The Guardian

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Headlines friday 25 november 2022

- **NHS Nurses across UK to strike for first time on 15 and 20 December**
- **Live Health secretary Steve Barclay insists nurses getting ‘fair’ pay rise as strike dates announced**
- **Who's taking action and when? The strikes summarised**
- **Jeremy Hunt Plans likely to degrade public services, says report**

Nursing

Nurses across UK to strike for first time on 15 and 20 December

Royal College of Nursing confirms action in England, Wales and Northern Ireland after government ‘refuses’ to enter pay talks

There are 47,000 unfilled NHS registered nursing posts in England alone with poor pay and morale being attributed to staff leaving. Photograph: Hesther Ng/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Andrew Gregory and Jamie Grierson
Fri 25 Nov 2022 04.01 ESTFirst published on Fri 25 Nov 2022 01.00 EST

Nurses across the UK will go on strike for the first time over two days in the fortnight before Christmas after ministers rejected their pleas for formal talks over NHS pay.

The Royal College of Nursing (RCN) said its members would stage national strikes – the first in its 106-year history – on 15 and 20 December. Senior

sources said the industrial action was expected to last for 12 hours on both days – most likely between 8am and 8pm.

The unprecedented national industrial action will seriously disrupt care and is likely to be the first in a series of strikes over the winter and into the spring by other NHS staff, including junior doctors and ambulance workers.

Rishi Sunak says nurses' pay rise is 'obviously unaffordable' – video

The RCN said it had confirmed the dates after the UK government turned down its offer of formal, detailed negotiations as an alternative to industrial action.

"Ministers have had more than two weeks since we confirmed that our members felt such injustice that they would strike for the first time," said the RCN general secretary, Pat Cullen. "My offer of formal negotiations was declined and, instead, ministers have chosen strike action.

"They have the power and the means to stop this by opening serious talks that address our dispute. Nursing staff have had enough of being taken for granted, enough of low pay and unsafe staffing levels, enough of not being able to give our patients the care they deserve."

The strikes will take place in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The RCN will announce which particular NHS employers will be affected next week, when formal notifications are submitted, it said.

In Scotland, the RCN has paused announcing strike action after the Scottish government reopened NHS pay negotiations.

The strikes are taking place after a series of individual ballots were held at NHS trusts and boards, rather than one national ballot.

At more than 40% of England's hospitals, mental health and community services nurses will not be entitled to strike because the turnout was too low in those ballots. Action can happen, however, at all of Northern Ireland's health boards and all but one in Wales.

NHS pay – graph

On Friday, Cullen said the UK government had chosen strikes over listening to nursing staff, adding: “If you turn your back on nurses, you turn your back on patients.”

She said she did not recognise figures put forward by the health secretary suggesting the pay demands from the RCN amounted to a 19.2% pay rise costing £10bn a year.

“If [health secretary Steve] Barclay wishes to meet with me, get round the table and stop the spin and start to speak, he can avert these strikes,” she said. “But my door is wide open night and day. I will make myself available, as will my team on behalf of our nursing staff.

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“That option isn’t available to me at this time and consequently he has chosen strikes over speaking to me.”

Earlier this month, the RCN announced that nursing staff at the majority of NHS employers across the UK had voted to take strike action over pay and patient safety.

The RCN said that despite a pay rise of about £1,400 awarded in the summer, experienced nurses were worse off by 20% in real terms due to successive below-inflation awards since 2010. It said the economic argument for paying nursing staff fairly was clear when billions of pounds were being spent on agency staff to plug workforce gaps.

It added that in the last year, 25,000 nursing staff around the UK had left the Nursing and Midwifery Council register, with poor pay contributing to staff shortages across the country, which it warned were affecting patient safety. There are 47,000 unfilled NHS registered nurse posts in England alone.

Nurses leaving NHS – graph

Other health unions are also balloting workers for industrial action. They have been warning for months that workers are quitting in huge numbers over pay and low morale, leading to staff shortages in hospitals and other parts of the NHS.

Wes Streeting, the shadow health secretary, said: “Why on earth is the health secretary refusing to negotiate with nurses? Patients already can’t get treated on time, strike action is the last thing they need, yet the government is letting this happen. Patients will never forgive the Conservatives for this negligence.”

The health secretary, Steve Barclay, said he was “hugely grateful” for the hard work of nurses and deeply regretted the industrial action. However, he refused to open formal talks and described the RCN’s demands as “not affordable”.

“Our priority is keeping patients safe,” he added. “The NHS has tried and tested plans in place to minimise disruption and ensure emergency services continue to operate.”

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Politics

Minister becomes eighth Tory MP to announce they are stepping down at next election – as it happened

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Trade unions

Strike action: who is taking action, and when

Transport, health and education staff are among those going on strike amid the cost of living crisis

Students show support for striking academics and support staff at the London School of Economics on Thursday. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/REX/Shutterstock

Kevin Rawlinson
Fri 25 Nov 2022 01.43 ESTFirst published on Thu 24 Nov 2022 19.06 EST

University staff

Tens of thousands of members of the University and College Union – including lecturers, librarians and researchers – went on strike on Thursday, over pay, working conditions and pensions.

Security guards at University College London who are members of the Independent Workers' Union of Great Britain walked out last week in a separate action.

Rail workers

RMT members working for Network Rail and train operating companies announced their intention to strike over the Christmas and new year period. A separate strike by drivers who are members of Aslef is to take place on Saturday.

Graphic

Health workers

Last week, the health secretary promised to meet six of the largest trade unions in an effort to find a deal that would avert proposed strike action in the NHS.

Members of the Royal College of Nursing (RCN), one of the six, have already voted to strike in December after the government insisted their demand for a 5% above-inflation pay increase this year was "not affordable".

Royal Mail

Strikes over pay are to go ahead around Black Friday and in the run-up to Christmas after members of the Communication Workers Union (CWU) rejected Royal Mail's offer.

London buses

Unite members working for Abellio in south and west London have walked out in the first of a series of actions across November and December.

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Education

In Scotland, tens of thousands of teachers went out on strike on Thursday, in the first nationwide schools strike since the 1980s. The action is over a long-running wage dispute and is expected to continue with further walkouts. And members of the Scottish Secondary Teachers' Association and the NASUWT in Scotland also plan to walk out in early December.

Elsewhere in the UK, the National Association of Head Teachers and the National Education Union are balloting teachers and headteachers in England and Wales, while the members of the former in Northern Ireland are also voting. And the Association of School and College Leaders has also opened its first consultative ballot, asking members if they support a formal ballot on strike action.

Civil servants

Members of the Public and Commercial Services Union union, which represents 150,000 civil servants, have voted for strike action and plan to update members on the next steps on Thursday evening.

The union's head has threatened to take his members out on the same day as colleagues in other unions to show solidarity. Mark Serwotka suggested road officials could take action on the same day as rail workers, and Border Force officials on the same day as airport staff, to cause maximum disruption.

Firefighters

The Fire Brigades Union plans to begin balloting members for strike action in December, with a result expected in January, after they turned down an offer that would have represented a real-terms pay cut.

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Public services policy

Jeremy Hunt's plans likely to degrade public services, says report

Thinktank says it expects chancellor's autumn statement to leave 'poisoned inheritance' for next government

- UK politics live – latest news updates

Lawyers protesting in London in June over legal aid cuts. The IfG says the justice system is unlikely to see court backlogs eased. Photograph: Guy Corbishley/Alamy

Peter Walker Political correspondent
@peterwalker99
Thu 24 Nov 2022 17.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 00.36 EST

Jeremy Hunt's autumn statement is expected to bring further degradation of public services, with even those given extra funds, such as schools and the

NHS, unlikely to catch up from the damage caused by Covid, a leading thinktank has said.

The Institute for Government (IfG) said the statement, given last week, and billed by the chancellor as generous in the circumstances, was deliberately frontloaded, leaving any government after 2024 with some hugely difficult spending decisions.

Its report also says less protected services, notably the criminal justice system, are likely to face effective cuts, with the sector unlikely to see reductions to courts backlogs or overcrowding in prisons.

Hunt's decision to put off most spending curbs for two years from now "leaves some very difficult spending decisions for the next government, whoever that may be", the report says.

Nick Davies, the IfG's programme director, and one of the report's authors, said: "Most services will be performing worse in 2025 than they were 15 years earlier – with devastating consequences for the people who rely on them. This is a poisoned inheritance for whoever forms the next government."

It is unclear, the report's authors say, whether it will be "politically sustainable for the next government to hold down public spending in line with Hunt's plans". There will be issues caused by the £22bn of cuts in day-to-day spending scheduled for the 2025-26 and 2027-28 financial years, and other factors, the IfG says.

One issue highlighted is the continued slow recovery of public services from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Another is pay, which accounts for more than half of public-sector budgets. With significant pressure for higher pay, and the likelihood of strikes if this does not happen, headline figures showing seemingly generous spending settlements could mean little actual improvement.

Areas given extra money, such as the NHS, schools and local government, should be able to meet demands caused by demographic changes and

inflationary pressures, the report says. “But they will struggle to do much more than that. In each, performance is currently far below pre-pandemic levels and the money provided is unlikely to be sufficient to return them to those levels.”

With criminal justice, in particular, an already scheduled small real-terms increase in funding over the next two years will mean demand is “likely to outstrip spending by a sizeable margin”.

The authors say: “Prisons and courts are in a particularly dire state, with problems felt before the pandemic badly exacerbated by it, and the spending decisions announced in the autumn statement mean there is little prospect of making meaningful reductions to the crown court backlog or of safely housing the expected increase in prisoner numbers.”

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By contrast, the report says, the promised extra £3.3bn for the NHS, aimed at reducing waiting times for ambulances and A&E, and better access to GPs, should deal with the rising demand – though it seems very unlikely to be enough to tackle backlogs, or to resolve longer-term staff recruitment and retention problems.

Similarly, a funding boost to the schools budget will restore core per-pupil funding to real-terms 2010 levels by 2023-24, the IfG says. However, this will probably not cover expected pay awards, and is “also unlikely to make up for learning lost during the pandemic – the schools’ equivalent to the ‘backlog’ felt in other services”.

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2022.11.25 - Spotlight

- **Celebrities? They're all a bit weird … Hadley Freeman on 22 years interviewing stars**
- **William the Conqueror French team to build replica of 1066 invasion warship**
- **'Why did I feel rusty? White supremacy' Kelela on writer's block, outsiderdom and her long-awaited second album**
- **Generation game How British Bangladeshi gardeners have gone back to their roots**

Advertisement

Celebrities? They're all a bit weird … Hadley Freeman on 22 years interviewing stars

‘I was overcome by his handsomeness’ … Hadley Freeman with Keanu Reeves in 2019.

Ben Affleck was delightful, Justin Timberlake a drag and Keanu so handsome I couldn’t speak. Here’s everything you always wanted to know about A-listers (but were afraid to ask)

Hadley Freeman
@HadleyFreeman
Fri 25 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 05.59 EST

I started working at the Guardian in the summer of 2000 – not to write, but to look after a key. The key to the fashion cupboard, to be precise, ensuring no clothes for the fashion shoots were stolen. This was my primary role as the fashion assistant. Or, as I preferred to call myself – and say it with me as one, fellow Ghostbusters fans – the keymaster. And I will never have a job with more responsibility or power.

Nonetheless, soon after I started, section editors asked which celebrities I’d like to interview. I was too young and dumb to appreciate how completely incredible it was for editors to even know the name of the fashion assistant, let alone give a damn who she wanted to interview. But that’s what the Guardian was like, and, my God, how lucky was I to be here. But my point

in this, my last feature for the Guardian, is among all the various job titles I've had on this paper, ranging from the improbable (northern news reporter) to the frankly unbelievable (World Cup features writer), one thing that has never changed is that I always interviewed celebrities.

With Michael J Fox.

On some level, this is as surprising to me as being sent out to follow Wayne Rooney around Brazil in 2014, because I was never actually that interested in famous people. I never hung out at gigs as a teenager, never wrote to fanclubs asking for autographs. I'm an enthusiast, meaning I *really* like the niche little things I like (80s movies), but it never occurred to me as a kid to write, say, to John Hughes and ask him questions about his films. Why would he talk to me?

Well, the one lesson I learned at university that has stuck with me is that famous people love to talk about themselves. I wrote for my university newspaper and occasionally a famous person would come and speak to students and I was dispatched to interview them. I learned that some famous people were surprisingly delightful (Ben Affleck), some were surprisingly not (Stephen Fry, possibly having a bad day), but all were completely fine with me, a random 18-year-old, asking them really quite personal questions, because I was interviewing them.

This was a genuine epiphany. Because as well as being an enthusiast, I am nosy, and this has occasionally got me into trouble in Britain. In New York City, where I'm from, it's pretty much standard for two strangers on the subway to chat about what prescription meds they're on; in London, there are people I've known for more than 20 years and I wouldn't dare to ask them if they dye their hair. Interviews, I quickly realised, are a context in which obnoxious nosiness is not just accepted but expected. It's where personal information is traded like a commodity for publicity, and while it still amazes me that so many celebrities will answer the bluntest of questions about their unhappy childhood/deepest trauma/ugly divorce in exchange for a mention of their movie in a newspaper, it's a transaction I am continually thrilled to exploit. It has been the rare week in the past 22 years when I haven't thought: I can't believe I get paid to do this.

With Rosamund Pike in 2015. Photograph: Hadley Freeman

It was thanks to two celebrity interviews that I got my job at the Guardian. My mother spotted a writing competition in the Daily Telegraph and told me to enter it. So I obediently sent in two interviews I had done for the university paper, one with Richard Whiteley, the hilarious and now sadly late presenter of Countdown, and the other with Ian Hislop, the editor of Private Eye. I won, and on the back of that, I became the Guardian's

keymaster. So the moral to that story, aspiring journalists, is always enter writing competitions. And listen to your mother.

But initially I had some concerns about interviewing famous people for the Guardian. As I've said, I'm an enthusiast, and while I felt fine with writing about my full-throated love of Countdown in my university paper, I wasn't sure if my tastes would really gel with Guardian readers, people who bought the paper to read Polly Toynbee on social housing and Jonathan Steele on foreign affairs. A bigger problem was that I had absolutely no idea what I was doing, as a glance at the transcript of my first interview for the paper proves. It was with Simon Amstell and Miquita Oliver, hosts of the Channel 4 show Popworld, which I adored, and fortunately for me, as well as being my first interview, it was theirs, too, so the three of us were equally clueless.

> Me: Why did you want to be a TV presenter?
> Simon: Because it seemed fun. Is that a good answer? What should I say?
> Me: I don't know. Was that a dumb question?
> Miquita: Yeah. But it's OK.

Others have been less understanding. When I made the rookie error of turning up to interview the shoe designer Christian Louboutin in a pair of very grubby ballet pumps, he sniffily informed me that if I were a shoe, I'd be "a DM boot". Robert Downey Jr was similarly unimpressed and took one look at my less-than-polished twentysomething face and expressed amazement that the Guardian had sent "the work experience girl" to interview him (it seemed unlikely that telling him that, actually, I was the fashion assistant would mollify him). As a hardwired people pleaser, these kinds of interactions initially unnerved me. But I soon learned that they made good copy, and this helped me to slough off my childish people-pleasing ways. Often the best interviews have a bit of grit in them.

With Pete Doherty and members of the group Babyshambles in 2005. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

Aside from wanting to know what Marina Hyde is like (terrifying), the most common question I get from readers is what the celebrities I've interviewed are like. That's easy: they're weird. All celebrities are a bit weird, because wanting to be famous is a weird thing and living your life as the object instead of a subject is a genuinely maddening way to exist. Some celebrities are very good at being celebrities, such as George Clooney and Tom Hanks, who maintain such a commitment to their brand images (respectively, old smoothie and modern day Jimmy Stewart) that they maintain the facade even during interviews. It must be exhausting to be them – always *on* – but at least they make being famous look more fun than most. Not long after I started my job, TV shows such as Popstars, Pop Idol, Big Brother and so on began their TV domination, with fame rather than money offered as the true prize. I had already learned what a con that was from interviewing famous people: there was the time I went to LA to interview Nicole Richie, who was then so frail she could hardly walk, and I watched her frantically gulp down an enormous cooked breakfast; or the time I was granted a five-minute interview in New York with Justin Timberlake, who looked so miserable I wondered if he was being held hostage. It was all great fun to write about, but it did make me think living in a cave as a hermit was perhaps an underrated lifestyle choice.

It took me a while to let readers know how weird I am. It happened inadvertently, when the then editor of G2 sent me to the US to interview Michael J Fox about his new sitcom. Reader, I adored him. I was so overwhelmed by my lifelong fandom of Marty McFly and my now deep love for Fox himself that I let my full enthusiastic nature show in the article. I was a little trepidatious the night before the article out – would I be laughed out of the paper? Would CP Scott come back to haunt me in disgust?

With Mel Brooks and Carl Reiner.

To my amazement, readers seemed to like the piece, and it was at this point that I learned one of the most useful lessons of my life: I am not unique. If I like someone, chances are, others do, too. I'm pretty basic that way. From then on, I went full tilt with my enthusiasms: I interviewed pretty much all of my childhood idols – Mel Brooks, Rob Reiner, Ivan Reitman, Frank Oz – and I was delighted by how a) lovely they were and b) how many Guardian readers shared my love for them. When I was overcome by Keanu Reeves's handsomeness to the point I was barely able to ask him a question, Guardian readers gave me sympathy rather than the snark I expected. And when I giddily ran around the Academy Awards every year, begging Eddie Murphy in vain for quotes (although Kevin Hart always obliged in his mate's stead –

thank you, Kevin), Guardian readers didn't roll their eyes too much. It turned out they can be interested in social issues and the Oscars, too.

As well as writing interviews, I also wrote columns, and as a columnist, the temptation is to be definitive about an issue, focus on the ringing black and white and not the more complicated greys. But people are rarely black and white, which is why they're so interesting. Charlie Sheen was a fascinatingly grey interviewee, someone who had done terrible things, but was smart and surprisingly self-aware and trying to figure out how to live with HIV. Woody Allen is now widely painted as A Bad Man, generally by people who have only the most skating knowledge of the 30-year-old accusations against him. I will always be grateful for the chance to interview him and later his son, Moses, and for giving me the space to re-examine the allegations. Journalism is about asking questions and refusing to accept whatever the currently accepted narrative is, whether it's about politics or celebrities. It is not about getting likes on Twitter.

With Kevin Hart.

There is now a mentality – popular in some progressive circles – that to give someone "a platform" (ie, interview them) means you endorse them. But this is only true if you write puff piece interviews, whereas I like to have what Mrs Merton used to call "a heated debate", or what I call a conversation. So

I argued with Jeff Koons in New York about politics and art, and I argued with Margaret Atwood in Toronto about gender. PRs, of course, hate this, because they think a journalist's job is to transcribe unquestioningly whatever the celebrity said, but I know that's not what readers want. It is definitely not what I want when I read an interview.

There have been other changes in the world of celebrity interviews in the 22 years since I started at the Guardian. Back then, people largely laughed at celebrities when they made political statements; now they yell at them if they don't, and so they nervily plaster their Instagram pages with their thoughts about social justice. And of course, social media didn't exist back then, so journalists were the only way celebrities could talk to the public; now celebrities like Beyoncé and Harry Styles see us as irrelevant middlemen and generally bypass us entirely, which is a relief to me because people that famous rarely say anything interesting. Give me Steve Guttenberg reminiscing about Police Academy over Justin Bieber talking about his journey any day. Harvey Weinstein was once so powerful that he was able to write a column in the paper complaining about me when I wrote (accurately) that his Baftas party was boring; now, well, we all know how that story ended.

God, it's been fun. I know some journalists hate dealing with celebrities, hate covering celebrity events, and I've never understood that. If you go into journalism because you want to tell interesting, weird and very human stories, well, what's not to love about spending a day with Pete Doherty on a beach in Normandy? Or pondering the power of the vagina with Aerosmith in LA? Or chatting with Helena Bonham Carter about divorce over mugs of tea? To everyone I've interviewed, thank you for putting up with my nosiness.

But most of all, I want to thank Guardian readers for putting up with me. You tolerated my excesses, patiently corrected my errors, frequently made me laugh, and I shall miss you enormously. To use a quote from a film I've referenced on average once a week in this paper, I've had the time of my life. It's the truth. And I owe it all to you.

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France

French team to build replica of William the Conqueror's warship

Viking-style vessel is based on the one that launched invasion of England in 1066 and its makers hope to sail it across Channel

A scene from the Bayeux tapestry that is believed to show William sailing to England in La Mora. Photograph: IanDagnall Computing/Alamy

Kim Willsher in Paris
Fri 25 Nov 2022 07.21 ESTFirst published on Fri 25 Nov 2022 00.00 EST

On 27 September 1066, William, Duke of Normandy, set sail in La Mora, the flagship of a huge fleet that would invade and conquer England. Now a historical society on France's Normandy coast is going to re-create the ship that launched almost 1,000 years of cross-Channel enmity.

The Bayeux tapestry, a 70 metre-long (230ft) embroidered account of the Norman Conquest, depicts La Mora as a Viking-style longship with a striped

red and gold sail flying the papal banner on its masthead. On board was William, his most trusted knights, their entourage and horses, and 60 oarsmen.

The rest, as they say, is history. King Harold was defeated in the Battle of Hastings 17 days later, and the Norman duke became William the Conqueror, King of England.

The €13m (£11m) project will recreate the 34-metre-long, 5-metre-wide La Mora, which carried 70 crew including the oarsmen, in a former industrial warehouse near the quay of the port of Honfleur.

Olivier Pagezy, president of the La Mora project, says the builders do not have much to go on. No original plans and few details of the actual ship survive except those depicted in the tapestry, where it was shown with the gilded statue of a child pointing to England on its stern and the head of a lion, the symbol of royal power, with its tongue sticking out at its prow.

William the Conqueror. His vessel was so fast, he had to stop for wine and breakfast in the Channel en route for England to let the rest of his army catch up. Photograph: Archivart/Alamy

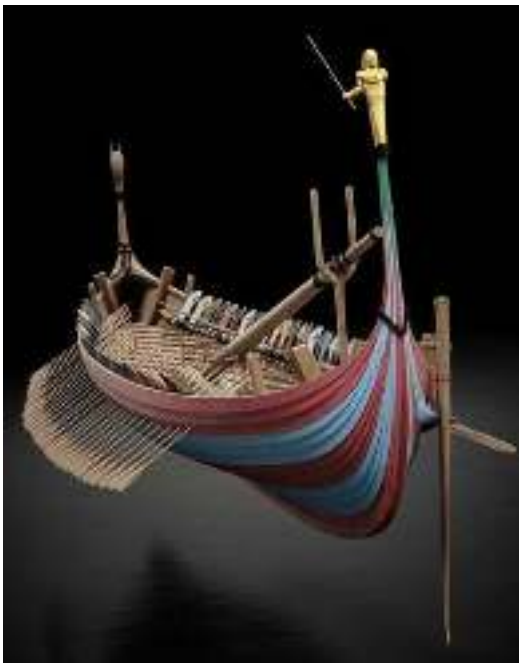
“We have the Bayeux tapestry and a plan of La Mora’s sister ship, as well as similar ships that are represented in museums in Denmark and Norway, where these kind of craft were originally built,” said Pagezy. “Our architect is confident we can reproduce the ship as authentically as possible.”

The project’s scientific committee is also in close contact with the Roskilde Museum in Denmark, which has created replicas of a number of 11th-century ships using techniques based on the discovery of ancient wrecks in 1962.

The naval architect Marc Ronet, who is overseeing the project and drew up the initial plans for La Mora II, says it was a Viking-type warship, powered by oar and a 150-square metre sail, and was narrow and shallow, meaning it was fast. So fast, the history books tell us, that after setting sail from Saint-Valéry-sur-Somme on the evening of 27 September 1066, the next morning William had to wait in the middle of the Channel and have breakfast with wine while the rest of his fleet, carrying more than 7,000 men and 2,000 horses, caught up.

The fleet landed at Pevensey in East Sussex later that day and went on to defeat King Harold in Hastings on 14 October. “Contrary to how it is done today, the construction of an *esneque* (Norse warship) is made with the planks of the outer shell fitted first, before the frame or skeleton is fitted. This method requires a very particular know-how and fewer tools, but it is also a reflection of the means available in the 11th century,” Ronet said.

“The way they cut the wood, planed the boards and assembled the pieces is linked to the tools of the 11th century. The carpenters of the time used green wood, which was easier to bend. After felling the oaks, they split them with wedges and sledgehammers, and then cut the boards to make the planks. The point of splitting the wood is to let it run its own course: in the end, the planks are stronger and thinner, and the boats are lighter.”



A 3D image of La Mora, William the Conquerer's warship. Photograph: Kadeg Boucher

As with the project to build a medieval castle at Guédelon in Burgundy using 13th-century techniques, which are also proving useful in the reconstruction of Notre Dame Cathedral in Paris, reproducing La Mora will involve long-forgotten skills. "Marine carpenters will have to relearn these techniques that are no longer used today," said Ronet.

Another challenge is to have the ship certified as seaworthy. "European standards obviously do not take into account 11th-century ships. However, La Mora's 34-metre length makes it a large pleasure boat! We are working with the [European Commission's] Maritime Affairs to find technical solutions to meet current safety standards," said Ronet.

The first €7m phase of the project will involve converting the site into a tourist and exhibition centre to be opened at the end of next year, after which the €5m second phase, to build the replica, will begin. Paying visitors will see the work as it progresses.

Although Honfleur has no historical connection with the Norman conquest, Pagezy says the site was the most suitable, and the exhibition space will reflect more widely the region's maritime history, and could attract 200,000

tourists a year. It is hoped that the new Mora will be ready to sail the Channel in 2027 to mark the 1,000th anniversary of William's birth. This time, says Pagezy, the French come in peace. He also hopes the project will spark interest and sponsorship in the UK.

"There are descendants of William's company on both sides of the Channel, and the object is to create something that is Franco-British. The object is not to play up the French invasion or be in any way triumphant. We want this to be a symbol of Franco-British friendship, something that in the wake of Brexit can reunite our two countries."

The main image on this article was changed on 25 November 2022 to show the correct scene from the Bayeux tapestry believed to show William's ship La Mora

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Advertisement

‘Why did I feel rusty? White supremacy’: Kelela on writer’s block, outsiderdom and her long-awaited second album

Tshepo Mokoena

‘I’m not seeking to be a bridge’ … Kelela. Photograph: Clothing Acne Studios. Stylist Mario Horne. Makeup Raisa Flowers. Hair Matt Benns/Justin French

The US singer and producer received mass acclaim for her debut album in 2017, then vanished. After a battle with perfectionism, she’s back with renewed self-assurance and one eye fixed firmly on the dancefloor

@tnm___
Fri 25 Nov 2022 01.00 EST

Kelela thought she had lost her touch. In January 2020, the US singer and producer had flown to Berlin to sketch out the outline of an album to follow her much-anticipated 2017 debut, Take Me Apart. She called up a few collaborators: LSDXOXO, real name Raus haad "RJ" Glasgow, her friend Asma "Asmara" Maroof (of Nguzunguzu). Standing in a recording booth, an instrumental playing over her headphones, she felt as though she had forgotten how to write songs.

"I remember coming out feeling so *rusty*," she says now. Improvising over a song now called Closure, she thought: "'You can do better than this, Kels.'" But she sang anyway, recording melodies that she would ordinarily tweak until they felt right. "I turned to Asma like: 'Girl, I don't know what's going on.' And she responded: 'What? That was popping.'" She laughs. "I kept thinking that it was all really basic, and that I could come up with a better melody." Rather than beat herself up about it, Kelela let the song be.

The moment speaks to the weight of expectation on Kelela (pronounced Kuh-luh-lah) Mizanekristos. This summer marked five years since she last released new music. During that time, fans of her dark, sensual electronic sound had tweeted consistently about her public silence, with reactions spanning from concern to faux panic. ("Every day I wake up, open my curtains and scream to the sky, 'WHERE IS KELELA?!'") It had become enough of a running joke for the Washington DC-born artist to gather some of the best one-liners for the video that teased her meditative comeback single, Washed Away, this September.

Kelela performing at the Pitchfork Music festival in 2014. Photograph: Roger Kisby/Getty Images

The song confirmed that her second album, Raven, was finally on its way, marking the return of one of the most groundbreaking artists of the past decade. It's hard to overstate just how much Kelela heralded the arrival of a new, confounding sound when she released her debut mixtape, Cut 4 Me, in 2013. Then she was one of the few visible queer Black female artists straddling electronic and pop music: her feathery R&B falsetto and lyrics about love and lust mingled with icy production to evoke what you might imagine pulsing out of an underground club in a future dystopia. She ended that year with a spot on the BBC Sound of 2014 poll; three years later Take Me Apart received huge acclaim, earning her fans including Björk and Solange.

But Kelela wasn't bothered about capitalising on those accolades, despite feeling like a late starter after breaking out aged 30. She went silent around 2018, only briefly reappearing to release an ambient mix the following year. "I really wanted to be able to stop and reconsider some things," she says over a video call from her apartment on the Lower East Side in New York. Her close-cropped hair and brows are bleached, a look that's now more lived-in than when she debuted it on a magazine cover in September. "To look and see if there were areas of my life where I might be able to reflect

and make something feel new. I took it as an opportunity to reckon with a lot around me: my relationships, my work, my friendships."

> I took it as an opportunity to reckon with a lot around me: my relationships, my work, my friendships

Even the writer's block proved revealing. Why had she felt so rusty? "Well, white supremacy," she says. "And capitalism." I assume she's half joking. "Perfectionism, I would say, is one of the central components of the culture of white supremacy," she begins, and soon she's on a winding path about capitalism and exploiting yourself. "There's a way that perfectionism can distort where you're at," even if you have "the juice" and are already good at what you do. "This idea that: 'I should be generating more. I should have a larger audience. I should always have more than what I currently have.'" That, she says, reminds her of how capitalism works; the constant growth and relentless productivity.

Kelela isn't always so direct when talking about Raven. From time to time she zips up and down a black Adidas track top, her long nails pale and dagger-shaped. "I would say that this record feels … maybe more explicitly boundaried?" she says. Frequently, she asks to go off the record to clarify a point, "Black femme to Black femme". When working through a knottier subject, she'll catch up to what she wants to express when she's already midway through the sentence. Granted, that may be because she's smoking what appears to be a fat joint as we talk.

She harks back to the writing process for Cut 4 Me, which she describes as purely instinctual. "I was like: 'First idea, best idea.' And you can feel that when you listen to it." Somewhere along the line, she wavered from that approach. Kelela broke out at a time when R&B was splintering. On the indie side, bands such as Dirty Projectors would get blog coverage for stiffly pairing R&B vocal hooks with guitars. Meanwhile, artists such as Banks, FKA twigs and ABRA blended melodic vocal lines with the more disconcerting corners of dance music.

Kelela became a bit of a figurehead for that group, and came to feel as though she had to extend an arm to listeners who wouldn't have expected her voice to waft over skittery, sometimes ominous production. "With my previous work, it felt very outward-looking," she says. "I was concerned with the 'reach out', worrying about how to get people invested." With this record, she says: "I'm not seeking to be a bridge."

Raven's 15 tracks ultimately came together in a week and a half. It's an expansive album that returns to some of the touchstones of Kelela's earliest work: these songs either swell slowly or jolt toward the dancefloor two-thirds of the way in. And contrary to her initial expectations in Berlin, Closure now stands as one of the album's strongest songs: a sultry, midtempo track about wanting to stop a back-and-forth exchange of teasing messages and consummate some sexting. The bass thunders like the floor caving in while Kelela sings breathily about ghosting. It doesn't sound at all off the cuff; more self-possessed.

She still sings about relationships with the intimacy of a breath on the back of your neck, though this time they're just as often about love as they are drawing firmer boundaries around her life: the title track is a kiss-off to people who weren't actively anti-racist before and during Trump's presidential term. For Kelela, Raven is an album about being an outsider who stops caring about whether she's let in, and who stops making allowances for others. Instead, she found the confidence to make a record for her core audience of queer, Black listeners.

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Kelela … ‘I can see that my audience really gets my politics.’ Photograph: Justin French

In the song Holier, she sings about going where you’re appreciated. It’s become a mantra for her. “I feel like so many Black people are concerned about the people who aren’t seeing them,” she says, relighting her joint. Rather than taking to heart every critique from white industry gatekeepers, she says, “what I would hope to see is that [Black artists] are clear about how we’re being assessed and can respond accordingly. But we’re not internalising that feedback about whether or not we’re doing a good job.”

She gets into a complex description of a chat she’d had with the musician Bambii (also a friend, and Raven collaborator) about the “right” ways that Black femme artists have to act and look to get approval from the mainstream. “If we put the unit [wig] on, a little eyeshadow, wear this outfit, a little heel, they won’t know what happened.” Kelela never took on this aesthetic – the closest she came was in Take Me Apart’s LMK video, with its nods to the R&B videos of the 90s and early 00s, looks she wore with a wink. She’s adamant that feminine Black musicians should feel able to look however they want, even if they don’t “create a certain type of response from the white gaze”.

Her new songs Raven, Holier and Bruises hint at distancing yourself from exploitative people and dynamics. They might have sounded like tracks written in response to the global uprising that swept parts of the world after the murder of George Floyd had Kelela not been talking about racism and colourism long before 2020. “I definitely didn’t write these songs in response to that moment,” she says. “I wrote them in response to the feeling I’ve always been having, that’s now bubbling to the surface.”

That so-called racial reckoning gave her a sort of permission to be even more upfront. “White people were like: ‘OK – this is now embarrassing me. Finally, I feel embarrassed by the lack of humanity that I have been displaying to Black people, as a baseline, in my culture.’” Kelela wrote a series of letters to industry associates in an attempt to establish business on her own terms, though today she would rather not name names. Based on their responses, she shed a fair few working relationships and ended some contracts early.

In interviews about her last album, Kelela seemed worried that she wasn’t openly political enough in her music. She’s very pro-Black and anti-bigotry. But her music doesn’t feature slogans in that vein. Does she still feel as conflicted now? “No,” she says. “But I remember feeling that way. That was the press run where I was able to share it all, in interviews.” She motions listing one item after the other on her fingers: “‘And another thing’, ‘and I don’t like this’.”

Now, she says: “I can see that my audience really gets my politics, and where I’m coming from. They get what it means to like Kelela. Even in the crowd at a show, if you’re being foul, everybody’s like, ‘What are you doing?’ It feels like there’s a culture that is fostered.”

The culture-fostering is also embedded in the DNA of her new album. Whether she’s referencing UK garage, 2-step or techno, Kelela uses Raven to showcase different strands of dance music as a Black artform. It’s a good time for it, after Beyoncé threw down the gauntlet for listeners to recognise the music’s origins with Renaissance earlier this year. How does she feel about following one of the world’s biggest artists in a similar lane? “For me, it just means more niggas thinking that four-to-the-floor is for them and by

them," says Kelela. "More niggas owning disco, owning certain forms of dance music. Having those popular references. It just adds value, no matter how you flip it, for me."

Kelela at Sonar, Barcelona in 2016. Photograph: Xavi Torrent/Redferns

Looking ahead, Kelela isn't planning to fall off the grid again any time soon. She's preparing for the opposite: getting in front of crowds. Touring now feels a fairly different proposition from when she was last on the road; an expensive, logistical nightmare. "It doesn't add up for a lot of people. I'll say that," she says, talking about the economics.

More than an hour into our conversation, Kelela lights her second joint. Even when alluding to ideas, or speaking in weaving sentences that you have to untangle, she looks refreshed, excited about what comes next. I mention that she sings the words "far away" a lot on the new album. "I know," she says, smiling. "It was not on purpose." I posit that some of the songs tackle a relational and physical yearning. It's clear I'm theorising more than she is. "I'm not a conceptual artist. I don't go: 'This is the mood board for this record,'" she says. It's only when she looks back after the fact that she might realise she's inadvertently coined a motif.

Once she clocked this one, she resisted changing the lyric for variety's sake. "Maybe there's a type of isolation that both the line and the record speak to," she wonders aloud. She's still working through what that may be, even now as she promotes the album. Kelela's hiatus may be over, but she's still off in her own world.

Raven is released on 10 February 2023 on Warp

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Advertisement

Generation game: how British Bangladeshi gardeners have gone back to their roots

With bottle gourds, naga chillies, fenugreek and amaranth among other plants, Fulnahar Begum's west London garden is a cornucopia of colour and flavour. *All photographs by Sophia Evans/The Observer*

More and more members of the community are cultivating traditional fruit and veg as a way of connecting to the old country

Thaslima Begum
Fri 25 Nov 2022 01.00 EST

When my mother, Fulnahar Begum, arrived in England in the 1980s from Bangladesh, she remembers looking out from the plane and wondering where on earth she'd come to. "Everything looked so grey and miserable. It was very different from what we were used to."

At customs, she was worried when an officer pulled a crumpled brown envelope full of seeds from her suitcase. Her own mother, Abijan Bibi, had told her to scatter them in her new home, saying: "That way a piece of this land will always be with you."

My mother grew up in Sylhet, in north-east Bangladesh, an area known for picturesque hills and tea plantations. Her home in the remote village of Borokhapon is surrounded by lush fertile plains and golden rice fields. Sylhet's tropical monsoon climate is perfect for subsistence farming, and most families there live off the land. In an enclosed courtyard outside her house, coconut, banana and jackfruit trees provide shade from the sweltering sun, and mangoes, oranges and lemons hang at arm's reach.

Begum checks her tomatoes

“Luckily the officer let the seeds through,” laughs Begum, now 74, who settled in the leafy suburb of Ealing, west London. Every morning when she looks out on to her garden she is reminded of home. “It’s more than just an ode to my homeland,” she says of her love of gardening. “It’s everything that we are – and that needs to be nurtured daily.”

My mother spends hours every day tending her garden; it’s an oasis of calm in brilliant, astonishing greens. Large, velvety leaves from taller plants create a criss-cross canopy; the rustling wind encourages the foliage to interconnect, offering shelter and protection for the more tender plants beneath. “My children grew up in this garden and now my grandchildren spend their summers here,” she says.

With many traditional Bangladeshi vegetables unavailable at local supermarkets, British Bangladeshis have taken to growing their own. Today, there are almost half a million Bangladeshis in the UK, most of whom hail from rural Sylhet, where agriculture is a way of life. “Most families cultivate their land together, with each person playing a key role,” says Begum. “It’s a team effort, with everyone keen to preserve techniques that have been passed down for generations.”

> My mother spends hours every day tending to her garden; it's an oasis of calm cloaked in brilliant, astonishing greens

For British Bangladeshis, gardening is a way to stay connected to their roots and the wider community, and the sharing of vegetables is commonplace. For many families, cultivating vegetables has also become a cheaper and more convenient way to get fresh produce, and proved particularly useful during lockdown, when supermarket shelves would quickly empty.

In my mother's garden, hanging baskets and terracotta pots of aromatic herbs, including coriander, rosemary, fenugreek and mint, release scents both familiar and foreign. This year, she has grown aubergines, pumpkins, tomatoes, carrots, radishes, parsnips, red amaranth, courgettes, green beans and naga chillies. "The *lau* is my favourite," she says, referring to her bottle gourds, which hang in a row in all shapes and sizes beneath a *sangari* – a wooden, handcrafted pergola. "They're my bottle gourd babies!" she says dotingly.

She isn't alone in her love of the bottle gourd, which is an ornamental oddity for Brits but a staple for Bangladeshis. The green hard-shelled plant varies in shape and size depending on how it is grown and when it is harvested. Once peeled, its tender white, mildly sweet flesh is chopped into cubes and typically added to meat or fish dishes such as *murgi lau*, a chicken curry. It is also used to make *murabba* – a dessert usually served on special occasions.

Azad Ali with son Yaqub and some of his tropical fruit experiments

A quick YouTube search for *shoker bagan* (which loosely translates as "garden hobby") brings up hundreds of videos of Bangladeshis showcasing their gardens, sharing tips and offering guidance. One of these channels, Bagan r Bagan, belongs to 50-year-old Azad Ali, who recently switched to working part-time so he could spend more time on his garden.

Ali grew up in a flat in north London with a tiny balcony where he would grow a few plants. But six years ago, wanting somewhere quieter and greener, he moved to a large detached house in Luton, Bedfordshire, where he now lives with his wife and three children.

Ali's garden in Luton

He quickly began creating the garden of his dreams. Today, it is a tropical paradise bursting with pineapples, mangoes, bananas, kiwis, papaya, cucamelons, pomelo and *shatkora* – a semi-wild citrus fruit native to Sylhet. Tall palms, bamboo and leafy climbing vines give his garden a jungle feel.

> It's a team effort to preserve age-old techniques that have been passed down for generations
>
> *Fulnahar Begum*

"The national fruit of Bangladesh, the *khatol* [jackfruit] is a personal favourite," says Ali, "but it's near impossible to grow in the British climate."

Yet summer droughts and flash floods have not deterred Ali, who points out a tiny jackfruit tree growing next to his thriving banana tree.

Ali often experiments with tropical vegetables by incorporating climate-friendly methods used in flood-prone Bangladesh, including companion planting – the careful placement of plants that have beneficial effects on one another. He has even tried to imitate Bangladesh's floating gardens by creating a pond with a hydroponic system, in which plants grow in water on a floating organic bed of water hyacinth, algae and other plant residue.

Gardening became a bonding activity for Ali and his sons during lockdown. His youngest, eight-year-old Yaqub, has carved out a patch for himself where he's begun growing his own fruit and veg.

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Yaqub shows off some freshly picked cucamelons

"It's really important to encourage young people to connect with nature instead of constantly being on their phones," Ali says.

A little further north, fellow Bangladeshi Mohammed Shah Elias, 60, has been working his allotment in Walsall, in the West Midlands, for almost a decade.

“I come here once – sometimes twice – a day if I can get away!” laughs Elias, who often escapes to his allotment from his busy multigenerational home. “It’s so quiet and peaceful here. It brings me so much joy being able to still do something I love – and has helped keep me active, reduce stress and lower my blood pressure. And just walking around admiring the fruits of one’s labour feels nice.”

He grows marigolds, sunflowers and peonies, as much for their beauty as their scent. A lovely soft intertwining of jasmine, rose and night-scented stock lingers among rows of tomatoes, cucumbers, aubergines, pumpkins, turnips and spinach. He has also accumulated a variety of gourds in every form – pointed, wax, ridge, fig-leaf and, of course, the much-coveted *lau* – alongside apples, pears, cherry, gooseberry and plum.

Mohammed Shah Elias, right, at his Walsall allotment, with nephew Mothin Ali

Elias’s father taught him how to garden from a young age. “In our village, if you couldn’t grow your own food, you wouldn’t eat,” he says.

> As Bangladeshis, it’s important that we don’t forget our roots
>
> *Mohammed Shah Elias*

He has saved money during the cost of living crisis by eating only his allotment-grown fruit and vegetables. Other Bangladeshi families have taken to selling their homegrown produce to takeaways and grocery stores as a way to make extra cash.

Elias's plot costs him £120 a year, but since the prices of compost, fertiliser and plant food have risen, Elias has begun making his own. "Proper homemade fertiliser is one of the best things you can do for your garden and results in bigger, healthier and overall happier plants," says Elias, who uses everything from raw food scraps, banana peel and used tea leaves to egg shells and recycled green waste from the allotment.

Gourds grown at Elias's allotment

The sheer abundance of Elias's harvest this year meant he had a lot of surplus to share with friends, family and neighbours. "I love the community spirit of gardening," says Elias, who has become friends with many people he would not normally have crossed paths with.

Though there are gardeners of several ethnicities at the allotments, Elias is the only Bangladeshi, but with gardening becoming increasingly popular among younger people, he hopes this will change. His nephew, Mothin Ali, has started a YouTube channel, My Family Garden, which attracts thousands

of views each month, and is the founder of #DigItOut, a campaign to promote diversity in British horticulture.

“As Bangladeshis, it’s important that we don’t forget our roots,” says Elias as he carefully places his bottle gourds, one by one, into a nearby wheelbarrow. “The harvest reminds us how generous the Earth is. The more you give, the more it gives back. It takes hard work and patience – but it’s always worth it in the end.”

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2022.11.25 - Opinion

- Call these voter ID laws what they really are: voter suppression and an attack on young people
- The gods of Silicon Valley are falling to earth. So are their warped visions for society
- Lady Mone is accused and still the Tories won't come clean about PPE. What are they hiding?
- Cartoon Ben Jennings on the cost of living crisis

OpinionPolitics

Call these voter ID laws what they really are: voter suppression and an attack on young people

Polly Toynbee

Older people lean Conservative – no wonder the government wants to keep younger ones away from ballot boxes

‘I would make voting compulsory for first-timers, so they get the habit.’ A polling station in London during the local elections in May this year. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

Fri 25 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 09.46 EST

It slipped out quietly this month in the brouhaha of the approaching budget. The regulations listing acceptable ID documents that will allow people to vote at elections were not included in the shameless voter-suppression bill that passed through parliament this year. Are you surprised that the list includes all kinds of acceptable ID held by older voters, but that ID the young might have has been struck out? The whole purpose is to make it harder for young people, poor people and those who often move home to vote.

So many outrageous things have happened recently that indignation fatigue is a risk. We grow weary, blase and cynical. But warping the voting system in the right’s favour is a permanent harm, copied from the US. First-past-the-post already gives the right a huge electoral advantage, but the Tories want more.

As from next May’s local elections, all voters must bring along ID specified in this list. As the Electoral Reform Society (ERS) says, the kind of photo ID

required is what older people are more likely to have. For example, why is a Transport for London Oyster card for 60+ travellers acceptable, but not a near-identical Oyster 18+ card? Let that stand as their true intention. Voters who don't have a driving licence or passport or various forms of disabled person's ID – all of which are more likely to be held by the old – can apply to their local authority for a free plastic voter ID photo card. How many would do that?

This barrier will, research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation shows, disenfranchise many low-income voters. Getting one of these special voter IDs is harder for those who work irregular hours, or who may not speak good English or know how to use the technology. The government was plainly thinking of exactly those people in setting up barriers to stop them voting.

The Lords voted by a big majority to add in all kinds of easier ID, such as bank statements, bills, student ID, library cards and much more. But their amendment was struck out in the Commons. The pretence that there is a serious electoral fraud problem was debunked by evidence from the 2017 election: there was just one – yes, only one – conviction for voter impersonation at a polling station. Postal voting has seen more cases. The cost of imposing the new ID – extra staff at polling stations and councils issuing it – will be up to £180m a decade, according to the Cabinet Office. Turning people away, and telling them to return with other ID, will cause trouble. In the few trials in England in 2018 and 2019, of 3,000 people turned away, more than a third never came back.

This voter suppression comes on top of David Cameron's previous assault on young voters. He barred colleges from block-registering all their students to vote. The serious problem is that the young are 40% less likely to vote; Bobby Duffy, director of the King's College Policy Institute, finds them 40% less likely to think it a civic duty. Maybe they resist the meagre choices on offer. But David Willetts, a dedicated campaigner in the Lords against voter ID, says the Resolution Foundation, whose advisory council he chairs, finds the greatest obstacle to the young voting is living in private rented accommodation, where only 63% are registered to vote owing to moving frequently. He would force landlords to register their tenants.

Here's why the government wants to keep the young away: voters over 70 are three times more likely to vote Tory than the 18-24s. Every year of life we age, we grow 0.35% more likely to be Tory. That may not sound a lot, "but it's very valuable over a lifetime", says Duffy. The tipping point for turning Tory has generally been growing older at each election: it was age 47 in 2017. No wonder the Tories worry they are dying out. Brexit saw a deep divide, with only 28% of millennials voting leave, compared with 61% of oldest voters.

This is what the young need to know: if you don't vote, you don't get. The old, with their pension triple lock, pension tax relief, no national insurance, untaxed property wealth and freedom passes, are rewarded, while, since 2010, government spending swivelled away from children, families and the young. Youth centres, Sure Starts, Connexions careers services, and children and adolescent mental health services are disappearing.

With this government, expect utter incompetence. Lord Willetts points out the irony that many turned away from voting will be "older, Brexit, Tory voters" without photo ID. "Most people have no idea they will have to bring photo ID to vote," he says. He warns that, in seats won by a tiny margin, the number turned away from polling stations could be greater than the majority.

Meanwhile, Labour has backed votes at 16 for years. I would make voting compulsory for first-timers, so they get the habit. What's needed now is an army of Greta Thunbergs to get all over-18s out to vote on green and social justice issues. Be warned, for the first time in history the latest census shows there are more over-65s than under-15s. There is no indignation deficit among the young: they've just got to get out and vote.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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OpinionSilicon Valley

The gods of Silicon Valley are falling to earth. So are their warped visions for society

Moya Lothian-McLean

Tech titans like Elon Musk and Sam Bankman-Fried have been feted for their wealth, but see the world in ways that also merit scrutiny

‘It is easy to assume that money is all that motivates the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos.’ Musk at the Qatar Economic Forum in June Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

Fri 25 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 05.53 EST

The new gods are running into a bit of trouble. From the soap opera playing out at Twitter HQ, the too-big-to-fail bankruptcies in the cryptocurrency space, to mass tech layoffs, the past month has seen successive headlines declaring a litany of woes facing the bullish tech boyos in Silicon Valley and beyond.

The minute-by-minute coverage of Elon Musk’s escapades and the global levels of interest in the FTX collapse both go well beyond what you’d expect from a business story. I’m willing to gamble a few Bitcoins that the popular fixation has little to do with any particular interest in successful software engineering; rather it is the personalities who inhabit these spaces, and the philosophies that propel them in their godlike ambition. What is their end goal, we wonder. What drives them, beyond the pursuit of growth? It is easy to assume that money is all that motivates the likes of Mark Zuckerberg, Musk and Jeff Bezos. Except, when you start to examine the mindsets of these men, it’s clear that cash is far from the whole story.

The concept of "effective altruism" has had its day in court after FTX, the world's second largest cryptocurrency exchange announced that, oops, it was mysteriously short of $8bn and would be filing for bankruptcy, post haste. As the dust – and fraud allegations – settle, the personal guiding principles of FTX's millennial chief executive, Sam Bankman-Fried, have come to the fore. Bankman-Fried ostensibly was driven into crypto by an adherence to the "effective altruism" movement. Originally espousing giving as much targeted time and money to philanthropy as possible, EA has been morphed by its most prominent practitioners into getting very, very rich and then spending that money on projects that better the human race. This "earn-to-give" philosophy is dependent on data-driven analysis of what causes offer the best returns of "betterment". It's utilitarianism with a god complex.

Since Bankman-Fried's spectacular fall from grace, it seems as if this doctrine may be doomed to the same downward spiral as its most famous disciple. It's hard to argue that you possess the best instincts to improve the prospects of the human race when you can't even keep your own affairs – or billions in customer funds – in order.

FTX chief executive Sam Bankman-Fried, an adherent of 'effective altruism'. Photograph: FTX/Reuters

Then there was the allegation last week by the Insider journalist Julia Black that Musk, along with other billionaires, appear to be engaged in their own personal eugenics programme via a movement called "pronatalism". Black writes that pronatalism – an ideology centred on having children to reverse falling birthrates in European countries, and prevent a predicted population collapse – is "taking hold in wealthy tech and venture-capitalist circles", with the aid of hi-tech genetic screening.

Musk has championed pronatalist ideas publicly. Privately the Tesla co-founder is, in his own words, "doing my part"; he has 10 children known to the public, two of whom are twins he fathered with an AI expert who serves as an executive for his Neuralink company. But the ideas go beyond Musk and into the canyons of Silicon Valley; the world's richest and most powerful people see it as their duty, Black claims, to "replicate themselves as many times as possible".

Black's subjects also namecheck effective altruism, longtermism (which prioritises the distant future over the concerns of today), and transhumanism (the evolution of humanity beyond current limitations via tech), as complementary philosophies. The concept of legacy is key to understanding our tech pioneers. As one interviewee tells Black, "The person of this subculture really sees the pathway to immortality as being through having children." Given that Musk's "genius" business record is one of multiple near-bankruptcies before he even arrived at Twitter, this rather undermines the theory that the future will be safe only if populated by mini-Musks.

These companies believe that in order to make visions ideas a reality, they require total control of the landscape around them. In his 2017 book World Without Mind, Franklin Foer wrote that Facebook – now Meta – was founded on the concept of "radical transparency" – a belief that sharing every facet of our lives will somehow result in social good. The metaverse, in which we don't just share our lives on social media but conduct them within it, is this idea's logical conclusion. It has already lost the company $9.4bn.

Silicon Valley and its missionary outposts are dominated not only by the pursuit of growth, which is a means to an end. The underlying raison d'etre tying these various tech titans together is their fervour for enacting their own

personal theological outlooks in supposed service of the wider world. To do this, they must dominate and monopolise – remake society in their image, platform by integrated platform.

When we view these monoliths as businesses like any other, or allow them to claim global monopolies, we fail to realise that they are competing for more than our attention or our cash: they are competing for the right to dictate what our societies look like. So it matters a great deal when that vision falters, or fails altogether. It's the stuff of myth and folktale played out via forums and Wall Street Journal tip lines; the emperors slowly shedding their clothes. We are watching would-be gods shrink back to being men once more.

- Moya Lothian-McLean is a contributing editor at Novara Media

- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our letters section, please click here.***

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OpinionMichelle Mone

Lady Mone is accused and still the Tories won’t come clean about PPE. What are they hiding?

Angela Rayner

Today’s accusations are serious, and they highlight a wider problem. Ministers have learned nothing from earlier scandals

Michelle Mone takes her seat in the House of Lords in 2015. Photograph: PA

Thu 24 Nov 2022 09.52 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 14.29 EST

The new Guardian revelations about Michelle Mone – claims that she and her children secretly received £29m originating from the profits of a PPE business that was awarded large government contracts after she recommended it to ministers – go way beyond startling headlines. They also clearly highlight the conflicts of interest and failures of due diligence that lay behind the waste of billions of pounds of taxpayers' money, and a Tory "VIP lane" that was declared illegal by the high court earlier this year.

