU membership hopes have long been on ice, has not publicly accepted its invitation, which was issued despite reservations from Greece and Cyprus.

The head of the European Council, Charles Michel, told the Guardian earlier this month that [it was obvious the UK should be invited](#), saying: “The United Kingdom is a friend, a partner, a like-minded partner.”

EU officials rejected suggestions in some UK media reports that Truss could send her foreign secretary, James Cleverly, in her place, arguing that only heads of government could attend. Michel has said the new organisation should be a flexible structure like the [G20](#), in response to concerns that it could duplicate other bodies, such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

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Diplomats from invited countries held talks on Thursday in Prague to prepare the ground for the meeting. “Participants shared the aim of the meeting: offering a political platform for dialogue, reinforcing peace, stability and prosperity on the continent,” an EU official said.

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Economic policy

Truss says she has ‘right plan’ on economy and will not change course

In series of local BBC interviews, prime minister says she is prepared to make difficult decisions

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Liz Truss claims government made right decision with mini-budget – video

Peter Walker and Pippa Crerar

Thu 29 Sep 2022 08.13 EDTFirst published on Thu 29 Sep 2022 04.19 EDT

Liz Truss has insisted her government’s economic policy is on the right course despite the need [for emergency intervention](#) from the Bank of England, saying she is “prepared to take difficult decisions” and will not change policy.

In a [round of interviews with BBC local radio stations](#), her first public statements since [warnings from the International Monetary Fund](#) (IMF) and the [bank’s intervention to prevent a run on pension funds](#), the prime minister said people would feel the benefits in the longer term.

“This is the right plan that we have set out,” Truss told BBC Radio Norfolk. “Of course there will always be people who will oppose a particular measures. And it’s not necessarily easy. But we have to do it.”

Pressed repeatedly by the presenters about why her government had cut taxes primarily for richer people in Friday’s mini-budget despite inflationary pressures, prompting a decline in the pound and a rise in the cost of government debt, Truss rejected any idea of error.

“Of course, some of these decisions are difficult,” she told BBC Radio Lancashire. “Some people don’t like them. But what I couldn’t do is allow the situation to drift. So that is why my government has taken urgent action.”

The shadow chancellor, [Rachel Reeves](#), claimed the round of local radio interviews had “made this disastrous situation even worse” as she urged the prime minister to recall parliament to reverse what she described as Kwasi Kwarteng’s “kamikaze budget” last Friday.

“Her failure to answer questions about what will happen with people’s pensions and mortgages will leave families across the country facing huge worry,” she said. “It is disgraceful that the family finances of people across the country are being put on the line simply so the government can give huge unfunded tax cuts to the richest companies and those earning hundreds of thousands of pounds a year.

“This is a serious situation made in Downing Street and is the direct result of the Conservative government’s reckless actions. If the prime minister continues to prioritise saving her face over saving people’s homes, Tory MPs must join Labour in calling for parliament to be recalled so this kamikaze budget can be reversed. Failure to do so will make them complicit in this reckless bout of economic self-harm.”

With a number of Tory MPs openly mutinous in the run-up to next week’s Conservative party conference in Birmingham, Truss tried to argue that the issues faced by the UK were little different to those of other countries.

“This is a global problem,” she told BBC Radio Kent. “But what is absolutely right is the UK government stepped in and acted at this difficult time. We’ve seen difficult markets around the world because of the very difficult international situation we face. And what our government has done is we’ve taken decisive action.”

BBC Bristol: Truss blames Bank of England intervention on war in Ukraine – audio

Stressing that the biggest part of the mini-budget involved help for energy bills, Truss said the government had sought to both curb inflation and help set “a better trajectory for the long term” with growth and wages.

She said: “Of course, that involves taking difficult decisions and as prime minister, I’m prepared to take difficult decisions and do the right thing.”

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There is increasing speculation that ministers could seek significant cuts to public spending to help balance the loss of revenue from tax cuts, which will disproportionately assist richer people.

It is also possible that increases to benefits and pensions, which had been due to rise in line with inflation, could be reduced.

Chris Philp, the chief secretary to the Treasury, attempted to play down the scale of the financial crisis in which the pound slumped on Monday. Asked by LBC radio’s Nick Ferrari: “This is a crisis, you accept that? Or was this all part of the plan on Friday?” Philp replied: “I don’t accept the word ‘crisis’ at all.”.

Earlier in an interview with Sky News, Philp said departments would be expected to deliver public spending cuts. “The efficiency and prioritisation exercise is designed to firstly make absolutely sure we stick to those spending limits and secondly make sure that we are prioritising expenditure, not on anything that is wasteful, but on things that really deliver frontline public services and drive economic growth.

“We are going to stick rigidly to those spending limits because it is important to be financially responsible.”

Asked if he felt regret for the turmoil in the markets after Friday’s fiscal statement, Philp said: “No one’s perfect but I’m not going to apologise for having a plan to grow the economy.”

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Mark Carney

Mark Carney accuses Truss government of undermining Bank of England

Former governor's comments come after central bank forced into £65bn intervention to avert financial crisis



Mark Carney said Liz Truss and the chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, appeared to be working at ‘cross purposes’ with the Bank of England. Photograph: Reuters

*[Kalyeena Makortoff](#) Banking correspondent
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Thu 29 Sep 2022 06.31 EDTFirst published on Thu 29 Sep 2022 03.08 EDT

The former governor of the [Bank of England](#) Mark Carney has accused Liz Truss’s government of “undercutting” the country’s economic institutions and working at “cross purposes” with Threadneedle Street.

Carney's comments come after the Bank was forced to step in [with a £65bn emergency bond-buying programme](#) on Wednesday as part of efforts to quell a market meltdown, which risked draining pension funds of cash and leaving them at risk of insolvency.

Sweeping tax cuts announced by the chancellor, Kwasi Kwarteng, last week have triggered investor panic over the future health of the UK economy, prompting a sharp fall in the value of the pound and driving government borrowing costs higher.

Carney said: "Unfortunately having a partial budget, in these circumstances – tough global economy, tough financial market position, working at cross-purposes with the Bank – has led to quite dramatic moves in financial markets."

While he welcomed the government's aim of boosting economic growth, Carney said he was concerned about the lack of detail, independent scrutiny and cooperation with other bodies like the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

"What's left out of the budget, [are] the real measures that were going to drive the acceleration of growth. It's necessary for the numbers to add up," he said.

"The message of financial markets is that there is a limit to unfunded spending and unfunded tax cuts in this environment. And the price of those is: much higher borrowing costs for the government and for mortgage holders and borrowers up and down the country."

"At some point, those higher costs of borrowing for everybody undoes the positive impact of any tax reductions," Carney said, adding that without other sources of funding, the government would probably have to cut spending elsewhere.

The Bank's massive intervention on Wednesday prompted comparisons to [1992's Black Wednesday](#), when the UK was ejected from the European

exchange rate mechanism for failing to keep its exchange rate above its lower limits.

The move appeared to have made some impact in calming the market turmoil, though the pound was still down about 1.1% against the dollar at \$1.07 on Thursday morning.

Carney, who made the comments in an interview with BBC Radio 4's Today programme, led the Bank of England for seven years until March 2020.

The former governor pushed back against UK government claims that the market turmoil was caused by wider global uncertainty, rather than its own policies. "Certainly the global economy is going through some difficulties, financial markets have been adjusting, that's been the case for over a year now," he said.

"But [over] the course of the last week, really, developments have centred around the UK. It's been a response to the budget of the government and to some extent, policies working at some cross-purposes."

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While monetary policy needed to be tightened to respond to rising inflation, the government was loosening fiscal policy, without explaining how it would make up for funding shortfalls, said Carney, a move that had caused "substantial uncertainty".

"There was an undercutting of some of the institutions that underpin the overall approach," he said, referring in part to the lack of OBR forecasts

alongside the mini-budget. The OBR usually factchecks and scrutinises the government's financial plans, including tax cuts.

"It's important to have it subject to independent and, dare I say, expert scrutiny. That's the system that's been put in place and ... one of the strengths in the UK has been a series of institutions that are around what we call macroeconomic policy," he said.

Carney, who was Canada's central bank governor through the 2007-08 credit crunch, said this week's events paled in comparison with the banking crisis, given they were in direct response to the chancellor's mini-budget.

"[It] can be addressed by policymakers if they choose to address it. That was a broader series of events, in which we were all beholden to each other. This is much more localised," said Carney.

