CITY A.M.

BUSINESS WITH PERSONALITY

SINGLE TICKET WHY THE MALDIVES IS IDEAL FOR SOLO TRAVELLERS **P18**

ACCESS GRANTED OPEN BANKING COULD UNLEASH COMPETITION **P14**

MONDAY 29 JULY 2019 | ISSUE 3,423 CITYAM.COM FREE

BORIS PLANS BILLIONS FOR BREXIT FIGHT

HARRY ROBERTSON

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BORIS Johnson's new government is working on the assumption that Britain will leave the European Union without a deal on 31 October and is set to ramp up borrowing to cover the costs, ministers said yesterday.

Chancellor Sajid Javid, promoted in Wednesday's brutal cabinet reshuffle, will this week reveal the government's plans to fund no-deal measures, such as hiring extra border security guards. There will also be a massive public information campaign on the implications of a no-deal exit.

Newly installed chief secretary to the Treasury, Rishi Sunak, told Sky News that the extra money would come from the government's "fiscal headroom" – the amount the UK can borrow and still keep debt falling as a share of GDP, which ministers claim is around £26bn.

The extra borrowing is part of Johnson's efforts to fulfil his leadership pledge to deliver Brexit by the end of October "come what may".

Michael Gove, who is now overseeing no-deal preparations as head of the Cabinet Office, said yesterday that planning for no deal was the government's "number one priority".

Writing in the Sunday Times, he said he hoped the EU will change its mind and reopen negotiations on the deal Theresa May failed to push through the House of Commons three times.

"But we must operate on the assumption that they will not," he said. Gove added that "every penny needed for no-deal preparation will be made available".

Sunak said: "We can afford this… because there's been some very careful management of the economy."

Lower borrowing and higher tax receipts led ex-chancellor Philip Hammond to highlight the government's capacity to borrow more and still meet its budget targets.

However, a no-deal exit could cost more than this, according to the UK's budget watchdog.

Last week, it warned that leaving the EU without a withdrawal agreement could lead to a borrowing binge of £30bn a year to offset falling tax receipts.

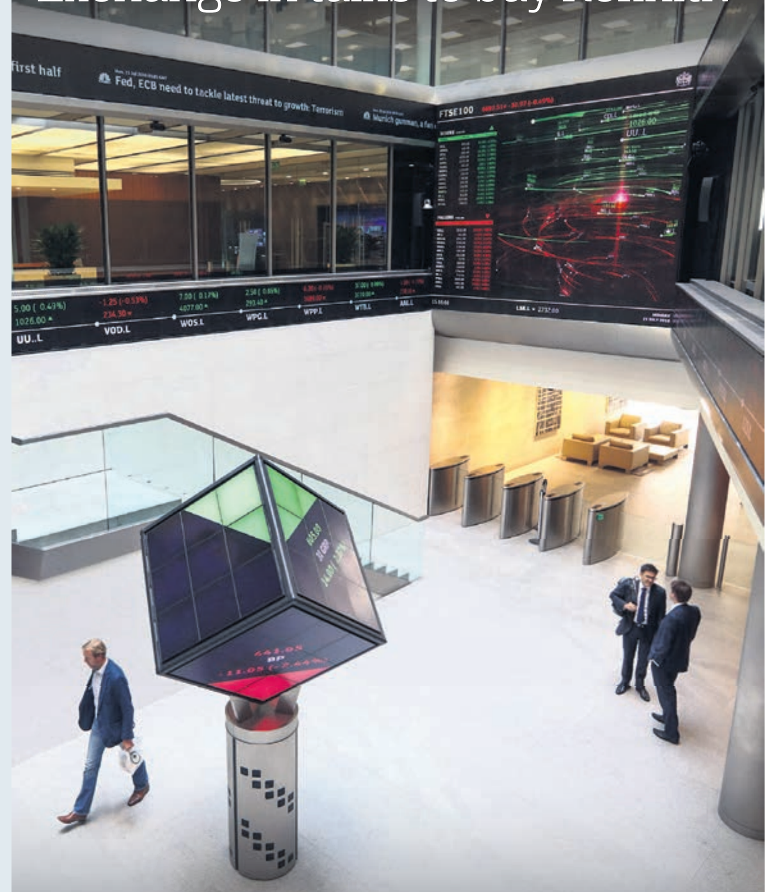
Sunak said the government will hire more border force guards, invest in new IT infrastructure and launch a public information campaign, among other measures, as part of its no-deal planning.

The statement of intent from Johnson's new ministers was accompanied by a "Boris bounce" in the polls. The PM earned the Tories a 10-point jump in a poll for the Mail on Sunday, and a six point boost in a Sunday Times poll, seeing the party overtake Labour.

Yet not all Conservatives were impressed by the government's willingness to accept a disorderly Brexit

The leader of the Scottish Tories, Ruth Davidson, said yesterday that if it comes to a no-deal Brexit, "I won't support it". Davidson is far from alone, with fresh reports also emerging over the weekend of Hammond's strategy to thwart a no-deal scenario.

ON THE MARKET London Stock Exchange in talks to buy Refinitiv



JAMES WARRINGTON

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THE LONDON Stock Exchange Group (LSE) is in discussions to buy data analytics firm Refinitiv for $27bn (£22bn), in a blockbuster deal that could see the company take on Bloomberg.

The exchange has confirmed it is in talks with Thomson Reuters and a consortium of funds linked to private equity firm Blackstone to acquire the markets data provider. LSE said it would fund the merger with newly-issued shares, giving Refinitiv investors a stake in the company.

Merger talks are said to be at an advanced stage and a deal could be unveiled next week. However, the move is expected to spark a lengthy antitrust review.

CONTINUES ON P3

Delays, anger and a call for executive drug testing in Sports Direct filings

ANNA MENIN

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SHAREHOLDERS in Sports Direct have come to expect the unexpected but even seasoned investors would have felt their patience tested as they waited – and waited – for the retailer's results last week.

By the time trading closed on Friday, when the delayed results promised at 7am had failed to materialise, it was clear that something had gone very wrong at Mike Ashley's retail empire.

But even so, few expected the statement to be as gloomy or as unorthodox as it turned out to be. Finally released just ahead of an early-evening press conference, the rambling 44-page document veers between stark assessments of the state of the billionaire's businesses and attacks on financial regulators, the government and auditors.

One of the more intriguing inclusions may have passed harried investors by: Ashley's call for the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to carry out voluntary drug testing for the heads of listed companies.

"Having such undisclosed personal issues could lead to blackmail and force [chief executives] and [chief financial officers] to make decisions based on saving their own skin and potentially reducing shareholder value," he said.

The FCA declined to comment on Ashley's proposals.

The colourful billionaire's own private life has been previously featured in the spotlight, after a 2017 high court battle revealed his competitive drinking antics in a London pub.

Elsewhere in the results document, the billionaire said that House of Fraser's problems are "nothing short of terminal in nature", and admitted his decision to buy the department store chain last year might have been different "if we had the gift of hindsight".

Ashley, never short of surprises, saved the most explosive revelation for last: that Sports Direct had been hit with a €605m tax bill by Belgian authorities, including "200 per cent penalties and interest". The firm will enter into mediation over the bill.

Following the results, one investor is said to have written an open letter to the tycoon, seen by the Financial Times, calling for the firm to increase its spending on corporate governance.

A CLASH AT THE TOP: P7

FTSE 100 ▲ 7,549.06 +60.01 **FTSE 250** ▲ 19,857.94 +37.59 **DOW** ▲ 27,192.45 +51.47 **NASDAQ** ▲ 8,330.21 +91.67 **£/$** ▼ 1.238 -0.007 **£/€** ▼ 1.112 -0.005 **€/$** ▼ 1.112 -0.002

CITY A.M.

THE CITY VIEW

Buybacks are vital for our economic health

POLITICAL opposition to share buybacks has become so fierce in the US that it was unsurprising to hear Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez ramp up the rhetoric at the end of last week, bizarrely describing the practice as "a huge Ponzi scheme". The doyenne of the Democratic left was specifically referring to pharmaceutical companies that return cash to shareholders. Given the perception of Big Pharma among the US left, her choice of target was predictable. However, complaints about buybacks across the pond are not limited to AOC's side of the spectrum; large elements of the Republican party have also decried buybacks as a Wall Street trick to further enrich wealthy shareholders at the expense of investment, economic growth and higher wages. Buybacks have soared in recent years, coming in at $223bn (£180bn) at the end of last year according to S&P Global research – nearly double the level of three years ago. Some of the more sophisticated arguments around buybacks may warrant attention. For example, are executive pay packets blunt and short-termist enough to excessively encourage buybacks? While the evidence is far from conclusive, it is a worthwhile question, and *City A.M.* has advocated simpler remuneration schemes partly to avoid the unintended consequences of warped incentives. However, the idea perpetuated by many senior US politicians that buybacks are some kind of unnecessary and malign practice, harming workers and the wider economy, is absurd. It is entirely reasonable for a firm to return money to shareholders when it judges that it does not have the power to invest the same cash in a way that would create greater returns. Buybacks allow investors to reinvest in startups and in a range of other companies that genuinely require cash for expansion plans. A comprehensive study conducted last year by three European professors of finance rejected the claim buybacks are detrimental to long-term growth. The leading academic Alberto Manconi, who studied 9,000 buyback announcements, recently told Bloomberg that buybacks do not restrict overall investment. "That is an argument that is very puzzling to an academic," he said. In her attack last week, AOC concluded: "Congress needs to end the stock buyback." On the contrary, politicians in the US and beyond need to take a more nuanced look at this issue and stop proposing blunt measures that threaten the health of capital markets required to fuel a growing economy.

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RALLY IN RUSSIA Mass arrests as police officers use force on campaigners in brutal crackdown at Moscow opposition protest

MORE THAN 1,000 protesters have been arrested at a Russian rally following demonstrations against the exclusion of opposition candidates in local polls. Alexei Navalny, Russia's outspoken opposition figure, has also been taken from jail to a hospital. His spokesperson said yesterday that he had an allergic reaction, though local reports suggested he may have been poisoned.

LSE deal is facing probe on both sides of Atlantic

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

Regulators in both the US and the EU are likely to open probes into the merger over concerns it could harm competition. The EU inquiry is likely to go into a phase two investigation, amid concerns it could affect the price of financial data.

The deal would give Refinitiv shareholders ownership of roughly 37 per cent of the enlarged group, with less than 30 per cent of the voting rights.

Don Robert would continue to chair the new London-based company, while David Schwimmer and David Warren would remain in their roles as chief executive and chief financial officer respectively.

"The combined business would create a leading, UK headquartered, global financial market infrastructure provider with significant multi-asset capital markets capabilities, a leading data and analytics business and a broad post-trade offering, well positioned for future growth in an evolving landscape," LSE said in a statement.

The move, first reported by the Financial Times, would come less than a year after Blackstone bought a majority stake in Refinitiv from Thomson Reuters for $17.3bn.

A takeover would transform LSE into a key player in the financial data sector and a competitor to Bloomberg Terminal, which provides market data, news and research.

Refinitiv's services, which include the Eikon and Tradeweb platforms, are used by more than 40,000 institutions worldwide.

The combined group would have revenue of more than £6bn, and LSE said it hoped a takeover would create cost savings of £350m per year.

Based on the value of the deal, Blackstone will have roughly doubled the value of its original investment in Refinitiv, Reuters reported, citing a source familiar with the matter.

Blackstone would become LSE's largest shareholder, while Thomson Reuters said the deal would give it a 15 per cent stake in the company. However, the limiting of voting rights to less than 30 per cent would allow the firms to sidestep City rules that could have forced them to make a takeover bid for the whole of LSE.

The exchange company has enjoyed strong trading in recent months, with shares rising more than 25 per cent since January.

A merger would mark LSE's first major deal since its proposed £21bn merger with Deutsche Borse was blocked by EU regulators in 2017.

Goldman Sachs, Morgan Stanley and Robey Warshaw are all said to be working with LSE on the deal.

WHAT THE OTHER PAPERS SAY THIS MORNING

FINANCIAL TIMES

PSA THREATENS TO PULL PLUG ON VAUXHALL PLANT

PSA, the French carmaker that owns Vauxhall, will pull all production from Ellesmere Port and switch to a plant in mainland Europe if Brexit renders the British factory unprofitable. Chief executive Carlos Tavares said the business had earmarked a site in southern Europe to build future Vauxhall Astra and Opel Astra cars if the UK was not able to achieve a satisfactory outcome when leaving the European Union.

DEUTSCHE BANK PROBES ACCESS OF FIRED WORKERS

Deutsche Bank has launched a probe into whether confidential client data was compromised after it failed to deactivate the accounts of dozens of fired staff when it closed its global equities business earlier this month.

THE TIMES

CITY EYES DEAL SPREE AFTER A BLOCKBUSTER START

The City is braced for a spree of deals after one of the strongest starts to the year on record culminated in £55bn-worth of merger activity last week.

ASHLEY'S HEIR APPARENT POCKETS HIMSELF £10M

Mike Ashley's 29-year-old future son-in-law has earned more than £10m from Sports Direct in two years, making him better paid than most FTSE 100 chief executives, despite the chain halving in value over that time. Michael Murray, who is engaged to Ashley's daughter, was hired in 2015 and is now in charge of its "elevation strategy".

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

CUMMINGS' 'ONE STRIKE AND YOU'RE OUT' LEAKS BAN

Boris Johnson's new adviser Dominic Cummings has told ministerial aides that he will fire any of them who leaked Cabinet papers in a new "one strike policy".

NO-DEAL EXIT WOULD LEAVE UK FARMERS 'DEFENCELESS'

British farmers and manufacturers are at risk of being left defenceless against a flood of cheap imports in the event that Britain leaves the European Union without a deal amid growing concerns that the current government may struggle to pass legislation to cushion a hard exit from the EU.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

PFIZER NEARS TIE-UP DEAL WITH DRUGMAKER MYLAN

Pfizer is in talks to merge its off-patent drugs business with the generic drugmaker Mylan, according to people who are familiar with the matter, in a potential deal that would create a giant global seller of lower-priced medicines.

HONG KONG CLASHES FLARE UP AND SPARK FEARS

Police and demonstrators clashed in Hong Kong this weekend in some of the fiercest confrontations to rock the city, fuelling apprehension that a summer of protests against the encroachment of Beijing is veering into dangerous new territory.

Advent's £4bn bid for Cobham under scrutiny

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

US PRIVATE equity firm Advent International's £4bn offer for Cobham came under scrutiny over the weekend amid shareholder divisions and speculation of rival bids for the defence group.

Some of Cobham's largest shareholders have been split in their support for the offer, which marks the latest in a series of public companies being bought out by private equity.

Last Thursday, Advent offered a 165p-a-share takeover bid for the British aerospace group, representing a 34 per cent premium to Wednesday's share price.

Artemis Investment Management, which holds a 5.1 per cent stake, is supporting the takeover, according to Cobham.

Yet Cobham's largest shareholder, Silchester International Investors, which controls an 11.8 per cent holding, said it did not view the offer as "compelling".

The London-based group also urged Cobham's board to "seek and respond" to other potential bidders.

The deal for Cobham, which is known for pioneering air-to-air refuelling technology, requires 75 per cent shareholder approval.

The Mail on Sunday reported yesterday that British engineering business Meggitt is mulling a possible bid for the group.

Meggitt declined to comment, but one source at the firm insisted that the FTSE 250 engineer was "categorically not looking at a deal".

Advent's takeover of Cobham could attract the scrutiny of politicians less than 18 months after GKN was acquired in a hostile takeover by turnaround group Melrose Industries.

The deal caused alarm among politicians and unions over the fate of the centuries-old British engineering company.

Just Eat has been under pressure from one of its shareholders to merge

Meal deal: Takeaway.com and Just Eat confirm merger talks

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

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JUST Eat confirmed over the weekend that it is in discussions to agree a £9bn tie-up with Dutch rival Takeaway.com.

A statement released by Just Eat said: "The possible combination may be implemented by way of an offer for Just Eat by Takeaway.com."

The talks, first reported by Sky News, come after months of pressure on Just Eat's board from Cat Rock Capital, an activist investor that has been calling on the group to merge its operations with Takeaway.com amid mounting competition within the food delivery industry.

Peltz ramps up pressure to sell Ferguson arm

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

VETERAN activist investor Nelson Peltz is said to have told FTSE 100 group Ferguson to offload its UK operations.

The plumbing and heating firm is coming under pressure from Peltz's Trian investment vehicle to sell its UK arm as part of a wider retreat from Britain, according to Sky News.

A potential auction would attract significant interest from private equity firms, sources told the broadcaster, providing that the blue-chip's board agreed to sell the arm.

Last month, Peltz surprised the City when his hedge fund swooped up a six per cent stake in the FTSE 100 company.

The Wall Street billionaire's UK vehicle Trian took a holding worth roughly £736m in Ferguson, a company that was previously known as Wolseley.

Peltz's activist fund, which has previously put pressure on Cadbury over shareholder returns, said the firm was an attractive investment trading at a discount to its US peers.

City bigwig Michael Spencer blasts 'politically motivated' regulators

JAMES WARRINGTON
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CITY grandee Michael Spencer has launched a scathing attack on "politically motivated" regulators after his firm successfully challenged a €15m (£13.5m) fine over the Libor rate-rigging scandal.

The former Tory party treasurer urged banks to stand up to regulators after his brokerage firm Icap won its court battle against the European Commission earlier this month.

"I believe this issue needs to be addressed urgently – most importantly there should be a much greater separation between the regulators' supervisory functions and their enforcement operations," he told the Sunday Telegraph.