We learn that PPE Medpro was given £203m to supply face masks and sterile surgical gowns at the height of the pandemic. Lady Mone, a Tory peer, referred PPE MedPro to the Cabinet Office in May 2020, five days before it was even registered as a company. She contacted the then ministers Michael Gove and fellow Conservative peer Lord Agnew, offering to supply PPE – for a price. Lord Agnew referred PPE Medpro to the "VIP lane", fast-tracking the bid for public contracts.

It now appears that tens of millions of pounds from those contracts ended up in offshore accounts connected to the individuals involved.

The government has admitted holding records and correspondence relating to the award, including any declarations of interest and due diligence. But it has refused to publish it, saying that it is in mediation with the company, so commercial confidentiality applies. This is an excuse it has been making for 10 months now.

It's the opposite of transparency. Today in the House of Commons I called on ministers to commit to their release, both to the UK Covid-19 public inquiry and to parliament. They gave no such commitment.

Asked what progress had been made in mediation, they would say only that it had not yet reached a satisfactory conclusion. That is certainly one way of putting it. We know that 25m surgical gowns, for which the government paid PPE Medpro £122m of our money, were subsequently rejected after inspection. They were never even used.

Ministers have failed to explain that abject failure, and would not say today whether a penny of public funds had been recovered. Today Gove, back in the cabinet, claimed Mone's referral had been passed to an "independently" run channel but was unable to say what due diligence was being performed.

There are, rightly, separate questions for Mone to answer about her previous denials of involvement in PPE Medpro and her apparent failure to declare it. When asked about this omission, her lawyer replied: "Baroness Mone did not declare any interest as she did not benefit financially and was not connected to PPE Medpro in any capacity." The Guardian's latest revelations cast doubt on this claim, raising serious questions about this apparent conflict of interest and what the government knew at the time.

What the government has not denied is that a Conservative politician apparently benefited personally and financially from her connection to a business that was awarded substantial government contracts as a result of her lobbying by a backdoor route not available to others.

But it's not just about one case: this goes far wider.

This government has written off more than £9bn alone on PPE that was procured with public money and then deemed unfit for use – unusable,

overpriced or undelivered. These were the gloves, goggles and gowns that were needed on the frontline in the NHS and care when nurses were left wearing bin bags instead.

As families struggle to make ends meet, taxpayers are still paying £770,000 every day on the storage of PPE that is unfit for use. That's enough to put more than 36,000 children into part-time nursery care. It represents billions wasted through downright incompetence and sleaze.

It took a successful Labour motion to force this government to release records over the Randox scandal, which led to the exposure of now disgraced former Tory MP Owen Paterson, who broke parliamentary rules to lobby for that firm. He now says the investigation into his conduct breached his right to privacy, and was unfair. It's a total mess. But it's certainly also time the government committed to release all the records relating to PPE Medpro.

Worse still, shameless ministers appear to have learned nothing from these scandals. The government's new procurement bill gives them free rein to hand out billions of pounds of taxpayers' cash once more. Far from showing that they will take steps to prevent a repeat of this scandal, they've brazenly admitted that if a new pandemic were unleashed upon us tomorrow, they would do it all again. But we can no longer afford another of these scandals – or waste on this epic scale.

Labour will put an end to this culture of cronyism and waste with a new plan for procurement and an Office for Value for Money to ensure public money is spent with care – and it's Labour that has a plan to clean up politics by restoring standards in public life through an Independent Ethics and Integrity Commission.

Britain is sick of being ripped off by the Tories. It's time to turn their procurement racket on its head.

- Angela Rayner is deputy leader of the Labour party

- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our letters section, please click here.***

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Guardian Opinion cartoon
UK cost of living crisis

Ben Jennings on British parents skipping meals – cartoon

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2022.11.25 - Around the world

- Algeria 49 people sentenced to death for mob killing of good samaritan
- Twitter Elon Musk offers general amnesty to suspended accounts
- US Biden renews call for assault weapons ban after latest mass shootings
- Australia Boy rescued from Byron Bay pool with 3-metre python wrapped around legs
- Taiwan China threat looms in local elections as voters weigh island's future

Algeria

49 people sentenced to death for mob killing in Algeria

The murder in 2021 came after a man was falsely accused of lighting deadly wildfires that he had come to help fight

A charred truck in the Kabyle region in Algeria, where an artist was killed after being falsely accused of being an arsonist. Photograph: Toufik Doudou/AP

Associated Press
Fri 25 Nov 2022 00.01 EST

An Algerian court has sentenced 49 people to death for the brutal mob killing of a painter who was suspected of starting devastating wildfires – but had actually come to help fight them, according to defence lawyers and the state news agency.

The killing in 2021 in the Kabyle region of north-east Algeria shocked the country after graphic images of it were shared on social media. It came soon after wildfires in the mountainous Berber region that killed about 90 people, including soldiers trying to tame the flames.

The mammoth, high-security trial over artist Djamel Ben Ismail's killing involved more than 100 suspects, many of whom were found guilty of some role in his death.

Those given the death penalty on Thursday are likely to face life in prison instead, because Algeria has had a moratorium on executions for decades. Thirty-eight others were given sentences of between two and 12 years in prison, said lawyer Hakim Saheb, a member of a collective of volunteer defence lawyers at the trial in the Algiers' suburb of Dra El Beida.

As the wildfires raged in August 2021, Ben Ismail tweeted that he would head to the Kabyle region, 320km from his home, to "give a hand to our friends" fighting the fires.

Upon his arrival in Larbaa Nath Irathen, a village hit hard by the fires, some local residents accused him of being an arsonist, apparently because he was not from the area.

Ben Ismail, 38, was killed outside a police station on a main square of the town. Police said that he was dragged out of the station, where he was being protected, and attacked. Among those on trial were three women and a man who knifed the victim's inanimate body before he was burned.

Police said photos posted online helped them identify suspects. His distraught family questioned why those filming didn't save him instead.

The trial also had political undertones. Five people were convicted in absentia both for involvement in the killing and for belonging to or supporting a banned Kabyle separatist movement called MAK, Saheb said. The movement's leader, Ferhat M'henni, based in France, was among them. Algerian authorities accused MAK of ordering the fires.

Defence lawyers said confessions were coerced under torture and called the trial a political masquerade aimed at stigmatising the people of Kabyle. At the time of the fires, the region was the last bastion of the "hirak" pro-democracy protest movement that helped bring down long-serving president Abdelaziz Bouteflika in 2019.

Hundreds of Algerian citizens have been jailed for trying to keep alive the hirak movement, whose marches have been banned by Algeria's army-backed government.

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Elon Musk

Elon Musk offers general amnesty to suspended Twitter accounts

Poll organised by new owner backed reopening accounts, leading to fears ‘superspreaders of hate’ will return to social media platform

Online safety experts predict Elon Musk’s amnesty will spur a rise in harassment, hate speech and misinformation. Photograph: Gregory Bull/AP

Dan Milmo Global technology editor
Thu 24 Nov 2022 17.46 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 00.25 EST

Elon Musk has announced a general amnesty for suspended Twitter accounts in a move that brought a warning that “superspreaders of hate” will return to the social media platform.

Twitter’s new owner said an amnesty for blocked users would begin next week after a majority of votes in a poll on his account backed the move. Accounts suspended on Twitter include Donald Trump’s former adviser

Steve Bannon, rightwing UK commentator Katie Hopkins and David Duke, the former Ku Klux Klan grand wizard.

Musk had launched a poll on Wednesday asking if a general amnesty should be offered to accounts provided they have not "broken the law or engaged in egregious spam". Musk did not specify which laws he meant. More than 3.1m votes were recorded by the poll, with 72% in favour of an amnesty.

> Should Twitter offer a general amnesty to suspended accounts, provided that they have not broken the law or engaged in egregious spam?
>
> — Elon Musk (@elonmusk) November 23, 2022

Announcing the result, Musk tweeted: "The people have spoken. Amnesty begins next week." He added "Vox Populi, Vox Dei", a Latin phrase meaning "the voice of the people [is] the voice of God."

Musk's announcement came days after he reinstated Trump's account as well as the accounts for Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson, former professional kickboxer Andrew Tate – whose extreme misogynistic views led to a Twitter ban in 2017 – and the unlocking of the account for US rapper Ye, formerly Kanye West, who was sanctioned last month for posting antisemitic comments.

The Center for Countering Digital Hate, a campaign group, said "superspreaders" of hateful content would benefit from the move and urged advertisers, many of whom have already paused spending on the platform, to stop funding Twitter.

"Superspreaders of hate, abuse and harassment will be the only people to benefit from this latest decision by Twitter," said Imran Ahmed, chief executive of CCDH. "The choice for advertisers has never been starker: stick around and back Elon Musk, or protect their brands and ensure their marketing dollars aren't used to enable the spread of hate, abuse and disinformation."

Angelo Carusone, president of US campaign group Media Matters, which monitors “conservative misinformation”, said reversing the suspensions would turn Twitter into an “engine of radicalization”.

This week Musk ruled out the return of conspiracy theorist Alex Jones, who has promoted the false claim that the Sandy Hook school massacre was a hoax, saying he had “no mercy” for people who capitalise on the deaths of children for personal fame. Other banned Twitter accounts include the rightwing writer Milo Yiannopoulos and former BBC presenter David Icke.

Musk had previously said there would be no account reinstatements until a newly announced content moderation council had met. However, the Tesla CEO then said human rights groups “broke the deal” by urging advertisers to halt spending on the platform.

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Joe Biden

Joe Biden renews call for assault weapons ban after latest mass shootings

President says he will seek to pass gun control before new Congress is seated in January, but odds of success are low

Joe Biden visits a fire station on Thanksgiving in Nantucket, Massachusetts. Photograph: Elizabeth Frantz/Reuters

Maya Yang and agencies
Thu 24 Nov 2022 17.57 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 22.58 EST

Joe Biden reiterated his calls on Thursday to ban assault weapons after mass shootings at a gay nightclub in Colorado Springs on Saturday and a Walmart in Chesapeake, Virginia, on Tuesday left 11 people dead.

While visiting a firehouse on Nantucket Island, Massachusetts, to thank first responders on Thanksgiving, the president told reporters he would attempt to

pass some form of gun control before a new Congress is seated in January, possibly renewing his attempt to ban assault weapons.

"The idea we still allow semi-automatic weapons to be purchased is sick. It's just sick. It has no, no social redeeming value, zero, none. Not a single solitary rationale for it except profits for gun manufacturers," Biden said.

"I'm going to try. I'm going to try to get rid of assault weapons," Biden said.

The shootings in Colorado Springs and Chesapeake are just two of the more than 600 mass shootings so far this year, according to the Gun Violence Archive, using the definition of four or more shot or killed, not including the shooter.

Other mass shootings occurred throughout the country over the past week. On Sunday, four people in Oklahoma were gunned down at a marijuana farm. Meanwhile, a mother and her three kids were killed in Richmond, Virginia, on Friday.

The president's efforts to ban assault weapons will get even more difficult next year with Republicans controlling the House of Representatives.

In July, the Democratic-controlled House passed an assault weapons ban but it was doomed in the Senate.

The last time the legislature passed an assault weapons ban was in 1994. A 2019 study in the Journal of Trauma and Acute Care Surgery showed the number of mass shooting deaths declined while the law, which expired in 2004, was in effect.

Biden on Thursday called the two owners of the Colorado Springs nightspot Club Q, Nic Grzecka and Matthew Haynes, to offer condolences after the attack on their venue and thank them for their contributions to the community, the White House said.

Speaking to the Associated Press, Grzecka said that the tragedy at his nightclub came amid a new "type of hate".

“It’s different to walk down the street holding my boyfriend’s hand and getting spit at [as opposed to] a politician relating a drag queen to a groomer of their children,” Grzecka said. “I would rather be spit on in the street than the hate get as bad as where we are today.”

Earlier this year, Florida’s Republican-dominated legislature passed a bill barring teachers from discussing gender identity or sexual orientation with younger students. A month later, references online to “pedophiles” and “grooming” in relation to LGBTQ+people rose 400%, according to a report by the Human Rights Campaign.

“Lying about our community, and making them into something they are not, creates a different type of hate,” said Grzecka.

Biden also addressed the mass shooting in Chesapeake, where a Walmart supervisor gunned down six co-workers on Tuesday before turning the gun on himself.

“Because of yet another horrific and senseless act of violence, there are now even more tables across the country that will have empty seats this Thanksgiving,” he said.

A witness has since said that the Walmart gunman appeared to target specific people.

Jessica Wilczewski told the Associated Press that workers had gathered in a store break room to begin their overnight shift late on Tuesday when the team leader Andre Bing entered and opened fire with a handgun. While another witness has described Bing as shooting wildly, Wilczewski said that she observed him targeting certain people.

“The way he was acting, he was going hunting,” Wilczewski told the Associated Press on Thursday. “The way he was looking at people’s faces and the way he did what he did, he was picking people out.”

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New South Wales

Boy rescued from Byron Bay pool with 3-metre python wrapped around legs

Five-year old was pulled from back yard pool with snake attached, father says, while mother tells other parents to ‘keep their eyes peeled’

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The 3-metre long python launched out of the nearby garden and latched on to the boy’s ankle, his father says. Photograph: Tesse Ferguson

Emily Wind
Fri 25 Nov 2022 04.23 ESTFirst published on Fri 25 Nov 2022 04.05 EST

A five-year-old boy is recovering after surviving an attack by a giant python in his grandparent's Byron Bay back yard.

Beau Blake was swimming with his brother yesterday afternoon, his father Ben said, when a 3-metre long python launched out of the nearby garden and latched on to Beau's ankle.

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"We were sitting down watching them swim, just about to jump in the pool, and all of a sudden: bang," Ben said.

"[It was] like a black shadow came out of the bush."

Ben isn't sure if Beau accidentally trod on the snake or scared it, but once the snake had latched on, Beau rolled and fell into the pool, and the snake quickly curled around his legs. His 76-year-old grandfather jumped in almost instantly and quickly lifted him out.

"We both jumped up and ran to his aide," Ben said. Once Beau was out of the pool, it took Ben around 15 to 20 seconds to pry the snake from his ankle.

Bite marks on the ankle of five-year-old Beau, who was attacked on Thursday after school in Byron Bay. Photograph: Tesse Ferguson

Ben said his son was an “absolute trooper” after the attack. After a trip to the hospital yesterday where he got the all-clear, Beau stayed home from school today to rest and recover.

“He was a bit sheepish and didn’t want to go out amongst the pool this morning,” Ben said. “We were all looking around, a bit sheepish.”

As for the snake, Ben said he held it for about 10 minutes after freeing Beau before releasing it back into the garden.

“My dad’s lived there for 36 years and we’ve possibly seen ten snakes on the property,” Ben said.

“It’s snake season; they’re out and about and after all the weather we’ve had and the climate that’s around at the moment they’re very mobile.”

Beau’s mother, Tesse Ferguson, shared details of the “dramatic evening” on social media, warning other parents to “keep their eyes peeled”.

“We were lucky to have the fast response of [Ben and Allan] … and it took quite a bit of effort to pull the python whom was firmly wrapped around his

leg," she said.

"Lots of cuddles for my boys tonight. Parents the unthinkable can happen!"

Despite Beau being "very shaken up", Tesse said the family is feeling grateful he is OK and wasn't more seriously injured.

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Taiwan

China threat looms in Taiwan's local elections as voters weigh island's future

Ruling DPP puts Beijing at centre of campaign while rival KMT steers clear, in first vote since tensions in the Taiwan Strait escalated

- China-Taiwan tensions explained in 30 seconds

Supporters of opposition party Kuomintang (KMT) at a rally ahead of local elections in Taiwan. Voters on the island head to the polls on Saturday. Photograph: Ann Wang/Reuters

Chi Hui Lin in Taipei
Thu 24 Nov 2022 19.00 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 12.25 EST

On Sunday afternoon 150,000 people gathered in front of the Taipei city hall. Harley motorcycles, giant floats, balloons and mascots led the parade to

a soundtrack of music banned in China. It looked like a concert, but on this day the main act was a politician.

The crowds were there to support Taipei mayoral candidate Chen Shih-chung, a former minister of health with the governing Democratic Progressive party (DPP).

Supporters excitedly waved flags and screamed "win the election!". One of Chen's main rivals for the seat, which is considered a stepping stone to the presidency, is Chiang Wan-an.

Chiang claims to be the great-grandson of Chiang Kai-shek, the Kuomintang (KMT) nationalist leader who ran a decades-long dictatorship in Taiwan after fleeing China at the end of the civil war. Polls show the race is tight.

The lively event was just one of the rallies in "golden week" ahead of Taiwan's local elections on Saturday. Millions of people are expected to travel to their home towns to vote for new leaders from county level down to village representatives.

The elections, held every four years and described by some as "Taiwan's midterms", are a key test of the ruling DPP's support ahead of the presidential vote in 2024 and China's claims over the island have become central to the campaign.

The elections will be the first national vote since China's massive military escalation towards Taiwan, which it claims as its territory and has vowed to take by force if necessary.

Beijing in focus

Local elections have always focused on domestic issues such as social welfare, housing, and energy. However, President Tsai Ing-wen and senior government officials have urged voters to use these elections to stand up to Beijing and show the world that Taiwan's democracy will not succumb to threats.

The KMT, the main opposition party, has traditionally been seen as in favour of closer ties to Beijing. While it strongly denies being pro-China, it has mostly avoided campaigning on issues related to China and focused on domestic topics.

“The whole world is watching whether Taiwanese people will choose a pro-China political party, or a party that defends democracy and supports Taiwan’s sovereignty and independence,” the premier of Taiwan, Su Tseng-chang, said in a recent interview.

DPP candidate for Taipei city mayor Chen Shih-chung meets supporters at a campaign event. Photograph: Nicolas Datiche/SIPA/REX/Shutterstock

All pro-independence party candidates including Chen have signed a pledge of “no surrender” to China.

But analysts say the focus on cross-strait tensions, which drove voter turnout and helped Tsai win back-to-back presidencies, isn’t connecting with a public that is more focused on the government’s domestic performance.

“This election will show whether the DPP’s China threat is facing diminishing marginal returns over time,” said Wen-Ti Sung, a political scientist at the Australian National University.

“So far it has largely been met with apathy in the Taiwanese media, for it feels somewhat out of place to link Taiwan’s survival with township-level elections,” Sung said.

Local issues matter

Recent polls have suggested the opposition KMT is expected to win more local races than the DPP.

“It is not that KMT is winning more support, but KMT incumbents in some cities have popularity among their electorate,” said Jeremy Huai-Che Chiang, a Taipei-based analyst.

“They also tend to campaign more on local issues rather than Taiwan-China relations,” Chiang said.

The KMT has scoffed at the “no surrender” pledge and only two candidates are believed to have signed it.

“There is little direct correlation between cross-strait relations and Taiwan’s local elections,” said Shen Yu-Chung, professor of political science at Tunghai University in Taiwan.

Shen said a win by the KMT would not necessarily shift policies in favour of Beijing.

Saturday’s vote also includes a referendum on a proposed constitutional amendment aimed at dropping the voting age from 20 to 18 for the first time. The proposal has angered Beijing. Young people in Taiwan are increasingly pro-independence and enthusiastic about democracy, with many running for local seats.

As those elected on Saturday will not be involved in foreign policy development, the DPP decision to campaign on China appears to be pure politics. But some voters appear to be persuaded by the strategy.

One voter, Nini Chang, said local issues were tied up with larger ones.

“The seats and actions of these people will also affect the operation and the decision-making of the parliament, the relationship between Taiwan and the world [not only China] and the cross-strait relations.

“Cross-strait relations are tense now … If we choose someone with no political opinions or favours one country, two systems, we are unified earlier by China.”

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Headlines thursday 24 november 2022

- **Revealed Tory peer Michelle Mone secretly received £29m from ‘VIP lane’ PPE firm**
- **The yacht, wedding and £29m Mone’s life during Covid**
- **What we know Michelle Mone’s PPE denials**

Advertisement

Revealed: Tory peer Michelle Mone secretly received £29m from ‘VIP lane’ PPE firm

Lady Mone's support helped PPE Medpro secure a place in a 'VIP' lane for Covid contracts. Composite: PPE Medpro/WPA/Getty/Guardian Design

Documents suggest husband passed on money from PPE Medpro, which secured £200m contracts after Mone lobbied ministers

David Conn
Wed 23 Nov 2022 13.53 ESTFirst published on Wed 23 Nov 2022 13.03 EST

The Conservative peer Michelle Mone and her children secretly received £29m originating from the profits of a PPE business that was awarded large government contracts after she recommended it to ministers, documents seen by the Guardian indicate.

Lady Mone's support helped the company, PPE Medpro, secure a place in a "VIP lane" the government used during the coronavirus pandemic to prioritise companies that had political connections. It then secured contracts worth more than £200m.

Documents seen by the Guardian indicate tens of millions of pounds of PPE Medpro's profits were later transferred to a secret offshore trust of which Mone and her adult children were the beneficiaries.

Asked by the Guardian last year why Mone did not include PPE Medpro in her House of Lords register of financial interests, her lawyer replied: "Baroness Mone did not declare any interest as she did not benefit financially and was not connected to PPE Medpro in any capacity."

The leaked documents, which were produced by the bank HSBC, appear to contradict that statement. They state that Mone's husband, the Isle of Man-based financier Douglas Barrowman, was paid at least £65m in profits from PPE Medpro, and then distributed the funds through a series of offshore accounts, trusts and companies.

The ultimate recipients of the funds, the documents indicate, include the Isle of Man trust that was set up to benefit Mone, who was Barrowman's fiancee at the time, and her children. In October 2020, the documents add,

Barrowman transferred to the trust £28.8m originating from PPE Medpro profits.

Michelle Mone being sworn into the House of Lords as Baroness Mone of Mayfair in 2015. Photograph: PA

That was just five months after Mone helped PPE Medpro secure contracts to supply masks and sterile gowns for use in the NHS.

Contacted about the new disclosures, HSBC said it was unable to comment, even to confirm if the couple had been clients. A lawyer for Mone said: "There are a number of reasons why our client cannot comment on these issues and she is under no duty to do so."

A lawyer who represents both Barrowman and PPE Medpro said that a continuing investigation limited what his clients were able to say on these matters. He added: "For the time being we are also instructed to say that there is much inaccuracy in the portrayal of the alleged 'facts' and a number of them are completely wrong."

Mone, 51, and Barrowman, 57, have over the last two years repeatedly insisted they had no "involvement" in PPE Medpro, and "no role" in the process through which the company was awarded its government contracts. PPE Medpro has repeatedly refused to identify its mystery backers, but

denied it was awarded contracts because of "company or personal connections" to the UK government or Conservative party.

The Guardian has previously reported how those claims seem to be at odds with documents appearing to show the couple were secretly involved in PPE Medpro's business, and emails suggesting Mone repeatedly lobbied the government on its behalf during the nine-month period after she helped secure its place in the VIP lane.

However, the Guardian's latest revelation – that the peer and her husband secretly amassed an offshore fortune on the back of PPE Medpro profits – could prove the most consequential for Mone, who has already been placed under investigation by the House of Lords commissioner for standards.

Separately, PPE Medpro has become the subject of a potential fraud investigation by the National Crime Agency. In April this year, NCA officers searched several addresses, including the mansion Mone and Barrowman occupy in the Isle of Man. At the time, lawyers for PPE Medpro declined to comment on the NCA investigation.

The controversy over Mone and PPE Medpro threatens to embroil the prime minister, Rishi Sunak, who has pledged to make "integrity and accountability" pillars of his leadership. David Cameron, who was himself embroiled in a lobbying scandal last year, was the Conservative leader who appointed Mone the baroness of Mayfair in 2015. The former owner of a lingerie business, she has proven to be one of the party's most high-profile and controversial peers.

Michelle Mone founded the lingerie brand Ultimo. Photograph: SWNS.com

HSBC investigation

The leaked documents setting out HSBC's understanding of the offshore distribution of PPE Medpro's profits were produced by the bank, which held several accounts linked to the Tory peer, her husband and children.

The Guardian understands that HSBC launched its own investigation following media reports about Mone's apparent links to PPE Medpro, which raised potential concerns for the bank. A report produced by HSBC on the couple and their links to PPE Medpro stated that it did "not manage to corroborate" those concerns.

Michelle Mone and Douglas Barrowman attending an event at Guildhall in London in 2017. Photograph: Jeff Moore/Alamy

In the process of investigating the couple, however, HSBC pieced together a money trail showing that Barrowman had transferred tens of millions in PPE Medpro profits through a network of offshore entities. About £29m ended up in the trust benefiting Mone and her children, the report indicates.

The bank's investigation noted that "large value inter-account transfers" originating from PPE Medpro were being routed through Barrowman's offshore accounts, often crediting and debiting within minutes of each other.

The internal bank report described the money flows as "unusual activity", noting a concern that Barrowman "may be attempting to conceal the true origins of the funds through multiple layers of transactions creating a distance between the receipt of PPE funds and the final beneficiaries".

Referring to Mone, it concluded that the transfers "suggest a UK peer in the House of Lords has benefited from a contract with the UK government". Barrowman is understood to have told HSBC that his wife had "no involvement" in the business activities of PPE Medpro, and the onward transfer of its profits via his personal bank account had been made "in his personal capacity".

HSBC was unable to corroborate any concerns of wrongdoing by the couple, but it did identify a number of "risks" related to retaining Barrowman and Mone as clients – including what it saw as potential reputational damage to the bank. Multiple sources have told the Guardian that HSBC then decided to drop the couple as clients.

Message and money trails

Mone and Barrowman have long denied any involvement in PPE Medpro, or any role in the process through which it was awarded government contracts. However, over the last two years the Guardian has ascertained multiple instances in which the couple appear to have been involved in the business.

The Tory peer first approached ministers in May 2020, before PPE Medpro had even been incorporated as a company. She contacted Michael Gove, who was then a Cabinet Office minister, and Theodore Agnew, then a minister for procurement, using their personal email addresses.

Mone told her fellow Conservative politicians that large quantities of PPE could be procured via "my team in Hong Kong".

Cabinet Office officials then added PPE Medpro to the VIP lane, which was used by the government early in the pandemic to prioritise referrals from politically connected companies.

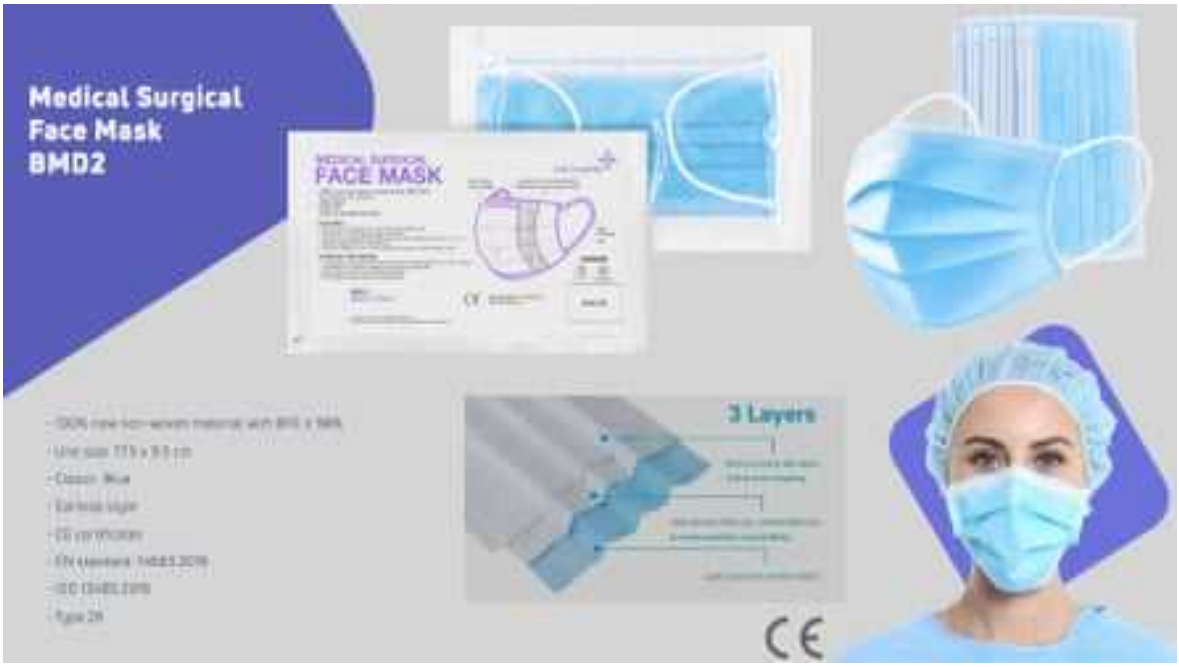
Get in touch with David Conn link

The government has consistently defended the VIP process; spokespeople have maintained that contracts were awarded "in line with procurement regulations and transparency guidelines, and there are robust rules and processes in place to prevent conflicts of interest". However the VIP procurement process has been ruled unlawful by the high court.

Within weeks of Mone's referral, which led to PPE Medpro being added to the high-priority channel, the company had received two government contracts worth a total of £203m to supply millions of face masks and sterile surgical gowns.

Around that time, Mone and her then fiance appear to have been secretly involved in PPE Medpro's business, according to previously leaked documents. Barrowman appears to have been personally involved in setting up PPE Medpro's deals with a supply chain partner, Loudwater Trade and Finance, in which PPE Medpro committed to using its "extensive network" to seek contracts with the UK government. Barrowman also participated in a meeting between the Cabinet Office, PPE Medpro and Loudwater.

Meanwhile, Mone appears to have sent a WhatsApp message from a private jet in which she discussed specific details relating to PPE Medpro's contract for sterile gowns. The message was sent to a person in PPE Medpro's supply chain who referred to her as "Lady Michelle". The couple were also included in correspondence between PPE Medpro's suppliers about the cost price of gowns.



Masks in the PPE Medpro product catalogue. Photograph: PPE Medpro

When the Guardian reported on their apparent secret involvement in the company, Mone's lawyers said its reporting was "grounded entirely on supposition and speculation and not based on accuracy", while lawyers for Barrowman said the Guardian's reporting amounted to "clutching at straws" and was "largely incorrect".

In September 2020, Barrowman was paid at least £65m in "profits" from the PPE deal, the HSBC report states. It states that money was transferred in two instalments to the Warren Trust, one of Barrowman's Isle of Man trusts, using the reference "Distribution".

From there, transfers totalling £45.8m were made to Barrowman's personal HSBC Isle of Man bank account. That account, in turn, transferred £28.8m in October 2020 to the Keristal Trust, the beneficiaries of which, bank records indicated, were Mone and her children, the report states.

The Keristal Trust's "settlors" – a reference to the individuals who created or funded it – were Barrowman and another individual linked to PPE Medpro, the document indicates. The document adds that the Keristal Trust's bank account was opened in May 2020. That was the same month Mone recommended PPE Medpro to Gove and Agnew.

Graphic showing distribution of money from PPE Medpro profits

The HSBC report states that smaller sums – ranging from £5,000 to £200,000 – originating from PPE Medpro profits were passed to some employees of the Knox Group, Barrowman's financial services firm, who were involved in the PPE business. According to the report, one of those employees told the bank the transfers were "gifts".

Honeymoon period

Like his wife, Barrowman has repeatedly distanced himself from PPE Medpro, although neither of them have explicitly denied that he benefited financially from it. Previously, his lawyers have also insisted that Barrowman was never an "investor" in PPE Medpro.

However the leaked HSBC report suggests that another Barrowman trust in the Isle of Man made an investment of £3m in PPE Medpro in June 2020, using the reference "PPE Transfer". The £3m capital injection was later repaid into Barrowman's trust by PPE Medpro, along with interest, the report states.

Contacted this week, PPE Medpro declined to comment about whether Barrowman had invested in the company, citing a continuing investigation. Barrowman also declined to offer further comment citing live investigations, but his lawyer said he disputes the Guardian's "claims and accusations".

Barrowman will now be under pressure to explain why he received at least £65m in PPE Medpro profits, and apparently passed on around half of that to his wife and her children, all via offshore payments.

Barrowman and Mone's huge windfall from PPE Medpro's profits appears to have landed at an auspicious time for the couple: a few weeks before their wedding in the Isle of Man and honeymoon in the Maldives.

An image of Mone posted on her Instagram account.

Their extraordinary enrichment from the profits of PPE Medpro may explain why Mone continued to lobby the government for further business for the company, months after it had been awarded £203m in PPE contracts.

Around the time Mone's trust received tens of millions in profits originating from PPE Medpro, she appears to have lobbied another then Tory minister, James Bethell, this time promoting the company's sale of Covid-19 tests, leaked emails suggest.

PPE Medpro ultimately failed to persuade the government to buy its antigen tests, despite Mone's continued efforts to pull strings with her political contacts.

In February 2021, back from her honeymoon, Mone appears to have been lobbying again, according to an email sent by Jacqui Rock, the chief commercial officer for NHS test and trace.

The senior civil servant told colleagues that Mone was angry at the treatment of PPE Medpro, whose products were being subjected to tests. The Tory peer believed PPE Medpro had been "fobbed off", Rock told colleagues. "Baroness Mone is going to Michael Gove and Matt Hancock today as she is incandescent with rage."

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Advertisement

The yacht, the wedding and £29m: Michelle Mone's life during the Covid crisis

Composite: Getty/Michelle Mone/Instagram

After recommending PPE Medpro for £203m government contracts, the Tory peer spoke of how business was hard but ‘rewarding’

David Conn
Wed 23 Nov 2022 13.08 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 00.13 EST

In the summer of 2021, when a traumatised Britain was enduring a third wave of Covid infections as it struggled to emerge from the pandemic, the Conservative peer Michelle Mone posted a photograph on Instagram of herself and her husband, Douglas Barrowman, in the Mediterranean. They were on their new luxury yacht, Lady M.

Mone, 51, who attained celebrity status through her bra and lingerie company, Ultimo, and was appointed to the House of Lords by David Cameron in 2015, told her followers: “Today I’m feeling reflective. I feel so grateful to be where I am, in a beautiful part of the world with the people I love the most. It wasn’t easy. There were some real challenges, both emotionally and physically.

“Business isn’t easy. But it is rewarding.”

Mone and Barrowman onboard the Lady M in the Mediterranean. Photograph: Michelle Mone/Instagram

The social media update about the sun-soaked luxury that "Lady (Michelle) Mone OBE", as she describes herself on her social feeds, was enjoying on deck prompted an obvious question: during a global health and economic crisis, what business had she and Barrowman found that was so rewarding?

There had been speculation some months earlier that the couple's good fortune may have had some connection to two large PPE contracts that the government awarded to a newly formed company, PPE Medpro, during Covid's first deadly wave. The contracts were awarded via the "VIP lane" for companies recommended by Conservative MPs and peers and other politically connected people, but the government did not disclose at that time that PPE Medpro's "VIP" had been Mone.

On paper, PPE Medpro had apparent links with Mone: the company's directors, Anthony Page and Voirrey Coole, worked for Barrowman's Isle of Man Knox Group, and Page had been the registered secretary of Mone's company MGM Media, which managed her brand.

Asked in late autumn 2020, after these contracts had been awarded, if they were involved with PPE Medpro, Mone and Barrowman had emphatically

denied having anything to do with it.

To emphasise the point, Page also issued a press release stating: “PPE Medpro was not awarded the contract due to company or personal connections to the government or Conservative party.”

Through the two years of scrutiny that have followed, the manner of Mone and Barrowman’s responses, almost all issued by lawyers acting on their behalf, has been striking: a series of fierce denials of “involvement” in the company, or the process through which it secured its government contracts, coupled with legal threats.

PPE Medpro’s product catalogue from 2020. Photograph: PPE Medpro

However the Guardian has chipped away at the edifice of the denials. A two-year investigation establishing the couple’s links to PPE Medpro culminates today with newly leaked documents indicating that Mone and Barrowman secretly received tens of millions of pounds originating from the company’s profits, which were sent to the Isle of Man.

The documents state that Barrowman received at least £65m in PPE Medpro profits, and transferred £29m to an offshore trust that, bank records indicate, benefited his wife and her adult children.

Contacted about the new disclosures, a lawyer for Mone said: “There are a number of reasons why our client cannot comment on these issues and she is under no duty to do so.” A lawyer who represents both Barrowman and PPE Medpro said that an ongoing investigation limited what they were able to say on these matters. He added: “For the time being we are also instructed to say that there is much inaccuracy in the portrayal of the alleged ‘facts’ and a number of them are completely wrong.”

A high-profile wedding and an ugly spat

In the autumn of 2020, months after PPE Medpro had secured the £203m Covid contracts, Mone was tussling with other considerations, including how to hold a wedding in the pandemic. In September 2020 she was forced to cancel a planned ceremony in the 13th-century chapel of St Mary Undercroft, in the Palace of Westminster.

Instead, she switched to the the Isle of Man, where there were few Covid restrictions at the time. Barrowman, her then fiance, has a sprawling U-shaped nine-bedroom home on the island. While the couple were making wedding arrangements from this base, Barrowman seems to have also been focusing on moving profits gained from PPE Medpro around various Isle of Man registered trusts, companies and accounts.

None of this was known then, despite the attention on Mone. Particularly since receiving a peerage in 2015, Mone had become a fixture in the tabloids, which titled her “Baroness Bra”. The wedding in November 2020 provided a level of glamour that was gleefully splashed across pages of papers mostly still concerned with the pandemic. Hello! magazine filled its pages with pictures of the couple’s celebrations, including shots of the bride in her designer wedding dress and Jimmy Choo heels.

Mone, pictured in 1999, attained celebrity status through her bra and lingerie company, Ultimo. Photograph: Jeremy Sutton Hibbert/Shutterstock

After the wedding, Mone took to Instagram to thank "everyone on the Isle of Man for making our day so special", including an opera singer and five live bands that had played during the weekend.

In December 2020, with the UK still in tier 2 and 3 Covid restrictions, Mone received a mixed public reaction to idyllic photos she posted online of the honeymoon at a five-star resort in the Maldives where, she tweeted, the couple were having "the most fantastic time".

Just a month later, the Guardian understands, the bank Barrowman used in the Isle of Man, HSBC, was conducting an investigation into the financier's receipt and distribution of the millions from PPE Medpro's profits, and – the Guardian understands – decided to drop the couple as customers. HSBC declined to comment.

Publicly, however, all was blissful through the summer of 2021. Mone posted a series of perfectly posed pictures, including ones on the deck of the Lady M, with reflections on her state of contentment. "Decide what makes you happy and just go for it," she wrote on one.

In June 2021, Mone and Barrowman garnered widespread publicity for a newly announced £18m business venture in Aberdeen, neospace, which provided office space tailored for post-Covid hybrid working. In August, almost a year after the couple are now known to have received a fortune in PPE Medpro profits, the Scottish Sun reported that Mone's adult children had altogether spent more than £3m buying new properties in Glasgow.

Michelle Mone at neospace. Photograph: Neo Space/PA

Just weeks after her 50th birthday, however, the cracks started to appear in Mone and Barrowman's carefully cultivated public image.

An ugly spat a couple of years previously with a former friend of Indian heritage was revealed by the Guardian. Mone was accused of sending him an allegedly racist message, calling him "a waste of a man's white skin", after a yacht crash off Monaco. Mone was interviewed under caution earlier this year, although in August the Metropolitan police confirmed that no further action would be taken.

Links to PPE Medpro revealed

The mystery around PPE Medpro was about to be broken too. For nearly 18 months the couple had constantly dismissed, denied or played down any

links to the company.

However the Good Law Project, a not-for-profit campaign group, pursued a freedom of information request that led to the information commissioner ordering the government to publish the names of both the companies that had received contracts through the VIP lane and those who had referred them. When it did so, PPE Medpro was on the list, with the name of the VIP who initially referred the company to the government: "Baroness Mone".

Confronted in November 2021 with the one inescapable fact at that time – that she had recommended the company to her fellow Tory peer Theodore Agnew, then a minister responsible for procurement – Mone's lawyer said: "Having taken the very simple, solitary and brief step of referring PPE Medpro as a potential supplier to the office of Lord Agnew, our client did not do anything further in respect of PPE Medpro."

Theodore Agnew in Downing Street in 2020. Photograph: PjrNews/Alamy

The lawyer also stated that Mone had not declared the company on her Lords register of interests because "she did not benefit financially and was not connected to PPE Medpro in any capacity".

The details of how Mone and Barrowman were linked to the company came instead from key information and documents provided by sources to the

Guardian after Mone's referral of the company became public.

In early January 2022, the Guardian revealed further details about Mone's links to the PPE Medpro contracts. Leaked files appeared to show that, despite their constant denials, Mone and Barrowman did appear to have been secretly involved in the company. By then it had also emerged that the gowns supplied under a £122m contract had been rejected after a technical inspection and never used.

A day after the Guardian's report, seemingly unconcerned by the revelations, Mone told her Twitter followers that she loved putting on make-up even when she had no event to attend. But it was the last time she shared her thoughts with her followers. On Instagram, too, her feed soon went quiet.

Get in touch with David Conn links

Then, in March 2022, the Guardian revealed new details of how Mone's efforts had helped PPE Medpro secure its place in the VIP lane back in May 2020.

Her first approach to the government was to her fellow Conservative Michael Gove, who was then a Cabinet Office minister. Neither party has responded to questions about the nature of their relationship and how Gove came to be Mone's first point of contact when offering to supply PPE to the government. She did tweet approvingly about him in 2017, writing: "Brilliant night with my colleagues at @UKHouseofLords Spent some time with @michaelgove I can honestly say,he's mega switched on&a nice guy."

> Brilliant night with my colleagues at @UKHouseofLords Spent some time with @michaelgove I can honestly say,he's mega switched on&a nice guy
>
> — Lady (Michelle) Mone OBE (@MichelleMone) June 13, 2017

After her approach to Gove in the weeks after the UK's first lockdown, Mone contacted Agnew by private email on 8 May 2020, copying in Gove. She offered to supply large quantities of PPE face masks, the Guardian revealed, saying they could be sourced through "my team in Hong Kong".

Michael Gove speaking at a Covid briefing in Downing Street in May 2020. Photograph: Pippa Fowles/10 Downing Street/Crown copyright/PA

Agnew passed the offer to civil servants handling "priority" offers from politically connected people. PPE Medpro, the company, was not even incorporated until four days later, on 12 May 2020, but by the end of June, the government had contracted to pay it £203m of public money.

A few weeks after these latest revelations, in late April 2022, Mone made a rare appearance in the House of Lords to vote on the government's police, crime, sentencing and courts bill. The following day police cars turned up at her London and Isle of Man properties. The raids by the National Crime Agency (NCA), investigating potential fraud relating to PPE Medpro, were reported widely. Mone has not voted in the Lords since.

The latest batch of documents reviewed by the Guardian state that in October 2020, Barrowman transferred £29m originating from PPE Medpro profits to a trust set up on the Isle of Man. Records indicate the trust was set up to benefit Mone and her three children, and that its bank account was opened the same month that she recommended PPE Medpro to Tory ministers.

Barrowman is understood to have told HSBC that his wife had “no involvement” in the business activities of PPE Medpro, and the onward transfer of its profits via his personal bank account had been made “in his personal capacity”.

Graphic showing distribution of PPE Medpro profits

These details will add significant pressure on the peer, who is facing an investigation by the Lords commissioner for standards into whether she breached the conduct rules by failing to register an interest in the company, and by lobbying for it to be awarded government contracts. That investigation continues. Mone has denied wrongdoing.

The NCA’s investigation into potential fraud by PPE Medpro also continues. So far no one has been arrested or charged. Lawyers for PPE Medpro have declined to comment.

A police raid conducted at an address in Douglas, Isle of Man. Photograph: Dave Kneale/The Guardian

Barrowman declined to answer questions about whether money originating from PPE Medpro profits was used to pay for the Lady M yacht, the new Glasgow properties, the wedding or the honeymoon. A lawyer for Mone and

her children said: “We are advised there is no truth in what appears to be entirely speculative ‘guesses’ on your part.”

A year ago Mone’s lawyer responded to a question about whether money derived from PPE Medpro’s deal had funded the yacht. “The inference which you clearly wish to create is that our client has used her position to lobby the government to award lucrative contracts to companies ‘connected’ to her and then spent the proceeds on an expensive yacht … That is not only wholly untrue, but if repeated, is highly actionable as it is grossly defamatory of our client.”

Meanwhile, the UK government is continuing its attempt to recover money from PPE Medpro in relation to the unused gowns through a dispute resolution process. PPE Medpro insists the gowns purchased through the £122m contract passed inspection, and that the company – and, presumably, the beneficiaries of its profits – are entitled to keep the money.

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Michelle Mone's PPE denials v what we know

Michelle Mone and her husband, Douglas Barrowman. Composite: Stills Press/PA/Alamy/Getty

Tory peer and husband have repeatedly distanced themselves from company given £200m in government Covid contracts

David Conn
Wed 23 Nov 2022 13.16 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 00.13 EST

The Conservative peer Michelle Mone and her husband, Douglas Barrowman, have denied the Guardian reports exposing their links to PPE Medpro. Over two years, the couple repeatedly distanced themselves from the company, which secured more than £200m in government contracts.

Dismissing mounting evidence pointing to their secret involvement in the PPE business, they insisted they had little or nothing to do with the company. Lawyers for the couple have variously accused reporters of "clutching at straws", and making allegations that were "largely incorrect" and "grounded entirely on supposition and speculation and not based on accuracy".

One lawyer for Lady Mone appeared to reject the very notion that the Tory peer should have to answer questions from journalists. "You … appear to

misunderstand our client's responsibilities to you," he wrote. "She is under no obligation to say anything to you."

Here are seven claims made by representatives of the Tory peer, her husband and PPE Medpro – and what we know about them.

Tory peer had 'no role' in process by which PPE Medpro secured contracts

In December 2020, when reporters first began asking questions about Mone's apparent links to a personal protective equipment company that had secured lucrative government contracts, her lawyer replied: "Baroness Mone has never had any role or function in PPE Medpro, nor in the process by which contracts were awarded to PPE Medpro." And PPE Medpro said: "PPE Medpro was not awarded the contract because of company or personal connections to the UK government or the Conservative party."

Barrowman and Mone at the Cheltenham races in 2019. Photograph: Max Mumby/Indigo/Getty Images

What we know: Mone contacted the then Cabinet Office minister Michael Gove and her fellow Tory peer Theodore Agnew in May 2020, offering to supply PPE "through my team in Hong Kong". Agnew, also then a Cabinet

Office minister, referred PPE Medpro to the "VIP lane", through which it was awarded the government contracts.

Mone's referral of PPE Medpro was a 'solitary' step

After the government revealed in November 2021 that Mone had recommended PPE Medpro to Gove and Agnew, Mone's lawyer stated: "Having taken the very simple, solitary and brief step of referring PPE Medpro as a potential supplier to the office of Lord Agnew, our client did not do anything further in respect of PPE Medpro."

What we know: Five months after the supposed "solitary step", in October 2020, Mone apparently lobbied another minister, James Bethell, on behalf of PPE Medpro, in a failed bid to secure the company Covid testing contracts from the government. Four months after that, in February 2021, Jacqui Rock, the chief commercial officer for the government's test-and-trace programme, emailed colleagues suggesting that Mone was still lobbying for testing contracts, stating: "Baroness Mone is going to Michael Gove and Matt Hancock today as she is incandescent with rage on the way she believes Medpro have been treating [sic] in the matter."

Mone had 'no involvement in the business' of PPE Medpro

Deploying the language of aggressive legal threats, Mone's lawyers have repeatedly rejected that she was "connected in any way" to the business. One lawyer said in December 2020 that "any suggestion of an association" between the Tory peer and PPE Medpro would be "inaccurate", "misleading" and "defamatory". Another said in February 2022: "You have now been placed on notice on numerous occasions of our client's position in relation to PPE Medpro. She has no involvement in the business."

What we know: Documents seen by the Guardian appeared to show that, besides repeatedly lobbying the government on behalf of PPE Medpro between May 2020 and February 2021, the Tory peer was involved – with

her husband – behind the scenes in the company's business affairs. Documents appear to show Mone and Barrowman included in correspondence in June 2020 between PPE Medpro's suppliers about the cost price of the surgical gowns to be supplied under the second contract.

WhatsApp messages sent by Mone, apparently when she was on a private jet, appear to show her in June 2020 discussing with a person in the PPE Medpro supply chain the required sizes of the gowns, and details about the government's purchase order process.

Mone 'did not benefit financially' from PPE Medpro

Asked in November 2021 why Mone did not declare PPE Medpro on her Lords register of interests, her lawyer replied: "For the avoidance of any doubt, Baroness Mone did not declare any interest as she did not benefit financially and was not connected to PPE Medpro in any capacity."

What we know: Documents seen by the Guardian indicate that Mone received £29m originating from the profits of PPE Medpro in October 2020. The money was paid into an Isle of Man trust of which she and her adult children were the beneficiaries. It was paid by Barrowman, who received at least £65m in PPE Medpro profits before distributing them through a network of offshore trusts, companies and accounts.

Barrowman is understood to have told his bank that the onward transfer of its profits via his personal bank account had been made "in his personal capacity". Contacted about the new disclosures, a lawyer for Mone said: "There are a number of reasons why our client cannot comment on these issues and she is under no duty to do so." A lawyer who represents both Barrowman and PPE Medpro added that he had been instructed to say "that there is much inaccuracy in the portrayal of the alleged 'facts' and a number of them are completely wrong".

Barrowman was 'not an investor' in PPE Medpro

In December 2020, a lawyer instructed by Barrowman told the Guardian: "Mr Barrowman is not an investor, director or shareholder in PPE Medpro." In other correspondence they stated that Barrowman had never been an investor in the company, using past tense.

What we know: Documents seen by the Guardian indicate that Barrowman was an investor, lending a £3m initial capital injection to PPE Medpro from one of his offshore trusts, in June 2020. The investment was subsequently repaid, with interest. Contacted this week, PPE Medpro declined to comment about whether Barrowman had invested in the company. Barrowman also declined to offer further comment, citing live investigations, but his lawyer said he disputes the Guardian's "claims and accusations".

Do you have information about this story? Email david.conn@theguardian.com, or (using a non-work phone) use Signal or WhatsApp to message +44 7584 640566

Barrowman had 'no role' in process through which PPE Medpro was awarded contracts

Also in December 2020, Barrowman's lawyers said he "was not personally involved in working for [PPE Medpro] in relation to PPE contracts" and "never had any role or function in PPE Medpro, nor in the process by which contracts were awarded to PPE Medpro".

What we know: Documents suggest Barrowman was centrally involved in setting up PPE Medpro's business deal with its supply chain partner company Loudwater Trade and Finance. Around the time PPE Medpro was securing the government contracts, Barrowman personally participated in a call with a Cabinet Office official on its behalf, documents indicate.

PPE Medpro's gowns 'kept NHS workers safe'

Gowns in the PPE Medpro product catalogue. Photograph: PPE Medpro

In a press release issued in December 2020, PPE Medpro claimed: “We are proud of the fact that we provided 210,000,000 [face] masks and 25,000,000 gowns, which undoubtedly helped keep our NHS workers safe at a time of shortages due to the Covid pandemic.”

What we know: The 25m surgical gowns, for which the government paid PPE Medpro £122m, were rejected by the Department of Health and Social Care after technical inspection and were never used in the NHS. The DHSC has been trying to recoup its money through a dispute resolution process. PPE Medpro insists its gowns passed technical checks and the company is entitled to keep the £122m. Either way, they have never been used to keep NHS workers safe.

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2022.11.24 - Spotlight

- **‘They want toys to get their children into Harvard’ Have we been getting playthings all wrong?**
- **'My heart is already dead' A year after 27 drowned crossing the channel, migrants still suffer in Calais**
- **Break a sweat without breaking the bank 26 of the best free or cheap fitness apps, sites and podcasts**
- **Music to score goals to? England – and Poles and Swiss – pin hopes on 90s hit**

‘They want toys to get their children into Harvard’: have we been getting playthings all wrong?

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A year after 27 drowned crossing the channel, migrants still suffer in Calais

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Break a sweat without breaking the bank: 26 of the best free or cheap fitness apps, sites and podcasts

Yoga with Adriene … Adriene Mishler in London. Photograph: Alastair Levy/The Guardian

Whether it is yoga, running or strength training you are after, there are plenty of affordable options to keep you moving

Zoe Williams
@zoesqwilliams
Thu 24 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 06.13 EST

We are swamped with advertising for gyms, yoga studios and personal training so it's easy to assume that getting fit or improving a technique will be expensive. But there are plenty of free or affordable classes and programmes online. Here are some of the best places to start.

Yoga

Adriene

With 11.5 million followers on YouTube, Adriene isn't quite the world's top yoga bunny, but her signature service – 30 different videos in 30 days, landing each January, which can keep you going all year – is one of the best

established, having been around for a decade. She has a sweet manner – she refers to viewers as “my darling friends” – and a mindful, calm, accepting approach, which will suit almost everyone except for the Bikram hot yoga crowd, who only like it when it hurts.

Kassandra

Ah, you like exercise to hurt, you say. Kassandra, also on YouTube, has quite a range and you could easily build up from nothing on 10-minute bite-size beginner videos. But when you get to a 30-minute intermediate Vinyasa, you will most likely break into a sweat. I fell over, but I was wearing ill-advised slippery socks. Apart from the rigour, I would recommend her mainly for her clear communication. Often when a yoga instructor says something like “Bring your knee cap to face the sky”, I can’t work out what it means and by the time I do, the exercise is over. Kassandra is precise. Plus, you can always hit pause. People prone to anxiety swear by her Yin routine.