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2022.09.29 - Spotlight

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‘People underestimate me’: Stacey Solomon on snobbery, The X Factor and her plan to sort Britain out

[Simon Hattenstone](#)



‘My parents raised me to believe I could achieve anything I wanted. I was really lucky’ ... Stacey Solomon. Photograph: Suki Dhanda/The Guardian

She seemed a typical here-today-gone-tomorrow reality star but won the nation over on I’m a Celebrity. Now a TV presenter, she reflects on being a teenage mum, politics and why we shouldn’t bankroll the royals



Thu 29 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 09.04 EDT

Stacey Solomon is giving me a tour of Pickle Cottage. Packets of crisps, pegged to a rail in the treats cupboard, stand at attention like soldiers on parade. The dog shelves contain wooden boxes labelled food, grooming, clothes, walkies and bedding. We pass a procession of gleaming kids' trainers and head up the stairs. Hairbands are sorted by colour, natch, into jars.

And finally Solomon's favourite things: her wardrobes. “I have my beiges in here, my pinks in this one and then this one for the greens and blues,” says the author, TV presenter and former X Factor finalist. “When I get up I normally think: ‘What colour do I want to wear?’, not: ‘What outfit?’” As for her husband, the actor and presenter Joe Swash, his clothes are squeezed into one tiny wardrobe. “That’s all he gets, God love him.” Her voice rises gleefully and she bursts out laughing. As she often does.

Was she always tidy? “No, but I was always organised. I think that comes from being a mum at a really young age. There was no room for error. I couldn’t be late. I couldn’t miss classes, otherwise I’d fail my exams. I couldn’t miss the post office run, otherwise I wouldn’t get my Giro. I couldn’t not cash in my milk tokens. There was so much I had to do just to get by.”

Solomon’s new book is called Tap to Tidy at Pickle Cottage. But she is underselling herself. It’s not so much about tidying as creating. She and Swash bought the part-Tudor cottage near Brentwood in Essex last year. It needed a huge amount of work doing on it and Solomon has done a fair whack of it herself. The book is a great guide to DIY and interior design for the DIY and interior design illiterate (ie me).



‘Without The X Factor I’d never be in the position I am now’ ... Solomon at The X Factor auditions in 2009. Photograph: Ken McKay/Talkback Thames/Shutterstock

I’ve got such an aversion to both that I couldn’t bear the thought of opening Tap to Tidy. But actually it’s fun, practical and friendly – much like Solomon herself. I couldn’t believe I was reading about renting a Sandy the Sander sanding machine for £35 a day and thinking: “Well, maybe”,

marvelling at her ability to create panda doorknobs and thanking her for teaching me what a Rawlplug does.

In 2009, Solomon finished third on The X Factor. If ever there was a here-today-gone-tomorrow reality star, it was her. Sure, the single-parent teenager could sing a bit and had a giddy appeal, but her one album and three singles came and went with little ado and that seemed to be the end of it. But in 2010 she won the reality show I'm a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here! partly because she was willing to stuff any number of bugs in her gob, largely because she was so well-liked.

Solomon met her future husband when she was crowned “queen of the jungle” and Swash, the 2008 “king of the jungle”, gave her a congratulatory hug. Twelve years on, and now 32, Solomon is thriving on numerous fronts – a mother of four children, newly married to Swash (the father of her two youngest), a regular panellist on ITV’s Loose Women and making a new BBC series of [Sort Your Life Out With Stacey Solomon](#), in which she and her team help people transform their homes. Many of those who wrote her off as dumb have realised Solomon is a pretty smart cookie. Perhaps best of all, she is a kind cookie in a world notorious for cattiness.

We’re in her kitchen, where she is talking 19 to the dozen. She’s dressed in a baggy beige jumper and beige leggings, her beige nails hovering over a beige pot of “mouldy veg soup”. Solomon has chucked in anything and everything that is about to go off.

Despite Solomon’s tidiness fixation, Pickle Cottage (so named because she calls her kids pickles) is most notable for its ramshackle warmth. Builders are working, three-year-old Rex is racing around, baby Rose is squalling, and Peanut the sausage dog is lying on the sofa waiting for his tummy to be tickled. Meanwhile, Solomon is pouring coffee, appeasing Rose and debating the state of the world.

Politics? She’s sick of the obfuscation. “I get really frustrated when politicians, most of whom have had a standard of education that the masses have not had, talk about things in terms that lots of us don’t understand. If I watch [Question Time](#), I have to slow it down to work out what somebody is

saying, and then when I do, none of it actually makes sense. It doesn't give us what we need – it just enables them to get away with more.”



Queen of the jungle ... Solomon undertaking a task on I'm a Celebrity ... Get Me Out of Here! Photograph: ITV/Shutterstock

The cost of living crisis? Terrifying, she says – even for her and Joe, despite the fact that they are doing well at the moment. “If our energy bill doubles, then it might well be beyond our means in the future. I’m not saying it is the same for us as someone on the breadline, ’cos it blooming well isn’t. But it’s such a scary time. How have we allowed the country to get to this point? How can the government not be prepared for it?”

Would she ever go into politics? Unlikely, she says, not quite ruling it out. “I’m passionate about circumstances and the way that some people get dealt certain hands and others don’t.” Which team would she bat for? “That’s where I don’t feel political at all. It’s all about: Are you Labour, Tory or Lib Dem? For me it’s not about any of those things. It’s about what you want for this country and the people in it.”

Solomon says the first thing she would look at is efficiency. “This sounds really sad. But I’d love to look at how we do things and reevaluate. My sister is a paediatric nurse and I’d love to look into how things are spent,

because I know her hospital needed certain equipment and couldn't buy it from a place that was loads cheaper because it was contracted to buy from somewhere else." You'd use your organisational skills? "Yeah, I'd love to go and give it a shake-around."

Now we're on to the royals. It's a week before the Queen's funeral and the patriotic fervour is gathering pace. A [Loose Women clip from 2018](#) recently reemerged on social media in which Solomon said she didn't get the point of the royals: how could we elevate one family over any other just by fluke of birth and why did we pay towards their upkeep when they were already phenomenally rich? The clip went viral just after the Queen's death and Solomon found herself feted by republicans and lambasted by monarchists. "They're regurgitating it at the moment, which is really difficult because obviously I didn't say it on the Queen's passing."

She claims the clip has been misrepresented. "I have nothing against the monarchy and the Queen seemed like a lovely lady, but I don't understand why we pay a contribution to one of the wealthiest families in the world." Solomon says the point she was making was that our priorities were wrong. "Some of our kids weren't even getting school lunches, and to know a huge amount of money is going to somebody who doesn't need it, I just couldn't get my head around that." As usual, she has a plan. "It would be cool if there was an opt-in opt-out version and you can opt to give it to somebody else."



‘We pinch ourselves sometimes’ ... Solomon with husband Joe Swash in 2018. Photograph: David M Benett/Getty Images for Primark

Even cooler would be the Stacey Solomon Republican Party, I say. “Absolutely not. You’re not getting me fronting the revolution for anything!” Perhaps the royals could just reinvent themselves, she suggests. “I don’t know why they can’t exist just as a cool famous family. Why do they have to be head of anything and have that monetary contribution?”

Solomon may have her doubts about the royals, but she loves traditional family. She says she owes hers everything. Her mother works in admin and her father is a wedding and barmitzvah photographer. They divorced when she was nine but there was no nastiness. It simply meant she had an extended family when her father remarried. (She now has six siblings in total.) Solomon grew up in Dagenham, east London, and attended the Jewish secondary school King Solomon high school where she passed 13 GCSEs. “My parents raised me to believe I could achieve anything I wanted. I was really lucky.”

But when she reached puberty early, she hated it. “I was fugly, lanky and unfortunate-looking with boobs, hormones and stuff nobody else had. I was just uncomfortable in myself because I had a woman’s body at 10 years old. I didn’t enjoy the connotations it brought. So as a defence mechanism I was

like: ‘I’m going to have to be the funny one because I’m not the one that slots into all the ideals. I’m not the pretty one, the popular one; I’m not the right size.’”

“Now I think I’m beautiful,” she says, “but back then I didn’t feel like other kids. It was all very awkward. I remember walking down the street and my dad would have to say: ‘She’s 10!’ to everyone looking at me. It was so gross. I was like: ‘Eurgh.’” By the age of 12, the other girls had caught up with her and she was back to her carefree self.

At 17, she became pregnant. She decided to have the baby, became a single mum at 18 and suffered terrible postnatal depression. “I almost felt violated giving birth. People tell you that you’ll feel this rush of love and happiness the minute it comes out, and I struggled to find that. I questioned who I was, my morals. I thought: ‘Why didn’t I immediately love this human? What’s wrong with me?’”