Spencer has donated millions to the Tory party

"Otherwise they tend to end up marking their own homework and making fundamental, politically motivated errors."

Icap was fined in 2015 over its alleged involvement in a cartel in the yen interest rate derivatives sector, but successfully fought the penalty.

OBITUARY

BRIAN CONLON

Chief executive of First Derivatives passes away at the age of 53

BRIAN Conlon, the founder and chief executive of Newry-based fintech company First Derivatives, passed away last night. In May, it was announced that Conlon had been diagnosed with cancer.

Primark calls for rent cuts in bid to match rivals

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PRIMARK is said to be demanding rent cuts on dozens of stores as it seeks to keep up with struggling rivals that have cut costs through insolvency procedures.

The fashion chain is asking landlords to slash rent by 30 per cent on stores where the leases have several years remaining, and is offering lease extensions or refurbishments in return, the Sunday Times reported.

Embattled high street rivals, such as Debenhams and Topshop owner Arcadia, have used company voluntary arrangements to shut stores and slash rents in a bid to stay afloat.

While Primark has not been pushed into insolvency, it appears the firm is looking to keep up with the advantage gained by its competitors.

Primark declined to comment on the mooted cuts, but said: "In principle, we may on occasion look to secure rent reductions.

"We have a duty to our shareholders to maintain a competitive cost base, and we seek to maintain good relationships with our landlords," the firm added.

While rent reductions would be unwelcome for landlords, lease extensions and renovations serve to increase the value of the property.

The Dublin-based retailer, which is a subsidiary of Associated British Foods, has proved resilient to the impact of lower footfall and increased costs, which are crippling many high street stalwarts.

The firm's sales rose four per cent year-on-year in the 40 weeks to 22 June, though this growth was fuelled largely by new store openings.

The company recently opened a flagship 160,000 square foot store in Birmingham, and its new locations in Bordeaux and Ljubljana have posted better-than-expected trading.

Other retailers, including Schuh and Ann Summers, are also demanding rent reductions from landlords, according to the report.

Rival fashion chain Next last year secured a 29 per cent reduction on rents at 19 of its stores, and is reportedly looking to renegotiate contracts at dozens more locations.

Almost two thirds of UK firms have tried to hire new recruits

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IN THE SECOND quarter of the year, 60 per cent of British firms tried to hire new employees, according to a new survey, in the latest sign of strength in the job market.

Meanwhile, 30 per cent of employers said they expect to grow their workforce in the next three months, a British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) and jobs website Totaljobs report showed today.

The survey comes as unemployment in Britain is at a 45-year low of 3.8 per cent, helping real wages grow 1.7 per cent in the three months to the end of May.

This latest BCC outlook report showed that low joblessness meant 64 per cent of employers struggled to find the right people for their openings in the second quarter.

In sectors such as construction and catering the shortages were at "critical levels", the BCC said. In construction 77 per cent of employers reported difficulties in recruiting.

Federal Reserve set for first rate cut in a decade

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THE US FEDERAL Reserve is set to cut interest rates for the first time in a decade when it meets this week in a pre-emptive effort to stave off the effects of trade tensions.

Market players think it is certain that the Fed will cut rates. Based on trades, the implied probability of a 25 basis point or 0.25 percentage point cut on Wednesday is 79 per cent, according to a closely-watched gauge from CME Group.

Traders think there is a 21 per cent chance of a deeper cut of 50 basis points or 0.5 percentage points.

It would be the first rate cut of the federal funds rate since the US central bank slashed borrowing costs in the wake of the financial crisis to 0.5 per cent. An interest rate cut makes borrowing cheaper and encourages spending, which is likely to boost the US economy.

The Fed raised its main rate from the post-crisis level in early 2016 to between 2.25 and 2.5 per cent by the end of 2018, where it has since stood.

However, Washington's ongoing trade war with China and signs of slowing growth have darkened policy-makers' mood.

This has made the Fed's rate-setting committee eye a cut despite the US economy growing faster than most other developed nations, and the country's unemployment standing at record lows.

Barclays analysts Michael Gapen and Jonathan Millar said that "a slow-down in the industrial sector on the heels of slower growth momentum abroad, increased uncertainty from trade and other unresolved government policy issues" are all factors.

"The desire to insulate the US outlook from weaker growth in some foreign economies and elevated policy uncertainty has all the classic markings of 'insurance' cuts."

Jeremy Corbyn has revealed plans to take the National Grid into public ownership

Labour party threats spark new National Grid overseas strategy

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

BRITISH electricity and gas networks giant National Grid is mulling a plan to create overseas subsidiaries amid threats of a public takeover from the Labour party.

Jeremy Corbyn's hopes of taking the National Grid into public ownership has spurred the FTSE 100 firm into weighing options to make sure investors are paid out properly in the event of nationalisation.

The news, first reported by the Sunday Times, comes after Labour unveiled a National Grid takeover plan in May.

A National Grid spokesperson said: "We are taking legal advice to explore the best route to protect shareholder value."

Sadiq Khan's approval rating hits record low

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APPROVAL ratings for Sadiq Khan have fallen to their lowest levels in his three-year tenure as mayor of London amid growing concern about crime rates in the capital.

Khan has an approval rating of minus three, with 30 per cent of Londoners saying they are satisfied with his leadership and 33 per cent dissatisfied, according to YouGov.

It marks the lowest approval ratings ever recorded for Khan, who scored plus 31 when he came into office in 2016.

Knife crime has surged during Khan's reign in City Hall, up more than 50 per cent, according to figures compiled by Conservative councillors.

"Of course Khan's popularity is plummeting," said London Assembly member Susan Hall. "Londoners are not stupid, they are becoming more and more aware of his failings, on crime, transport and housing – the things for which he is responsible."

A spokesperson for Khan said: "Sadiq is absolutely focused on delivering for Londoners despite massive cuts to public services by this Tory government."

Iran leader hopes Johnson's familiarity with country will help to improve ties

PARISA HAFEZI

IRANIAN President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday he hoped British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's "familiarity" with the Islamic Republic will help improve relations between Tehran and London.

The statement came before an emergency meeting in Vienna between parties to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal in response to an escalation in tensions between Tehran and the West that included confrontations at sea and Iranian breaches of the accord. Iran's senior nuclear negotiator Abbas Araghchi described the talks as "constructive".

Meanwhile, in a message posted on the official Iranian presidency website, Rouhani congratulated Johnson on his appointment.

Tensions between London and Tehran took a turn for the worse this month.

Iranian commandos seized a British-flagged tanker in the Strait of Hormuz on 19 July, two weeks British forces captured an Iranian oil tanker near Gibraltar, accusing it of violating sanctions on Syria.

"I hope that your familiarity with the issues of the relations of Iran and England and your presence once in Tehran will be a considerable help to get rid of existing obstacles in the growth and expansion of relations between us," Rouhani said in the statement.

Reuters

FOOD FOR THOUGHT Remainer Jamie Oliver says 'we should get on' with Brexit

Can’t find your card?
Freeze it.
Found it?
Unfreeze it.
Crack on.

Control the use of your Visa debit card
with the Halifax mobile app.

Halifax makes it happen.

HALIFAX VISA

Mike's changing of the guard

Sebastian McCarthy reports on the clash of visions in the top ranks of Sports Direct

MIKE Ashley once admitted that there was in fact another person who had really been running Sports Direct. She is a media-shy 51-year-old multi-millionaire called Karen Byers. For almost three decades, Byers had been quietly working under Ashley as one of his core lieutenants, pulling 18- hour days and keeping a ruthless focus on the firm's operations.

Yet earlier this month her long-term relationship with Sports Direct and its maverick owner came to an abrupt end, when Byers unexpectedly resigned from the business. Her sudden departure, *City A.M.* understands, was due to a clash of visions at the very top of Sports Direct.

While retail chief Byers had been keen to keep the firm close to its roots, Ashley has been eyeing a more upmarket move for his high-street group. It involves bringing in higher quality products with higher margins, as well as putting his higher-end brand Flannels in more House of Fraser stores.

A senior source at the firm said that Ashley told Byers to go away and think things through.

"We said she could come back if she wanted to, but she just couldn't get her head around the fact that the business is changing," they added.

On Friday night, as investors and journalists digested the firm's frantic late-night release of financial results, one line in the group's report in effect admitted the split: "As the focus of the group moves to an elevated offering, including shop fits, this meant that Karen was no longer able to do the things she loved and was good at for so many years."

In shunning one of his most respected directors, Ashley risks repeating the mistakes of his retail rival, Philip Green. Many in the industry point to Green's split with Topshop brand director Jane Shepherdson in 2006 as the beginning of the end for the Monaco-based tycoon's fashion group.

One City retail veteran said the rift was worsened by a falling out between Byers and Michael Murray, Ashley's future son-in-law and the man now charged with heading up the firm's "elevated" upmarket offer.

With Byers out of view, the Square Mile is already looking to see whether Murray, a man who looks poised to play an ever-increasing role by Ashley's side, has what it takes to move the firm away from its reputation as a budget retailer.

Over the coming days, the City's concerns over Sports Direct will likely be focused mainly on the immediate issues for Ashley, such as the fact that he is facing a €674m (£605m) tax bill from the Belgian authorities. Another factor is that he has now abandoned all guidance for 2020 due to troubles at his House of Fraser chain, which he admitted has "terminal problems".

> "Ashley's future son-in-law is now heading up the firm's more 'elevated' offering

Causing even more turmoil, his chief financial officer is standing down.

Even for Ashley – a man not unwilling to treat the traditions of the stock market with blatant disregard – the delays and surprises of Sports Direct's results were a particularly chaotic and shambolic way of ending the week for shareholders, and they will take some time to digest in the City.

But when Friday's dust settles, investors might in fact look at the current changing of the guard as the most important factor of all in deciding the fate of Ashley's increasingly troubled high street empire.

Troubles for Office Depot amid supplier credit insurance woes

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

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STATIONERY chain Office Depot is said to have become the latest retailer to face troubles with its suppliers, after one of its major credit insurers pulled its cover.

Creditor insurance group Euler Hermes has told firms supplying Office Depot Europe that it was no longer willing to cover their dealings, according to a report in the Sunday Telegraph.

The move comes months after a Office Depot rival Staples, a retail chain backed by former US presidential candidate Mitt Romney, collapsed into administration.

Another rival Office Outlet said in March it was entering administration following weaker demand for stationery supplies.

Its suppliers had also cut the credit terms on which it trades, the company said.

Office Depot did not respond to a request for comment.

Businesses feel the pull of the City

HARRY ROBERTSON

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BIG BUSINESSES upped sticks for the City in 2018 as companies increasingly moved further afield to find the best office space, a new study has shown.

Mayfair lost the largest number of businesses renting office space of over 10,000 square feet, according to analysis by law firm Cushman & Wakefield, with a net loss of 12 large firms.

Businesses were enticed by the gleaming towers of the London's financial district, with a net gain of 32 occupiers for the City.

Cushman & Wakefield's head of London markets Alistair Brown said this was due to recent availability of office space in the Square Mile.

"An enduring lack of stock in the West End office market is triggering a notable migration," he said.

City businesses also showed loyalty to the area, with 53 out of 114, or 46 per cent, of transactions originating from companies already located there.

"Modern businesses are brushing aside the notion of traditional boundaries. Instead, they are moving further afield to secure the right space that meets their requirements and reflects their brand," said Hayley Armstrong, senior insight analyst at Cushman & Wakefield.

A lack of rental stock in the West End is pushing businesses to the Square Mile

Aim delistings fall to lowest rate in decade

ANNA MENIN

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THE NUMBER of companies delisting from the stock exchange's Alternative Investment Market (Aim) dropped to the lowest level for a decade last year.

Just 66 companies delisted from Aim during the year ending 30 June, according to research by accountancy group UHY Hacker Young. This was down from last year's figure of 82, and represents a significant decrease compared to 10 years ago, when the total was 275.

Six firms cited Aim's regulatory obligations being a cost or time burden when delisting last year, down from 47 a decade ago. Just one delisted from Aim this year citing a weak financial position, down from 21 in 2008-2009.

Laurence Sacker, managing partner at UHY Hacker Young, said this year's fall in delisting reflected the "improved quality of Aim's offering".

"Companies are increasingly seeing the cost of listing as worthwhile to access the deep pools of secondary capital Aim offers a route to. As the market has grown, so has its reach to institutional investors and this ability to meet funding needs reduces the need to move," he added.

The average daily volume of trades on Aim rose dramatically during the period examined in the study, hitting 44,360 in 2018-19, compared to 15,180 a decade ago. The research also found that the average value of trades per day increased from £468m to £1.9bn during the same period.

"Tough economic conditions and more robust market requirements have led to weaker companies leaving the market, and better-run companies surviving and growing," Sacker said.

Launched in 1995 with just 10 companies listed, Aim now has more than 1,200 listings.

Housing woes hit productivity, employers warn

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

BRITAIN's housing shortage is having a harmful impact on the country's productivity, almost half of businesses have warned.

Forty-three per cent of UK companies with more than 1,000 employees said that housing issues are having a negative effect on their business' productivity, according to new findings released by the Centre for Social Justice (CSJ).

The think tank's report also revealed that 48 per cent believe that housing issues are having an adverse effect on the wellbeing of their staff.

Andy Cook, boss of the CSJ, said: "Businesses are feeling the pressure of the housing crisis too, both in terms of the hit to productivity and when recruiting staff. But some are leading the way in ensuring that those most in need of the benefits of a job are housed appropriately."

Half of employers said housing issues are having an adverse effect on recruiting and retaining staff.

"The barriers to accessing permanent accommodation can be particularly damaging to those already struggling to maintain employment while living in temporary accommodation," the CSJ added.

The report comes days after Boris Johnson appointed Esther McVey as the UK's new housing minister, becoming the ninth person to hold the position in just nine years.

Earlier this month, an influential group of MPs hit out at the government, accusing it of prolonging the national housing crisis by not selling enough land for affordable and social housing.

The Public Accounts Committee said the UK would miss its 2020 target of public land sales "by a wide margin". The government said it delivered 222,000 new homes last year, more than "in all but one of the last 31 years".

John Connolly, who set up Cogital in 2016

Firms eye up bids for challenger accountant

ANNA MENIN

@annafmenin

SEVERAL private equity groups are reportedly preparing bids on UK-based accounting firm Cogital, in a deal that could value the company at £1bn.

European firms BC Partners, Permira and PAI are preparing bids alongside US-based Hellman & Freidman, the Financial Times reported.

Cogital was set up in 2016 by former Deloitte partner John Connolly in collaboration with HG Capital. It was nominated for Accountancy Firm of the Year at last year's *City A.M.* awards.

It is unclear if the reported sale would be of a minority or majority stake in the firm, but it comes at a time when the dominance of the Big Four is under threat.

Regulators are pushing for legislation that would require the accountancy giants to break up their firms to avoid conflicts of interest and offer greater choice to companies seeking an auditor.

Cogital declined to comment on reports of a sale, as did PAI and Hellman & Freidman. Permira and BC Partners could not be reached for comment.

Sharing is caring: How Via Van is making a capital connection

Alexandra Rogers speaks to the boss of Via Van; just don't call it an Uber rival

WHEN we told people we were going to launch a shared ride-service in New York they told us we were crazy," says Chris Snyder, the chief executive of new kid on the block, Via Van.

Six years later, and Via Van is the provider of 1.5m rides across key US cities and 60m rides across London, Amsterdam, Milton Keynes and Berlin.

Using algorithms, customers of the app book a ride and will find their request matched with a vehicle going to the same destination. What will turn up is a six-seater Mercedes Benz, sometimes filled with fellow riders, sometimes not.

Last year, Via Van brought its business case to arguably one of the hardest cities to crack – London. Setting up here wasn't easy because of the tough regulatory environment, and it took about a year to get approval.

Earlier this month, however, it received the good news that Transport for London (TfL) – which has had a testy relationship with ride-hailing apps, most famously Uber – had granted it a further three-year licence to continue its operations in and outside the capital.

The licence grant, which Via Van says is the longest TfL has gifted to any operator, seems to dispel the myth that hardened City types would not take to ride-sharing.

"The truth is millions of people share an armpit with a stranger every day on the Tube," Snyder says.

"Yes they're sharing a ride, but it's very convenient and also very popular. It's also very effective in providing sustainable transport. We have saved 550 tonnes of CO2 in our first year of operation."

These may be impressive stats for a newcomer to what has become a crowded market, but how does Via Van differentiate itself from the raft of ride-hailing apps that have sprung up in the capital?

As it stands, Londoners can choose from apps including Bolt (formerly Taxify), Kapten, Gett, Uber and Addison Lee, to name a few.

Via Van, like many of the other apps in the market, is often described as an Uber rival, referring to the total dominance the latter has enjoyed in London and globally.

> "I'm not sure that London needs another Uber. I'm not sure how it benefits London or its future

But Snyder is keen to point out that what he is offering is very different to the recently-listed US tech giant.

"When we entered the London market, our goal was never to compete with Uber in providing single occupancy rides in the city. We didn't think that was the solution for London of the future," he says.

"London deserved and needed an on-demand share product. I'm just not sure that London needs another Uber. I'm not sure how it benefits London or its future, I think that's frankly the past."

Johnson pledges funds for fast Leeds-Manchester train service

MICHAEL SEARLES

*@michaelsearles_*

BORIS Johnson has pledged to fund a new high-speed rail link between Leeds and Manchester.

Speaking in Manchester on Saturday, the new Prime Minister said he will give his backing to the trans-Pennine transport link to "turbocharge the economy".

