CITY A.M.

BUSINESS WITH PERSONALITY

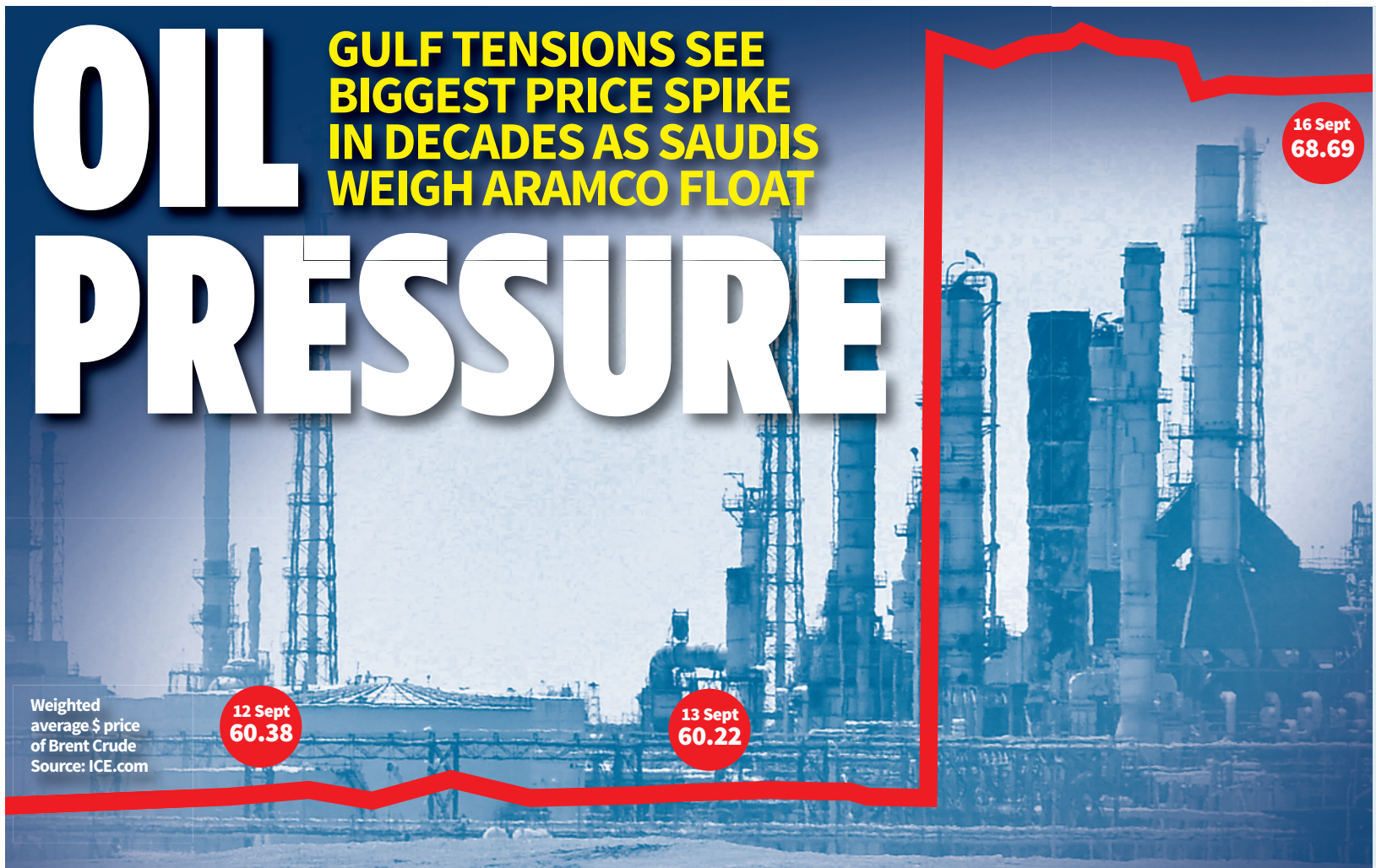
FORD MOTORS AHEAD
MONDEO MAN REVS UP IN DETROIT'S NEW GT P22

HISTORY BOYS?
GATLAND AND SCHMIDT GO FOR GLORY P34

TUESDAY 17 SEPTEMBER 2019 | ISSUE 3,458 CITYAM.COM FREE

OIL PRESSURE

GULF TENSIONS SEE BIGGEST PRICE SPIKE IN DECADES AS SAUDIS WEIGH ARAMCO FLOAT



ALEX DANIEL AND AUGUST GRAHAM

@alexmdaniel @augustgraham

OIL PRICES witnessed their biggest daily gains in nearly three decades yesterday amid a dramatic escalation of tension in the Gulf, following a series of drone strikes that took out half of Saudi Arabia's crude production.

Both the US and Saudi Arabia have pointed the finger at Iran for Saturday's attacks, which knocked out more than 5m barrels a day, five per cent of the world's crude oil supply. The Iranians hit back, dismissing the accusations as "unacceptable" and warning that it is ready for "fully-fledged war".

But the US pressed ahead with claims that Tehran was behind the attack with US ambassador to the UN Kelly Craft saying information "indicates that responsibility lies with Iran" and US President Donald Trump said it was "looking that way" when asked if Iran was responsible.

The UN's envoy to Yemen – where Iranian-linked Houthi rebels have claimed they were behind the attacks – said responsibility was "not entirely clear."

Amid the rising temperatures, crude oil prices surged to the biggest gains since Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 while stock markets reeled as they reopened yesterday. Brent Crude was last night trading around $68.69, a rise of more than 12 per cent.

The FTSE 100 fell 0.63 per cent, while US markets fell between 0.28 per cent and 0.52 per cent.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's state oil firm Saudi Aramco is said to be considering a second delay to its highly-anticipated float after the attacks.

The world's biggest oil company is worried the attacks could dent its valuation in any potential float, the Wall Street Journal reported.

"This comes as no surprise – a huge attack on your key facilities does not set things up for a sparkling stock market debut," said Neil Wilson, an analyst at Markets.com.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

London still number one for forex

HARRY ROBERTSON

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LONDON has increased its dominance of global foreign exchange (FX) trading over the past three years in a sign that the City remains a top-tier financial hub despite Brexit uncertainty.

A new report revealed the share of foreign exchange trading taking place in the UK rose by six percentage points to 43 per cent between 2016 and April 2019, comfortably the largest single market.

The figures, part of the latest triennial study from the Bank for International Settlements (BIS), also showed the UK overtook the US and recorded the highest average daily turnover in interest rate derivatives in the world in April, seeing 50 per cent of the global total.

London has traditionally dominated the foreign exchange and rate derivatives markets due to its convenient time zone and the English language, among other factors.

There had been fears that Brexit could affect its status.

The new figures are "a clear vote of confidence in the City," said Catherine McGuinness, policy chair at the City of London Corporation. "Despite challenging times, the fundamentals of the City remain strong."

Bank on carnage as DLR concourse shut down as part of station upgrade

ALEXANDRA ROGERS

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COMMUTERS face chaos and overcrowding at already congested Bank station as the DLR concourse will shut down later this month for up to three years.

As part of the station's 2022 upgrade, users of the DLR will be directed through a one-way system to exit the station instead of using its regular concourse.

Transport for London (TfL) will shut down the concourse to build three new escalators to the Northern Line.

Tube commuters will be able to reach the DLR by the existing fixed staircase, but those wishing to switch to the Northern Line will be redirected on to other platforms, with new signage and staff on hand.

DLR users will be able to enter and exit Bank and Monument stations as usual, but may be forced to take a different route if the station becomes too crowded.

Bank – which along with Monument station absorbs 120m passengers every year – is currently undergoing a revamp as part of a station upgrade which will increase capacity by 40 per cent.

TfL major projects director Stuart Harvey said: "Demand at Bank Tube station has risen by around a quarter in recent years and the new escalators to the DLR from the Northern line are essential to managing this increase while making customer journeys quicker and more comfortable by increasing capacity. I apologise to customers who may be affected by the concourse closure."

TFL BOSS MIKE BROWN CALLS BORROWING LIMITS 'BONKERS': P7

FTSE 100▼ 7,321.46.05 -46.05 FTSE 250▼ 20,060.30 -135.45 DOW▼ 27,076.82 -142.70 NASDAQ▼ 8,153.54 -23.17 £/$▼ 1.242 -0.008 £/€▲ 1.129 +0.001 €/$▲ 1.109 +0.002

CITY A.M.

THE CITY VIEW

Banks can't ignore the disruptors any longer

INSIDE one of the City of London's oldest buildings, bankers will today be discussing the vexing questions of tomorrow. Amid trade war turmoil, Brexit uncertainty and climate change concerns, there is one issue above all that dominates the agenda; digitalisation. It is a topic at the heart of the 23rd World Conference of Banking Institutes held at the City's Guildhall, where corporate bigwigs and academics are meeting to discuss "the age of disruption". It was not so long ago that the cumulative impact of many of the so-called 'disruptors' in the City barely amounted to a rounding error on the big banks' operations. But today neo-banks, fintechs and payment providers are all giving the traditional high street lenders a run for their money, eating up a higher share of the market and piling pressure on their larger rivals. You have only to look at the adverts dominating the Tube network to clock the rise of new digital banking products. A new report out this week from Accenture predicts that banks are set to miss out on as much as $280bn (£225bn) in payments revenue over the next six years if they do not adapt to shifts in the sector, with 18 per cent of UK banks' payment revenue likely to be displaced. "The digital boom will mean banks have to fundamentally change the way they think about their revenue composition," said Alan McIntyre, head of Accenture's banking practice. Another new digital challenge was also raised in yesterday's conference; data. Mountains of it are being used by the UK's largest lenders to improve services and drive up customer retention. Banks have been investing in new infrastructure and recruiting more people with data analytics skills, but the question of trust over privacy remains one of the industry's biggest hurdles. "Standards will have to be developed for the ethical use of data and analytics," said Lloyds boss Antonio Horta-Osorio. He warned that privacy concerns sparked by the banks could create a "confidence backlash" among the public. Be it the rise of data or the rise of fintechs, it is notable that two of the biggest challenges facing the whole banking sector are both technological: bankers now need to be tech wizards every bit as much as savvy money-lenders.

Bankers now need to be tech wizards as well as savvy money lenders

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Luxembourg premier Xavier Bettel staged the joint press conferene without PM Johnson

No 10 plans to run down clock in Brexit face-off

CATHERINE NEILAN

@CatNeilan

THE UK will hold back from giving Brussels a written proposal for alternatives to the Irish backstop until as late as October, as the two sides try to out-manoeuvre each other in the final stages of Brexit talks.

The European Union has repeatedly called for operable, legal text to be presented by the UK before it will consider reopening the existing Withdrawal Agreement to remove or change the Irish backstop. Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said repeatedly the removal of the backstop is a red line against any deal.

But *City A.M.* understands that Number 10 will not present its proposals in a formal, written, manner until the eleventh hour, after having previous efforts "trashed" almost immediately.

It is now thought the earliest a proposal will be put forward is after the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in New York, where Johnson will meet world leaders, which will run from 24-30 September.

Any earlier would "not be the smart way to go about getting a deal", said a senior government source.