Helping people transform their homes in Sort Your Life Out With Stacey Solomon. Photograph: James Callum/BBC/Optomen

She simply wasn’t ready for motherhood, she says. “Breastfeeding had a lot to do with it. I was a teenage girl, so to get my boobs out in front of people just felt gross. I found the whole thing really conflicting. When I breastfed

Rose I loved every second of it, but I found it hideous the first time around. And there are the things people don't talk about when you're going to have a baby, like the midwife is going to check all the cracks in your nipples, and people are constantly touching you and looking at you." She felt exposed in every way. After giving birth to Zachary she lived with her mother, sharing a bedroom with her son, sister and brother. "For quite a while I was sad," she says quietly.

For the first time she became aware of her mortality. "When you're growing up you feel invincible: you're never going to die, the world is your oyster. Once you've given birth that mentality changes. There's this huge weight on your shoulders because somebody solely depends on you to survive. You don't ever get that feeling back of being a kid."

Solomon returned to college and took Zach with her. She felt people regarded her with pity, at best. "They would say: 'It's a shame you won't be able to fulfil your ambitions because you've got somebody else who relies on you now.' I was a kid with a kid and that wasn't appealing to anybody." Did she think she would never get another boyfriend? "I didn't want another boyfriend!" She gurgle-giggles. "If this is the result of relationships, I'm out!"

How did she get her positivity back? "My hormones balanced out, which made a massive difference. And I had a mum who recognised the signs of postnatal depression from her own experience. So I was lucky that she was there for me."

You have no idea what it's like to be a teenage mum from Dagenham, then being in a room with Whitney Houston and singing to her. It was just insane!

Then there was The X Factor. She turned up to the audition in denim shorts and a T-shirt, spoke so fast she was barely comprehensible, bobbed her head like a chicken in response to every question and sang her heart out. "Without The X Factor I'd never be in the position I am now. There is no way I could have broken into this industry any other way. People have good and bad experiences of it, but I loved every single second."

She still finds it hard to believe she was mentored on the show by Whitney Houston and sang for George Michael. “You have no idea what it’s like to be a teenage mum from Dagenham, carrying her kid up the station stairs every day in a pram, then being in a room with Whitney Houston and singing to her. It was just insane! Incredible.”

Does she think The X Factor portrayed her as thicker than she is, I ask. “I think I seem thicker than I am anyway. People underestimate me because I’ve got a common accent and I’m smiley. I think The X Factor accentuated who I was already, because that’s what telly does.”

People have questioned her intelligence all her life, and for a long time it made her do so, too. “At my first school we all spoke like this and the teachers let us know we sounded common as muck. When I went to secondary school, in a posher area, they spoke nicer and I did feel common as muck because of the way they looked at me, especially the parents.”

Then there is the prejudice against positivity. “A happy disposition often makes people think there’s not much going on. For a lot of people, being happy means being dumb or disingenuous. They either think you’re not really that happy or you’re not all there.”



Solomon and her dogs at the gate to Pickle Cottage. Photograph: @staceysolomon/Instagram

It has its advantages, though. “The smallest thing you say with an ounce of intelligence people are like: ‘Wow! I didn’t expect that’, so it’s nice to be underestimated sometimes.”

Solomon didn’t enjoy her brief experience of the music industry. “You had to make so much money to pay back your label. It was a huge pressure and I wasn’t equipped for it.” These days singing is a hobby rather than a career. “If someone rang me and said: ‘Stace, d’you want to sing down at the RAF club?’ that to me is a lot of fun. But I don’t do gigs any more.” As with a number of former X Factor contestants, she has found TV presenting more to her liking.

She particularly loves transforming people’s homes on Sort Your Life Out. And she’s amazed at how she has managed to sort out her own – marriage, work and raising the pickles at Pickle Cottage (her second-eldest, 10-year-old Leighton, is the son of her ex-fiance Aaron Barham, whom she split from in 2014).

“We pinch ourselves walking around here sometimes. We can’t believe this is our garden, this is our road. I remember when we moved in I said to my dad: ‘Can we afford it?’, and he said: ‘If you can afford it now and it only lasts you 12 months or two years, go and work your butt off so you can enjoy it for the moment.’”

And does she worry they might lose it? “Absolutely not,” she says. “Growing up, we had nothing and all I look back on is happy memories because I had such a great family. I would like the kids to be sufficiently well-rounded to be like: ‘If we have to live in a caravan, we have to live in a caravan.’”

It’s time to go. I tell her I’m looking forward to future books such as Tap to Tidy the Royal Family or Tap to Tidy British Politics. “Hahaha! Oh God, no. Tidying politics would be so long!”

She asks if I'm hungry and says the mouldy veg soup will be ready in 20 minutes. Tempting though it is, I say, I'd better be on my way. "You've been here for two hours and not eaten. I'm embarrassed. My nana will be turning in her grave." She unclips a packet of crisps to keep me going.

I'm glad things have worked out so well for her, I say.

Well, there's always room for improvement, she says. "I'm yet to find someone with the perfect infrastructure for life."

Blimey, what did she just say?

She repeats it, bursts out laughing and waves me off.

Tap to Tidy at Pickle Cottage is published by Ebury (£17.99). To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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From satanic panic to billion-dollar business: how Dungeons & Dragons conquered the world

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Heat deaths, scorched trees and civil unrest: life on the climate frontline in 2022



A dry cracked lake bed in drought-stricken Lake Mead on 15 September in Boulder City, Nevada. Photograph: Frederic J Brown/AFP/Getty Images

Three Guardian reporters, based in different corners of the globe, share what they have learned while reporting the climate disaster

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[Gabrielle Canon, Nina Lakhani and Damien Gayle](#)

Thu 29 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 06.24 EDT

Damien Gayle, reporter on climate activism

When activists from Extinction Rebellion towed a pink boat into Oxford Circus, in the heart of London's busiest shopping area, and locked themselves to it, they changed the face of climate protest.

XR's April 2019 rebellion brought disruption to the heart of the metropolis, and with protest blockades manned by hundreds of activists, they established a model disruptive climate protest that has spread across the west.

Now scarcely a day goes by without news of climate protesters blocking roads, airports or fossil fuel infrastructure in cities in the UK, Europe or North America.

Protest is a politics of desperation, by those desperate and enraged that their concerns being disregarded by lawmakers. And yet they can wield real power.

Since joining the Guardian, I have made a point of trying to cover them. While other journalists worked the corridors of power, I quizzed those shouting and marching and blocking the streets outside.



The pink boat which climate change activists used as a central point of their encampment as they occupied the road junction at Oxford Circus in central London. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Protest and civil disobedience has proven itself as a way – sometimes the only way – for people to push issues on to the political agenda and into the public consciousness. This has been proven repeatedly.

In 2019, the wave of global climate strikes and Extinction Rebellion's disruptive mass protests in London – controversial though they were – pushed climate change from a fringe concern to the top of the agenda.

Polls that year showed almost three-quarters of people across eight countries believed the world was facing a “climate emergency”, with climate breakdown at risk of becoming “extremely dangerous”.

Last year, with just 100 committed activists, Insulate Britain enraged politicians, press and public with repeated blockades of key roads around London – and forced a national conversation about home insulation that now, amid a fuel price crisis, seems remarkably prescient.

Most recently, the climate activists of Just Stop Oil blockaded fuel terminals, vowing to paralyse the supply of petrol in an escalation they described as a shift from “civil disobedience” to “civil resistance”.

But the problem is vast and, as much lip-service is paid to a greener future, scientists warn time is running out. We've made [a series of videos](#) about various activist groups, and I'm determined to keep readers informed about these vital elements of the climate movement into the future.

Nina Lakhani, senior reporter for climate justice

I met 60-year-old Sareptha Jackson in Phoenix, Arizona, as the city braced itself for its first extreme heatwave of the year, with daytime temperatures hitting 115F.

Sareptha's apartment was like a furnace; it was literally too hot for her to do anything but lie as still as possible next to a small aircon unit. Last year she had a stroke on a similarly scorching day, but cannot afford to move.

Phoenix is America's hottest city, and the climate crisis is making it hotter and drier, which isn't much fun for anyone, but for those with limited financial resources it can be deadly.

So far this year, the county coroner has confirmed 175 heat-related deaths; another 250 are under investigation.



People try to keep cool at a resource centre in Phoenix catering to the homeless population, as temperatures hit 110F in July. Photograph: Ross D Franklin/AP

Extreme heat deaths are entirely preventable, and the people dying are those without adequate shelter and healthcare.

The climate crisis is no equaliser, rather it's a threat multiplier: it is exposing and exacerbating racial, economic, land, housing, and gender inequalities between and within countries.