The plans would see journey times across the 36-mile route cut from 50 minutes to under half-an-hour, with full details to be published in the autumn following a HS2 review.

The plans are part of Johnson's wider commitment to deliver a high-speed railway link across the north of England, costing around £39bn, and to "rebalance power, growth and productivity" across the UK.

However, Labour shadow transport secretary Andy McDonald said the project had been "announced time and time again by the Conservatives".

"With Boris Johnson's staggering failure to build a bridge across the Thames and an estuary airport I'm not confident he'll be able to deliver better train services between Leeds and Manchester," he added.

Beggars Group music boss Martin Mills bags £8m in bumper payday

Beggars label XL Recordings released three albums by singer-songwriter Adele

JAMES WARRINGTON

@j_a_warrington

THE MUSIC mogul behind record company Beggars Group bagged an £8m dividend last year as his firm cashed in the sale of its stake in Spotify.

Martin Mills, who founded Beggars in 1977, secured the sum after a strong year of trading for the company, which posted a 30 per cent rise in pre-tax profit to £12m last year.

Beggars controls XL Recordings, the record label behind artists including Adele, Radiohead and Vampire Weekend. The group also owns half of Young Turks, which counts The xx and FKA Twigs among its artists.

The figures were boosted by the sale of the firm's stake in Spotify following the Swedish streaming giant's initial public offering last year.

Company accounts revealed Beggars paid out 44 per cent of the proceeds from the sale – thought to be in the region of $100m (£81m) – to its artists.

While Beggars welcomed a strong year of trading, boosted by growth in streaming, the firm warned a no-deal Brexit could have a serious impact on its business due to its reliance on revenue from the EU.

"We are gravely concerned that a longer term negative political climate, if we leave the EU, would do irreparable political, social and economic damage by association to our sector's soft power," the firm said.

Mills' music empire started in a record shop in Earl's Court. He has since grown Beggars into one of the most successful independent record companies and has garnered credit as one of the early advocates of streaming services.

Watchdog's new ad heralds final PPI claims push

ANNA MENIN

@annafmenin

THE ANIMATRONIC head of Arnold Schwarzenegger and the eight-time world memory champion have been enlisted by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to help consumers remember if they were mis-sold Payment Protection Insurance (PPI).

With a month to go before the deadline for making PPI complaints to providers, the regulator has launched a campaign that aims to take people back to the 1990s and early 2000s, when they may have been mis-sold PPI when making significant purchases.

PPI was designed to cover loan repayments if the consumer became unable to do so, due to circumstances such as being made redundant or being unable to work. As many as 64m PPI policies were sold in the UK according to the FCA, most of which were sold between 1990 and 2010, but policies were often mis-sold.

The FCA's new campaign hopes to jog consumer memories by urging them to visit its list of providers who sold PPI, which includes high street and catalogue retailers, building societies, and supermarkets.

In the regulator's new advert, launched today, Schwarzenegger's animatronic head tells the nation not to delay in making PPI complaints, urging people to "do it now". The FCA has also extended the opening hours of its PPI helpline, which can be reached on 0800 101 8800, ahead of the deadline.

Schwarzenegger's head also appeared in a previous PPI ad

Dominic O'Brien, eight-time world memory champion, suggested that consumers employ a "time travel" memory technique to help transport themselves back to financial milestones in the period.

"Close your eyes and return to a location that you frequented during the time period in question... and ask yourself what incidents that triggers," O'Brien advised.

SITTING COMFORTABLY Once Upon a Time in Hollywood starts strong with $40m

DISNEY's The Lion King might still rule everything the light touches, but Quentin Tarantino's Once Upon a Time in Hollywood won the box office battle this weekend, raking in $40m (£32.3m). It stars Brad Pitt (left), Leonardo DiCaprio and Al Pacino.

BDO still leads the beancounter charts with most clients on Aim

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

BDO HAS extended its lead as the beancounter with the most clients on London's Alternative Investment Market (Aim), a new quarterly rankings has found.

Big Four accountancy group PwC also nudged up into third place on the table by total constituent numbers, while RSM has moved alongside Deloitte in a share of fifth place.

The figures come as part of a report released today that provides Aim client rankings of professional services groups including law firms, public relation companies, stockbrokers and auditors.

FTI Consulting remained the leading financial PR firm by client numbers and market-cap.

Meanwhile, Alma PR, Yellow Jersey PR and Buchanan also all headed up the rankings after a roll-back in numbers for Newgate Communications.

SFO convictions drop as it cuts legal spending

ANNA MENIN

@annafmenin

THE SERIOUS fraud office's (SFO) spending on staff and external counsel fell last year, while its conviction rate crumbled to just over 53 per cent.

The figures, released in the SFO's annual report, showed spending on staff fell 2.4 per cent to £30.6m last year, with spending on external counsel dropping 5.7 per cent to £10.6m.

Only 17 of 32 defendants in SFO cases were convicted, a rate of just 53 per cent, down from 77 per cent the previous year.

Lisa Osofsky, head of the SFO, said the conviction rate can "vary significantly" due to its caseload.

The office's average conviction rate across the past four years was 60 per cent.

The report comes shortly after the release of a leadership review of the SFO by the Crown Prosecution Service Inspectorate, which found "the sharp focus on delivery of casework" had "led to tolerance of neglectful approaches to management or, in some cases, of unacceptable behaviours".

The SFO has been under scrutiny recently following the failures of several high profile cases.

In December, the trial of eight former Tesco executives collapsed after the SFO was unable to prove that the defendants had been aware of fraud within the retailer's accounts.

China's soybean crushers hold on US purchases

HALLIE GU

DESPITE the carrot of a potential exemption from import tariffs, Chinese soybean crushers are unlikely to buy in bulk from the US any time soon as they grapple with poor margins and longer-term doubts about trade relations, people familiar with the matter said.

China imposed a 25 per cent tariff on US soy imports last year as Washington-Beijing trade disagreements boiled over into tit-for-tat levies on each other's goods.

That blow was felt on both sides of the Pacific: China was the top buyer of US soybeans.

A warming of relations led to hopes in the soy trade that the situation might improve: After talks last month, US President Donald Trump said he would not to impose new tariffs on Chinese goods – if China bought more US agricultural products.

There have been no signs of US soybean sales to China in recent weeks.

However, in an apparent goodwill gesture Chinese officials briefed private importers on Friday on a plan to boost them, according to three people familiar with the matter.

These and other people interviewed by Reuters on the subject declined to be named.

According to one of the sources, a group of five crushers were told by China's state planner that they could apply for exemptions from the 25 per cent tariffs on some US soybean cargoes arriving before the end of December.

The source said the group included Yihai Kerry, owned by Singapore-based Wilmar International, state-owned Jiusan Group, and privately owned Shandong Bohi Industry, Hopefull Grain & Oil, and China Sea Grains & Oils Industry. *Reuters*

CITY DASHBOARD YOUR ONE-STOP SHOP FOR BROKER VIEWS AND MARKET REPORTS

LONDON REPORT

Vodafone helps FTSE to rise as banks gear up

VODAFONE, which enjoyed its best day in more than 16 years on plans to create a separate European tower company, led the FTSE 100 higher on Friday, but mid-cap **Sports Direct** fell after three times delaying its annual results.

The main index added 0.8 per cent to 7,549.06 points, as weakness prevailed in sterling, helping the exporter-heavy FTSE 100 outperform the broader European market, which lagged after the European Central Bank did not cut interest rates.

The mid-cap FTSE 250 rose 0.2 per cent to 19,857.94, up for the sixth straight session.

Vodafone surged 10.6 per cent to its highest level since March after laying out plans to separate its mobile mast infrastructure in 10 European markets into a new organisation that it could potentially list.

Mike Ashley's Sports Direct gave up 3.9 per cent as it issued three statements. After the bell, Sports Direct reported an operating loss of £54.6m, worse than analysts had expected.

This coming week sees a barrage of corporate earnings and interest rate decisions from the Bank of England – which is expected to keep rates as is – and the US Federal Reserve, which is forecast to cut.

The focus will turn to the UK's biggest banks as second-quarter earnings season gets into full swing.

Lloyds will kick things off on Wednesday, followed by **Barclays** on Thursday and **Royal Bank of Scotland** on Friday. In the first quarter, Lloyds' profits were dented by an extra provision for payment protection insurance claims and a competitive mortgage market.

Vodaphone's shares shot up to their highest level in four months

BT will ring up a first-quarter update on Friday, with the telecoms giant's shares down 21 per cent since the start of the year amid a mix of news.

Reckitt Benckiser and **Greggs** report tomorrow, while **Next** and **Taylor Wimpey** will publish their figures on Wednesday.

A half-year update from **Royal Dutch Shell** on Thursday comes after a crude oil prices started to rise again on the back of tensions in the Gulf.

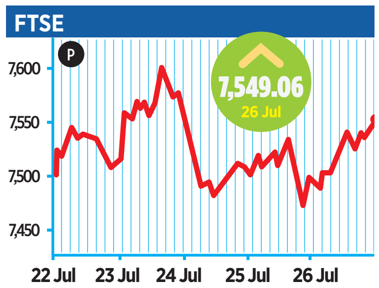
TOP RISERS

1. **Vodafone** Up 10.6 per cent
2. **Pearson** Up 5.89 per cent
3. **Relx** Up 3.59 per cent

TOP FALLERS

1. **Anglo American** Down 4.07 per cent
2. **Antofagasta** Down 2.25 per cent
3. **IAG** Down 1.51 per cent

FTSE



BEST OF THE BROKERS

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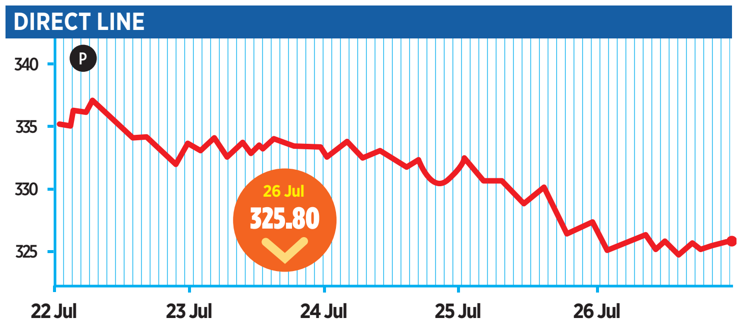
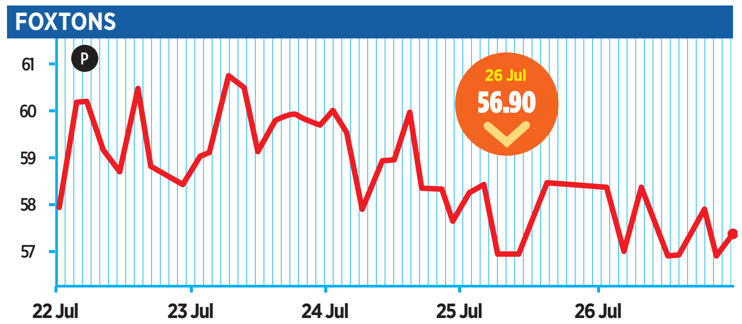
DIRECT LINE



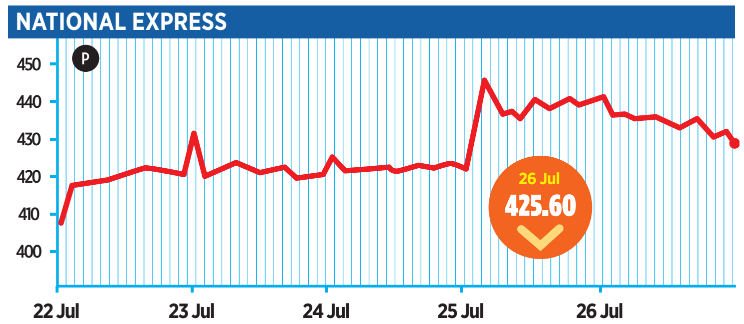
Ogden tables may not make for exciting dinner party conversation, but for insurance firms such as Direct Line they're providing a lot of food for thought. The rate, which dictates compensation payment levels, has been revised to minus 0.25 per cent. This is a better rate for insurers, but it's lower than the zero per cent rate assumed by Direct Line when setting its reserves. As a result, brokers at Canaccord Genuity revised their full-year profit before tax forecast down seven per cent to £240m. Canaccord held its "Sell" recommendation, with a target price of 280p.

FOXTONS



Foxtons hasn't been able to escape the recent downturn in the London property market, posting a decline in revenue to £51.1m in the first half, while losses widened to £3.2m. Foxtons blamed the dip in ongoing political uncertainty, as Brexit continues to weaken consumer confidence. Brokers at Peel Hunt were distinctly unimpressed with the results, and warned there was no sign of an uplift in transaction volumes in the near future. Peel Hunt reiterating its "Sell" rating and target price of 40p.

NATIONAL EXPRESS



Liberum analysts have parked any doubts when it comes to National Express, pouring praise on the transport giant for another set of record first-half results. "This is becoming an increasingly familiar, and reassuring, trend," they crowed. An encouraging school bus bid season in North America was a driving force behind the brokers' optimism, while revenue and profit growth, as well as margin improvement, also went down well. Liberum held its "Buy" rating with a target price of 480p.

NEW YORK REPORT

S&P ends on a high as Fed set to cut rates

ROBUST earnings from **Alphabet** and **Starbucks** pushed the S&P 500 and Nasdaq indices to record highs on Friday, with support from data showing US economic growth slowed less than expected in the second quarter.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 0.19 per cent to end the week at 27,192.45 points, while the S&P 500 gained 0.74 per cent to 3,025.86. The Nasdaq Composite added 1.11 per cent to 8,330.21.

For the week, the S&P 500 added 1.7 per cent, the Nasdaq climbed 2.3 per cent and the Dow rose 0.1 per cent.

Starbucks rallied 8.9 per cent to a record high after the world's largest coffee chain posted its biggest same-store sales growth in three years.

Google-owner Alphabet surged almost 10 per cent after beating Wall Street targets on higher ad sales and growth at its cloud unit, a high-margin business it is leaning more on to drive expansion.

All eyes will be on the US Federal Reserve on Wednesday as it makes its latest policy announcement.

ING noted that several analysts have made the case for the Fed going early and aggressively to head off the risks to US growth with a 50 basis points move next week.

"However, recent firm data has put pay to that view with the implied probability of such action drifting lower over the past couple of weeks. St Louis Fed President James Bullard, who is perceived to be one of the most dovish members of the FOMC having voted for a rate cut in June, has also downplayed that prospect," ING said.

Also in the spotlight will be the resumption of US-China trade talks when US trade representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury secretary Steven Mnuchin travel tomorrow to Shanghai to begin negotiations. Vice-premier Liu He is expected to lead the talks for China.

S&P 500 companies scheduled to report results this week include **Merck**, **Pfizer**, **Apple**, **General Electric**, **Spotify**, **Qualcomm**, **Verizon**, **General Motors** and **ExxonMobil**.

CITY MOVES WHO'S SWITCHING JOBS

LASALLE

Global real estate investment manager Lasalle Investment Management has announced that Martin Zdravkov has joined its UK business in the newly-enhanced role of head of UK residential and impact investing, based in London. Martin will report to Philip Nell, the head of UK real return assets at Lasalle. He will be responsible for various investment strategies in the residential sector, including build-to-rent, social housing and shared ownership, and specialist supported living. Martin joins Lasalle from Aviva Investors where he was portfolio manager for the Realm Social Housing Fund and various other UK and pan-European long income real estate funds, as well as launching new products, such as the European long income fund. Previously, he was a senior investment Manager for the Notting Hill Housing Group, one of the largest housing associations in the UK, where he was responsible for corporate finance and business development.

AUGUSTA

Polly Bahl has joined litigation and dispute funding institution Augusta as chief operating officer, based in London, where there is a team of 70. Polly joins from US law firm Proskauer Rose where, as London director of professional and administrative resources, she coordinated a range of operational functions. A solicitor by training, Polly qualified with SJ Berwin – now King & Wood Mallesons – where she became a partner specialising in private investment funds, a role which latterly incorporated various operational responsibilities. Polly's hiring is the latest addition to Augusta's senior team following the recent arrivals of Gowling WLG partner James Foster as head of international arbitration and FTI consulting managing director Leor Franks as chief marketing officer. These additions reflect Augusta's ongoing growth and increasing client demand for dispute and litigation funding.

KNIGHT FRANK

Mark Routledge has been appointed partner within Knight Frank's capital markets team. He was formerly head of office investment at CBRE for more than nine years. Prior to this he was head of investment at MEPC and a director at JLL. He will be working closely with Knight Frank's Alastair Graham-Campbell and Richard Claxton with whom he worked 25 years ago at Herring Baker Harris. Alastair said: "We are delighted to have Mark joining us and, having known him for over 25 years, we know he has much to add. Mark brings significant investment and development experience to the... team and has an excellent network of contacts within private equity. He is a serious 'rainmaker' and we are excited about what he will bring to our team."