But the source suggested the conversations Johnson and his team were having with their EU counterparts were "broadly" what would appear in any written form.

Johnson had a mixed visit to Luxembourg yesterday, with the first half of the trip yielding a positive result.

After a working lunch with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker, the pair agreed that "political level" talks between the EU's chief negotiator Michel Barnier and Brexit secretary Stephen Barclay would resume, following a two month hiatus.

A Downing Street spokesperson said: "The leaders agreed that the discussions needed to intensify and that meetings [between officials] would soon take place on a daily basis."

However, the Commission offered a less upbeat account. In a statement, it was noted that Juncker had reminded Johnson it was the UK's "responsibility" to come up with legally operable alternatives to the backstop.

"Such proposals have not yet been made," it added.

Johnson later met Luxembourg Prime Minister Xavier Bettel, but this descended into a row after Bettel's team refused to relocate a planned press conference, despite the presence of a loud anti-Brexit protest.

It is understood that Downing Street asked for the set piece to be conducted indoors, but this was rejected by Luxembourger officials.

Speaking next to an empty podium Bettel initially appeared willing to thank Johnson, with whom he had enjoyed a "longer than planned" meeting.

But Bettel grew increasingly heated as he attacked the "lies" of the Vote Leave referendum campaign and the inadequacies of the Remain campaign, while the crowd cheered loudly throughout.

"These are homemade problems and we all now have to deal with them," he said.

Speaking later in a quieter location, Johnson explained that he would have been "drowned out by the noise" of the protesters, but told the BBC he was "cautiously optimistic" about the state of negotiations.

He insisted: "We have just the right amount of time to do a deal... A lot of work is going on here. We are very keen to do it, but I don't want people to think it's in the bag."

WHAT THE OTHER PAPERS SAY THIS MORNING

FINANCIAL TIMES

LABOUR'S BIGGEST DONOR HIT BY RULES ON FUNDING

Unite the Union, the biggest donor to the Labour party, has seen a slump of 110,145 members paying into its political fund in the last year as a result of legal changes introduced by the Conservatives. Former Prime Minister David Cameron pushed through trade union rules in 2016 to crack down on the movement, which included tougher thresholds on strike action.

ELLIOTT INVESTS IN CNH INDUSTRIALS BEFORE SPLIT

Hedge fund Elliott has built a stake of less than three per cent in CNH Industrial, the tractor and truck maker controlled by Italy's Agnelli family that is preparing to split in two. This month, CNH announced plans to hive off truck business Iveco into a separate company leaving the more profitable agricultural equipment.

THE TIMES

COUNCILS TO SPEND £1BN BUYING SHOPPING CENTRES

Councils have spent hundreds of millions of pounds buying shopping centres in their local area in the last few years as they attempt to regenerate ailing town centres. Councils have invested more than £770m in shopping centres around the country since 2016, and are poised to reach £1bn by the end of 2020

POLLUTION WEBSITE COULD DRIVE DOWN HOUSE PRICES

Housebuyers are being encouraged to seek discounts of up to 20 per cent by checking a new website – addresspollution.org – that reveals the level of air pollution on each doorstep.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

JCB SCION IN RESCUE BID FOR 'BORIS BUS' MAKER

The son of JCB billionaire tycoon Lord Bamford is racing to strike a deal to salvage "Boris Bus" maker Wrightbus. Jo Bamford is in talks to rescue at least part of the Northern Irish firm after a rescue attempt by local businessman Darren Donnelly collapsed yesterday.

SOROS IN TALKS TO SELL STAKE IN BROADBAND FIRM

Billionaire investor George Soros' Quantum Strategic Partners investment vehicle is holding discussions about selling his stake in British full fibre internet service provider Hyperoptic in a deal that is expected to value the company at more than £500m.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

PANEL TO CRITICISE FAA'S BOEING APPROVAL PROCESS

A panel of international air-safety regulators is finishing a report expected to criticise the initial US approval process for Boeing's 737 MAX jets, while urging a wide-ranging reassessment of how complex automated systems should be certified on future airliners.

PRUDENTIAL SETTLES MUTUAL-FUND UNIT PROBE

Prudential will pay $32.6m (£26.2m) to settle claims that it didn't disclose how a reorganisation of its mutual-fund business would cost the funds millions in lost interest income. The Securities and Exchange Commissions ruled there was a conflict of interest.

Cobham given the green light for £4bn merger

JAMES WARRINGTON

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INVESTORS in aerospace giant Cobham have approved a £4bn takeover by private equity firm Advent International, despite fierce opposition from the company's founding family.

More than 93 per cent of investors approved Advent's offer of 165p per share, which marked a 50 per cent premium on Cobham's three-month average share price and was previously recommended by the board.

The vote brings to an end a bitter dispute over the manufacturing giant's future, with the Cobham family rejecting the offer over national security concerns.

In August, Lady Nadine Cobham, whose late husband Sir Michael was the son of the firm's founder, warned a sale could weaken the UK's defence industry.

This stance was backed by Sanderson Asset Management, Cobham's 11th largest shareholder, which revealed it was "inclined to vote against" the deal.

Silchester International Investors, which was Cobham's largest shareholder when the deal was announced in July, also urged the board to find a better offer.

Despite the concerns, the overwhelming majority of shareholders passed the motion at yesterday's meeting. Shares in Cobham closed up just under one per cent.

Chairman Jamie Pike told shareholders that the board had "pushed as hard as they could push" and engaged in some "arm wrestling" before settling on the £4bn price tag.

The Dorset-based company, best known for its air-to-air refuelling technology, has been plagued by a string of profit warnings and contract disputes in recent years.

But chief executive David Lockwood said the "heavy lifting" of the turnaround had largely been done, and said he would regret leaving before the task had been completed.

Advent, which has capitalised on the weak pound to swoop on the defence firm, said the deal will boost Cobham's access to US contracts.

NORTHERN LIGHTS Ocean Outdoor buys Swedish ad firm Visual Art in €63m deal

OUTDOOR advertising stalwart Ocean Outdoor has bought Swedish rival Visual Art for €63m (£56m) as it beefs up its presence in the European market. Ocean operates major ad locations such as Piccadilly Lights.

Transport for London sells iconic HQ to developer in £120m deal

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

TRANSPORT for London (TfL) has sold its Grade I-listed 55 Broadway headquarters to Integrity International Group for more than £120m.

TfL put the 150-year leasehold for the St James's office complex on the market in May this year in order to reduce its office administration costs and increase revenue for infrastructure works.

Tony Matharu, founder of Integrity International Group and co-founder of Grange Hotels Group, said the firm is "looking at all options" for the future use of the "extraordinary" building after the deal was announced yesterday.

Matharu said: "We intend to collaborate with TfL and others to ensure that this landmark building has an exciting future in the heart of London."

Aldi to expand in London after profit decrease

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

ALDI is planning to expand in London as the budget supermarket seeks new customers following a sharp drop in profit.

The company said yesterday it will more than double the number of stores inside the M25 from 45 to 100 by the end of 2025 including new smaller "local" high street branches.

UK and Ireland sales were up 11 per cent to £11.3bn in the year ending December 2018. However, operating profit fell 26 per cent and pre-tax profit was down 18 per cent, which Aldi blamed on slashing product prices and investment in its infrastructure.

The supermarket began trialling its Local format, which are around half the size of a standard store, in March.

Aldi is focusing on London expansion, where market share is 3.4 per cent compared to 8.1 per cent across the rest of the country.

Store openings in the coming months will include Sydenham, Blackheath and Watford.

The German company, which currently operates more than 840 stores, plans to open more than 100 new branches across the UK over the next two years.

Eddie Stobart profits will be 'significantly below expectations'

ALEXANDRA ROGERS

@city_amrogers

EDDIE Stobart has warned its underlying profits for 2019 will be "significantly below" expectations as it confirmed it had received a takeover offer from one of its shareholders.

Last month, the truck firm suspended shares and announced its chief executive Alex Laffey would depart with immediate effect after it discovered a multi-million pound accounting error. Shares will remain suspended.

In a trading update yesterday, Eddie Stobart said it expected underlying profits to fall behind due to "an adverse performance against an ambitious budget" alongside delays in the "implementation of operational efficiencies".

It said revenue for the first half of the year is expected to be in the region of £450m, while underlying profits would come in between £10m to £11m. Net debt at 31 May is expected to be approximately £155m.

The firm also said its balance sheet had been "further impacted by the reduction in EBIT, poor cash collection and its historical dividend policy", forcing it rely heavily on its debt facilities.

Sebastien Desreumaux, the company's new chief executive, has started a review into the firm's operations in a bid to improve operating margins and its overall financial performance.

"The management team is focused on continuing to deliver excellent customer service and commitment, whilst simultaneously prioritising cash generation within the business," the company said.

Eddie Stobart announced earlier this month that it had been approached by Dbay Advisors, one of its shareholders, with a potential takeover offer.

Dbay owns a 10.1 per cent stake in the logistics group, which has brands Biforce, Logistics People and Speedy Freight, according to data from Refinitiv Eikon.

"There can be no certainty either that an offer will be made nor as to the terms of any offer, if made," Eddie Stobart said.

Embattled fund manager Neil Woodford owns a 22.9 per cent stake in the company.

Shares in Eddie Stobart were suspended last month as the group worked to understand an accounting error which hit adjusted operating profits by £2m.

Jim Ratcliffe 'nearing deal' to build vehicle in Ford factory closure town

ALEX DANIEL

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JIM RATCLIFFE is said to be closing in on a deal to build a car in Bridgend, the town where Ford is bringing down the shutters on an engine factory which employs 1,700 people.

Ineos, Ratcliffe's chemicals firm, has been in negotiations for months over where to build the car.

City A.M. understands the sports utility vehicle will not be made on the same site as the Ford plant.

However, the decision is nonetheless likely to provide hope for hundreds of workers at the soon-to-close factory.

Ford's decision to close the site, announced in June, was thought to have been influenced by the possibility of a no-deal Brexit scenario, although the US car manufacturer has denied this.

Labour MP for Bridgend Madeleine Moon told *City A.M*: "Any deal that brings quality engineering jobs to Bridgend is highly welcome. People have been devastated locally at the loss of the Ford factory."

The upcoming deal, reported by the Financial Times, means Ratcliffe, an ardent supporter of Brexit, will give a boost to the car industry which has struggled in the face of a possible no-deal scenario.

Preparation for no-deal Brexit still has issues

ANNA MENIN AND SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

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THE HEAD of the UK's financial regulator has struck a cautious tone over the City's preparations for a no-deal Brexit, warning that while progress is "welcome", there are "issues still to be resolved".

Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) boss Andrew Bailey said yesterday that overlaps between UK and EU share trading regulations post-Brexit would damage both markets "to no good end".

On the same day as Bailey warned of the damage such overlaps could cause, the government's City minister told *City A.M.* that financial services firms were "as prepared as they can be" for a no-deal Brexit.

John Glen said: "I am confident that we've worked closely to address the concerns that exist. There are a very small number of residual concerns... but I think we are as well prepared as we can be."

In his speech yesterday, Bailey called for equivalence between the UK and the EU. "Without action, EU firms may lose access to UK liquidity pools and liquidity would be fragmented, harming both markets," he said.