We are absolutely not all in this together, and my job as climate justice reporter is ensuring we report the stories of families and communities most affected by the climate breakdown.

Part of my role is also reporting on the inequalities in access to resources to help communities adapt to extreme weather.

The transition to renewable energy risks sacrificing entire communities if land is stolen and water polluted in order to mine lithium and construct hydroelectric dams, or if families unable to afford to retrofit their homes for solar or buy electric vehicles are left behind.

It's in these communities – which, by the way, have contributed least to the greenhouse gas emissions causing global heating – that I've also found the most inspiring, affordable and sustainable solutions to climate adaptation.

Amplifying their stories is crucial, to make sure that frontline and Indigenous experts get a seat at the climate negotiating table.

[Climate journalism, open to all](#)

Gabrielle Canon, extreme weather correspondent

It has been a summer of extremes across the American west. In the months since I joined the Guardian as its new extreme weather correspondent, I have covered behemoth blazes in California that have swallowed small mountain towns and catastrophic floods that swept away homes and infrastructure in

Montana.

From up close, I have tracked a devastating [drought throughout the southwest](#) that is threatening the waterways depended upon by tens of millions of people for drinking water, vast agricultural hubs that feed the nation and the world and delicate ecosystems already in decline.

In the American west, as in much of the world, the climate crisis is already unfolding with devastating effects. A new era of aridification – peppered by severe storms – is settling in across this region, which faces increasing threats from spiking temperatures, ferocious wildfires, water shortages and catastrophic floods.



Burnt cars after a wildfire broke out in Foresthill of California. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Dramatic bathtub rings encircle reservoirs where water levels have receded, ancient trees that thrived here for centuries are dying, and sea creatures have been baked alive by extreme heat.

I report from the frontlines of these disasters, adding context to the calamity while capturing the effects of a warming world. I am here to help readers

from across the globe understand what's happening, why it matters – and what can be done.

I know what's at stake for these cherished landscapes – and the people, plants, and animals that call them home – if dramatic action isn't taken quickly. I try to bring our readers to the frontlines of these disasters, aided by scientists, policy-makers, Indigenous experts, advocates and a dedicated global team at the Guardian that believes these stories must be told.

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[Interview](#)

‘We pick up where we left off’: Sigourney Weaver and Kevin Kline on working together again

[Benjamin Lee](#)

Actors discuss their third film collaboration, an ‘elaborate hoax’ one pulled on the other and having more horny older characters



Sigourney Weaver and Kevin Kline in *The Good House*. Photograph:
Michael Tompkins



Thu 29 Sep 2022 01.22 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 10.26 EDT

For the third time on screen, [Sigourney Weaver](#) and Kevin Kline are playing a couple in an unconventional situation.

In 1993's cameo-packed political comedy *Dave*, Kline played a lookalike to the president hired to take over during an emergency, hoping to fool Weaver's first lady along the way both in public and in private (a contemporary re-examination might label the ruse "problematic" on reflection). In 1997's 70s-set family drama *The Ice Storm*, Kline's mid-life crisis leads him to embark on an affair with Weaver's sharp-tongued neighbour, attempting sexual liberation despite the restrictions of the time. And now in 2022's small-town comedy drama *The Good House*, Weaver plays an alcoholic realtor edging towards romance with an old flame, played by Kline, despite a complicated history.

Earlier this week, I saw them on screen together yet again, this time on Zoom, where they spoke about a shared history, a "mean" hoax once pulled on-set and the importance of embracing horniness over 70.

Going back to the first time you ever met each other, which I believe was when you had to host together at the Obie awards in 1981, what were your first impressions?

Sigourney Weaver: Well, tall, handsome ...

Kevin Kline: Tall, that's the first thing I noticed. And then the wit. We just laughed a lot and we were actually having to write some, what would you call that ...

Sigourney Weaver: Silly dialogue ... banter.

Kevin Kline: So we worked together as writers, as presenters, before we ever had to act together.

Sigourney Weaver: I remember that what I liked about Kevin right away is that even though we were supposed to be very light-hearted and relaxed, he didn't assume we could just improvise our way through this so he wanted to work as hard as I did. You can't just ego your way through those shows.

Kevin Kline: I've always been sort of anti-awards anyway as they have been towards me occasionally.

There's this throwback feel to The Good House, tapping into that robustly made, mid-budget adult type of movie that we just don't get as much these days, films where grownups just get to live without some fantastical element involved. Has it become harder to find these scripts and do you as consumers also miss them?

Sigourney Weaver: I consider The Good House one of those smaller but very well-made films. We shot it very quickly in Nova Scotia and it was so amazing to be doing a script that was written from a woman's point of view, an older woman who has a lot to say about what's going on in her life so I think that even though I know what you mean about these bigger, more reassuring films, I do feel like I can't live my life expecting those. It's great when they happen but it's much more Avatar and then [something smaller like] The Good House.

It's also a film that allows older people to be sexual and messy and flawed. Do you find you're both still getting offered too many characters, with age, that don't have such nuance? Is there an abundance of thankless parent or grandparent roles?

Kevin Kline: Aren't we always looking for movies that don't repeat the same old tired tropes that have been passed down just out of laziness? It was the first thing that leapt off the page at me was to see that oh, instead of always having old people depicted as having somehow receded into oblivion or irrelevance, that they're still quite horny among other things. Oh, I'm being glib.

Sigourney Weaver: They have ... *appetites*.

Kevin Kline: They have *appetites*, yes, and they're not to be disregarded as ageists tend to do so that's a nice thing with the movie that you can take away subliminally or otherwise.

Sigourney Weaver: I think audiences have also changed, maybe during Covid, watching all this long-form TV that really has the time to get into different characters and a lot of them are older characters so we've changed our appetites as well and I think there's less ageism with scripts, in my opinion, there are a lot of great scripts, a lot of great women characters around of all ages. I haven't been looking at it from the male point of view but do you think that's true or does Anthony Hopkins get all the good roles?

Kevin Kline: Yes. I'm sorry I wasn't listening. Yes, Anthony Hopkins gets all the good roles but he's gotta have a vacation every now and then so they do trickle down to others of us.

I read [an interview with Ivan Reitman](#) where he said on the set of *Dave*, Sigourney you would ridicule Kevin's actorliness. What sort of things was he doing?

Sigourney Weaver: I'm afraid it refers quite specifically to the fact that Kevin was about to do a show, a benefit of Shakespearean monologues and sonnets, and he was always rehearsing these as we were setting up so I started to go around and ask the crew in the background to look like they were falling asleep. So at the end of the film, I'm afraid that Gary Ross, the writer, and I gave Kevin this huge book called Kevin Kline Reads Shakespeare in very good medieval writing and you open it up and it's just one picture after another of Kevin trying to do his work and the whole crew behind him just going like this [mimics sleeping]. So it was a very mean

thing and to his credit, lasting credit, he looked at this thing, there was this long pause and then there's this little smile.



Kevin Kline and Sigourney Weaver in *Dave*. Photograph: Warner Bros/Allstar

Kevin Kline: What? I cherish that book! I thought it was one of the most generous, kindest, funniest things and elaborate. It was an elaborate hoax.

Sigourney Weaver: We had a lot of pictures to choose from.

Kevin Kline: I wasn't walking around spouting Shakespeare!

Sigourney Weaver: Well, he was actually. You were.

Kevin Kline: Was I?

Sigourney Weaver: You were, I'm afraid. You might have had your lines hidden somewhere but you knew a lot of it and you were just running through it. We should have actually just listened very respectfully.

Kevin Kline: You might have learned something but that's OK.

Kevin, there was a quote recently about you not being a very sociable person ...

Kevin Kline: What I was saying was that in defence of Sigourney and I not seeing that much of each other when we are not working together, we pick up where we left off whenever we do. I'm fine with solitude *or* being social but especially during Covid, I was perfectly content to be completely sequestered from the hurly burly or the whirligig of society. I'm fine but I'm not antisocial.

Sigourney Weaver: He plays a lot of music and he also paints beautifully so he has other ways to express himself and his talents which I certainly don't have. I don't even knit!

As actors who both live in New York, how have you managed the scene in Los Angeles?

Kevin Kline: I go to LA to shoot movies occasionally, I always find the weather very salubrious and the people are very nice. But I haven't been there in years. I don't follow show business either in New York or LA. People ask me "do you think there's a trend in ..." and I have no idea.