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FTSE 100	FTSE 250	FTSE ALL SHARE	DOW JONES	NASDAQ	S&P 500
7549.06	19857.94	4124.08	27192.45	8330.21	3025.86
60.01	37.59	28.05	51.47	91.67	22.19

£/€	1.1124	0.0046	€/$	1.1124	0.0023
£/$	1.2381	0.0072	€/£	0.8984	0.0033
£/¥	134.56	0.7153	€/¥	120.90	0.1984

GILTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Tsy 3.750 19	100.34	-0.01	103.4	100.3
Tsy 2.000 20	101.44	-0.03	102.5	101.4
Tsy 4.750 20	102.56	-0.02	106.5	102.5
Tsy 3.750 20	103.57	-0.04	106.4	103.6
Tsy 2.500 20	356.17	-0.04	361.4	355.8
Tsy 8.000 21	114.01	-0.07	120.5	113.7
Tsy 4.000 22	109.28	-0.07	111.3	109.0
Tsy 0.500 22	100.22	-0.08	100.3	97.7
Tsy 1.875 22	116.69	-0.15	118.3	115.5
Tsy 2.250 23	107.35	-0.11	107.4	104.7
Tsy 2.500 24	373.09	-0.17	373.2	358.7
Tsy 0.125 24	114.34	-0.20	114.8	110.9
Tsy 5.000 25	124.96	-0.16	125.3	122.1
Tsy 4.250 27	129.95	-0.25	130.3	122.6
Tsy 1.250 27	137.00	-0.40	137.4	128.4
Tsy 6.000 28	148.52	-0.25	149.1	140.5
Tsy 0.125 29	129.51	-0.49	129.7	118.8
Tsy 4.750 30	143.01	-0.34	143.4	132.1
Tsy 4.125 30	388.59	-0.55	389.5	355.2
Tsy 4.250 32	140.25	-0.44	140.7	128.5
Tsy 1.250 32	158.31	-0.84	159.1	144.1
Tsy 0.125 36	150.42	-1.19	151.7	133.4
Tsy 4.250 36	147.31	-0.58	148.0	133.1
Tsy 4.750 38	161.24	-0.62	162.2	144.9
Tsy 0.625 40	170.90	-1.29	173.5	152.8
Tsy 4.500 42	164.36	-0.70	165.5	145.9
Tsy 3.500 45	146.59	-0.78	147.8	128.0
Tsy 4.250 46	166.52	-0.80	168.0	145.7
Tsy 4.025 49	172.75	-0.86	174.2	150.0
Tsy 0.500 50	200.17	-1.75	207.7	173.7
Tsy 0.250 52	196.34	-1.92	204.9	168.8

AEROSPACE & DEFENCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BAE Systems	533.8	1.8	654.4	443.9
Cobham	167.8	2.7	168.7	96.8
Meggitt	589.0	12.0	589.0	458.0
QinetiQ Group	289.4	-0.2	312.4	264.3
Rolls-Royce Holdi	868.4	0.4	1094.0	759.2
Senior	201.6	-2.0	334.4	185.4
Ultra Electronics	1925.0	36.0	1941.0	1232.0

BANKS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Bank of Georgia G	1488.0	2.0	1878.8	1310.0
Barclays	160.1	0.5	194.0	146.1
Close Brothers Gr	1354.0	-4.0	1660.0	1349.0
CYBG	197.8	-3.6	364.2	173.9
HSBC Holdings	662.4	7.3	730.5	600.8
Lloyds Banking Gr	56.0	-0.8	66.6	50.0
Metro Bank	392.2	7.2	3402.0	378.0
Royal Bank of Sco	227.9	-0.2	270.4	203.0
Standard Chartere	690.2	3.0	736.8	519.8
TBC Bank Group	1242.0	-18.0	1774.0	1204.0

BEVERAGES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Barr (A.G.)	656.0	6.0	975.0	610.0
Britvic	912.5	15.5	956.0	745.0
Coca-Cola HBC AG	2824.0	31.0	3074.0	2244.0
Diageo	3323.0	82.5	3482.5	2523.5

CHEMICALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Croda Internation	4674.0	58.0	5447.7	4576.0
Elementis	136.5	-2.1	247.8	129.8
Johnson Matthey	3195.0	-7.0	3760.0	2620.0
Sirius Minerals	14.8	-0.1	38.5	13.5
Synthomer	325.4	-2.4	537.2	323.6
Victrex plc	2006.0	-26.0	3408.0	1944.0

CONSTRUCTION & MATERIALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Balfour Beatty	222.6	2.4	296.5	218.0
CRH	2707.0	33.0	2720.0	1971.5
Galliford Try	636.0	5.0	1104.0	512.0
Ibstock	232.0	-1.8	278.0	193.1

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Marshalls	641.5	-8.5	690.0	412.2
Polypipe Group	418.6	0.0	453.8	307.8

ELECTRICITY

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Contour Global	175.0	-3.0	246.0	150.1
Drax Group	305.4	6.6	427.2	260.2
SSE	1093.5	14.0	1280.0	1008.0

ELECTRONIC & ELECTRICAL EQ.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Halma	1993.5	12.0	2094.0	1237.0
Morgan Advanced M	259.6	-2.2	363.0	237.0
Oxford Instrument	1344.0	6.0	1424.0	842.0
Renishaw	3800.0	-34.0	5650.0	3670.0
Spectris	2734.0	14.0	2898.0	1966.5

EQUITY INVESTMENT INSTRUM.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aberforth Smaller	1184.0	2.0	1394.0	1120.0
Alliance Trust	828.0	5.0	829.0	672.0
Apax Global Alpha	156.0	-1.5	159.0	127.0
AVI Global Trust	774.0	3.0	782.0	660.0
Baillie Gifford J	816.0	6.0	869.0	663.0
Bankers Inv Trust	958.0	6.0	966.0	766.0
BBGI SICAV S.A. (	156.0	0.5	168.0	142.5
BlackRock Smaller	1402.0	2.0	1600.0	1160.0
BMO Global Smalle	1374.0	12.0	1495.0	1220.0
Caledonia Investm	3055.0	0.0	3110.0	2650.0
City of London In	426.0	2.5	434.0	376.0
Edinburgh Inv Tru	602.0	4.0	699.0	571.0
F&C Investment Tr	723.0	7.0	741.0	616.0
Fidelity China Sp	225.0	1.0	250.0	182.4
Fidelity European	254.0	0.0	257.5	202.0
Fidelity Special	263.5	2.5	278.0	220.0
Finsbury Growth &	927.0	12.0	940.0	740.0
GCP Infrastructur	126.2	0.0	130.8	122.2
Genesis Emerging	780.0	4.0	782.0	615.0
Greencoat UK Wind	138.6	-0.6	143.2	122.8
HarbourVest Globa	1716.0	-4.0	1726.0	1288.0
Herald Investment	1328.0	16.0	1364.0	1055.0
HGCapital Trust	215.0	-0.5	220.0	175.0
HICL Infrastructu	163.2	3.2	170.1	149.9
International Pub	158.0	0.2	163.4	146.8
JPMorgan American	487.5	2.5	488.0	386.5
JPMorgan Emerging	1046.0	12.0	1050.0	759.0
JPMorgan Indian I	743.0	6.0	790.0	566.0
JPMorgan Japanese	443.0	-0.5	470.0	367.0
Jupiter European	843.0	0.0	895.0	666.0
Law Debenture Cor	594.0	2.0	636.0	534.0
Mercantile Invest	205.0	2.0	219.6	168.0
Monks Inv Trust	951.0	7.0	951.5	710.0
Murray Internatio	1194.0	12.0	1208.0	1056.0
NB Global Floatin	89.5	-0.1	93.3	87.6
NextEnergy Solar	119.0	-1.5	124.5	108.0
Pantheon Internat	2320.0	10.0	2335.0	1955.0
Perpetual Income	318.5	2.0	365.0	301.5
Pershing Square H	1444.0	8.0	1470.0	990.0
Personal Assets T	42500.0	100.0	42600.0	38900.0
Polar Capital Tec	1468.0	36.0	1468.0	1066.0
RIT Capital Partn	2150.0	15.0	2150.0	1892.0
Riverstone Energy	858.0	7.0	1282.0	840.0
Schroder Asia Pac	468.0	4.5	469.5	379.0
Scottish Inv Trus	833.0	0.0	902.0	748.0
Scottish Mortgage	554.0	2.5	568.3	441.4
Sequoia Economic	113.4	0.0	115.2	106.0
Smithson Investme	1260.0	2.0	1274.0	1000.2
Syncona Limited N	256.5	2.0	302.5	213.5
Temple Bar Inv Tr	1262.0	8.0	1366.0	1116.0
Templeton Emergin	816.0	6.0	818.0	649.0
The Renewables In	126.8	-0.2	133.2	109.3
TR Property Inv T	424.0	1.0	433.5	353.5
Vietnam Enterpris	467.5	0.0	472.0	420.0
VinaCapital Vietn	342.0	0.0	350.0	318.0
Witan Inv Trust	222.5	1.0	227.6	189.6
Woodford Patient	53.3	0.0	91.0	52.3
Worldwide Healthc	2760.0	20.0	2915.0	2325.0

FINANCIAL SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3i Group	1111.5	0.5	1164.5	756.2
3i Infrastructure	285.5	1.5	303.0	232.5
AJ Bell	430.0	-5.0	477.0	220.0
Allied Minds	73.6	1.7	87.1	37.3
Amigo Holdings	160.6	-0.4	297.5	154.2
Arrow Global Grou	272.8	-0.2	276.2	167.2
ASA International	354.0	-7.5	510.0	320.0
Ashmore Group	533.0	11.5	533.0	337.0
Brewin Dolphin Ho	320.8	4.0	366.0	295.4
Charter Court Fin	307.5	-8.5	375.0	228.8
City of London In	434.5	-0.5	440.0	360.0
CMC Markets	100.8	1.8	197.0	77.4
Coats Group	80.2	-1.2	91.3	69.8
Georgia Capital	982.0	1.0	1260.0	941.0
Hargreaves Lansdo	2105.0	25.0	2433.0	1633.0
IG Group Holdings	560.6	-13.4	954.5	474.8
IntegraFin Holdin	383.0	2.0	406.1	269.0
Intermediate Capi	1409.0	-11.0	1435.0	899.0
International Per	112.8	2.0	248.8	107.0
Investec	485.5	-3.7	561.0	423.4
IP Group	69.0	0.1	131.2	67.4
John Laing Group	378.8	-2.8	402.0	283.2
JTC	355.0	-13.0	440.0	287.0
Jupiter Fund Mana	376.6	-0.4	442.8	287.6
Liontrust Asset M	814.0	24.0	814.0	532.0
LMS Capital	49.2	-0.4	53.5	44.0
London Finance &	38.5	0.0	44.5	37.5
London Stock Exch	5672.0	46.0	5784.0	3867.0
Man Group	167.0	-0.7	184.9	126.8
OneSavings Bank	377.2	-9.2	447.4	330.0
Paragon Banking G	429.4	-11.8	502.0	379.2
Plus500 Ltd (DI)	607.4	-39.6	2040.0	495.0
Provident Financi	413.0	2.0	692.6	394.9
Quilter	149.6	-0.3	156.6	110.6
Rathbone Brothers	2210.0	-15.0	2634.0	2085.0
Real Estate Credi	169.0	1.0	175.5	163.0
Record	32.2	0.0	42.1	27.3
River and Mercant	266.0	-4.0	330.0	212.0
S&U	2310.0	10.0	2605.0	1767.5
Sanne Group	752.0	6.0	762.0	450.0
Schroders	3001.0	6.0	3210.0	2334.0
Standard Life Abe	304.6	0.6	378.9	224.9
TP ICAP	317.0	-0.6	324.5	267.2
Walker Crips Grou	27.0	0.0	39.0	24.0
XPS Pensions Grou	117.0	-2.0	180.0	95.0

FIXED LINE TELECOMS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BT Group	192.0	2.7	264.7	187.0
TalkTalk Telecom	108.0	0.5	137.0	96.6
Telecom Plus	1346.0	-4.0	1528.0	1010.0

FOOD & DRUG RETAILERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Greggs	2378.0	-14.0	2476.0	950.0
Morrison (Wm) Sup	198.3	-0.2	269.4	195.3
Ocado Group	1240.0	30.5	1435.0	749.8
Sainsbury (J)	198.8	-2.3	341.5	187.9
SSP Group	693.0	4.0	744.4	615.1
Tesco	226.0	-0.9	266.2	189.6
UDG Healthcare Pu	796.5	6.0	850.0	551.0

FOOD PRODUCERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Associated Britis	2394.0	20.0	2638.0	2041.0
Bakkavor Group	114.6	3.4	191.0	108.6
Cranswick	2576.0	-8.0	3454.0	2472.0
Greencore Group	224.1	-0.9	230.0	162.9
Hilton Food Group	951.0	1.0	1088.0	884.0
Tate & Lyle	752.2	-1.4	800.4	624.0
Unilever	4899.0	3.0	5091.0	3931.0

FORESTRY & PAPER

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Mondi	1825.0	-3.0	2236.0	1584.0

GAS, WATER & MULTIUTILITIES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Centrica	87.5	1.2	155.6	85.3
National Grid	846.4	6.1	889.2	748.7
Pennon Group	724.4	5.0	792.8	684.2
Severn Trent	2038.0	10.0	2153.0	1770.0
United Utilities	791.6	6.6	873.6	682.4

GENERAL INDUSTRIALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Smith (DS)	375.5	0.5	513.4	292.2
Smiths Group	1639.5	9.0	1649.0	1279.5
Smurfit Kappa Gro	2632.0	-34.0	3292.0	1934.0
Vesuvius	518.5	-13.5	662.0	473.2

GENERAL RETAILERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Auto Trader Group	535.0	5.6	606.0	388.5
B&M European Valu	380.5	2.9	426.3	278.6
Card Factory	170.5	-1.7	212.4	162.6
Dixons Carphone	123.1	-0.2	179.8	107.6
Dunelm Group	923.0	2.5	981.0	482.8
Inchcape	626.5	28.0	783.5	486.6
JD Sports Fashion	630.2	12.6	635.6	318.5
Just Eat	635.6	12.8	883.4	533.8
Kingfisher	223.5	2.5	311.7	202.2
Marks & Spencer G	209.5	1.0	299.1	204.2

MAIN CHANGES UK 350

Risers		%
Vodafone Group	146.0	10.6
Pearson	927.0	5.9
Inchcape	626.5	4.7
Ascential	390.0	3.8
Homeserve	1178.0	3.6
Relx plc	1934.5	3.6
Bakkavor Group	114.6	3.1
Howden Joinery Gro	567.0	2.8
Capital & Counties	218.0	2.6
Ferguson	6158.0	2.6

Fallers		%
Plus500 Ltd (DI)	607.4	-6.1
Aston Martin Lagon	604.2	-4.2
Anglo American	2098.0	-4.1
Sports Direct Inte	229.8	-3.9
Tullow Oil	191.9	-3.9
National Express G	425.6	-2.9
Charter Court Fina	307.5	-2.7
Paragon Banking Gr	429.4	-2.7
Vesuvius	518.5	-2.5
Lancashire Holding	692.5	-2.5

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Next	5712.0	44.0	5936.0	3991.0
Pets at Home Grou	208.8	1.6	208.8	110.0
Sports Direct Int	229.8	-9.4	414.5	225.8
Ted Baker	914.0	12.0	2378.0	800.0
Vivo Energy	121.6	-1.2	156.0	96.0
WH Smith	2122.0	-18.0	2186.0	1697.0

HEALTH CARE EQUIPMETN & S.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Assura	65.9	-0.5	66.6	52.4
Convatec Group	150.1	0.5	239.0	118.6
Mediclinic Intern	333.9	-5.4	522.2	293.4
NMC Health	2470.0	-37.0	4120.0	2192.0
Smith & Nephew	1796.5	25.0	1802.0	1258.0

HHOLD GDS & HOME CONSTR.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Barratt Developme	662.0	6.6	670.2	434.0
Bellway	3003.0	27.0	3226.0	2419.0
Berkeley Group Ho	3945.0	95.0	3981.0	3226.0
Bovis Homes Group	1097.0	6.0	1177.0	828.0
Countryside Prope	305.6	4.0	353.2	270.0
Crest Nicholson H	370.0	8.8	404.8	296.4
McCarthy & Stone	142.1	1.6	143.3	105.2
Persimmon	2094.0	23.0	2501.0	1859.5

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Reckitt Benckiser	6481.0	50.0	7155.0	5593.0
Redrow	574.0	8.0	674.6	460.8
Taylor Wimpey	173.5	0.9	192.3	129.3

INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Bodycote	770.0	-4.5	1024.0	676.0
Hill & Smith Hold	1141.0	-23.0	1516.0	902.5
IMI	1050.0	18.5	1242.0	870.0
Melrose Industrie	194.4	-1.8	233.9	146.3
RHI Magnesita N.V	4556.0	-2.0	5085.0	3318.0
Rotork	310.4	3.0	361.4	235.7
Spirax-Sarco Engi	8880.0	105.0	9400.0	5900.0
Weir Group	1557.0	12.5	1977.5	1240.0

INDUSTRIAL METALS & MINING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Evraz	654.0	-0.2	709.4	442.1
Ferrexpo	257.2	-2.5	301.3	143.5

INDUSTRIAL TRANSPORTATION

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BBA Aviation	298.0	0.6	350.0	207.0
Clarkson	2620.0	30.0	2900.0	1878.0
Fisher (James) &	2115.0	30.0	2260.0	1600.0
Royal Mail	208.1	-0.3	489.0	194.5

NON LIFE INSURANCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Admiral Group	2227.0	0.0	2300.0	1897.0
Beazley	565.0	-12.5	599.0	492.6
Direct Line Insur	325.8	-1.1	366.5	304.9
Hastings Group Ho	197.9	0.0	274.2	174.0
Hiscox Limited (D	1772.0	18.0	1777.0	1418.0
Lancashire Holdin	692.5	-18.0	725.5	530.0
RSA Insurance Gro	577.8	4.8	644.2	496.6
Sabre Insurance G	282.5	0.0	294.0	249.0