Asana Rebel

You don’t have anxiety? Good, because fitness on Instagram is a sensory bin fire, like trying to attend a nightclub through your phone, while taking written instructions at the same time as physical ones. If you can cope with all these things, @asanarebel is a jewel of the genre, covering yoga from beginners up but stretching into Hiit workouts, mindfulness, toning and diet. If you find watching beautiful people doing things in any way motivating, you will like this.

Movement for Modern Life

This is a subscription app, not free, but you can try it for a fortnight before you commit. It is quite mission-driven (a lot of environmentalism and rewilding, of your gut and your patio – see more on Twitter @MFML_) and explicitly against the body-fascism that permeates the more visual platforms (“There’s no such thing as a beach body! All bodies deserve to be

comfortable in the heat!”). The yoga is well structured, clear and watchable; the barre classes are great.

Cycling

Zwift

At-home training with Zwift. Photograph: Zwift

This is supposed to be an economy drive, so I’m reluctant to recommend a platform with a monthly subscription (£12.99) which also requires you to buy A Thing. Even assuming you already have a bike, you will have to buy A Thing, and I justify this by saying that all serious cyclists have an indoor option for weather/time constraints, and they all use Zwift, even the ones who say they never use anything. You turn a road bike into an indoor bike with a turbo trainer: just detach the back wheel and attach it to the sprocket; it’s really easy (very expensive new, but available on eBay for about £80). Then you join the platform, and it is amazing: tailored programmes, group rides, CGI scenery, data collection, functions that only elite cyclists would ever use (extremely challenging structured workouts), functions that Mamils (an acronym: middle-aged men in Lycra) really like (power-to-weight ratio calculators), but enough users that anyone at any level could find a virtual club to join or user to race.

BKool app

Like Zwift, only a bit cheaper (£9.99/month) and the graphics are slightly more macho.

Fascat cycling coach podcast

A pair of extremely serious US cyclists – semi-pro mountain biker Frank Overton founded it; journalist and gravel rider Ben Delaney is his co-host – share coaching tips geared mainly towards the elite rider. Their workout suggestions can stretch to more than 100 minutes, their idea of kicking back and having fun is a six-hour mountain climb with mates and – I wouldn't even suggest this for the general listener, except that it is quite motivating – listening to how much they love riding. You don't have to be good to join their gang, you just have to love your bike – and for that all you need to do is ride it.

Roadman podcast

Anthony Walsh hosts this likable mix of coaching tips, Q&As and musings. One listener asked him the other day how to become a "smooth" rider, one of those elegant, supple, at-one-with-the-bike guys, and he said: "Watch the good lads, the good lads do stuff differently." He has great in-ear presence and his coaching tips are on-the-nose, particularly for intermediates and above (I learned more about cadence than I will ever be able to use from his description of the ERG setting on Zwift).

Strength training

Redefining Strength

Cori Lefkowith. Photograph: Duke Loren

California-based Cori Lefkowith is straight-talking and a bit bossy, but before any of that, incredibly strong: I could watch her doing renegade rows for ever, just to marvel at the human form. (It's a tricep curl using kettle bells, from a plank position, which looks impossible.) The workouts are thorough and varied; the accent is on bodyweight exercises. You won't need a huge amount of equipment.

Alice Liveing

Liveing is a columnist for Women's Fitness UK and also founded the coaching app givemestrength. She is quite deadpan but has an unusual infectious triumph; the first time she did a "full Nordic" I wanted to punch the air. A lot of her Instagram reels are gym-based so you will need weights to get involved.

Centr app

Chris Hemsworth. Photograph: Centr

This one is a little eccentric, and isn't free (£93/year), but stick with it: the Australian actor Chris Hemsworth has put together a complete workout and meal planner app. Its line is, presumably, that if you follow it faithfully, you end up looking more like Hemsworth, which is obviously unlikely. But it is very popular, mainly because it is so slickly produced: lovely graphics, varied workouts, daily planners, nice touches such as "household item hacks". So if you don't have sandbags, maybe you could use your giant bag of rice?

Hiit/Cardio

PE with Joe Wicks

You will have heard of Joe Wicks, but it would be churlish not to include him. An object lesson in why you don't need to reinvent cardio every six months to get the benefit. He will run through 10 exercises, most of which are recognisable from an aerobics class of any era, and at the end you will feel like a good person.

Lita Lewis

Lewis's Insta content is a bit poetic – sometimes she'll just go on a hike. The YouTube 30-minute cardio workouts are more systematic and challenging.

The Audio Trainer (Spotify)

Ben Ogden does 25-minute audio workouts, but also bite-size ones with a theme – a five-minute boxing session, for instance. They can be pretty lo-fi – he does a "towel workout" at one point, which is like a bodyweight session except with a towel. I don't mind that. You need to be confident of your technique, given that you can't see him, and put your own breaks in or you will pass out.

Running

Couch to 5k app

I've done couch to 5k, then back to couch, then up to 3k and back to couch again, and hearing my coach of choice, Michael Johnson (there are five, you can choose a funnier one), say "well done" never gets old. It is a brilliant novice resource, taking you from the point at which 90 straight seconds of running nearly kills you to 20 minutes of effortless (ish) gliding in eight short weeks. All you need to do is turn up. BBC funded, so no ads.

Nike Run Club app

When you hit 5k, move straight to Nike, which will get you from there to 10k and on to half and full marathons. There are guided runs from 20 minutes upwards, virtual running clubs, playlists and great coaches (Dina and Dora Asher-Smith are amazing).

Strava app

People who use it say Strava is all about community, which for practical purposes means sharing your stats with your brother-in-law then trying to destroy each other with ever-improving kilometres an hour or running-pace

data for the rest of your lives. It's like a cross between Facebook, a Fitbit and Wordle – connect, run/cycle/hike, collect data, show off.

In fact, when you drill in, the gamification sends them all a little bit crazy – one person I spoke to had drawn a Christmas tree with his route, complete with a star – but being nuts is good for motivation. It offers a three-month free trial, after which it is £4 a month.

Milestone podcast

I discovered Steve Hobbs a couple of years ago while scouting for a running-mindfulness tutorial (I can only take state-of-mind advice from a bloke in Epping Forest; by happy chance, there is one), and a fair amount of his output is coaching advice, but I stayed for the rambling. He will do a monologue, while he is running, about his mother-in-law, how insurance is a scam, what freedom really means. And it is brilliant because it is like having a running buddy, except you don't have to talk back.

If you are pregnant

Strong like a mother … Slam! Photograph: Rachel Marie Photography

Slam! app

There are two main blocks to working out before and after pregnancy: the first is other pregnant women, who are always less tired, less gigantic, more graceful, better at glowing. The last thing you want is to be herded into a room with them. The second is the aesthetic – look for workouts online and suddenly you're in a world full of purples and pinks, flowers and heavily seriffed fonts, as if because you are having a baby you are suddenly 12. The only alternative is a souped-up girl-power sensibility (Slam stands for "strong like a mother"), which is also grating, but the workouts are good and ain't nobody so cool they can do without a pelvic floor.

Kim Perry

There are tailored, paid-for programmes on kimperry.com, but the Insta output gives you the idea: the differences between pre- and postnatal cardio workouts basically boil down to impact. While instinct might tell you not to jump during a jumping jack at eight months pregnant, it won't necessarily tell you what to do instead, and that's where Perry comes in.

Knocked-up Fitness

Erica Ziel is not as much as of a rebel as her handle suggests. Rather she is prolific and diligent: podcasts, short-burst workouts on Insta, tailored programmes at ericaziel.com, sometimes very detailed (for instance, how to restore your core after a caesarean), other times comically California ("Non-negotiable self-care in motherhood" *laughs for ever*).

If you have a disability

Sophie Butler

Sophie Butler uses a wheelchair as a result of a spinal injury, and posts a lot of inventive, challenging content for people without full mobility. She is an educative and incisive voice across a whole range of subjects, from

disability hate crimes to body fascism to autumn fashion, and I could watch her for hours. She does longer workouts on YouTube.

Kate Stanforth

Kate Stanforth. Photograph: Hannah Todd

The Newcastle-based model and ballet dancer Kate Stanforth has been ill, sometimes confined to bed, with ME (myalgic encephalitis) since she was 14 but has been dancing professionally since she was eight. Over time, she has adapted her dance teaching and performances so that they are sometimes wheelchair-based and sometimes improvised with balance aids such as a Swiss ball or big tree.

Zoe McKenzie

Zoe McKenzie also does one-to-one online coaching and is the author of an ebook, Actively Essentials, which covers essential pilates for the core, lying, sitting and standing, many of which can be done from bed. She has lupus, a fluctuating condition, and has a deep understanding of the limits of fitness patter – break through your pain barrier, feel the burn yada yada – applied to autoimmune conditions. Push yourself too hard with a chronic condition and you can end up worse off.

If you are older

Jenny Stoute

Former Olympian Jenny Stoute. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

The Olympic sprinter and former TV Gladiator Jenny Stoute has exactly the perfect, straight-bodied, elegant, strong technique that you would expect – you don't end up in the Olympics for no reason. I like her mainly because she is always in a good mood. The videos are short and useful for drilling in the right way to do a particular exercise or use a piece of equipment.

More Life Health

Mike Kutcher is a seniors' specialist physio with a massive back catalogue of workout videos for people over 60. If I'm honest, the gentle pace, the ubiquitous resistance bands, the prominence of the armchair are all a bit closer to 70 or 80 than 60. But he has a winning Australian can-do attitude and a brisk narration style.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2022/nov/24/break-a-sweat-without-breaking-the-bank-26-of-the-best-free-or-cheap-fitness-apps-sites-and-podcasts

World Cup 2022

Music to score goals to? England – and Poles and Swiss – pin hopes on 90s hit

Gala's Freed From Desire proved popular when Fifa asked each World Cup country to select songs to play over the PA when they score

England's players have already heard their goal celebration music half a dozen times at this World Cup. Photograph: Martin Meissner/AP

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About this content

Paul MacInnes
@PaulMac
Wed 23 Nov 2022 19.11 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 05.11 EST

When it comes to World Cup preparation, England have been meticulous. With an eye on every detail, from team psychology to adjusting to the heat

of a desert climate, Gareth Southgate's team have left no stone unturned. Except one: they've picked the same goal music as Switzerland and Poland.

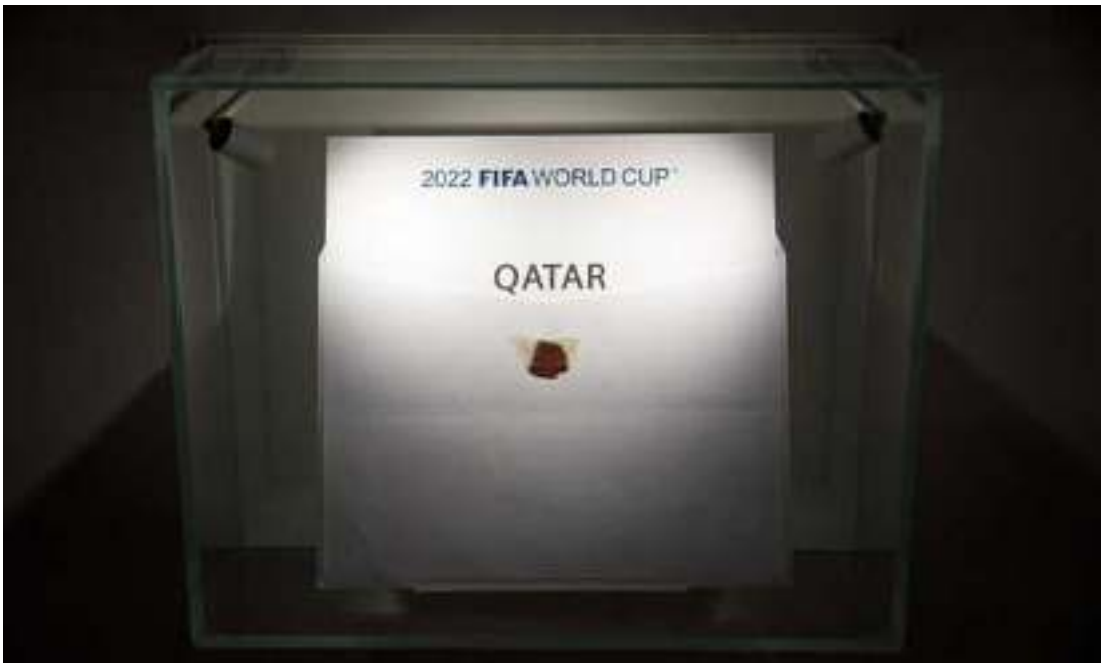
For some traditional football fans, that blast of music over the PA system that follows a goal is anathema. At the World Cup it's all part of the entertainment, with the organiser, Fifa, having requested a song from each of the 32 competing nations that might best capture the joy of scoring.

The Guardian has obtained the list of the nominated tracks and it showcases commercial pop music from every corner of the globe; from Canada's choice of native superstar Drake and his Going Bad to the devotional music of Tunisia's selection, Muhammed by Adnan Dogru, the Balkan reggaeton of Serbia's selection Preko Sveta by Rasta. England have chosen fan favourite Freed From Desire, a 1997 hit for the Italian singer Gala. The only problem is that the song is so popular the Poles and Swiss have selected it too.

Quick Guide

Qatar: beyond the football

Show



This is a World Cup like no other. For the last 12 years the Guardian has been reporting on the issues surrounding Qatar 2022, from corruption and human rights abuses to the treatment of migrant workers and discriminatory laws. The best of our journalism is gathered on our dedicated Qatar: Beyond the Football home page for those who want to go deeper into the issues beyond the pitch.

Guardian reporting goes far beyond what happens on the pitch. Support our investigative journalism today.

Photograph: Tom Jenkins

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

The Three Lions have had occasion to play their goal music half a dozen times so far, while Switzerland have yet to kick off their tournament and the Poles were held to a 0-0 draw by Mexico, whose chosen piece is La Negra by La Hija Del Mariachi. While England have named a backup goal jingle, however – Dua Lipa's One Kiss – the other two countries have not.

A clash of goal "stings", as Fifa calls them, will not be the biggest controversy at the World Cup, but music is certainly playing a central role in the tournament. The official song of Qatar 22, Hayya Hayya (Better Together), brings pop stars from three continents together. The US R&B singer Trinidad Cardona, the Afrobeats icon Davido and the Qatari star Aisha share verses on a song articulating a message of global friendship, one of the organisers' key themes.

South Korean K-pop singer Jung Kook performs at the World Cup's opening ceremony on Sunday. Photograph: Ronald Wittek/EPA

In case Asian fans felt neglected at all, Fifa flew in the K-pop sensation Jung Kook of BTS to perform at the opening ceremony in Doha last weekend. The governing body also claimed a first when they launched an official World Cup playlist on Spotify under the artist name Fifa Sound. Not to miss out, sponsors Budweiser have released their own World Cup song too, a cover of Tears For Fears' 80s anthem Everybody Wants to Rule the World, performed by the rapper Lil Baby. It has been less commonly heard in Doha than Hayya Hayya.

In another first, live music has also been integrated into the tournament in an attempt, in Fifa's words, to "reimagine" the fan experience. The Fifa Fan Festival, a 40,000 capacity concrete park in Doha's West Bay, mixes live screenings of every match with a crowd-pumping MC and a series of live acts, again selected from all over the world. There is a beach festival too, with big name DJs, which fans can pay to access, or get in free if they stay in one of the £175-a-night tent villages.

Quick Guide

Song list

Show

Argentina Luz Delito - Wos

Australia Down Under - Men at Work

Australia On My Mind - Powderfinger

Belgium DevilTime - MC Devil

Brazil Esquentando O Couro - Escola De Samba

Canada 30,000 Feet - NorthSideBenji & DJ Charlie B

Canada Going Bad - Meek Mill feat. Drake

Cameroon Mbandjoh - Les Rythmeurs ABC

Costa Rica El Otro Gol - Gandhi

Costa Rica Ole Ole - Los Ajenos

Croatia Srce Vatreno - Marko Lasic-Nered

Croatia Svijet Voli Pobjednike - Colonia

Denmark Re-Sepp-Ten - VM Holdet

Ecuador Ecuador, Si Se Puede - Damiano

England Freed From Desire - Gala

England One Kiss - Dua Lipa

Spain Mi Gran Noche - Raphael

France Song 2 - Blur

Germany When We Stand Together – Nickelback

Ghana Oofeets - Sarkodie

Iran Iran1400 - HM

Japan Syori No Emi Wo Kimi To - Ukasuka

South Korea Idol - BTS

South Korea The Shouts of Reds - TransFixion

Saudi Arabia Al Saudia - Rashed Al Majed

Morocco Allez Allez Maroc - Hamid Bouchnak

Mexico La Negra - La Hija Del Mariachi

Netherlands Love Tonight - Shouse

Netherlands Samba De Janeiro - Bellini

Poland Balkanica - Piersi

Poland Freed From Desire - Gala

Portugal A Minha Casinha - Xutos & Pontapés

Portugal Vamos Com Tudo - David Carreira

Qatar NA – NA

Senegal - NA - NA

Serbia Rasta - Preko Sveta

Serbia Uzicko Kolo - Svetozar Gongo

Switzerland Freed From Desire - Gala

Tunisia Muhammed - Adnan Dogru

Tunisia Sidi Mansour - Saber Rebai

Uruguay Cumbia Pa La Seleccion - De La Planta

USA Feel So Good - Mase

Wales Kernkraft 400 - Zombie Nation

Wales This is Wales - The Barry Horns

Was this helpful?
Thank you for your feedback.

The idea of the World Cup as one big party has never been so deliberately cultivated, but football and music have a long history together going back to the days of New Order and John Barnes, or the less artistically relevant 1970 single by England's World Cup squad, Back Home. The extension of the World Cup experience also reveals an underlying truth, however; that football's power brokers see a world in which their sport becomes just another strand of consumer entertainment, and they want to make sure they're ready.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/24/sound-of-success-england-poland-switzerland-pick-same-goal-music-world-cup

2022.11.24 - Opinion

- **Just how bad do Britain's trains have to get before the Tories act?**
- **Ignore false claims and bad journalism – most LTNs do reduce traffic**
- **I'm a Sudanese woman – the protests in Iran mirror my own tangled history with clothing and freedom**
- **I've just had an MRI scan. It should have been stressful – but I've never been so relaxed**

OpinionRail industry

Just how bad do Britain's trains have to get before the Tories act?

Helen Pidd

In the north of England in particular, rail companies such as Avanti are causing misery on a daily basis. This cannot go on

Helen Pidd is the Guardian's North of England editor

A TransPennine Express train (left) and a Northern service just outside Manchester Piccadilly station. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Thu 24 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 08.29 EST

I was hoping for some catharsis on Wednesday. The new secretary of state for transport, Mark Harper, was due in Manchester to deliver a keynote speech, and I was ready for him.

Secretary of state, did you pay £369.40 for a peak return on Avanti West Coast this morning? Does that seem a fair price for a journey lasting barely two hours? Did tickets only appear on Trainline a day or two beforehand, with all the cheapest options mysteriously sold out?

Did you reserve a seat only to find a train so crowded that it was "declassified", with all reservations null and void? Did you have to urinate in a Pringles pot because you couldn't reach the toilets? Was the wifi broken? Was the onboard shop not accepting cards? Did you lie awake worrying whether you would actually be able to get to Manchester at all and end up thinking sod it, I'll get up at 5am and drive?

Alas, Harper was a no-show. Instead of appearing in person at the Great Northern Conference, an annual get-together of the north of England's business and political leaders, he popped up via video link. He was sad to not be there, he said in his pre-recorded address, but some last-minute government business had come up. He didn't say what.

He insisted Rishi Sunak's government had made an "unwavering commitment to the north of England". He didn't add, as long as ministers like him don't actually have to go there too often.

In his five-minute speech, Harper promised to bring HS2 to Manchester and build Northern Powerhouse Rail across the Pennines in some unspecified constellation (new tunnels? A station in Bradford? No idea). But he made no reference to the dire state of public transport outside London.

It was an omission which suggests that, four weeks into his new job, Harper has not been paying attention to the misery being wrought by our privatised rail companies across whole swathes of the country.

Here, then, is some background reading for him. A year ago, Jason Wood got his "dream job" as executive director of public programmes and audiences at the British Film Institute, which meant commuting from Manchester to London twice a week. Avanti slashed services this summer amid a driver shortage, saying the move would deliver better reliability. But Wood insists every single commute has been delayed since then. "It is costing me a fortune, ruining my marriage and making my dream job unsustainable," he said.

Another rail user, Rachel Brennan, says she spent £3,000 booking train tickets for delegates at a conference in Birmingham on Monday for Groundswell, the homelessness charity. Volunteers and staff travelled from London, Greater Manchester, Newcastle and Bradford – or at least, they tried to. "Most people had to stand, some got diverted and had to change trains even though we had booked direct," she said, as she began to do battle with various delay-repay schemes on Wednesday.

Others talk of jobs lost, education missed, holidays ruined and mental health shattered by never being able to know if they were going to get to their

destination on time.

In a letter to Harper on Wednesday, Chris Oglesby, chair of the Manchester Business Sounding Board, said staff at an accountancy firm were curtailing all travel to the north-west and had recently cancelled a client conference for more than 120 businesses in Manchester because of Avanti. “The conference will be rescheduled at a later date but in all likelihood in London,” wrote Oglesby.

It is not just Avanti. TransPennine Express, which has the franchise for many east-west services in the north of England, as well as services to Scotland, is still only running 69% of trains on the pre-pandemic timetable, and still cancelled 5.8% of those in the last 12 weeks. Coastal locations seem worst affected; on many mornings key commuter services out of Cleethorpes and Hull are cancelled.

If Harper had gone to the conference he would have heard Andy Clarke from Manchester airport say that passengers were starting to fly from alternative hubs because TransPennine cancelled so many airport services.

Strikes compound the nightmare. But why shouldn’t rail workers demand fair pay in a cost of living crisis when their employers are able to pay out millions to shareholders despite offering reliably abysmal services?

I know numerous people learning to drive or buying a second car so that they do not have to rely on trains to get to work or college – a disastrous development given the climate crisis. There are already 3.1m more private cars registered in Britain than there were 10 years ago, an increase of 11%, with cities outside London seeing the largest growth in car ownership.

Is that levelling up? I’d have liked to ask Dehenna Davison, the levelling up minister, who was also supposed to be speaking at the Great Northern Conference. But she didn’t turn up either.

- Helen Pidd is the Guardian’s North of England editor

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/24/britains-trains-tories-north-england-avanti

Bike blogTransport

Ignore false claims and bad journalism – most LTNs do reduce traffic

Andrew Gilligan

Objections to active travel infrastructures are now picking and choosing data to fit the narrative

‘There is good data that most, though not all, LTNs do reduce traffic.’ Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

Thu 24 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 14.04 EST

I’m starting to wonder if anyone is ever going to make an honest argument against cycling and walking infrastructure again. They do exist. People used to say things like “I want to drive and park wherever I like”, or “why should cyclists and pedestrians inconvenience my much more important car journey?”.

Those are still the basic objections, but these days most prominent opponents realise that it sounds a bit politically incorrect. You need some higher public interest ground, however shaky, to pitch your tent on.

With low-traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs), which use motor traffic restrictions to boost walking and cycling, the top choice used to be claiming that they increase pollution. But that has now been so thoroughly debunked that it's losing its magic.

So a new variant appeared recently in the Times, claiming that "councils that implemented LTNs during the pandemic have seen bigger increases in car use than boroughs that did not".

This was based on adding up the total increase in traffic returning after Covid across "10 inner London boroughs that introduced LTNs in 2020" (11.4%) and comparing it with the total increase in "two inner London boroughs that did not implement LTNs in 2020" (8.9%).

In a leader, the paper cited its "investigation" as evidence that LTNs were an "expensive and infuriating failure".

The two inner boroughs that didn't introduce new LTNs were Westminster and Kensington. There's a completely obvious reason, nothing to do with LTNs, for why traffic return has been less in those two. They are central.

In the working-from-home era, central London's office-based economy and traffic hasn't recovered as much as elsewhere. The Times didn't mention this. It didn't even name the two boroughs, perhaps to stop readers working it out for themselves.

Look at each borough, rather than adding small numbers of them selectively together, and the "investigation" seems even more problematic. The lowest rise in traffic in London post-Covid (4%) was in Newham, which implemented five new LTNs. The second lowest (7.7%) was in that paragon of cycling, stuffed full of LTNs, Waltham Forest.

By contrast, the third highest rise in traffic (14.4%) was in Bromley, which created no LTNs. The highest of all (16.1%) was in Harrow, where a handful

were installed but quickly removed. Could this be why the paper overlooked all these – and, indeed, 20 of the 32 boroughs?

There is good data that most, though not all, LTNs do reduce traffic – both within the scheme area and, after a lag, on the roads immediately around it, because fewer people make short local journeys by car.

And as you won't have read in the Times, across London the average rise in traffic post-pandemic was in fact exactly the same in boroughs that installed and kept LTNs as it was in boroughs which never did them, or ended them quickly, at 11.1%.

Such borough-wide data is of limited use anyway – most schemes have been done on too small a scale to have impacts across the whole. Saying all that, though, would have damaged the claim the Times was trying to push.

The antis' other favourite pseudo public interest argument is also under strain. To argue, as some do, that cycling is a middle-class conspiracy against the poor, you have to ignore that poor people are less likely to drive – and that cycling is cheap.

But poor people (and, of course, many other people) do use buses. Aha! Great! We can claim bike lanes delay buses! Or we can claim, in the words of the long-term anti-bike infrastructure campaigner Vincent Stops, that "the cycle lobby has been allowed to ruin London's bus service" and that segregated bike tracks have "swung a wrecking ball at bus journey times".

The article cites no evidence, again perhaps because the evidence says something quite different.

Taking the most recent three months of 2022, average bus speeds in Westminster and Camden – the boroughs with the greatest amount of segregated bike lane – are precisely the same now as they were in the same periods of 2013, before construction on the lanes started.

If that's a wrecking ball, I'd be asking my demolition contractor for a refund. The claim that 12 miles of segregated superhighway can have

“ruined” a bus network running on almost 2,000 miles of road is obviously wrong, too.

The article gets one thing right: overall average bus speeds across London have indeed fallen. But here’s what it leaves out. That decline is largely due to huge drops in outer boroughs with no meaningful bike infrastructure at all. Bromley and Havering, for instance, have seen bus speeds fall by up to 6.3% since 2013.

As I mentioned, traffic in central London is still not all the way back to pre-Covid levels. Speeds did drop in the centre after 2013, before recovering. But even on a pre-pandemic comparison (between 2013 and 2019), bus speeds fell more sharply in outer boroughs than in central ones. So could it perhaps be that buses are delayed not by bike lanes but by the growth in motorised traffic?

It is very telling that opponents so often have to mislead to make their case. But that doesn’t mean it’s not effective. And if left unchallenged, it can enter the political bloodstream.

So what active travel now needs is a network of people to scrutinise, swiftly unpick and publicly rebut false claims and bad journalism – and to complain to the offenders, who tend to be the same few people. That has been rather effective in reducing propaganda campaigns on other subjects, and making news outlets think twice before publishing slanted stories. How about it, folks?

Andrew Gilligan was London’s cycling commissioner from 2013-16, and was a transport adviser to Boris Johnson in Downing Street.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/environment/bike-blog/2022/nov/24/ignore-false-claims-and-bad-journalism-most-ltns-do-reduce-traffic

OpinionIran

I'm a Sudanese woman – the protests in Iran mirror my own tangled history with clothing and freedom

Basma Khalifa

As a teenager, I argued with my parents about covering up. Then I saw a photo of my mother wearing a short dress in 1950s Sudan

People gathering to mark 40 days since the death of Mahsa Amini in Saqez, Iran, 26 October 2022. Photograph: UGC/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 24 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 10.02 EST

On 16 September, Mahsa Amini was arrested by Iran's morality police after supposedly wearing her hijab incorrectly and sporting skinny jeans. Later that night, she died in their custody. Amini's family claim the morality police beat her to death, an accusation they have since denied. What has followed have been the country's largest protests in recent years. Iranians of all ages, ethnicities and genders have joined in the demonstrations. I watched on and paid my dues by posting on social media too, but I also couldn't help reflect on my own relationship to clothing – and freedom.

Can you be free and wear the hijab? It's worn by many of my family and friends, and it was always presented to me as a choice when I was young. Modesty, however, was more important. I'm of Sudanese origin but I grew up in Northern Ireland, where, as a teenager, it wasn't trendy to cover up. I spent years battling with my parents, who would be telling me that I was showing too much skin, that I should never show my cleavage or midriff. In the late 1990s fashions changed from crop tops to long T-shirts. I remember my mother's relief that we wouldn't have to go through the "go get changed" conversation every time I wanted to leave the house.

But then, one day, in my late teens, I was sifting through old photo albums. I found a black-and-white photo from the 1950s of my mother and her sisters in Sudan, standing side by side wearing shift dresses, and all I could see were shoulders and knees. The double standards didn't make sense. I later asked my mother about it, airing my frustrations at the hypocrisy. She was left a little lost for words as she tried to explain how the cultural and religious climate in Sudan had changed over the years. Leaving the conversation confused, I decided to dig a little deeper.

In mid-1970s Saudi Arabia, a religious police was established as the clergy were given power over public space. In Sudan, President Jaafar Nimeiry, who had come to power in 1969 in a leftist coup, would end up imposing Sharia law by 1983. In the subsequent years, with the formation of a Sudanese religious police in the early 90s, the spaces of relative freedom in which my mother had once dressed had closed up. Religious police currently operate in various forms in many Muslim countries, from Nigeria to Somalia to Afghanistan. What might have started as the enforcement of simple modest dressing has become, in extreme cases, a full burqa with face covering. In all kinds of societies, rulers have worked out that religious law is a useful tool for exercising control.

Speaking to my mother about this, I could hear the whirring sound in her voice as I asked her about her own choices. She told me about her belief in modesty, that the liberal way of dressing was a thing of the past. She clearly explained how women with government jobs couldn't come to work if they weren't wearing a hijab. As she spoke, I began to understand how attitudes change over time, progress was not a one-way street, and how much "rules" and cultures can vary. There's such a fine line between modesty being the expression of a personal connection to faith and it being a result of patriarchy.

People at a protest demanding the return of civilian rule in Khartoum, Sudan, September 2022. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

What happened to people such as me was that the repression taught to our mothers was, in turn, passed down to us. But this intergenerational inheritance is coming apart, not least because of social media.

In recent years, social media has created space for women to form positive communities. Fashion has become more accepting of modest clothing. I saw it play out in front of my eyes as my peers experimented with different prints and designs on their hijab, scarves and hats, taking joy in creating original looks. Designers now have hijabi women walking at fashion shows and sportswear brands catering to modest attire. Though the west continues to see the hijab as another form of oppression, it's more complex for those who actually wear it.

What women in Iran are fighting for shouldn't be downplayed into a conversation about the enforcement of the hijab. It's in fact a much larger conversation about the generational brainwashing that has occurred at the hands of Islamic fundamentalist men who want to use religion to impose order. So, while Iranian women are fighting for their own sovereignty, I believe they are also fighting for the sovereignty of all women. We owe it to ourselves and to our mothers. To remind them of a past that once existed

where they were free to make their own decisions. And we owe it to ourselves to make sure that the next generation won't be prisoners of decisions made on our behalf.

- Basma Khalifa is a Sudanese multi-disciplinary creative living in London

- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our letters section, please click here.***

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OpinionHealth & wellbeing

I’ve just had an MRI scan. It should have been stressful – but I’ve never been so relaxed

Adrian Chiles

Half an hour with no decisions to make? That’s my idea of bliss

‘Breathe in, breathe out!’ A patient being prepared for a scan. Photograph: Thomas Barwick/Getty Images

Thu 24 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 03.21 EST

I had an MRI scan recently. There I lay, strapped in, with a roof tile laid on my chest. Would I like to listen to some music? No, ta. Then I was told it would take half an hour and I changed my mind about the music, but the bloke had gone. Silence it was. Silence, that is, apart from the weird, irregular clanking and banging noises these things make. It was a feet-first entry, which felt like being loaded into a cannon for a daredevil stunt. There was also a lot of going in and out. At first I thought this was the bloke trying to pick the right spot but it turned out this was the nature of this particular scan – something to do with veins that I barely understood. In a bit, out a bit, all the way in, a bit out, all the way out, back in a bit, and so on.

It ought to have been stressful, but it wasn’t. It was the opposite. I was soon intensely relaxed, having no choice but to submit to this whole disorientating caper. And that was the point – I had no choice, no options. My life’s too full of options, with thousands of decisions, on matters big and small, necessary every day. Now, for an increasingly wonderful half-hour, there were none. I had one job: to keep perfectly still as I was slid in and out at random depths like some absurdist representation of uncertain sexual intercourse. Had they been available at the time, these scanners would certainly have featured in

Woody Allen's film Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex* (*But Were Afraid To Ask).

After about 20 minutes, the number of jobs I had to do trebled, but I was equal to the tasks. "Breathe in!" demanded an automated Japanese-American woman's voice. Then, "Breathe out!" Again, no discussion, no decisions to be made, and mindful breathing guidance all in the price. The thought occurred that if an MRI scan is the closest I get to properly chilling out, I might need to rethink my life. Other than this, it was pure bliss.

- Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist
- This article was amended on 24 November 2022. The original photograph showed a patient undergoing a CT scan. This has been changed.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2022/nov/24/mri-scan-should-have-been-stressful-never-been-so-relaxed

2022.11.24 - Around the world

- Malaysia Anwar Ibrahim appointed prime minister after unprecedented hung parliament
- 'Bad faith' Brazil judge fines Bolsonaro allies millions over spurious challenge to election
- Indonesia Five-year-old boy pulled from earthquake rubble after two days
- US Mary Peltola, first Alaska Native in Congress, wins bid to retain seat
- Kenya Government halts baobab exports to Georgia after outcry

Malaysia

Anwar Ibrahim becomes Malaysian prime minister after decades-long wait

Former deputy PM who spent nearly a decade in jail takes office after five days of post-election deadlock

Anwar Ibrahim's progressive coalition edged out a conservative alliance. Photograph: Zahim Mohd/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

Lorcan Lovett in Bangkok and agencies
Thu 24 Nov 2022 08.32 ESTFirst published on Thu 24 Nov 2022 01.24 EST

Anwar Ibrahim has been sworn in as the prime minister of Malaysia after five days of post-election deadlock were broken in a moment his supporters say was two decades in the making.

The 75-year-old rose from student activist to deputy prime minister in the 1990s, but was jailed on charges of corruption and "sodomy" before returning to parliament as opposition leader.

His tenure could be turbulent, with inflation soaring, growth slowing and the the country suffering economic fallout from the pandemic. His rival the former prime minister Muhyiddin Yassin has already challenged him to prove his majority in parliament.

“Anwar is so patient, so calm and so collected,” said Tammy Chan, 35, a public relations executive who was celebrating the result in Malaysia’s capital, Kuala Lumpur. “He won the hearts of people like that, at least my heart.”

Anwar’s progressive coalition edged Muhyiddin’s mostly conservative ethnic-Malay, Muslim alliance, in a country where race and religion remain divisive issues. For decades, Anwar has called for inclusiveness and an overhaul of the political system in the multi-ethnic country. Ethnic Malays, who are mainly Muslim, and members of Indigenous groups together make up about 70% of the population of nearly 33 million. The rest of the population are mainly ethnic Chinese or Indian.

“At a time when we talk about diversity, the opposition is still playing the race card, which is outdated and not workable any more, not for the urban dwellers,” said Chan, who acknowledged support for Muhyiddin among rural, ethnic Malay, many of whom fear they may lose their privileges with greater pluralism under Anwar.

Anwar has time and again been denied the premiership despite getting within striking distance a number of times over the years: he was deputy prime minister in the 1990s and the official prime minister-in-waiting in 2018.

In between, he spent nearly a decade in jail on charges he says were politically motivated and aimed at ending his career.

With 82 parliamentary seats, Anwar’s Pakatan Harapan, or Alliance of Hope, came out on top in Saturday’s election, but was short of the 112 seats needed for a majority. The former prime minister Muhyiddin’s Perikatan Nasional, or National Alliance, won 73 seats.

The alliance led by the United Malays National Organisation (Umno), which has 30 seats, held the balance of power. Umno's secretary general, Ahmad Maslan, said on Thursday that the party's highest decision-making body had decided to support a unity government that was not led by Muhyiddin's camp and the party would accept any unity government or any other form of government decided by the king.

With the support of all 30 lawmakers in the Umno alliance, Anwar was able to secure a majority. He is the fourth prime minister in as many years.

Rashaad Ali, a political analyst, said the coalition government – likely to include "a conservative Malay party and a predominantly Chinese party" – would help temper ethnic tensions stirred during the election.

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Anwar told Reuters in an interview before the election he would seek "to emphasise governance and anti-corruption, and rid this country of racism and religious bigotry". He called for the removal of policies favouring Malays and an end to a patronage system that had kept Malaysia's longest-ruling coalition, the Barisan Nasional, in power.

Before Anwar's appointment, police had told social media users to refrain from "provocative" posts and said they were setting up 24-hour checkpoints on roads throughout Malaysia to ensure public peace and safety.

Now, said Ali, expectations were of a "clean, progressive and lean government".

“It becomes their primary responsibility to sort out the polarisation of identity politics,” he said. “But until they announce which parties and coalitions exactly are supporting his government the question of a challenge will remain.”

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Brazil

Brazil judge fines Bolsonaro allies millions after ‘bad faith’ election challenge

Head of Brazil's electoral court rejects claim from outgoing president’s coalition that said voting machines malfunctioned

The party of outgoing Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro has been fined and lost its election challenge. Photograph: Eraldo Peres/AP

Reuters and Associated Press
Wed 23 Nov 2022 21.13 ESTFirst published on Wed 23 Nov 2022 19.19 EST

The head of Brazil’s electoral court has rejected an attempt by outgoing president Jair Bolsonaro’s party to overturn the results of October’s run-off election, which he lost.

Alexandre de Moraes, a supreme court justice, also fined the parties in Bolsonaro's coalition 22.9m reais ($4.3m) for what the court described as bad faith litigation.

Bolsonaro had challenged the Brazilian presidential election he lost last month to Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, arguing votes from some machines should be invalidated.

His coalition said its audit of the 30 October second-round runoff between Bolsonaro and Lula had found "signs of irreparable … malfunction" in some electronic voting machines.

De Moraes had issued a prior ruling indicating Bolsonaro's party could suffer if it made such a challenge, and demanded extra information from the party, which it declined to provide.

De Moraes then wrote in his final decision: "The complete bad faith of the plaintiff's bizarre and illicit request … was proven, both by the refusal to add to the initial petition and the total absence of any evidence of irregularities and the existence of a totally fraudulent narrative of the facts."

On Tuesday, party lawyers filed a 33-page request citing a software bug in the majority of Brazil's machines – they lack individual identification numbers in their internal logs – to argue all votes they recorded should be nullified.

Neither Costa nor de Bessa explained how the bug might have affected election results. Independent experts consulted by the Associated Press said that while newly discovered, it did not affect reliability and each voting machine was still readily identifiable through other means.

In his ruling on Thursday, de Moraes noted the same.

He also wrote that the challenge to the vote appeared aimed at incentivising anti-democratic protest movements and creating tumult, and ordered an investigation of the president of Bolsonaro's party, Valdemar Costa.

Maurício Santoro, a political science professor at the State University of Rio de Janeiro, said: “De Moraes’ message to the political establishment is: the game is over. Questioning the result of the elections is not fair play, and people and institutions who do that will be punished harshly.”

On Wednesday, Costa said his intention was merely to prevent the results of the 2022 vote from haunting Brazil into the future.

Lula’s victory has been ratified by the superior electoral court and acknowledged by Brazil’s leading politicians and international allies. Bolsonaro himself has authorised his government to begin preparing for a presidential transition in the days after October’s run-off election.

Earlier, Gleisi Hoffmann, the president of Lula’s Workers party, described Bolsonaro’s election complaint as “chicanery”.

“No more procrastination, irresponsibility, insults to institutions and democracy,” she wrote on Twitter. “The election was decided in the vote and Brazil needs peace to build a better future.”

Brazil began using an electronic voting in 1996. Its system has been closely scrutinised by domestic and international experts who have never found evidence of it being exploited to commit fraud.

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Indonesia

Five-year-old boy pulled from Indonesia earthquake rubble after two days

Azka, whose mother died in disaster, probably survived due to being protected by a mattress, while 40 people remain missing in Cianjur

Boy, five, rescued three days after earthquake hits Indonesia – video

Lorcan Lovett and agencies
Thu 24 Nov 2022 05.14 ESTFirst published on Wed 23 Nov 2022 16.59 EST

Driving rain and the danger of landslides disrupted the work of Indonesian rescue workers searching on Wednesday for survivors of an earthquake that killed 271 people, with an official warning that time was running out for anyone trapped.

As the search continued, rescuers pulled a five-year-old boy from the rubble, who had survived because he was protected by a mattress.

In a video of the rescue posted by a local fire department, Azka, who had been trapped for two days, appeared conscious and calm as he was lifted to safety.

“[Azka] is fine now, not wounded,” his relative Salman Alfarisi, 22, said while holding Azka’s hand at a makeshift tent in the hospital car park, adding his mother had died. “The doctor said he’s only weak because he’s hungry.

“He wants to go home now. He’s been asking for his mother.”

Indonesia earthquake: drone footage shows devastation in Java – video

Monday's 5.6-magnitude earthquake caused extensive damage in the town of Cianjur, in mountains about 45 miles (75km) south of the capital, Jakarta, with 40 people still missing. Recovery efforts focused on Cugenang, one of the worst-hit districts, where at least one village is believed to have been buried under a landslide.

Helicopters were due to drop food and water to two villages that could not be reached by road, according to the chief of the search and rescue agency, Henri Alfiandi. He said the chances of anyone trapped in rubble surviving three days after the earthquake were increasingly slim and the danger of aftershocks triggering more landslides on rain-soaked slopes had delayed his teams.

"Because the quake was quite strong and raining, we feared there would be landslides," he said. "But we have continued the evacuation process now."

Ai Nurjanah, 48, said she had been trapped under fallen concrete for about 15 minutes after the quake, while shielding her four-year-old daughter under her. They were having a nap when the quake hit.

Indonesia: rescue efforts under way after deadly earthquake hits Java – video

"I keep shouting for help until I ran out of voice," she said. "My daughter was crying: 'Mama, it's dark, I can't breathe.'"

Authorities were working to bring in more heavy machinery to clear the landslides. About 6,000 rescuers have been dispatched, the disaster mitigation agency said. Officials said there had been more than 170 aftershocks including a 3.9-magnitude one on Wednesday afternoon.

At a Cianjur hospital, patients were being treated outside in tents due to the fear of aftershocks, a member of staff said.

The health minister, Budi Gunadi Sadikin, said there was an urgent need for extra help for patients in quake-damaged hospitals. Indonesia is one of the world's most earthquake-prone nations, regularly recording strong earthquakes offshore where fault lines run.

Monday's quake was so deadly because it struck a densely populated area at a shallow depth of just 10km. Poor building standards led to many deaths, officials said. The Indonesian president, Joko Widodo, called for earthquake-proof housing to be included in reconstruction efforts when he visited the disaster zone on Tuesday.

Rescuers remain hopeful that more survivors will be pulled from the rubble, but they are "running against the clock", according to Deni Kurniawan, a rescue team leader for the Jakarta-based NGO Human Initiative.

"We hope we will [have] more miracles," he said. "Yesterday we were told that a pregnant woman was inside her house. Our team found her, but we lost them both, her and the baby. It's a really distressing situation.

"The earthquake happened in the day time when mothers and children were at home, and the fathers were working in the rice fields. Most of the casualties are mothers and children."

While the magnitude would typically be expected to cause light damage to buildings and other structures, experts say proximity to fault lines, the shallowness of the quake and inadequate infrastructure that cannot withstand earthquakes all contributed to the damage.

Rescuers were struggling to reach damaged pockets of the mountainous region, some of which were inaccessible by car, said Karlo Purba, the Indonesia programme director of the Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA).

"The government is warning there will be heavy rains. There will potentially be landslides and flash flooding in some areas," he said.

About 22,000 families whose homes had been badly damaged needed emergency tents, he added. "We are looking for 300 families to support initially so they can build proper tents," he said.

ADRA would roll out information on saving, not destroying, damaged homes, he said. "Once people destroy their damaged house, they will need to

100% rely on the government to reconstruct it, but that will take time, maybe a year, to get the funding.

“But the problem is poor construction. Earthquakes don’t kill, poor buildings kill.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/24/five-year-old-boy-pulled-from-indonesia-earthquake-rubble-after-two-days

Alaska

Mary Peltola, first Alaska Native in Congress, wins bid to retain seat

Peltola made history to become the first woman to represent the state in the House of Representatives when she won a special election in August

Mary Peltola gives the keynote address at the Alaska Federation of Natives conference on 20 October 2022. Photograph: Mark Thiessen/AP

Maanvi Singh
@maanvissingh
Wed 23 Nov 2022 21.53 ESTFirst published on Wed 23 Nov 2022 20.41 EST

Mary Peltola, a Democrat and the first Alaska Native to serve in Congress, has won her bid to retain the state's sole seat in the House of Representatives.

Peltola made history when she won a special election this summer to replace the Republican Don Young after his death. She is also the first woman to represent Alaska in the House of Representatives since it became a state in 1959.

Peltola served out the remainder of Young's term before facing a rematch with her previous challengers, Republicans Sarah Palin and Nick Begich III and Libertarian Chris Bye, for a full congressional term.

On Wednesday, she once again prevailed in Alaska's newly adopted ranked-choice voting system.

"Now, I'm a real congressman for all Alaska," she said. Young often referred to himself that way. Peltola has described his legacy as one of bipartisanship and building support for Alaskan interests in Congress.

Campaigning as a moderate who is willing to work with candidates from both parties, Peltola ran on a "pro-fish, pro-family, pro-freedom" platform. After taking office, she hired Young's former chief of staff – a lifelong Republican – to run her office.

"I want to work with everyone and anyone who is a reasonable person to find solutions to Alaska's challenges," she told the Guardian in August.

Having been sworn into Congress just two months ago, Peltola has maintained a "pro-fish, pro-family and pro-freedom" platform – vowing to address the climate emergency and other threats to Alaskan fisheries and protect access to abortions. Though she retains the support of environmental and Native groups across her home state, she has raised controversy among supporters by backing one of the largest proposed onshore oil and gas developments in the US, on Alaska's North Slope.

She has said she seeks to balance the economic realities in Alaska – which is enmeshed with the oil and gas industry – with the need to address the climate crisis, including in Alaska's vulnerable Arctic regions.

Her second victory speaks not only to her broad appeal across party lines, but also to Alaskans' skepticism of Palin – whose popularity in her home

state plummeted after she stepped down from her post as governor following an unsuccessful vice-presidential bid. Known for her relentless affability, Peltola ran a largely positive campaign and had attracted praise from Alaska Republicans, including Palin.

The two overlapped in Alaska's capitol, when Peltola was a legislator and Palin the governor. "Doggone it, I never have anything, like, to gripe about," Palin said of Peltola at the Alaska Federation of Natives convention in late October.

Palin and Begich III, the two Republicans, were often at odds throughout the campaign season, even as they encouraged each other's supporters to rank them as a second choice, so as to guarantee a Republican in Congress.

In Alaska's ranked-choice voting system, voters were asked to choose among candidates in their order of preference. If one candidate wins more than 50% of first-choice votes, they win. If not, the candidate with the fewest votes is eliminated and their votes are reallocated among the remaining candidates until someone wins. The system is similar to ranked-choice voting used in some other US jurisdictions.

Peltola won the election with 54.94% of the vote in the third round of ballot-counting, after two other candidates, Begich III and Bye, were eliminated and their supporters' votes were reallocated to the remaining candidates, according to the Alaska Division of Elections. Peltola had won nearly 49% of the vote in the first round, putting her close to victory from the beginning. Even though only about 10% of the eliminated Republican candidates' supporters ranked Peltola as their next choice, rather than Palin, it was enough to secure her win.

This article and subheading was amended on 24 November 2022. Mary Peltola is the first woman to represent Alaska in the House of Representatives, but not the first woman to represent the state in Congress. Lisa Murkowski has served as a senator since 2002.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2022/nov/23/mary-peltola-wins-alaska-democrat

Global development

Kenyan government halts baobab exports to Georgia after outcry

President orders Ministry of Environment and Forestry to launch investigation over contractor's licence for removing trees

An uprooted baobab tree awaiting export in Kenya's Kilifi region last month. Photograph: Edwin Ndeke/The Guardian

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About this content

Caroline Kimeu in Nairobi

Thu 24 Nov 2022 02.45 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 02.46 EST

The Kenyan government has halted the transportation and export of Kilifi baobabs to Georgia and ordered an investigation into how a foreign contractor received permission to transport the ancient trees out of the country.

Kenya's president, William Ruto, ordered the Ministry of Environment and Forestry to investigate whether Georgy Gvasaliya had the proper licence to take the trees out of Kenya under the Nagoya protocol, an international agreement that governs the conditions for the export of genetic resources, which has been incorporated into Kenyan law.

The protocol requires communities to give prior informed consent to any exports, and an agreement between whoever is taking them, the government and the community, on how the benefits should be shared.

The move followed the Guardian's report last month on growing concern over the uprooting and transportation of the trees from the Kilifi region, on the Kenyan coast, at a time when the country is trying to recover lost forest

cover. Kilifi has experienced the third-highest rate of tree-cover loss in Kenya over the last two decades.

Baobabs can live for thousands of years, are drought-resistant and provide habitats for a number of species. They produce fruit that contains high levels of vitamin C, antioxidants, calcium, potassium and fibre, and powder found in the fruit is used in smoothies and porridge. The bark has medicinal properties, and oil from the seeds is used in beauty products.

Outrage over the export of the trees, and debate among Kenyans over the need to protect the country's environment and resources, gained the attention of the president, who intervened in the export of the eight baobabs this week.

Ruto tweeted: "There must be adequate authorisation and an equitable benefit sharing formula for Kenyans. Further, the exercise must be in line with the government's agenda of planting 15bn trees in the next 10 years."

Shortly after posting the tweet, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry issued a statement that said the environmental impact assessment licence issued to Gvasaliya in October, allowing the trees to be uprooted and exported, had been given "irregularly".

The ministry halted the transportation with immediate effect, saying the trees could not be taken out of the country until agreements on their export were "regularised". It said action would be taken against any government official found not to have followed the correct procedures when processing the licence, amid public calls for accountability.

Sofia Rajab, a human rights lawyer, said: "We need to see accountability for the failures in the system that allowed this to happen."

A baobab tree that was marked for export after being uprooted but was subsequently abandoned, in the Kilifi region. Photograph: Edwin Ndeke/The Guardian

The Guardian has learned that the eight trees were being exported to Shekvetili Dendrological Park, owned by Georgia's former prime minister Bidzina Ivanishvili, who has been involved in other tree-uprooting activities along the Georgian coast.

Environmental groups welcomed the government's announcement.

"This has sent a clear message to the world that the exploitation of Kenya's biodiversity can only happen when Kenyans are meaningful beneficiaries," said Gus Le Breton, chair of the African Baobab Alliance. "It has big implications globally in terms of reiterating the importance of the Nagoya protocol to regulate trade and biodiversity."

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Headlines tuesday 22 november 2022

- **Manston Asylum centre now empty after weeks of controversy**
- **Live Labour says Starmer's 'immigration dependency' comment does not mean policy is the same as the Tories'**
- **Politics Keir Starmer vows to wean business off 'cheap labour'**
- **Live Argentina v Saudi Arabia: World Cup 2022**
- **World Cup Iran stand with protesters as England and Wales bow to Fifa over armbands**

Manston asylum centre

Manston asylum centre now empty after weeks of controversy

Vacating of Home Office site follows series of concerns including over outbreak of diphtheria

- UK politics live: latest news updates

The covered-up entrance at Manston asylum centre in Kent. Photograph: Andy Aitchison/The Guardian

Diane Taylor
Tue 22 Nov 2022 04.39 ESTLast modified on Tue 22 Nov 2022 12.08 EST

Manston asylum centre, the troubled Home Office site in Kent where people arriving in the UK in small boats were taken for initial checks, is completely empty.

Just a few weeks ago about 4,000 arrivals were placed there by the Home Office, almost three times the maximum 1,600 capacity of the tented site near Ramsgate.

The prime minister's official spokesman said on Tuesday: "Manston by design is meant to be a temporary holding facility, where people are processed before moving on – normally, fairly quickly. Obviously there were immediate challenges, particularly after the attack at the other centre, which caused numbers to spike. So you would expect numbers to be relatively low on a daily basis as people are moved through quickly."

The Public and Commercial Services Union and the charity Detention Action, two of the organisations bringing a legal challenge about conditions at Manston, welcomed the news.

James Wilson, the deputy director of Detention Action, said: "The home secretary has only taken steps to address her serious failures at Manston after our urgent legal challenge and widespread, public condemnation. Potentially thousands of people may be legally entitled to compensation for their mistreatment at Manston and we are calling for an independent inquiry into conditions at the facility to be held."

Paul O'Connor of the PCS said: "The conditions at Manston that refugees and our members have had to endure recently have been a disgrace. We are pleased that the home secretary has been forced to respond to our concerns, but we should not have needed to resort to the threat of legal action before they were addressed."

The Home Office has been approached for comment.