Sigourney Weaver: I think there's a big influence in Hollywood about how you look and even when I went there when I was very young, I felt I needed to get a facelift. They have different priorities or they used to in the old days. It's also so dominated by the business and what I love about New York is that everyone thinks what they're doing is the most interesting thing, And they could care less if we're walking down the street, people really leave you alone here whereas there spotting a celebrity is kind of an industry, I think, which I take my hat off to people who can live with that but I would find it, having grown up in New York and being used to a certain kind of privacy you get in a big city, I'd find it really difficult.



Sigourney Weaver in Alien. Photograph: Cinetext/20th Century Fox/Allstar

Sigourney, you mentioned being in Hollywood when you were young and feeling like it was too image-focused. Were you finding feedback from agents or directors then that was targeted toward how you looked?

Sigourney Weaver: You know, I'd walk into a room and I'm so tall that the producers would just sit down, they didn't know what to do with me and in a way, it worked for me because I ended up working with more unconventional people. But there was a long time where people were really looking for blonde, blue-eyed tiny creatures and that was never me so I never expected much from those kind of situations and I think it actually helped me play a lot of interesting women because I wasn't being put in these romcoms. I'm delighted to be doing kind of a romcom with Kevin now because I haven't done enough and I think they're so much fun.

You both obviously leapt at the chance to work again but do you have an internal list of actors who, if you were asked to star alongside them again, you'd run a mile?

Kevin Kline: [in a British accent] Oh certainly!

Sigourney Weaver: [in a British accent] Yes probably but it will stay internal though Ben if that's all right with you?

Kevin Kline: [in a British accent] I'm afraid yes, one mustn't.

- The Good House is out in US cinemas on 30 September with a UK date to be announced
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Who can argue now that Keir Starmer's approach is not working?

[Martin Kettle](#)



The Labour leader has responded to Kwarteng's gift with a textbook illustration of why thought and judgment count



Keir Starmer with conference delegates in Liverpool on 28 September.
Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Thu 29 Sep 2022 01.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 06.03 EDT

If, despite the slide in sterling, I had had a pound for each time that someone had told me over the past two and a half years how disappointed they were with [Keir Starmer](#) (to which I have mostly retorted that he seemed to be playing a long game rather skilfully), I would be well placed to pay my energy bills this winter with some ease.

I am not sure these old arguments about Starmer will provide a productive income stream for much longer. The combination of last week's catastrophic [unfunded tax cuts](#) and a solidly [successful Labour conference](#) has begun to generate a new consensus that Starmer is moving closer to power. The International Monetary Fund's [warning](#) – greeted on the right as further proof that all international institutions are out to get them – tightens the knot a little further. The next election may now even be Labour's to lose.

It bears repeating that, after what happened in the 2019 election, this is an extraordinary possibility and turnaround. [Labour](#) needs to win about 130 seats to have an overall majority next time, with a swing bigger than the one achieved under Tony Blair in 1997. Take Scotland out of the equation and

Labour requires a bigger swing in England and Wales than in Clement Attlee's 1945 victory. The proverbial mountain that Labour needs to climb is as high as ever.

It also needs stressing that the next election will not come soon. It will most likely be in 18 to 24 months, and a lot can change in that time. Liz Truss is a ruthless politician who should not be underestimated simply because she is presiding over the worst market crisis under a Tory government for 30 years. And Labour is always capable of throwing away a midterm lead.

Even so, the events of the past few days have helped crystallise a sea-changing sense that the country needs and is ready for a new government. It is a big moment. For those of us old enough to recall those times, it has something of 1995-6 about it, and also of 1963-4. But the past is no predictor of the future: Labour's win in 1997 may have been a landslide, but the 1964 victory was an absolute squeaker.

The 2024 election will be fought in a different Britain from either. This was neatly summed up by the comfort with which Labour said it would reimpose the 45p top rate of income tax, abolished by Kwasi Kwarteng last week. That wouldn't have happened under New Labour in the tight fiscal conservatism of the 1990s. But it has happened in the 2020s because, after Covid and the energy price explosion, the public debate about spending and taxation is simply in a different place now.

The possibility that Labour may win it is not solely down to the chaos and division that has overtaken the Tory party. A lot is Starmer's doing, too. The Liverpool party conference was a vindication of his priorities since becoming leader in 2020: first, the repudiation of the Corbyn era and the renewal of the party's patriotic credentials; second, the long reforging of trust in Labour's economic competence and values, and this week, a forward-looking grasp of the climate and energy crises.

Starmer is a very methodical person. As a lawyer, he built his reputation not on dazzling courtroom displays but on patient scrutiny of the strengths and weaknesses both of his own case and that of his opponents. He was always good at thinking logically and long, at working out in advance where the

crunch in a contest would come, and at preparing a case that would allow him to seize the advantage when the right time came.

This is his approach to politics too, and it is hard to argue now that it is not working. The conference has been light years away from the tensions and suspicions of the recent past. The national anthem on Sunday embodied the left's current eclipse. Rachel Reeves's economy speech, albeit in front of the open goal provided by Kwarteng, confirmed her as the leader's most important lieutenant. Meanwhile, the [Great British Energy](#) plan provided real substance to the party's "fairer, greener" conference pitch.

There were other, less obviously headline-generating descants, too. The priority on energy in Starmer's speech allowed him to consolidate Labour's increasing advantage among younger, greener voters. The conference's success gave impetus to the anti-nationalist offensive the party needs to begin in Scotland. The carefully phrased remarks from Reeves and Starmer on "making Brexit work" were another important advance, creating space for a less confrontational relationship with Europe.

Liverpool was also a success in party management terms. Internal party elections went Starmer's way. There was minimal speculation about alternative leadership challengers, such as Andy Burnham, Angela Rayner or Wes Streeting. The unions cooperated with the leadership most of the time. And the conference vote in favour of electoral reform means the issue is back on the table without Starmer needing to say anything much on the subject – but watch this space.

In the end, though, Starmer also proved to be an incredibly lucky general. Kwarteng has gifted him a definitive demonstration of why surface cleverness in politics (at least as defined by the Tory press) is not enough. At one of those rare times when the public may notice, Starmer has responded with a textbook illustration of why thought, wisdom and judgment count for so much more.

It would still have been a successful conference week for Labour even without Truss, Kwarteng and the IMF. But to be presented with a once-in-a-generation, government-created sterling slide, bond market crisis, mortgage

famine and a handout to the super-rich has helped transform Labour's week from one of workmanlike advance to one that showered the party with a bonanza of political rewards. They may not endure, but it will all be very different with the Tories in Birmingham next week.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist
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OpinionFood & drink industry

My sister would still be alive if the food industry took allergy labels seriously enough

[Gareth Gower](#)

People like Celia shouldn't have to gamble with their lives. We need more rigorous checks and tests on "free from" products



Celia Marsh, 42, from Melksham, Wiltshire, died in 2017 after eating a wrap bought from Pret a Manger in Bath, Somerset. Photograph: Leigh Day/PA

Thu 29 Sep 2022 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 06.00 EDT

The last time I saw my big sister Celia was at our leaving party in July 2017. My family was uprooting from the UK to Melbourne, Australia. She was full of life and looking forward to visiting us in our new home. But on 27 December that year, Celia went on a shopping trip in Bath and died of

anaphylaxis after eating a contaminated vegan rainbow vegetable wrap bought from [Pret a Manger](#) that was labelled as dairy-free.

Celia was highly allergic to dairy and scrupulously avoided it in her diet. Last week, more than four and a half years later, the coroner at her inquest [ruled that Celia's death](#) was from anaphylaxis caused by the milk protein found in the contaminated dairy-free yoghurt used in the wrap that she consumed that day.

When Celia died, I was already aware of the severity of her milk allergy because she'd suffered a first anaphylactic reaction in May 2017 from eating a cereal bar, which almost killed her, demonstrating just how severely allergic to milk she had become. Since that incident, I felt some comfort in knowing that she was so meticulous and careful about everything she ate.

Upon hearing the news of her death, I remember feeling very numb and shocked, and quite useless on the other side of the world. When I spoke to Celia's husband, Andy, a few days later, we reflected on how careful Celia was when choosing what she could eat. We knew she would not have made a mistake. We vowed to uncover the truth and identify the source of the dairy contamination in the wrap.

The details that emerged were shocking and upsetting. Before hearing statements at the inquest, I had little appreciation of how unregulated the food standard was for "free from" products. As the details emerged about a lack of due diligence and testing, I felt my anger grow at almost everything Bethany Eaton – the founder and managing director of Planet Coconut, which had provided the contaminated yoghurt to Pret a Manger – was saying. She repeatedly stated that she "trusted" the verbal assurances from Henry Gosling, the director of Coyo in Australia, that his HG1 stabiliser product used in the manufacture of the yoghurt was dairy-free.