LIFE INSURANCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aviva	410.6	-0.2	502.8	364.6
Legal & General G	270.0	3.0	291.2	223.7
Phoenix Group Hol	709.0	-2.9	724.8	544.0
Prudential	1692.5	0.5	1824.0	1340.0
St James's Place	1063.0	12.5	1216.5	914.0

MEDIA

	Price	Chg	High	Low
4Imprint Group	2600.0	-10.0	2700.0	1800.0
Ascential	390.0	14.4	434.8	337.2
Bloomsbury Publis	235.0	2.0	243.0	190.5
Centaur Media	46.0	0.0	56.5	34.7
Entertainment One	448.2	3.0	483.4	336.4
Euromoney Institu	1358.0	32.0	1412.0	1132.0

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Future	1092.0	14.0	1248.0	375.0
Goco Group	80.7	-1.3	132.0	64.6
Haynes Publishing	224.0	0.0	227.0	160.0
Huntsworth	100.0	3.8	125.0	81.0
Informa	883.2	10.8	886.2	605.8
ITE Group	74.7	0.6	84.5	56.3
ITV	112.8	-1.0	170.1	104.7
Moneysupermarket.	358.1	2.4	417.7	264.0
Pearson	927.0	51.6	1027.5	769.2
Reach	85.6	-0.5	87.3	54.6
Relx plc	1934.5	67.0	1973.5	1491.5
Rightmove	524.9	13.3	585.1	420.9
STV Group	375.0	11.0	440.5	318.0
Tarsus Group	425.0	0.0	438.0	243.0
WPP	958.2	11.6	1301.0	800.4

MINING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Acacia Mining	228.6	1.2	256.6	96.1
Anglo American	2098.0	-89.0	2266.0	1464.6
Antofagasta	938.4	-21.6	1022.5	727.2
BHP Group	1955.0	-3.0	2049.0	1490.6
Centamin (DI)	118.2	-0.8	136.2	79.8
Fresnillo	786.0	1.4	1039.0	724.8
Glencore	272.1	-3.7	341.5	254.7
Hochschild Mining	209.6	-1.8	217.0	149.1
Kaz Minerals	578.8	-8.4	846.4	436.7
Polymetal Interna	999.4	-8.6	1031.0	597.2
Rio Tinto	4605.5	30.0	4976.5	3486.0

MOBILE TELECOMS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Inmarsat	563.6	5.2	581.4	362.8
Vodafone Group	146.0	14.0	186.7	123.3

OIL & GAS PRODUCERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BP	523.0	-0.6	598.3	485.9
Cairn Energy	158.7	-3.3	250.0	140.0
Energean Oil & Ga	1018.0	-8.0	1046.0	507.0
Premier Oil	80.7	-1.3	143.6	55.6
Royal Dutch Shell	2548.0	8.5	2666.0	2213.0
Royal Dutch Shell	2554.0	11.5	2705.5	2227.0
Tullow Oil	191.9	-7.8	266.3	165.2

OIL EQUIPMENT & SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Hunting	547.5	-14.0	849.0	453.6
Petrofac Ltd.	415.3	-3.7	663.4	381.5
Wood Group (John)	553.2	2.4	796.4	389.9

PERSONAL GOODS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Burberry Group	2295.0	52.0	2345.0	1623.5
PZ Cussons	218.0	0.5	244.0	178.6

PHARMACEUTICALS & BIOTECH

	Price	Chg	High	Low
AstraZeneca	6905.0	55.0	6919.0	5325.0
BTG	836.0	0.0	853.0	508.5
Dechra Pharmaceut	2896.0	12.0	3168.0	2014.0
Genus	2634.0	4.0	2908.0	2098.0
GlaxoSmithKline	1685.8	15.8	1692.2	1418.0
Hikma Pharmaceuti	1836.0	12.5	2025.0	1510.5

REAL ESTATE INVEST. & SERV.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BMO Commercial Pr	116.4	0.2	149.4	110.8
Capital & Countie	218.0	5.6	279.5	209.5
CLS Holdings	228.5	-2.0	255.0	195.4
Daejan Holdings	5500.0	-70.0	6400.0	5420.0
Grainger	238.6	-4.0	278.5	205.8
NewRiver REIT	175.0	-3.6	280.5	163.4
Safestore Holding	646.5	-2.5	664.5	499.4
Savills	934.5	10.0	949.5	678.5
St. Modwen Proper	441.0	4.0	442.0	365.0
UK Commercial Pro	85.3	-0.9	92.7	81.0

REAL ESTATE INVEST. TRUSTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Big Yellow Group	992.5	-22.5	1062.0	852.5
British Land Comp	535.6	-0.4	660.2	523.0
Derwent London	3036.0	-24.0	3328.0	2761.0
Great Portland Es	687.0	-4.8	773.6	652.3
Hammerson	270.5	-5.0	521.8	266.9
Intu Properties	77.4	-1.6	201.5	74.7
Land Securities G	841.0	-2.6	943.6	791.8
LondonMetric Prop	206.8	-3.2	215.2	172.7
Primary Health Pr	135.4	0.4	139.0	106.4
SEGRO	768.4	-1.6	776.8	585.2
Shaftesbury	815.5	-6.0	932.0	803.0
Tritax Big Box Re	157.3	-1.0	159.7	129.0
Unite Group	1050.0	-3.0	1076.0	797.5
Workspace Group	864.0	-4.5	1088.0	789.5

SOFTWARE & COMPUTER SERV.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Avast	341.4	2.6	345.8	228.7
Aveva Group	4030.0	68.0	4170.0	2284.0
Computacenter	1348.0	7.0	1580.0	952.0
FDM Group (Holdin	840.0	0.0	1000.0	734.0
Funding Circle Ho	118.4	1.2	440.0	112.0
Kainos Group	570.0	2.0	676.0	340.0
Micro Focus Inter	1723.8	36.0	2491.6	1434.4
Playtech	446.6	-1.6	560.4	361.8
Sage Group	742.4	10.4	820.4	525.6
Softcat	954.0	5.0	993.5	565.0
Sophos Group	443.0	8.0	539.5	298.2

SUPPORT SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aggreko	780.4	5.4	882.0	691.8
Ashtead Group	2290.0	47.0	2438.0	1586.5
BCA Marketplace	241.8	0.6	247.0	178.5
Bunzl	2158.0	10.0	2551.0	2059.0
Capita	118.1	2.2	162.0	99.9
DCC	6974.0	148.0	7390.0	5555.0
Diploma	1499.0	11.0	1634.0	1150.0
Electrocomponents	608.8	3.4	761.6	480.0
Equiniti Group	217.0	0.0	266.0	186.2
Essentra	426.6	3.4	507.0	325.4
Experian	2482.0	43.0	2484.0	1728.5
Ferguson	6158.0	156.0	6556.0	4749.0
G4S	195.2	1.4	282.0	175.9
Grafton Group Uni	767.5	-11.0	937.0	630.0
Hays	154.9	2.5	212.0	135.7
Homeserve	1178.0	41.0	1263.0	849.0
Howden Joinery Gr	567.0	15.2	570.9	416.4
Intertek Group	5700.0	82.0	6014.0	4387.0
Network Internati	605.0	-3.0	611.0	500.0
Pagegroup	453.2	11.4	623.5	415.0
PayPoint	937.0	-10.0	1118.0	748.0
Rentokil Initial	411.6	3.0	424.4	284.8
Robert Walters	518.0	4.0	475.0	814.0
Serco Group	141.1	-0.1	145.8	84.1
SIG	130.6	0.2	153.0	102.2
Travis Perkins	1342.5	-16.5	1465.0	970.0

TOBACCO

	Price	Chg	High	Low
British American	3019.0	-1.0	4222.5	2375.0
Imperial Brands	2140.0	-3.5	2987.5	1846.8

TRAVEL & LEISURE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Carnival	3641.0	48.0	5000.0	3412.0
Cineworld Group	252.3	0.9	323.6	246.9
Compass Group	2039.0	21.0	2045.7	1483.0
Domino's Pizza Gr	257.9	4.4	328.7	224.4
EI Group	282.2	-0.4	285.0	152.0
FirstGroup	114.7	0.6	116.6	79.3
Flutter Entertain	6886.0	28.0	8290.0	5525.0
Go-Ahead Group	2180.0	2.0	2200.0	1480.0
Greene King	634.8	5.8	704.4	472.8
GVC Holdings	626.4	6.4	1170.0	507.5
InterContinental	5587.0	98.0	5592.0	3958.4
International Con	438.0	-6.7	711.4	436.3
Marston's	106.7	1.6	124.7	89.9
Merlin Entertainm	451.6	1.0	451.8	307.1
Millennium & Copt	680.0	0.0	685.0	436.0
Mitchells & Butle	304.0	4.0	307.5	238.0
National Express	425.6	-12.8	441.2	361.4
PPHE Hotel Group	1850.0	0.0	1990.0	1490.0
Rank Group	152.6	-0.4	189.0	135.0
Restaurant Group	149.5	0.4	221.9	111.9
Stagecoach Group	134.3	-0.7	177.0	115.5
TUI AG Reg Shs (D	847.0	2.6	1631.0	698.0
Wetherspoon (J.D.	1540.0	-8.0	1581.0	1066.0
Whitbread	4554.0	14.0	5114.0	3883.0
William Hill	159.8	0.9	300.2	132.3
Wizz Air Holdings	3769.0	27.0	3794.0	2329.0

AIM 50

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Abcam	1317.0	-15.0	1539.0	1017.0
Advanced Medical	285.0	-5.0	370.0	260.0
Alliance Pharma	68.4	-1.4	95.6	60.0
ASOS	2465.0	47.0	6228.0	2107.0
Blue Prism Group	1460.0	20.0	2575.0	1040.0
Camellia	10450.0	100.0	11800.0	9100.0
CareTech Holding	378.0	-4.0	406.0	325.0
Central Asia Meta	208.0	2.5	266.5	200.5
Clinigen Group	957.0	15.0	1069.0	721.0
CVS Group	948.0	64.5	1153.0	395.0
Dart Group	772.5	1.0	1017.0	751.0
Diversified Gas &	110.0	1.5	134.0	100.0
Draper Esprit	530.0	0.0	645.0	458.0
Eland Oil & Gas	120.6	-0.4	134.5	97.0
EMIS Group	1208.0	8.0	1242.0	864.0
Fevertree Drinks	2475.0	45.0	3956.0	2070.0
First Derivatives	3130.0	15.0	4390.0	2050.0
Frontier Developm	1004.0	6.0	1385.0	740.0
Gamma Communicati	1005.0	-5.0	1195.0	688.0
GB Group	596.0	1.0	631.0	410.5
Gooch & Housego	1365.0	117.5	1880.0	954.0
Hurricane Energy	45.0	-0.5	60.8	39.0
Impax Asset Manag	256.0	2.0	295.0	184.0
Iomart Group	325.5	-1.0	475.0	308.0
IQE	67.5	0.9	112.5	51.6
James Halstead	508.0	14.0	532.0	367.0
Johnson Service G	169.6	2.0	170.8	113.6
Keywords Studios	1647.0	4.0	2065.0	900.0
Learning Technolo	114.2	-6.2	166.5	62.2
M&C Saatchi	342.0	5.0	394.0	270.0
M. P. Evans Group	680.0	13.0	800.0	637.0
Majestic Wine	252.0	-1.5	472.0	219.0
Midwich Group	560.0	-10.0	685.0	491.5
Mortgage Advice B	570.0	-30.0	720.0	490.0
Next Fifteen Comm	600.0	-16.0	658.0	469.0
Nichols	1700.0	-35.0	1840.0	1240.0
Numis Corporation	242.0	-3.5	430.0	221.5
Polar Capital Hol	590.0	-6.0	680.0	448.0
Purplebricks Grou	115.6	0.4	300.0	90.0
Redde	118.6	0.0	196.0	90.0
Renew Holdings	398.0	3.5	436.5	333.0
RWS Holdings	639.0	3.0	652.0	415.5
Scapa Group	185.4	0.4	473.4	157.0
Secure Income Rei	417.0	6.0	418.0	371.0
Serica Energy	113.0	-0.2	142.0	68.2
Smart Metering Sy	514.0	0.0	665.0	480.0
Telford Homes	352.0	2.0	430.0	267.0
Thorpe (F.W.)	326.0	0.0	340.0	248.0
Watkin Jones	201.5	0.0	232.5	192.2
Young & Co's Brew	1650.0	35.0	1885.0	1322.5
Young & Co's Brew	1080.0	0.0	1300.0	1030.0

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EU SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
AB INBEV	90.43	0.43	91.88	56.32
ADIDAS N	289.55	6.90	289.55	178.30
AIR LIQUIDE	123.95	1.25	124.95	101.85
AIRBUS BR	131.00	0.50	133.86	77.50
ALLIANZ	212.40	-0.20	218.70	170.50
AMADEUS IT GRP BR-A	73.14	0.18	82.20	58.06
ASML HLDG	208.40	0.70	211.50	130.12
AXA	23.47	-0.08	23.99	18.40
BANCO SANTANDER	4.06	-0.03	4.82	3.80
BASF N	61.91	-0.79	84.80	57.26
BAYER N	59.91	0.71	96.97	52.00
BBVA	4.83	-0.06	6.33	4.48
BMW	68.77	-0.28	86.71	61.31
BNP PARIBAS A	42.94	-0.06	56.94	38.14
CRH PLC	30.14	0.30	34.87	26.53
DAIMLER N	48.32	0.20	59.99	44.54
DANONE	78.40	1.20	79.18	59.72
DEUTSCHE POST N	30.21	-0.05	32.20	23.43
DEUTSCHE TELEKOM N	15.06	0.44	15.88	13.36
ENEL N	6.21	-0.04	6.62	4.22
ENGIE	14.05	0.10	14.28	11.31
ENI N	14.34	-0.01	16.71	13.39
ESSILORLUXOTT	119.10	0.10	129.55	95.50
FRESENIUS	45.24	0.26	71.00	38.50
IBERDROLA	8.59	-0.05	9.13	5.81
INDITEX	27.65	0.12	28.86	21.85
ING GROUP	10.41	-0.04	13.28	9.09
INTESA SANPAOLO N	2.01	-0.01	2.66	1.80
KERING	473.25	-35.65	539.80	351.70
KON AH DEL BR	20.53	0.09	24.01	18.60
L'OREAL	249.10	1.10	257.80	182.00
LINDE	179.90	2.00	0.00	0.00
LVMH	385.60	9.45	392.65	242.30
MUENCHENER RUECKV N	219.80	-0.20	228.70	180.00
NOKIA	5.05	0.11	5.76	4.17
ORANGE	13.52	0.13	15.25	13.08
ROY.PHILIPS	42.20	0.40	42.50	29.05
SAFRAN	135.00	2.05	137.20	99.98
SANOFI	75.95	0.55	80.44	71.32
SAP I	114.04	1.50	125.00	84.02
SCHNEIDER EL	79.24	0.24	81.36	57.54
SIEMENS N	100.82	-0.08	121.40	90.90
SOCIETE GENERALE	23.08	0.09	35.06	20.81
TELEFONICA	7.06	-0.01	8.06	6.59
TOTAL	48.03	0.11	55.39	44.23
UNILEVER	52.49	-0.26	55.40	45.30
VINCI	91.96	0.46	94.96	69.98
VIVENDI	26.19	1.49	26.69	20.40
VOLKSWAGEN VZ I	154.88	0.52	163.70	131.02

COMMODITIES

Gold	1416.10	-10.85
Silver	16.53	-0.20
Brent Crude	63.18	-0.65
Krugerrand	1440.80	-7.85
Palladium	1539.00	9.00
Platinum	881.00	19.00
Tin Cash Official	17600.00	6.00
Lead Cash Official	2067.00	56.50
Zinc Cash Official	2455.00	-19.50
Copper Cash Official	5968.00	42.00
Aluminium Cash Official	1796.00	-1.00
Nickel Cash Official	14470.00	-14.00
Aluminium Alloy Cash Official	1270.00	31.00
Cocoa Futures	2443.00	-20.00
Coffee 'C' Futures	99.78	-0.87
Feed Wheat Futures	146.50	-0.40
Soybeans Futures Continuation Contract	881.40	-1.00

CREDIT & RATES

BoE IR Overnight	0.750	0.00
BoE IR 7 days	0.750	0.00
BoE IR 1 month	0.750	0.00
BoE IR 3 months	0.750	0.00
BoE IR 6 months	0.750	0.00
LIBOR Euro - overnight	-0.468	0.00
LIBOR Euro - 12 months	-0.346	-0.01
LIBOR USD - overnight	2.349	0.00
LIBOR USD - 12 months	2.179	0.00
Halifax mortgage rate	3.990	0.00
Euro Base Rate	0.000	0.00
Finance house base rate	1.000	0.00
US Fed funds	2.50	0.00
US long bond yield	2.59	-0.01
Euro Euribor	-0.413	0.01
The vix index	12.16	-0.58
The baltic dry index	1947.00	-67.00
Markit iBoxx EUR	245.36	-0.03
Markit iBoxx GBP	348.64	0.38
Markit iBoxx USD	255.28	-0.32