'It's not fit for habitation': protesters demand Manston asylum centre is shut down

The news comes after a series of controversies at the site including claims of drug-selling by guards, outbreaks of infectious diseases such as diphtheria, the stranding of asylum seekers in central London after their release from Manston, and the death of an asylum seeker placed there on Saturday.

The office of the Prisons and Probation Ombudsman has confirmed it is investigating the death of the man, who arrived in the UK on a small boat on 12 November. His details have not yet been released and it is understood the Home Office is still trying to contact his next of kin.

The Independent Office for Police Conduct (IOPC) has received a referral from the Home Office about the death. but said on Tuesday it could not investigate. An IOPC spokesperson said: “The IOPC does not have the jurisdiction to investigate enforcement functions being carried out where persons are held in detention centres under the Immigration and Asylum Act (1999).”

The Kent coroner has confirmed receipt of a referral about the case and is in the early stages of investigating it.

Human rights campaigners have raised concerns that the man who died was being held unlawfully at Manston at the time of his death. Small boat arrivals who are taken to Manston are supposed to be held there for only 24 hours. In exceptional circumstances this can be extended to five days, but the man arrived on 12 November and died on 19 November.

The campaign group Action Against Detention and Deportations expressed concern that he was held “far longer than the legal limit of 24 hours”. A spokesperson for the group said: “This first death was entirely foreseeable. There is copious evidence that Manston is not fit for human habitation and falls far below even minimum standards for accommodation, healthcare and safeguarding.”

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The Red Cross was carrying out a pilot project to support newly arrived asylum seekers on small boats at nearby Western Jet Foil two days a week from August until early October. It is understood it has raised concerns with the Home Office about both Western Jet Foil and Manston.

According to evidence from the Scottish Refugee Council to the independent commission of inquiry into asylum provision in Scotland published earlier this month, 142 asylum seekers lost their lives in the UK between April 2016 and August 2022.

Emma Ginn, the director of the charity Medical Justice, which works to support the health of people in immigration detention, said: “The home secretary has been warned repeatedly that detaining vulnerable people beyond the 24-hour lawful limit in the terrible conditions at Manston has been harmful, putting thousands of men, women and children’s health at risk. So many questions and concerns about healthcare provision remain unanswered.”

Maddie Harris, of the Humans for Rights Network, said: “Unaccompanied children who have recently been held in Manston have shared details with us of the appalling lack of medical care they were subjected to whilst held there.

“One child told us that two weeks ago whilst held there, he witnessed a person’s health deteriorating to the extent that he thought he was going to die. He and others held there told the guards repeatedly that this man was very sick and needed an ambulance immediately.

“He told us that for almost two days they did not call for an ambulance, despite him and many others screaming for help for the guards to do this. He was eventually rushed to hospital by ambulance.”

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Labour

Keir Starmer vows to wean business off ‘cheap labour’

Labour leader to tell CBI conference that UK’s low-pay economy and reliance on immigration must end

Keir Starmer and Rachel Reeves at a meeting with female entrepreneurs. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Jessica Elgot Deputy political editor
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Mon 21 Nov 2022 19.07 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 19.14 EST

Keir Starmer will say that UK businesses must wean themselves off “cheap labour” and that a low-pay model for growth is no longer working for the British people.

The Labour leader is expected to say to the Confederation of British Industry conference that his party will be “pragmatic” about the shortage of workers and not ignore the need for skilled migrants – but stressed that any changes “will come with new conditions for business”.

Starmer will say Labour expects to keep a points-based immigration system and to train up more workers, especially in high-skilled jobs and the NHS. But he stopped short of pledging that overall migration should come down – a promise that Rishi Sunak renewed last week.

The Labour leader will tell company bosses at the conference in Birmingham that “the days when low pay and cheap labour are part of the British way on growth must end”.

He will say that “our common goal must be to help the British economy off its immigration dependency. To start investing more in training up workers who are already here.”

The speech, which Labour strategists see as a key intervention, is the latest attempt by to draw a line under issues that have dogged the party with swing voters – crime, defence and now immigration.

But Starmer has already sparked some discomfort within his own party for earlier comments about overseas staff in the NHS, where he said the health service was “recruiting too many people from overseas” rather than training staff.

In the speech on Tuesday, Starmer will double down on the argument, saying: “When we look at our economy as a whole, it can seem like we’re more comfortable hiring people to work in low-paid, insecure, sometimes exploitative contracts than we are investing in the new technology that delivers for workers, productivity and our country.

“And we can’t compete like that. Britain’s low-pay model has to go. It doesn’t serve working people. It’s not compatible with grassroots growth.”

The Labour leader will say his party will always protect the rights of migrant workers: “Migration is part of our national story – always has been, always

will be. And the Labour party will never diminish the contribution it makes to the economy, to public services, to your businesses and our communities."

He will also pledge there will be no return to freedom of movement but promises a thorough review of the current system, which has led to labour shortages, low skills, stagnant pay and poor working conditions.

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Labour's reforms are to include changes to the Migration Advisory Committee to give it more access to information on labour shortages and skills shortages and to project future trends, as well as offering new training plans and improved pay and conditions whenever labour shortages necessitate international recruitment.

Starmer will also promise to reset the party's relationship with business, after a big offensive to woo corporate leaders at receptions and at party conference. Shadow cabinet minsters have said that healthy poll leads for Labour have generated a wave of interest from business in the party's policies.

He will say the next Labour government aims to have a "new partnership" – founded on three principles of economic stability, higher skills and green growth.

"I'll put it simply: every business in this room has a strategy for growth. A nation needs one too," Starmer will say. "I believe in our country, I believe in our businesses and I believe in our people."

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Skip to key events
World Cup 2022

World Cup 2022

Saudi Arabia rocked Argentina – and football – with two second-half goals to come back from 1-0 down and seal a famous World Cup victory.

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Daniel Harris
@DanielHarris

Tue 22 Nov 2022 08.19 ESTFirst published on Tue 22 Nov 2022 03.30 EST

Key events

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  FULL-TIME: Argentina 1-2 Saudi Arabia
- 5d ago

GOAL! Argentina 1-2 Saudi Arabia (Aldawsari 53)

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  GOAL! Argentina 1-1 Saudi Arabia (Alshehri 48)
- 5d ago
  HALF-TIME: Argentina 1-0 Saudi Arabia
- 5d ago
  GOAL DISALLOWED FOR OFFSIDE!
- 5d ago
  GOAL! Argentina 2-0 Saudi Arabia (Martinez 28)
- 5d ago
  GOAL! Argentina 1-0 Saudi Arabia (Messi pen 10)
- 5d ago
  PENALTY TO ARGENTINA!
- 5d ago
  Our teams!
- 5d ago
  Preamble

Saudi Arabia beat Argentina! Photograph: Sebastian Frej/MB Media/Getty Images

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Daniel Harris
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Tue 22 Nov 2022 08.19 ESTFirst published on Tue 22 Nov 2022 03.30 EST

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Key events

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5d ago07.48 EST

Which means we're done here. Thanks all for your company and comments – sorry I couldn't use them all – and enjoy the three more games we've got for you over the next eight or so hours. Peace out!

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5d ago07.47 EST

Here's Andy Hunter's report on a match of devastating unreality.

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5d ago07.40 EST

"VAR gives penalties and cancels open play goals," says Robert. Just what everyone was clamouring for before its introduction." And he then returns with a plan:

"Here is a penalty kick law that enhances the proportionality of the sanction while still providing extra punishment for fouls in the penalty area. One does not wish to encourage defensive fouls near their own goal, and direct free kicks (with walls etc) are generally an underwhelming and timewasting spectacle. Instead we get an interesting contest between kicker and keeper from a variety of places in the penalty area.

- have the penalty kick for most offences taken from the place of the offence
- however, penalty kicks awarded for DOGSO offences (anywhere on the field), and deliberate offences in the penalty area against an opponent which are not an attempt to play/challenge for the ball, are taken from the penalty mark
- attacking team can elect to take an indirect free kick instead of a penalty kick from the place of the offence
- offences in the goal area are deemed to occur on the nearest point on the long line of the goal area

- the goalkeeper can always elect to defend a penalty kick from the penalty mark
- no follow-on play from penalty kicks - the only outcome is a goal or goal kick”

There’s a lot to digest there. One thing I would say is that part of football’s charm is its simplicity, so I’d want any solution to be as clear as possible, not just for elite level but for every level, playground included. But I see a lot of the rationale.

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Updated at 07.41 EST

5d ago07.32 EST

“In the queue for the Denmark v Tunisia game,”emails Hugh Molloy, “and a massive cheer went up on the final whistle.”

I’ll bet. There’s nothing like the World Cup for simultaneously making the world bigger and smaller. Enjoy!

Photograph: Hugh Molloy

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Updated at 07.36 EST

5d ago07.29 EST

And here's our majestic cartoonist's take on things…

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5d ago07.28 EST

I mentioned this at the time, but I loved how Roy Keane crystallised things, beautiful even by his standards: "Treat people with decency."

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5d ago07.26 EST

Hello, Billy Buzzkill back again, but what can we do. Football always wins … which is exactly what the bad people are relying on, so.

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Updated at 07.27 EST

5d ago07.22 EST

As Jimmy Cricket once said, “And there’s more…”

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5d ago07.20 EST

“Brazil fans are rejoicing at the humiliation of their arch rival Argentina,” emails Tom Phillips, our Latin America correspondent. “As the final whistle went in Qatar on Tuesday, Brazilians shared the following tearful version of Argentina’s flag on social media.”

Oh man, this is exactly it: you simply cannot beat football.

> Brazil said: pic.twitter.com/w9ojeKmnb2
>
> — Tom Phillips (@tomphillipsin) November 22, 2022

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5d ago07.18 EST

And I guess we also need to remove ourselves from the moment for a second to note that some things are more important than football; to make sure we’re not narcotised by amazing, uplifting, affirming football into forgetting all of what’s going on around it. I’m sorry, I hate to do it, but I’m afraid it’s my job and all of our social, moral responsibility.

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5d ago07.16 EST

I guess we need to remove ourselves from the moment for a second, to note that Argentina still have a decent chance of escaping the group, so still have a chance of winning the thing – in 1990, they lost their first game to Cameroon and still made the final. But they'll need to play a lot better than today, with more intensity, aggression and intelligence – I'm not surprised they lost from 2-1 down, I am surprised by how little they created following their second concession.

Photograph: Dylan Martinez/Reuters

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Updated at 07.25 EST

5d ago07.13 EST

It's not even that Saudi won – well it is – but to do some from behind is even more astoundingly astonishing. And in a sense they beat Argentina at their own game, two brilliant goals backed up with every possible kind of physical intervention, every possible kind of law-manipulation, and the mental fortitude of the Gods.

What a day for the Saudi Arabia players and fans . Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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Updated at 07.34 EST

5d ago07.11 EST

The Saudi players run to their end in the most ecstatic glee anyone in the world has ever experienced, while on Argentinian faces we see a mixture of confusion, dismay and humiliation. Saudi were tremendous in every aspect; Argentina were wan, and when they needed to step it up, they looked in the larder and found nothing.

Scenes! Photograph: Clive Brunskill/Getty Images

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Updated at 07.13 EST

5d ago07.09 EST

USA 1950, North Korea 1966, Cameroon 1990, Senegal 2002 … AND SAUDI ARABIA 2022! Football is unmatched, unrivalled, undefeated, and the greatest thing on the face of the earth!

Incredible! Photograph: Rungroj Yongrit/EPA

Dejection amongst the Argentinian ranks. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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Updated at 07.52 EST

5d ago07.08 EST

FULL-TIME: Argentina 1-2 Saudi Arabia

OH MY ABSOLUTE COMPLETE AND UTTER EVERLASTING DAYS!

Wow! Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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Updated at 07.10 EST

5d ago07.07 EST

90+13 min Lisandro puts a ball into the box but it's scuffed and Saudi clear yet again! This is desperate, unreal, exhausting, mystifying stuff! This is World Cup football!

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5d ago07.06 EST

90+13 min There can't be long left now. Hang onto your souls, people!

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5d ago07.06 EST

90+11 min Messi to D Maria … whose cross is useless, scuttling behind. Argentina's first loss in 36 games is imminent, and Saudi have earned the absolute arse out of this. They've been brave, tenacious, wild and composed – it's been a brilliant effort, and they're on the verge of one of the great World Cup moments, results and feelings!

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5d ago07.04 EST

90+10 min Argentina win successive corners, both cleared, but the second allows a ball back in and it pick out Alvarez! But he can't impart requisite power, and Alowais flies across his goal to save comfortably.

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5d ago07.03 EST

90+9 min We go again, Alsharani giving thumbs-up from his stretcher.

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Updated at 07.05 EST

5d ago07.02 EST

90+8 min Alsharani still receives treatment and is now on a stretcher being carried off. on the touchline, Alburayk prepares to replace him for what I guess will be enough four or five minutes.

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Updated at 07.03 EST

5d ago07.01 EST

90+6 min Alsharani is conscious, I think, while, sat in his six-yard box, Alowais decompresses. He looked upset by what happened but is composed now, complaining of knee-knack.

This looks serious. Photograph: Simon Stacpoole/Offside/Getty Images

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Updated at 07.08 EST

5d ago07.00 EST

90+5 min Alowais charges way out of his goal to punch clear and oh my days, he absolutely annihilates Alsharani, kneeing him full in the phizog with the full force of the moment. The ref, though allows play to proceed before the ball goes dead; godspeed, old mate.

Saudi Arabia's goalkeeper Mohammed Al-Owais (right) collides with teammate Yasser Al-Shahrani. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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Updated at 07.44 EST

5d ago06.58 EST

90+4 min Saudi win a corner down the right and try to keep the ball down there, but soon give away a free-kick. Argentina haven't looked like scoring really, and that's testament to how well Saudi have defended and also disappeared time. They've made these last 20 a real mess.

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5d ago06.57 EST

90+2 min When the ball's cleared, Di Maria curls back in, Otamendi goes up with the keeper and does enough to disturb him, enabling Alvarez to thrash goalwards … but on the line, Al-Amri heads clear brilliantly, Alowais is booked for protesting Otamendi's challenge, and Saudi still have their lead! My word!

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5d ago06.55 EST

90+1 min There'll be eight added minutes and Messi's poor free-kick achieves nothing, then another monstrous challenge from Altambakti robs Alvarez and hands Argentina another corner. He celebrates like he's scored again, and what a match he's had!

The free-kick goes straight into the wall. Photograph: Odd Andersen/AFP/Getty Images

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Updated at 06.59 EST

5d ago06.54 EST

90 min Di Maria weaves at the Ssaudi defence and Asiri welcomes himself to the game by administering the trip. Free-kick Argentina, 25 yards out, level with the left edge of the box…

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5d ago06.53 EST

88 min Alabid, the first-half sub, is subbed, with the ref chasing him to the touchline to award a yellow card; Asiri replaces him, while Haitham is on for Albrikan.

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Updated at 06.53 EST

5d ago06.51 EST

87 min Di Maria again goes down the right, picks out Lautaro, and again, Altambakti, my man of the match, makes a fine challenge.

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5d ago06.51 EST

87 min Er, there's another game kicking off in 70 minutes' time.

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5d ago06.50 EST

86 min I can't help but think the removal of Paredes harmed Argentina. He was helping them set their tempo, and the game's got a bit messier since he departed; weight of numbers should override structure only at the very end.

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5d ago06.48 EST

84 min Argentina haven't lost a World cup game in which they've scored first since West Germany beat them 3-1 in 1958, but excuse me while I interrupt myself! Di Maria picks out Big Leo Messi at the back stick, he's up early … too early, I think, and can't impart any power on his header aimed for the far corner, so again, Alowais collects. Since going behind, Argentina have created almost nothing.

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Updated at 06.48 EST

5d ago06.46 EST

83 min Acuna bursts down the left and crosses, but no one hits the near post so Alowais collects under nae pressure.

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5d ago06.46 EST

82 min Argentina are being Argentinad now, Abdulhamid clattering someone – Fernandez I think – and taking a card while stopping momentum.

Enzo Fernandez gets a reducer from Saud Abdulhamid. Photograph: Nick Potts/PA

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Updated at 06.51 EST

5d ago06.44 EST

81 min And Messi lofts high over the bar!

Argentina's Lionel Messi’s has a pop. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Messi rues his miss. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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Updated at 07.46 EST

5d ago06.44 EST

80 min The Saudi wall isn't keen to retreat, the tension ratcheting up a few more levels above stratospheric.

That's not 10 yards. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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Updated at 07.10 EST

5d ago06.43 EST

79 min Argentina win a free-kick in Messi Territory after a foul on De Paul and Aldawsari is booked for appealing it's award. Here he comes, 25 yards out, just left of centre…

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Updated at 06.43 EST

5d ago06.42 EST

78 min Change for Saudi, Alghannam for Alshehri, scorer of their first goal.

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5d ago06.42 EST

77 min The ground is bouncing, jumping, and every other cliche we use to describe the greatest communal experience that exists in the world. Argentina have roughly 20minutes to save themselves – though in a sense, this result would be as bad for Poland and Mexico, both of whom will fancy making the knockouts.

Scenes. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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Updated at 07.12 EST

5d ago06.39 EST

75 min Albulaihi is booked for timewasting. I daresay his won't be the last, and it's interesting that this is a risk he was prepared to take, England, Wales and the rest.

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5d ago06.39 EST

74 min Tremendous keeping from Alowais, who's been great so far. A ball in behind and for a second it looks like Lautaro is in, but the keeper slides out and makes a brilliant, goal-saving challenge. I've smoke coming off my fingers, this is wondrous, wonderful stuff.

Mohammed Alowais is having a worldie in the Saudi goal. Photograph: Kirill Kudryavtsev/AFP/Getty Images

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Updated at 06.48 EST

5d ago06.38 EST

74 min “Not just third-choice keeper,” says Jerry Spring. “How about from the kick-off the captain wear the armband, gets booked, passes to another player, gets booked, passes on...back to the captain, gets second yellow and off, onto the next player, etc. No players left on the pitch and it hasn’t even kicked off ... and if all the main teams do that in consecutive games then Fifa won’t have a competition to sell ... let’s see who backs down first.”

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World Cup 2022

Iran stand with protesters as England and Wales bow to Fifa over armbands

On a hectic day at the World Cup the Iran players' gesture contrasted sharply with meek end to OneLove protest

'It's not enough': Iranian fans torn on team refusal to sing national anthem at World Cup – video

Supported by

About this content

Sean Ingle at the Khalifa International Stadium
@seaningle
Mon 21 Nov 2022 17.34 ESTLast modified on Tue 22 Nov 2022 03.33 EST

England have never enjoyed an opening World Cup match like this. Six goals, and a performance soaked in exuberance and enticing possibilities, laid down an early marker for the next four weeks in Qatar. Yet this game will surely be remembered for something else entirely: the remarkable sight of Iran's players refusing to sing the national anthem in a gesture of solidarity with oppressed women and protestors back home.

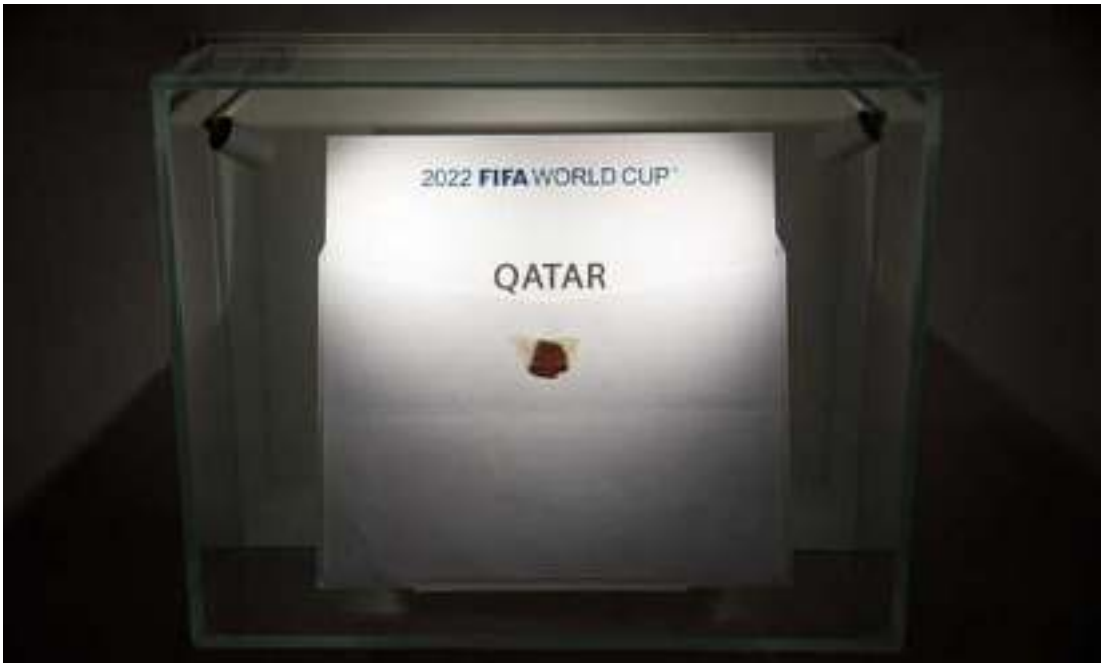
As the anthem rang out across the Khalifa International Stadium, Iran's players pursed lips, bowed heads and locked shoulders. Their 1,000-yard stares told you something else too: that they, and their families, may soon pay a heavy price. And yet they carried on. The defiant, and the damned. A TV camera cut to an Iranian woman in the stands. She was crying.

Many Iranian women here sported T-shirts with the phrase "Woman, Life, Freedom", which has become the rallying cry for protestors since a 22-year-old Kurdish-Iranian woman, Mahsa Amini, died in hospital while in police custody. Her crime? Not wearing a headscarf correctly. They also wore skirts and dresses, sang songs and smiled: basic freedoms denied back home.

Quick Guide

Qatar: beyond the football

Show



This is a World Cup like no other. For the last 12 years the Guardian has been reporting on the issues surrounding Qatar 2022, from corruption and human rights abuses to the treatment of migrant workers and discriminatory laws. The best of our journalism is gathered on our dedicated Qatar: Beyond the Football home page for those who want to go deeper into the issues beyond the pitch.

Guardian reporting goes far beyond what happens on the pitch. Support our investigative journalism today.

Photograph: Tom Jenkins

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

What made this display of courage from Iran's players so powerful is that they had come under immense pressure to stay out of the revolution in Iran,

which human rights groups say has led to more than 450 people being killed and more than 15,000 being arrested.

Watching on were two Iran supporters, Bardia and Fred, who praised the bravery of the players. Bardia had put black tape over the badge on his team shirt to signal his opposition to the regime, while Fred explained why so many thousands were cheering their team on in Qatar.

“For Iranians all over the world, our hearts are with the women and the young,” he said. “Our team belongs to the people, not the Islamic regime.”

The Iran team fought hard over the following 90 minutes, but they were no match for England. For years, supporters have urged Gareth Southgate to “release the handbreak”. Not only did England’s manager do that, he poured super-diesel in the tank and slammed down the accelerator.

Iran fans protest against the regime in the stadium during the team’s game against England. Photograph: Zabulon Laurent/ABACA/Shutterstock

A goal from the teenager Jude Bellingham started the rout before Bukayo Saka (two), Raheem Sterling, Marcus Rashford and Jack Grealish finished the job. Grealish’s celebration was particularly noteworthy. The Manchester City playmaker had promised an 11-year-old fan with cerebral palsy that he

would perform a celebration in his honour the next time he scored – and proved as good as his word.

Not that Southgate was entirely happy, noting with frustration how his team had conceded two late goals. “We know Iran are usually really difficult to score goals against, so it’s a credit to our players and the movement, the quality of our passing, the quality of our finishing,” he said. “But I didn’t like the end of the game. I understand the focus drifting but that won’t be enough for us to progress in the tournament.”

It proved to be another hectic day at this World Cup, and it began with another protest coming to a meek end. For the past two months England and Wales have been among seven European countries promising to wear OneLove armbands to protest against discrimination in Qatar. However after Fifa warned them on Sunday night they would face sporting sanctions – including potentially a yellow card for their captains – they backed down on Monday morning.

From a sporting perspective, the decision was understandable, given it could lead to players missing crucial knockout matches. But the contrast with the bravery of Iran’s players was stark. As the former British Olympian Jeanette Kwakye noted: “The most powerful protests in global sport have not required permission.”

Perhaps surprisingly, Southgate said that he understood Fifa’s decision. “You can set a precedent and it’s very difficult as to where to draw the line,” he said. “But people know what we stand for.”

Harry Kane wears a Fifa-sanctioned armband after England backed down from wearing OneLove armbands. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

However numerous human rights organisations were far less forgiving, with the veteran gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell accusing Fifa's president, Gianni Infantino, of showing his "true colours" after speaking about inclusivity at the weekend.

"I urge the team captains at their post-match press conferences to spend just 30 seconds to speak out for the rights of women, LGBTs and migrant workers," he said. "That would have a huge impact, reaching a global audience of hundreds of millions of people.

"Fifa has crushed the OneLove campaign with the threat of yellow cards. It's time to show Fifa and Qatar the red card."

Fifa said it was only applying its long-held regulations "to preserve the integrity of the field of play" and that it was an "inclusive organisation". Captains will instead wear other armbands as part of Fifa's No Discrimination campaign.

Fifa was soon facing fire from a different direction as hundreds of England fans found themselves unable to log into their official mobile ticket app before entering the ground. Football's governing body attempted to resolve

the situation by resending ticketing emails and telling supporters to get them printed out at the stadium's ticket resolution point.

But that led to huge queues, with many fans still outside when England and Iran kicked off, as scheduled, at 4pm. There was still time for a final surprise, with Iran's coach, Carlos Queiroz, telling Iranian fans who booed the anthem to stay away from the World Cup if they were going to use it for political statements.

"Those who come to disturb the team with issues that are not only about football opinions are not welcome," said Queiroz. "They are just simple football boys. They have one dream, to play football. It is not their fault that the World Cup happens at the moment. The moral is: let the kids play the game."

Meanwhile bookmakers responded to England's 6-2 victory by making them third favourites, behind Brazil and Argentina, for the trophy.

World Cups are not won in the first game, of course. But a tone can be set. A marker laid down. England are now even stronger favourites to win Group B. Accomplish that and a last-16 match against Ecuador or Senegal is on the cards. A quarter-final against a France team without several of their best players due to injury, or Denmark, could then follow. Whisper it, but here we go again.

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2022.11.22 - Spotlight

- **Die Another Day at 20 Is the reviled Bond movie worth a second look?**
- **‘This looks like the real deal’ Are we inching closer to a treatment for Alzheimer’s?**
- **Environment What happens when humans meddle with nature?**
- **The long read ‘He was fast … he ran you right over’: what it’s like to get hit by an SUV**

Die Another Day

Die Another Day at 20: is the reviled Bond movie worth a second look?

The 20th film was ripe for ridicule – from Madonna's awkward theme song to an invisible car – but it's a smarter film than many think

Pierce Brosnan and Halle Berry. Photograph: c MGM/Everett/Rex Features

Francesca Carington
Tue 22 Nov 2022 02.06 EST

There's a scene in the 20th Bond movie, Die Another Day, when Pierce Brosnan's 007 saunters into the black marbled lobby of a smart Hong Kong hotel, having – in 27 short minutes – already surfed into North Korea, hijacked an arms dealer's helicopter, blasted through the DMZ on a hovercraft, been captured and tortured for 14 months, returned to MI6 in a prisoner exchange, faced a heart attack and jumped off a boat into the South China Sea.

The usually soigné secret agent is dishevelled, with long hair and a beard, his luxuriously hairy chest exposed by the open shirt of his drenched blue pyjamas. He requests his usual suite, and a bottle of ’61 Bollinger. The club manager asks if he’s been busy. “Surviving,” answers Bond, “just surviving”.

This arch juxtaposition of rags and riches exemplifies the wider tonal inconsistency of a film that, for all Bond’s talk of survival, nearly killed the franchise. Often derided as one of the series’ worst, resulting in a Daniel Craig-fronted overhaul with Casino Royale in 2006, Die Another Day has a lot to answer for: the invisible car, sliding like clear jelly through a misty ice palace; Madonna’s jerkily awful theme song; Madonna, again, playing a corseted fencing instructor; a villain who changes race; another whose face is speckled with diamonds; an estimated $70m (£59m) spent on product placement; John Cleese.

And yet, as the much-maligned first Bond movie of this century turns 20, its deranged atonality deserves a second look. It wasn’t poorly received when it came out, grossing $430m (£365m) worldwide, making it the highest-grossing Bond movie at the time. Critics were lukewarm, even if Michael Gove did approvingly call Rosamund Pike a “tart citrus sorbet”. Die Another Day was released just over a year after 9/11, and is perched uneasily between two action movie eras: the suave glamour and glossy heroics of the previous Bonds and the gritty seriousness and complex geopolitics of the next generation. It’s the most anxious of all the Bonds, and for that, I adore it.

On 11 September 2001, the creative team of Die Another Day were in a script meeting at 138 Piccadilly when they heard of the terrorist attacks on the Twin Towers, director Lee Tamahori recalled. The film’s New York-set finale was swiftly canned, and the explosive ending relocated to Korea’s Demilitarised Zone. The film’s only veiled reference to 9/11 is M’s loaded comment to Bond after his 14-month absence: “While you were away, the world changed.”

Die Another Day is both of the new world and the old. In post-9/11 action movies, heroes were cynical and fallible. They bore emotional and physical scars, often explored in origin stories (Batman Begins, and, of course, Casino Royale). Government agencies weren't always the good guys (the Bourne movies). There are elements of this ambivalence in Die Another Day – in the movie's surprisingly dark opening, the villain, Colonel Moon, drawls that he "majored in western hypocrisy" at Oxford and Harvard. Bond is an "assassin", while a North Korean general is portrayed as a loving, wronged father with a strong moral compass. Bond is betrayed, imprisoned and tortured – scenes spliced horribly with the writhing fire and ice maidens of the opening credits – before a bleak, Dostoevskian moment when a desolate Bond thinks he's going to be executed. His American saviour scoffs, "You'd think he was some kind of hero."

So far, so complex, but then the movie shifts gears into reverse – around the time Bond walks into that hotel. Minutes later, having disarmed the masseuse, Peaceful Fountains of Desire, been reunited with his Brioni shirts and Bollinger, Bond is off to Cuba, where he meets Halle Berry's bikini-clad Jinx, who emerges in a homage to Dr No's Ursula Andress from the sea, squirming in slow-motion delight. It's one of a number of self-referential winks, which range from cheeky throwbacks, like Rosa Klebb's shoe in Q's lab, to a metatextual commentary on the Bond universe's increasing obsolescence with a villain who models the sneering pomposity of his white alter ego on 007 himself.

The 20th Bond movie jokes about its irrelevance, but it's also very, very worried about being irrelevant. Die Another Day doubles down on the Bond formula – lasers, diamonds, an improbably located final bonk – while lassoing in incongruent features of the movie's perceived competition. In an effort to keep up with the twin threats of The Matrix and video games, Tamahori insisted, in a Bond movie first, on using CGI – resulting in a truly dismal tidal-wave kite-surfing sequence widely slammed by critics. More bizarre is the film's humour – like Jinx's embarrassing "Your momma" crack (penned by Berry herself) – the clunkiness of which is more Austin Powers than James Bond, perhaps stemming from a fear that the Bond parody might steal Bond proper's audience.

Pierce Brosnan and Rosamund Pike in a still. Photograph: Keith Hamshere/Mgm/Eon/Kobal/Rex/Shutterstock

And then there's a more intriguingly voiced climate anxiety. It comes in a gag: "global warming, it's a terrible thing", sneers Colonel Moon (Toby Stephens), as he blasts Iceland's frozen landscape with a space laser, causing an ice sheet to crumble into the sea. The laser is named Icarus, a sly reference to the tragic consequences of man's attempt to conquer nature. In Die Another Day – and earlier Bond movies – elemental destruction is collateral damage in man's grander scheme for money and power.

The thing about Bond is that times change but Bond, by design, has to stay the same. So, on its 20th birthday, in times as anxious, spare a thought for this basket case of a Bond movie: faced with cultural, social and geopolitical change, 007 got a little lost. Unable to commit to recreating the Roger Moorean high camp of the films of old or to paving the way for the salty darkness of the future, Die Another Day attempted a version of both, its insecurities all too apparent – despite the invisible car.

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Advertisement

‘This looks like the real deal’: are we inching closer to a treatment for Alzheimer’s?

Illustration: Thomas Hedger at Grand Matter/The Guardian

After years of setbacks, dementia researchers are getting excited about a new antibody drug called lecanemab. No one expects it to stop cognitive decline, but even slowing it would be a breakthrough

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At the end of November, thousands of researchers from around the world will descend on San Francisco for the annual Clinical Trials on Alzheimer's Disease meeting. The conference is a mainstay of the dementia research calendar, the place where the latest progress – and all too often, setbacks – in the quest for Alzheimer's treatments are made public for the first time.

This year's meeting is poised to be a landmark event. After more than a century of research into Alzheimer's, scientists expect to hear details of the first treatment that can unambiguously alter the course of the disease. Until now, nothing has reversed, halted or even slowed the grim deterioration of patients' brains. Given that dementia and Alzheimer's are the No 1 killer in

the UK, and the seventh largest killer worldwide, there is talk of a historic moment.

The optimism comes from a press statement released in September from Eisai, a Japanese pharmaceutical firm, and Biogen, a US biotech. It gave top-line results from a major clinical trial of an antibody treatment, lecanemab, given to nearly 2,000 people with early Alzheimer's disease. The therapy slowed cognitive decline, the statement said, raising hopes that a drug might finally apply the brakes to Alzheimer's and provide "a clinically meaningful impact on cognition and function".

The announcement was greeted, broadly, with delight and relief from researchers who have endured failure after failure in the long search for Alzheimer's drugs. But even the most enthusiastic conceded that significant questions remained. With only a press release to go on, it was hard to be sure the claims stood up. The answer will come on 29 November when researchers leading the trial, named Clarity AD, present their results at the San Francisco meeting.

'If you can slow the decline, even a small amount, you will really start to see an impact at the economic and medical level.' Illustration: Thomas Hedger at Grand Matter/The Guardian

Lecanemab has already sparked debate. Antibody drugs are so costly they are beyond the means of many countries. Lecanemab itself is not easy to administer, unlike pills and capsules: patients are required to attend clinic for an intravenous infusion twice a month. And the side-effects call for extensive monitoring: patients on the trial had regular scans for brain swelling and haemorrhages, a service many hospitals cannot provide at scale.

More importantly, lecanemab might not work very well. From the data released so far, it is unclear what difference it could make to the devastating burden inflicted by Alzheimer's. Some doctors warn that the benefits of the drug seem so small, patients may not even notice. But others counter that *any* effect on Alzheimer's deserves celebration: it proves the disease can be beaten, or at least slowed down. It's a start, a concrete foundation to build on.

"Dementia is a global economic disaster as people are institutionalised while their disease progresses at huge cost to society and healthcare systems," says Prof Giovanna Mallucci, former centre director of the UK Dementia Research Institute at the University of Cambridge, now principal investigator at Altos Labs. "If you can slow the decline, even a small amount, you will really start to see an impact at the economic and medical level."

‘I feel like we might be able to offer something decent to patients within the next few years’ … Prof Bart De Strooper. Photograph: Ine Dehandschutter/Ine Dehandschutter/VIB

Researchers liken the situation to the HIV crisis in the 1980s. The first anti-HIV drug was far from ideal, but it paved the way for the highly effective therapies used today. “When you have that first breakthrough, it’s like the hole in the dyke that leads to a bigger hole,” says Prof Bart De Strooper, director of the UK Dementia Research Institute at University College London. “There is much more belief now that we can find something. As a doctor, I feel like we might be able to offer something decent to patients within the next few years.”

“This is not a cure by any stretch of the imagination, but if it does slow cognitive decline, it means that for the first time we are modifying the disease,” says Dr Richard Oakley, head of research at the Alzheimer’s Society. “We need to understand the real-world clinical benefit, but I’ve spoken to people and where there’s never been excitement, always hesitation, this does look like the real deal. We need to see the data, but everyone is now saying this is the beginning of disease-modifying treatments.”

Alzheimer's accounts for more than 60% of the 55 million cases of dementia worldwide. The condition costs the UK £25bn a year, a figure that is on course to nearly double to £47bn by 2050. The most common early signs are memory problems, but as the disease progresses, people can find themselves lost in familiar places, having trouble with decisions, struggling with simple tasks, experiencing mood swings and changes in personality. It is a terminal condition: typically, people die within eight years of an Alzheimer's diagnosis.

> If we think about Alzheimer's in old age, I think most people have mixed forms of dementia

The cognitive decline in Alzheimer's arises from the relentless destruction of neurons, the cells that ferry information around the brain. The effect goes far beyond normal age-related brain shrinkage: on death, a patient's brain can weigh 140g less than before the disease took hold – a reduction of more than 10%.

Exactly what kills the brain cells is still up for debate. In some families blighted by early onset Alzheimer's, scientists have found mutations that cause abnormal clumps, or plaques, of a brain protein called amyloid beta to build up between neurons. Above a certain tipping point, these plaques seem to aid the formation of harmful tangles of another brain protein called tau. These accumulate inside the neurons themselves. More tangles tend to mean greater cognitive decline.

But inherited forms of Alzheimer's are rare. In most patients, the decline is likely to be driven by a messy mix of processes, which fuel one another. Amyloid and tau are still in the frame, but other toxic proteins, chronic inflammation, vascular problems, cellular health, and faulty disposal of waste from the brain may all contribute. "If we think about Alzheimer's in old age, I don't think most of these people have pure Alzheimer's," says De Strooper. "I think they have mixed forms of dementia. It's not always clear what's really driving the disease."

Efforts to develop Alzheimer's drugs have focused overwhelmingly on amyloid. Some aim to block enzymes involved in the production of

abnormal amyloid, while others, such as lecanemab, are antibodies designed to clear it from the brain. Between 2007 and 2019, more than a dozen final-stage, or "phase 3", trials of amyloid-targeting drugs reported results. None slowed cognitive decline; some even made it worse.

A computer-generated image of amyloid plaques – misfolded proteins that aggregate between neurons. Photograph: Artur Plawgo/Getty Images/iStockphoto

The failures split the research community. Some threw out the entire amyloid hypothesis. Others concluded that even if it was valid, amyloid wasn't the best protein to target. Further concerns surrounded the trials themselves: many enrolled patients who already had Alzheimer's symptoms. For them, removing amyloid may be too little, too late: snuffing out the match once the fire is raging. The problem is compounded by the insidious early phase of the disease, which destroys neurons without people noticing. "Your brain is so plastic that it can cope with a lot of damage before it starts to show symptoms," says De Strooper.

In June last year, the US Food and Drug Administration gave the green light to the first new drug for Alzheimer's in nearly 20 years. Biogen's Aduhelm (aducanumab) became the first approved therapy to target amyloid, but the

decision provoked a furore. An independent FDA committee advised against approval because Biogen's trial data failed to show clear benefit.

But the FDA granted "accelerated approval" because it cleared amyloid plaques from patient's brains, and therefore *might* slow the progression of Alzheimer's if taken early enough, and for long enough. Several scientists resigned from the committee in protest, including Prof Aaron Kesselheim at Harvard Medical School, who told the regulator that its ruling was "probably the worst drug approval decision in recent US history".

The FDA will rule on lecanemab in January 2023, with decisions in the UK and Europe to follow. While press-released data from the lecanemab trial suggests the drug slowed cognitive decline, the effect was small. After 18 months, cognition declined 27% less in those who took the drug compared with those on a placebo. On a common dementia rating scale, which scores people from 0 to 18 on memory, problem-solving and other tasks, those on lecanemab performed only 0.45 points better. The result is statistically significant, but it may not mean much for individual patients.

"The effect they've reported to date is very small. It's not large enough to be clinically important," says Prof Victor Henderson, director of the Alzheimer's Disease Research Center at Stanford University. He warns that there is a subjective element to the dementia ratings that could matter when the observed benefit is so marginal. "I would be concerned that this could be a drug that has statistical significance without clinical significance and we may need to wait for something better," he says.

One idea gaining ground in Alzheimer's research is that drugs will need to remove amyloid fast to have any hope of showing a clinical benefit. The logic is laid out in a 2022 paper by De Strooper and Eric Karran at AbbVie, a US biopharmaceuticals firm. They argue that it will take time for the effects of amyloid removal to show up in thinking and memory tests. If a drug doesn't push amyloid low enough, or takes years to do it, it probably won't help, they suggest, at least not in the timeframe of most clinical trials.

Despite lecanemab's reportedly small effect, Mallucci sees positives in the results. "What really needs to be trumpeted from this trial [assuming the results hold up] is that you can change the rate of decline of the disease. That

half a point is subtle and the individuals might not feel very different, but you can build on it," she says.

It's likely that more research has been done on Covid in the past three years than on dementia in the past century. Photograph: Cultura Creative Ltd/Alamy

Chronic underfunding means patients have already waited too long for progress. Earlier this year, De Strooper searched the US medical database PubMed for dementia. He found 250,000 studies. He then searched for cancer and found 4.7m. Next, he searched for Covid, a disease that didn't exist before 2019, and found 300,000 studies. It's a rough metric, but it suggests that more research has been done on Covid in the past three years than on dementia in the past century.

The comparison with cancer is particularly striking. Decades of substantial funding and research have transformed cancer diagnosis and care. Under NHS England targets, people should wait no more than 28 days from referral to hear whether or not they have cancer. But for dementia, NHS England has only an "ambition" to diagnose two-thirds of patients. No timescale is mentioned.

With cancer, the full suite of diagnostic equipment is brought to bear on patients, from genome sequencing to advanced MRI and PET scanners. People often receive a detailed diagnosis of the cancer they have. Dementia diagnosis and care lag far behind. If Alzheimer's patients can benefit from amyloid-clearing treatments, they will need an early diagnosis and evidence of amyloid in the brain. UK clinics are not close to being able to offer such services. "We could be in the situation in 2025 when we have access to a drug that modifies disease but are unable to give it to those most likely to benefit because we diagnose them too late and unspecifically," says Oakley.

The real hope may lie in entirely different approaches. Antibodies may help some Alzheimer's or pre-Alzheimer's patients, but to have a major effect on the disease, a combination of drugs that hit different biological processes is needed. "I suspect antibodies will have a place for a small number of carefully selected patients, but we need multiple approaches," says Mallucci. "This isn't a feasible way forward for dementia treatment on a global scale. It's not feasible economically or logistically."

One idea is to administer vaccines that prompt the patient's immune system to churn out antibodies to clear problematic amyloid and tau. De Strooper believes drugs that block key enzymes needed for the production of harmful amyloid are worth another look. Mallucci favours drugs that make the ageing brain more resilient, by protecting and reinvigorating brain cells. There are many potential approaches, including boosting the brain's ability to clear toxic proteins and targeting inflammation. She has pioneered work on increasing the fitness of diseased brain cells, the ability to make new proteins, and on the "cold-shock" protein RBM3, which mammals release in hibernation and hypothermia. Both these approaches help to regenerate synapses, the connections between neurons, and – in mice, at least – help to protect against dementia by boosting memory and preventing brain cell death.

Another line of attack is to boost a compound called BDNF, which might also reinvigorate cells and help them build new connections. A new clinical trial at the University of California, San Diego, is about to test whether a BDNF-boosting gene therapy can help patients with early Alzheimer's.

And this is what the field needs, says Oakley: more funding, more approaches, more trials. “We are beginning to see a future where we can make dementia a chronic condition, one you live with and die with but don’t die from,” he says. “We’ve seen it work in every other major condition that research has tackled, and we will see it in dementia. This first generation of amyloid-clearing drugs is only the beginning.”

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Advertisement

What happens when humans meddle with nature?

Clockwise from top left: a frog from Panama; a close-up of coral; hand-pollinating pear trees in China; pest-eating ants; and an Indian white-rumped vulture. Photograph: Alamy, Getty Images, Shutterstock

Seven ways in which our destruction of the natural world has led to deadly outcomes

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About this content

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1. As Indian vultures decline, the number of rabies cases rise

In the early 1990s, vultures across India started dying inexplicably. Long-billed, slender-billed and oriental white-backed vultures declined to the brink of extinction, with the number of India's most common three vulture species falling by more than 97% between 1992 and 2007. Six other species were in sharp decline too. Scientists started testing the dead birds and worked out they had been exposed to diclofenac, an anti-inflammatory drug routinely given to cattle in south Asia at the time. The vultures fed on the carcasses of cows and were poisoned.

A vulture beside a sheep carcass at the Zojila pass in Kashmir. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

That was the beginning of a far-reaching chain reaction. As vulture populations crashed, cow carcasses started to pile up, and the numbers of rats and wild dogs surged. Dogs became the main scavengers at dumps

previously used by vultures. Data suggests that from 1992 to 2003, dogs increased by 7 million. The number of dog bites soared and rabies infections shot up, causing tens of thousands of people to die each year. In 2006, diclofenac was banned, and vulture populations have slowly started to recover.

2. Sparrow slaughter in China sparks insect plagues

In the late 1950s, China's leader, Mao Zedong, wanted to rapidly industrialise the country through the Great Leap Forward. That involved the "four pests campaign", targeting mosquitoes, rats, flies – and sparrows. He ordered all the country's sparrows to be killed because he thought they were feeding on rice and grains and reducing the amount available for people. Citizens were told to shoot the birds, tear down their nests, smash their eggs and bang pots so they would be scared into the sky and fall to their deaths, exhausted. Sparrows were nearly driven to extinction in China.

Sparrows gather on a stone pillar in a Beijing park. Photograph: VCG/Getty Images

What Mao's officials didn't realise is that sparrows rely on grains for only a small part of their diet: the bulk of it comprises insects. After the mass

killing, there was an eruption of insect pests which destroyed the country's crops. "This ecological catastrophe coupled with a multi-year drought and disastrous agricultural policies led to one of the most devastating famines in history. It is estimated that about 45 million people died," says Prof Marc Cadotte, an ecologist at the University of Toronto.

3. Deadly frog fungus causes malaria spike

A deadly chytrid fungus called *Batrachochytrium dendrobatidis* (Bd) ripped through Panama and Costa Rica from the 1980s to the mid-1990s, leading to the extinction of dozens of species of amphibians, with some scientists putting the number at 90. It was described as "the greatest loss of biodiversity attributable to a disease", but most people would have been unaware of the tragedy.

A frog being treated at the amphibian conservation centre El Valle de Antón in Panama. Photograph: Ron Giling/Alamy

After the deaths, there was an eight-year spike in malaria cases in Central America, as mosquitoes thrived, probably because there were no frogs, salamanders and other amphibians to prey on their eggs, researchers reported recently. At its peak there was a fivefold increase in malaria cases.

“If we allow massive ecosystem disruptions to happen, it can substantially impact human health in ways that are difficult to predict ahead of time and hard to control once they’re under way,” says Michael Springborn, a professor at the University of California, Davis, and lead author of the paper.

4. Mangrove loss makes the Asian tsunami worse

In 2004, an Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami killed more than 230,000 people. The countries worst hit were Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India and Thailand, all of which had experienced significant declines in mangrove cover, according to a report by the Environmental Justice Foundation. From 1980 to 2000, the area covered by mangroves in these countries fell by 28%. In places where the trees had been destroyed, the waves penetrated further inland, killing more people and aggravating the destruction of homes and livelihoods. The “mangrove forests played a crucial role in saving human lives and property”, the report said.

Mangroves’ large root systems absorb some of the impact of waves. Photograph: James Morgan/WWF

Mangroves absorb the impact of waves and rising sea levels by their large root systems, which dissipate energy. “Conserving and restoring coastal

mangrove areas is essential if coastal communities are to recover and be protected from similar events," the report concluded.

5. As bees disappear, fruit trees in China are hand-pollinated

In Sichuan province, south-west China, the widespread use of pesticides alongside habitat destruction means that farmers have to carry pots of pollen to pollinate pear and apple trees themselves, according to Dave Goulson, professor of biology at the University of Sussex. This means using a paintbrush attached to a long bamboo pole to dab inside each flower. About 30% of China's pear trees are artificially pollinated, according to one study.

A farmer hand-pollinates pear flowers in an orchard in China's Hebei province. Photograph: Xinhua/Rex/Shutterstock

Pollinating insects are vital to human food security – three-quarters of crops depend on them. They are also crucial to other wildlife, as a source of food and as pollinators of wild plants. But a lack of wild pollinators is affecting food production around the world. In the US, researchers studied seven crops grown in 13 states and found that five showed evidence that a lack of bees is affecting the amount of food that can be grown, including apples, blueberries and cherries.

6. Pesticides kill more than bad pests

Since the second world war, our main defence against crop pests has been artificial pesticides. But these chemicals also kill helpful insects, including parasitoid wasps, lacewings and ladybirds, which hunt common pests and provide support to farmers and gardeners.

An ant carries off a feast from the fields in Van province, Turkey. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Researchers in Brazil have found that ants can be more effective than pesticides at helping farmers produce food because they are better at killing pests, reducing plant damage and increasing yields. This is because they are "generalist" predators, hunting pests that damage fruit, seeds and leaves. The scientists looked at the impact of 26 species of ants (mainly tree ants) on 17 crops, including citrus, mango, apple and soy. According to the paper, published in Proceedings of the Royal Society B, they do best in diversified farming systems, such as agroforestry and shade-grown crops because there are more places for them to nest.

7. Losing coral reefs leaves coastal properties unprotected

Like mangroves, coral reefs are a natural barrier to waves and storms. Because of their hard, jagged formations they can protect coastal communities and reduce the threat of erosion. They make it more likely for waves to break off-shore, reducing wave energy by an average of 97% by the time they hit land. It is estimated that nearly 200 million people in coastal areas around the world depend on the protection of coral reefs. Research shows that in the US they provide more than $1.8bn annually in flood protection benefits.

A coral reef on the Florida coastline. Photograph: Joseph Prezioso/Zuma Press Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

However, developments such as marinas and docks, as well as pollution, damage these reefs. The corals are also being destroyed by rising temperatures, which lead to mass bleaching. Research suggests that virtually all corals on the planet will suffer from severe bleaching if global temperatures rise by 1.5C.

Find more age of extinction coverage here, and follow biodiversity reporters Phoebe Weston and Patrick Greenfield on Twitter for all the latest news and features

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‘He was fast … he ran you right over’: what it’s like to get hit by an SUV

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2022.11.22 - Opinion

- People are dying waiting for social care. Wealthy people's inheritance issues are not a priority
- In the war between snowflakes and boomers, I'm with the kids. If only it wasn't so easy to laugh at them …
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OpinionSocial care

People are dying waiting for social care. Wealthy people's inheritance issues are not a priority

Polly Toynbee

A cap on the amount individuals pay ignores the much greater needs of those who get no care at all

‘The real catastrophe is the failure to provide any care at all for so many.’ Photograph: Linda Nylind/The Guardian

Tue 22 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 22 Nov 2022 06.46 EST

Not absolutely everything in last week’s budget was wrong. But one thing it got right was met with an avalanche of anger. The government abandoned a decade-long promise to preserve the assets of better-off people who have to pay for their own social care in England. The pledge to set a cap of £86,000 as the maximum anyone should pay has been delayed yet again, notionally until after the election, which effectively means the policy is dead. At this time, it must surely be right not to spend billions on protecting the wealth of better-off people when so many are being denied any care at all. Yet again, how to pay for social care proves to be a political landmine.

How to pay for care is the same wicked issue that contributed to Labour’s 2010 defeat and blew up under Theresa May’s ill-fated 2017 general election campaign. To borrow her notorious phrase as she U-turned on this, “Nothing has changed”, because the same old unresolved social care conundrum is as politically toxic as ever. But with every year that passes without a solution, the crisis deepens.

In the public mind there is confusion between two quite separate social care crises, deliberately conflated by Tory governments who keep pretending they have a plan for both. One crisis – the lack of care – is a real shocker. But the other – better-off people spending their savings – not quite so much.

The serious issue is the lack of any care in a collapsing system: shrinking council budgets have left 2.6 million people over the age of 50 in need of care, but getting none, according to Age UK. (That frightening figure obviously does not include the care plight of younger disabled adults.) Every day cash-strapped councils are receiving a phenomenal 5,400 requests for care, according to the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services. This has been long predicted as my boomer generation grows frail, but the great Osborne/Cameron austerity cut council services as never before, instead of preparing for this inevitable demographic need. Care providers – mostly privatised in the Thatcher era – are going bust, paid too little by councils for each patient, starved of staff who are fleeing to better pay, leaving 165,000 vacancies.

Councils struggling to buy enough care are going bust, too – even the likes of lush Kent, Hampshire and Surrey whose Tory leaders, after 12 supine years, are finally raising their voices – too late. A month ago the rebellious, pre-budget version of Jeremy Hunt said social care needed £7bn to stand still: but now as chancellor he "gives" councils just £2.8bn next year – and they have to find two-thirds of that from a 5% council tax rise that most won't dare impose, as they face local elections next May.

The public may be more alert to the importance of social care since Covid, but local politicians know that despite growing numbers, at any one time a relatively small proportion of their voters use care. It's effectively an invisible service, so locals rate libraries, pools, emptying bins and filling pot-holes above care hidden behind lace curtains.

Hunt's budget claims to provide 200,000 more care "packages" over the next two years, but that barely touches those 2.6 million queueing for help. As Care England's Martin Green says, a "package" might mean a costly nursing home bed or a once-a-day half-hour visit. Nor is care funding ringfenced, he says, so there is a worry that councils could divert it to their visibles.

As for the grotesquely unreformed council tax, a 5% increase would raise far more in affluent areas of the country than in poorer regions, where few pay for their own care: this reverses levelling up. Nationally, most can't afford to pay, relying on councils that keep cutting eligibility criteria. That makes the queue for care so long that 150,000 people died waiting in the past five years. It doesn't take much imagination to visualise the lives of those who can't move, wash or feed themselves often dying alone.