Eaton accepted that the 25kg bags of stabiliser delivered to Planet Coconut from a manufacturer in Wales stated: "Manufactured in a factory that handles milk, eggs, cereals." But she said Gosling had told her they "were making it in an allergy-free area". She added: "I took his word on that and believed it. I wouldn't have dreamed it contained dairy. I didn't have any

worries. I believed there was a separate facility or area or line that was entirely allergen free.”

In a statement read at the inquest, Gosling said that under the licensing agreement, Planet Coconut was obliged to ensure the HG1 it used was dairy free.

Now that the inquest is over, our family – supported by Leigh Day solicitors – want to see change for Celia. The coroner’s ruling gave us all validation. I always believed Celia had done everything she could to ensure the food was safe to eat as she had so much to lose. She would never take risks with food.

The coroner made it clear that Planet Coconut had in their possession [documents that flagged the risk](#) of cross contamination, but that this risk was not passed up the supply chain to Pret. Pret confirmed that had it known that the yoghurt might have contained milk, it would not have used the ingredient. In other words, Celia would still be alive today.

I take some comfort in believing that Celia’s death will not be in vain. The [coroner has confirmed](#) she will be providing a prevention-of-future-deaths report to highlight suggestions that had been made during Celia’s inquest to protect allergy sufferers. This brings us considerable hope.

One main consideration is whether a system of obligatory testing for all ingredients in a supply chain should be implemented. “Free from” should mean a guaranteed absence of the allergen from the food and not open to interpretation by the manufacturer. There should be a “free from” certification mark that can be earned and applied to products to show regular testing, auditing and controls. This would provide visible assurance that the product has been assessed to the British Retail Consortium’s standard and that the claim is verified and rigorously maintained.

Food labelling in Australia, where I live, is generally better than in the UK. All allergens are identified using [Voluntary Incidental Trace Allergen Labelling](#) (Vital) that provide a standardised allergen risk assessment process for the food industry. The [state of Victoria requires](#) that all anaphylaxis cases presenting to hospital for treatment are reported to the Department of Health. This ensures samples are taken immediately to identify the source of the

reaction and uncover any possible dangers. The coroner has recommended that food-related anaphylaxis should be registered as a notifiable disease in the UK, which would serve the same purpose.

We know how and why Celia died, and food companies should be acting now. There is no need for food business operators to wait for the coroner's final report, or for the [Food](#) Standards Agency to consult on implementation. What is good for food companies' customers is good for their business.

As Celia's younger brother, I miss the feeling of having her looking out for me. She always had time for me and was so supportive. She would bring her smile wherever she went and loved to help others. She would take some comfort in knowing the cause of her death was being used to deliver improvements in the lives of all food allergy sufferers. Allergy sufferers should not have to gamble with their lives every time they eat out or try a product that claims to be safe.

- ***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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OpinionSoccer

My fellow Midlanders have decided I am a traitor and should be dunked in Birmingham's filthiest canal

[Adrian Chiles](#)



I thought it would be fun to have a fantasy football match between northern and southern-born players. But where to draw the border?



If a northern-born team played the southern-born, who would win?
Photograph: FOTOKITA/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Thu 29 Sep 2022 02.00 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 07.38 EDT

Some topics for radio shows have great promise but don't deliver. It's these I specialise in. I had an idea the other week that I was certain would fly on Radio 5 live but didn't, for reasons I should have seen coming. I still consider it too good to waste, so I rehash it here for your consideration. It followed the American owner of Chelsea football club daring to have a bright idea about the Premier League having an all-star game with the [best players from the northern clubs playing the best from the southern clubs.](#) Nah, rubbish, we all said. However, I have always been interested in who produces the best players, the north or the south. If a northern-born team played the southern-born, who would win?

A ruling on where the north-south border should run had to be made. This was tricky enough but, as this was the *British* Broadcasting Corporation, in the interests of inclusivity we felt Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland should be part of this. The road to hell is indeed paved with good intentions. It turns out that dividing the United Kingdom by drawing a line between the Dee estuary in the west and the Wash in the east is to invite derision and division of Brexit-like magnitude. The Welsh didn't want to play for the south, and nor did my fellow Midlanders, who called for me to be treated

like the traitor I was and be strung by my ankles and dunked in Birmingham's filthiest canal.

Amid all the fury, about six callers actually bothered to suggest players. For the vanishingly few who remained interested, we ended up with the following XI representing the north. Gordon Banks (born in Sheffield, before you write in); Gary Neville, Alan Hansen, Jack Charlton, Andy Robertson; Denis Law, Graeme Souness, George Best; Kenny Dalglish, Alan Shearer, Wayne Rooney. The Southern XI were Neville Southall; George Cohen, Bobby Moore, Rio Ferdinand, Ashley Cole; Gareth Bale, Glenn Hoddle, Stanley Matthews, Frank Lampard; John Charles, Ian Rush. I've got it down as a 2-2 draw. And I won't be taking any more calls on the subject.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and 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](#)[New York](#)

I'm a city person, but there's one bit of rural cosplay I can't resist

[Emma Brockes](#)



The temperatures fall, and the kids and I – as if hypnotised – find ourselves driving out of town for some ritual apple-picking



“Let’s go apple-picking,’ someone says, and every year you insist you’ll resist.’ Photograph: Susan Montoya Bryan/AP

Thu 29 Sep 2022 03.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 14.57 EDT

It was a long weekend in [New York](#) last week, where the schools closed for the Jewish New Year and New Yorkers reckoned with an annual tradition. “Let’s go apple-picking,” someone says, and every year you insist you’ll resist. The 80F (27C) heat; the dust; the bumper to bumper New York plates; and the task itself – picking sodding apples you will never, ever make into a pie (when, in your entire life, have you ever made a pie?) – none of that matters. Like a trigger from a hypnotist, hear those words and you, a city person, are compelled by some law of physics to rent a car, identify a farm and drive out to fulfil your autumn quest in a jacket too warm for the day.

This year, we tried to at least use our years in the trenches to make the experience less onerous. Drive 45 minutes out of town to a field in New Jersey and you’ll find yourself less in a farm than a giant car park. (This is the same, semi-metropolitan zone that three months hence will offer ski slopes with 3cm of snow, warmed by the heat of 8 million New Yorkers). This year, we would do it properly and drive two and a half hours north west into rural Pennsylvania. We would stay with friends who knew what they were doing. We would find the one apple-picking experience that, unlike

that of all the other cosplaying city folk, would bring us convincing insights into rural life.

If there is a genuine aspect to all this, it is what I assume is the deeply embedded need in all humans to mark the change of the seasons with something more profound than a novelty order at Starbucks. We undertake the annual migration, in part, because the kids love to choose a pumpkin from a pumpkin patch rather than a supermarket aisle, but also because, at some mineral level, our bodies are telling us to do it. For 99% of the year, I have zero desire to live in the country. For this single weekend, as the leaves start to fall and the temperature cools, I entertain the idea that life in the city is suppressing my latent but vital Tess of the d'Urbervilles side.

The farm was three hours from the city. It was an overcast day, threatening rain, and the car park was two-thirds empty. As an immigrant to the US, I'm extremely susceptible to certain types of Americana, the novelty of which never wears off. This was it: the farm of my dreams, full of activities clearly not devised by someone running the place from a Manhattan zip code. There was a bouncy castle with no safety barrier. There was a single, ancient fairground ride that looked as if it had been kicking around since the 70s. There was a "corn pit" – like a huge sand box, but instead of sand, corn. The kids dived in and emerged 30 minutes later covered in a thick layer of corn dust that was thrillingly unsanitary. There was a miniature steam train that did a circuit of the farm. A concession stand sold deep-fried Oreos.

And there was the orchard itself. As my children faffed about putting enormous Honeycrisp apples into their bags, I put my back into having an important seasonal moment. What would Gerard Manley Hopkins do with this? "Margaret, are you grieving / Over Goldengrove unleaving?" Yes, one gets older. Yes, the leaves fall. But as long as the apples are crisp and the air is fresh, might we not enjoy the mixed metaphor of our path through the woods? Right, back to the city.