Although Brussels has previously said EU customers would be able to use UK clearing houses for derivatives until March next year in the event of a no-deal Brexit, the bloc would need to grant an extension soon in the event of a failure to reach a deal.

Bailey warned the process "would impose significant costs on EU firms as well as potentially straining market capacity", adding: "Ultimately, the best solution is for the EU to grant permanent recognition" to UK clearing houses.

He also reiterated that even through the regulator has been working alongside the Bank of England to prepare for all possible Brexit outcomes and "to mitigate the impact of potential disruption", the FCA "cannot guarantee" that there will be no disruption.

Last month, the European Central Bank urged banks to step up Brexit preparations, warning that London-based firms were falling behind on plans to move jobs to the EU.

A WOBBLY RIDE Lib Dem revival heads off track as party splits over 'revoke' position

CRACKS began to emerge in the newly expanded Lib Dems yesterday, with party grandee Sir Norman Lamb warning that the party was "playing with fire" by pledging to revoke Article 50. He said it would result in leave voters "angry" and "feeling that the social contract has been broken". The party's annual conference continues, buoyed by the arrival of Tory and Labour defectors into its ranks.

Aramco float may be delayed

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The state oil company's profits are roughly double those of Apple, and its listing promised to be the biggest in history.

Saudi Aramco has been pursuing an initial public offering as the kingdom tries to raise cash for investments which could help it wean off its oil.

Sam Wahab at SP Angel said Saudi hopes for a $1.5 trillion to $2 trillion valuation for the oil giant"now looks to be a dream rather than a reality".

However, Rehan Akbar at credit rating agency Moody's said that while the disruption is significant, "we do not expect this to leave a long-lasting impact on Saudi Aramco's financial profile given its robust balance sheet and strong liquidity buffers."

Ambitious de facto leader Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman now faces one of his biggest decisions over whether to respond diplomatically or militarily. He has said Saudi Arabia is "willing and able" to respond to the "terrorist aggression".

ECB stimulus the right move, says chief economist

HARRY ROBERTSON

@henrygrobertson

EUROPEAN Central Bank (ECB) chief economist Philip Lane yesterday defended the institution's decision to turn back on the stimulus taps, despite public opposition from members of its governing council.

The bank relaunched its massive bond-buying programme and cut its deposit rate by 0.1 percentage points to minus 0.5 per cent last week in a bid to kickstart growth and inflation in the Eurozone.

Yet some members of the ECB's governing council quickly came out against the move. Dutch central bank chief Klaas Knot, for example, called the move "disproportionate to the present economic conditions".

Speaking at Bloomberg's headquarters in London yesterday, Lane defended the policies, saying they create a cushion to insulate the economy from risks such as the US-China trade war and a hard Brexit.

Lane, the former governor of the Bank of Ireland who has been the ECB's chief economist since June, played down the significance of public opposition from the bank's own members.

He said the debate over restarting stimulus "is everywhere", adding: "At the [US Federal Reserve] or Bank of England there's not that many votes that are unanimous."

Lane said the disagreements reflect "the nature of this world we're in and the seriousness of these issues", adding that at the ECB "there's a high degree of consensus about needing to act... The fact we've reopened an existing programme, I don't think is a very dramatic decision." When faced with stubbornly low inflation, he said, "you have to act".

Lane's intervention came at the start of a week when the Fed and the BoE will announce interest rate decisions.

Room's soundproof phonebooths have proved a hit amid a rise in flexible working

Phonebooth startup Room dials in

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ROOM, the US startup specialising in phonebooths for open plan offices, launches in the UK today as it looks to cash in on the rising popularity of coworking spaces.

The New-York based firm, which counts Google, Uber, Amazon and Apple among its clients, is expanding to seven European countries.

Room's phonebooths are designed to provide a private working space, and the firm has seen rapid growth since launching last year.

Chief executive Brian Chen told *City A.M.* the firm's product was well-suited to London due to the capital's booming flexible workspace offering. "The trend towards open offices goes hand in hand with flexible real estate," Chen said.

Room, which is backed by Silicon Valley angel investors Slow Ventures, is currently used by 2000 companies in the US and said it expected to reach the $40m (£32m) revenue milestone by the end of the year.

Vince Cable attacks 'general paranoia' about China over Hong Kong bid for LSE

HARRY BANKS

THE POLITICAL rhetoric over Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing's approach for the London Stock Exchange has intensified after former business secretary Sir Vince Cable described critics as indulging in a "general paranoia about the Chinese".

Speaking to The Times, Cable said: "There is a big 'bash the Chinese' movement at the moment originated by [US President Donald] Trump and we should be careful not to go down that road."

The former Lib Dem leader, who is standing down at the next election, said it "looked like a perfectly sensible commercial proposition".

The intervention is particularly significant as during his time in government Cable floated the idea of strengthening the rules around foreign takeovers of UK firms, including financial penalties for companies which reneged on promises made during takeover proceedings.

HKEX's takeover has hit a rocky road with LSE rebuffing its cash-and-share £32bn offer last Friday and a seeming lack of public enthusiasm from shareholders. Many expect that even if the takeover was to progress, pressure would grow on the government to look carefully at the deal due to HKEX's perceived closeness to the Beijing regime, in light of ongoing unrest in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong's rating is downgraded to negative

ANNA MENIN

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MOODY'S has downgraded Hong Kong's rating outlook to negative, saying that ongoing political protests in the financial hub "reveal an erosion in the strength" of its institutions.

The ratings agency said its new negative outlook for the territory "reflects the rising risk that the ongoing protests reveal an erosion in the strength of Hong Kong's institutions, with lower government and policy effectiveness than Moody's had previously assessed, and undermine Hong Kong's credit fundamentals by damaging its attractiveness as a trade and financial hub".

Moody's said its decision to maintain Hong Kong's overall rating at Aa2 was due to its "strong fiscal and external buffers".

TfL boss hits out at its 'bonkers' borrowing caps

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TRANSPORT for London (TfL) boss Mike Brown has criticised the government for imposing "bonkers" limits on its borrowing and for failing to provide it with long-term certainty over its funding.

The TfL commissioner told *City A.M.* that the organisation's borrowing caps, which are set by government, were based on "no logic other than discussions within government as to what they should be". TfL has reached its borrowing limits for this financial year, making it difficult to finance transport upgrades, several of which have been temporarily shelved.

"In any conventional business, your borrowing would be based on your existing asset base and how you could capitalise and get some revenue from that," Brown said, citing the central tunnel of Crossrail. "There isn't that mechanism to do that at the moment because it all sits under government. It's clearly bonkers."

The TfL boss also said he had also received "no certainty beyond next year" from the Department for Transport or the Treasury as to how the travel body would be funded, and that this was preventing him from signing crucial business contracts.

TfL is currently funded through a variety of sources, including a capital grant financed from a proportion of local business rates it gets through the Greater London Authority.

"I'm not asking for special treatment for London compared to other cities in the country or other regions in the country; I'm just asking for equal treatment," Brown said.

"I can't sign contracts when I've got no stream of certainty of how I'm going to pay for it," he added. "It's questionable from a fiscal prudence perspective – the board wouldn't let me do it and the mayor wouldn't let me do it."

A Treasury spokesperson said: "This month's spending round was a fast-tracked, one-year event to give departments their budgets so we can get on with Brexit. A multi-year spending review will take place next year."

Value of government's £22bn help to buy scheme seen as 'uncertain'

CATHERINE NEILAN
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MPS HAVE raised alarm bells over the government's costly help to buy scheme, noting that more than half of those it helped did not need financial support, while warning it does not address structural problems in the housing market.

The scheme, which will cost an estimated £22bn – more than eight-times its original budget, has offered "uncertain" value, the report, by the influential Public Accounts Committee found. Around three-fifths of those who bought a property using the scheme did not need the loan, the committee added.

And while the scheme has increased housing supply by an estimated 14 per cent, it does not address issues with the wider planning system, or other problems in housing, such as the provision of affordable housing and rising levels of homelessness. There is also no plan in place to prevent a fall in supply when the scheme ends in 2023.

The report, which has made recommendations to be carried out before the end of the scheme, also warned the Department for Housing, Communities and Local Government is at risk of losing its investment in homes if house prices fall.

The findings of the Oakervee review into HS2 are due to be released later in the year

HS2 told to cease its woodlands clearance works pending review

ALEXANDRA ROGERS
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THE GOVERNMENT has ordered the removals of ancient woodlands near the High Speed Two (HS2) route to be halted while it waits the outcome of a review into the controversial project.

Transport secretary Grant Shapps has told HS2 Limited, the company building the high speed line, to stop its clearance works unless it can prove they are necessary to avoid major costs and schedule impacts.

HS2, the railway that will link London to the north in stages, is currently subject to a review led by its former chairman Douglas Oakervee and scheme critic Lord Berkeley.

Shapps said: "There is no sense in hiding the challenges HS2 faces, or masking the difficult decisions that need to be taken. As Douglas Oakervee's review continues, we must take a sensible approach and recognise that some works simply cannot be undone later. HS2 may be a complex project overall, but I think this request is just common sense."

H&M summer collection boosts third quarter sales growth

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H&M REPORTED its strongest sales growth in three years in the third quarter of the year yesterday, boosted by the popularity of the retailer's summer collection.

Net sales increased 12 per cent, totalling 62.6bn Swedish crowns (£5.21bn), and were up eight per cent in local currencies, according to H&M's latest trading update out yesterday, in a rare sign of positivity on the high street.

However, shares in the Swedish firm, which also owns retailers including & Other Stories and Cos, slipped following the news yesterday morning as investors remained concerned over the brand's profit margins. H&M shares closed down 2.81 per cent.

H&M, which is the world's second largest fashion retailer after Zara owner Inditex, said its summer collections had been popular.

"Well-received summer collections and increased market share confirm that the H&M group is on the right track with its transformation work to meet the customers' ever-increasing expectations," the high street giant said.

H&M added that activity levels related to its transformation project that is aiming to revive the business were high in the third quarter, indicating that in-store and online investments were weighing on margins.

Michael Hewson, chief market analyst at CMC Markets, said: "Swedish high street retailer H&M shares have been on a slow climb for the last few months on hopes that the worst of its recent problems appear to be behind it.

The H&M group is the second-largest retailer in the world

"Earlier this year the company reported sales were rising despite profits being sharply lower from a year before.

"The company has been having trouble reducing its high inventory levels and this has raised concerns that it is achieving sales at the expense of its margins."

Earlier this month, it was reported that the retailer had entered into a disagreement with landlords and demanded property owners take on the cost of the increased number of returned clothes. The Times reported that H&M is looking to enter into turnover-based contracts with retail landlords, making the Swedish high street store one of many looking to strike a better deal.

CHELSEA GIRL Swinging 60s fashion icon Mary Quant honoured for King's Rd boutique

A PLAQUE celebrating Dame Mary Quant was unveiled at 138A King's Road yesterday, the site of her pioneering fashion store. The plaque unveiling coincides with London Fashion Week and a international retrospective exploring her career at the V&A Museum.

HM Government

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PwC partner profits jump to £765k

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

PARTNER profits at PwC UK increased 7.4 per cent to £765,000 this year, despite the firm receiving a dressing down from the regulator for a fall in the quality of its audit work.