But that was never the problem the Tories chose to solve. Their only social care pledge, as made again by Boris Johnson, has been to protect inheritances: no one would have to sell their home to pay for care. A state subsidy costing what the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) estimates at "several billion" would protect them from "catastrophic costs" and secure their right to pass on their assets when they died.

That phrase "catastrophic costs" keeps cropping up, though the real catastrophe is the failure to provide any care for so many. In the present crisis the government is quite right to redirect some of the "costs" of that pledge towards care for those with none. The admirable Sir Andrew Dilnot was only commissioned by David Cameron to devise a plan to save property, not a plan to ensure everyone got the care they needed. Writing passionately for the Guardian last week, he made a strong case for removing the injustice that may oblige those unlucky enough to need years of care for dementia or a stroke to pay everything they've got, while those lucky enough to drop dead suddenly bequeath their assets to their heirs. The NHS treats all, regardless of their wealth, so why not social care too? Quite right in principle. May that day come soon.

But we live in this miserable country where, the IFS says, "the truth is we just got a lot poorer", thanks not just to Covid and war in Ukraine, but the depredations of austerity, Brexit and Liz Truss. That forces us to grimly rank catastrophes in a hierarchy of suffering. Should we put protecting some people's savings and property ahead of spending on care for others, or indeed the many other barren public services? Alleviating the pain of losing savings is less urgent than, say, the pain of those waiting for an NHS operation. What of all those other pressing needs? For example, the schoolchild's one life-chance dashed by a lack of attention from overstretched teachers or the hungry child denied free school meals. As it

turns cold, those who can't pay heating bills need insulation and investment in cheap green renewables. Add your own public spending priorities here.

Compared to those and other deprivations, talk of the "catastrophic costs" of losing an inheritance looks somewhat hyperbolic. Savings should be used for a rainy day in old age. The real danger is that the social care collapse is pulling the NHS down with it, blocking its beds. Labour promises a national care service, although details are as yet vague. Let's hope it can make it happen, but rank it wisely in the hierarchy of need: as Aneurin Bevan said, the language of priorities is the religion of socialism. The Tories' instinctive priority is inheritances before care. Yet time and again, when confronted with the reality they step back from the cost, so now they have no care policy at all.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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OpinionYoung people

In the war between snowflakes and boomers, I'm with the kids. If only it wasn't so easy to laugh at them …

Zoe Williams

Gen Z seem to see trauma and toxicity everywhere they look. As I've just been reminded, that doesn't mean they're imagining things

Whatever I might have first thought, I had to admit that best-friendship is incredibly intense (posed by models). Photograph: Hello Africa/Getty Images

Tue 22 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Thu 24 Nov 2022 11.42 EST

Near where I live, there's an open-mic day for local kids who are in bands. It's slickly run, with professional sound engineers and equipment, and it's all free. It's an act of incredible generosity by a load of self-effacing ponytail guys, and I believe it will save at least a minuscule corner of the world of live music, just by populating south-east London with 14-year-olds who know how to plug in an amp.

It was Sunday. My treasured 15-year-old first born was about to play bass. I was in an incredibly good mood. My ex-husband had just said in a really loud voice: "I love the World Cup and I won't have any woke liberals ruining it for me," and even though he was joking, there was no way for bystanders to know that, so now they all think that he's bad and I, per the ancient laws of the relational binary, am nice.

Before my son's band started, a 15-year-old soloist was on. "This is a song about the abusive relationship I was in with my best friend," she said. "I wrote it as a cry for freedom, and I sing it because now I am free." I laughed,

obviously. My daughter said in disbelief: “Why are you *laughing*?” I was World Cup guy in this dyad. Why? So many reasons!

Gen Z and their language: nothing can ever be mean, it always has to be abusive. Nothing can ever be painful, it always has to be traumatic. Nothing can ever stir up a bad memory, it always has to be triggering. Don’t get me wrong, I will always naturally side with the young, because now there are only two sides: snowflakes and boomers. The rest of us just have to pick a team. But I can’t be expected to not laugh. Abusive relationship with your best friend? The very idea.

She started singing. Her voice was miraculous. A guy called her the next Adele, and while it’s true that a lot of the open-mic kids go to the Brit school, the same school Adele went to, the comparison didn’t quite nail the sensibility. She had Judy Garland’s surprise right-hook, how-is-that-possible, fully adult voice coming out of a kid, coupled with the dense, surreal lyricism of Regina Spektor, maybe a trace of Ian Dury wit in there as well.

She elaborated in song a complex metaphor about venom and wine, how it was considered so critical that the young be protected from alcohol but not emotional toxicity, which was worse, actually – she said it much faster than that, and with chords – and finally, I tapped into some empathy. In fact, best-friendship is incredibly intense. It can be unbelievably manipulative and horrible. I still feel chary about the word “abuse”, which runs the risk of making the category so broad it loses definition – but this experience is real, and not unimportant.

There is always a drive in older generations to minimise the pain of younger ones, and I don’t get it, even though I do it. Second-wave feminists saying to the third wave: “Which bit about working motherhood are you complaining about? Try the 80s, when maternity leave was three weeks, which you also had to spend replastering the bathroom.” Survivors of the 90s interest-rate crisis saying: “You’re worried about 5%? Come back to me when you’ve weathered 16% and spent 10 years frozen in negative equity.” It makes no discursive sense, since “Who had it worse?” is a dead end and just generates resentment. But it makes emotional sense: empathising in a real way is quite hard work. It generates all these feelings such as impotence and sadness, and

I hate those. It's so much easier if you start from a baseline of: "Well, that is a young person, and they are flakier than us." Sometimes you need someone to sing it to you before you remember.

Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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OpinionWorld Cup 2022

LGBTQ+ fans are sad about Harry Kane's armband – but we're tired of being political footballs

Jon Holmes

In the two days of the tournament so far, Fifa has shown itself to be utterly uninterested in LGBTQ+ inclusion

'Harry Kane ended up wearing an armband approved by world football's governing body instead of the One Love armband.' The England captain during the World Cup match with Iran, in Qatar, 21 November 2022. Photograph: Foto Olimpik/NurPhoto/REX/Shutterstock

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About this content
Tue 22 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 22 Nov 2022 08.05 EST

During Monday's World Cup matches, the upper arms of various team captains took on a new significance. In Monday's match against Iran, England's Harry Kane wore an armband reading "no discrimination", in black and white – which, despite its stated message, meant more cold-shoulder treatment for lesbian, gay, bi and trans people at this World Cup.

When it was announced back in September that eight competing nations would support the One Love campaign, with multicoloured hearts appearing on captains' sleeves, the power of the gesture lay in allyship. "Wearing the armband together on behalf of our teams will send a clear message when the world is watching," said Kane.

The six colours being used for One Love aren't those of the Pride rainbow, but that made sense in the context of Qatar. After all, the criminalisation of same-sex love is not the only human rights issue in the host nation. But even then, One Love never did feel alright – and its weaknesses were ultimately exposed by Fifa's bullying tactics and England's risk-averse response.

Cracks in the coalition started to appear when the France skipper, Hugo Lloris, said last week that "respect" for Qatar's rules and culture meant he

was unlikely to wear the armband. He also suggested he was waiting for the final call from Fifa, which then stopped the remaining seven teams with the threat of sanctioning their skippers if they wore the campaign apparel.

The BBC football pundit Alex Scott wearing the One Love armband during the World Cup match between England and Iran, 21 November 2022. Photograph: BBC

Kane ended up wearing an armband approved by world football's governing body instead. Meanwhile, Virgil van Dijk, the Netherlands captain, sported a different design – but again, Fifa-approved and anodyne – when his team played Senegal on Monday afternoon.

I run a network called Sports Media LGBT+ for those working in sports media who are LGBTQ+ (we have more than 50 in our core group) and the ping of WhatsApp messages on Monday morning was testament to the way hearts were sinking.

We are collectively exasperated at our community being seen as political. Fifa's own statutes include sexual orientation in its non-discrimination, equality and neutrality clause, but it appears visibility and a reference to love is still a stretch too far. It's why Sports Media LGBT+ is among the

supporters of the No Pride Without All campaign launched by Three Lions Pride, the Rainbow Wall and Pride in Football.

Members of these LGBTQ+ fan groups have not travelled to Qatar – they did not receive adequate reassurances of security for fans, while they also wanted to show solidarity with their queer Qatari siblings.

They feel similarly deflated by the overruling of One Love. Their statement reads: "Fifa are guilty of crushing the basic human rights to freedom of speech and of expression that every single one of us should have without question."

Kane could, of course, have worn the One Love armband anyway, and taken the booking or whatever punishment Fifa intended to dish out – but, amid so much uncertainty just hours before kickoff, the FA erred on the side of caution.

The players and staff of the national teams involved were put in a near impossible position. Ultimately, Fifa's failings during the whole affair – exemplified by the insensitive manner in which its president, Gianni Infantino, referenced diversity in his address to the media on the eve of the tournament – has undermined the very values it professes to share, and that are written into the non-discrimination clause of its statutes.

Fifa seems to believe that by mandating usage of its own armbands, it is showing leadership. But with seven out of eight groups at this World Cup containing nations where homosexuality is still illegal, there simply isn't a shared commitment on LGBTQ+ inclusion.

The visibility of One Love might have at least started a specific conversation, and perhaps we shall discover that Fifa's actions have made it even more of a talking point.

The only person seen wearing the armband at England v Iran was, commendably, the BBC pundit Alex Scott, who has recently written in her autobiography about her previous relationship with her former teammate Kelly Smith.

She was representing LGBTQ+ people from the sidelines. It's where our community will no doubt continue to find itself during this men's World Cup.

- Jon Holmes is a sports journalist and the founder of Sports Media LGBT+

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The politics sketchRishi Sunak

Mystic Rish! predicts bold future where innovation trumps immigration

John Crace

PM tells business leaders all they have to do to make most of Brexit is to go forth and innovate

Rishi Sunak speaks at the CBI conference in Birmingham. Photograph: Simon Dawson/No 10 Downing Street

Mon 21 Nov 2022 14.34 ESTLast modified on Tue 22 Nov 2022 00.13 EST

On the plus side. Years spent turning a small fortune into a large one at Goldman Sachs have taught Rishi Sunak how to speak to the Confederation of British Industry. Not for him, the long digressions about Peppa Pig World that punctuated Boris Johnson's speech to the CBI conference this time last year. Rish! can talk their language: the language of management text books.

On the down side. Most of what the prime minister had to say was pure bollocks. In its own way, just as mindless as that of his predecessor. And by the time most of the delegates realised he had told them nothing of value – and certainly nothing they had really wanted to hear – he was long gone from the conference centre in Birmingham. Back in London, he was desperate to have a word with Jeremy Hunt, who everyone was now blaming for briefing the media that the government was finally about to do something sensible and negotiate a Swiss-style trade deal with the EU.

Still, at least Tony Danker, director general of the CBI, was happy. "You're wasted as prime minister," he enthused after Sunak had delivered his 10-minute "will that do?" jargon-filled monologue. "You should be one of us."

Rish! looked thrilled. There's nothing he likes more than being liked. To be accepted. To be loved. It was hard to know who was the most deluded. Sunak for imagining he had said something important. Or Danker for being blinded by bullshit. When he comes to, he might just realise the prime minister had ignored his demands entirely.

Danker had got the conference under way with a short keynote speech in which he had seemed totally at odds with the government. What the UK wanted was more immigration. Business simply didn't have the people to be fully productive. To grow the economy. And there had been nothing to address that in the previous week's autumn statement. Trade as a percentage of GDP was pitiful. Everyone in the EU was doing better. As a challenge to Sunak it could hardly have been any clearer.

Only Rish! wandered on stage and ignored him entirely. Looking and sounding every bit like a 10-year-old let loose on a MBA course, Sunak delivered a speech with only a passing reference to the everyday realities of modern business. "I know things are tough," he began, before promising to be bold, radical and decisive. Which were the last things he would actually prove to be.

What we needed was innovation. That alone would grow the economy. Innovation would bring down inflation. Innovation would lower the tax burden. It was, of course, pure nonsense. Desperate even. Last chance saloon. There was no way that innovation alone was going to get the UK through the next few years of recession.

Service industries and public services weren't closing or falling apart because of a lack of robots. What they were crying out for was more staff. And not just immigrants with PhDs on golden visas. We also needed people with the relevant qualifications who wanted to work.

But Rish! was on a roll. The new Brexit freedoms were going to allow us to innovate more. He couldn't say what those Brexit freedoms were, though. Largely because they were as yet unquantified. In the world of the Sunakered, Brexit is something to be taken on trust.

Nigel Farage believed in Brexit because he couldn't stand the sight of eastern Europeans doing the jobs Brits couldn't be bothered to do. The Convict believed in Brexit because he thought it was the easiest way of him becoming prime minister. Sunak was more of a purist. He believed in Brexit because he genuinely thought it would be good for the economy. And if he had more of an enquiring mind, he might have stopped to ask himself why the economy was in the worst shape of any G7 country six years after the UK voted to leave the EU.

Instead, though, Rish! has chosen to follow the mirage. To carry on dreaming the dream. He wants there to be Brexit benefits so much that they must eventually make themselves known. All we have to be is patient. And as he's running out of any real, tangible benefits on which to stake a claim, he's moved on to the mystical. Innovation in something as yet unknown will unlock a bold Brexit future.

By the time he wrapped up, Sunak had begun to sound positively unhinged. Though seemingly making sense to the CBI inner sanctum. Rish! promised that he would innovate to make the NHS world-beating. Just reasonably functional would be a start. Or perhaps he's just hoping to drive everyone into going private.

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"There will be no innovation without the skills to innovate," he concluded. Mystic Rish! Which is why we needed to tackle illegal immigration. What?

The media weren't so easily smooth-talked. What was wrong with more immigration? Why be ideological about it when business needed more staff? "Because," said Sunak. Because to be ideological was to be Brexit. If businesses just shut their eyes and innovated they would learn to operate on their own. We were in a post-human world. So what we really needed was to stop all the illegal migrants because that's what people had voted for.

Rish! went further. There would be no Swiss deal. Hunt was a dead man even for thinking it. There was no honour in coming to a deal with the EU. We would never align with any regulation made in Brussels. Even if it was in our own interests. To Brexit is to endure the purity of suffering. To rediscover our essential Britishness. We must not make any trade deals with anyone. Because to agree something with foreigners is a sign of weakness.

Then he went full-on bonkers. "You, business, are the innovators. You are the ones who must tell government what to do," he sang. Only the CBI had told him exactly what they wanted. They wanted to innovate with more immigration. Only Sunak had very loudly told them they couldn't have it. They had to change their pre-Brexit mindsets. Go forth and innovate. Go figure.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2022/nov/21/mystic-rish-predicts-bold-future-where-innovation-trumps-immigration

2022.11.22 - Around the world

- Coronavirus Beijing shuts parks and museums as China’s Covid cases rise
- United Arab Emirates Fears over oil producers’ influence with next host of Cop climate talks
- Shinzo Abe Japan begins inquiry into Unification church in wake of former PM's killing
- Sweden Greta Thunberg’s charity donates £158,000 to Sami campaign
- Jay Leno Comedian released from hospital after suffering serious burns in car fire

China

Beijing shuts parks and museums as China's Covid cases rise

In China's capital, cases have hit a record high, testing a recent government commitment to ease its zero-Covid policy

A woman drives a scooter across a nearly empty intersection in the central business district of Beijing. China recorded its first Covid deaths in six months at the weekend. Photograph: Kevin Frayer/Getty Images

Reuters
Mon 21 Nov 2022 23.24 EST

Beijing shut parks and museums on Tuesday, and more Chinese cities resumed mass testing for Covid-19, as China fights a fresh nationwide spike in cases that has deepened concerns about its economy.

China reported 28,127 new local cases nationally for Monday, nearing its daily infection peak in April, with cases in the southern city of Guangzhou and the southwestern municipality of Chongqing accounting for about half of the total. In the capital, Beijing, cases have hit a fresh record high, prompting calls for more residents to stay put.

There were two new deaths attributed to Covid-19, compared with three over the weekend, which were China's first since May.

The latest wave is testing recent adjustments China has made to its zero-Covid policy, which asks authorities to be more targeted in their clampdown measures and steer away from the widespread lockdowns and testing that have strangled the economy and frustrated its citizens.

Beijing on Monday warned that it was facing its most severe test of the pandemic so far and tightened rules for entering the city, requiring arrivals from elsewhere in China to undergo three days of Covid testing before they are permitted to leave their accommodation.

Many museums have been closed and on Tuesday, venues such as the Happy Valley amusement park and the city's vast Chaoyang Park, a popular spot with runners and picknickers, said they would shut due to the outbreak. Beijing reported 1,438 new local cases, up from 962 on Sunday.

Investors hope that China's move earlier this month to adopt more targeted approaches in enforcing zero-Covid curbs heralds more significant easing, but many analysts are cautioning against being too bullish.

"The real picture may not be as rosy as it seems," Nomura analysts said in a separate note, saying they only expected a reopening to be sped up after March next year, when the reshuffle of China's top leadership is completed.

"Reopening could be back and forth as policymakers may back down after observing rapid increases in cases and social disruptions. As such, local officials may be even more reluctant to be the initial movers when they try to sound out Beijing's true intentions," Nomura wrote.

Even after changes in targeted Covid approaches, China still has some of the world's strictest Covid restrictions, and the measures in Beijing and other cities have renewed investors' worries over the economy and prompted global stocks and oil prices to slip overnight.

Nomura analysts said on Tuesday their in-house index estimated that localities accounting for about 19.9% of China's total gross domestic product were under some form of lockdown or curbs, up from 15.6% last Monday.

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United Arab Emirates

Fears over oil producers' influence with UAE as next host of Cop climate talks

More than 630 fossil fuel lobbyists attended Cop27, and the Emirates, where Cop28 will be held, is a major oil and gas exporter

The UAE's president, Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed al-Nahyan (left), with the industry minister, Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber, at Cop27 in Sharm el-Sheikh. Photograph: UAE Presidential Court/Reuters

Fiona Harvey in Sharm el-Sheikh and Ruth Michaelson in Istanbul
Tue 22 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 22 Nov 2022 01.02 EST

Fears are growing among climate experts and campaigners over the influence of fossil fuel producers on global climate talks, as a key Gulf petro-state gears up to take control of the negotiations.

The United Arab Emirates, one of the world's biggest oil exporters, will hold the presidency of Cop28, the next round of UN climate talks that will begin

in late November next year.

Decisions taken at the Cop27 climate summit in Egypt, which finished on Sunday, showed the clear imprint of fossil fuel influence, according to people inside the negotiations. They said Saudi Arabia – an ally of Egypt outside the talks – played a key role in preventing a strong commitment to limiting temperature increases to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.

Many countries, including the UK and the EU, were bitterly disappointed. Alok Sharma, the UK president of last year's Cop26 summit, said in visible anger at the conclusion of Cop27 on Sunday morning: "Those of us who came to Egypt to keep 1.5C alive, and to respect what every single one of us agreed to in Glasgow, have had to fight relentlessly to hold the line."

There were also at least 636 fossil fuel lobbyists attending the Cop27 talks in Egypt, of whom 70 were linked to UAE oil and gas companies.

This has raised questions over what will happen next year. Yamide Dagnet, director for climate justice at the Open Society Foundations, warned: "We expect the theme for Cop28 to include energy, alongside resilience [to the impacts of climate breakdown], finance and the global stocktake. So we should not be naive and assume that fossil fuel lobbyists will relent."

Matthew Hedges, an expert on the Emirates' political economy, who was imprisoned and tortured for almost six months in the UAE capital, Abu Dhabi, during his doctoral research, said there could be a conflict of interests.

"The Emirates is a country with some of the world's largest oil reserves, with a desire to continue to expand and enhance fossil fuel production. There will be an effort to illustrate their engagement in renewables, particularly solar and nuclear, but there are questions to be asked about how you can engage in such conflicting actions," he said.

About 13% of the UAE's exports come directly from oil and gas, which represent about 30% of the country's GDP. Many of its other industries, including construction and travel, are also financially linked to fossil fuels.

At Cop27, Saudi and other Gulf states, along with Brazil and China, are also said to have stymied attempts to include a resolution to phase down fossil fuels in the final outcome. Hedges said: “The UEA and Saudi Arabia have a very similar view on fossil fuels. Both depend on their ability to process and export oil.”

Alden Meyer, senior associate at the E3G environmental thinktank, said the final stages of Cop27, where negotiations ran more than 30 hours beyond the final deadline and were severely criticised by participants as “untransparent, unpredictable and chaotic”, should provide a lesson in what can happen when a Cop host nation allows fossil fuel interests to wield too much influence.

“It’s hard to imagine running a worse process than the Egyptian presidency,” he said. “The spotlight at Cop28 is going to be on 1.5C, and UAE are going to have to deal with that. Hopefully they will be more neutral than the Egyptian presidency.”

Nick Mabey, a founding director of E3G, was more optimistic. “UAE is not Egypt, and not Saudi Arabia. They have very different interests and wish to position themselves differently,” he said. “They’ve said very different things about fossil fuels. That hopefully means they will have a more balanced approach.”

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UAE also has close relations with Russia, which is another source of concern. Since Vladimir Putin’s invasion of Ukraine in February, there has

been a steady flow of Russian cash to UAE, including partnerships on energy and an increase in imports of Russian oil to enable UAE to export more of its own.

Russia, a leading oil and gas producer, is the world's fourth biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, and has gas production facilities so leaky that they are a big source of the powerful greenhouse gas methane.

Paul Bledsoe, a former Clinton White House climate adviser now with the Progressive Policy Institute in Washington DC, said: "Russia is one of the nations that should be facing our opprobrium over Cop27. They should be ashamed of themselves, but I think Vladimir Putin is beyond saving. He has weaponised oil and gas for cash and for his geopolitical ends."

Simon Stiell, the UN climate chief, is said to be scrutinising the Cop processes, with a view to ensuring their transparency and smooth running. He will be under pressure to ensure that the process of negotiation is less susceptible to fossil fuel interests.

The Guardian approached the UAE multiple times at Cop27 without response. UAE had a large pavilion at Cop27, and a delegation of about 1,000 members, which was twice as many as the next biggest delegation, that of Brazil.

The UAE government has declared its intention to reach net zero by 2050, and has invested heavily in renewable energy. The International Renewable Energy Agency is headquartered in Abu Dhabi.

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Shinzo Abe

Japan begins inquiry into Unification church in wake of Shinzo Abe killing

Investigation will focus on church's finance and organisation amid public dismay at extent of its links to ruling party

Well-wishers in Japan gather at a state funeral for late former prime minister Shinzo Abe in September. An investigation into the Unification church has begun. Photograph: Keizo Mori/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Justin McCurry in Tokyo and agencies
Tue 22 Nov 2022 01.54 ESTLast modified on Tue 22 Nov 2022 05.17 EST

Japan's government has launched an investigation into the Unification church, five months after the former prime minister Shinzo Abe was shot dead, allegedly by a man with a longstanding grudge against the group.

The probe, announced on Tuesday, will focus on the church's finances and organisation, and could see it stripped of its legal status, media reports said.

Revelations of longstanding ties between members of the ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP) and the church – whose members are colloquially known as Moonies – have been greeted with dismay by the public and sent the prime minister Fumio Kishida's poll ratings into freefall.

The education minister, Keiko Nagaoka, said the church, which is officially known as the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, would be given until 9 December to respond to investigators' questions, including those related to its controversial fundraising activities.

It will then be left to a court to decide whether to remove the church's legal status and with it the tax exemptions that registered religious organisations enjoy in Japan. Reports said that it would be able to continue as a religious entity in that scenario.

Tetsuya Yamagami, who is accused of killing Abe while he was making an election speech in early July, has said he targeted the politician because he believed he was a supporter of the church, which he blamed for bankrupting his family.

Yamagami, who is undergoing a psychological evaluation that is expected to last until early next year, told police that his mother had donated large sums of the money to the church two decades ago.

Abe, whose grandfather, postwar prime minister Nobusuke Kishi, helped the Unification church establish a presence in Japan, sent a congratulatory video message to an event held by an affiliate of the church in 2021.

The church, a deeply conservative organisation founded by the Rev Sun Myung Moon in South Korea in 1954, has been accused of pressuring members in Japan to pay exorbitant sums for "spiritual" items that will purportedly relieve them of bad ancestral karma. The church, which is denounced as a cult by its critics, has denied any wrongdoing.

Earlier this month, Nagaoka noted that the church had been ordered to pay damages of at least 1.4bn yen ($9.8m) in 22 civil lawsuits. She said the

group needed to be investigated as it is “suspected of wielding great influence and inflicting widespread damage”.

Few expected Yamagami’s reported motive for killing Abe to have such dramatic political repercussions. However revelations that LDP politicians have appeared at Unification church events and accepted members’ help during election campaigns have rocked Kishida’s party, sending his approval ratings to the lowest level since he took office late last year.

In August, a party investigation revealed that about half of the LDP’s lawmakers had associated with the organisation.

Kishida’s approval rating has stayed at 27.7% for a third straight month, according to a poll by the Jiji news agency conducted in mid-November. The poll showed that 43.5% of respondents did not support the government.

Most voters also opposed Kishida’s decision to hold a state funeral for Abe in September.

His problems have been compounded by the recent resignations of three cabinet ministers. The justice minister, Yasuhiro Hanashi, quit last week after joking that he only made the news when he signed execution orders, while the economic revitalisation minister, Daishiro Yamagiwa, resigned last month over his links to the Unification church.

At the weekend, Minoru Terada, the internal affairs minister, resigned in connection to political funding scandals after media reports that Kishida was about to sack him.

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Indigenous peoples

Greta Thunberg's charity funds Sami fight against British mining company

Indigenous people in Sweden are battling UK firm over plans for iron-ore mine on reindeer-herding lands

The proposed mine in Swedish Sápmi has become a symbol of what has been condemned as disregard by big business and government for the protected status of Sami culture. Photograph: Carl-Johan Utsi/The Guardian

Daniel Boffey Chief reporter
Tue 22 Nov 2022 03.00 ESTLast modified on Tue 22 Nov 2022 06.41 EST

The charity founded in Greta Thunberg's name has donated £158,000 to cover the legal costs of Indigenous people in Sweden's Arctic north as they battle a British mining company over plans for an iron-ore mine on reindeer-herding lands.

Beowulf Mining, which has its headquarters in the City of London, was given approval in March by the Swedish government for excavation on an area used by the Sami community.

The government's decision appeared to bring to an end to a decade-long fight during which opposition to the open pit mine had attracted the support of Unesco and the leader of Sweden's national church.

Jon-Mikko Länta, the chair of the Jåhkågaska Sami community, which will be most affected, said a Greta Thunberg Foundation donation of 2m Swedish krona (£158,000), had provided them with the opportunity to continue to resist the mine.

He said: "At the moment we are trying to appeal against the Swedish government's decision to grant the concession as our legal team think it is not in line with international conventions on the rights of Indigenous people.

"It is a lot of work and expensive, which is why we are so grateful. We are hoping that if our appeal is successful that everything will go back to the Swedish government and we will at least get better terms."

The proposed Gállok mining site, located 28 miles (45km) outside the town of Jokkmokk in the county of Norrbotten in Swedish Sápmi, has become a symbol of the fight to protect Sami culture from big business and government.

Beowulf has been seeking approval for the mine since April 2013 but has consistently faced steep opposition, only strengthened by public relations missteps.

In 2014, the former chair Clive Sinclair-Poulton was filmed in a boardroom with a photograph of the site, telling investors: "One of the major questions I get is, 'What are the local people going to go ahead and say about this project?'. And I show them this picture and I say, 'What local people?'"

The Sami parliament, the representative body for people of indigenous heritage in Sweden, wrote last February to the Swedish government warning

the mine would destroy grazing areas and cut off the only viable migratory route for reindeer followed by the Jåhkågasska Sami community.

Sami communities to the west and east of the mine would also be hit through a reduction in viable grazing areas already under pressure from changes to the snow conditions attributed to the climate emergency, logging, power lines and the development of a hydroelectric dam, the parliament said.

Unesco, the UN's cultural protection wing, has spoken of a potentially "large, very large" impact on the Laponian area, the mountainous world heritage site 21 miles west of the mine.

The archbishop of Uppsala, Antje Jackelén, who heads the Church of Sweden, wrote an open letter to the Swedish prime minister, claiming that the open pit mine was "not existentially and spiritually sustainable".

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Despite the opposition, Sweden's business minister, Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson, approved the mine in March while stressing that he was imposing "far-reaching conditions" to minimise the impact on reindeer husbandry.

Beowulf is working on an environmental plan on the subject of which it is obliged to consult with the local communities. Sami representatives are due to meet the company's executives early in the new year.

Thunberg, who visited Jokkmokk last year, told the Guardian: "For the last 12 years, the Jåhkågaska Sami community has been defending its grazing

lands by resisting this iron-ore mine.

“By doing so they have been safeguarding what keeps us all safe: biodiverse forests, intact carbon stock as well as clean water and air. This case is far from unique – it is part of a pattern we see across the globe.

“Indigenous peoples living on the frontlines are guarding the land and thus defending many of the last intact ecosystems from destruction. Sweden is often keen on labelling itself as a ‘progressive country’ that fights for human rights. But the Swedish state has been colonising Sápmi for centuries, constantly searching for new natural resources on indigenous land they can exploit, often completely ignoring the position of the local Sami community.”

Beowulf did not respond to a request for comment.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/nov/22/greta-thunbergs-charity-donates-to-sami-campaign

Jay Leno

Jay Leno released from hospital after suffering serious burns in car fire

Comedian was injured while working underneath a car but is expected to make a full recovery

Leno was working underneath a car in Burbank, California, when he suffered serious burns. Photograph: John Salangsang/Invision/AP

PA in Los Angeles
Mon 21 Nov 2022 20.35 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 20.57 EST

Jay Leno has been released from hospital and is “looking forward to spending Thanksgiving with his family” after being treated for serious burns sustained in a recent petrol fire accident.

The former host of The Tonight Show was said to be thankful for the care he had received following the incident and “very appreciative of all the well

wishes".

The incident reportedly took place while Leno was working underneath a car in Burbank, California, last week.

The comedian suffered "deep second-degree" and possibly third-degree burns. But Dr Peter Grossman said he was "pleased with Jay's progress" and "optimistic" that Leno would make a full recovery.

"Jay would like to let everyone know how thankful he is for the care he received, and is very appreciative of all of the well wishes," read a statement from the Grossman Burn Centre, shared with US media.

"He is looking forward to spending Thanksgiving with his family and friends and wishes everyone a wonderful holiday."

The centre also shared a picture of Leno with several hospital staff, which showed visible burn scars on his face, neck and hand.

He previously said he was "okay" but in recovery after the incident.

"I got some serious burns from a gasoline fire," he said in a statement shared with the PA news agency.

"I am okay. Just need a week or two to get back on my feet."

The US presenter and comedian took over NBC's Tonight Show when longtime host Johnny Carson retired in 1992, and returned for another stint from 2010 to 2014, before handing over the reins to current host Jimmy Fallon.

Leno, 72, turned his love of cars into a CNBC series, Jay Leno's Garage, and now hosts a revival of the game show You Bet Your Life.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/media/2022/nov/21/jay-leno-burned-hospital-released-car-fire

Headlines saturday 26 november 2022

- London fire brigade Report finds toxic culture of misogyny, racism and bullying
- Live Russia-Ukraine war: Moscow probably firing cruise missiles with nuclear warheads removed, says UK
- Live Tunisia v Australia: World Cup updates
- England Team close on knockouts but draw tempers expectations
- ‘It’s the tea party, colonies thing’ New York soccer fans on the game

Firefighters

Report finds misogyny, racism and bullying at London fire brigade

Female firefighters have been groped, beaten and had their helmets filled with urine, review finds

Nazir Afzal highlighted the high volume of complaints by women in the UK's biggest fire service. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

Rajeev Syal Home affairs editor
Fri 25 Nov 2022 14.21 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 03.31 EST

Incidents of misogyny, racism and bullying have been exposed by an independent report on the culture at the UK's largest firefighting and rescue organisation.

Female firefighters have been groped, beaten and had their helmets filled with urine, a review of the London fire brigade has found.

Some male firefighters who visited women's homes for safety visits go through drawers looking for underwear and sex toys, a female firefighter told the report.

In one incident logged in the report, a black firefighter had a noose put over his locker and in another, a Muslim colleague had bacon and sausages stuffed in his pockets and a terrorist hotline sign posted on his locker.

Nazir Afzal, the former chief prosecutor who conducted the review, has labelled the brigade "institutionally misogynist and racist".

In some watches there appeared to be a deep resistance to women being firefighters, and senior figures explained that the approach of male colleagues was to "treat you badly and hope to get rid of you".

Afzal said he hoped the review would be a "turning point" so that all firefighters could enjoy dignity at work and not have to run a gauntlet of abuse from colleagues.

"The actions of some firefighters are bringing a great institution into disrepute and these people do not belong in modern public services. When I sit before women explaining that they fear for their lives when they go to dangerous incidents because they have to depend on their colleagues, and it's impossible to do this when the same colleagues treat them like dirt, then I despair," he said.

One female firefighter told the review that there is a "banter" culture that allows female firefighters to become the target of jokes.

"There will be some people who don't understand the nature of bullying in this job.

"Your life depends on your colleagues. You have to rely on them to get out safely and how can you do that when you know they think so little of you and treat you like dirt?" she said.

She said she advises female friends not to allow male firefighters in their houses for fire safety checks.

“I know what they do. They go through women’s drawers looking for underwear and sex toys. They will spend hours bragging about the dildo they found and refer to the women as sluts,” she said.

The review says: “On countless occasions, stories of racial slurs being casually used were related to us by people of colour. At its worst, particularly in relation to Muslim firefighters, this would manifest itself in constant mockery, baiting and bullying. We heard from one firefighter who had been diagnosed with PTSD as a result.”

More than 4,500 of the London fire brigade’s 5,000 staff are firefighters, but only 425 are women and slightly more than 500 are from ethnic minorities.

Afzal’s review, completed with a team of six experts, took place over the past 12 months, during which they visited stations, gathered submissions and interviewed staff at all levels. The report, titled the Independent Cultural Review of London Fire Brigade, is based on the experiences of more than 2,000 members of staff.

The report was commissioned after the death of Jaden Francois-Esprit, a trainee at Wembley fire station who took his own life aged 21 in August 2020.

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An inquest last year heard that Francois-Esprit believed he was being bullied at work because of his ethnicity. He was teased about the Caribbean food he brought in for lunch. He had made 16 requests to be transferred to another station.

Afzal said: “Jaden’s position was not unique. We have spoken to others that are equally isolated and harbouring suicidal thoughts. It’s wholly unacceptable that public servants are being stripped of their dignity and this review must be the starting point to end this toxic culture and start building a more supportive environment that values all staff. That would be a fitting legacy for Jaden.”

The review contains 21 recommendations, including the introduction of body-worn video by firefighters, a historic review of complaints about racism, misogyny and bullying over the past five years, and secure facilities for all women in stations.

The mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, said the review should be a “watershed moment” for the London fire brigade and said he supported the fire commissioner, Andy Roe, in setting it up.

“The fire commissioner knows he has my full support in making the significant and necessary changes to root out all those found to be responsible for sexism, racism, misogyny, homophobia, bullying or harassment – and to support members of staff to speak out.

“Some of that work has already started with a new independent team investigating complaints and a pledge to scrutinise firefighter interactions with the public through body-worn video. But more must be done and at pace,” he said.

A statement from LFB said it would take immediate steps including piloting bodycams, a zero-tolerance approach to discrimination, harassment and bullying, an external complaints service and a new brigade-wide leadership structure.

Roe said: “Anyone accused of discrimination, harassment and bullying will be suspended following a risk assessment, pending immediate investigation and dismissed if the accusation is upheld.

“The report highlighted a lack of confidence in the brigade’s current complaints procedure and showed that staff didn’t feel safe speaking up. The brigade is introducing an external complaints service while internal

processes are improved. Staff will be able to use the service to report poor behaviour rather than having to report it internally," he said.

"This report highlights many issues within the brigade, and it also highlights examples of completely unacceptable behaviour from some of our staff when dealing with the public.

"These staff jeopardise not just the trust placed in us, but the safety of those who now might be dissuaded from requesting our help."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/25/report-finds-misogyny-racism-and-bullying-at-london-fire-brigade

Ukraine war liveUkraine

Russia-Ukraine war live: Zelenskiy says Kyiv residents ‘need more protection’ as temperature drops – as it happened

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Skip to key events

World Cup 2022

World Cup 2022

- Duke header keeps Socceroos hopes alive
- Win is Australia's first World Cup victory in 12 years
- The best images from the Socceroos must win match

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Jonathan Howcroft

Sat 26 Nov 2022 07.22 ESTFirst published on Sat 26 Nov 2022 03.30 EST

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  Kick-off!
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  Tunisia XI
- 23h ago
  Preamble

Mitchell Duke celebrates after scoring for Australia. Photograph: Mike Hewitt/FIFA/Getty Images

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Australia XI
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  Tunisia XI
- 23h ago
  Preamble

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19h ago07.22 EST

Summary

Jonathan Howcroft

Thanks for joining me today on an historic occasion for Australian football. Stay tuned for live coverage of the day's remaining three matches with Poland v Saudi Arabia up next.

I'll see you back here soon.

-
-

19h ago07.19 EST

Harry Souttar was a giant out there, literally and metaphorically. He's had a word to Australian TV.

> It feels great, it was an absolute battle out there. Both teams going at it. We were hanging on a little bit towards the last ten, 15 minutes. But all the lads put their bodies on the line, making tackles, making the blocks. It was just an amazing feeling and that relief to go over the line and to get three points. We know we could have played better in the France game, we were disappointed with ourselves and the manner of the goals we conceded. But I think everyone defending to really put that right. Yes, just so happy we got through.
>
> I don't think I was on the ball much, just trying to defend the box. And every single one of us did that exceptionally well. Coming for crosses, taking pressure off the back four, the midfield dropping back for wing-backs, the wingers took again doing unbelievable and so pleased for everyone. The players, the staff, please for the manager.

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19h ago07.15 EST

Here's **Emma Kemp's** match report hot off the press.

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19h ago07.14 EST

Here's Arnie:

> I'm proud of the boys for showing that great fighting Aussie spirit. We were in their faces all the time. I hope we made the nation very proud.

> Look, the other night, we played against the current world champions and the boys had the same effort level. The effort level was incredible. Again, when the doubters hate us, bring it on.
>
> After the first game I said it was the best friendly we could have had against France. Because you make a small mistake and you get punished. And a lot of those mistakes were removed tonight and I could not be more proud of the boys. Incredible effort. The Australian fans here, great support. And now we move forward.

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19h ago07.11 EST

France still top group D on three points but it's now on goal difference from Australia. Denmark and Tunisia are languishing on one point with both still yet to play the French.

It's looking bad for the Eagles of Carthage from here, and Denmark will have added motivation for their clash with the World Cup holders later today.

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19h ago07.06 EST

Mitch Duke is so happy he's got tears in his eyes.

> No words, such a big moment for my family and the supporters. It is the best feeling in the world, but try not to get too caught up because there is one more game to win and get out of the group.
>
> The best moment of my life and my football career, there are no words. Just so happy and proud of the boys. We made so many sacrifices to get here. It is the best feeling in the world.

Honestly, I will go to war with these boys. A huge shift by the lads, keeping the clean sheet and getting a result, we fought until the end, everyone gave 110% and that is all you can ask. We showed the Aussie spirit and we got the result.

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19h ago07.04 EST

2 - Australia have kept just their second clean sheet at the #FIFAWorldCup, and first in 15 games since a goalless draw with Chile in 1974. Daz. pic.twitter.com/vh8AoWecxc

— OptaJoe (@OptaJoe) November 26, 2022

-
-

19h ago07.04 EST

Australia win their first World Cup game since beating Serbia 2-1 at the 2010 World Cup. They have since gone 7 games without a World Cup win.

They pick up an important three points against Tunisia.
pic.twitter.com/FBSsJ0CAjR

— Statman Dave (@StatmanDave) November 26, 2022

-
-

19h ago07.04 EST

A victory for Total Bloke-Ball

— Barney Ronay (@barneyronay) November 26, 2022

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19h ago07.03 EST

Harry Souttar was phenomenal. That was the performance of his life. Aaron Mooy and Jackson Irvine were combative and smart in midfield. Mat Ryan was authoritative in goal. Craig Goodwin, Mitch Duke and Matt Leckie were tireless. A banner night for Arnold's famous Australian DNA and the Aussie battlers. Expect to win, done done done.

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19h ago07.01 EST

It wasn't the prettiest match. Quality football was at a premium. But Australia were resolute, scrapped from start to finish, and deserved the three points. What a moment for Graham Arnold as he brings his charges into a huddle with Martin Boyle on crutches in the middle.

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19h ago06.59 EST

Just Australia's third ever win at the World Cup finals. It keeps the Socceroos alive going into the final group game against Denmark and heaps pressure on the Danes who face France later.

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19h ago06.58 EST

Full-time: Tunisia 0-1 Australia

A famous victory for the Socceroos!

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19h ago06.57 EST

90+5 mins: Australia have dropped deep, Tunisia are lumping long diagonal balls into the final third. None of them cause any threat to a Socceroo rearguard action that is so committed.

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19h ago06.56 EST

90+4 mins: Superb claim from Ryan, commanding his area and plucking a cross out of the sky on the penalty spot with bodies all around him. Tunisia running out of time.

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19h ago06.54 EST

90+3 mins: Tunisia take an age to feed the ball into the box and when they do Australia have enough bodies to snuff out any danger. Mooy then does superbly to clear, forcing Sassi into accepting a yellow card for a deliberate handball.

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19h ago06.53 EST

90+2 mins: What have Tunisia got left? Not enough to get through Harry Souttar who stands tall for the umpteenth time.

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19h ago06.52 EST

90 mins: Australia have done so well all night putting bodies on the line and committing to winning the second and third challenges. Aaron Mooy especially has excelled in a blue collar midfield display.

Six minutes of injury time.

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19h ago06.51 EST

88 mins: Tunisia are building. Kechrida gets free down the right and his pullback finds Khazri but his effort is weak and straight at Ryan.

Khazri reacts after missing a shot at goal saved by Ryan. Photograph: Jewel Samad/AFP/Getty Images

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Updated at 06.59 EST

19h ago06.50 EST

87 mins: Sliti comes again, this time exchanging passes and making his way into the box but there's no clear shooting opportunity. A cross-shot from the left is then drilled straight at Ryan.

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19h ago06.49 EST

86 mins: Souttar again! Tunisia threaten to break in behind but the Aberdonian stretches out one of his go-go Gadget legs and interrupts Khenissi at full speed.

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Updated at 06.49 EST

19h ago06.47 EST

85 mins: Souttar again brilliant stepping up from the back to nip the ball off the feet of Khazri allowing Mooy to clear.

More subs for Australia with Goodwin and Leckie making way for Awer Mabil and Keanu Baccus.

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20h ago06.46 EST

84 mins: Montassar Talbi with a rare shot on target, but it was straight at Ryan from a long way out and the Australian skipper handles it with aplomb.

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20h ago06.45 EST

82 mins: Tunisia work a couple of passes down the left to generate enough space for a cross that Souttar smuggles behind. Khazri whips in a dangerous corner but the Socceroos are committed at the near post. Souttar is there again to snuff out danger with Tunisia punishing a soft turnover in midfield.

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20h ago06.42 EST

79 mins: Tunisia try route one, but it's meat and drink for a side schooled in Fitba corner. Souttar wins the aerial battle then Mooy mops up on the ground and sets up some nice ball retention. Everything is starting to get a bit leggy and stretched but Tunisia continue to offer little imagination or wit.

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Updated at 06.42 EST

20h ago06.40 EST

77 mins: Australia shift the ball around nicely in midfield. Mooy and Irvine have linked well all night, and Goodwin and Behich have always offered an outlet on the left. Leckie tries to keep the move alive but in his desperation he feels the effect of cramp and goes to ground clutching his toes before the trainer comes on with some pickle juice.

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20h ago06.37 EST

75 mins: Dangerous cross from the right from Tunisia that Rowles can only flick on to Msakni, hit he can't react quickly enough to divert an effort on target.

Degenek on for Karacic for Australia at right fullback.

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20h ago06.36 EST

73 mins: Mooy flashes a half-volley just over the angle of post and bar.

More changes for Tunisia with Bronn and Jebali replaced by Taha Khenissi and Wajdi Kechrida.

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20h ago06.34 EST

71 mins: Australia inches away from a second! Behich does well winning possession then finding Goodwin, who helps the ball onto Maclaren in the channel. His cross flies across the face of goal but the onrushing Leckie can't execute his slide in time.

Tunisia go down the other end and Msakni draws a sharp save from Ryan at his near post. The ball isn't cleared fully and another effort arrives from range but straight into Ryan's breadbasket.

Leckie reacts after missing a scoring opporunity. Photograph: Miguel Medina/AFP/Getty Images

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Updated at 07.04 EST

20h ago06.32 EST

70 mins: Maclaren's first touch is a cheap turnover, but Hrustic's is a lovely piece of skill to get behind the Tunisian defence, but he is obstructed and unlucky not to be awarded a free-kick. Tunisia are now the side dominating possession, but it's slow ball with plenty of sideways passes and Australia's defence alert to step up whenever anything is played vertically.

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20h ago06.30 EST

68 mins: Now it is time for Tunisia's No 10, Wahbi Khazri. He gets the final quarter, replacing Aïssa Laïdouni.

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20h ago06.28 EST

67 mins: Tunisia link a series of passes neatly through the lines and a cute backheel fashions a shooting opportunity for Msakni but his effort is blocked by a forest of bodies in the box. Abdi then tries to slide in Jebali but Souttar is too strong.

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20h ago06.26 EST

65 mins: Ali Abdi has his name taken for pulling back Irvine with Australia threatening to break from midfield.

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20h ago06.25 EST

64 mins: Jamie Maclaren and Ajdin Hrustic come on for the Socceroos. Mitch Duke and Riley McGree make way. Both put in committed shifts and can be proud of their efforts.

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20h ago06.24 EST

63 mins: I wonder why Wahbi Khazri hasn't seen any action yet? I think plenty of Tunisians are asking the same question.

> 😶😶 pic.twitter.com/TvDljSjeqp
>
> — Tunisie Football (@tunisiefootball) November 26, 2022

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20h ago06.23 EST

62 mins: Awful from Sassi the sub. Tunisia shift the ball quickly into the final third but Sassi has no patience to build an attack, instead larruping a wild swipe from distance miles wide.

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20h ago06.22 EST

60 mins: Nice skill on the left from Msakni but his cross is too close to Ryan who slaps clear. Abdi then tries to feed the ball into the box but Souttar is positioned well to head away.

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20h ago06.20 EST

58 mins: Australia have absorbed Tunisia's reaction after half-time and settled back into their game. Jalel Kadri needs to shake things up a bit or this result will slide out of his reach.

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20h ago06.18 EST

56 mins: Tunisia now playing the ball neatly in the middle third with Australia dropping off into a low block. Still the Socceroos find the turnover, Leckie battles hard to retain possession, Irvine carries the ball forward, Goodwin drills a tempting cross along the six-yard box but there's nobody on hand to finish.

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20h ago06.16 EST

54 mins: Another free-kick to Tunisia clipped into the box but cleared by Australia. The second balls all falling their way and with it more time in possession.

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20h ago06.14 EST

52 mins: All the second balls seemed to land Australia's way in the opening half but Tunisia have evened the ledger since the break. The Socceroos are being drawn out of their shape and into some rash challenges. From one, a free-kick results and Ryan has to be out smartly off his line to punch clear. Tunisia continue to push for an equaliser and now they have some momentum in midfield the crowd is back in the game.

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20h ago06.12 EST

50 mins: Superb chasing back from Leckie on the right to help out his fullback and earn a free-kick with Tunisia looking dangerous. Australia take advantage and on the counter McGree is canny to free Goodwin on the left and his cross is dangerous in the box but there's no navy shirt to put the chance away.

Leckie battles for possession with Abdi. Photograph: Catherine Ivill/Getty Images

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Updated at 06.16 EST

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World Cup 2022

England close on World Cup knockouts but USA draw tempers expectations

- Lack of imagination mars turgid stalemate in Qatar
- Side can afford to lose to Wales by margin of up to three goals

Mason Mount shows England's nerviness on a night when Harry Kane (right) admitted: 'We weren't clinical.' Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

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About this content

Sean Ingle at Al Bayt Stadium
@seaningle
Fri 25 Nov 2022 17.47 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 04.30 EST

England's footballers are on the verge of the World Cup knockout stages despite a turgid goalless draw against the USA. But their lack of imagination and guile will surely temper expectations about whether they have the class to go all the way in Qatar.

The good news for Gareth Southgate's side is that they only need to avoid losing to Wales by more than three goals on Tuesday to progress to the last 16. They know, too, that in almost every major tournament they are liable to put in the odd whiffer of a performance. But the loud boos from England supporters at the end suggested that this was a proper stinker.

Gone was the free-flowing football that blitzed Iran 6-2. That performance was so unusually bold and aggressive that Southgate was universally lauded for taking the handbrake off his young side. Here, though, England's manager was altogether more cautious. The gear stick was pushed into reverse. The handbrake yanked back up.

Quick Guide

Qatar: beyond the football

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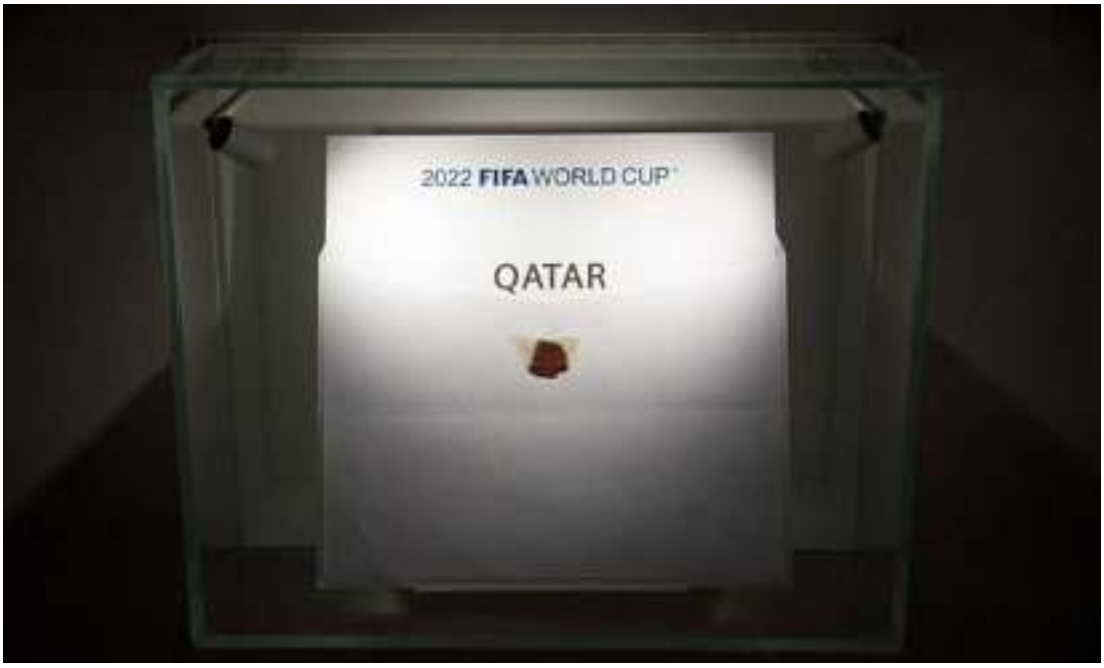

This is a World Cup like no other. For the last 12 years the Guardian has been reporting on the issues surrounding Qatar 2022, from corruption and human rights abuses to the treatment of migrant workers and discriminatory laws. The best of our journalism is gathered on our dedicated Qatar: Beyond the Football home page for those who want to go deeper into the issues beyond the pitch.

Guardian reporting goes far beyond what happens on the pitch. Support our investigative journalism today.

Photograph: Tom Jenkins

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Even so, England remain on top Group B on four points, one ahead of Iran and they remain firmly in the box seat to qualify for a knockout tie against either the Netherlands, Ecuador or Senegal.

“It wasn’t our best performance for sure,” admitted their captain, Harry Kane, afterwards. “We weren’t clinical. But overall we were playing a tough team, and we move on.

“It’s a draw at a World Cup. No game is easy. People thought after our first performance we would landslide every team, but that’s not the case. It leaves us in a really good position.”

England started brightly enough and had the best early chance when Kane’s shot was blocked by defender Walker Zimmerman. But the US team became increasingly assertive, with midfielder Weston McKennie shooting over from the penalty spot and the Chelsea forward Christian Pulisic hitting the bar.

If Southgate was hoping for a response in the second half, he was to prove sadly disappointed, even if the introduction of Jack Grealish briefly galvanised his side.

However the England manager was upbeat afterwards, saying: “It was exactly the sort of game I thought it would be, a good opponent who were very athletic. Some of the quality in the final third could have been a little bit better, but we’ve shown great resilience to defend against opponents who kept asking questions. We’re not going to roll through a tournament, and sweep through everybody without having nights like that.”

Wembley's arch was lit in rainbow colours before the game. Photograph: Andrew Couldridge/Action Images/Reuters

Before the match the Football Association lit the Wembley arch in rainbow colours to protest at not being able to wear the OneLove armband, which was designed to be a symbol of inclusivity and tolerance at a tournament in a country where LGBTQ+ community is criminalised.