WORLD INDICES

	Price	Chg	%chg
FTSE 100	7549.06	60.01	0.80
FTSE 250	19857.94	37.59	0.19
FTSE All-Share	4124.08	28.05	0.68
FTSE AIM All-Share	928.21	2.16	0.23
S&P 500	3025.86	22.19	0.74
Dow Jones I.A.	27192.45	51.47	0.19
Nasdaq Composite	8330.21	91.67	1.11
Xetra DAX	12419.90	57.80	0.47
CAC 40	5610.05	32.00	0.57
Swiss Market Index	9968.08	91.05	0.92
ISEQ Overall Index	6324.29	-31.78	-0.50
FTSEurofirst 300	1537.43	5.89	0.38
Hang Seng	28397.74	-196.56	-0.69
Shanghai Composite	2944.54	7.18	0.24
STI Index	3356.49	-26.99	-0.80
ASX All Ordinaries	6879.30	-22.60	-0.33

US SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3M	173.98	-4.15	219.75	159.32
ABBOTT LABORATOR	87.75	-0.25	88.76	63.07
ADOBE	311.27	2.54	313.11	204.95
ALPHAB RG-C-NV	1250.41	118.29	1289.27	970.11
ALPHABET-A	1245.22	109.28	1296.98	977.66
AMAZON.COM	1943.05	-30.77	2050.50	1307.00
AMERICAN EXPRESS	126.78	-0.37	129.34	89.05
APPLE	207.74	0.72	233.47	142.00
AT&T	34.15	0.34	34.37	26.80
BANK OF AMERICA	30.77	0.43	31.91	22.66
BERKSHIRE HATH RG-B	209.90	2.00	224.07	186.10
BOEING CO	345.00	-3.09	446.01	292.47
CATERPILLAR	132.92	-1.79	159.37	112.06
CHEVRON	123.72	-1.91	128.55	100.22
CISCO SYSTEMS	56.53	-0.09	58.26	40.25
CITIGROUP	72.16	0.77	75.24	48.42
COCA-COLA CO	54.17	1.10	54.82	44.25
COMCAST-A	44.63	0.02	45.30	32.61
DOW	49.11	-1.66	0.00	0.00
EXXON MOBIL	74.81	-0.12	87.36	64.65
FACEBOOK-A	199.75	-0.96	218.62	123.02
GOLDMAN SACHS GR	222.14	2.16	245.08	151.70
HOME DEPOT	216.91	1.36	219.30	158.09
IBM	151.36	0.97	154.36	105.94
INTEL	51.59	-0.57	59.59	42.36
JOHNSON & JOHNSO	130.73	-0.39	148.99	121.00
JPMORGAN CHASE	116.22	0.51	119.24	91.11
MASTERCARD RG-A	282.07	2.72	282.29	171.89
MCDONALD'S	215.58	1.14	218.96	153.13
MEDTRONIC	102.55	0.46	103.29	81.66
MERCK	81.43	-0.32	87.07	62.38
MICROSOFT	141.34	1.15	141.68	93.96
NETFLIX	335.78	9.32	386.80	231.23
NIKE -B-	87.54	0.26	90.00	66.53
ORACLE	58.50	0.21	60.50	42.40
PAYPAL HOLDINGS	115.49	0.37	121.48	74.66
PEPSICO	118.61	0.56	119.74	101.06
PEPSICO	131.22	2.23	135.24	104.53
PFIZER	43.09	0.42	46.47	38.04
PHILIP MRRS INT	85.98	0.35	92.74	64.67
PROCTER&GAMBLE	114.73	1.96	116.52	78.49
TRAVELERS COS	149.93	1.44	155.09	111.08
TWITTER	41.52	3.40	43.41	26.19
UNITEDHEALTH GRO	252.94	4.24	287.94	208.07
UTD TECHS	135.63	-0.73	144.40	100.48
VERIZON COMM	57.08	0.72	61.58	51.11
VISA RG-A	183.69	2.10	183.99	121.60
WALGREENS BOOTS	55.05	0.29	86.31	49.31
WALMART	113.02	0.80	115.49	85.78
WALT DISNEY	144.65	1.44	145.43	100.35
WELLS FARGO	49.30	1.21	59.53	43.02

FORUM

EDITED BY RACHEL CUNLIFFE

How Open Banking could fix the loyalty penalty headache

Sam Bowman

YOU DON'T get to be Prime Minister without having a few political gifts. One of Theresa May's was her ability to spot the issues that people cared about – even if she found it harder to come up with effective ways of improving them.

That was why her maiden speech outside Downing Street was so inspiring to many people: the things she saw as problems, lots of voters did too.

One such problem, in many people's eyes, is the so-called "loyalty penalty", where businesses offer better deals to new customers than their existing users are getting.

If you haven't switched energy or insurance provider in the last year, chances are you're on a tariff that charges you a lot more than you could be paying for the same service.

Even if you're a savvy customer who remembers to switch insurance and energy providers every year, and cancel your mobile phone contract once you've paid off the handset, it's a near-certainty that you have relatives and friends who aren't. To many people, it's too much of a hassle to switch, and the gains are too uncertain to bother checking.

This practice seems like a rip-off, and that was the motivation behind the energy price cap proposed by Ed Miliband and implemented by the May government at the start of this year.

As critics of the policy predicted, the energy price cap is now being ratcheted downwards, so that more and more customers will be caught in it and the price discounts that energy companies can offer will become smaller and smaller. In telecoms, Ofcom has just reached an agreement with most of the mobile operators to curb loyalty penalty pricing in mobile phone contracts.

This may sound like a good thing, but trouble with price caps and contract regulations is that customer switching is good for efficiency overall.

Customer switching forces companies to compete with each other and try to find ways of doing business more cheaply. Diminishing the rewards for switching means that fewer people will be willing to shop around, which weakens the incentive these companies have to improve.

The current regulatory approach tries to protect non-switchers by hurting switchers. That's a dead end, making markets affected by it sclerotic, uncompetitive, and less innovative in the long run.

A better approach may be to make switching easier, or even entirely automatic. And a model for this already exists, in banking.

Open Banking was introduced by the Competition and Markets Authority last year, and is intended to allow bank customers to more easily compare financial products across the market, and access the best ones for them.

For example, many people default to their home bank for mortgages and credit card borrowing, even when this is a more expensive option, because it is easier to manage. By lowering the barriers to comparing, accessing and managing loans from other lenders, Open Banking should drive competition and lower borrowing costs in the market.

> **The current regulatory approach tries to protect non-switchers by hurting switchers, making markets sclerotic and uncompetitive**

It is early days, but already services that use Open Banking are being rolled out and making it easier for customers to access and manage credit and other financial products from the whole market, not just their current account provider.

The Open Banking regime could do a lot more, as a recent paper by my colleagues at Fingleton, co-authored with the Open Data Institute, argues.

If, for example, it were extended to other financial products like mortgages and insurance, customers could use Open Banking based services that monitor the market on their behalf and nudge them to switch when a better deal becomes available.

The same approach could be extended to energy and telecoms.

At a cost of over £11bn, the smart meter rollout has been enormously expensive and currently offers little more than easier meter readings.

But giving customers control over their own smart meter data, so that they could share it with approved third parties, could make something worthwhile out of this project.

Energy customers could provide their usage data and contract information to approved third party intermediaries that could guarantee to prompt them when a cheaper tariff became available, or even switch them automatically. Almost all the work would be shifted to intermediaries, and customers could be given certainty about the benefits of switching to a new supplier.

This kind of approach would allow this new government to address the problem of the loyalty penalty, while avoiding the mistakes made by the last one.

Instead of more regulation, here's a way for the new Prime Minister to show that he means business – and shake these markets up with a bit of competition.

Sam Bowman is a principal at Fingleton Associates and a senior fellow of the Adam Smith Institute.

Our collaboration with Manchester and Leeds will unlock the UK's full potential

Peter Estlin

WHAT do Channel 4, Amazon, TalkTalk, Boohoo, and Autotrader have in common? The answer is that they have all announced that they are creating jobs in the Manchester and Leeds regions.

Last week, I visited these two cities with a growing global reputation. Like the City of London, Manchester and Leeds both host strong financial and professional services clusters, share an ambitious innovation agenda, and have excellent access to talent via world-leading educational institutions.

Manchester has the UK's second biggest financial centre outside of London, joint with Edinburgh. Today, the region is home to more than 2.8m people, with an economy bigger than that of Wales or Northern Ireland.

Meanwhile, Leeds has more science, technology, engineering, and mathematics graduates than anywhere else in the country, which has manifested itself in UK-leading healthtech and fintech industries, and a professional services hub second only to London in size.

Both showcase how the UK's regional economies have a substantial offer that we need to wake up to. And that is something I want to push in my mayoral term.

Being the lord mayor of London, people often mistake my promotion of the financial services sector as solely focused on the Square Mile.

Yes, London is the capital of capital and the world's leading net exporter of financial services, totalling £68bn. But while this sector has its historical roots in the City, it is a UK-wide industry, and it is collectively that we succeed.

After all, two thirds of the financial and professional services industry is based outside of London.

With our departure from the EU on the horizon, it is more important than ever that our cities work together. Because a stronger regional economy means a stronger, more competitive UK on the world stage.

That is why it was fascinating to hear from those businesses in Manchester and Leeds that are the vanguard of their cities' economic success – from "angel investors" like NorthInvest in Leeds, which is providing funding to northern companies, to Manchester-based NCC, a cyber security company making strides worldwide.

Despite the good work of these organisations, there is still so much potential for growth in these regions, particularly in capital raising – and that is where the City of London can help. London is a magnet for foreign direct investment, which helps to create jobs and generate major capital projects right across the country.

We recognise our role in the growth of regional economies. Manchester and Leeds are key cities in the City Corporation's regional strategy, which is helping to increase inward investment and build awareness of how London can act as a springboard for regional firms to export their products and services globally.

In my meetings in both cities, it was recognised across the board that it is collaboration – not competition – which will ensure our future prosperity.

And while I am used to extolling the virtues of the City of London in this column, it is abundantly clear that, with changes afoot to our relationship with Europe, we must look closer to home and realise the full potential of our regions.

Peter Estlin is the lord mayor of London.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

Licence to IPO

[Re: Was the Aston Martin IPO a folly?]

Aston Martin's 105-year history and its reputation as an ad man's dream – loved by royalty and James Bond fans alike – underpinned by a loyal following of wealthy buyers led to the decision to float the company. It was hoped that surging demand in Asia Pacific and the IPO itself would move the company up a gear, even if comparisons would become inevitable with the already-listed Ferrari.

Unfortunately, since October trading conditions have deteriorated, with disappointing sales trends in the UK and Europe. The profit warning earlier this week has left the shares down 66 per cent since its float, although the fact that there was no retail offer has ironically cushioned some of the blow. Next year's launch of the DBX sports utility vehicle is now looking crucial for Aston Martin's prospects.

To have elected for an IPO was not a folly in itself – but the timing of the IPO given a deteriorating economic backdrop was a highly questionable decision.

Richard Hunter, Interactive Investor

Ties off

[Re: Want to clock off early? You are not alone]

With the UK seeing record-breaking temperatures last week, leading to havoc on the rail network and uncomfortable office spaces, it's really no surprise that people are crying out for flexible working. Some businesses may fear the cost implications, or a drop in productivity, but the reality is that a lot of companies already have similar initiatives in place and are doing extremely well as a result. In fact, more and more companies are now offering early finishes at the end of the week, working from home days, and flexi-hours as a way of keeping staff focused, engaged and comfortable. But why stop there? In this heat, companies should also consider providing staff with flexibility on office wear too – nobody enjoys being in a suit at 36 degrees. For businesses which are looking to get ahead of the curve, finding ways to ensure that staff have a choice in how and where they work best can really set the business apart when it comes to staff wellbeing and satisfaction.

Jamie Mackenzie, Sodexo Engage

BEST OF TWITTER

What would happen to the fortunes of different parties after no deal Brexit? Brexit Party – gone, Leave voters behind Con, Remain divided & without clear cause (too late for revoke, so re-applying for membership as objective?). So despite effect of no deal, might be best for Con
@FabianZuleeg

The Prime Minister's cat is known as the Chief Mouser to the Cabinet Office. So what job title should the PM's dog get? Assuming there isn't an official one already...
@asabenn

Chief Sniffer without Portfolio.
@TheUKDemocrat

Chief Whippet
@Lordveck

Deputy Best Boy. Michael Gove's No. 2.
@BenedictSpence

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Herd behaviour and panic are to blame for the Woodford saga

Oliver Hemsley

OVER the last two months, the media storm around Neil Woodford has captured the attention of investors, regulators, and even parliament.

A man who was once billed as "Britain's Warren Buffett" is now at the centre of a crisis which threatens to extinguish the star fund manager and his eponymous fund.

Woodford built his reputation as an independent thinker, eschewing the herd mentality which left investors heavily exposed to tech stocks during the dotcom bubble and financial services during the crisis of 2007-08. It is ironic that a man who resisted the pressure of herd behaviour throughout his career now risks being consumed by it, after Woodford's Equity Income Fund was forced to suspend following a deluge of redemptions.

But Woodford is no stranger to controversy: while at Invesco, his decision to avoid overhyped tech stocks led to a similar pattern of underperformance. Woodford was reported to be within six months of losing his job before the market corrected itself, vindicating his investment strategy.

It appears that Woodford is now awaiting a similar change in fortune. He longs for a market correction to vindicate him once again and make investors think twice about withdrawing their money. Whether the inevitable wave of redemptions can be halted once the current suspension is lifted remains an open question.

One thing is for sure: investors calling for a new investment approach will likely be disappointed.

Woodford is a consistent contrarian, and his investment mandate has always been clear. So while he may face criticism for the level of unquoted stocks in his portfolio, it is hard to argue that he was not transparent. Information regarding the portfolio's holdings was open to all investors – sophisticated or otherwise.

From this perspective, it becomes increasingly clear that – although the fund had been underperforming – its more recent decline has been fomented by panicked investors seeking redemptions, thereby putting pressure on equities held by the fund and causing a race to the bottom.

It is no surprise that irrational decisions such as these often permeate financial markets, yet their effects can be surprising. As we saw during the financial crisis, herd behaviour can magnify losses, as institutional and retail investors alike fall prey to hysteria which appears to induce myopia.

This shortsightedness is an issue because, while Woodford's performance since 2017 was problematic to say the least, investors' failure to acknowledge that his minimum investment horizon spanned almost half a decade meant that investment decisions were driven by the spot price on any given day.

Active funds aren't designed to track the index, and often flow counter to it.

This works in both directions: as passive funds track whichever trend is driving the market, active funds may go through a period of underperformance, but when the market switches to focusing on fundamentals, active fund managers can achieve supernormal returns. This approach allowed Woodford to vastly outperform passive funds and the FTSE All-Share tracker during his time at Invesco.

To be fair to regulators, there is an acceptance that investors must be protected from herd mentality where possible, with the FCA's Andrew Bailey describing the fund's suspension as "the right thing to do" in a recent select committee appearance. This is a refreshing bout of realism in our ever more populist public discourse.

As Woodford begins the process of selling down his stakes to meet the expected redemptions, one must look holistically at the events which have transpired. Although his investment strategy may rely upon a long anticipated market correction, this should not obscure the fact that herd behaviour has exacerbated this saga.

A nauseating level of hysteria has characterised these events, but for those who would write Woodford's obituary, one must admit that it is rather difficult to report sightings of a supernova without a telescope.

Institutional and retail investors alike fall prey to hysteria which induces myopia

Oliver Hemsley is the former chief executive of Numis.

DEBATE

As public scrutiny increases, has 'diversity' become a dirty word in the tech industry?

YES

PHILIPPA STURT

The term "diversity" has become so prevalent in the tech sector that it has lost a lot of its impact, especially when it comes to gender.

In the venture capital industry, for example, investors are being encouraged to invest in women under a positive discrimination agenda, which does a disservice to both female and male entrepreneurs.

The problem has become particularly prominent in the tech industry, because this is still seen by many as a "man's world". The response has been one of over-correction, imposing quotas to increase female employment and tick the box of diversity.

Diversity became a dirty word when it stopped being seen as a way of attracting the best talent and started being seen as a set of criteria that was prioritised over candidates' capabilities.

If companies focused on hiring the best candidate for the role, they would achieve diversity without invoking the negative connotations that the word has come to represent.

Philippa Sturt is managing partner at Joelson.

NO

RAMYANI BASU

"Diversity" and its sister word "inclusion" are still pivotal in ensuring the success of the tech industry. The sector has suffered from a gender imbalance for decades, and it is only now that we are taking steps in the right direction with science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and coding education in schools, plus better benefits for working parents, and more women in leadership positions.

But it's not just gender that's the issue; diversity in all its forms continues to be a struggle for the sector. While many took International Women's Day and Pride as an opportunity to demonstrate diversity to the outside world, there are still internal inclusion issues in many businesses.

Far from being a dirty word, it needs to be a part of companies' strategic goals – led by the chief executive, not a diversity and inclusion officer.

Organisations must push beyond quotas and external perceptions to address the root cause of why diversity strategies haven't always worked to date, and how to change that.

Ramyani Basu is digital partner at A.T. Kearney.

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OFFICE POLITICS

Stop all that corporate drivel and get to the point

Is 'purposeful communication' over-hyped nonsense, or essential to reach consumers?

Tom Maddocks

LOTS of recent heavy-duty research suggests that millennials and generation Z are different from other consumers. According to such studies, these younger generations care more about ethical issues and the environment, they want to know what their pensions and investments are being used for, and they want to buy from companies that have a higher purpose than simply maximising profits.

Is this really true?

In reality, many younger consumers don't really care – they want the best return on their investments (if they have any) and the cheapest goods, wherever they come from. Otherwise, it's highly unlikely that fast-fashion specialist Primark – which has been mired in criticism over the way it treats its labour staff – would be the most successful chain on the high street.