Profit for the year to 30 June increased to £1.02bn, up from £935m in 2018, the firm said yesterday.

Revenue leapt 12 per cent to £4.23bn from £3.76bn in 2018, which the firm ascribed to demand from clients seeking help tackling uncertainty, risk and the need to transform.

PwC senior partner and chair Kevin Ellis told *City A.M.*: "There is a lot of change going on out there, not just Brexit, but the challenge of the fourth industrial revolution and the need to tackle the onslaught of the robots, and that causes our clients to turn to us."

PwC was criticised by audit regulator the Financial Reporting Council (FRC) in its audit quality inspection in July for its "notable decline" in results.

"We were disappointed," Ellis said of the FRC's verdict. "We are committed to high standards, that's why we are investing the extra money in the audit business to improve quality."

In June, PwC said it would invest £30m into its audit practice to improve quality, hiring more than 500 experienced auditors across the UK.

PwC UK chair and senior partner Kevin Ellis was paid £3.7m last year

Petra loses some sparkle as profits fade

SEB MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

PETRA Diamonds suffered a double-digit fall in annual profits during the last year as weak diamond prices dragged down the South African mining giant.

London's largest quoted diamond mining group reported adjusted core profits of $153m (£122.8m) in the 12 months to 30 June, plunging 22 per cent from 2018.

Net losses after tax hit $258m, including a non-cash impairment charge of $246.6m as a result of weak rough diamond prices.

Demand remained solid across all assortments but was weaker for larger white stones, according to the firm.

Shares in the group have crashed almost 80 per cent in the last year, closing down 5.78 per cent yesterday at 7.58p.

"Whilst noting that seasonal weakness is typically experienced in pricing at the first tender of [financial year] 2020, the company expects the diamond market to remain challenging in the near-term," the group said in a statement yesterday.

Chief executive Richard Duffy said: "In the short term, we remain firmly focused on the rigorous execution of Project 2022, which is expected to reduce the company's high net debt levels, against this backdrop of a challenging diamond market. Addressing this leverage will enable us to capture future organic growth opportunities and reposition Petra as the leading mid-tier diamond producer."

The global diamond market is struggling with an oversupply of stones and lower prices, as well as US-China tensions and pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong that have hit demand in key markets.

"You need a world that's firing on all cylinders for diamonds to do extremely well," Richard Hatch, an analyst at Berenberg said. "It's a luxury, discretionary spend."

Former National Grid boss 'heads for City Fibre'

ALEX DANIEL

@alexmdaniel

CITY Fibre, the ultrafast broadband network which is competing to become the biggest UK rival to BT, is said to be gearing up to announce the former chief executive of National Grid as its new boss.

Steve Holliday, who was well-thought-of by investors while at the helm of the energy infrastructure firm, has agreed to take the top job, according to Sky News.

Holliday's appointment would strengthen City Fibre's expansion plans as it presses on with an investment programme worth £2.5bn.

Gresham House sees assets and income increase

ANNA MENIN

@annafmenin

GRESHAM House has reported an 8.1 per cent increase in assets under management (aum) for the first half of 2019, which it said was driven by an increase in organic growth.

The aum increase pushed its income for the first half up more than 200 per cent.

The specialist alternative asset management firm had £2.5bn aum at the end of June, up from £2.3bn at the end of 2018.

Gresham's income increased significantly during the first half, rising 209 per cent to £15.3m, compared to £4.9m during the same period last year.

Continued demand in the north of England has helped the low-cost housebuilder

MJ Gleeson brushes off Brexit uncertainties

SEB MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

LOW-COST housebuilder MJ Gleeson yesterday posted a double-digit rise in earnings for last year as it shrugged off Brexit uncertainties and enjoyed continued demand in the north of England.

The developer reported £41.2m of pre-tax profits during 2019, rising 11 per cent from £37m in the previous 12 months. Revenues jumped 27 per cent to nearly £250m, while earnings per share rose 10 per share.

MJ Gleeson, which operates both Gleeson Homes and Gleeson Strategic Land, also said the record performance had led the board to keep the latter within the group, having previously mulled selling it off.

Interim chief executive James Thompson put the rise in profits down to three fundamental reasons: "We're able to buy land cheaply in areas where others don't want to compete with us, we can also build houses very cost effectively, and we're selling to part of the market that has the strongest demand," he told *City A.M.*

Shares closed down yesterday 1.18 per cent at 840p.

US authorities charge JP Morgan metals traders with 'racketeering'

ALEX DANIEL

@alexmdaniel

JP MORGAN's global head of precious metals trading has been charged in the US with running an eight-year "racketeering conspiracy" to manipulate markets.

Michael Nowak, who ran the bank's global precious metals trading desk, faces charges of a "massive, multiyear scheme to manipulate the market for precious metals futures contracts and defraud market participants", said assistant attorney general Brian Benczkowski.

Nowak and two others allegedly "engaged in a complex scheme to trade precious metals in a way that negatively affected the natural balance of supply-and-demand", while working at the bank.

The US Department of Justice (DoJ) alleged that the defendants placed orders they intended to cancel before they went through.

This was a bid to create liquidity and make prices better for orders they actually wanted to make on the opposite side of the market, the DoJ added.

Nowak's lawyers at Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom said he had "done nothing wrong" and they expected "him to be fully exonerated". JP Morgan declined to comment.

IN THE MONEY Monzo is ranked among most popular companies for UK techies

MONZO, Skyscanner and the BBC have been named most desirable UK companies to work among British UK tech talent. Transferwise, Starling Bank and Revolut also made it into the top 10, according to a survey by recruitment firm Hired.

UK PPI costs are half of litigation charges at banks

SEB MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

COSTS from the mis-selling of payment protection insurance (PPI) have accounted for more than half of all litigation and conduct charges faced by Britain's biggest banks in recent years.

Moody's Investors Service has said PPI was the largest single source of conduct and litigation charges from 2011 to the first half of 2019, as the country's five largest banks took a balance sheet hit from a long-running PPI scandal.

The cost burden facing these banks is set to ease following an end of new claims, with the deadline for complaints closing at the end of August.

However, a last-minute surge in claims ahead of the deadline forced large UK lenders to set aside fresh provisions.

Last week, Lloyds Banking Group and Barclays revealed that they were facing PPI costs of up to £1.8bn and £1.6bn respectively following a bigger-than-expected stampede of complaints about the historical mis-selling.

Substantial conduct and litigation provisions have weighed on the profitability of the large UK banks relative to their large European peers, Moody's said yesterday, piling on pressure amid Brexit uncertainty, low interest rates and shrinking mortgage interest margins.

Lloyds Banking Group was the most affected, with PPI provisions in the third quarter of 2019 ranging between four per cent and six per cent of its Common Equity Tier 1 capital as of June 2019.

"Profitability of the five largest UK banks – HSBC, Barclays, RBS, Lloyds and Santander UK – has long been weakened by persistently high conduct and litigation costs," said Laurie Mayers, associate managing director at Moody's.

She added: "The 29 August deadline for new PPI claims prompted a surge in late enquiries, forcing lenders to set aside fresh provisions, but it brings to a close the most costly recent remediation episode for the UK banking industry."

New breed of cryprocurrencies pose risks, says ECB executive

ANNA MENIN

@annafmenin

THE NEW breed of asset-based cryptocurrencies known as stablecoins are untested and pose "serious risks", a European Central Bank executive said yesterday.

"Stablecoins are largely untested, especially on the scale required to run a global payment system," Benoit Coeure said during an event at the Bank of International Settlements in Basel.

Coeure said stablecoins "give rise to a number of serious risks related to public policy priorities".

"The bar for regulatory approval will be high," he added.

Facebook's planned Libra currency is the most prominent of the new stablecoins, which are designed to be less vulnerable to the wild price swings that have plagued Bitcoin.

Since being announced in June, Libra has come under fire from regulators over concerns about its impact on the financial system and potential to be used for money laundering.

Government switches smart meter targets

AUGUST GRAHAM

@AugustGraham

ENERGY suppliers were given four more years to meet their obligation to offer smart meters to all homes in Britain yesterday, as the roll-out lags behind the previous 2020 deadline.

The government said it was planning to implement "strict" new annual targets for suppliers until 2024. Missed targets could lead to fines, it added.

The chief executive of Citizens Advice Gillian Guy hailed the decision as a "common sense move", which will be good for households up and down the UK.

"It's been clear for a long time that the 2020 deadline wouldn't be met and today's announcement finally recognises that reality," she said.

Suppliers have for years been falling behind on the move to bring smart meters into British homes.

The devices can help track, and reduce, energy use, saving customers money and reducing carbon emissions.

The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy yesterday said installing smart meters will save customers £5.6bn in energy bills, around £250 for every family.

Meanwhile it will drive down carbon emissions by 45m tonnes in Great Britain.

"Our energy system is already cheaper, greener and more efficient for consumers because of smart meters. Replacing traditional gas and electricity meters is a vital upgrade to our national energy infrastructure," said Lord Duncan of Springbank, the minister for climate change.

"The government has finally bowed to the inevitable and accepted that the 2020 smart meter deadline is impossible to meet," said Uswitch head of regulation Richard Neudegg.

"The new 2024 plan – which places more onus on energy companies to meet interim installation milestones along the way – suggests ministers are confident that suppliers are close to cracking the technical problems which have plagued the roll out so far."

Piece of cake: New products boost Finsbury Food's revenue to £315m

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

SHARES in Finsbury Food Group closed up almost seven per cent per cent yesterday as the food manufacturer announced revenue growth driven by the launch of new product ranges.

The Aim-listed firm said revenue increased 3.8 per cent to £315.3m in the financial year ended 29 June.

Adjusted earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation (Ebitda) was flat at £25.5m.

Profit before tax soared 203 per cent to £13.4m due to a drop in non-recurring costs. Adjusted profit before tax was £15.9m, down 7.5 per cent on last year.

Chief executive John Duffy said: "In what has been a continued challenging market, our sales growth and increased dividend demonstrates our ability to navigate more challenging times and our continued confidence in the prospects of the group.

"Our achievements have been underpinned by our relentless focus on investment, efficiency and innovation, alongside our ability to harness the growth available from premium, healthy and authentic on-trend innovation."

Shares closed out trading at 70p.

The August 2018 Genoa bridge disaster killed 43 people who were crossing it

Atlantia's chief exec set to step down as bridge probe darkens

STEFANO BERNABEI

THE LONG-STANDING head of Italian infrastructure group Atlantia is ready to step down as a probe into a deadly bridge collapse snowballs, prompting its top shareholder, the Benetton family, to pull support, sources said yesterday.

Giovanni Castellucci, who masterminded a multi-billion merger with Spanish rival Abertis last year, will hand in his resignation at an extraordinary board meeting today, two sources close to the matter said.

"His position is very difficult, I am not sure if he will find any support from investors," one of the sources said.

The 60-year-old Castellucci, who has been Atlantia's chief executive since 2006, was re-appointed with a new three-year mandate last May.

He did not immediately respond to a request for comment by Reuters.

The Benetton family, which owns a 30.25 per cent stake in Atlantia, signalled its backing for the manager was wavering after allegations of falsified safety reports at the group's road operations emerged.