The FA's chief executive, Mark Bullingham, also spoke for the first time about how unspecified threats from Fifa, football's governing body, had stopped Kane wearing the armband against Iran.

He explained to ITV: "On the day of the game they came here with five officials and they ran us through a scenario where at a minimum anyone wearing the armband would be booked and face disciplinary action on top of that."

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Bullingham said that the FA had backtracked on their initial pledge after being warned that any player wearing the armband could face a ban of multiple matches. “We are frustrated, we’re angry, we thought it was outrageous the way this was handled,” he added. “We wanted to show our support to the community and were not able to do so.”

However Bullingham was criticised by the former England striker Ian Wright, who said that the team should have gone through with their protest, regardless of Fifa’s threats. “It’s a valid point of view,” Bullingham said. “We felt that we couldn’t put the players in that position – the World Cup which many of them had dreamt of playing in since they were young – suddenly they may not be able to play a part in it.”

'We're equals': USA and England fans in London react to World Cup draw – video

Meanwhile despite Fifa reiterating its promise that anyone wearing rainbow-coloured attire would be allowed into matches, a BBC cameraman wearing a rainbow watch strap was initially stopped by security and refused entry, while a Times reporter with a rainbow wristband was also questioned.

However, England fan Sayed Tangam, an IT worker from Croydon, said that he had been impressed by the kindness of the Qatari hosts. “The way everyone has behaved to us has been exemplary,” he said. “The four of us have booked a service apartment for $400 a night and we plan to watch three games in the four days we are here.” His friend Raja Hyderali, an IT consultant from Orpington, insisted that England still had the side to progress deep into the competition. “Player for player we have a stronger squad than in 2018, and if Kane stays fit, we can go really far,” he said.

True. But this will be a night from which England will want to quickly reset – and forget.

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World Cup 2022

‘It’s the tea party, colonies thing’: New York soccer fans on USA v England

A nil-nil result proved little – except that the outcome is profoundly un-American

Fans in Times Square watching the match between England and the USA. Photograph: Andrew Kelly/Reuters

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About this content

Edward Helmore in New York

Fri 25 Nov 2022 18.21 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 04.07 EST

The limitations of the "special relationship" were on display during England's first round World Cup game with USA, as soccer fans in New York grappled with split allegiances to European club sports and the US national team.

In the end, a nil-nil result proved little – except that the outcome is profoundly un-American. "A tie is like kissing your sister," said David Dunbar, a professor of New York history at Columbia University. "In America, you've got to win. We don't do well with dichotomies, and ambiguity is a bad word – it makes us worried."

At a packed-out English bar Dog & Bone on Manhattan's Third Avenue many said the game, in which an England win would have guaranteed a place in the second round while a loss for the US would have made further progress in Qatar difficult, inspired mixed feelings – but only to a degree.

Football fans watching the World Cup game between the USA and England in a New York bar. Photograph: Edward Helmore

“Every team always needs to win. You can’t go into this with a mixed mindset because qualification is more assured,” said Kevin Clarke, a Chelsea supporter from London, who said he had seen the domestic game becoming more popular in the US.

As in any match-up between two countries with closely intertwined histories, historical score-settling beneath expressions of competitive goodwill could also be inferred.

“I’d like to see England lose more than I’d like to America win,” said Leicester City fan Jordan Fox, 19, before the 90 minutes was up. “It’s the whole tea party, colonies thing. You guys never said sorry, so I’d be pleased if it never ‘comes home’ again.”

“It felt like a loss after the 6-2 win [against Iran],” said Scott Robertson, proprietor of the Dog & Bone. Southgate’s team, he added, didn’t play to win, “he played not to lose”. But at least it had been good for trade. “As a business owner, as long as we both go through, I’m happy.”

A win for the US would have established that the game is called soccer, not football, said Kamila Bergaliyeva, a medical student from Kazakhstan. Bergaliyeva had not expected a USA victory.

“We’re here knowing we’re probably going to lose. But if we win we want to be here for it,” she said, adding that it was fun to see so many British fans dropping their reputation for emotional reserve. “Very out of character,” Bergaliyeva noted.

'We're equals': USA and England fans in London react to World Cup draw – video

Next door, at Fitzgerald’s Pub, patrons were almost exclusively pro-US. As the scoreless half-time whiskey approached Dunbar said the outcome of the game matters more to the US “because you guys have been doing it for so long – it’s your national game”.

Dunbar’s father had played for the American team in the year the US last beat England. And that was in 1950. “The subculture of soccer in America is now permanent,” he added. “The US played well, and we’re a young team that’s trying to establish itself for the future. We’re looking four years ahead.”

A win now against Iran is essential for the USA to get through – a match that will come with its own historical and political complications.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from https://www.theguardian.com/football/2022/nov/25/its-the-tea-party-colonies-thing-new-york-soccer-fans-on-the-usa-v-england

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Kevin De Bruyne

Interview

‘After a while it eats you up’: Kevin De Bruyne on dealing with the spotlight, life at home and whether he gets paid too much

Simon Hattenstone

The Manchester City midfielder – currently leading Belgium’s golden generation in their last stab at World Cup glory – is football’s quiet genius. He gives a rare look at the family life of a Premier League superstar

Kevin De Bruyne with his wife, Michèle LaCroix, and children Suri, Mason and Rome. Photograph: David Yeo/The Guardian

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About this content

Sat 26 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 13.34 EST

Confession. I'm a Manchester City fan. Another confession. Kevin De Bruyne is my favourite player. In 30 years of journalism, I've never interviewed a City player. Don't meet your heroes, they say. The whole thing is discombobulating. De Bruyne – one of the world's great players – has agreed to a rare interview. But there's a caveat. If you talk to me, he says,

you also talk to my wife, my kids, you do it at our home and you get to know us all. Usually, it's the opposite – you don't talk to my family, you don't come to my home, it's all about the work rather than the private life. Strange.

We meet a few weeks before the start of the World Cup. He's beginning to think about it. But in typical De Bruyne fashion he dispenses with diplomacy and tells it as it is. No, he's not happy about it being in Qatar. Yes, it is a distraction from the Premier League. No, he doesn't think Belgium have much chance of winning.

Now he's out there hoping to prove himself wrong.

At his best on the pitch, virtually everything is channelled through him. Often he will start a move by winning the ball and running with it in the same movement. Though he plays in the centre, he sets up goals by overlapping on the wing to put in crosses of such pace, swerve and accuracy that they are impossible to defend. And while goal-scoring isn't his main thing (he prefers to assist), last season, when he scored four goals against Wolves, commentator Alistair Mann quivered: "Kevin, stop it! I'm running out of superlatives for you!"

In 2020, De Bruyne became the first City men's player to win the prestigious PFA Player of the Year, and won it again the following season. In September, he was named the world's best passer in the video game Fifa 23. Earlier this month, the game Football Manager 2023 ranked him the greatest player in the world.

De Bruyne doesn't run with the football pack. We never see him out getting into trouble. In fact, we pretty much never see him. Which makes today even stranger. But it also makes a kind of sense. "Away from football, it's all about family," he says. "This is my life."

Michèle Lacroix, AKA Mrs De Bruyne, greets me at the door. She apologises for still being in her bathrobe, shows me in and makes coffee. The house is everything you'd expect: huge driveway, extension the size of a small hotel, artworks galore, carpets like quicksand. Coco, the white-grey

cat, is so perfectly coordinated, you wonder whether she came with the furnishings. Yet it's also homely. Toys spill out of the playroom and De Bruyne's office obviously doubled up as the home-schoolroom in the pandemic (one wall is plastered with spelling tests).

De Bruyne is nowhere to be seen, so Lacroix introduces me to Coco, the three children and her mother. We chat and drink, and it's only after a while that I realise De Bruyne is also now in the kitchen. He is wearing a brown tracksuit, has a wispy gingerish beard and bears more than a passing resemblance to his cartoon compatriot Tintin. He glides through his house like a ghost: if he hadn't shaken my hand and introduced himself, I probably wouldn't have registered his presence. He floats off to the fridge, takes out slices of white Hovis, makes himself a mustard sandwich, heats up green soup and starts eating. All without a murmur. De Bruyne is a paradox. He is both famously shy and famously outspoken. A number of stories shape the mythology around him. The first is that at eight he turns to his father and says he wants to leave his club, KVV Drongen, because the training sessions at Ghent, another local club, are better. Second, now playing for Ghent, he gets so enraged when told off for not helping to clear up the pitch that he grabs one of the posts and refuses to let go. Three adults try to pull him away but fail, and his coach, Frank De Leyn, has to stay with him because De Bruyne tells him he is planning to hold on all night.

> I compare my pay to a singer at a concert. Yeah, it's a lot of money, but is it too much? It's not a popular answer, but no

Fast forward a few years for another classic tale: De Bruyne is on the verge of the first team at rival Belgian club Genk, living there with a foster family during the week, when they decide, two years in, that they don't want him to live with them any more because he doesn't fit in; he's too quiet. Finally, there is the time, aged just 20, when he gives a half-time interview ripping into his Genk teammates for shirking: "I'm ashamed of them. I suggest that those who don't have a desire to play just leave," he says at the time.

His management team are also here today and he's talking to them in a quiet, flat voice. It's so understated you almost tune out. Then you hear what he's saying. Asked if Belgium can win the World Cup, he says, "No chance,

we're too old." It's only seven months ago that Belgium were ranked No 1 in the world. De Bruyne says that because the tournament is being played in Qatar in mid-season, it doesn't feel like a real World Cup. One of his reps says it must be a dream playing with Erling Haaland, the extraordinarily prolific striker at City. "Ach, it's like any forward." Even he thinks his response is underwhelming. "He is so quick, though," he adds.

He finishes his soup, cuts up some blackberries and grapes for baby Suri, who is sitting in her highchair having her hair primped for the photoshoot. He says his childhood was so different from that of his children. His father worked in a factory painting trains, his mother was a housewife, and he describes his background as "lower-middle class". What was he like at school? "I was OK. Smart enough to know how much I needed to do and to finish it. I left at 18 with a diploma."

I ask why so many European footballers seem better educated than their British counterparts. Perhaps the difference is languages, he says. "There are a lot of people from different countries who speak two or three languages, where English players usually only speak English. I come from a country where by 13 you are studying Dutch, French and English." With languages, perhaps comes wisdom and humility – an ability to put yourself in the shoes of others, a knowledge that your way is not the only way. He smiles. The Belgian way was never going to be the only way, he says. "Everybody in Belgium always watches English TV anyway!"

I tell him I recently watched footage of him playing as a young boy and his style has hardly changed. Even if you blocked out his face, it could only be De Bruyne. "I know!" He takes out his phone and compares two photographs. "This is from a couple of months ago when I scored against Bournemouth. Look at the way I kick the ball. And this is a picture of me shooting when I was a kid. Identical! Same technique!"

Taking on Wales in the Uefa Nations League in September. Photograph: Yves Herman/Reuters

Are Mason, six, and Rome, almost four, promising footballers? “No,” he says. “They don’t play.” Are they not interested? “I don’t know,” he says, as if he’s never considered it. “They like to go to the football. My oldest plays piano a bit and likes to run. He’s a good runner.”

I ask about the famous stories. Did you really cling to the goalpost and refuse to budge? “I think the stories are a bit made up.” So it’s not true? “I don’t remember it. It could be true!” Does it sound like him ? He grins. “I was a little bit stubborn, yeah. I let most things go, but when I do say something I am outspoken. I know now when you speak as a teenager or a kid to an adult with an opinion, people don’t like it … even if it’s true.”

Was that the case when you suggested your Genk teammates were not trying? De Bruyne pinkens. He often flushes like this – when he’s embarrassed, when he’s upset on the pitch and when he’s made one of his superhuman runs. “Yes! The problem is the fans like that and other people like that, but the team doesn’t.”

A hairdresser is here to give everyone a trim before the photoshoot. While it’s De Bruyne’s turn, I chat to Lacroix. She’s a model, a social influencer

(with more than 350,000 Instagram followers) and she recently started a Flemish podcast called Secret Society with a few Belgian girlfriends. Her parents are physiotherapists and she wanted to be a doctor when she was at school. “I never thought my life would look like this. Getting a degree was my main goal then.” When she was 17 and De Bruyne was 21, they started dating. Apart from it being her husband’s career, she has no interest in football and certainly had no ambition to be a footballer’s wife. Can she see what makes him a special player? “I don’t know a lot about football, but I think he sees things before the others maybe. He’s always one step ahead?”

She’s encouraging Suri to finish her fruit. “Everyone thinks she’s called Surrey,” she says. “‘*Ello, Surrey!*’” She does a good impression of a cockney. Rome is building a racetrack on his mini computer. He shows me how to do it, but I can’t keep up. Mason asks for a go of my tape recorder. “I’m going to interview you. What’s it like working for media? What’s your favourite colour?”

De Bruyne emerges from his haircut looking pleased with himself. “I’m like 24 now! I could be a model!” We head back into his office and he and Lacroix sit together on the sofa. I ask her how life has changed since they got together. For starters, she says, they weren’t living anywhere like here. Back then he was just making a name for himself and they could pretty much do what they wanted socially. “Football-wise, it’s got better and better. But then we could do more normal stuff. On a city trip, say, maybe two or three people would come up to us. Now we’re more isolated. So you do more things at home with friends. Kevin has grown more open because we’re in such an intimate circle, always with the same group. He’s more comfortable with who he is.”

“I’m more open-minded to life,” De Bruyne says. “When I was younger, it was just football. Now I have a family, life is different.” In fact, he says, it’s remarkably similar to many other working people – he drops the kids off on his way to work, trains, comes home, family meal with the kids, helps with the homework, watches telly.

> Because I’m a foreigner living here, I’m still OK. When you’re an English player, the attention flows from everywhere

He admits there is one way their life is noticeably different from the rest of ours – they spend more money on stuff. This is partly because they can and partly because they pay extra to buy their privacy. “We have to live our life in a more secluded way. Often, if we go on a tour it will be a private tour, and most of the time this stuff is more expensive and more individual.”

Lacroix says this is not a choice. When she and the kids go out without De Bruyne, they can do whatever they want. But with him it’s a different story. “Yesterday we thought we’d try going to the fair and Kevin made at least 100 pictures. Maybe 150. And the kids had to wait all the time, and it wasn’t enjoyable for them. At one point security came up and we thought they’d help, then they said, ‘Can we have a picture?’” She laughs.

She’s not asking for sympathy, she says. In so many ways it’s a wonderful, privileged life. But it isn’t without problems. “When I’ve been driving to the club lately,” De Bruyne says, “there have been people driving next to me and filming. People have followed me.”

After games, Lacroix adds, “People just jump in front of the car so you can’t drive. Then the one next to them goes for a picture so you can’t go anywhere.”

Top footballers get paid ludicrous salaries and are idolised by their supporters. De Bruyne is City’s best-paid player, earning an estimated £385,000 a week – £20m a year. In 2020, he cut ties with his long-term agent, Patrick De Koster, after he was arrested on suspicion of fraud. The investigation was reportedly triggered by complaints from De Bruyne himself. Last year, he negotiated his own contract extension using data analysts to prove his worth to the club.

All the money and worship must change you, I say. “I don’t necessarily think it’s the money, it’s the attention. If you go from no attention to wherever you go people give you attention, then that changes you. You either take everything in or block everything out. Some people like all the attention, but after a while it becomes so much you get eaten up by it. Then if you push it out you seem arrogant. It’s a thin line you have to walk.”

In terms of attention, he says, it's harder for the top English players: "Because I'm a foreigner living here, I'm still OK. When you're an English player, the attention flows from everywhere. It would be too much for me."

'Elite sport is brutal.' Photograph: David Yeo/The Guardian

Does he think he gets paid too much? "No. I compare it to a singer at a concert and 60,000 people come. I look at it logically. There are millions of people watching the football on TV, there's 60,000 watching the games, the income of a club is £500-£600m. Yeah, it's a lot of money, but is it too much? If the club can afford it, it's not too much. It's not a popular answer, but that's how I see it."

How hard is it for them to relate to people struggling with the cost of living crisis? "We are really close to our family and friends, and most of them have normal jobs, so we know the struggles," Lacroix says.

She looks at De Bruyne and asks him to translate an expression. "We stay with our feet on the ground," he says. "It's easier for us to understand, but it will be harder for the kids because they're used to a certain lifestyle. They go to a private school and there are people from similar backgrounds. They understand when we go to see our families it's different types of houses and

another lifestyle." It worries him: "We'll try, but it cannot be the same as when we grew up. It's not possible."

When he was a child, he says, his parents didn't have much, but it was plenty: "We had what we needed; a nice garden." Does he have siblings? "One sister. She did trampoline and was pretty good at it. But she didn't have the character to go on like I did."

So many promising footballers fall by the wayside. Fewer than 0.5% of the kids in English academies at the age of nine make it as professionals at any level. So what is character? "It's will. It's saying no to fun stuff. At 17, 18, a new social life is beginning, people are going out, having fun with friends, and you have to say no." That must be hard? "It is, and that's why many people fall down at that stage. You have to become an adult quickly in football. When you start playing with the first team, you're living with 30-, 35-year-olds; people with kids. It's not easy and you need to learn that quickly, because if you don't, you fall out. Elite sport is brutal."

Did he find it tough as a teen? "Yes. I also missed part of my life because I went away from 14. We'd play on a Saturday, then I would go home to see my parents and on Sunday evening I'd travel back. So I missed the whole social part of my life." Was he jealous of his friends? "Not at that time. Maybe afterwards. Later, when you experience things, you think perhaps it would have been fun to be doing this when everybody else was."

It was his decision to leave home at 14: he was desperate to play football, and his parents were supportive.

I ask if the story about being dumped by his foster family is true. "Yes," he says. "There were three of us and the other two were more sociable. At summer break I said bye to the family and went home. Then my parents told me, you're not going back, they don't want you any more." He says the foster family never said anything directly, but told his parents they didn't want him because he was too quiet, too difficult, a teenager who didn't fit in. To add insult to injury, Genk told him he had to go to boarding school instead. In Belgium, boarding schools are more for problematic than privileged students. "I really didn't want to do it."

Did that rejection make him question his character? “No. I thought I’m going to push more and show them. I said to my parents, I will do good, you’ll see. I’ll be in the first team quickly, then everything will change.”

There is a YouTube film about De Bruyne that depicts his life as a triumph over tragedy. “Right from the beginning he was abandoned by his foster family,” it says. “And still life didn’t stop hitting him with tragedy after tragedy.” It goes on to document how the 20-year-old signed for Chelsea in a £7m deal and played only three Premier League games before being sold as a flop.

Celebrating a hat-trick against Wolverhampton in May. Photograph: Nick Potts/PA

Has he seen the film? “No.” In the film, it mentions a match in which he came on as a half-time substitute and scored five goals. Every goal, it says, was a way of answering the foster family: “One goal, they don’t want you any more. Two goals, too quiet. Three goals, too difficult. Four goals, *they don’t want you any more*. Five goals, because of who you are.” When I describe this, he turns a pinker shade of pink. “That’s not true. I don’t know who said that, but it’s not true. I find that a little bit embarrassing, to be fair.” Now he’s laughing. “My life wasn’t that bad, to be honest!”

De Bruyne says too much was made of his time at Chelsea when he left, and too much was made when he returned to the Premier League a couple of years later with Manchester City. “When I came here people said, ‘Chelsea reject.’ No, I was just a young boy who didn’t play and was there for six months. I was really young.”

Leaving Chelsea was the making of him. He signed for Bundesliga club Wolfsburg in 2014 for £18m, ended the 2014-15 season with 16 goals and 27 assists in all competitions and was named Germany’s footballer of the year. In August 2015, Manchester City signed him for £55m. Those who remembered his unhappy time at Chelsea couldn’t believe how much City paid for him. Former Liverpool player Phil Thompson said: “The world is going mad. The amount of money they’re paying for this boy is just absolutely bonkers.” But it turned out to be a bargain. In four of his seven seasons, he has been voted player of the season, and City have won the Premier League four of the past five seasons. In 2017-18 they became the first (and still only) club to get 100 points in a season and the following season won an unprecedented clean sweep of domestic trophies.

Eight months after De Bruyne arrived at City, Pep Guardiola became manager. It was the catalyst for the club’s greatest run in its history. For most of my life as a City fan, I was used to nothing but failure; between 1976 and 2011 the club didn’t win a trophy. Thanks to huge investment from its UAE owners, the signing of great players and arguably the best manager in the world, City have dominated the Premier League for the past decade.

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‘When I was younger, it was just football. Now I have a family, life is different.’ Photograph: David Yeo/The Guardian. Styling: Bemi Shaw

As supporters, I say, we love everything our owners have done for the club, but some/many of us do worry about the UAE’s human rights record. Does it bother him? “Honestly, I don’t know too much about that. All I can say is when we speak to people from the Emirates, they’re all really good and polite. I can only speak highly of them, especially Khaldoon [chairman Khaldoon al-Mubarak]. You speak to him and he’s a normal person.”

I ask Lacroix if De Bruyne finds it easy to turn off from football. “Yes. He comes home and it’s like, ‘Oh my God, I need a break’, so he’ll watch NBA or Formula One. If he’s injured and City plays, me and the kids just leave him alone in front of the television, because when something goes wrong he shouts. I’m like, nothing is going to change, then he shouts at us, and I’m like, OK, let him just watch the game, and after he’s like, sorry!”

De Bruyne has never been sent off for City. But there is a famous clip of him losing it with his teammates at the end of a Champions League match against Napoli in 2017 when he wants to confront the referee. De Bruyne, at his pinkest, shouts “Let me talk” five times. Every time his voice gets louder and more high-pitched. In the end, he sees sense and walks away.

I ask Lacroix to do an impression of him getting angry. “One time when he was injured he threw a bottle of water on the floor with full strength. He couldn’t walk but still managed to get up to the television to shout at it.”

“I just want my team to win,” De Bruyne says meekly.

Suddenly the door bursts open and Spider-Man flies into the room. He removes his head gear, and it’s Mason. “Are you going to answer questions?” Lacroix asks. “No,” Mason says. Is it true you’re more interested in playing piano than football, I ask. “Yes,” he says.

Despite City’s domestic success, they have yet to win the Champions League, the most prestigious club tournament in Europe. How important does De Bruyne think it is? “I don’t think it’s that important. It would be nice, but I think it’s more from the outside. It’s a stick people can beat City with. ‘Oh, you’ve done this but you haven’t done this.’ OK, but we’ve still done really good.”

Who are his best friends at City? “I would say probably Kyle Walker and Nathan Aké.” That’s surprising, I say. Walker seems quite different from you. (Walker was splashed across the front pages of the tabloids after hosting a party with sex workers during lockdown.) “Not really,” De Bruyne says. Is that the media? “I don’t know about media. Obviously there have been issues in the past for him. But from day one I have been close to Kyle and he has three kids and they play with my kids.”

With Kyle Walker and the Premier League trophy, May 2021. Photograph: Peter Powell/AFP/Getty Images

I ask about Belgium's chances in Qatar, wondering if he'll be more diplomatic this time. But he's not. "I think our chance was 2018. We have a good team, but it is ageing. We lost some key players. We have some good new players coming, but they are not at the level other players were in 2018. I see us more as outsiders."

De Bruyne, at 31, is at his peak. It's hard to imagine him playing with such pace for much longer. Does he feel it's getting tougher?

"I am fully able to do what I need to do, but I feel the difference compared with eight years ago. I need more treatment, more rest."

"When he was younger, the day after a game he'd be like, 'We can go and play tennis,'" Lacroix says. "Now the day after he's like, 'I need to rest. My body hurts.'"

Lacroix says football has brought her the lifestyle she dreamed of. The only difference is she had always imagined she would make her own money. What's the worst thing about being a footballer's wife? Often she feels like a single parent, she says. "For example, Kevin has never been to one school nativity. I'm always the parent on their own. It's rare he can go to something

for them. Two of the kids are at school, so we only have weekends to do things with them, but Kevin is playing then. It makes it harder to do stuff together as a family. Kevin always says now we need to be disciplined for football and later we can enjoy everything together."

Does she think when he retires that will be her time to pursue her dreams? "That's what everyone keeps saying. But I don't think so now. I'm devoted to being with the kids, and I've just started the podcast."

> Kevin giving up football wouldn't happen. When Covid began he was running round the sofa. I couldn't cope with him at home

"She's the glue," he says out of nowhere. Then he looks embarrassed. "I don't want to say that because tonight she'll say, 'My God, look what you've said.'"

Lacroix: "No, I don't do that. I do not."

"Yes, you would," he says. "If I said you were the glue to the family, you'd say, 'Remember you said that.'"

Do you mean Michèle would use it against you?

Lacroix: "*Nooooooooo*."

De Bruyne: "Of course!"

Lacroix: "He's making it up!"

They seem to have a lovely relationship.

I ask if he is planning for life after playing? She looks at him, curious to hear the answer: "He gets annoyed when I ask about it. 'I'm still playing!'"

De Bruyne: "Not really."

Lacroix: "You do a bit."

De Bruyne: “Well, I do things to advance the future. I’ve got my Uefa A and B coaching qualification already.”

Does he think he’ll stay in football?

De Bruyne: “Probably, yes.”

Lacroix: “100%. Kevin loves football way too much to not be in it. He should because it’s in his heart as well.”

But he could simply retire, live a life of luxury, make up for lost time on the self-indulgence and dossing front.

“It would never happen,” Lacroix says. “Give him one month, then he would be annoyed. When Covid started he was running around the sofa. I couldn’t cope with him at home.”

They go to have their photos taken. I stay in the office staring at his platoon of man of the match awards. I pop in to see how the shoot is going. De Bruyne is trying to juggle all three children in his arms and I’m worried he may get injured. I’m not sure Pep would be happy.

On the way out, I tell him that at away matches my daughter Maya and I get into the ground early when it’s almost empty and shout for waves from the players when they come out to warm up. Nearly all have given us waves, but never De Bruyne. You’re so intensely focused? “I think so, yes. I’m very different on the pitch to when I’m here. Once I’m playing football it’s a different zone. Then when I’ve finished, the game is done.”

For many years, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo were the undisputed two best players in the world. But things are changing. In August, De Bruyne was runner-up in the Uefa Men’s Player of the Year award, won by another oldie, Karim Benzema. How important is it to be regarded as one of the best in the world? The quiet, diffident De Bruyne looks at me with magnificent imperiousness. “It’s not important to be regarded as one of the best,” he says. “I want to be the best.”

The next few weeks with Belgium at the World Cup will provide the perfect stage for him to prove that he is.

This article was amended on 26 November 2022. Kevin De Bruyne's club at the age of eight was KVV Drongen, not "Drogen" as an earlier version said; and his wife Michèle's surname is Lacroix rather than LaCroix.

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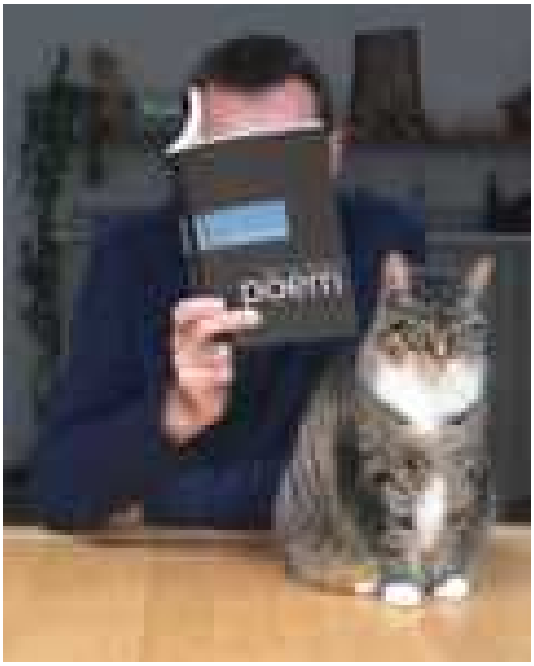
Advertisement

‘That orange, it made me so happy’: 50 poems to boost your mood

Illustration: Nathalie Lees/The Guardian

Humour, beauty, solace ... the right poem can bring a ray of sunshine. Andrew Motion, Kayo Chingonyi, Tishani Doshi and other poets recommend the verses that lift their spirits

Brian Bilston, Kayo Chingonyi, Ella Risbridger, Andrew Motion, Hannah Lowe, Andrew McMillan, Elif Shafak, Rishi Dastidar, Tishani Doshi and Mary Jean Chan
Sat 26 Nov 2022 04.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 04.40 EST



Photograph: MacMillan

Brian Bilston
Poet and novelist

1) Hope Is the Thing With Feathers, Emily Dickinson
2) Poem [Lana Turner has collapsed!], Frank O'Hara
3) Not My Best Side, UA Fanthorpe
4) Aimless Love, Billy Collins
5) Survivor, Roger McGough

Poetry refreshes the parts that other words cannot reach and, like the little bird of Emily Dickinson's Hope Is the Thing with Feathers, contains the strength to sustain us even in the "chillest land / And on the strangest sea".

But a poem doesn't have to be explicitly inspirational to do that. Frank O'Hara's Poem [Lana Turner has collapsed!] hoicks us up off the floor with its sheer exuberance and breathlessness: we have no choice but to be swept along. And what could be more helpful than a poem that pokes fun at how ridiculous we all are, as presented in UA Fanthorpe's wickedly funny triptych Not My Best Side, giving voice to the characters in Paolo Uccello's painting Saint George and the Dragon. Of course, laughter can provide the biggest pick-me-up of all, and there are few poets funnier than Billy Collins. In Aimless Love, through celebrating a wren, a dead mouse and a bar of soap, he helps us fall back in love with life. Finally, in terms of a strategy for coping with all that the world throws at us, who can better that offered by Roger McGough in his short poem Survivor?

Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

Kayo Chingonyi
Poet and editor

6) "The moon rose over the bay. I had a lot of feelings", Donika Kelly
7) Brand New Lover, Amy Key
8) Against Complaint, Roddy Lumsden
9) Caveat, Fiona Benson
10) From Blossoms, Li-Young Lee

I'm particularly moved by poets who sing from the rooftops, as in Donika Kelly's wonderful poem – a tender though not sentimental pick-me-up for when you are so enamoured of someone that you find yourself playing slow jams in the early hours of the morning. The immediacy of desire also suffuses Amy Key's Brand New Lover, with its woozy soft focus and tense interplay of disclosure and guardedness. When I find myself whingeing, the best medicine is Roddy Lumsden's Against Complaint, which affirms that most stoic of maxims, "It could be worse". There is, in so many things, a small crack through which hope can enter. Which brings to mind Fiona Benson's gorgeous little poem Caveat (published below), which, read in the midst of tribulations, will surely gladden the heart like an empathetic hand on the shoulder. And when I need to remember happier times I look to From Blossoms by Li-Young Lee, a poem which swells with hard-won joy like a peach ripening on the branch.

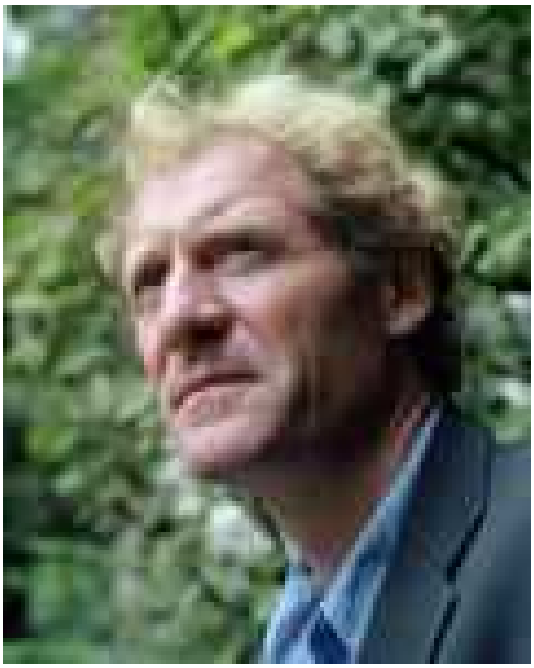
Photograph: Gavin Day/from Ella Risbridger

Ella Risbridger
Editor of the anthology Set Me on Fire: A Poem for Every Feeling

11) How to Triumph Like a Girl, Ada Limon
12) To the Woman Crying Uncontrollably in the Next Stall, Kim Addonizio
13) Goodtime Jesus, James Tate

14) People Are a Living Structure Like a Coral Reef, Heather Christle
15) Poem in Which I Practise Happiness, Joe Dunthorne

What I like in a poem is jokes, and what I hate is a poem that takes itself too seriously. I love being spoken to directly by the poet, and I love a poem that makes me feel we're getting to the secret heart of everything: in these five, that's reached through rain on a window, "lady horses", good money for a bad haircut and using a guinea pig as a telephone. Also, Jesus having a cup of coffee. I love a poem that knows happiness is tough, even if you "make it look easy", like Ada Limon in How to Triumph Like a Girl (published below). I love Kim Addonizio for knowing that "joy is coming" (To the Woman Crying Uncontrollably in the Next Stall, a real banger of a title). I love James Tate's Goodtime Jesus for its perfect punchline: "Take a little ride on my donkey, I love that donkey. Hell, I love everybody". And I love Heather Christle's People Are a Living Structure Like a Coral Reef, especially for her unabashed use of the exclamation mark. I love poems about connection. I love poems about people. I love poems about stuff. In the words of Joe Dunthorne's Poem in Which I Practise Happiness, "I love the piano./ I love true crime./ I love the sun/ when it arrives/ like a tray/ of drinks."



Photograph: Karen Robinson/The Observer

Andrew Motion
Former poet laureate

16) Epistle to Miss Blount, Alexander Pope
17) Epitaph on a Hare, William Cowper
18) Hurricane Hits England, Grace Nichols
19) In My Country, Jackie Kay
20) Postscript, Seamus Heaney

The idea that poems might be an easy means of cheering ourselves up is enough to make anyone feel depressed, especially if the poems themselves are determined to be cheerful. Remember Hardy: "If way to the Better there be, it exacts a full look at the Worst". That might overstate the case a little, but he's right about the relationship between (relative) optimism and realism. For this reason, four of my choices are poems that admit – with varying degrees of candour – what problems need to be overcome, in order for their speakers to find equilibrium of some kind. Boredom and isolation in the case of Alexander Pope's affectionate Epistle to Miss Blount; grief in William Cowper's apparently small-scale (but in fact expansive) Epitaph on a Hare; homesickness and the difficulties of home-making in Grace Nichols's Hurricane Hits England; and racist hostility in Jackie Kay's In My Country. In my fifth choice, Seamus Heaney's Postscript (published below), an affirming flame is allowed to blaze more defiantly, but it's still battered and blustered by the winds of the world.

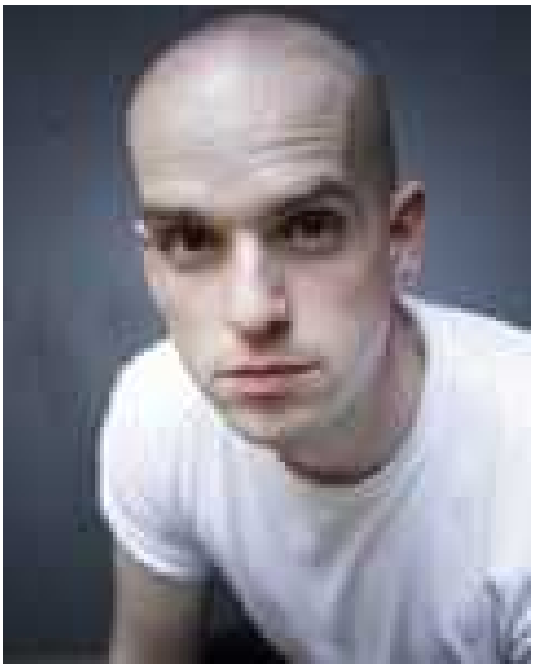
Photograph: Christian Sinibaldi/The Guardian

Hannah Lowe
Winner of the 2021 Costa book of the year for her collection The Kids

21) Great Western Road, Donny O'Rourke
22) Belle Isle, 1949, Philip Levine
23) Beginning in a City, 1948, James Berry
24) What the Living Do, Marie Howe
25) Looking at Them Asleep, Sharon Olds

The poems that lift my spirits are those that find beauty in the domestic and everyday. Donny O'Rourke's Great Western Road describes a Saturday well spent, a list of jubilant images that builds to a declaration: "God Glasgow it's glorious / just to gulp you down in heartfuls". Philip Levine's Belle Isle, 1949 finds wonder in a teenage night swim in the Detroit River, "to baptise ourselves in the brine / of car parts, dead fish, stolen bicycles". James Berry's Beginning in a City, 1948 mixes public history with personal remembrance, telling of how the newly arrived Jamaican migrant survives his first night in England, ending with a headstrong optimism: "So I had begun. Begun in London." Marie Howe's beautiful elegy for her brother What the Living Do lifts my spirits by emphasising how the small things make a life and should be cherished, as does Sharon Olds's Looking at Them

Asleep. I love the surprise and precision of Olds's use of metaphor to describe her children sleeping: "oh the son he is sideways in his bed / one knee up as if he is climbing / sharp stairs up into the night".



Andrew McMillan Photograph: undefined/Urszula Soltys

Andrew McMillan
Poet and editor

26) Filling Station, Elizabeth Bishop
27) Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong, Ocean Vuong
28) Final Curve, Langston Hughes
29) "There is no life or death", Mina Loy
30) Provisional Eternity, Mark Strand

I've spent time recently searching for release from my own anxiety and co-editing an anthology, 100 Queer Poems. The twin missions of trying to reorient my mind and immerse myself in piles of poetry reminded me of the solace a good stanza or line might bring. Think of that great ending to Elizabeth Bishop's Filling Station, "somebody loves us all"; it often comes back to me when I feel isolated or alone. The journey towards better loving ourselves is perhaps more important (and yes, I know RuPaul said that better). Ocean Vuong's Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong (published below),

with its invocation “Ocean, don’t be afraid”, is a poem I often return to, as is Langston Hughes’ wonderful Final Curve. Mina Loy’s “There is no life or death” says it’s OK to sit in the flux of things; it rejects absolutes, and its rhymes and syllables pull us forward into possibility. Ultimately, my mood is boosted by just being at home with my boyfriend and our dog; that reminds me of a Mark Strand poem that hugs you with the warmth of a shared duvet, Provisional Eternity. It’s the simplicity of “this”, “this never wanting it to end”; it reaches beyond sex, beyond lust, into a state of comfort and ease between two people. I used to have it pinned above my desk, but now it’s just on the noticeboard of my mind.

Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Elif Shafak
Novelist

31) All Rivers at Once, Rumi
32) Ithaka, CP Cavafy
33) Remember How We Forgot, Lemn Sissay
34) [the] north[ern] [of] ireland, Pádraig Ó Tuama
35) Old Tongue, Jackie Kay

Poetry is deeply personal. You might struggle to explain to yourself, let alone to others, why you feel emotional when you read a certain poem; how it remains with you afterwards, like a childhood memory lodged in your heart. Poems can take you within, making you aware of parts of yourself you have neglected; and they can also lift you up and carry you near and far, connecting you with people and experiences beyond borders. When I was younger, for a long time I assumed that being an immigrant, I could not fully understand or enjoy English verse; there would always be something I would miss out – a broken piece, an invisible shard. That I came to adore reading poems in a language other than my mother tongue, I owe to many wonderful poets who challenged my fears and encouraged me to dive in. Today I see poets as a tribe of their own, impossible to narrow down to national boxes. Like Walt Whitman, they contain multitudes. First, I would love to recommend All Rivers at Once by the wonderful Rumi, whose voice is needed in today's polarised world more than ever before. This poem for me is primarily about connectivity and compassion. I am a big fan of CP Cavafy, and I read his work time and again - especially Ithaka. Lemn Sissay's voice is a balm for our troubled times; Remember How We Forgot is incredibly moving. Pádraig Ó Tuama's [the] north[ern] [of] ireland contains so much pain, memory and resilience, it will deeply resonate with readers across the world. And then there is the inimitable Jackie Kay: I love the courage and wisdom in her Old Tongue.

Rishi Dastidar
Poet and critic

36) Delight in Disorder, Robert Herrick
37) Hiroshima, 1961, Holly Singlehurst
38) Soulcraft, John McCullough
39) The Orange, Wendy Cope
40) The Tiger, Nael

"A fine distraction" tends to be what I want from a poem to cheer me up. My first stop is always Robert Herrick, and especially Delight in Disorder. I never fail to be charmed by the beguiling twinkle that runs through it. Also beguiling is the way Holly Singlehurst's Hiroshima, 1961 frames the joy of playing with your shadow and being bathed by sunlight. John McCullough's Soulcraft ruminates on light too, a "private neon", crucial for lifting him when "a flock of days descends / and my soul flickers, goes to ground". The poem rises from here, reminding us that something as simple as rain can revive our spirits again. And if not the weather, how about a piece of fruit? Wendy Cope's delight in the mundane is always a tonic. The Orange (published below) is an exquisite example of this: who doesn't love those rare days that are "quite easy / I did all the jobs on my list"? For me, though, the best mood boost is witnessing an underdog hero overcome formidable

odds to triumph in nail-biting circumstances. So I hope Nael's The Tiger, written when he was just six, has you punching the air in joy the way I do every time I read it.

Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

Tishani Doshi
Poet

41) Recreation, Audre Lorde
42) Ode to My Husband, Who Brings the Music, Zeina Hashem Beck
43) An Attempt at Jealousy, Marina Tsvetaeva
44) I Will Greet the Sun Again, Forough Farrokhzad
45) Fucking in Cornwall, Ella Frears

Partly because I've recently spent time as a caregiver, and partly because legislation around the autonomy of women's bodies continues to be so depressing, I looked for poems of the body, poems of desire, that could inject what Audre Lorde called the "lifeforce" into me. Let's begin with Lorde's Recreation, which believes a body can be made into a poem. I wanted to collect female voices and create a web of ancestry between them – so, the tenderness of Zeina Hashem Beck's Ode to My Husband, Who Brings the Music contrasts with the bristle of Marina Tsvetaeva's An

Attempt at Jealousy. Then there's the perseverance of Forough Farrokhzad, who brings us to the "love-filled threshold" in I Will Greet the Sun Again, and the sheer sexiness of Ella Frears's Fucking in Cornwall - "Do you remember what it felt like to dig a hole all day/ with a tiny spade just to watch it fill with sea?/ I want it like that."

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Mary Jean Chan
Winner of the 2019 Costa poetry prize for Fleche

46) Canopy, Emily Berry
47) If There Is an Afterwards, Vahni (Anthony Ezekiel) Capildeo
48) Poplar Street, Chen Chen
49) Wild Geese, Mary Oliver
50) When the War Is Over, WS Merwin

Five poems come to mind that might offer solace during these troubled times. The first is Emily Berry's Canopy, which she describes as an "anti-Rock-a-bye baby": it's about survival and connection, and I return to it over and over. I had the pleasure of rereading Vahni (Anthony Ezekiel) Capildeo's work as a judge for this year's Jhalak Prize. In their latest collection Like a Tree, Walking, If There Is an Afterwards stood out to me as a shimmering poem about loss and silence. My third poem is Poplar Street, by the American poet Chen Chen. It concludes his debut collection, and is one of the most hopeful poems I have ever read about self-acceptance, love and forgiveness. The final two poems I have found particularly moving in the wake of the pandemic and the ongoing war in Ukraine: Wild Geese by Mary Oliver and When the War is Over by WS Merwin. Both are about what it means to live, which is a question always worth asking.

Five poems for an instant lift

Illustration: Nathalie Lees/The Guardian

The Orange

by Wendy Cope

At lunchtime I bought a huge orange –
The size of it made us all laugh.
I peeled it and shared it with Robert and Dave –
They got quarters and I had a half.

And that orange, it made me so happy,
As ordinary things often do
Just lately. The shopping. A walk in the park.
This is peace and contentment. It's new.

The rest of the day was quite easy.
I did all the jobs on my list
And enjoyed them and had some time over.
I love you. I'm glad I exist.

From Serious Concerns (Faber) © Wendy Cope.

Postscript

by Seamus Heaney

And some time make the time to drive out west
Into County Clare, along the Flaggy Shore,
In September or October, when the wind
And the light are working off each other
So that the ocean on one side is wild
With foam and glitter, and inland among stones
The surface of a slate-grey lake is lit
By the earthed lightning of a flock of swans,
Their feathers roughed and ruffling, white on white,
Their fully grown headstrong-looking heads
Tucked or cresting or busy underwater.
Useless to think you'll park and capture it
More thoroughly. You are neither here nor there,
A hurry through which known and strange things pass
As big soft buffetings come at the car sideways
And catch the heart off guard and blow it open.

From The Spirit Level by Seamus Heaney (Faber) © Seamus Heaney.

Illustration: Nathalie Lees/The Guardian

Caveat

by Fiona Benson

But consider the cactus:
its thick hide
and parched aspect

still harbour a moist heart;
nick its rind, and sap
wells up like sugared milk

from the store of water
held beneath its spines,
its armoury of barbs.

And, once a lifetime,
when the slant rains fall
there is this halo of flowers.

From Bright Travellers (Cape) © Fiona Benson 2014.

How to Triumph Like a Girl

by Ada Limón

I like the lady horses best,
how they make it all look easy,
like running 40 miles per hour
is as fun as taking a nap, or grass.
I like their lady horse swagger,
after winning. Ears up, girls, ears up!
But mainly, let's be honest, I like
that they're ladies. As if this big
dangerous animal is also a part of me,
that somewhere inside the delicate
skin of my body, there pumps
an 8-pound female horse heart,
giant with power, heavy with blood.
Don't you want to believe it?
Don't you want to lift my shirt and see
the huge beating genius machine
that thinks, no, it knows,
it's going to come in first.

From Bright Dead Things (Milkweed Editions) © Ada Limón.

Someday I'll Love Ocean Vuong

by Ocean Vuong

Ocean, don't be afraid.
The end of the road is so far ahead
it is already behind us.
Don't worry. Your father is only your father
until one of you forgets. Like how the spine
won't remember its wings
no matter how many times our knees
kiss the pavement. Ocean,

are you listening? The most beautiful part
of your body is wherever
your mother's shadow falls.
Here's the house with childhood
whittled down to a single red trip wire.
Don't worry. Just call it *horizon*
& you'll never reach it.
Here's today. Jump. I promise it's not
a lifeboat. Here's the man
whose arms are wide enough to gather
your leaving. & here the moment,
just after the lights go out, when you can still see
the faint torch between his legs.
How you use it again & again
to find your own hands.
You asked for a second chance
& are given a mouth to empty out of.
Don't be afraid, the gunfire
is only the sound of people
trying to live a little longer
& failing. Ocean. Ocean —
get up. The most beautiful part of your body
is where it's headed. & remember,
loneliness is still time spent
with the world. Here's
the room with everyone in it.
Your dead friends passing
through you like wind
through a wind chime. Here's a desk
with the gimp leg & a brick
to make it last. Yes, here's a room
so warm & blood-close,
I swear, you will wake —
& mistake these walls
for skin.

From Night Sky With Exit Wounds by Ocean Vuong (Jonathan Cape) © Ocean Vuong.

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Advertisement

Blind date: ‘What was I hoping for? A husband whose salary I could retire on at 30’

Calum (left) and Ciarán. Composite: Christian Sinibaldi/Jill Mead

Calum, 30, a civil servant, meets Ciarán, 27, a media professional

Sat 26 Nov 2022 01.00 EST

Calum on Ciarán

What were you hoping for?
A rich, handsome future husband whose salary I could retire on at 30 and devote myself to fun stuff. More realistically, a fun evening with some nice company.

First impressions?
Ciarán was lovely! I liked his smile. We hugged spontaneously, like old pals.

What did you talk about?
Our trips to Colombia. Using Scottish/Irish slang in England. Our love of This Is My House. Our mutual distrust of anyone who eats green bananas.

Most awkward moment?
I'm dyspraxic, so eating in a taco restaurant on a date could have led to more

carnage than it did.

Good table manners?
He didn't make a hint of mess eating tacos, so I'd say they were magisterial.

Best thing about Ciarán?
He is a charming, warm person who seemed genuinely interested in getting to know me.

Would you introduce Ciarán to your friends?
Absolutely. They too are welcoming of fans of non-green bananas.

Describe Ciarán in three words.
Charming, funny, gregarious.

What do you think he made of you?
Probably that I was an eccentric but lovable Scottish man. He did well to hide his disgust on hearing I'd never been to Ireland (I'm sorry, one day).

Did you go on somewhere?
We stayed at the bar beyond some of the waiting staff to sample nearly every margarita on the menu, if that counts.

And ... did you kiss?
Alas, 'twas not to be.

If you could change one thing about the evening what would it be?
Not much. It was a very wholesome and jolly affair.

Marks out of 10?
A strong 8.

Would you meet again?
As friends, absolutely.

Calum and Ciarán on their date
Q&A

Want to be in Blind date?

Show

Blind date is Saturday's dating column: every week, two strangers are paired up for dinner and drinks, and then spill the beans to us, answering a set of questions. This runs, with a photograph we take of each dater before the date, in Saturday magazine (in the UK) and online at theguardian.com every Saturday. It's been running since 2009 – you can read all about how we put it together here.

What questions will I be asked?
We ask about age, location, occupation, hobbies, interests and the type of person you are looking to meet. If you do not think these questions cover everything you would like to know, tell us what's on your mind.

Can I choose who I match with?
No, it's a blind date! But we do ask you a bit about your interests, preferences, etc – the more you tell us, the better the match is likely to be.

Can I pick the photograph?
No, but don't worry: we'll choose the nicest ones.

What personal details will appear?
Your first name, job and age.

How should I answer?
Honestly but respectfully. Be mindful of how it will read to your date, and that Blind date reaches a large audience, in print and online.

Will I see the other person's answers?
No. We may edit yours and theirs for a range of reasons, including length, and we may ask you for more details.

Will you find me The One?
We'll try! Marriage! Babies!

Can I do it in my home town?
Only if it's in the UK. Many of our applicants live in London, but we would love to hear from people living elsewhere.

How to apply
Email blind.date@theguardian.com

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Ciarán on Calum

What were you hoping for?
To meet someone different, and get a 10 rating on my dating skills.

First impressions?
Super friendly, great smile, chatty.

What did you talk about?
Celtic roots (I'm Irish, he's Scottish). How Greggs is overrated. Coming-out stories (the gay date staple). Perfect banana ripeness.

Most awkward moment?
None, he was so easy to chat to and we had a good few giggles over the set-up.

Good table manners?
Perfect, but it was a judgment-free zone because of the tacos.

Best thing about Calum?
His hilarious impersonations, and his ability to chat about anything without sounding like a know-it-all.

Would you introduce him to your friends?
Definitely, we Celts must stick together.

Describe Calum in three words.
Bubbly, fun, intelligent.

What do you think he made of you?
I recall him calling me “normal”, which I think is a win?

Did you go on somewhere?
No, but we were there for hours fleecing the place of their avocado-and-passion-fruit cocktails.

And ... did you kiss?
No, but Jesus, even if we did, our mutual Catholic guilt would never allow us to reveal it to the world.

If you could change one thing about the evening, what would it be?
Boringly, nothing – I had a great time.

Marks out of 10?
9, couldn’t fault him.

Would you meet again?
I didn’t feel a romantic spark, but we agreed over text afterwards to be pals.

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Fashion

‘Beautifully chosen’: David Hockney’s yellow Crocs impress King Charles

Artist’s choice of footwear for Order of Merit luncheon highlights shoe brand’s enduring popularity

David Hockney, in yellow Crocs, talks with attendees at the Order of Merit lunch at Buckingham Palace on Thursday. Photograph: Aaron Chown/AFP/Getty Images

Morwenna Ferrier
Sat 26 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 05.36 EST

It is a question that must have plagued those attending King Charles's first luncheon for the Order of Merit on Thursday – what to wear while eating partridge pie with the new monarch.

For the 85-year-old artist David Hockney it was simple – his signature checked Savile Row suit, a knitted checkerboard tie … and a pair of yellow garden Crocs. As a fan of the great outdoors, the king was delighted. "Your yellow galoshes!" he remarked. "Beautifully chosen."

Crocs might be closer in shape to clogs, but he was not far off. Durable, sturdy and slip-resistant, crocs began life as outdoor shoes but were quickly adopted by blue-collar industries, notably kitchen staff and nurses. Made from a proprietary cell resin material called Croslite, which is somewhere between rubber and plastic, they are comfortable for workers to stand in for long hours and thick enough to protect feet from a stray cleaver.

We love to hate Crocs – but that does not stop us buying them. Driven into the arms of comfort-wear during the pandemic, sales have soared in the past five years. In the quarter ending 30 September, they reached almost $1bn

(£827m). According to a spokesperson, more than 100m pairs are sold each year. It is less about who is wearing them, and more about who is not.

Influence tends to trickle up, so it was only a matter of time before Hockney would join the Crocerati, a broad but notorious band of wearers that includes the pop star Justin Bieber, rapper Post Malone and the actor Adam Sandler. Blame Christopher Kane and Balenciaga, too, who have refashioned Crocs, whacked up the price and caused them to sell out.

Hockney, of course, has always been a style icon. Over the past two decades, Paul Smith and Christopher Bailey have designed collections around the artist's wardrobe, which included (but was not limited to) Coney Island logo sweatshirts, striped rugby shirts, slacks and spectacles. Historically, though, the artist preferred a pair of white, battered, lace-free white plimsolls.

The luncheon's dress code is a long way off that of broader culture. Most attendees wore black. The TV presenter Floella Benjamin was among the few guests to introduce a welcome pop of magenta in her headpiece. These days, Hockney mostly uses a wheelchair, so was presumably granted carte blanche. Comfy on levels actual and spiritual, he no doubt chose Crocs because they have a deep insole, so one can pop their orthotics inside.