But despite this, I believe that there is an underlying shift in attitudes, from old and young alike, on a number of fronts. Look at the Twitter outcry against the eye-catching £1 bikini offer from Missguided, or the rise of planet-friendly veganism among younger people.

We are all fed up with the corporate robots who are on-message but never answer the question

And even if we didn't like their methods, the recent Extinction Rebellion environmental protests didn't just get a lot of support from millennials, but from their parents too.

Virtue-signalling, so popular on Twitter and Facebook, is moving into the real world, and that has a real impact on businesses.

For instance, fund managers are now challenging companies much more aggressively on their production. This is particularly apparent around packaging, after David Attenborough's Blue Planet series highlighted the amount of junked plastic polluting the oceans.

So how can companies update their corporate messaging?

Companies need to change their communication style for a start – no more corporate robots please.

For some, separating themselves from the crowd by showing that they have a "higher purpose" could be an attractive business model. For the rest, it's about authenticity and transparency. If what you say isn't backed up by action, you are in trouble.

So if you tell us that you're working to improve diversity, you'd better have a diverse set of spokespeople.

If you tell us you promote green technology, you'd better have experts who can explain the benefits in a non-technical manner, so it doesn't sound like a lot of mumbo-jumbo.

If you have a social purpose, your staff should have examples that show how this percolates through the organisation, rather than just looking like a marketing gimmick or greenwash. If you tell us how hard you've worked to pay above minimum wage, you'd better not get found out for using suppliers who are exploiting child labour.

It's more important than ever for the public face of organisations to be human, and authentic, admitting where mistakes have been made and further progress is required.

And to make this work, the substance has to be there as well.

I am fed up with the kind of media training that produces the corporate robots who are always on-message but never answer the question, and I suspect a lot of other people are too.

Tom Maddocks is founder and course director of Media Training Associates.

A TWEET OF COMPLAINT

Twitter
Free

In a fit of rage, you launch into a tirade about the shambles that is the railway. You bash out a tweet to the train company: "How am I supposed to get to work today?!" You get a swift response from their faceless social media person, who tells you how sorry they are. You know that they are being paid to say that, though – they don't really care. But at least you are able to share your frustration with everyone else on Twitter.

COFFEE BREAK

SUDOKU

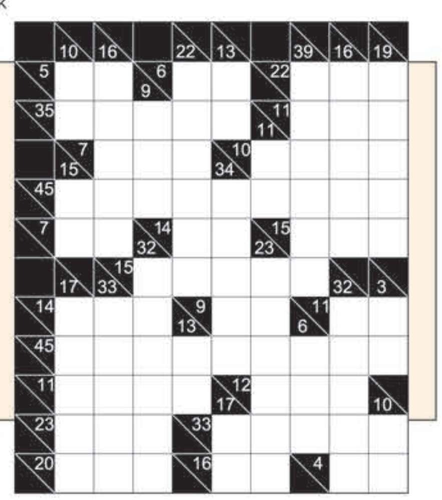
Place the numbers from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9 to solve this tricky Sudoku puzzle.

					9	7		
			4	7		6	8	2
	3							
	6	7		2				1
		3	5	1	6	4		
8				3		2	6	
							4	
1	7	2		4	5			
		9	7					

KAKURO

Fill the grid so that each block adds up to the total in the box above or to the left of it.

You can only use the digits 1-9 and you must not use the same digit twice in a block. The same digit may occur more than once in a row or column, but it must be in a separate block.



WORDWHEEL

Using only the letters in the Wordwheel, you have ten minutes to find as many words as possible, none of which may be plurals, foreign words or proper nouns. Each word must be of three letters or more, all must contain the central letter and letters can only be used once in every word. There is at least one nine-letter word in the wheel.

LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTIONS

QUICK CROSSWORD

F	I	F	T	H	■	G	R	O	U	P
E	■	A	■	O	■	U	■	U	■	R
T	E	Q	U	I	L	A	■	T	O	O
C	■	■	■	S	■	V	■	R	■	V
H	E	A	R	T	■	A	D	A	G	E
■	■	M	■	■	■	■	■	G	■	■
A	S	I	D	E	■	B	R	E	A	K
L	■	A	■	E	■	I	■	■	■	N
E	B	B	■	R	E	L	A	P	S	E
R	■	L	■	I	■	L	■	A	■	L
T	H	E	M	E	■	Y	O	D	E	L

KAKURO

6	4	3	7	■	6	9	8	7
3	2	1	5	■	2	7	1	3
8	5	■	9	2	5	8	■	■
9	7	■	■	1	3	6	4	2
■	6	9	8	5	7	■	6	9
3	8	7	9	■	1	8	2	3
2	1	■	6	4	8	9	7	■
1	3	5	4	2	■	■	9	3
■	■	7	3	1	8	■	5	1
9	6	8	1	■	6	3	1	2
7	8	9	2	■	9	7	8	4

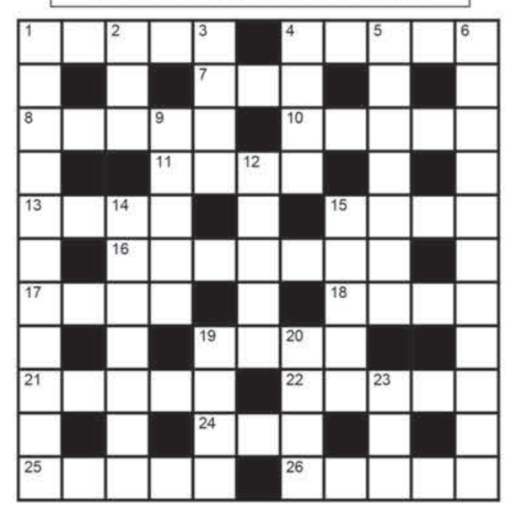
SUDOKU

6	4	3	7	9	8	2	5	1
2	7	1	6	4	5	3	8	9
8	9	5	3	1	2	7	6	4
9	5	8	4	2	3	6	1	7
3	1	6	5	8	7	9	4	2
7	2	4	9	6	1	8	3	5
4	8	9	1	7	6	5	2	3
1	3	2	8	5	9	4	7	6
5	6	7	2	3	4	1	9	8

WORDWHEEL

The nine-letter word was MINIATURE

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Unobstructed (5)
4 Illuminated (3,2)
7 Single number (3)
8 Lazed (5)
10 Assent (5)
11 Villein (4)
13 Very many (4)
15 Confront (4)
16 Pasta 'cushions' (7)
17 Not at home (4)
18 Army division (4)
19 Non-flowering plant (4)
21 Strong thread or string (5)
22 Ice house (5)
24 Tennis stroke (3)
25 Royal (5)
26 Closes with a bang (5)

DOWN

1 Apparent lowering of the air temperature by wind (5,6)
2 Long and slippery fish (3)
3 Travelled in a vehicle (4)
4 Page of a book (4)
5 Land (7)
6 Pompous or foolishly grandiose (11)
9 Written composition (5)
12 Major European river (5)
14 Doing business (7)
15 Thrown forcefully (5)
19 Dropped to earth (4)
20 Chest bones (4)
23 Field covered with grass (3)

PERSONAL FINANCE

BREAKING FREE

Katherine Denham finds out what the big banks are doing to help survivors of financial abuse

MONEY ultimately brings us freedom, so what if your partner were to restrict access to your income or bank account? It's not uncommon for perpetrators of domestic abuse to manipulate their partners through money in this way – in fact, according to Women's Aid, a third of survivors say that their access to cash during their relationship was controlled by their abuser.

Now consider the fact that 26 per cent of women and 15 per cent of men in England and Wales experience domestic abuse at some point in their lifetime. And yet, the financial side of domestic abuse is deeply misunderstood, and for this reason, it can often go unreported.

So what actually is it? According to the charity Surviving Economic Abuse, this behaviour is designed to reinforce or create economic instability. And in this way, it limits people's choices and ability to access safety.

While economic abuse can be broader than just limiting access to money, and includes efforts by abusers to deprive their partners of basic essentials like food, clothing or transport, financial abuse is a major factor. If people don't have the financial means to be independent, it forces them to stay with abusive partners for longer.

Financial abuse rarely occurs in isolation, as perpetrators often use physical and emotional behaviour to reinforce it. And despite perceptions, men and women at all income levels can be victims of abuse. In fact, individuals who don't fit the victim stereotype – such as professionals in high income households – often feel like their experience is ignored. In many ways, this shows how stereotypes, particularly those about typical gender roles, can end up reinforcing abusive patterns.

Amid all of this is a glimmer of hope in the form of new legislation, which Theresa May pushed through parliament just days before handing over the keys to Downing Street last week.

Introduced in parliament on 16 July, the Domestic Abuse Bill would offer more support to victims, while helping bring perpetrators to justice – and for the first time, the rules include emotional and economic abuse.

Victims have unique needs when it comes to separating and managing their finances, so the question is: what are banks doing to try to help?

The Financial Abuse Code of Practice was launched in October last year, and since then, banks have been working with specialist domestic violence charities to make sure that they handle situations of coercive control appropriately. *City A.M.* spoke to the UK's biggest banks, HSBC, Lloyds, Barclays, RBS, and Santander, to find out what they're doing to help victims.

SPOT THE SIGNS

All five banks told us that they train staff to help them spot the signs of abuse and support suspected victims.

HSBC outlined some of the warning signs, such as unusual account activity, unpaid bills, or an unexplained shortage of money. In more than half of cases, an abusive partner will take out loans and build up bad debts in the victim's name, according to Women's Aid. But signs of abuse can also be subtle and behavioural, such as nervousness when interacting with banking staff, while Santander points out that the perpetrator may give clues in their behaviour too.

Often it's the frontline staff at banks who raise the alarm bells and support victims. In fact, a Women's Aid survey found that 14.6 per cent of domestic abuse survivors had sought help from their bank. All the banks we spoke to said that suspected cases of financial abuse should be escalated to the bank's specialist customer protection team, who assess the impact and look at the options for the victim going forward, such as opening a new account.

Nowadays, most banks have systems in place to flag a vulnerable customer when they walk into a branch or pick up the phone. Indeed, one bank said that, with the customer's consent, staff can add confidential notes to their account to ensure that their colleagues are aware of the situation.

ESCAPE PLAN

Even those who share joint accounts with their partners are not safe from financial abuse. Indeed, many victims don't have access to the money within these accounts because their debit cards have been confiscated by their partners, while a third have their wages taken from them directly, according to Women's Aid.

One way banks can help victims is to separate the joint account, removing additional cardholders to prevent further abuse. However, one barrier for victims is that both parties typically need to give permission for one of them to be removed from a joint account – and while they are able to do this separately, they are ultimately jointly liable for any debts on that account. Some banks are also able to protect funds in joint accounts by blocking transactions.

For survivors who have escaped abusive partners, there are various protective measures used by the big banks, such as moving to paperless billing, and resetting pins, passwords, and security details.

Some survivors might be worried that their branch details could reveal to their ex-partner where they are living. To avoid this risk, banks can arrange for customers to be given a non-geographical sort code (which is essentially a generic sort code not linked to a specific location), and can also allow vulnerable customers to transfer their existing account to a branch of their choice.

OUTSIDE THE BOX

Banks often have to diverge from their usual protocols in order to protect their vulnerable customers. For example, new customers wanting to set up an account must provide documents to verify their identity, such as proof of address. But domestic abuse survivors may be living in temporary accommodation or simply be unable to provide the information needed.

In this case, bank staff can consider whether an exemption to the rules might be appropriate, while arranging for any post to be sent to a safe address, such as a women's refuge. Indeed, HSBC told us that it can accept a letter from a recognised charity or victim support organisation in order to continue to support the victim.

> “We hear from women on a weekly basis who are facing issues with their bank around economic abuse

And, of course, many victims who have suffered violence at the hands of their partners are distressed and possibly not in a frame of mind to deal with their finances properly. In such circumstances, banks like HSBC allow survivors to appoint a trusted representative to manage their money on their behalf until they feel strong enough to do it themselves.

SURVIVING TO THRIVING

Unfortunately, a 2015 report from Women's Aid found that the response from banks had often been poor.

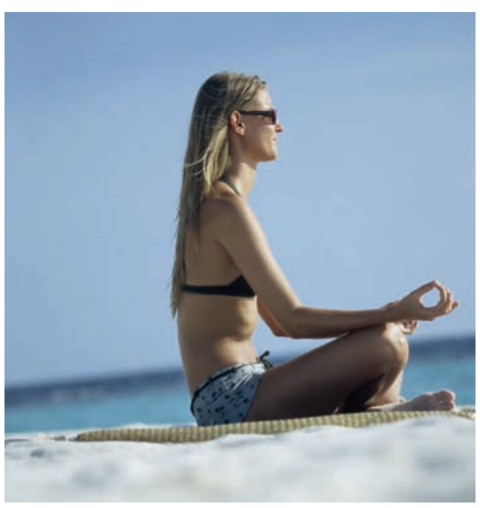
When *City A.M.* asked if enough was now being done to help victims, Christina Govier from Surviving Economic Abuse said encouraging steps have been taken within the industry since the code of conduct was launched nine months ago.

However, she said that there has not been significant sector-wide change responding to the issue, adding: “We continue to hear from women on a weekly basis who are facing issues with their bank or building society around economic abuse.”

The abuse itself can be exacerbated by the way companies deal with situations, with some staff failing to respond to what they are told. Govier said banks should be responsive to a victim's needs, taking action that is outside their normal procedure, such as offering a longer appointment or moving deadlines to allow more time to make any financial decisions.

Domestic abuse is always a complex issue, and it's important that banks try to make the situation for survivors better, not worse.

TRAVEL



TAKE A ROMANTIC BREAK FOR ONE TO THE MALDIVES

The Maldives is made for romance. But, says **Angelina Villa-Clarke**, it also offers plenty for solo travellers

On the plane, everyone is in a couple. Most of them are holding hands as they stare moon-eyed at each other. If emojis were real, the air above each seat would be bursting with pink hearts. Except over mine, where there would be one solitary 'rolling eyes' emoji.

I shouldn't be surprised. I am, after all, en route to the number one honeymoon destination in the world – the Maldives. Here, the pure white sands and impossible azure seas promise the ultimate in romance to the 1.3m visitors (many of whom have just got hitched) who touch down each year.

Known for its series of private island resorts boasting a plethora of amorous attractions, such as beds with sunset views, candle-lit beach dinners under a moon-lit sky and spa treatments à deux – it's perhaps a little odd that I'm travelling to the Maldives to experience a holiday for one.

But here I am, checking into Mirihi Island Resort, found in the South Ari Atoll, a 20-minute sea-plane ride from Malé. Its new Solo Traveller holiday means that it is casting its net wider to catch more than just loved-up travellers. Offering the chance for lone wolves to soak up its untouched natural beauty and Zen-like atmosphere, it makes for the perfect way to reset your mojo and clear your mind. Indeed, each year it has a specific period of time in which the single supplements are removed from all villas, with a focus on solo-travel friendly activities including rum tasting and barefoot barbecues.

The hotel's easy-going tone is clear the minute you touch down and are told to kick off your shoes, never to be worn again until you leave. Literally a bare-foot resort, all the floors segue seamlessly into the beach, so wherever you go, you'll feel the sand between your toes. It's totally liberating.

While other Maldivian resorts may have beach butlers, underwater restaurants and even slides to take you into the ocean, the focus here is more authentic. Mohamed Shareef, the general manager who's been at the resort since it opened 18 years ago, has a lot to do the atmosphere. "It's all about balance," he says. "If you want to doze on the beach and do nothing, then you won't be pestered. But if you're after the thrill factor, we can offer that, too. We're not as glitzy as some places, but what we do offer is personalised service. Many of our guests return each year and we've got to know them well." He gestures towards the turquoise waters: "You don't need gimmicks when you're surrounded by natural beauty like this – you can't fail to be impressed."

He's not exaggerating: the island has one of the richest house reefs in the area, teeming with rainbow-hued fish, green turtles and baby reef sharks, many of which can often be spotted even in shallow waters.

As well as snorkelling the reef with the in-house experts, there are also longer trips to take advantage of. The Whale Shark Safari is a highlight, and takes you onboard a 55ft pine-wood yacht to the edge of the atoll, so you can swim alongside green turtles and daunting – but harmless – pods of whale sharks and manta-rays. The Sunset Dolphin Cruise, meanwhile, brings with it a local musician playing acoustic traditional tunes to serenade the pods of dolphins that flip and somersault alongside the boat – a sure-fire way to melt your heart.