Italy's tax police said on Friday they had found evidence that safety reports for some viaducts operated by Atlantia's motorway unit had been falsified or information omitted, with the aim of misleading transport ministry inspectors. *Reuters*

Apple challenge to EU over €13bn Irish tax order

ANNA MENIN

@annafmenin

APPLE is set to launch a legal challenge today over an order by the European Commission to pay €13bn (£11.5bn) in Irish back taxes, as the EU seeks to crack down on tax avoidance by multinational companies.

The tech giant was accused by the European Commission in 2016 of having dodged taxes and received €13bn illegal state aid from Ireland.

The Commission said Irish tax rulings had artificially reduced Apple's tax burden over two decades, enabling the iPhone maker to pay a tax rate of less than one per cent in defiance of EU law.

Margrethe Vestager, European competition commissioner cited the 0.005 per cent tax rate paid by Apple's Irish unit in 2014 as evidence of unusually low tax payments by the company.

Both Apple and Ireland appealed against the ruling, and the court battle will begin today at the Luxembourg-based General Court.

Apple paid the tax bill – which totalled €14.3bn with interest – last year, but it has been held in escrow.

The company is expected to send a six-person delegation led by chief financial officer Luca Maestri to the two-day hearing. Chief executive Tim Cook has previously called the EU's ruling "total political crap".

Apple is set to argue it did nothing wrong as it had followed Irish and US tax laws, while Ireland has accused the Commission of meddling with its sovereignty over tax affairs.

The Irish authorities are expected to argue that Dublin has not granted Apple any advantage, and could not tax the company in Ireland for profits that have not taken place in the country.

The country's tax regime is a key attraction for multinationals, which employ around 10 per cent of Ireland's workforce.

Kaspi.kz is the second company to announce a major London listing in the last week

Kazakh financial group to list in London in boost to market

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

KAZAKH financial group Kaspi.kz yesterday announced plans to list in London this year.

The offering will consist of a sale of existing shares in the form of global depository receipts by shareholders, Kaspi.kz said.

The proposed listing is a boost to London's stock market, which has undergone a quiet spell as firms grapple with Brexit uncertainty.

The announcement follows confirmation from African telecoms firm Helios Towers last week that it is planning to float in London.

Kaspi.kz controls Kazakhstan's third largest-lender Kaspi Bank and also runs online marketplace, payments and fintech platforms.

In the first half of 2019 its total revenue was 226.8bn Kazakhstan tenge (£473m), representing year-on-year growth of 34 per cent.

Morgan Stanley, Citigroup Global Markets, Credit Suisse Securities and Renaissance Capital are advising on the offering.

Endeavor looks to raise $712m in public listing

JAMES WARRINGTON

@j_a_warrington

US MEDIA giant Endeavor Group has revealed it is looking to raise up to $712m (£573m) from its initial public offering (IPO) later this year.

The company, which owns Hollywood talent agency William Morris Endeavor, said it will sell roughly 19m shares priced between $30 and $32 each.

A further 2.9m shares may be sold to the underwriters of the float, which include Goldman Sachs, JP Morgan and Morgan Stanley, according to a company filing.

The listing on the New York Stock Exchange could value the company at roughly $8bn.

Endeavor pulled in revenue of more than $2bn in the six months to the end of June, up from $1.5bn in the same period last year.

Most of this revenue came from its sports and entertainment division, which controls media rights for clients including the International Olympic Committee and National Football League.

Endeavor also owns the Ultimate Fighting Championship and represents musicians and actors such as Adele and Dwayne Johnson.

EU and Germany clash over budget spending plan

FRANCESCO GUARASCIO

THE EU may need to scale down plans to boost growth and mitigate the social impact of a slowdown if it fails to quickly agree on a long-term budget, officials said yesterday, as Germany pushes to restrict spending.

The EU is funded with a seven-year budget. The size and targets are often subject to prolonged haggling among its member states.

But divisions over the next 2021-2027 financial framework run deeper than usual at a time when the bloc faces risks of a new economic recession and uncertainty over the financial outcome of Brexit.

"My big concern is that Europe will be in a difficult economic and geopolitical situation if there is no budget by the first of January," the EU commissioner in charge of the talks, Guenther Oettinger, told an EU ministers' meeting in Brussels.

Germany, the EU's largest economy and the main contributor to the budget, said it wants to limit spending to one per cent of economic output, according to a document seen by Reuters.

Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands support Berlin.

However, the European Parliament, backed by southern and eastern European states who are net receivers of EU funds, wants a bigger budget, set at 1.3 per cent of economic output. *Reuters*

Greece seeking new mining jobs and higher royalties in talks with Canada's Eldorado Gold

ANGELIKI KOUTANTOU

GREECE is in talks with Canada's Eldorado Gold to secure higher royalties from its mining development projects and new jobs, energy minister Kostis Hatzidakis said yesterday.

Vancouver-based miner Eldorado has two operating mines and two development projects in northern Greece and its planned investment is viewed as one of the biggest in the country in years.

The projects have, however, repeatedly stalled over licensing delays and environmental concerns.

They have become flagship schemes for Greece's new conservative government, which took office in July with a pledge to unblock foreign investments and help boost economic output crimped by a quarter through years of financial turmoil.

Earlier this month, the government issued installation permits for Eldorado's Skouries project. *Reuters*

Saudi stakes in Evening Standard and Independent owners cleared

JAMES WARRINGTON

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THE GOVERNMENT has decided not to pursue a probe into Saudi investments in the Evening Standard and the Independent, despite concerns they could harm freedom of expression.

Culture secretary Nicky Morgan yesterday said she will not appeal against a court ruling that blocked the government from forcing a full public interest inquiry.

The verdict came after reports from regulator Ofcom and the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) concluded the deals did not warrant further investigation. However, Ofcom warned the links to Riyadh could pose a threat to press freedom.

"We cannot rule out that there may be incentives and ability for the buyers to alter the accuracy or editorial stances of the publications," Ofcom said.

Despite this, the regulator said this risk was mitigated by the presence of "other strong shareholders", and said the newspapers had measures in place to preserve editorial independence.

It added that the investments did not appear to have had an editorial impact to date.

Jeremy Wright, then culture secretary, first raised concerns in June when it emerged a mysterious Saudi investor had taken 30 per cent stakes in Independent Digital News and Evening Standard owner Lebedev Holdings.

Wright asked both Ofcom and the CMA to look into the investments, but a court ruled in July that the government's time limit to spark a more detailed probe had expired.

A spokesperson for ESI Media, which represents the newspaper groups, said: "We are pleased, but not at all surprised, that the secretary of state has agreed with the conclusions of the CMA and Ofcom.

"They both found that there were no grounds for the government to take further action in relation to the investments."

Concerns were raised over harm to freedom of expression in the papers

Canal+ pairs up with Netflix in a pay-TV shift

GWENAELLE BARZIC

VIVENDI'S French media company Canal+ has agreed a deal to add Netflix shows to its TV bundles in France and elsewhere, the French broadcaster said on Monday, in the latest such alliance to counter pressure from streaming giants.

The new Canal+ bundles, integrating Netflix productions such as Stranger Things, would be available in France from 15 October and later expanded to other European markets.

Stranger Things has been a hit for the streaming giant

Pay-TV groups have been squeezed globally as viewers switch to online video platforms that often offer cheaper packages and churning out original productions. Netflix, with a string of hit shows such as The Crown, has been leader of the streaming pack.

Some have responded by striking deals with Netflix and other platforms to add content and keep clients from switching off, including Comcast's Sky in Britain, even if it allows streaming companies to make further inroads in their market.

"People have already subscribed to Netflix, it's unavoidable," said Francois Godard, an analyst at Enders Analysis.

Canal+ has suffered after losing some football broadcasting rights in recent years and is still losing subscribers despite producing critically acclaimed series such as The New Pope alongside Sky and HBO.

Canal+ bosses said the group is also "in discussions" with Disney but declined to provide details. *Reuters*

Rosenblatt was the fourth law firm to float on the London Stock Exchange

Rosenblatt expands beyond law with corporate finance firm deal

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

SHARES in listed London law firm Rosenblatt rose yesterday after it announced the acquisition of Manchester corporate finance boutique Convex Capital.

Convex is a sell-side M&A boutique which focuses on helping companies in sales to large corporates.

Rosenblatt said the deal was in line with its strategy to diversify beyond legal services and create opportunities for cross-referrals.

The total consideration for the deal, assuming all earn-out and deferred consideration payments are made, is £22m.

The firm is also rebranding to RBG Holdings to reflect its evolution to a broader supplier of professional services, it said.

Shares rose 3.95 per cent to 92p.

Asda staff hold fresh protests over contracts

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

ASDA employees staged protests across the country yesterday over the implementation of a controversial new contract.

Protests took place at nine stores, including in Leeds, Glasgow and Nottingham, after GMB union members held nationwide demonstrations earlier this month.

Workers have raised concerns that the new "Section 6" contract means they will be forced to work bank holidays and weekends and will not be paid for any breaks. Staff that have not yet signed the contract are on notice and will lose their jobs on 2 November if they do not agree to the new terms.

However, the Walmart-owned supermarket said a new contract is required to create flexibility in the "immensely competitive" retail sector. It said it has minimised the impact of unpaid breaks and increased the notice period to ask staff to change their department or working pattern following consultation with unions.

GMB national officer Gary Carter said Asda should "offer dedicated, long-serving staff a better deal."

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

LONDON REPORT

Oil majors curb FTSE fall after Saudi attacks

NON-OIL shares on the London market yesterday took a hit from mounting geopolitical risks and growth concerns after crude prices rose due to the attacks on Saudi Arabian production facilities.

The FTSE 100 slipped 0.6 per cent to overall, at 7,321.41 points, but a four per cent gain in **BP** and two per cent in **Shell** kept a lid on losses.

The mid-cap FTSE 250 was down 0.7 per cent to 20,060.30 points.

"It looks like investors assess the situation as having potential to further weigh on a geopolitical landscape already beset by the slowing global economy, Brexit and trade," City Index analyst Ken Odeluga said.

Asia-facing financial shares and miners also weighed on the main index, after data showed that China's slowdown deepened in August with growth in industrial production at its weakest for more than 17 years.

Still, losses were seen across the board in all but the energy and utilities sectors. The travel and leisure index that also houses airline stocks dropped per cent.

Meanwhile, the FTSE oil & gas index jumped 2.8 per cent on its best day in seven months. **Premier Oil** and **Tullow Oil** gained the most on the index.

"Explorers like Premier Oil, Cairn Energy and Tullow Oil were even bigger beneficiaries as they stand to gain the most from supply shortages and disruption to existing channels," Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson said.

In news-related moves, telecoms company **BT** rose 3.4 per cent to be among the top gainers on the main index after its chief executive bought shares in the company.

BP was among the few bright spots on the London markets

Wealth manager **St James's Place** fell 2.7 per cent, with traders citing a report that said the company would likely axe a bonus scheme for its partners.