But he may well have been drawn to the colour. Guests will have noted he wore them with a pair of blue socks. From a distance, it was as if his 1967 masterpiece, A Bigger Splash, had come to life.

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2022.11.26 - Opinion

- Rich nations have promised to pay for the climate crisis – but will they?
- Who wants to live to 100 on a diet of lentil and broccoli slurry? Mostly rich men
- David Beckham and a Manchester United bid – what could go wrong?
- Edith Pritchett on millennial life Why David Attenborough documentaries gross me out

OpinionClimate crisis

Rich nations have promised to pay for the climate crisis – but will they?

Gordon Brown

For too long pledges have gone unmet, so at Cop28 new solutions need to be explored

Gordon Brown is the WHO ambassador for global health financing

An indigenous man raises his hands in prayer asking for rain in the Lloko Lloko community, in Tihuanacu, Bolivia, November 2022. Photograph: Claudia Morales/Reuters

Sat 26 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 11.36 EST

On Sunday, loud cheers from Sharm el-Sheikh greeted the announcement of a new initiative – the global loss and damage fund – to right historical wrongs by compensating climate-hit developing countries. This breakthrough brought back memories of another, the £100bn a year agreed at the 2009 Copenhagen climate summit to help poor countries mitigate the effects of the climate crisis.

That money has never fully materialised. If our 13 years' experience of the £100bn fund that never was is anything to go by, eulogies of praise will soon turn into allegations of betrayal. The president of next year's Cop28 will have to answer for yet another fund without funders. Far from the loss and damage fund narrowing the credibility gap on climate action, it is likely to bridge nothing if money fails to flow from rich to poor.

The last decade has been a history of promises made and broken. Before Covid, the cost of financing the sustainable development goals (SDGs) was $2.5tn a year. Now, post-Covid, and with the price of fighting floods,

firestorms and droughts – and the debt burden of low-income countries – dramatically escalating, it is $4tn annually. Set against an official development assistance (ODA) budget of only $179bn a year and $130bn on offer mainly in multilateral loans, the SDGs represent yet another unanimous but unfunded pledge of the international community. To make matters worse, the British development aid budget has now been cut from 0.7% of our national income to 0.5% for years ahead, and already our overall contribution to meeting all our climate and development targets is down from the promised £16bn to just £11.5bn.

But there is a way forward if we are to meet our goals. About $2tn (£1.75tn) will be needed each year by 2030 to help developing countries cut their greenhouse gas emissions. This could be paid for, if necessary, by raising global taxes like the airline levies pioneered by France and the UK. As the pathbreaking Bridgetown declaration, inspired by the prime minister of Barbados, Mia Mottley, recommends, $100bn of special drawing rights (the international money issued by the IMF) should immediately be redistributed from rich to poor countries, with half going to finance green projects. President Macron's June summit on climate finance should cancel the unpayable debt of low-income countries in return for those countries taking action on the climate. For those who can pay, debt repayments should be varied in the event of climate disasters.

Public funds will never, as Bridgetown recognises, be enough, so it is vital that every pound, dollar and euro of aid is used to generate other sources of support. Mobilising private finance was the centrepiece of a seminal 2015 report from the IMF and the development banks. Governments, it proposed, should put in place the right incentives to encourage private finance to invest in climate breakdown and development. Indeed, the SDGs' funding needs could be met if we mobilised just 1% each year of the $400tn financial assets held by banks, institutional investors and fund managers.

Yet despite billions in pledges, good intentions and a flood of press releases publicising socially responsible environment, social and government projects, too little private investment is yet in play, leading to allegations of greenwashing. Pioneered by Ronald Cohen, impact investing, where corporate outlays are measured not only in risk and reward but in socially

beneficial results, has the potential to fund clean energy, renewables and mitigation and adaptation. But this will almost certainly require legislation for impact-weighted accounting, so that alongside profit and loss, companies itemise in monetary terms the real-time social and environmental benefits of their activities.

Young activists hold a demonstration at Cop27 climate conference in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, 19 November. Photograph: Sedat Suna/EPA

But all this will take time, and climate finance is needed urgently. It should be kickstarted immediately by transforming the World Bank into a global public goods bank. The international development association is the arm of the bank dedicated to the lowest-income countries. By borrowing on the strength of repaid loans, it can unlock more than $100bn in additional capital. Merging this with the bank's facility that aids middle-income countries could then quadruple the bank's capital base.

Even more funds could be generated through the innovative use of guarantees offered to the regional development banks by the richest countries, and the Asian Development Bank is already planning to fund climate projects securing guarantees from European governments. If deployed across all multilateral banks, an initial $10bn in grants, some raised from global philanthropists, matched with $60bn of guarantees, could

be used to raise a total of $270bn to support the transition to net zero, and, overall, our regional and international institutions could soon be investing not just billions but a trillion dollars each year.

And funds could be guaranteed on a sustained basis if the world's richest countries agreed to share the burden fairly, based on their capacity to pay. While this is a proven model, used in 1966 in an attempt to eliminate smallpox, today only $7bn of UN financing (for peacekeeping) and just $1bn of health financing (to pay 25% of the current World Health Organization budget) is currently raised through a burden-sharing formula. All the rest comes through passing around a begging bowl.

A world addressing an existential challenge should not have to rely on charity. An action plan for Cop28 that requires donors to contribute to climate finance based on their capacity to pay – and, in the case of loss and damage, based on historic liability for greenhouse gas emissions – should be the starting point for the next round of climate finance. Adequately funding our global goals for the first time would be something to really cheer about. We have the means and the knowhow. What we now need is the political will.

- Gordon Brown is the WHO ambassador for global health financing, and was UK prime minister from 2007 to 2010

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OpinionAgeing

Who wants to live to 100 on a diet of lentil and broccoli slurry? Mostly rich men

Gaby Hinsliff

Instead of searching for the key to immortality, what if we tried to make people's lives better in the here and now?

‘The former Twitter CEO, Jack Dorsey, an early biohacking devotee, swears by just one meal a day and a morning salt juice.’ Photograph: Marco Bello/AFP/Getty Images

Sat 26 Nov 2022 04.00 ESTLast modified on Sat 26 Nov 2022 08.40 EST

Shortly after waking, Bryan Johnson drinks a murky concoction involving olive oil, cocoa flavanols and something derived from algae. Breakfast will be a blended green slurry of lentils, broccoli and mushrooms, with lunch and dinner not much different.

The 45-year-old American entrepreneur is religious about his sleep, follows a strict workout regime, monitors the performance of his vital organs using hospital-grade medical equipment, and suggests to his social – media followers that deviating from what he calls the “blueprint” to have a raucous night out getting wasted with friends is a form of self harm.

If your best friend suddenly started behaving like this, you’d worry she was developing an eating disorder. But men like Johnson – whose monastically disciplined routine went viral on Twitter this week – consider themselves biohackers: scientific pioneers pushing the boundaries of human life expectancy, in what amounts to an attempt to hack death itself. He claims his experiment – from which he hopes to devise rules anyone can use – allows

him to resist ageing so successfully that "for every 365 days, I age 277 days", whatever that means. Yet contemplating his dessert of olive oil with pellets of dark chocolate floating glumly in it, you have to ask if it's worth it.

Who wants to live for ever? Not me, with all due respect to Freddie Mercury for asking, and possibly not you either. Only a third of Britons even want to make it to 100, according to a recent Ipsos poll carried out for the British not-for-profit initiative the Longevity Forum. This suggests less a death wish than a fear of what growing old may actually involve. Tellingly, the older the respondent already was, the less enthusiastic they were about getting very much older. Extreme age can look brutal, up close.

Personally, I want very much to live until my child no longer needs me, whenever that may be, and to enjoy some kind of retirement. But beyond that, I just want to live until it feels like *enough*, and then ideally to have some control over the end. I'd rather have a busy, happy, meaningful life and drop dead at 75 than make it to 150 and run out of ways to fill the endless days.

Perhaps at 74 I'll feel differently, but intriguingly the poll found women less keen than men on a long life, although it couldn't explain why. Are we perhaps less likely to see ageing as a competition, won by the last person standing? Do we worry more about outliving all our friends? But perhaps it's just that men are statistically more likely to die sooner, so don't take longevity for granted. For whatever reason, venture capitalists continue to pour billions into biotech companies promising to extend human lifespan, while Silicon Valley tech bros' famed obsession with often scientifically questionable "human optimisation" regimes shows no sign of waning.

The former Twitter CEO, Jack Dorsey, an early biohacking devotee, swears by just one meal a day and a morning "salt juice" (a mix of water, lemon and Himalayan salt). Dave Asprey, CEO of the supplements company Bulletproof, describes in his book, Superhuman: The Bulletproof Plan to Age Backwards and Maybe Even Live Forever, his hopes of making it to 180. Some biohackers predict a future where we'll voluntarily replace healthy limbs with prosthetics, engineering ourselves for optimal performance.

But beneath this exhausting quest for immortality, the constant tweaking of the bodily algorithm to ensure maximum efficiency, you sense anxiety and perhaps also the legacy of burnout. Johnson has tweeted about suffering from depression in the past, admitting that while building the tech company he eventually sold to PayPal for $800m – freeing him to pursue adventures in biohacking – he worked round the clock: "Days without sleeping was legend. Ragged state of being a badge of honour. Now I'm trying to make up for that." Perhaps extreme health kicks like this are best understood as a reaction against an extreme way of life, replacing workaholism with a different form of driven behaviour.

Yet already the niche language of biohacking is filtering down, much like its less sciencey cousin "wellness", to the rest of us mere mortals via glamorous Instagram influencers and magazine articles suggesting you can shave years off a suspiciously nebulously defined "biological age" by eating more berries, walking barefoot on grass or taking ice baths. Biohackers often say they're interested in extending healthy life, not living just for living's sake, and of course it's good to want to stay fit for as long as possible, dodging Alzheimer's or cancer or painfully crumbling bones if you can.

But there's a difference between enthusiastically wanting to get the most from life and fearfully striving to reverse the cellular process of ageing via suspiciously rigid regimes. Much of that venture capital and restless energy might be more practically employed seeking not to defer old age indefinitely, but to take the terror out of it – through better treatments for horrible degenerative diseases, unsexy but useful technology that helps people stay independent at home for longer, and reliable social care.

The goal shouldn't be to endlessly extend life but to create joy and purpose at every stage of it, whether that means easing pain at the very end or not making employees spend their 20s sleeping in the office. We don't really need to hack death. What we need is to make life worth living.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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SportblogManchester United

David Beckham and a Manchester United bid – what could go wrong?

Marina Hyde

There is no more elegant pivot than moaning about the World Cup in Qatar to begging a Gulf state to come and buy your club

David Beckham: ‘His unappealing antics over the past few weeks have catapulted him closer in the public affections to the reviled sports-owner category.’ Illustration: Matt Johnstone

Fri 25 Nov 2022 10.47 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 13.54 EST

“When I want a peerage,” sniffed Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe), “I shall buy one like an honest man.” So yes: I want to begin with an apology for a ridiculous statement in my most recent column, which held that David Beckham’s mega-lucrative Qatar promotional deal meant he has been “wearing the face of a man who knows he is never going to get his knighthood now”. This was obviously wrong. Having been paid a reported £150m for his work shilling for the Qatari regime, David is in fact even better placed to buy a knighthood than he was before, and could easily run to a peerage.

But could David also be involved in the purchase of something else? Namely, Manchester United football club, which you’ll have noted is back on the market after the adored Glazer family have finally decided to cash out of the club they bought with some debt back in 2005. Can you cash out of something you never put cash into? Amazingly, yes. High finance is magic, and I’ve got a huge amount of time for it.

According to the Financial Times, Beckham is “open to holding talks with potential bidders for Manchester United”, aware his backing “could lend credibility”.

Quick Guide

Qatar: beyond the football

Show

This is a World Cup like no other. For the last 12 years the Guardian has been reporting on the issues surrounding Qatar 2022, from corruption and human rights abuses to the treatment of migrant workers and discriminatory laws. The best of our journalism is gathered on our dedicated Qatar: Beyond the Football home page for those who want to go deeper into the issues beyond the pitch.

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Photograph: Tom Jenkins

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Could it? Certainly, his unappealing antics over the past few weeks have catapulted him closer in the public affections to the reviled sports-owner category, though of course his personal wealth is nothing like what you'd need to be meaningfully financially involved in a bid, with current estimates of United's worth ricocheting cheerily between just under £5bn to upwards of £7bn.

But Beckham's sense that he would make a worthy figurehead or heritage fan appeaser for someone else's bid is intriguing. On one level it's hard to know how much appeasing would even be necessary. There is no more elegant pivot in world sport than spending years moaning about the World Cup being in Qatar to begging a Gulf state to come and buy your club, and I feel sure we'll be seeing some stunning examples of this executed as the sale hots up.

As for who Beckham would lend his image to, that's the big question. Though he is not formally a spokesmodel for Just For Men Beard and Moustache dye, Beckham's alarmingly coloured beard now looks so odd he could almost be the continuity Glazer candidate, at least on the weird facial-hair front. (You'll remember the particular beard sported by the late paterfamilias Malcolm Glazer. In my taxonomy of beard types, I always think of that one as "the pervert special", though of course there is absolutely no suggestion that Malcolm's kinks were anything other than financial. Tonsorially, Glazer owed much to the Amish. And financially, he owed much to a number of funds and institutions.)

David Beckham in the VIP seats for the England v Iran group game. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Anyway: runners and riders for a bid for the club. Openly keen is the Ineos tycoon Sir Jim Ratcliffe, who is a lifelong United fan and already involved in sports ownership. Jim is Britain's richest man – lives in Monaco, obviously – but something about the cut of his jib makes me feel he'd be the long prelude to your first sighting of a "GLAZERS IN" banner.

The Daily Star seems to think Apple is interested (no), while the Times mentions Amazon and Meta. The latter would suggest Mark Zuckerberg's money-pit cravings are somehow insufficiently satisfied by the metaverse on which he has already dropped more than the US spent on the entire Manhattan project. Next up are the obligatory pair of Americans, in the form of Stephen Pagliuca and Larry Tanenbaum, disappointed shortlisters to buy Chelsea. Then there's Jim O'Neill and his Red Knights, and the Zara magnate Amancio Ortega. Arguably the one to watch is Dubai International Capital, which would mean cuddly Sheikh Makhtoum could swap notes with Beckham on their iron-filings beards, like a pair of those magnetic Wooly Willy toys.

But, banter-wise, you do have to think a certain other little Gulf state could come in with a late surprise, as soon as Qatar realise there's one bit of the

UK they haven't already bought. After all, even considering just luxury London hotels, Beckham's friends in the Qatar regime own some or all of the Ritz, Claridge's, the Connaught, the Berkeley and the InterContinental Park Lane. So they enjoy internal competition, and PSG could serve as a cute little feeder club or something.

That would certainly make for the sort of flashy launch event to which Beckham could be drawn. When the Qataris opened the Shard, the party featured Boris Johnson, the prime minister of Qatar and Prince Andrew. So that's Boris Johnson, the prime minister of Qatar and Prince Andrew at the top of an extremely tall glass building. I know what you're thinking – and believe me, so am I – but it's impossible to print those things without someone writing some pained letter to the readers' editor about you, and I haven't got the time this weekend.

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So let's conclude this section by noting that Prince Andrew abseiled down part of the Shard for charity, scoffing that there was "a lot of psychobabble about this sort of thing". Cool as a cucumber; no sweat. Having completed his descent, Andrew said: "All my family, who have been very supportive, probably want to know I have landed safely." (But did they? Hopefully series whatever of The Crown will portray this incident as a failed assassination attempt by Prince Philip. Can't win 'em all.)

Money taking and bad decision-making: the Glazers' legacy at Manchester United – explainer video

Whichever way you slice it, then, there is everything to play for with our Golden Balls-for-hire. Let's hope our manscaped figurehead finds a ship to lash himself to in very short order, allowing him to once again set sail on lucrative tides.

Marina Hyde's World Cup Week will appear each Friday *during the tournament*

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Edith Pritchett on millennial lifeLife and style

Why David Attenborough documentaries gross me out – Edith Pritchett cartoon

Edith Pritchett
Sat 26 Nov 2022 01.00 EST

Edith Pritchett cartoon on David Attenborough's documentaries. They're a lesson in the majesty of nature, but also a lesson in the grossness of nature; it's amazing to see insects in such detail, but I can't help thinking about the cameraman who got assigned ants while his colleagues got tigers or whales; David Attenborough really harks on about how smart these capuchin monkeys are for tirelessly smashing open nuts with rocks, but sorry I just don't think that's very impressive. I can warm up an apple crumble pot in the microwave in 1 minute 10; some of the shots are unbelievable – turtles that freeze during the winter and thaw in the spring, but it must be so mortifying to wake up all crusty-eyed and discover you're being filmed by the BBC; ugh, of course it had to be NOW

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2022.11.26 - Around the world

- US Trump reportedly dined with white nationalist at Mar-a-Lago
- Kanye West Rapper announces 2024 presidential bid amid far-right ties
- Australia Tasmanian flower farmer ‘shocked’ to learn she planted opium poppies by mistake
- Pakistan Imran Khan to resume protests – this time taking on military

Donald Trump

Trump reportedly dines with white nationalist at Mar-a-Lago

Ex-president ‘dined and conversed’ with Nick Fuentes and Kanye West a week after announcing his 2024 campaign

Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago after announcing his presidential run on 15 November. Photograph: Andrew Harnik/AP

Victoria Bekiempis
Fri 25 Nov 2022 16.01 ESTLast modified on Fri 25 Nov 2022 16.03 EST

Donald Trump reportedly “dined and conversed” with infamous white nationalist Nick Fuentes at the former president’s Mar-a-Lago club in Palm Beach on Tuesday.

Trump’s encounter with the openly racist Fuentes – who was in the company of disgraced rapper Kanye West, now known as Ye – came one week after the former US president declared his 2024 campaign.

The interaction has prompted concerns about Trump's willingness to engage with far-right extremists.

News website Axios first reported on the trio's confab emerged hours after Ye posted a video titled "Mar-a-Lago Debrief" to his Twitter account Thursday evening, which was recently restored following suspension for making antisemitic statements.

Ye – who has been dropped by brands such as Balenciaga and Gap over his bigoted comments – announced his own bid for president in this video missive. But in the video he then also claimed to describe meeting with Trump in the company of Fuentes.

"Trump is really impressed with Nick Fuentes and Nick Fuentes, unlike so many of the lawyers and so many people that he was left with on his 2020 campaign, he's actually a loyalist," Ye said.

Fuentes, who has espoused vehemently antisemitic, racist and misogynistic views, launched a white nationalist organization named America First Foundation.

He first received national attention in 2017 after claiming to have left Boston University over "threats" following his attendance at the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

Trump confirmed the meeting on his social media platform, Politico reported. "This past week, Kanye West called me to have dinner at Mar-a-Lago … Shortly thereafter, he unexpectedly showed up with three of his friends, whom I knew nothing about. We had dinner on Tuesday evening with many members present on the back patio. The dinner was quick and uneventful. They then left for the airport."

In a statement reported by Axios, Trump appeared to try distancing himself from Fuentes, saying: "Kanye West very much wanted to visit Mar-a-Lago. Our dinner meeting was intended to be Kanye and me only, but he arrived with a guest whom I had never met and knew nothing about."

Trump has long been criticized for his embrace of far-right figureheads. He refused to condemn white supremacists and other far-right groups during the first 2020 presidential debate, instead telling the Proud Boys extremist group to “stand back and stand by”.

In 2017 Trump was widely condemned for saying they were “very fine people on both sides” after clashes at a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, left one anti-fascist protester dead.

The Southern Poverty Law Center reported in March 2020 that white nationalist hate groups increased 55% during the Trump era, saying that the surge stemmed from “a deep fear of demographic change”.

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Kanye West

Kanye West announces 2024 presidential bid amid far-right ties

Declaration comes amid Adidas investigation and fashion brands dropping the rapper over antisemitic comments

Kanye West, who now goes by Ye, at a rally in support of his previous presidential bid in South Carolina in July 2020. Photograph: Randall Hill/Reuters

Edward Helmore in New York
Fri 25 Nov 2022 10.40 ESTFirst published on Fri 25 Nov 2022 09.39 EST

The disgraced rapper and designer formerly known as Kanye West has said he plans to run for president in 2024, amid a series of antisemitic tirades and new far-right associations.

The declaration of his candidacy, which referenced several political figures and aides associated with US white supremacist and anti-democracy movements, would make him the second person to enter the race after Donald Trump.

A day earlier, the sportswear giant Adidas announced it was launching an investigation into allegations he harassed former employees. Rolling Stone magazine reported claims by Adidas employees working on the rapper's Yeezy shoe line that he used "porn, bullying and mind games" to create a "toxic environment" at the company.

That revelation itself followed several fashion brands, including Adidas, Gap and Balenciaga, dropping the 45-year-old star over antisemitic comments he made online, including that he would go "death con 3 on JEWISH PEOPLE".

That comment, after he wore a controversial "White Lives Matter" T-shirt during Paris fashion week, triggered mass condemnation of the rapper, and he was dropped by banker JPMorgan, his talent agent CAA, lawyers and record company. Ye later said he had lost "$2bn in one day".

Twitter and Instagram temporarily locked his accounts. Ye went on Fox News' Tucker Carlson Tonight and made further inflammatory comments, this time about his ex-wife, Kim Kardashian, and the pop star Lizzo. He told former CNN anchor Chris Cuomo that his antisemitic comment was "not hate speech; this is the truth".

Ye's faltering effort to distance himself from the remarks were further undermined when antisemitic demonstrators referenced Ye in signs raised over the 405 freeway in Los Angeles, California, and in Jacksonville, Florida. One sign reportedly read: "Kanye is right about the Jews."

"This weekend's antisemitic protests in LA were disgusting and cannot be normalized or brushed aside. Words matter", California's governor, Gavin Newsom, said in a tweet.

The presidential run is Ye's second. During his first, in 2020, he qualified for ballot access in just 12 states, unsuccessfully sued for access to five more,

gave up on four and missed registration deadlines on a further 29.

He held one highly emotional rally in South Carolina in which he spoke of his anti-abortion views, funded two television ads and ultimately picked up just 70,000 votes across the entire US.

Ye's announcement of a second run for the White House was made with a video of his campaign logo to social media captioned "Ye24". In it, he claimed to have asked Donald Trump to be his running mate, a suggestion that had "most perturbed" the former president.

"The thing that Trump was most perturbed about [is] me asking him to be my vice-president," Kanye said in a video posted on his recently unlocked Twitter account. "I think that was, like, lower on the list of things that caught him off-guard."

"It was the fact that I walked in with intelligence," Ye added.

In the "Ye24" Twitter post, the rapper said he'd he advised Trump to "go and get these people that the media tried to cancel", with flashes of Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski, Roger Stone and InfoWars conspiracist Alex Jones.

Several days ago, Ye was seen in the company of white nationalist Nick Fuentes at Trump's Mar-a-Lago country club and home. In the subsequent video, titled "Mar-A-Lago Debrief", Ye said Trump "started basically screaming at me at the table, telling me I'm going to lose. Has that ever worked for anyone in history? I'm like, 'Wait, hold on Trump, you're talking to Ye.'"

Fuentes is known for virulently antisemitic opinions of his own, as well as extreme racism, misogyny and fascism. He started a white nationalist organization called America First Foundation. The Department of Justice has called him a white supremacist and he has been banned from multiple social media platforms.

In the video Ye sang Fuentes's praises and called him a "loyalist".

Ye also recently told the far-right British commentator Milo Yiannopoulos that he was “working on the campaign”, which Yiannopoulos said he took to be a campaign announcement. On Thursday, Ye indicated that he had enlisted Yiannopoulos as his 2024 campaign manager.

Yiannopoulos has a long history of antisemitism, too, including donating $14.88 to a Jewish journalist, a figure that references the so-called “14 Words” white supremacist manifesto and 88, used by neo-Nazis as shorthand for “Heil Hitler” because H is the eighth letter of the alphabet.

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The rural networkTasmania

Tasmanian flower farmer ‘shocked’ to learn she planted opium poppies by mistake

Kate Dixon has issued a warning to other gardeners after authorities seized 50 plants she thought were ornamental varieties

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A flower farmer has a word of warning for gardeners after finding out her ‘really beautiful poppies’ were a prohibited opium variety. Photograph: Martina Unbehauen/Getty Images/iStockphoto

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About this content

Khaled Al Khawaldeh

Fri 25 Nov 2022 18.00 EST

A Tasmanian flower farmer who planted a new line of "really beautiful poppies" has issued a warning to other gardeners after learning she had mistakenly grown opium poppies.

Kate Dixon, who operates a commercial flower farm at Clifton Beach, about 25km south of Hobart, said she received a call from the authorities earlier this month after they saw a photo of her frilly pink poppies on Instagram.

"I got an email through my website as an inquiry," Dixon told ABC radio. "And at first glance, thought it was a phishing scam, because I had absolutely no idea that the poppies that I was growing were questionable or illegal and restricted."

Officers from the department of natural resources and environment took a sample of the flowers to the University of Tasmania for testing, and determined they were of prohibited species *Papaver somniferum,* known as

alkaloid or opium poppies, and *Papaver bracteatum*, known as Persian or Iranian poppies.

Dixon said she took “full responsibility” for not spotting the flowers earlier but said the seeds were widely available.

“I was just really shocked because I’ve seen these, I bought these particular seeds from a mainland seed supplier, and I’ve definitely seen these varieties available for local sale, I’ve seen them in people’s cottage gardens here,” she told the ABC.

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In a later post on her Instagram page, Dixon said she had bought seeds containing what she thought was Poppy Pink Frills, or *Papaver paeoniflorum*, and a coral oriental poppy, *Papaver oriental*.

Papaver paeoniflorum is a cultivar of *Papavar somniferum*, and is listed as a prohibited species in Tasmania. What Dixon thought were oriental poppies were actually the very similar-looking *Papaver bracteatum*.

In a statement, the department confirmed it had removed 50 plants from Dixon’s property.

“The department appreciates the assistance of the property owner,” the statement said. “Where prohibited poppies have been found in a garden setting in the first instance our preferred approach is generally education, awareness and to engage with the owner.”

The chief executive of Poppy Growers Tasmania, Keith Rice, told Guardian Australia the rules on growing poppies in Tasmania were clear, and urged gardeners to be more careful.

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"The government factsheets are very clear on what you cannot grow, it's a very well-known crop in Tasmania and does not look very alike to the legal kind," Rice said.

Rice said he had not heard of seeds from restricted varieties being found in a flower seed mix, and said that strict licensing protocols made that extremely unlikely.

"It's been an issue in Tasmania going back almost a century when poppies were grown in flower gardens," he said. "Over the years, that's become far, far more restricted, they're basically not there any more."

Tasmania is the largest alkaloid poppy producer in the world, and supplies almost half of all global demand. The crops are strictly monitored, but there are frequent reports of people becoming sick after drinking "poppy tea".

Earlier this month there was a national recall of poppy seeds after 19 people were hospitalised with severe poisoning after drinking homemade poppy seed tea. None of those cases were in Tasmania.

- *It is illegal to grow, manufacture, sell or possess alkaloid poppies in Tasmania without a licence. For more more information about poppies, readers can also contact the Regulated Crops Branch on 1300 368 500 or email poppies@nre.tas.gov.au*

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Imran Khan

Imran Khan to resume protests – this time taking on Pakistan's military

After surviving an assassination attempt, many believe ex-PM could use his support to press army to back a return to power

Supporters in Rawa, Pakistan, watch a televised address by Imran Khan. Photograph: Rehan Khan/EPA

Hannah Ellis-Petersen and Shah Meer Baloch
Sat 26 Nov 2022 04.02 ESTFirst published on Fri 25 Nov 2022 05.33 EST

It will be the moment that Imran Khan has been building up to for weeks. On Saturday, Pakistan's toppled prime minister and former superstar cricketer will bring his "long march 2.0" to the city of Rawalpindi as he continues to push for early general elections. If a vote is called, Khan insists he will win overwhelmingly.

Khan's appearance will be his first public outing since an assassination attempt earlier this month, when he was shot in the leg as his march travelled through Punjab. He remains unable to walk so will address the crowds from a wheelchair. According to security agencies, there remains a high risk of another assassination attempt, so Khan will be shielded within a cube of bulletproof glass.

On Saturday, a video was circulating of aides posing with a now-removed blue cast that Khan wore on his right leg after the shooting.

Since Khan was removed as prime minister in April in a vote of no confidence, his popularity has gone from strength to strength just as Pakistan has spiralled further into a state of political crisis. The former PM – known to thrive as an opposition agitator – has mobilised hundreds of thousands of people at his rallies and made speeches filled with incendiary rhetoric.

Khan accused the US government of being behind a conspiracy to remove him from power, though he has recently backtracked and accused the new coalition government led by Shehbaz Sharif of being "imported" and corrupt. But it is Khan's decision to go up against Pakistan's mighty military establishment that has gripped the people and left the country reeling.

Pakistan: Imran Khan says two shooters tried to assassinate him – video

Khan and the senior aides in his party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), have not only accused the military of being responsible for pushing him out of office, but also for having a role in the assassination attempt. Khan unsuccessfully tried to file a police report naming Sharif, the interior minister, Rana Sanaullah Khan, and the senior army general Faisal Naseer as the three conspirators.

"It is no secret that the [military] establishment played a huge role in removing Imran Khan from power, by forcing our allies to abandon him," said Fawad Chaudhry, a PTI spokesperson. The government and the military have denied this, and the shooter held responsible has said he acted alone.

Imran Khan addresses the media at a hospital in Lahore, the day after the assassination attempt against him. Photograph: Arif Ali/AFP/Getty Images

Khan's outspoken position is all the more extraordinary given his once entrenched relationship with the military establishment, who have a long history of keeping a stranglehold over Pakistani politics and in the past have taken power through coups.

Yet many believe Khan is once again looking for their backing to return him to power. Khan's huge appeal, particularly when compared with the declining popularity of the Sharif government, remains his trump card.

Zahid Hussain, a political analyst, said: "Khan is hugely popular while the army position has been weakened and they are on the defensive so they may cave to pressure and talk to him. The military is not neutral, it has never been neutral."

Khan was dealt a significant blow on Thursday when it was announced that the new army chief, arguably the most powerful position in Pakistan, will be Gen Asim Munir, whom Khan fired from a senior post in 2019. Munir is reported to be apolitical but, said the former prime minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, "to remain out of politics will be a big challenge for the new chief.

The army has so much influence in governmental matters, it is so ingrained in the system, that it is difficult and complicated for this to just end".

For years, Khan was described as the "blue-eyed boy" of the generals. Though he denies it, many within his party say he was elected in 2018 with the help of the military, who are accused of pressuring MPs to join the PTI and rigging the election in his favour.

One senior PTI leader, who is still close to Khan so spoke on the condition of anonymity, said: "The military is cunning and they brought him in power in a way that they could also get him out easily as we were not given the majority."

Khan's government operated as a so-called hybrid regime where the military interfered directly, though behind the scenes. "Our politics was outsourced, it was run by ISI," said the PTI leader, referring to Inter-Services Intelligence, an agency controlled by the military.

Noor Alam Khan, who left the PTI in April having joined from the Pakistan People's party, said: "There used to be interference from the establishment, lots of calls to politicians forcing them to join a certain party [PTI], vote a certain way." Since Khan was removed from power, the interference has stopped.

Even Khan recently stated that while in power he received help from military agencies and could not pass bills without their support.

Gen Asim Munir (right) meets the Pakistan president, Arif Alvi, in Islamabad on Thursday. Photograph: AP

Under the hybrid regime, the army cracked down on media freedom and Khan's political opponents were imprisoned. Pakistan's ranking in the Transparency International corruption index slipped a record 20 places from 2019-21 due to "state capture" and an "absence of rule of law", despite Khan's election promise to clean up politics.

In 2021, the relationship between Khan and the military, and in particular with the army chief, Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, began to fray over the generals' concerns that Khan was running the country's economy into the ground, as inflation soared and the government spent wildly on subsidies on fuel and power.

Khan's erratic approach to foreign policy, alienating allies such as the US and Saudi Arabia, was also a cause of consternation.

The relationship broke down completely after the military refused to back Khan's candidates in regional elections, then decided against Khan's will to transfer Lt Gen Faiz Hameed, the head of the ISI who was helping him run the country.

Despite Khan's best efforts to prevent a vote of no confidence, it went ahead in April 2022 and he was removed after swathes of his own PTI MPs as well as coalition allies voted against him. Some credited not only the military's withdrawal of support but also the alleged rampant corruption and disastrous economic policies that had left them unable to face their constituents.

"Imran Khan has two faces," said Noor Alam Khan**.** "He is not clean, he is not sincere to the nation and he does not believe in democracy."

The ferocity with which Khan has since turned against the military appears to have taken the establishment by surprise. Khan criticised the military in speeches, in particular the powerful army chief Bajwa.

On Wednesday night, Bajwa, who retires from his post next week, took the highly unconventional step of openly admitting military interference in politics for the past 70 years. In what appeared to be a pointed response to Khan, Bajwa criticised those building a "false narrative" and said the army had made the decision "it would never interfere in any political matter".

This was met with scepticism among analysts and politicians. "We've heard that too at times before and too many times it simply hasn't happened," said Michael Kugelman, a senior associate for south Asia at the Wilson Center thinktank in the US. "Given how deeply entrenched the military is in Pakistan's political fabric, it would be almost impossible for there to be such a sharp shift."

Instead, Khan's fate is likely to rest on whether Munir, the new military chief, is willing to come to the negotiating table. "Ultimately the army wants to deal with the terrible political mess in the country," said Kugelman. "So the big question now is, do they think that involves some kind of reconciliation with Khan?"

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World Cup 2022

World Cup 2022: England, Wales and others back down over armband row – as it happened

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UK news

‘Perfectly legitimate’ for England players to take knee at World Cup, says minister

Robert Jenrick says he’s ‘fine’ with England team protesting against inequality before matches in Qatar

- World Cup 2022 – live news updates

England players take the knee before a Euro 2020 championship quarter-final match against Ukraine in July 2021. Photograph: Alessandra Tarantino/AP

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About this content

Peter Walker Political correspondent
@peterwalker99

Mon 21 Nov 2022 05.11 ESTFirst published on Mon 21 Nov 2022 03.48 EST

A senior UK cabinet minister has said it is “perfectly legitimate” for England players to take the knee at the World Cup to protest against inequality, emphasising the apparent change in attitude towards the stance by some Conservative politicians.

England will take the knee before their match against Iran on Monday, although Harry Kane will not wear the “OneLove” rainbow captain’s armband in support of LGBTQ+ rights, over concerns this could bring an instant yellow card.

Robert Jenrick, the immigration minister, said he had no issue with England players taking the knee, a protest that emerged from the Black Lives Matter movement but which is used by footballers as a more general condemnation of prejudice.

“I’m fine with that,” he told Sky News. “I think that’s a choice for Harry Kane and the team, and indeed for Wales as well. These are their choices, it’s not for the government to tell them what to do.

“And I think when you’re playing in a country like Qatar, which does have different standards in the way it treats, for example, the LGBTQ community, it’s perfectly legitimate for the England or the Welsh team to make that stand.”

During the Euro 2020 football competition, which took place last year, Boris Johnson, the then prime minister, refused to condemn fans who booed England players for taking the knee.

Priti Patel, Johnson’s home secretary at the time, said England fans had the right to boo players for what she called “gesture politics”, while Lee Anderson, the Tory MP for Ashfield in Nottinghamshire, said he would not watch any England games while the team was supporting a “political movement” and risked alienating “traditional supporters”.

Discussions over equality at the World Cup are all the more pointed given laws in Qatar that discriminate against LGBT people.

Fifa, football’s world governing body, has requested that team captains wear armbands with messages such as “Football unites the world”, “Share the meal” and “Bring the moves”.

England and Wales, and some other teams, had planned to defy Fifa and send out their captains wearing the rainbow armband. However, England and Wales and some other World Cup nations have said they now will not.

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In a joint statement with Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland, the English and Welsh football associations said that while they would be prepared to pay fines, they could not risk “sporting sanctions” for players.

The statement said: “We are very frustrated by the Fifa decision which we believe is unprecedented” and that players and coaches were “disappointed”.

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World Cup 2022

‘Very frustrated’: England and Wales back down over OneLove armband

- Seven countries issue joint statement after warning from Fifa
- They say players could be booked or forced to leave the pitch

England’s Harry Kane wearing the OneLove armband in September. Photograph: The FA/PA

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About this content

Sean Ingle and Nick Ames in Doha

Mon 21 Nov 2022 05.06 ESTFirst published on Mon 21 Nov 2022 03.52 EST

England, Wales and five other European nations have backed down from wearing the OneLove armband that was intended as a protest at all forms of discrimination at the World Cup in Qatar. The decision came after they were warned by Fifa they would face sporting sanctions, and that their captains could be booked or even forced to leave the pitch.

Instead the captains are expected to wear Fifa-approved armbands promoting different social messages throughout the tournament. Fifa announced on Monday that the "No Discrimination" message, originally scheduled to be worn by teams in the quarter-finals, would instead be worn in the first group games instead.

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Qatar: beyond the football

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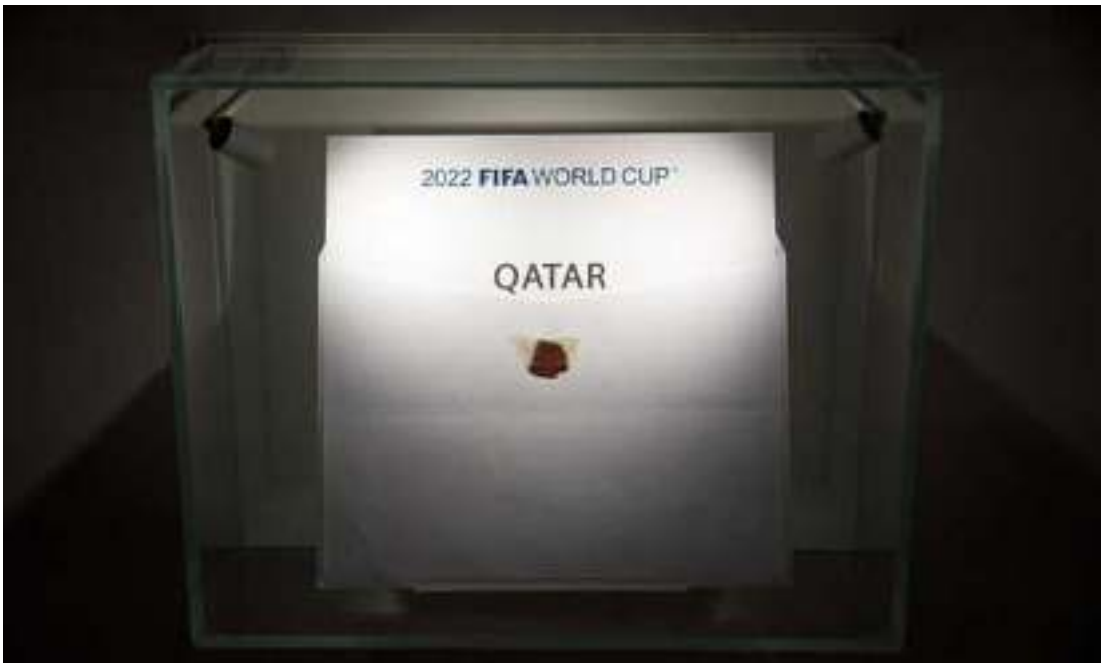

This is a World Cup like no other. For the last 12 years the Guardian has been reporting on the issues surrounding Qatar 2022, from corruption and human rights abuses to the treatment of migrant workers and discriminatory laws. The best of our journalism is gathered on our dedicated Qatar: Beyond the Football home page for those who want to go deeper into the issues beyond the pitch.

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Photograph: Tom Jenkins

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In a statement the seven federations – also including Belgium, Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands and Switzerland – expressed dismay at Fifa's behaviour.

"Fifa has been very clear that it will impose sporting sanctions if our captains wear the armbands on the field of play," they said. "As national federations, we can't put our players in a position where they could face

sporting sanctions including bookings, so we have asked the captains not to attempt to wear the armbands in Fifa World Cup games.

“We were prepared to pay fines that would normally apply to breaches of kit regulations and had a strong commitment to wearing the armband. However, we cannot put our players in the situation where they might be booked or even forced to leave the field of play.”

What also frustrated the federations was that they had contacted Fifa in September to say they planned to wear the rainbow armband in a country where same-sex relationships are illegal, yet had heard nothing – until Sunday evening.

“We are very frustrated by the Fifa decision which we believe is unprecedented – we wrote to Fifa in September informing them of our wish to wear the One Love armband to actively support inclusion in football, and had no response,” they said. “Our players and coaches are disappointed – they are strong supporters of inclusion and will show support in other ways.”

The federations met Fifa on Monday morning to seek clarity over the issue. Before the statement was issued the Denmark manager, Kasper Hjulmand, made clear his bafflement at Fifa’s attitude given the armband was worn, with scant fanfare, during Nations League games in September. That competition falls under Uefa’s jurisdiction.

“This is not something invented for this occasion, it’s something we’ve done before,” he said. “A OneLove armband – I can’t see the problem to be honest.”

The Netherlands manager, Louis van Gaal, said: “We are not going to wear the armband if we’re going to get a yellow card and we need to question whether this is a correct act on the part of Fifa. And you can answer that question. I think it is crystal clear.”

The Guardian has spoken to Qatari and Fifa sources who insisted the decision was taken purely by football’s governing body – and that there had been no pressure from Qatar regarding the armband. A Fifa source also

pointed out that the regulations have long been clear that unapproved armbands are not allowed – and therefore nothing had really changed.

The emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, with Fifa's president, Gianni Infantino. Photograph: Qian Jun/ATP/SPP/Shutterstock

Fifa said in a statement: "Fifa can confirm its No Discrimination campaign has been brought forward from the planned quarter-finals stage in order that all 32 captains will have the opportunity to wear this armband during the Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022.

"This is in line with Article 13.8.1 of the Fifa equipment regulations, which state: 'For Fifa final competitions, the captain of each team must wear the captain's armband provided by Fifa.'

"The Fifa World Cup Qatar 2022 regulations, as approved by everyone in the game, exist to preserve the integrity of the field of play for all participants and are equally applicable to all competing teams.

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"Fifa is an inclusive organisation that wants to put football to the benefit of society by supporting good and legitimate causes, but it has to be done within the framework of the competition regulations which are known to everyone."

The decision was quickly greeted with dismay by fans and LGBTQ+ groups. The Football Supporters' Association said: "LGBT+ football supporters and their allies will feel angry. Today we feel betrayed. Today we feel contempt for an organisation that has shown its true values by giving the yellow card to players and the red card to tolerance.

"Never again should a World Cup be handed out solely on the basis of money and infrastructure. No country which falls short on LGBT+ rights, women's rights, workers' rights or any other universal human right should be given the honour of hosting a World Cup."

A joint statement from 3 Lions Pride and The Rainbow Wall, LGBTQ+ fan groups of England and Wales respectively, accused Fifa of censorship and said football's governing body was "crushing the basic human rights to freedom of speech and expression" and "giving a platform to hate".

The veteran gay rights campaigner Peter Tatchell said that Fifa's president, Gianni Infantino, had showed his "true colours" after speaking about inclusivity at the weekend.

"I urge the team captains at their post-match press conferences to spend just 30 seconds to speak out for the rights of women, LGBTs and migrant workers," he said. "That would have a huge impact, reaching a global audience of hundreds of millions of people.

"Fifa has crushed the OneLove campaign with the threat of yellow cards. It's time to show Fifa and Qatar the red card."

Infantino said he had spoken to Qatar's "highest leadership" and "I can confirm that everyone is welcome".

The British Olympian and BBC presenter Jeannette Kwakye expressed disappointment at the FA's decision. "The most powerful protests in global sport have not required permission," she pointed out on social media.

The official spokesman of Rishi Sunak, the British prime minister, said: "We share the FA's frustration with Fifa's decision on this which puts players in a very difficult position. It is, ultimately, a decision for the FA. On LGBT rights more broadly, clearly Qatar's policies are not those of the UK government and not ones we would endorse."

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2022.11.21 - Spotlight

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- **‘I’m a homeless guy looking after a palace!’ The housesitters escaping the cost of living crisis**
- **Keyboard shortcuts and a poker face How to watch the World Cup at work**
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- **A new start after 60 ‘I learned to skydive. The door opens, the wind comes through – and vroom, you’re away!’**

Immigration and asylum

Cold comfort Kent: where small-boat arrivals receive a fraying welcome

From Dover port to Marston and Napier barracks, the UK offers asylum seekers who cross the Channel a mixed reception

A Chinook military helicopter flys over Napier barracks in Folkestone, where every fence has been covered up with tarpaulin to separate the asylum seekers housed inside from the outside. Photograph: Andy Aitchison/The Guardian

Diane Taylor
Mon 21 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 07.17 EST

A few sturdy souls dressed in waterproof winter coats braved the elements to take a walk along Folkestone's clifftop promenade, The Leas. Some winced as the biting wind and slanted rain hit their faces. Below them the waves of

the Channel rose high as they bashed the shore. This was weather to gladden the heart of the home secretary, Suella Braverman.

The Home Office officials and their boss, who reportedly scrutinise the weather forecasts more than most, may have offered silent prayers of thanks to the weather gods in the last few days. After a spike in the numbers of people in crossings the previous weekend – including 972 recorded on 12 November – there were zero crossings due to the inclement conditions over 15-17 November.

At a time when the Home Office is facing unprecedented pressure over small boat crossings as numbers have risen above a record 40,000 so far this year, officials are likely to regard every arrival-free day as a bonus. This Thursday marks the first anniversary of the death of 27 people who tried to cross to England in a dinghy, the worst maritime disaster in the Channel for 30 years.

There are a series of immigration landmarks along the Kent coast, some looking rather frayed at the edges, where small boat arrivals are processed and temporarily accommodated. However, the newcomers are increasingly hidden from view and separated from the general public. This means contact between them and British people, both friends and foes, has been reduced.

A penned-off area in Manston asylum seeker processing centre. Photograph: Andy Aitchison/The Guardian

Evidence of the aftermath of a firebomb attack by far-right supporter Andrew Leak on 30 October can be seen at Western Jet Foil at Dover harbour where small boat arrivals are taken to. Part of the gate is charred from where Leak threw a plastic bottle taped to a lit firework. An orange coach sits empty by the fence due to the lack of arrivals.

At Napier, the military barracks in Folkestone, used to house hundreds of asylum seekers by the Home Office, it is no longer possible to speak through the metal fencing to asylum seekers inside, although they are not locked up on the site. The extensive perimeter has now been wrapped in blue tarpaulin which flaps in the wind. The Home Office continues to use the barracks after a damning high court ruling in June 2021 which found that conditions there failed to meet a minimum standard.

Officials made a belated admission at the height of the Covid pandemic last year that about 200 people had become infected with the virus. Since then the Home Office says it has made significant improvements to the site.

A glimpse behind tarpaulin covering the entrance to Manston processing centre. Photograph: Andy Aitchison/The Guardian

At Manston, another military base along the coast, which provides basic temporary accommodation in a series of marquees, the Home Office started to process small boat arrivals in February. That site too has been hit by a series of scandals including reports of infectious diseases such as diphtheria, drug-selling by guards to asylum seekers and some new arrivals released from Manston and dumped in central London. That site is locked and on 30 October protesters filmed footage of young children shouting "Freedom!" through the fence. Since then that site too has been wrapped in swathes of tarpaulin.

Through the tiniest of gaps in the fence all that is visible are guards in fluorescent jackets and a huge coil of barbed wire. The site looks desolate and there is little sign of activity behind the big metal gates. Across the road in the back garden of a house facing the Manston site a union jack flag has been fixed on to a flagpole. If it's intended to send any particular message to the asylum seekers across the road they won't be able to see it due to the wall-to-wall fence cladding.

In the heavy rain and cold wind a group of asylum seekers walk the 15 minutes from Napier barracks to the Napier barracks drop-in centre wearing only flip-flops on their feet. Here they can drink tea and eat homemade cakes while playing games, chatting and doing art activities.

An art refuge session at Napier barracks drop-in centre where the refugees can get legal advice, talk with local volunteers and do art therapy. Photograph: Andy Aitchison/The Guardian

A 29-year-old asylum seeker from Syria who worked as a chef in his home country is desperate to work.

“We don’t want to cost the government any money. We want to work and pay our taxes,” he said. “I had to run away from my country because people were dying there every day. We wouldn’t want to leave our home if it was safe.”

He said that conditions at Napier were not too bad and preferable to life in a hotel because there was a sense of community among the men living there, some of whom he had met in Calais.

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Ahmed, age 22 from Sudan looking through a reel viewer at old pictures of animals. Photograph: Andy Aitchison/The Guardian

“It’s hard to sleep, though, in a dormitory of 24. All through the night someone or other is going to the toilet,” he said.

Sally Hough, a local resident, who runs the project for Napier asylum seekers, said she used to look across the Channel and think about France as a holiday or shopping destination but now just worries about the safety of those crossing in small boats.

“I fervently wish there were safe routes to apply for asylum from outside the UK. I view the Channel as an extremely dangerous place where people risk their lives every day,” she said.

Charles Sturgess, another local resident, does not think the UK should be welcoming small boat arrivals. “One-10th of the Albanian male population has come here,” he said. “Everyone coming on small boats are economic migrants. They should be sent back to that friendly country called France.”

No government or other source has said a 10th of Albania’s men are coming to the UK on small boats, although there has been an increase this year in the numbers arriving from that country.

Hadi, who arrived in the UK seven years ago from Afghanistan, now works as a taxi driver in Folkestone. Photograph: Andy Aitchison/The Guardian

For Hadi, a 22-year-old refugee from Afghanistan who lives in the area and works as a taxi driver, Kent is a welcoming place for refugees. He arrived here at the age of 16 in the back of a refrigerated lorry stuffed full of frozen chips, claimed asylum and has now been granted indefinite leave to remain in the UK.

“I have encountered very little racism here and have friends from so many different countries,” he said.

While people have different views about the best way to address the growing numbers arriving in small boats, there is broad consensus across the political divide that these dangerous crossings need to end. One of the windswept walkers along The Leas said: “All of this is down to years of mismanagement and a ridiculous lack of organisation on the part of the Home Office.”

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Advertisement

‘I’m a homeless guy looking after a palace!’ The housesitters escaping the cost of living crisis

‘Financially, housesitting is amazing’ … Sean Wood and Megan Gay, at a property they are caring for in Taunton, Somerset. Photograph: Roy Riley/The Guardian

Who wouldn’t want to live rent-free in a nice warm home in return for looking after the owner’s pets and keeping burglars away?

Jessica Rawnsley
Mon 21 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 11.31 EST

Massive houses, expansive gardens, occasionally a fridge full of food – and all of it free. Megan Gay and Sean Wood, both 27, have managed to dodge the cost of living crisis and the rent or mortgage hikes that are ravaging many people’s lives and savings in the UK. Their trick? Full-time housesitting. Seven months ago, the couple decided to quit London’s rental market and go on the road. Their belongings in bags, they have moved from house to house across the UK. They plan to continue living like this for at least another year.

Housesitting – taking care of properties and pets for nothing while owners are away – is not new. But since the pandemic, the trend has boomed. Confronted with an unstable housing market, inflation at a 40-year high and soaring food and energy costs, increasing numbers of people of all ages and walks of life are turning to housesitting to keep a roof over their heads.

“More and more people are struggling to find a place they can afford to live in, so housesitting is definitely a desirable alternative,” says Nick Fuad, of House Sitters UK, which connects sitters with owners. The number of housesitters on his site is double what it was before the pandemic. TrustedHousesitters, another housesitting platform, reports a 275% increase in UK growth since 2021.

With no rent or utility bills, Gay, a PR and marketing manager, is now able to put a significant portion of her salary into savings, while Wood has been able to set up his own business. Their overheads include petrol, some food and a £200 annual subscription to TrustedHousesitters, but this pales in comparison with what they were previously forking out: £2,000 a month rent

for a flat in south London, £200 or more for bills each month and £2,500 a year for a parking space – and they didn't even have a garden.

"I was working in a job that only just covered my rent and expenses, so I wasn't able to save," says Gay. "We reached breaking point and decided to leave the flat. Financially, housesitting is amazing. I'm hearing stories from friends whose rent is being hiked; they're having to leave and go back home to live with their parents, move to cheaper places, or beg their bosses for pay rises."

Megan Gay and Sean Wood, who left their rented flat to stay in other people's homes. Photograph: Roy Riley/The Guardian

The average housesit lasts one to two weeks, but long-term sits that average three to five weeks are on the rise, especially among those wanting to do it full time.

Angela Laws, 75, and her husband were among the first to sign up to TrustedHousesitters 12 years ago. They were semi-retired and back-to-back pet-sitting offered an otherwise unattainable lifestyle.

"It allowed us to travel more and do more than we ever thought possible on a limited income," says Laws. Their housesitting has seen them crisscross the globe: Scotland, France, Australia, America, Italy, Canada and the

Caribbean. For the past four years, Laws has also been working as a community manager for TrustedHousesitters. She has heard people say they have saved more than £30,000 a year.

‘It allowed us to travel on a limited income’ … veteran sitter Angela Laws housesitting on Bainbridge Island, Washington.

“You can literally save tens of thousands if you housesit for a few years,” says Fuad. “That can be enough to save for a deposit on your own home.”

Corinne Harrison and her partner Jack, both 30, began full-time housesitting earlier this year. Over the past six months, they have chalked up 11 housesits, staying in a tiny cottage in south Wales, a flat in Notting Hill in west London, a Tudor house in Bath and a residential compound in Spain.