I dropped off the rental car at a garage in midtown, six blocks from Times Square. It was 10 degrees warmer than the country. The traffic speed was roughly 4mph. Pigeons were fighting in the gutter over a discarded slice of pizza. "It's good to be home, right?" I said to my daughter, but the

unexpected perfection of the weekend lingered. My one sadness is that we left the farm before I had a chance to try out [axe throwing](#). What if I'm an amazing axe thrower? What if, unbeknownst to me, I have the kind of axe-throwing talent that belongs in the World Axe Throwing League? Autumn is a time for regrets and I would lean more fully into this sadness if I didn't know better. There is always next year.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
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Pacific islands

US strikes partnership deal with Pacific Island leaders at historic summit

US official says Pacific leaders endorsed joint statement one day after leaked documents showed discord among the group over proposals



US secretary of state Antony Blinken hosts a working lunch with Pacific Island countries in Washington. Photograph: Kevin Wolf/AFP/Getty Images

Guardian staff and agencies

Wed 28 Sep 2022 20.02 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 09.11 EDT

The United States said at a summit with Pacific island leaders that it had agreed on a partnership for the future with them and held out the prospect of “big dollar” help to a region where it hopes to stem China’s expanding influence.

The Washington Post quoted US officials as saying the Biden administration would announce it would invest more than \$860m in expanded programs to

aid the islands at the two-day summit, on top of more than \$1.5bn provided in the past decade.

The White House had no immediate comment on the funding figure, but a US official said the newspaper's reporting that all the visiting leaders had endorsed an 11-point statement of vision committing to joint endeavours was accurate.

They included Solomon Islands prime minister Manasseh Sogavare, whose government had earlier indicated it would not sign the declaration, raising further concerns about his ties to China. Sogavare's spokesman had no immediate comment.

It is the first time the United States has been host to so many leaders of a region it has considered its maritime backyard since the second world war, but into which China has been making steady advances. Some of the nations have complained about being caught in the middle of the superpowers' battle for influence.

Secretary of state, [Antony Blinken](#), welcomed the leaders to the summit and promised: "You can count on the United States partnering with you."

The lead-up to the meeting had been clouded by the leak of documents showing that Solomon Islands had rejected a draft US agreement with the region and that Micronesian leaders had raised serious concerns about the level of financial assistance on offer.

A leaked note seen by the Guardian, written by the embassy of Solomon Islands in New York, announced that the country, which [signed a controversial security deal with China in April](#), would not be endorsing a regional diplomatic agreement being proposed by the US.

Blinken on Wednesday made a veiled reference to China's growing assertiveness around the region and across Asia, saying that the US would work with the islands on "preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific where every nation – no matter how big, no matter how small – has the right to choose its own path."

Following up on an initiative last week on the sidelines of the UN general assembly, Blinken promised \$4.8m to strengthen “blue economies” – cleaner oceans with more sustainable fishing.

He also promised an assertive stance on climate change by the US, which under Biden has approved domestic action on green energy after years of gridlock and skepticism by much of the rival Republican party.

Biden will meet the leaders on Thursday, a personal touch that US officials hope will help reestablish Washington’s preeminence after long taking for granted a region the US has dominated for decades.

Administration officials did not deny that Pacific Island nations voiced concerns that the pivot could be temporary. But officials highlighted the breadth and bipartisan support for the effort.

As part of a new strategy, the US would appoint its first envoy to focus on the Pacific Islands and was adding three more diplomatic missions in the region, bringing the total from six to nine, officials said.

The US would also resume a USAID office in Fiji and expand contacts through the Coast Guard, defence department and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

The US as well as Australia and New Zealand, which are participating in the summit as observers, had a wake-up call when Solomon Islands signed its secretive security pact with China.

After intensive US and Australian appeals, the broader region rejected an overarching pact with China. But western officials fear that Beijing will use Solomon Islands as a base to expand militarily into the Pacific or to pressure Taiwan, a self-governing democracy claimed by Beijing.

Sogavare, in a speech at the United Nations last week, vowed that his tiny country “will not be coerced into choosing sides”.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Weng Wenbin, asked about Biden’s summit, said that Pacific Island nations were sovereign and had the right to build relations with any country.

“Growing relations with the Pacific Island countries is not about seeking a sphere of influence and does not target any third party,” he told reporters.

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[North Korea](#)

Kamala Harris hits out at North Korea's 'provocative nuclear rhetoric' on DMZ visit

Pyongyang fired ballistic missiles into the sea just hours before US vice-president arrived in Seoul



The US vice-president, Kamala Harris, visiting the demilitarized zone (DMZ) separating the two Koreas in Panmunjom, South Korea, on Thursday. Photograph: Leah Millis/AP

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies

Thu 29 Sep 2022 05.27 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 00.27 EDT

The US vice-president, Kamala Harris, has condemned North Korea's "provocative nuclear rhetoric" during a trip to South Korea that included a [visit to the heavily armed border](#) dividing the peninsula.

Harris arrived in Seoul on Thursday, hours after [North Korea](#) fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea, in a move that underlines Washington's struggle to rein in the regime's weapons programme.

Her visit to the [demilitarised zone](#) (DMZ) – which has divided the peninsula since the 1950-1953 Korean war ended in an uneasy truce – was intended to demonstrate the US's commitment to South Korea, a key ally in the region.

Harris looked through binoculars as a South Korean colonel pointed out military installations on the southern side. An American colonel then pointed out some of the defences along the military demarcation line, which marks the boundary between the two Koreas, including barbed wire fences and mines.

“It’s so close,” Harris said.

Earlier, she told US military personnel at a nearby base “how grateful and thankful we are” for their role in protecting the southern side of the tense border between the two Koreas.

North Korea’s leader, [Kim Jong-un](#), has overseen a record number of missile launches this year, including one that involved a long-range weapon. Officials in Seoul and Washington have warned that Pyongyang could be preparing to carry out a nuclear test.

In a meeting in Seoul with the South Korean president, Yoon Suk-yeol, Harris praised the alliance between the two countries as a “linchpin of security and prosperity. I’m here to reinforce the strength of our alliance and strengthen our work together”.

Yoon, a conservative who took office in May, called her visit “another turning point” in strengthening bilateral ties.

They reaffirmed their commitment to the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula and “condemned [North Korea’s] provocative nuclear rhetoric and ballistic missile launches, in violation of UN security council resolutions”, the White House said in a statement. “They discussed our response to

potential future provocations, including through trilateral cooperation with Japan.”

The DMZ has become a regular stop for visiting US officials eager to demonstrate their resolve on North Korean weapons’ development and their commitment to the security of South Korea, where 28,5000 US troops are based.

The 155-mile (250km) long border is highly fortified with razor wire, heavy armaments and tank traps on either side of a 2.5-mile wide buffer.

Ronald Reagan was the first US president to visit the DMZ, but Bill Clinton – who described it as “the scariest place on Earth” during a 1993 visit – and Donald Trump are the only sitting presidents to have visited the Joint Security Area, a cluster of buildings that hosts inter-Korean talks, and the only place where troops from both sides directly face each other.

Harris’s visit comes at a time of rising tensions on the peninsula. This week, the US and [South Korea](#) launched large-scale naval exercises for the first time in five years. The allies insist that their joint drills are purely defensive, but North Korea routinely condemns them as rehearsals for an invasion.

Earlier this week, Harris condemned Pyongyang’s “illicit weapons programme” during a speech at a naval base in Japan, where she also attended the state funeral of the country’s former prime minister Shinzo Abe.

Speculation is building that [North Korea](#) is preparing to detonate a nuclear device in what would be its seventh nuclear test since 2006. Pyongyang claimed that its most recent test, in 2017, involved its most powerful weapon to date.

This week, the South Korean spy agency said North Korea appeared to have completed a third tunnel at its Punggye-ri nuclear site as part of preparations for a test, according to a South Korean MP who attended a closed-door briefing by the National Intelligence Service.

The lawmaker said Pyongyang was likely to conduct the test after the end of the Chinese Communist party congress, which begins on 16 October, and

before US midterm elections on 8 November.

Kim Jong-dae, of the Yonsei Institute for North Korean Studies, said the latest missile launches were an attempt by the regime “to gain an upper hand on the peninsula with a nuclear arsenal at its disposal”.

That and other launches were “a harbinger of Pyongyang’s aggressive posturing to come next month – with missile launches and a possible nuclear test”, Kim added.

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Guns and liesCalifornia

Oakland police search for two suspects after school shooting that injured six

Mayor Libby Schaaf calls for gun restrictions after shooting at Rudsdale Newcome high school for recently immigrated students



The shooting took place at about noon on Wednesday in East Oakland.
Photograph: Peter Dasilva/EPA

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Thu 29 Sep 2022 16.43 EDTFirst published on Wed 28 Sep 2022 18.10 EDT

California authorities are searching for at least two people in connection with a shooting on a school campus in Oakland that left six people injured.

Wednesday's shooting occurred at Rudsdale Newcomer high school, which serves students who are at risk of not graduating and have recently immigrated to the US after fleeing their home countries "because of violence and instability". The school is one of four adjacent schools that serve middle and high school students on Fontaine Street just outside East Oakland.