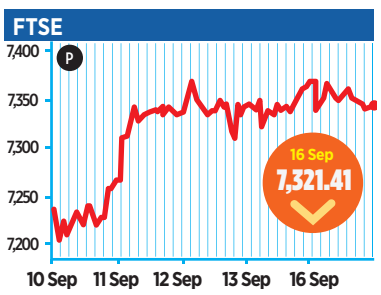
African diamond miner **Petra Diamonds** slipped 5.8 per cent to hit an all-time low after it missed annual profit forecasts, as a Sino-US trade row and protests in Hong Kong dented demand in big Asian markets.

TOP RISERS

1. **BP** Up 4 per cent
2. **BT** Up 3.38 per cent
3. **Shell A** Up 2.12 per cent

TOP FALLERS

1. **Prudential** Down 3.46 per cent
2. **Evraz** Down 3.25 per cent
3. **Rolls-Royce** Down 3.15 per cent



BEST OF THE BROKERS

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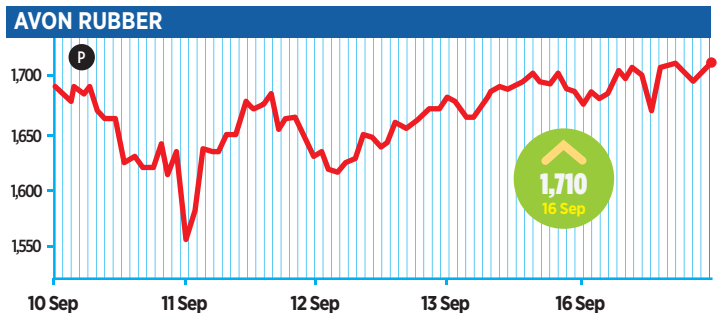
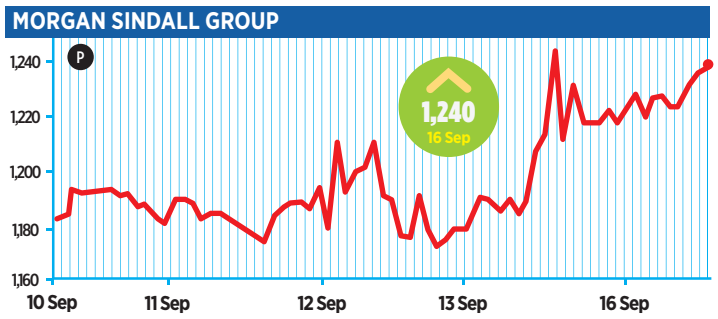
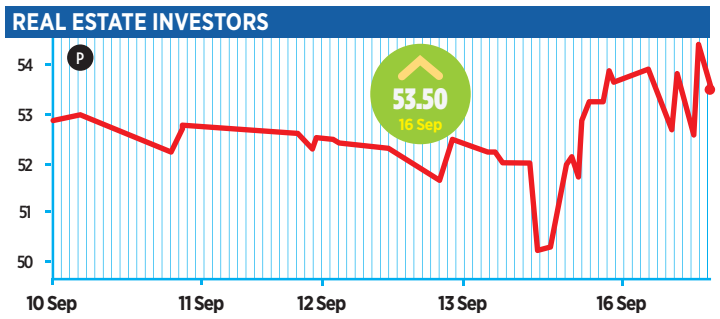


Avon Rubber's latest trading update came as a breath of fresh air for investors. The Wiltshire-based company, which specialises in respiratory protection equipment for military and law enforcement personnel, reported a strong second half of trading, with management expecting revenue growth of four per cent for the full year. Brokers at Peel Hunt said the trading was in line with expectations, but said they'd been overly cautious on operating margin and foreign exchange. Keen to right their wrongs, the brokers reiterated a "Buy" rating with a higher target price of 1,850p.



Peel Hunt were also keen to build up confidence over at Morgan Sindall. The brokers said too much attention was paid to the downside risks in the construction firm's fit out business. Morgan Sindall's self-help actions would comfortably mitigate the expected reduction in earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation, Peel Hunt said. Morgan Sindall is set to book pre-tax profit of £86m for the full year. The brokers reiterated their "Buy" recommendation, with an increased target price of 1,700p.



Laconically-named Real Estate Investors (REI) may not be winning any awards for creativity, but the firm certainly seems to have delivered in the first half. The company's Ronseal-style approach to business helped to drive earnings growth ahead of expectations, with £25m of cash and facilities allowing for onward investment. REI suffered a small decrease in net asset value over the period due to the £2.1m Metro Court sale, but this was largely offset elsewhere in the business, Liberum said. The brokers gave REI a "Buy" rating with a target price of 75p.

NEW YORK REPORT

Energy shares jump as crude prices spike

ENERGY stocks spiked while most of Wall Street fell yesterday after weekend attacks on Saudi Arabia's oil facilities added to investors' concerns about geopolitical risk and a stumbling global economy.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 0.52 per cent to end at 27,076.82 points, while the S&P 500 lost 0.31 per cent to 2,997.96. Nasdaq dropped 0.28 per cent to 8,153.54.

The S&P 500 energy index, a gauge of one of the worst performing sectors so far this year, soared 3.3 per cent, its largest one-day gain since January. Shares of **Apache**, **Helmerich and Payne** and **Cimarex Energy** jumped between 12 per cent and 17 per cent and led gainers on the S&P 500.

The Saudi-led military coalition battling Yemen's Houthi movement said the attacks were carried out with Iranian weapons, raising the prospect of a conflict involving the US and Iran.

"The US investor is waiting with bated breath about what the US and its allies might do," said Jake Dollarhide, chief executive officer of Longbow Asset Management in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Anticipation of higher fuel costs drove down tourism firms' shares, with the S&P 1,500 airlines index shedding 2.1 per cent, while **Carnival** fell 3.2 per cent."

The drone strike in Saudi has had an impact on how investors are looking at the security and stability of the global energy supply chain and is fuelling a degree of risk reassessment," said Peter Kenny, founder of Kenny's Commentary and Strategic Board Solutions in New York.

Shares of defence companies **Raytheon**, **Lockheed Martin** and **Northrop Grumman** rose more than two per cent. JP Morgan upgraded Raytheon shares to "overweight".

Among other movers, **General Motors** fell 4.2 per cent after the United Auto Workers went on strike on Sunday, the first nationwide strike at GM in 12 years.

The more than a decade-long rally continues to hinge on whether the Fed will keep cutting interest rates and on progress in US-China trade talks.

CITY MOVES WHO'S SWITCHING JOBS

JENNISON ASSOCIATES

Raj Shant has joined Jennison Associates, the fundamental active equity and fixed income affiliate of PGIM, as a portfolio specialist. As part of Jennison's continued efforts to grow its European institutional footprint, Raj will expand the European relationship platform for the firm. Based in London, Raj joins as an employee of PGIM and is wholly dedicated to Jennison. He reports to Peter Clark, Jennison's head of product and strategy. Raj was the head of European equities at Newton Investment Management, spearheading the growth of the European equities business. In addition to his almost three decades of investment experience, he brings a proven ability to build strong relationships.

CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

Hassan Farran has been appointed as a partner to head Cushman & Wakefield's Middle East desk in the Europe, Middle East and Asia capital markets team, based in London. Hassan joins Cushman & Wakefield from Savills where for the past eight years he has played a key role, based both in London and Dubai, in establishing the firm's cross-border investment presence in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and leading the advisory teams on transactions for Middle Eastern clients. Prior to this, Hassan worked for Bena Properties in Syria advising on viable funding structures for real estate developments. A Norwegian national, Hassan's considerable experience in advising Middle Eastern capital includes advising Rasmala Investment Bank on its recent acquisition of the Dupont development in Leiden Bio Science Park, Netherlands. Other transactions include advising an Emirati private family on the acquisition of the MM25 office building in Rotterdam, and another Emirati investor on the acquisition of London's New Cobham House and Regis House. In 2018 Cushman & Wakefield acted on more than $34bn (£27.4bn) of transactions across EMEA, covering more than 117m square feet.

BTG ADVISORY

BTG Advisory, the boutique advisory arm of Begbies Traynor Group that provides commercial, strategic and partner-led advice to companies, investors, lenders and other stakeholders, has announced the appointment of four new partners to its London Canary Wharf office. Anthony Brennan has joined from CameronBarney and Paul Davies from Menzies, as well as the senior internal promotions of both Andrew Dalton and Sorca Hunt. Anthony was previously at CameronBarney, Praesidian Capital Europe and Peel Hunt. Paul , who started out at Begbies Traynor, has previously been at ReSolve Partners and Mazars, Kaupthing Singer & Friedlander and Grant Thornton UK.

To appear in CITYMOVES please email your career updates and pictures to citymoves@cityam.com

FTSE 100	FTSE 250	FTSE ALL SHARE	DOW JONES	NASDAQ	S&P 500
7321.41	20060.30	4028.79	27076.82	8153.54	2997.96
46.05	135.45	24.52	142.70	23.17	9.43

£				
/€ 1.1293	0.0004	€/$	1.0999	0.0072
/$ 1.2427	0.0080	€/£	0.8849	0.0005
/¥ 134.36	0.8380	€/¥	118.99	0.7241

GILTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Tsy 4.750 20	101.96	-0.05	105.8	101.9
Tsy 2.500 20	354.67	-0.05	361.4	354.4
Tsy 2.000 20	101.16	-0.04	102.2	101.1
Tsy 3.750 20	103.05	-0.05	105.8	103.0
Tsy 8.000 21	112.84	-0.12	119.2	112.5
Tsy 1.875 22	116.26	-0.37	118.3	115.5
Tsy 0.500 22	100.07	-0.18	100.7	97.7
Tsy 4.000 22	108.66	-0.17	110.7	108.5
Tsy 2.250 23	106.94	-0.26	107.9	104.7
Tsy 2.500 24	372.88	-0.54	377.9	358.7
Tsy 0.125 24	114.30	-0.49	115.8	110.9
Tsy 5.000 25	124.36	-0.37	126.1	122.1
Tsy 4.250 27	129.98	-0.70	132.8	122.6
Tsy 1.250 27	137.84	-0.95	141.1	128.4
Tsy 6.000 28	148.59	-0.80	152.2	140.5
Tsy 0.125 29	131.37	-1.03	134.7	118.8
Tsy 4.125 30	393.10	-1.10	404.2	355.2
Tsy 4.750 30	143.73	-0.96	147.9	132.1
Tsy 1.250 32	161.87	-1.56	167.7	144.1
Tsy 4.250 32	141.82	-1.11	146.4	128.5
Tsy 4.250 36	150.32	-1.35	155.7	133.1
Tsy 0.125 36	155.69	-2.04	162.5	133.4
Tsy 4.750 38	165.38	-1.50	171.8	144.9
Tsy 0.625 40	177.16	-2.25	185.7	152.8
Tsy 4.500 42	169.46	-1.75	176.7	145.9
Tsy 3.500 45	151.99	-1.93	159.0	128.0
Tsy 4.250 46	172.84	-1.97	181.0	145.7
Tsy 4.025 49	179.51	-2.12	188.9	150.0
Tsy 0.500 50	209.08	-3.12	222.9	173.7
Tsy 0.250 52	206.22	-3.43	221.1	168.8