“The only way to live together and save money at the same time is essentially to make yourself homeless and live in other people’s houses,” says Harrison. “Even before the cost of living crisis, the numbers were creeping up. This was our chance to get off that treadmill of renting, working, buying.”

That is not to say there aren’t downsides to this way of living. While some people have found lining up back-to-back sits relatively easy – in Wood’s words, it is a “sitter’s market” – others confess to a scramble to fill gaps

between bookings: nights spent on friends' sofas, a week at the parents', or a few days in a bedsit.

This makes permanent housesitting untenable for those who do not have a safety net. For Harrison, it has spawned an obsession with finding long-term sits. The couple began with week-long gigs, but soon discovered it wasn't sustainable because it was sometimes hard to line up sits that made sense geographically. Even so, the shift to remote work – and its continued acceptance by many employers – has seen the numbers of digital nomads balloon, and furthered the popularity of housesitting.

'This was our chance to get off that treadmill of renting, working, buying' … Corinne Harrison on the Sugar Loaf, Monmouthshire, while housesitting in Wales.

The pandemic has brought more owners to the market, too. On House Sitters UK, homeowner memberships are up 400%. This year, 5,000 new sits were posted on the TrustedHousesitters site each day. The surge has been fuelled partly by people itching to travel post-pandemic, and partly because of the mass puppy purchases that swept the UK during lockdown: pet owners looking for holiday cover now account for 85% of members on HouseSit Match.

For Julia Cudbard, 60, a care worker, housesitting offers a cost-saving and worry-free option when she has to leave her three Burmese cats. “They’re very dog-like cats and they need a lot of stimulation,” she says. “There’s no way I’d consider just leaving them in the house and getting neighbours to come round and feed them twice a day.” And hiring a private housesitter, she says, would “probably cost as much as the holiday itself”.

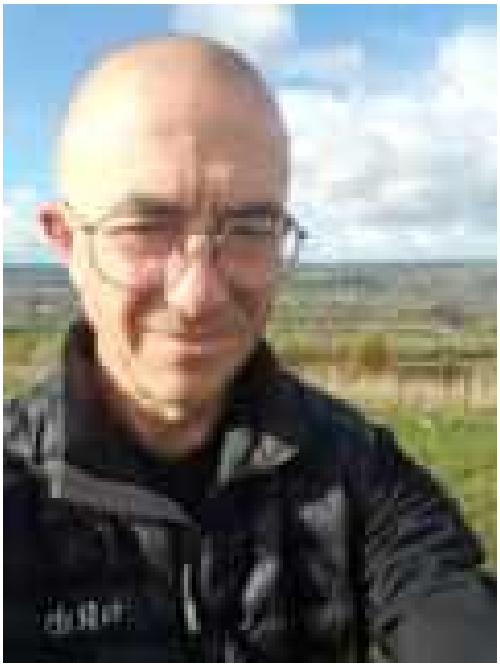
On the whole, housesitting works as a value-based exchange: no money changes hands between sitters and owners. The sitters look after the owners’ homes and pets; the owners pay them back with free accommodation, heating and, sometimes, food. This kind of bartering is an age-old practice, but the fact that some people are using it as a result of the housing crisis says something wider about British society today. Increasingly, people are turning not to the state, but to each other, to find a way to cope with current pressures.

How do people wanting to use a sitter ensure they can trust them? How do sitters ensure they are not being lured into an unsafe situation? Housesitting platforms provide a certain amount of vetting through user reviews but that is not to say things never go wrong.

Leila, 61, who has been a full-time housesitter since 2020, admits that living in other people’s properties can present challenges. “I’ve had a couple of pretty torrid experiences,” she says. “I’ve ended up staying in building sites, looking after animals that were end of life, and one that had had an operation recently so wasn’t able to go for walks. I’ve been in a couple that were less than clean.” Last-minute cancellations can leave owners in the lurch, too.

For most, though, the experience is a good one. David Twigg, 55, turned to housesitting after a divorce. With nowhere to live, it offered a lifeline while he sorted his finances. He says it has been transformational, partly because of the kindness of strangers, now friends, he has met along the way.

“I’m technically a homeless guy looking after a palace,” he says. “But that’s not what’s important. It’s trust and universal values.”



Housesitting provided David Twigg with much-needed accommodation after his divorce.

Five years ago, Lamia Walker, the director of HouseSit Match, received a call from Bragi Jonnson, from Iceland, who didn't want to spend the winter there. Walker found him a lengthy stay in Spain. Then another. Jonnson spent the next few years leaving Iceland to housesit during the winter, and returning in summer. Now he has retired and housesits full time. Currently in Truro, Cornwall, he has done more than 50 sits. Living rent-free means he can save money, even while living off his pension. He has been able to travel, buy a drone, and pay for his hobby of geocaching – a game using hidden objects. He hopes to continue housesitting into his 70s and 80s: "I don't see any reason for stopping."

For those who have been catapulted into housesitting because of strained finances, it is the community and friendships that inspire them to continue. Alejandro Alvarez, 34, felt isolated living with relatives in a small village in Derbyshire. Unable to afford city rents, he began to search online for free accommodation, exchanges, or sofa-surfing opportunities. Then he discovered housesitting. For the past month, he has been pet-sitting in London. He will continue until he can find work and get on his feet. "This has been the most incredible thing for me," he says. "As a gay man, being in

this diverse city, it really is life-changing. Housesitting opened doors for me.”

“We’ve stayed in several large places where we’re like: ‘Yeah, this is never going to be us’,” says Harrison. “But it’s a novelty to see how the other side live. We just take it as an experience.”

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World Cup 2022

Keyboard shortcuts and a poker face: how to watch the World Cup at work

Here are the crucial dos and don’ts for not giving the game away in the office over the next four weeks

The Qatar and Ecuador football teams line up before the opening match of the Fifa World Cup, at al-Bayt Stadium on Sunday. Photograph: Ronald Wittek/EPA

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About this content

Josh Halliday
Mon 21 Nov 2022 02.34 EST

From Monday, the World Cup in Qatar begins in earnest, and millions of Britons will be faced with the same problem: how to watch the football at work discreetly.

One poll found that nearly half of the country's workforce would not be allowed to watch games during business hours, but a fifth of those surveyed said they would find a way nevertheless.

It helps that many matches are happening at lunchtime, including England's opener against Iran, but here are some obvious dos and don'ts for supporters keen to watch the action without getting caught in the act.

Practice your poker face

An unexpected roar of glee from the sedentary position is an obvious giveaway. If your side have scored, maintaining an entirely neutral face is crucial to keeping up the appearance of work. Similarly, a sudden slump on to your desk, head in hands, accompanied by an involuntary groan, might suggest to fellow workers that you are not working on that all-important document for HR – instead, your side have just gone one down.

The carefully timed meeting

Given that most people can take a break at 1ish, you are entitled to watch some of the lunchtime games over a sandwich. That will probably only take you to the end of the first half, though, so the key period is just after lunch – the 45 minutes from 2pm. Scheduling meetings with like-minded supporters who have also practised their poker faces might be one way of seeing the game through to the end without arousing suspicions.

Rear-view mirrors

Cyclists can choose from an array of mini rear-view mirrors to help them avoid traffic coming up unexpectedly from behind. These small devices may also be handy for office workers keen not to be caught unawares by the sudden appearance of a colleague on their shoulder.

'Command and M' – or equivalent

For those unable to escape the office, this is absolutely vital – and requires practice. Watching on a desktop computer is fraught with danger, even for those who have bought rear-view mirrors. However, there are ways to make what you are watching disappear in a nanosecond. On Apple computers, hitting the command and M keys at the same time will quickly hide the front window whenever the boss is in sight. Ideally, have a daunting-looking spreadsheet open at the same time.

Plan ahead

It may be optimistic for England and Wales fans to already be thinking about the knockout stages, but there is good news for any team getting that far: all the eliminator games are on evenings or weekends.

The World Cup final is on Sunday 18 December at 3pm GMT. Just don't book the next day off work just yet.

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Advertisement

World Cup opening ceremony: six things we learned in Qatar

La’eeb, meaning ‘super-skilled player’, is an ‘adventurous, fun, curious’ sprite based on a ghutra headdress. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Morgan Freeman and BTS were star attractions at the opening ceremony while Gianni Infantino stayed silent until the last moment

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About this content

Martin Belam

Sun 20 Nov 2022 12.03 ESTLast modified on Sun 20 Nov 2022 15.45 EST

World Cup opening ceremonies don't carry quite the cultural heft of Olympic opening ceremonies. To make a truly memorable one you need to get Diana Ross to hopelessly miss a penalty or Robbie Williams to give the TV audience his middle finger. Many have interpreted Qatar hosting this World Cup as being about sportswashing their international image and no expense was spared on the 30-minute show that preceded the opening fixture between Qatar and Ecuador. Here is what we learned…

1) Qatar still trying to sell itself as inclusive

An opening video sequence saw a dream to kick progress from an infant in the womb to become a procession through the desert leading to the tent-shaped Al Bayt Stadium, via some space whales.

The organisers and Fifa have talked a lot about inclusivity – of the right kind of course – which was embodied in a sequence where Morgan Freeman and Ghanim al-Muftah spoke about overcoming differences. Al-Muftah is a Qatari who was born with Caudal Regression Syndrome which prevents the development of the lower spine, and he is a local social media personality.

US actor Morgan Freeman, left, sits on the stage at the opening ceremony with World Cup ambassador Ghanim al-Muftah. Photograph: Natacha Pisarenko/AP

2) Everybody got their own song

In a sequence where dancers seemed to be dressed as Imperial troops from Star Wars holding light sabres, drummers and singers ran through a greatest hits of football chants, and then every now and then the camera would switch to the crowd where, handily, it turned out that groups of fans from competing nations beyond Qatar and Ecuador were all seated together wearing their replica shirts to cheer along.

Which way to the death star? Photograph: Natacha Pisarenko/AP

There were also giant walking replica shirts that looked like they had escaped from a vintage edition of *Jeux sans frontières*.

Quick Guide

Qatar: beyond the football

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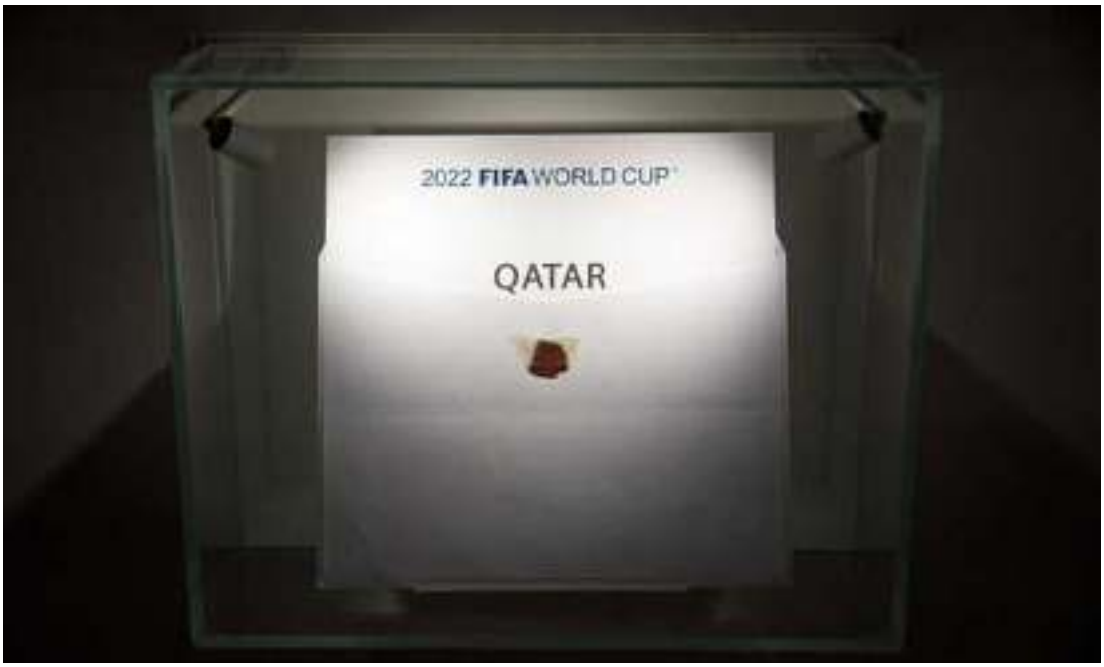

This is a World Cup like no other. For the last 12 years the Guardian has been reporting on the issues surrounding Qatar 2022, from corruption and human rights abuses to the treatment of migrant workers and discriminatory laws. The best of our journalism is gathered on our dedicated Qatar: Beyond the Football home page for those who want to go deeper into the issues beyond the pitch.

Guardian reporting goes far beyond what happens on the pitch. Support our investigative journalism today.

Photograph: Tom Jenkins

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

3) Russia still made a mark, despite their ban

The Qatari organisers rolled back the years with the mascots of World Cups gone by, marking a welcome reappearance of the likes of Naranjito from Spain 1982 and Footix from France 1998. Perhaps less welcome was the appearance of Zabivaka, Russia's mascot from the last tournament. Russia were expelled from World Cup qualifying following their invasion of Ukraine in February of this year.

Russia's 2018 mascot was included in the line-up of mascots from times gone by, despite the country's current Fifa ban. Photograph: Kim Hong-Ji/Reuters

The parade of old mascots marked the entrance of the 2022 World Cup mascot. La'eeb is meant to be based on a ghutra headdress, but more than one observer has noted that it looks like the risen spirit of the migrant workers who have died in the course of putting this tournament on.

A spectre looms over proceedings in Qatar. Photograph: Kai Pfaffenbach/Reuters

4) Jungkook of BTS has not started his military service yet

A surefire way to get an army of social media support for your opening ceremony is to include a K-Pop star, and Jungkook from BTS was on hand to sign his song Dreamers from the FIFA World Cup official soundtrack, a concept which would surely baffle Jules Rimet, founder of the whole World Cup caboodle back in the 1920s. After a long national debate, the seven members of BTS, one of the best-selling bands in the world, will shortly be putting their pop careers on pause to do military service in South Korea.

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Jungkook of BTS performs during the opening ceremony. Photograph: Adam Davy/PA

5) Emir claimed World Cup would celebrate diversity

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani was a popular figure with the crowd when he appeared, and he smiled broadly after there was a video montage sequence which showed him playing football as a young boy in the 1970s or 1980s.

Same-sex relationships are illegal in Qatar. Earlier this month, former Qatar international footballer and World Cup ambassador Khalid Salman said that homosexuality was “damage in the mind”.

Nevertheless al-Thani said the event gathered people of all nationalities and beliefs. “From Qatar, from the Arab world, I welcome everyone to the World Cup 2022. How lovely it is that people can put aside what divides them to celebrate their diversity and what brings them together all at once.”

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and Fifa president Gianni Infantino greet the public. Photograph: Kai Pfaffenbach/Reuters

6) Fifa president Gianni Infantino kept quiet – until the last moment

After Saturday's bizarre nearly hour-long press conference where Infantino declared he felt gay, disabled and like a migrant worker, he had a much simpler message to deliver during the ceremony itself. Silence. He sat next to the Emir, but said nothing.

However, in an unusual move, long after the ceremony itself had finished, as Qatar and Ecuador assembled on the pitch, Fifa's president – unscheduled - took the microphone to say: "football unites the world. And now let's welcome the teams and let the show begin. All the best to everyone."

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Advertisement

A new start after 60: ‘I learned to skydive. The door opens, the wind comes through – and vroom, you’re away!’

Mercy Baggs above the clouds on her tandem jump last March. Photograph: Simon Donnelly

At 77, Mercy Baggs did her first parachute jump – and found it thrilling. As she turned 90, she did it again for charity – and might try a zip wire next

Paula Cocozza
@CocozzaPaula
Mon 21 Nov 2022 02.00 EST

Mercy Baggs is contemplating her future. “Should I live to 95, I’ll do another parachute jump,” she says. She first jumped when she was 77, to commemorate her stint as mayor of the Wiltshire town of Calne. Then she jumped again last March, a day before her 90th birthday, to raise funds for Wiltshire air ambulance.

“It’s the thrill of it,’ she says. “You go up, and then that door opens and the wind starts to come through. You are strapped to this guy and he slides you out. Suddenly there’s a touch on your head, and vroom, you’re away. You free-fall. You free-fall for a long time.”

She has always enjoyed risks since she shinned up drainpipes as a child. “Whether it was just to show that I wasn’t frightened of anybody,” she says. “Because I’m not frightened of anybody … When I was a kid, people used to look down on me. But nobody does now.”

Baggs, 90, was born in 1932, the seventh of eight children, and grew up in Fulham, south-west London. “We all had fleas on our heads,” she says. “If you didn’t have fleas you were posh.”

The poverty was such that Baggs “didn’t have knickers to go to school with”. Her big sister enterprisingly safety-pinned her vest between her legs but it came undone at school “and all the kids were laughing at me. The teacher was in tears. She took me up. She put clean underwear on me and gave me spares to take home. We were so poor – I make no secret of it. But there was love,” she says.

Ready to jump … Baggs is harnessed up and all set. Photograph: Simon Donnelly

During the second world war, when she was seven, she was evacuated to Shottermill in Surrey. And there began “the happiest six years of my life”. She remains close to Betty, now 93, the daughter of the family she stayed

with; they speak on the phone twice a week. Baggs credits her “great faith” to her time in Shottermill, where she learned to say her prayers each night.

Of course, every time the headmaster appeared in the classroom, all the children feared he was bringing bad news. “I am very, very sensitive to people who are more unfortunate,” Baggs says.

As a young adult, she joined the British Transport Commission police, but dealing with children who couldn’t find their parents was too much to bear. “I knew what they were going through, having been evacuated. My dad said, ‘Look, it’s getting to you.’ It was. When you’ve been through it yourself … I like kids. I really do.”

She left the police and did stints with British Gas, Marks & Spencer and North Wiltshire council. But no doubt her childhood fed into her actions as a councillor, and later mayor, in Calne, where she helped to set up a drop-in centre for young people. “We raised money ourselves. We ended up with six computers, a pool table, wifi – until 2018 when the rent became too expensive.

‘There’s a world out there. There’s a life out there’ … Baggs after a smooth landing. Photograph: Simon Donnelly

“Those youngsters now are in their 30s. And they’ve got children of their own. I’ve seen them,” Baggs says. The drop-in was one of the causes she raised money for with that first leap out of the plane.

But why a parachute jump? At the time, her late husband, John, was ill with bowel cancer. “He said, ‘I do wish you wouldn’t do it.’ I said, ‘John, it’s life. I’ve got to do something.’”

Now she says that she wanted “to show that you don’t have to sit on your backside knitting or watching television all the time. There’s a world out there. There’s a life out there.”

Besides, she has never been fazed by ageing. “One day you’re 59, the next you’re 60. You are still the same person. You haven’t altered, have you?”

Baggs feels conscious each time she wakes that “today is one of the last days of my life”. The first words she utters are: “Good morning John, good morning God.”

“Death doesn’t frighten me,” she says. “A friend of mine said to me, ‘I’m terrified of dying.’ I said, ‘Do you remember being born?’ She said no. I said, ‘Well, you won’t remember dying, then.’” Baggs hopes for at least one more skydive, maybe a go on a 100mph zip wire – and “a peaceful end”.

- Tell us: has your life taken a new direction after the age of 60?

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2022.11.21 - Opinion

- It’s not just Qatar hoping we now ‘put politics aside’. It’s the hypocritical west, too
- I’ve waited my whole life to see Wales in the World Cup. But now it’s in Qatar, it’s complicated
- Britain was meant to be supporting fleeing Ukrainians. Instead, we’re failing them
- I’ve taken 263 photos since arriving in Venice, my husband has taken five – it would be nice to have a few more of me

OpinionQatar

It’s not just Qatar hoping we now ‘put politics aside’. It’s the hypocritical west, too

Nesrine Malik

By all means boycott the football, but we could also follow the trail of gifts, property and arms deals closer to home

The opening ceremony prior to the Fifa World Cup 2022 group A opening match between Qatar and Ecuador in Al Khor, Qatar, 20 November 2022. Photograph: Martin Divíšek/EPA

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About this content

Mon 21 Nov 2022 01.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 02.26 EST

The 2022 World Cup was supposed to herald the arrival of Qatar, already an economic powerhouse, into the international arena as a legitimate cultural and political player. But so far, the opposite has happened. In an epic backfiring, all it seems to have achieved is focusing attention on the country's abusive treatment of migrant workers and repression of LGBTQ+ people and women. Everything in Sunday's opening ceremony – which the BBC remarkably chose not to broadcast, focusing instead on all that was wrong with Qatar 2022 – felt coloured by the buildup, precipitating an overall sense of enforced joyfulness. Even the generic welcoming words from the Qatari sovereign felt pared-back and pointed.

On the face of it, the frenzy around this tournament has been the rare triumph of a human rights issue "cutting through" to the public. There's just something about how the bid came about that put people off: it looked like money bending the world to its will, with the event being held in winter – in the middle of the European football season – and the use of cheap, exploited labour to build the facilities. Recent headlines including a World Cup ambassador describing homosexuality as a "damage in the mind" and the sight of a Danish journalist being forced off air, while broadcasting in a public space, seemed to confirm all this. High-profile footballers such as the former Bayern Munich and Germany player Philipp Lahm have said they will not be attending, while the Lionesses' captain, Leah Williamson, has said she hasn't "any interest" in such a compromised contest. Major European cities including Barcelona and Paris are not broadcasting matches in public places, and David Beckham, an ambassador for the event, came under intense pressure to withdraw from the proceedings.

But there is something counter-productive and lopsided to the protests: the focus on the actions of sporting figures, players and even viewers seems off when Qatar only managed to manoeuvre itself into this prime position by soliciting the support of powerful states that have fast-tracked its passage into polite society. It is armed to the teeth by the UK, Europe and the US, and is a joint venturer in monumental, lucrative financial and real-estate transactions on European soil. The state of Qatar is the 10th largest landowner in Britain. Since it won the right to host the World Cup, it has been granted billions of pounds of weapons sales licences, including sophisticated surveillance equipment, by Britain.

There is a special relationship with London in particular, and it can be seen in the Westminster ledger of declared gifts. In the runup to the World Cup, the value of Qatar's gifts to British MPs was greater than the amount spent by all the other 15 countries whose governments made donations to British MPs combined. The Conservative MP David Mundell, the first openly gay Tory cabinet minister, accepted hospitality worth £7,473 from Qatar, and then, in a parliamentary debate a few months later, in response to concern raised by another MP about LGBTQ+ rights in Qatar, said that Qatar's critics should "focus their energies on the handling of LGBT issues in professional football in the UK".

'The last World Cup was held with much less scrutiny.' Fifa president Gianni Infantino, Vladimir Putin, Emmanuel Macron and Croatian president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic after the 2018 final in Moscow. Photograph: Natacha Pisarenko/AP

So yes, David Beckham should know better, but he is not making a massive leap into the political fringe. Qatar is not a pariah state – it exists in a global political system of western sponsors that have forged deep alliances with Gulf monarchies and extended them immunity. The country's strong foundations are in its energy wealth, with the yield of gas exported across the world, including Europe, and its soft power is undergirded by

strategically investing its surplus to forge titanium geopolitical links in and with the west.

And it is the strength of those links that means the buck has passed to us; and to footballers, coaches and their organising bodies, who have to take difficult questions, or make decisions about attendance, kits, what to say and what not to say. The message from governments, meanwhile, is loud and clear. "We should not politicise sport," Emmanuel Macron said last week. What he really means is that Qatar (the recipient of French arms exports 25 times higher in 2017–21 than in 2012–16) is with the big boys. How, then, to hold any effective boycott or protest, with this sort of high-profile state protection?

Further weakening the hand of those now pushed to the frontline of Qatar criticism is the fact that the last Word Cup was held, with much less scrutiny, in Russia soon after the Skripal poisonings. The relative pass Russia, a country that hunts its dissidents and passed an anti-LGBTQ "gay propaganda" law, was given compared with the kicking Qatar is getting, makes it hard to argue that there isn't a whiff of bias alongside the indignant good intentions. There is a sort of cultural gatekeeping at play here, where European countries with longer footballing heritages are seen as more legitimate than gauche Gulf upstarts with little historical connection to the sport. Not reckoning with past mistakes allows Qatar to position itself as a symbol of worldly progress, and hands the opportunity to cynics such as the Fifa president, Gianni Infantino, to claim that the country is being "bullied".

There is also the vexing question of what constitutes a human rights violation so grave that it deserves a boycott. Is it, shall we say, running a large offshore prison that exists in a legal vacuum, where over the past 20 years, hundreds of prisoners have been dumped without a trial, and many tortured? Guantánamo Bay is not the same as systemically maltreating thousands of migrant workers – no two human rights abuses are the same. But these kind of differences are not always a matter of objective measurement, but of how successfully we have been sold narratives that inure us to some violations and sensitise us to others.

How useful, then, is it really to set up moral purity tests for ourselves when our efforts are compromised by own our governments and our own unexamined prejudices and double standards? Whether you or I tune in over the next few weeks is neither here nor there. If the point is to register an objection and make a stand, then I suppose a boycott is the way to do it. But if the purpose is for some real pressure points to be squeezed so life perhaps gets better for migrant workers and LGBTQ+ people and women in Qatar, then our eyes and efforts would be better trained closer to home.

Qatar and other wealthy undemocratic regimes around the world are empowered in Britain, and by extension on the global stage, by a parliamentary system open to lobbying, a lucrative weapons industry, and a real-estate economy that is geared to a global wealthy elite. Qatar may have underestimated the scrutiny that it would come under in the runup to the competition, but there is one calculation that it has surely made correctly: the anger will dissipate and attention will move on, as the football drowns out the noise. The World Cup lasts a month; grubby political alliances are for ever.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
- ***Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our letters section, please click here.***

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OpinionWorld Cup 2022

I've waited my whole life to see Wales in the World Cup. But now it's in Qatar, it's complicated

Darren Chetty

In fact, Fifa could learn a lot from the Football Association of Wales about what the modern game can look like

- Darren Chetty is co-editor of Welsh (Plural): Essays on the Future of Wales

A painting of Wales captain Gareth Bale in Cardiff on 8 November. Photograph: Huw Fairclough/Getty Images

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About this content

Mon 21 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 06.27 EST

When the Wales men's team line up this evening for what will be a stirring rendition of Hen Wlad fy Nhadau at their World Cup opener, each player will know that he carries the hopes and dreams of a footballing nation. But more than that, he will know he has already helped make dreams come true.

Ending a 64-year wait for World Cup qualification makes this a Welsh team of history makers. Yes, the march to the semi-finals of Euro 2016 still looms large in the memory of all Wales fans, but it is respect and gratitude, rather than a huge sense of expectation, that I and many other fans will be feeling tonight.

Wales fans know all about footballing dreams – and nightmares. As a child, I felt the disappointment of the team missing out on España '82, mercifully unaware of how often the feeling would return. Nevertheless, by then I was obsessed with the World Cup, compiling scrapbooks about the players in each team and facts about the countries involved.

I already had some sense that this was bigger than football alone. Looking back, the tournament was a rare break from the often parochial concerns of eighties television and struck a chord with a young football-mad boy with family on three continents. Now, finally, I have the chance to indulge my passion for the World Cup and Welsh football at the same time. I'll be among hundreds at the London Welsh Centre watching Wales (population 3.1 million) take on the US (population 331 million).

Still, I have mixed feelings about this tournament, as will a lot of people. Many have raised concerns for LGBTQ+ fans wishing to travel to Qatar for the tournament, given the country's draconian laws banning homosexuality and the recent homophobic comments from a Qatari ambassador for the World Cup. I've seen far less written about the safety of gay players, however; perhaps this betrays the broader homophobia within the men's game, which is still far from an environment where players can safely be out. Many of the 22 Fifa executive committee members who awarded consecutive World Cups to Russia and Qatar have since been fined, suspended, banned or indicted. The Guardian has reported that there have

been 6,500 migrant worker deaths in Qatar since that decision. The world governing body grows ever further out of touch with fans and players.

Politics is not new to the World Cup. Wales's 1958 qualification came about only because Egypt and and several other countries had either withdrawn or refused to play Israel, citing the latter's invasion of Egypt in 1956. Wales had no such qualms – perhaps because the UK had been part of the invasion.

Yaacov Hodorov, Israel's goalkeeper, catches the ball during the World Cup eliminator in Cardiff against Wales on 5 February 1958. Wales won 2-0. Photograph: PA/PA Archive/Press Association Images

Like the current squad, the one in 1958 was managed by a man from the valleys with a global superstar as its talisman. But the tournament was a very different affair, with half as many teams competing and minimal media coverage back home. On returning home to Swansea, defender Mel Charles was asked if he'd been away on his holidays.

In contrast, 2022 qualification is shaping up to be a cultural moment for Wales. The camaraderie among the players and the close bond to the Red Wall, as the fans on the stands are known, has been building for well over a decade now, helped no doubt by an unprecedented period of success on the pitch, but also by the Football Association of Wales, which often feels like

an extension of the fanbase. Frequent references to Cymru indicate a newfound pride taken in Cymraeg. Bucket hats, vintage shirts, Zombie Nation, Yma O Hyd; Welsh football fandom these days comes with its own look and its own sound.

Indeed, the FAW video that accompanies Dafydd Iwan's remastered protest song, drives home just how much Wales has changed in those intervening 64 years. Among the football clips are scenes of the 1965 flooding of Capel Celyn, the 1966 Aberfan disaster, the miners' strike of 1984-5, the 1997 devolution referendum and the Cymdeithas yr Iaith protests that led to Welsh finally being recognised as an official language in 2011.

'Stop the hypocrisy': LGBTQ+ activists protest at Fifa museum before World Cup – video

If the events included in the video offer little to acknowledge the long presence of Black people and racial minorities in Wales, the same cannot be said of Gŵyl Cymru, a 10-day festival that aims to strengthen the links between sports and the arts and build a cultural legacy for the World Cup. Organised by the FAW in partnership with Arts Council Wales, Gŵyl Cymru was launched with a short film featuring Hanan Issa, the new national poet Wales, performing The Crowd Gathers, alongside Grug Muse, who translated the poem into Welsh. Issa, the first Muslim to be made national poet, writes in English and uses Welsh and Arabic phrases in the poem.

Festival highlights include rappers Lemfreck and Mace the Great, performing in New York before the Cymru v USA game, comedians Priya Hall and Leila Navabi and new artwork from Yusuf Ismail and Shawqi Hasson of Unify, whose murals are already modern landmarks in Cardiff. There will also be events featuring the Rainbow Wall, FAW's group for LGBTQ+ supporters and allies.

Fifa should take note. It could learn much from the FAW about what the modern game could look like.

- Darren Chetty is a writer, teacher and researcher. He is co-editor of Welsh (Plural): Essays on the Future of Wales

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OpinionRefugees

Britain was meant to be supporting fleeing Ukrainians. Instead, we're failing them

Keir Giles

The government left the job of helping refugees to local authorities and volunteers. Now the system is at risk of collapse

- Keir Giles is the author of Russia's War on Everybody

An Ukraine independence day demo near Downing Street in London, 24 August – six months after the Russian invasion. Photograph: Alastair Grant/AP

Mon 21 Nov 2022 04.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 13.49 EST

Ukraine may be enjoying success on the battlefield, but displaced Ukrainians in the UK face renewed trauma. The Homes for Ukraine scheme, which has housed more than 100,000 people in Britain since the start of the war, is now at risk of collapse. Without early and drastic intervention, the scheme will compound rather than ease the suffering of the Ukrainian families it was meant to help.

The single biggest problem with the scheme is that it was drawn up with a six-month time limit attached, and the war has been going on for nine months. That means families reaching the end of the allotted period face a cliff-edge where essential support can suddenly stop, with no alternatives in place. By mid-October this year, nearly a third of displaced Ukrainian families were approaching the end of their hosting arrangements. When placements have ended, local and central government officials have told many displaced Ukrainians that they should look for new accommodation on the local private housing market, perfectly aware that letting agencies demand security and credit histories that people who have been subsisting in the country for only six months will find impossible to provide. Some local authorities advise that the only way to access further support is to deliberately make Ukrainian mothers and children homeless – which makes little sense, given that emergency housing is much more expensive than hosting arrangements.

That approach isn't universal, and a few local authorities stand out for recognising and addressing the problem. Wiltshire council says it will put down a deposit and the first month's rent for displaced Ukrainians needing new accommodation – if they can find somewhere they can afford. Bristol City council, meanwhile, offers a rent guarantee to landlords who offer homes to Ukrainians, plus a £1,000 thank-you payment. But other authorities have provided none of this help – leading to inevitable questions over what, exactly, they have done with the funding received from central government to support Ukrainians in their area. After overcoming lengthy delays and impenetrable bureaucracy to be granted a visa to reach the UK, Ukrainians have faced a postcode lottery, with support for the scheme varying hugely across the country. In some areas where government funding hasn't produced visible benefits for Ukrainians, responses to freedom of

information requests for details on how the money has been spent have been vague and incomplete.

In some places, volunteer groups have stepped in to fill the gap. Local church, community and social groups have undertaken extraordinary efforts to help arrivals from Ukraine – and the host families accommodating them – assimilate and overcome the obstacles they face. The local group where I help out as a volunteer, in a rural area of central England, aims to assist displaced Ukrainians navigating their way to integration and independence so they eventually no longer feel the need to visit their drop-in sessions or call on their services. But the road to reach that point is hard, and made harder by a failure of government to live up to its promises.

Tributes to Ukraine decorate a monument to St Volodymyr the Greatm near Ukraine's embassy in London, Britain, 10 March 2022. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

The language barrier is not the only obstacle displaced Ukrainians have faced in finding work. The scattering of new arrivals across the country has had the positive benefit of distributing them across many receptive communities, instead of creating enclaves in major cities. But this also means many find themselves in rural locations where the only feasible means of accessing work, shopping or services is a car – which is often too

expensive. Most of the Ukrainians who have arrived under the scheme are women with children, whose spouses have remained behind for military service. Childcare arrangements, even where they are available, are often prohibitively expensive and rule out full-time work.

Ukrainian children were supposed to have been provided with school places, but this has also been a lottery. Some small local schools have made extraordinary efforts to welcome and accommodate their guests. In other areas, children wait months as one school after another declines to offer them a place, and parents and their hosts wrestle with inflexible and unresponsive local bureaucracy. Again, funding has been provided – an allocation of up to £8,755 per secondary school-age child specifically to cover school places on top of the £10,500 per person allocated for other forms of support.

Hosts also receive a monthly payment intended to cover costs. The refugees minister has conceded that this is wholly inadequate, and deters hosts from signing up. That's one reason why new hosts are coming forward at a much slower rate than early in the scheme, making it even harder to find options for families whose hosting arrangements have come to an end.

Central government appears to think its job is done, leaving the burden of making the system work to local authorities and volunteer groups. At the scheme's inception, nobody could have foreseen the duration of the war. But nine months should have been plenty of time to recognise that a longer-term solution was required – especially given the warnings of urgency from those same support groups that have been working on the frontline to fill the many gaps in the current flawed system.

Ukraine's biggest challenge over the coming winter will be providing essential basic services like heat, light and power to its population, while Russia does its very best to destroy them. The desperate need for safe havens abroad remains, and will continue to do so well into next year, regardless of Ukrainian success on the battlefield. But with the challenges facing displaced Ukrainians in accessing the help and support that they were promised, it is little wonder that some are already giving up on the UK, preferring to take their chances by going back to a war zone. Ukrainians

fighting on the frontline look to countries such as the UK to keep their families safe, and a system designed to fail represents a shameful breach of the UK's promises.

- Keir Giles works with the Russia and Eurasia programme of Chatham House; he is the author of Russia's War on Everybody

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OpinionLife and style

I've taken 263 photos since arriving in Venice, my husband has taken five – it would be nice to have a few more of me

Emma Beddington

Men don't take pictures like women do. But memory is an unreliable thing and I want to mark our past selves

Emma Beddington … ‘Here’s a photo I took of a gull in Venice. I have also taken lots of my husband.’ Photograph: Courtesy of Emma Beddington

Mon 21 Nov 2022 02.00 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 04.28 EST

‘I think you should take a picture of me,” I say to my husband, with slightly gruff embarrassment. We are on a long-planned, once-in-a-lifetime trip to Venice, undertaking a self-devised initiation rite for the empty nest stage of our lives: working and living in a single room for a month with our mildly demented dog.

I can’t stop taking pictures – 263 so far, and counting. Everything is beautiful: the luminous green water against faded yellow and terracotta, the bridges topped with smart Venetians looking at their phones, the glitter of sun or low-lying morning mist on water. I have to capture the joyful decorative flourishes: a stone camel here, a brass lion there, the five-tiered Murano glass chandelier surrounded by plaster daisies in the library where I’m working. My phone is packed with boats, a woman walking nine chihuahuas and countless gulls.

My husband is not taking pictures. When he does, it’s an event, not a habit: I think he has taken five since we arrived. But we are walking along a

particularly fetching canal in the sun and the dog, falling apart but still elegant, like the city, is at my side. I have lots of my husband (OK, more of gulls); wouldn't it be nice to have a few of me? He obliges happily, but I look self-conscious and awkward. It shows I had to ask.

Men don't take photos. There are countless talented male photographers, but most men don't seem to take phone pictures the way women do: candid, constant ones of their partners and families. I am in hardly any family pictures, except posed ones taken by friends or relatives. A social media post I saw recently of a sunlit, laughing woman captioned "filming myself for my funeral since my husband never takes photos or videos of me" was followed by a string of "so true" and "can relate" comments. We were already talking about this "image inequity" in my 00s blogging days, but it has been thoughtfully analysed in recent years. Are women taking on another responsibility, as family archivist and chronicler of daily life?

A rare snap …Emma Beddington with the family dog photographed in Venice by her husband. Photograph: Courtesy of Emma Beddington

I wonder what role social media plays. Instagram, particularly, feels like a female space to me, though actually the platform has only a slight bias towards female users: maybe it is just that my friends are mainly female. I do put pictures up there, and I am uncomfortably aware of sometimes seeing

experiences as photo ops. But most of my pictures are not for public consumption. I mainly want to mark our past selves – what we did and where we went. I don't even print any out, though I should: if we have learned anything recently, it is don't entrust anything precious to grandiloquent tech bros.

On one level, my husband is right. Holding up your phone is an imperfect and inelegant way of capturing a place or a feeling. That is the classic criticism of the digital age: we are recording, not living. He is good at being in the moment and that is exactly what he is doing here. He loves the people-in-boats-watching and the shifting magic of the light as much as I do, but he is happy to simply enjoy it.

But I'm right too. Memory is unreliable: it is a story we construct for ourselves, not an objective truth. If I think about 2020, my chest tightens and I remember dread, grief and sitting at my desk seven days a week. But if I scroll through my pictures, it is all stupid family games, terrible haircuts and weird but lovely socially distant drinks and breakfasts. There is one son proudly holding a carrot he grew; the other sledging with his dad and the dog during an unexpected snowstorm.

My phone's camera roll is a powerful corrective to my natural pessimism. My brain will probably frame 2022 as the permacrisis, a time of global grief and fear. But my pictures will tell a different, also-true story: that perfectly spherical aubergine I grew; the sons I also grew. And now, a really good-looking gull or my husband enjoying an espresso. That is why I do it (and why I will keep asking him to do it). If happiness doesn't come naturally, sometimes you need to take its picture.

- Emma Beddington is a Guardian columnist

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2022.11.21 - Around the world

- South China Sea China accused of seizing rocket debris from Philippines navy
- Live Disney shares surge as Bob Iger returns; oil hit by China Covid worries
- Disney Bob Iger returns as CEO as Bob Chapek exits
- Sudan Country experiences worst dengue fever outbreak for more than a decade

South China Sea

China accused of seizing rocket debris from Philippines navy in South China Sea dispute

Coast guard cut towing cable the Phillipines navy was using, say military officials, as Kamala Harris makes visit to Manila

An aerial view of Thitu Island in the South China Sea. The Philippines has accused China's coast guard of blocking its navy vessels and seizing suspected Chinese rocket debris it was towing. Photograph: Bullit Marquez/AP

Rebecca Ratcliffe with agencies
Sun 20 Nov 2022 22.44 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 01.37 EST

China's coast guard forcibly seized the suspected debris of a Chinese rocket that the Philippine navy was towing to its island in the South China Sea,

Philippines military officials have said, in the latest confrontation in the disputed sea.

The Chinese vessel twice blocked the Philippine naval boat before seizing the floating debris it was towing on Sunday off Philippine-occupied Thitu island, Vice Admiral Alberto Carlos said on Monday. He said no one was injured in the incident.

The incident occurred just hours before US vice-president Kamala Harris arrived in the Philippines for talks with president Ferdinand Marcos Jr, where the leaders are expected to discuss the strengthening of their security alliance. Speaking ahead of their meeting on Monday, Harris said the US had an "unwavering commitment" to defending international rules and norms in the South China Sea.

"An armed attack on the Philippines, armed forces, public vessels or aircraft in the South China Sea would invoke US mutual defence commitments and that is an unwavering commitment that we have to the Philippines," she said.

Chinese coast guard ships have blocked Philippine supply boats delivering supplies to Filipino forces in the disputed waters in the past, but seizing objects in the possession of another nation's military constituted a more brazen act.

Monday's incident is the latest flare-up in long-seething territorial disputes in the strategic waterway involving China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan.

Carlos said the Filipino sailors, using a long-range camera on Thitu island, spotted the debris drifting in strong waves near a sandbar a little over 500 metres away. They set out on a boat and retrieved the floating object and started to tow it back to their island using a rope tied to their boat.

As the Filipino sailors were moving back to their island, "they noticed that China coast guard vessel with bow number 5203 was approaching their location and subsequently blocked their pre-plotted course twice", Carlos said in a statement.

The Chinese vessel then deployed an inflatable boat with personnel who "forcefully retrieved said floating object by cutting the towing line attached to the" Filipino sailors' rubber boat. The Filipino sailors decided to return to their island, Carlos said, without detailing what happened.

Major Cherryl Tindog, a spokesperson for the Philippines military's western command, said the floating metal object appeared similar to a number of other pieces of Chinese rocket debris recently found in Philippine waters. She added the Filipino sailors did not fight the seizure.

"We practise maximum tolerance in such a situation," Tindog said. "Since it involved an unidentified object and not a matter of life and death, our team just decided to return."

Metal debris from Chinese rocket launches, some showing a part of what appears to be a Chinese flag, have been found in Philippine waters on at least three other occasions.

Rockets launched from the Wenchang space launch centre on China's Hainan island in recent months have carried construction materials and supplies for China's crewed space station.

On Monday, Marcos welcomed Harris' comments reiterating US commitments to protecting international order the South China Sea, and described the ties between the two countries as increasing important in light of instability seen in the region and internationally.

"I have said many times I do not see a future for the Philippines that does not include the United States," he said.

The leaders are expected to discuss the strengthening of security and economic cooperation, as well as concerns such as the climate crisis. Harris will travel to Palawan on Tuesday, the island province near to the South China Sea.

China has been criticised previously for allowing rocket stages to fall to Earth uncontrolled. Nasa accused Beijing last year of "failing to meet responsible standards regarding their space debris" after parts of a Chinese

rocket landed in the Indian Ocean, and the Philippine Space Agency earlier this month pressed for the Philippines to ratify UN treaties providing a basis for compensation for harm from other nations' space debris.

The Philippine government has filed many diplomatic protests against China over aggressive actions in the South China Sea but it did not immediately say what action it would take following Sunday's incident. The Department of Foreign Affairs in Manila usually waits for an official investigation report before lodging a protest.

Thitu island, which Filipinos call Pag-asa, hosts a fishing community and Filipino forces and lies near Subi, one of seven disputed reefs in the offshore region that China has turned into missile-protected islands, including three with runways, which US security officials say now resemble military forward bases.

The Philippines and other smaller claimant nations in the disputed region, backed by the US and other western countries, have strongly protested and raised alarm over China's increasingly aggressive actions in the busy waterway.

Associated Press contributed to this report

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Business liveBusiness

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Walt Disney Company

Former Disney CEO Bob Iger reappointed to role in surprise decision

Move described as ‘probably the most significant piece of corporate upheaval since Steve Jobs went back to Apple’

Iger has agreed to serve another two years as Disney CEO. Photograph: Alberto E Rodríguez/Getty Images

Jasper Jolly and Mark Sweney
Mon 21 Nov 2022 03.13 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 15.08 EST

Disney has reappointed Bob Iger as its chief executive in a surprise decision as the entertainment company ousted his hand-picked replacement, Bob Chapek, after less than three years in the job.

During Iger’s acclaimed 15-year reign, Disney made a series of big acquisitions, including the Marvel film franchise, the Pixar animation studio

and the Star Wars film franchise.

He retired as chief executive in 2020, having delayed his exit several times to guide the company through the early stages of the coronavirus pandemic. He was replaced by Chapek, who formerly ran its theme parks division, but stayed on as executive chairman until the end of last year.

Iger returns to the CEO role with immediate effect and will serve for two years, Disney said in a statement late on Sunday. The company highlighted a fivefold market value increase under his leadership, adding that he had a "mandate from the board to set the strategic direction for renewed growth" while it looked once more for a long-term successor.

Michael Antonelli, a market strategist at Baird, a US asset manager, said Iger's return was "probably the most significant piece of corporate upheaval since [Steve] Jobs went back to Apple" and the news sent Disney's shares up more than 8% – nearly $14bn – when Wall Street opened on Monday.

"We applaud Disney's board for the courage to make this change," said Michael Nathanson, senior analyst at MoffettNathanson. "We have never hidden our affection for Mr Iger and the job that he did in building Disney into the global powerhouse that it has become."

Chapek had overseen a difficult period for Disney, with disruption from the pandemic – which forced its theme parks to close – followed by concerns over the profitability of its streaming service, Disney+. The platform is competing in a crowded field and has spent billions of dollars creating new content as it contends with rivals Netflix and Amazon Prime Video. While Disney+ has grown subscriber numbers rapidly, it has come at the cost of steep operating losses.

Disney has also faced pressure in Florida, where its Walt Disney World theme parks are based, over its public opposition to the state's "don't say gay" laws that ban classroom discussion of sexual orientation and gender identity in certain grades.

The company publicly opposed the laws, seen by many activists and teachers as repressive, prompting the rightwing Florida governor, Ron DeSantis, to try to strip it of its privileges in the state.

The company's market value has slumped by more than 40% during 2022, much worse than the 17% decline in the S&P 500 index of large US companies.

The news of Iger's return prompted the widely respected MoffettNathanson to upgrade its target share price for Disney to $120 – it had been trading at under $100 – its first upgrade on the stock since early 2020.

Susan Arnold, Disney's chair, said: "We thank Bob Chapek for his service to Disney over his long career, including navigating the company through the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic. The board has concluded that as Disney embarks on an increasingly complex period of industry transformation, Bob Iger is uniquely situated to lead the company through this pivotal period."

Iger said: "I am extremely optimistic for the future of this great company and thrilled to be asked by the board to return as its CEO." Disney did not publish a statement from Chapek.

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His return comes weeks after Disney's share price took a battering after reporting a rare miss on revenues and profits, and a doubling of losses on its streaming business to $1.5bn in the quarter to 1 October.

Disney has spent about $9bn to date on loss-making Disney+, and about $30bn annually on content from Hollywood blockbusters and big budget TV shows to NFL football across its television and streaming businesses, which include ESPN and ABC.

The company said its streaming business had hit “peak loss” and Disney+ remains on track to become profitable in its 2024 financial year, at which point it will most likely be bigger than Netflix, although it has pegged back subscriber expectations to between 215m to 245m globally.

To meet this goal Disney is pushing through price rises of up to 38% in the US, with regions including Europe likely to see increases in the near future, and will launch an ad-supported subscription tier starting in the US on 8 December.

Analysts expect Iger to implement cuts in areas including content spend at Disney+ and the pay-TV sports network ESPN.

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Global development

Sudan experiences worst dengue fever outbreak for more than a decade

Floods caused by warming temperatures and a lack of preventive care are driving the spread of the disease in a country racked with political and economic upheaval

People sit by the floodwaters in Khartoum, Sudan. Flooding is thought to be one reason for the spike in dengue and malaria cases. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

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About this content

Zeinab Mohammed Salih in Khartoum

Mon 21 Nov 2022 02.15 ESTLast modified on Mon 21 Nov 2022 02.17 EST

More than 1,400 people in Sudan have been diagnosed with dengue fever this year in the worst outbreak in the country for more than a decade.

Half of the country's 18 states have registered cases and nine deaths recorded, including one child, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) who suspect the true number to be far higher.

Dr Muntasir Osman, the director general of emergencies at the federal ministry of health, said 2022 had seen "the largest spread of the fever geographically in the history of the country" with 1,430 cases registered.

Dengue fever is spread by infected mosquitoes usually found near still water sources or in water storage tanks. It has flu-like symptoms and can sometimes cause organ failure and death.

Osman blamed the heavy rains and a lack of "preventive" measures such as bed nets and insect repellants. "For economic reasons the country has lost many essential jobs in terms of preventive medicines. We no longer have the

staff that used to work in observational health or workers who used to prepare things before a problem could happen."

After last October's military coup, Sudan is in turmoil, aggrevated by failed harvests and rising food prices.

Nima Saeed Abid, WHO's chief in Sudan, said the confirmed cases were "the tip of the iceberg".

"Some [people] present with mild cases, others consult traditional healers or just rely on home remedies and therefore do not report to the health facilities. What are reported to the health facilities are the most severe cases that require admission or medical care," he said.

North Kordofan, North Darfur and White Nile states are seeing dengue for the first time.

In North Kordofan state's capital, El Obeid, photos of patients lying on the ground as hospitals run out of beds have circulated on social media. There are at least 1,200 cases suspected in North Kordofan, with 393 confirmed.

Dr Ibtihal Ibrahim, of the ministry of health in North Kordofan, said she kept her sick child with dengue at home.

"It's not only my child, my entire neighbourhood is full of sick people with the fever, but they stayed at home to get natural remedies and some of them got drugs by themselves. They are treating themselves," she said.

Ibrahim said medicine prices had soared. "I bought drips for my son with 3,500 Sudanese pounds (£5.20), which, just a few weeks ago, were only 600 pounds (90p)."

The WHO says dengue cases have increased eightfold over the past 20 years, due in part to better reporting of the disease. Research published in The Lancet Planetary Health last year suggested global warming was resulting in both malaria and dengue "being found in more areas, gradually emerging in previously unaffected places, and re-emerging in places where they had subsided".

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2022.11.22 - Around the world
Coronavirus Beijing shuts parks and museums as China's Covid cases rise
United Arab Emirates Fears over oil producers' influence with next host of Cop climate talks
Shinzo Abe Japan begins inquiry into Unification church in wake of former PM's killing

Sweden Greta Thunberg's charity donates £158,000 to Sami campaign
Jay Leno Comedian released from hospital after suffering serious burns in car fire
Headlines saturday 26 november 2022
London fire brigade Report finds toxic culture of misogyny, racism and bullying
Live Russia-Ukraine war: Moscow probably firing cruise missiles with nuclear warheads removed, says UK
Live Tunisia v Australia: World Cup updates
England Team close on knockouts but draw tempers expectations
'It's the tea party, colonies thing' New York soccer fans on the game
2022.11.26 - Spotlight
'After a while it eats you up' Kevin De Bruyne on dealing with the spotlight, family and how much he gets paid
'That orange, it made me so happy' 50 poems to boost your mood
Blind date What was I hoping for? A husband whose salary I could retire on at 30
'Beautifully chosen' David Hockney's yellow Crocs impress King Charles
2022.11.26 - Opinion
Rich nations have promised to pay for the climate crisis – but will they?
Who wants to live to 100 on a diet of lentil and broccoli slurry? Mostly rich men
David Beckham and a Manchester United bid – what could go wrong?
Edith Pritchett on millennial life Why David Attenborough documentaries gross me out
2022.11.26 - Around the world
US Trump reportedly dined with white nationalist at Mar-a-Lago
Kanye West Rapper announces 2024 presidential bid amid far-right ties

Australia Tasmanian flower farmer ‘shocked’ to learn she planted opium poppies by mistake
Pakistan Imran Khan to resume protests – this time taking on military
Headlines monday 21 november 2022
Live CBI chief Tony Danker joins Tory Brexiters’ criticism of seeking Swiss-style Brexit deal
Live Russia launched 400 strikes on Sunday, Zelenskiy says; UN to inspect Zaporizhzhia plant
Live World Cup 2022: England, Wales and others back down over armband row
World Cup ‘Perfectly legitimate’ for England players to take knee, says minister
FA Chief executive admits England may ‘step back’ from OneLove armband
2022.11.21 - Spotlight
Cold comfort Kent Where small-boat arrivals receive a fraying welcome
‘I’m a homeless guy looking after a palace!’ The housesitters escaping the cost of living crisis
Keyboard shortcuts and a poker face How to watch the World Cup at work
Opening ceremony Six things we learned in Qatar
A new start after 60 ‘I learned to skydive. The door opens, the wind comes through – and vroom, you’re away!’
2022.11.21 - Opinion
It’s not just Qatar hoping we now ‘put politics aside’. It’s the hypocritical west, too
I’ve waited my whole life to see Wales in the World Cup. But now it’s in Qatar, it’s complicated
Britain was meant to be supporting fleeing Ukrainians. Instead, we’re failing them
I’ve taken 263 photos since arriving in Venice, my husband has taken five – it would be nice to have a few more of me
2022.11.21 - Around the world
South China Sea China accused of seizing rocket debris from Philippines navy

Live Disney shares surge as Bob Iger returns; oil hit by China Covid worries
Disney Bob Iger returns as CEO as Bob Chapek exits
Sudan Country experiences worst dengue fever outbreak for more than a decade