Police believe at least two people opened fire on the campus at about noon, said LeRonne Armstrong, Oakland's police chief, during a press conference on Thursday.

Paramedics transported six people to local hospitals, all with gunshot wounds. Two of the victims are in critical condition, one is stable and three have been released. Two of the victims are students, one is a counselor, another is a security guard, and two others are described as "workers at the school", according to the Oakland police department's Facebook page.

During the same conference, Libby Schaaf, the mayor of Oakland, called on federal legislators to pass gun restrictions that would make it more difficult to obtain certain firearms.



A school shooting occurred at Rudsdale Newcomer high school on Fontaine Street in Oakland. Photograph: Google Maps

The shooting comes as Oakland has been grappling with more than two years of elevated gun violence, a rise that began early in the pandemic.

John Sasaki, a spokesperson for Oakland Unified school district, said in a statement that district officials “do not have any information beyond what Oakland police are reporting”.

Before the pandemic, homicides and gun violence in Oakland – along with a number of Bay Area cities – had reached [historic lows](#). But by mid-2020, gun violence was on the upswing and the usual refuges of school, community centers and violence prevention workers were largely unavailable. By the end of 2020, 102 people were killed, 24 more than the year before.

So far this year, at least 96 people have been killed, mostly with guns.

The city's youth have not been spared from this increase in homicides. In 2020, at least 14 people under the age of 20 were killed, according to a Guardian analysis of state homicide data. The next year, the number of young people killed increased, including 18-year-old Demetrius Fleming-Davis, an Oakland native who was shot and killed while riding in the back of a truck.

"A lot of us have plans that we can't even make happen because we die at 18 and 19. It's just a big war zone that we're facing and I don't know how it's gonna be stopped," said Cianna Williams, a 19-year-old friend of Fleming-Davis last year.

On Tuesday, LeRonne Armstrong, Oakland's chief of police, announced plans to address the city's gun violence by increasing officers' presence in areas where gun violence is concentrated and where police think people are involved in shootings frequently.

The Associated Press contributed to this story

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Denmark

Denmark's Queen Margrethe strips four grandchildren of royal titles

Official reason to allow children 'to shape their own existence' while mother of two princes losing titles 'shocked' by decision



Denmark's Queen Margrethe stripped four of her eight grandchildren of their titles, the palace announced. Photograph: FD/Francis Dias/Newspix International

Agence France-Presse

Wed 28 Sep 2022 19.20 EDT Last modified on Fri 30 Sep 2022 00.29 EDT

Denmark's Queen Margrethe, Europe's only reigning queen and the continent's longest serving monarch, has stripped four of her eight grandchildren of their titles, the palace announced.

The official reason was to allow the four children of her youngest son, Prince Joachim, to live more normal lives, and follows similar moves by

other royal families in [Europe](#) to slim down their monarchies, the palace said.

“As of January 1 2023, the descendants of His Royal Highness Prince Joachim will only be able to use their titles of Count and Countess of Monpezat, their previous titles of Prince and Princess of Denmark ceasing to exist,” a statement from the royal palace said on Wednesday.

Prince Joachim, 53, has four children from two marriages: Nikolai, Felix, Henrik and Athena, ranging in age from 23 to 10.

“With her decision, Her Majesty the Queen wants to create a framework for the four grandchildren, to a much greater degree, to be able to shape their own existence without being limited by the special considerations and obligations that a formal affiliation with the Royal House as an institution implies,” the palace said.

“The queen’s decision is in line with similar changes that other royal houses have carried out in recent years in different ways,” the statement added.

The mother of Prince Joachim’s two eldest sons told Danish media she was “shocked” by the decision.

“This came from out of the blue. The children feel excluded,” Countess Alexandra told the daily BT. “They can’t understand why their identity is being taken from them.”

The queen’s four other grandchildren, born to Crown Prince Frederik, 54, will retain their titles but when they come of age only the future king, Prince Christian, will receive an appanage, a decision taken in 2016.

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Myanmar

Aung San Suu Kyi and Australian adviser handed three years' jail after secret trial

Myanmar junta's sentencing of ousted leader and economic adviser Sean Turnell described as 'cruel injustice'



Sean Turnell has been detained in Myanmar since a military coup overthrew Aung San Suu Kyi. Photograph: Myanmar News Agency/AFP/Getty Images

[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) and agencies

Thu 29 Sep 2022 00.49 EDT Last modified on Thu 29 Sep 2022 12.25 EDT

Aung San Suu Kyi and the Australian academic Sean Turnell, who served as her adviser, have been sentenced to three years in prison after a closed trial in Myanmar, according to reports.

Turnell, an economist at Sydney's Macquarie University, was first detained on 6 February last year, a few days after the [military ousted Myanmar's elected government](#), plunging the country into chaos.

Turnell was later charged with violating Myanmar's Official Secrets Act, and over the past year has appeared alongside co-defendants including the ousted leader and three of her former cabinet members.

A source, who declined to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue, told Reuters Turnell and the ousted leader had been given "three years each, no hard labour". Both had pleaded not guilty.

The Australian foreign minister, Penny Wong, rejected the court ruling and called for Turnell's immediate release.

"Prof Turnell was tried in a closed court – Australia's chargé d'affaires and consular officials in Myanmar made every effort to attend the verdict but were denied access to the court," Wong said. "We will continue to take every opportunity to advocate strongly for Prof Turnell until he has returned to his family in Australia. We acknowledge the strong international support shown for him, including from our region."

There is very limited information about court proceedings involving political prisoners in Myanmar, where more than 15,600 people have been arrested since last year's coup. Hearings are not accessible to journalists and defence lawyers have been gagged from talking to media.

Aung San Suu Kyi had already been sentenced to 20 years in prison over separate cases, and is still facing trials.

The military had accused Turnell of possessing confidential documents when he was detained last year, according to the Irrawaddy news site. Turnell has reportedly denied the charge and said the documents were not confidential, but were economic recommendations he had given in his capacity as adviser to Aung San Suu Kyi's government.

The case against him has been widely condemned by rights groups.

Elaine Pearson, the Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said the sentences handed down were a “cruel injustice”. “The junta’s willingness to pile sentences on Aung San Suu Kyi, along with the Australian economist Sean Turnell and three of her ministers, shows that Myanmar’s military has no qualms about their international pariah status.

“Concerned governments should take this as a clear signal that they need to take concerted action against the junta if they are going to turn the human rights situation around in the country,” she said. Turnell had been denied proper access to legal counsel, she added.

Turnell has worked on economic and banking issues in Myanmar since the early 2000s, focusing on promoting reform and growth. He has served as special economic consultant to Aung San Suu Kyi and as a senior economic adviser to the minister of planning, finance and industry. Before this, he worked at the Reserve Bank of Australia.

Last month, as the UN special envoy to Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer, met the junta chief, Min Aung Hlaing, to call for a de-escalation in violence in the country, she also conveyed a request from the Australian government appealing for Turnell’s release.

Junta-controlled media later published what it claimed was an account of their meeting, in which Min Aung Hlaing said: “With regard to the case of Mr Sean Turnell, should the Australian government take positive steps, we will not need to take stern actions. In the Mr Sean Turnell’s case, the evidence shows that severe penalties could be imposed.”

At least 15,683 people have been arrested since the military took power on 1 February 2021, and 12,540 remain in detention, according to the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners, which tracks arrests and killings.

Other foreign nationals being held include [Britain’s former ambassador to Myanmar Vicky Bowman](#), and Toru Kubota, a Japanese film-maker.

Separately, [Amnesty International launched a report](#) on Thursday that argued Facebook’s algorithms “substantially contributed” to atrocities committed by

the military against Myanmar's Rohingya minority when Aung San Suu Kyi was in power.

"In the months and years leading up to the atrocities, Facebook's algorithms were intensifying a storm of hatred against the Rohingya which contributed to real-world violence," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general.

"While the Myanmar military was committing crimes against humanity against the Rohingya, Meta was profiting from the echo chamber of hatred created by its hate-spiralling algorithms."

Amnesty's reassessment of Facebook's role in the genocide is based on the cache of documents released by the whistleblower Frances Haugen in 2021, which "enable a renewed understanding of the manner in which [Facebook's] content shaping algorithms fuelled the mass violence", the report said.

In a statement, Meta's Rafael Frankel said: "Our safety and integrity work in Myanmar remains guided by feedback from local civil society organisations and international institutions, including the UN fact-finding mission on Myanmar; the human rights impact assessment we commissioned in 2018; as well as our ongoing human rights risk management."

Additional reporting by Alex Hern

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