AEROSPACE & DEFENCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BAE Systems	576.6	6.2	636.2	443.9
Cobham	161.2	1.5	168.3	96.8
Meggitt	618.4	-6.6	643.0	458.0
QinetiQ Group	302.0	-4.2	312.4	267.0
Rolls-Royce Holdi	805.6	-26.2	997.4	730.0
Senior	200.0	-5.6	323.0	185.4
Ultra Electronics	2090.0	-10.0	2252.0	1232.0

BANKS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Bank of Georgia G	1310.0	-14.0	1878.8	1285.0
Barclays	153.5	-3.1	178.9	136.2
Close Brothers Gr	1402.0	-7.0	1660.0	1227.0
CYBG	124.5	-7.1	333.6	110.0
HSBC Holdings	618.6	-12.1	682.0	580.9
Lloyds Banking Gr	54.1	-0.5	66.6	48.6
Metro Bank	290.2	9.0	3050.0	261.6
Royal Bank of Sco	207.3	-1.5	270.4	177.7
Standard Chartere	690.8	-10.6	736.8	519.8
TBC Bank Group	1240.0	-10.0	1728.0	1220.0

BEVERAGES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Barr (A.G.)	600.0	2.0	975.0	562.0
Britvic	927.0	2.0	956.0	745.0
Coca-Cola HBC AG	2617.0	19.0	3074.0	2244.0
Diageo	3236.5	-44.0	3625.5	2523.5

CHEMICALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Croda Internation	4802.0	-100.0	5447.7	4564.0
Elementis	166.0	4.0	245.8	129.8
Johnson Matthey	3160.0	-75.0	3673.0	2620.0
Sirius Minerals	10.0	-1.2	30.6	8.1
Synthomer	330.6	-11.4	517.6	279.8
Victrex plc	2242.0	-44.0	3408.0	1845.0

CONSTRUCTION & MATERIALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Balfour Beatty	234.0	-5.2	295.0	194.2
CRH	2761.0	-76.0	2837.0	1971.5
Galliford Try	690.0	-10.5	1099.0	512.0
Ibstock	229.8	-1.6	262.0	193.1
Marshalls	671.5	-10.5	696.0	412.2
Polypipe Group	404.6	-1.2	453.8	307.8

ELECTRICITY

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Contour Global	192.6	-1.4	218.0	150.1
Drax Group	302.6	1.8	427.2	260.2
SSE	1200.0	16.5	1232.5	1008.0

ELECTRONIC & ELECTRICAL EQ.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Halma	1946.5	-33.0	2094.0	1237.0
Morgan Advanced M	258.8	-5.8	338.8	237.0
Oxford Instrument	1294.0	20.0	1424.0	842.0
Renishaw	3900.0	-114.0	5000.0	3368.0
Spectris	2510.0	1.0	2898.0	1966.5

EQUITY INVESTMENT INSTRUM.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aberforth Smaller	1246.0	12.0	1356.0	1114.0
Alliance Trust	806.0	-10.0	838.0	672.0
Apax Global Alpha	156.5	-3.0	159.5	127.0
AVI Global Trust	756.0	-8.0	781.0	660.0
Baillie Gifford J	817.0	-8.0	866.0	663.0
Bankers Inv Trust	947.0	-7.0	970.0	766.0
BBGI SICAV S.A. (	156.5	-0.5	168.0	142.5
BlackRock Smaller	1430.0	-2.0	1482.0	1160.0
BMO Global Smalle	1370.0	-10.0	1480.0	1220.0
Caledonia Investm	3000.0	-20.0	3110.0	2650.0
City of London In	419.5	-1.0	431.5	376.0
Edinburgh Inv Tru	582.0	0.0	681.0	535.0
F&C Investment Tr	713.0	-7.0	731.0	616.0
Fidelity China Sp	221.0	-3.0	250.0	182.4
Fidelity European	247.5	-4.0	257.5	202.0
Fidelity Special	262.5	-4.0	275.0	220.0
Finsbury Growth &	933.0	-6.0	958.0	740.0
GCP Infrastructur	126.2	0.0	130.8	122.4
Genesis Emerging	774.0	-3.0	783.0	615.0
Greencoat UK Wind	139.6	-0.2	143.2	124.4
HarbourVest Globa	1716.0	-4.0	1726.0	1326.0
Herald Investment	1312.0	-16.0	1364.0	1055.0
HGCapital Trust	228.0	-6.0	237.0	175.0
HICL Infrastructu	164.8	-0.4	170.1	149.9
International Pub	159.8	-3.4	165.4	146.8
JPMorgan American	474.5	-3.0	494.5	386.5
JPMorgan Emerging	995.0	-13.0	1066.0	759.0
JPMorgan Indian I	707.0	-9.0	790.0	566.0
JPMorgan Japanese	442.0	-8.0	463.0	367.0
Jupiter European	843.0	-12.0	875.0	666.0
Law Debenture Cor	586.0	-4.0	620.0	534.0
Mercantile Invest	209.5	-3.0	215.7	168.0
Monks Inv Trust	922.0	-5.0	964.0	710.0
Murray Internatio	1194.0	-18.0	1212.0	1056.0
NB Global Floatin	88.5	-0.5	93.0	87.6
NextEnergy Solar	118.5	0.0	124.5	109.0
Pantheon Internat	2295.0	5.0	2330.0	1955.0
Perpetual Income	305.0	0.0	354.0	284.5
Pershing Square H	1554.0	-6.0	1568.0	990.0
Personal Assets T	42350.0	-100.0	43150.0	38900.0
Polar Capital Tec	1416.0	-18.0	1500.0	1066.0
RIT Capital Partn	2145.0	-25.0	2170.0	1892.0
Riverstone Energy	684.0	-6.0	1282.0	635.0
Schroder Asia Pac	446.0	-4.0	469.5	379.0
Scottish Inv Trus	835.0	0.0	875.0	748.0
Scottish Mortgage	521.0	-6.0	568.5	441.4
Sequoia Economic	114.2	0.2	117.6	106.0
Smithson Investme	1250.0	-6.0	1280.0	1000.2
Syncona Limited N	246.0	0.5	302.5	213.5
Temple Bar Inv Tr	1248.0	-6.0	1366.0	1116.0
Templeton Emergin	795.0	-8.0	829.0	649.0
The Renewables In	129.4	-0.2	133.2	109.3
TR Property Inv T	420.5	-5.5	430.0	353.5
Vietnam Enterpris	498.0	0.0	503.0	421.5
VinaCapital Vietn	348.5	-1.5	357.5	318.0
Witan Inv Trust	217.5	-1.5	225.5	189.6
Woodford Patient	45.3	-0.3	91.0	40.1
Worldwide Healthc	2695.0	-15.0	2915.0	2325.0

FINANCIAL SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3i Group	1125.0	10.0	1164.5	756.2
3i Infrastructure	302.5	-4.0	306.5	240.3
AJ Bell	413.5	0.0	477.0	220.0
Allied Minds	60.0	0.9	84.2	37.3
Amigo Holdings	73.8	0.1	297.5	70.7
Arrow Global Grou	217.0	-2.0	273.0	167.2
ASA International	381.0	21.0	493.6	320.0
Ashmore Group	473.0	-7.6	542.5	341.2
Brewin Dolphin Ho	314.4	-7.2	358.0	287.6
Charter Court Fin	306.5	0.0	375.0	228.8
City of London In	418.0	-2.0	440.0	360.0
CMC Markets	102.2	0.2	167.6	77.4
Coats Group	76.9	-1.9	91.3	69.8
Georgia Capital	1036.0	-4.0	1260.0	941.0
Hargreaves Lansdo	2014.0	-33.0	2433.0	1633.0
IG Group Holdings	587.8	-1.0	870.0	474.8
IntegraFin Holdin	394.0	2.0	406.1	269.0
Intermediate Capi	1379.0	-69.0	1448.0	899.0
International Per	106.6	-0.4	233.6	87.0
Investec	496.9	-1.1	561.0	400.7
IP Group	62.3	-1.7	131.2	55.7
John Laing Group	357.0	-2.0	402.0	296.2
JTC	402.0	2.0	440.0	287.0
Jupiter Fund Mana	364.0	-5.6	432.0	287.6
Liontrust Asset M	776.0	4.0	816.0	532.0
LMS Capital	54.8	0.0	57.8	44.0
London Finance &	38.5	0.0	42.5	37.5
London Stock Exch	7404.0	-110.0	7514.0	3867.0
Man Group	163.3	-2.2	183.0	126.8
OneSavings Bank	374.2	-2.6	447.4	313.6
Paragon Banking G	467.0	-1.2	478.8	379.2
Plus500 Ltd (DI)	743.6	-14.0	1647.0	495.0
Provident Financi	426.5	-2.3	658.6	356.0
Quilter	137.2	-1.3	156.6	110.6
Rathbone Brothers	2410.0	-30.0	2566.0	2085.0
Real Estate Credi	169.0	0.5	175.5	163.0
Record	33.5	2.1	41.5	27.3
River and Mercant	259.0	-4.0	330.0	212.0
S&U	2150.0	10.0	2605.0	1767.5
Sanne Group	549.0	-18.0	752.0	450.0
Schroders	3147.0	-24.0	3210.0	2334.0
Standard Life Abe	272.9	-3.8	370.3	224.9
TP ICAP	342.4	3.0	342.4	267.2
Walker Crips Grou	24.5	0.0	38.0	24.0
XPS Pensions Grou	113.0	0.0	171.0	95.0

FIXED LINE TELECOMS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BT Group	177.2	5.8	264.7	158.9
TalkTalk Telecom	109.4	-0.5	137.0	96.6
Telecom Plus	1200.0	-6.0	1528.0	1022.0

FOOD & DRUG RETAILERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Greggs	1993.0	-55.0	2476.0	1006.0
Morrison (Wm) Sup	208.4	-0.2	261.1	176.9
Ocado Group	1349.5	-0.5	1435.0	749.8
Sainsbury (J)	220.1	-1.3	324.0	177.1
SSP Group	654.0	-6.0	744.4	615.1
Tesco	237.5	-2.9	253.0	189.6
UDG Healthcare Pu	743.5	4.5	821.0	551.0

FOOD PRODUCERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Associated Britis	2333.0	-10.0	2638.0	2041.0
Bakkavor Group	118.2	1.6	170.0	93.3
Cranswick	2992.0	18.0	3454.0	2472.0
Greencore Group	227.0	-2.1	230.0	162.9
Hilton Food Group	983.0	-8.0	1088.0	884.0
Tate & Lyle	741.8	-3.4	800.4	633.4
Unilever	4849.5	-61.0	5324.0	3931.0

FORESTRY & PAPER

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Mondi	1676.0	-16.0	2157.0	1510.5

GAS, WATER & MULTIUTILITIES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Centrica	75.0	-0.9	155.6	64.6
National Grid	832.9	4.4	889.2	748.7
Pennon Group	758.8	3.2	792.8	684.2
Severn Trent	2048.0	4.0	2153.0	1770.0
United Utilities	785.0	0.2	873.6	682.4

GENERAL INDUSTRIALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Smith (DS)	367.7	-1.7	491.4	292.2
Smiths Group	1660.0	-32.0	1692.0	1279.5
Smurfit Kappa Gro	2606.0	-52.0	3160.0	1934.0
Vesuvius	487.6	-7.2	662.0	448.8