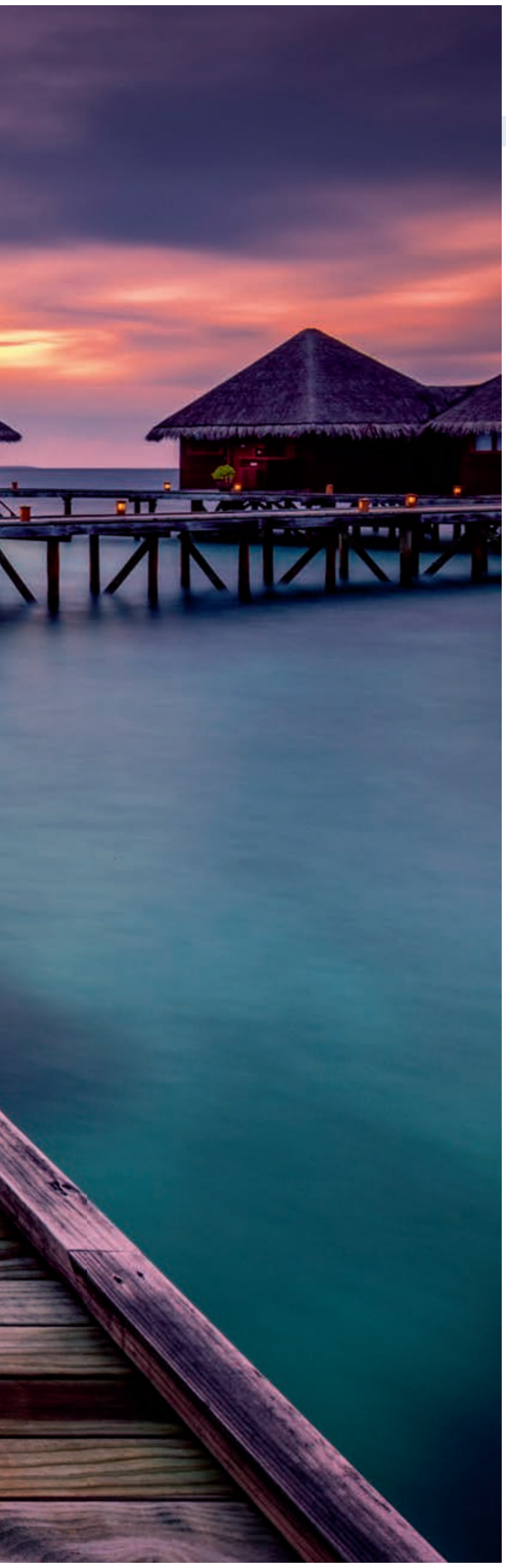
If you stay on the resort, then days start with a yoga session in the pavilion, the lapping ocean nearby providing the ultimate soundtrack. Then it's to breakfast in the relaxed al fresco Dhonveli Restaurant. While the resort has its fair share of couples as guests, there's also a surprising variety of people checked in – groups of friends, singletons, extended families – so you never feel conspicuous padding around alone or eating at a table for one.

> "The Sunset Dolphin Cruise comes with a local musician playing acoustic tunes

At just 350m long and 50m wide, the island is tiny, but you'll never feel like you're going stir crazy. Days can be spent lounging on your own stretch of beach, while a trip to the Duniye Spa will offer the chance to de-stress, with traditional-style treatments using products made from tropical ingredients. There's also meditation classes at sundown to really channel your inner calm.

Each of the 37 villas – six of which are on the beach – offer their own form of sanctuary. Pared-back interiors are inspired by the ocean – so there are pops of exotic colour, natural features and locally-made artworks. Water villas include shower room with full slide-away doors, opening up views to the Indian Ocean, and a private outdoor deck with direct access to the sea. Be warned: there are no TVs in the rooms and limited wifi in the public spaces – but at least you'll have the chance to catch up on all those books that have been gathering dust at home.

For foodies, the culinary offering will also impress, including Maldivian cookery classes with head chef Felix Bamert. You'll soon master the



taste of the islands by rustling up red lentil curry, pol roti coconut bread, and banana fritters.

By night, Dhonveli Restaurant bursts with Maldivian flavours – the country's cuisine is a complex blend of Indian and Sri Lankan flavours, layered with an abundance of unusual spices and ingredient, including gotukola, drumstick leaves and banana flower. There are four restaurants in all, each with a different ambience. Over-sea restaurant Muraka offers more of a fine-dining twist to local dishes and is an inspiring place to dine – especially with a chilli and passion fruit daiquiri in hand – as the sun goes down.

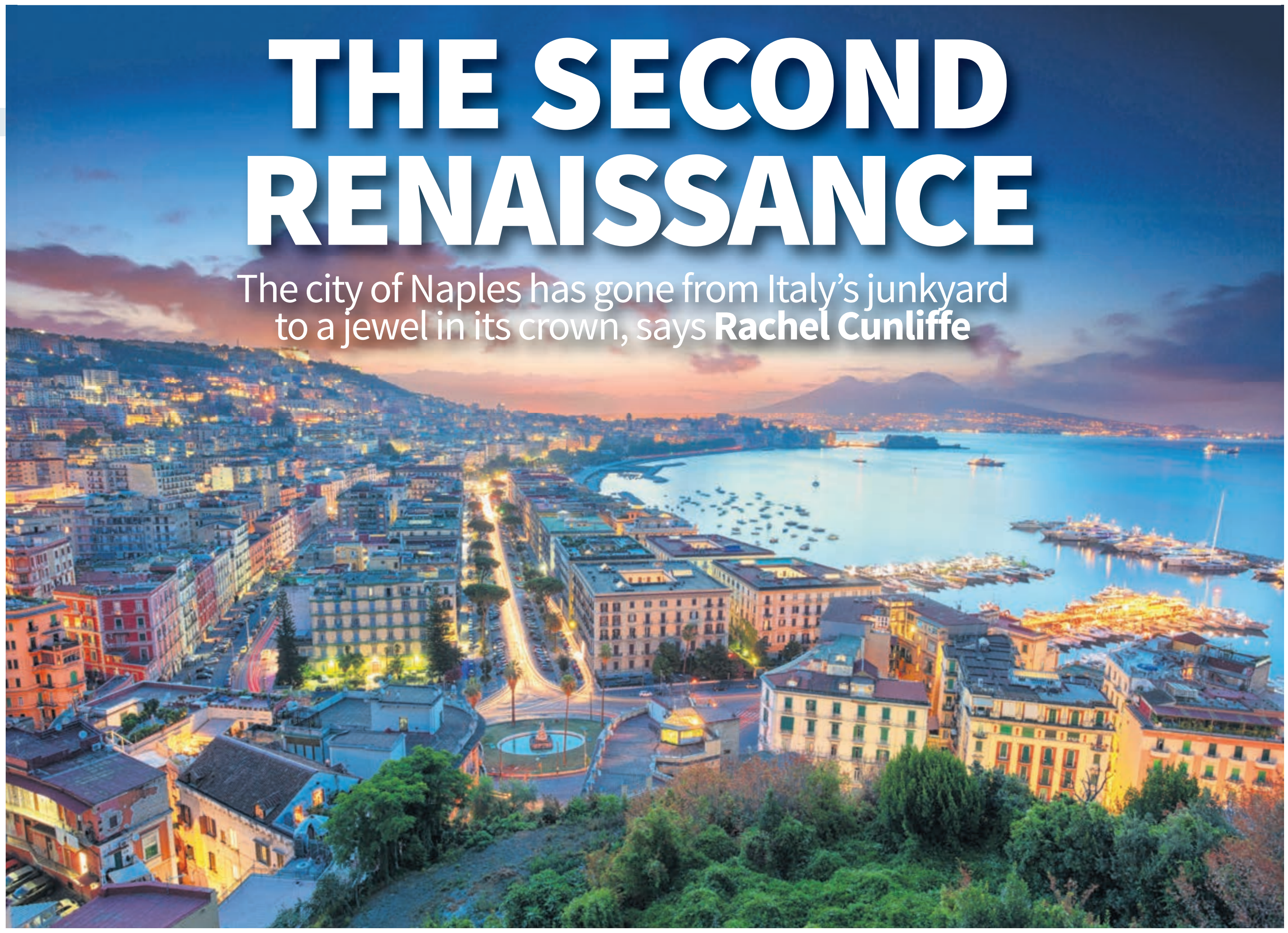
Talking of which, once night falls, there's still plenty to keep you amused: from the beach cinema to rum and chocolate tastings. On clear nights, the resort sets up a high-strength telescope to gaze at the stellar show above you, with the rings of Saturn and moons of Jupiter both visible on clear nights. It's guaranteed to leave you starry-eyed.

NEED TO KNOW

Nightly rates at Mirihi Island start from $600 (approx £479) per villa, on a B&B basis, based on two people sharing. Prices are subject to 10 per cent service charge and 12 per cent GST. For more information or to make a reservation visit mirihi.com, call +960 668 0500 or email info@mirihi.com

THE SECOND RENAISSANCE

The city of Naples has gone from Italy's junkyard to a jewel in its crown, says **Rachel Cunliffe**



NAPLES
ITALY

THE WEEKEND

Leave all your preconceptions about southern Italy at the departure gate – Naples is a hidden gem of culture, history and, of course, food. Nestled in the shadow of an active volcano and infamous as a mafia hot-spot, it's safe to say that this is a city with an edge.

For decades considered little more than northern Italy's crime-ridden junkyard, Naples has cleaned itself up and is now enjoying a second renaissance, but hasn't yet had its authenticity beaten out of it by gentrification and tourism.

THE HOTEL

The five-star Hotel Romeo signals its lavishness from the first glance, with a lobby of blue neon lights and glitzy water features. Situated a 10-minute walk from Naples' historic centre, it looks out onto the harbour, and one of its main draws is the stunning view of the twin tops of the volcano Vesuvius.

The other is the luxurious full-service spa, complete with multiple saunas, jacuzzis, a steam room, and treatment facilities that turn the ritual of relaxation into a near-spiritual experience – exactly what is needed after a day of exploring the city on foot.

THE FOOD

Both the hotel's restaurants boast stunning sea views, so you can watch the sun setting beyond the volcano. The Beluga lounge bar offers a more informal dining experience, but if you can get a table, the Michelin-starred Il Comandante is a culinary adventure, with regional dishes and local produce reimagined for gourmet tastes. Specialities include egg with smoked mozzarella and truffles, veal sweetbreads, and mullet with scallops. Our meal was matched with a bottle of Terre Stregate Trama Falanghina, from the same region as the notorious Camparian liqueur Strega (meaning "witch" in Italian – drink at your own risk).

WHAT TO SEE

Naples is best known as the starting point to explore the ancient Roman towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum, devastated in the eruption of 79AD and preserved in volcanic ash. Both sites are just a short train ride away and ideally suited to day trips.

But it is a disservice to assume that the ruins are all Naples has to offer. The city is rich in its own history. It was a cultural hub during the Renaissance and Baroque periods, inspiring poets, philosophers, and artists (most notably Caravaggio and Bernini).

Its past – from the glory days up until Italian unification, through to the advent of fascism, and finally liberation – is built into its architecture: ornate balconies next to crumbling palazzos, punctuated by marvels such as the glass-domed Galleria Umberto and a building whose facade incorporates encrypted sheet music for a secret melody.

It's a city meant for exploring, by wandering the narrow streets and hidden courtyards, stopping for world-famous sfogliatella pasties (as seen on The Great British Bake Off) along the way. But for a tour that takes you off the beaten track, check out Sophia Seymour (*lookingforlila.com*), and let her uncover Naples' beating heart for you, from its classical origins, to the shady world of the mafia, to the neighbourhoods immortalised in the best-selling novels of Italian author Elena Ferrante.

AND AFTER THAT...

The National Archeological Museum is top on any list of Neapolitan must-sees, and offers the obligatory dose of classical statues if you can't make it to Pompeii itself. But afterwards, take a taxi up the hill to the Catacombe di San Gennaro, and explore the city's complex relationship with death.

The catacombs tour ends a short walk from the Fontanelle cemetery, whose chambers are stacked high with thousands of skulls, mostly anonymous plague victims. It's an eerie but uplifting experience – locals leave coins and charms to the dead in exchange for wishes, and there's a sense of tranquility as shafts of dappled light illuminate the skeletons.

TOP TIP

Speaking of death, if you come across bronze skull statues in the historic centre, do as the Neapolitans do and make a wish. Oh, and remember that a "coffee" in Italy means a shot of espresso, so be prepared to wake up – Naples is famed for the best coffee in the nation.

NEED TO KNOW

- Hotel Romeo (hotelromeo.it) offers rooms from €320 per night on a B&B basis.

SPORT

BERNAL'S BIG DAY Team Ineos's young Colombian pips Thomas to Tour de France title

Egan Bernal became the first Colombian winner of the Tour de France after crossing the finishing line on the ceremonial last stage in Paris yesterday. The 22-year-old rider is the youngest to win the famous race in 110 years, while defending champion Geraint Thomas finished second to secure a one-two for Team Ineos. While Ineos, who were formerly called Team Sky, claimed a seventh victory from the last eight years, Bernal's triumph ends a run of four successive British winners – Chris Froome's three consecutive wins preceding Thomas's last year. As Bernal (left) celebrated it was Australia's Caleb Ewan who sprinted to take victory in stage 21 last night to take his second stage win of the tour.

SPORT DIGEST

VERSTAPPEN VICTORIOUS AMID RAINY GERMAN GP

Red Bull's Max Verstappen claimed his second win of the season at the German Grand Prix yesterday as Mercedes endured a day to forget. Verstappen finished ahead of Ferrari's Sebastian Vettel and Daniil Kvyat of Toro Rosso on a dramatic, incident-packed race in the rain. Lewis Hamilton came 11th after making two mistakes, while his Mercedes team mate Valtteri Bottas was one of six drivers not to finish.

BALE STRANDED AS REAL CANCEL CHINA TRANSFER

Gareth Bale looks set to stay at Real Madrid after his proposed move to China fell through yesterday. Bale was reportedly to earn £1m per week at the Chinese Super League team Jiangsu Suning, but Real have cancelled the deal for the Welsh forward. The 30-year-old still has three years left on his contract with Zinedine Zidane's side.

ENGLAND HUMBLED IN T20 ASHES LOSS TO AUSTRALIA

Australia continued their dominance of the Women's Ashes by clinching the Twenty20 section of the series with a seven-wicket win over England at Hove yesterday. Tammy Beaumont scored 43 in England's 121-8 batting first, but Meg Lanning (43 not out) and Ellyse Perry (47 not out) made light work of the chase, reaching the total with 13 balls to spare to establish a 12-2 lead in the multi-format series.

MEDLEY RELAY WIN SEALS ANOTHER GOLD FOR PEATY

Adam Peaty secured a third gold medal of the World Championships as Great Britain won the 4x100m medley relay in South Korea yesterday. Peaty, James Guy, Luke Greenbank and Duncan Scott beat the United States and Russia in a European record time of 3:28.10. "For me, that's better than Olympic gold and anything else," said Peaty.

FULHAM LOOKING UP AGAIN

In the second of our Championship previews **Michael Searles** looks at the Cottagers' prospects

A YEAR ago Fulham were about to embark on a keenly anticipated return to the Premier League with the full weight of billionaire owner Shahid Khan behind them.

They had been promoted via the play-offs, but a 23-match unbeaten run, football that Pep Guardiola would have been proud of and an injection of cash for new additions meant an air of excitement accompanied the Cottagers' return to the top flight.

Come May – and two managers later – they were destined for a crushing return to the Championship, such is the ease with which football can swing between ecstasy and heartache.

Fulham are favourites with the bookmakers to return to the Premier League at the first time of asking, but fans remain wary of the pitfalls in the second tier, which resumes this week.

"There's a sense of cautious optimism because we have managed to keep [Tom] Cairney and [Aleksandar] Mitrovic who could have been off to the Premier League. That was key," Fulham Supporters' Trust secretary Gerry Pimm tells *City A.M.*

"The caution is because we still haven't strengthened at the back. We need at least one centre-back a right-back, and [following the departure of Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa] another defensive midfielder."

While Cairney and Mitrovic (pictured) agreed five-year deals, Fulham have also strengthened in wide positions, signing Anthony Knockaert and Ivan Cavaleiro on loans from Brighton and Wolves respectively, as they brace for the likely departure of Ryan Sessegnon.

Striker Aboubakar Kamara, meanwhile, has been reintegrated into the squad after being exiled to Turkey for the second half of last season following a training ground bust-up that saw him arrested.

"He's a raw talent, and by that I don't mean he's young, but I think half the time he doesn't know what he's going to do, let alone the opposition's defence," adds Pimm, who works at the Bank of England.

"The other reason for caution is that [manager Scott] Parker is a novice and there's always a risk it won't work out."

The 38-year-old was handed a two-year contract at the end of the season after impressing as caretaker manager following the sacking of Claudio Ranieri, but his inexperience remains a concern.

He has, at least, appeared to have had more sway than Slavisa Jokanovic was afforded in the transfer market last summer.

"Last year it was all about stats and Tony [Khan, vice chairman] bought players and Slav didn't have a say, but I think Parker will be having a bigger say this time," explains Pimm.

While there appears to be a grudging acceptance that Shahid Khan's ownership means his son is here to stay, fans are contented by the redevelopment of Craven Cottage's riverside stand, which would appear to secure the club's continued presence on the banks of the Thames.

On the pitch there is more uncertainty, however. Rarely do teams bounce back to the Premier League at the first attempt, the last to do so being Newcastle in 2017.

"I don't think we'll go up," says Pimm of Fulham, who begin the new campaign at Barnsley on Saturday. "I'm optimistic we'll make the play-offs but the Championship is a nightmare to get out of."

TRANSFERS

In: Anthony Knockaert (Brighton, loan), Ivan Cavaleiro (Wolves, loan), Martell Taylor-Crossdale (Chelsea, free)
Out: Ryan Babel (Galatasaray, free), Andre Schurrle (Borussia Dortmund (end of loan), Havard Nordtveit (Hoffenheim, end of loan), Luciano Vietto (Sporting Lisbon, end of loan), Sergio Rico (Sevilla, end of loan), Calum Chambers (Arsenal, end of loan), Timothy Fosu-Mensah (Manchester United, end of loan), Lazar Markovic (released), Harvey Elliott (Liverpool, undisclosed), Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa (Villarreal, loan), Jean Michael Seri (Galatasaray, loan)