GENERAL RETAILERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Auto Trader Group	515.2	-13.0	606.0	388.5
B&M European Valu	376.9	-8.1	426.3	278.6
Card Factory	164.0	-2.9	209.0	151.2
Dixons Carphone	123.0	1.0	178.6	104.9
Dunelm Group	856.0	-8.0	981.0	482.8
Inchcape	639.5	-10.5	695.5	486.6
JD Sports Fashion	715.6	-13.2	730.0	318.5
Just Eat	674.0	-17.8	812.0	533.8
Kingfisher	204.5	-3.9	266.2	188.0
Marks & Spencer G	205.5	0.6	299.1	180.4

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Reckitt Benckiser	6220.0	-48.0	7155.0	5593.0
Redrow	634.0	-9.0	674.6	460.8
Taylor Wimpey	163.0	-1.4	192.3	129.3

INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Bodycote	747.0	-13.5	925.5	654.0
Hill & Smith Hold	1178.0	-12.0	1306.0	902.5
IMI	1036.5	14.0	1155.0	870.0
Melrose Industrie	206.2	-2.3	222.6	146.3
RHI Magnesita N.V	4256.0	-34.0	5000.0	3318.0
Rotork	324.2	2.3	340.8	235.7
Spirax-Sarco Engi	7990.0	-140.0	9400.0	5900.0
Weir Group	1596.5	12.5	1814.0	1240.0

INDUSTRIAL METALS & MINING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Evraz	518.0	-17.4	709.4	442.1
Ferrexpo	200.3	-6.1	301.3	155.8

INDUSTRIAL TRANSPORTATION

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BBA Aviation	313.0	-2.2	324.8	207.0
Clarkson	2310.0	-40.0	2860.0	1878.0
Fisher (James) &	2020.0	-65.0	2260.0	1600.0
Royal Mail	228.7	1.0	489.0	188.4

MAIN CHANGES UK 350

Risers	%	Fallers	%
Premier Oil ... 94.2	10.3	Sirius Minerals ... 10.0	-10.5
Wood Group (John) ... 451.4	9.3	CYBG ... 124.5	-5.4
Tullow Oil ... 241.0	8.4	Wizz Air Holdings ... 3372.0	-5.0
Cairn Energy ... 206.8	7.7	Intermediate Capit ... 1379.0	-4.8
Hunting ... 514.5	4.8	Intu Properties ... 43.0	-4.4
BP ... 524.6	4.0	Wetherspoon (J.D.) ... 1486.0	-4.1
BT Group ... 177.2	3.4	Funding Circle Hol ... 102.8	-3.6
Petrofac Ltd. ... 455.9	3.3	Prudential ... 1480.0	-3.5
Metro Bank ... 290.2	3.2	Shaftesbury ... 864.5	-3.4
Elementis ... 166.0	2.5	CLS Holdings ... 241.0	-3.4

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Next	6150.0	90.0	6178.0	3991.0
Pets at Home Grou	233.0	-0.6	239.4	110.0
Sports Direct Int	277.8	-1.4	350.5	214.0
Ted Baker	1040.0	-31.0	2378.0	800.0
Vivo Energy	130.0	-1.6	139.5	96.0
WH Smith	1992.0	-36.0	2186.0	1697.0

HEALTH CARE EQUIPMETN & S.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Assura	69.2	-1.0	71.7	52.4
Convatec Group	173.9	-3.5	239.0	118.6
Mediclinic Intern	362.1	-4.4	474.7	293.4
NMC Health	2934.0	-8.0	3678.0	1801.5
Smith & Nephew	1882.0	-8.0	1990.0	1258.0

HHOLD GDS & HOME CONSTR.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Barratt Developme	651.8	-7.4	663.0	434.0
Bellway	3253.0	-48.0	3301.0	2419.0
Berkeley Group Ho	4152.0	-56.0	4208.0	3226.0
Bovis Homes Group	1109.0	-26.0	1177.0	828.0
Countryside Prope	324.8	-8.8	353.2	270.0
Crest Nicholson H	392.8	-3.6	404.8	296.4
McCarthy & Stone	144.6	-2.9	151.0	121.3
Persimmon	2101.0	-4.0	2471.0	1836.0

NON LIFE INSURANCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Admiral Group	2104.0	-21.0	2300.0	1932.5
Beazley	596.5	-16.0	612.5	492.6
Direct Line Insur	299.8	-2.1	366.5	279.9
Hastings Group Ho	203.6	-0.8	269.4	174.0
Hiscox Limited (D	1646.0	-6.0	1777.0	1418.0
Lancashire Holdin	718.5	-4.5	726.5	530.0
RSA Insurance Gro	537.4	-3.4	634.0	496.6
Sabre Insurance G	281.0	-3.0	294.0	249.0

LIFE INSURANCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aviva	394.5	-6.5	497.0	352.3
Legal & General G	252.8	-2.9	291.2	216.7
Phoenix Group Hol	693.1	-10.0	724.8	544.0
Prudential	1480.0	-53.0	1814.5	1326.0
St James's Place	1002.5	-28.0	1154.5	914.0

MEDIA

	Price	Chg	High	Low
4imprint Group	2980.0	-30.0	3045.6	1800.0
Ascential	380.2	-6.2	427.2	337.2
Bloomsbury Publis	236.0	1.0	243.0	190.5
Centaur Media	35.5	-0.5	56.5	34.7
Entertainment One	571.0	-5.5	589.0	336.4
Euromoney Institu	1392.0	-22.0	1450.0	1132.0
Future	1260.0	-10.0	1320.0	410.0
Goco Group	74.9	-0.1	102.6	64.6
Haynes Publishing	250.0	5.0	258.0	160.0
Huntsworth	95.0	-2.0	123.5	81.0
Informa	840.0	-1.4	892.0	605.8
ITE Group	81.7	1.2	81.9	56.3
ITV	125.2	-1.1	162.3	103.6
Moneysupermarket.	366.3	-7.0	417.7	264.0
Pearson	871.4	-3.6	1027.5	769.2
Reach	91.0	0.0	94.9	54.6
Relx plc	1833.0	-21.0	2011.0	1491.5
Rightmove	536.9	-5.2	585.1	420.9
STV Group	348.0	3.0	400.5	318.0
WPP	1016.5	-21.5	1156.0	800.4

MINING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Acacia Mining	234.0	2.2	272.8	96.1
Anglo American	1936.4	-49.2	2266.0	1539.0
Antofagasta	949.0	0.2	1022.5	727.2
BHP Group	1824.2	-12.2	2049.0	1490.6
Centamin (DI)	123.3	1.9	152.4	79.8
Fresnillo	722.0	-7.6	1027.5	601.0
Glencore	256.3	-5.1	341.5	222.2
Hochschild Mining	204.6	0.2	227.0	149.1
Kaz Minerals	461.1	1.3	738.4	380.3
Polymetal Interna	1133.5	0.5	1208.5	598.8
Rio Tinto	4332.5	-93.0	4976.5	3513.5

MOBILE TELECOMS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Inmarsat	585.6	-0.6	608.2	362.8
Vodafone Group	159.1	-2.4	170.9	123.3

OIL & GAS PRODUCERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BP	524.6	20.2	598.3	485.9
Cairn Energy	206.8	14.8	233.6	140.0
Energean Oil & Ga	955.0	5.0	1082.0	548.0
Premier Oil	94.2	8.8	143.6	55.6
Royal Dutch Shell	2331.0	48.5	2666.0	2213.0
Royal Dutch Shell	2322.5	43.0	2705.5	2227.0
Tullow Oil	241.0	18.7	266.3	165.2

OIL EQUIPMENT & SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Hunting	514.5	23.5	838.5	414.2
Petrofac Ltd.	455.9	14.7	663.4	381.5
Wood Group (John)	451.4	38.4	796.4	357.5

PERSONAL GOODS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Burberry Group	2138.0	-37.0	2345.0	1623.5
PZ Cussons	210.0	-1.5	244.0	178.6

PHARMACEUTICALS & BIOTECH

	Price	Chg	High	Low
AstraZeneca	6793.0	-72.0	7533.0	5325.0
Dechra Pharmaceut	2908.0	18.0	3036.0	2014.0
Genus	2850.0	-52.0	2902.0	2098.0
GlaxoSmithKline	1627.2	-12.8	1745.2	1418.0
Hikma Pharmaceuti	1937.0	-2.0	2064.0	1510.5
PureTech Health	280.0	-6.0	292.0	160.0

REAL ESTATE INVEST. & SERV.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BMO Commercial Pr	115.2	-1.4	144.2	106.0
Capital & Countie	223.2	-2.4	279.5	184.9
CLS Holdings	241.0	-8.5	255.0	195.4
Daejan Holdings	5110.0	-90.0	6160.0	4715.0
Grainger	245.8	-0.6	277.1	205.8
NewRiver REIT	189.4	-4.6	264.0	147.6
Safestore Holding	643.0	-3.5	681.0	499.4
Savills	896.0	-1.0	957.0	678.5
St. Modwen Proper	423.5	4.0	441.5	365.0
UK Commercial Pro	82.7	-1.2	92.7	79.9

REAL ESTATE INVEST. TRUSTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Big Yellow Group	1024.0	-20.0	1074.0	852.5
British Land Comp	554.8	-4.8	625.6	468.3
Derwent London	3076.0	-72.0	3328.0	2761.0
Great Portland Es	699.6	-9.0	773.6	649.4
Hammerson	268.4	-4.6	470.0	203.9
Intu Properties	43.0	-2.0	201.5	32.2
Land Securities G	820.6	-11.8	936.0	735.4
LondonMetric Prop	210.2	-1.2	215.2	172.7
Primary Health Pr	134.6	-2.6	139.0	106.4
SEGRO	764.2	-11.6	793.0	585.2
Shaftesbury	864.5	-30.5	928.5	739.5
Tritax Big Box Re	143.9	-0.9	159.7	129.0
Unite Group	1039.0	-13.0	1076.0	797.5
Workspace Group	930.0	-19.5	1050.0	789.5

SOFTWARE & COMPUTER SERV.

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Avast	372.0	2.0	393.4	259.6
Aveva Group	3576.0	-18.0	4170.0	2284.0
Computacenter	1291.0	-3.0	1525.0	952.0
FDM Group (Holdin	768.0	-26.0	1000.0	734.0
Funding Circle Ho	102.8	-3.8	440.0	90.8
Kainos Group	436.0	-1.0	676.0	366.0
Micro Focus Inter	1147.6	20.6	2491.6	1051.4
Playtech	426.6	-7.3	508.4	360.5
Sage Group	660.6	-7.0	820.4	525.6
Softcat	986.5	4.0	1044.0	565.0
Sophos Group	402.1	-2.0	517.5	298.2

SUPPORT SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aggreko	840.2	-1.0	876.6	691.8
Ashtead Group	2290.0	-48.0	2438.0	1586.5
BCA Marketplace	242.0	0.0	247.0	178.5
Bunzl	2128.0	5.0	2551.0	1978.5
Capita	145.5	-0.7	146.8	99.9
DCC	7120.0	-64.0	7390.0	5555.0
Diploma	1655.0	3.0	1662.0	1150.0
Electrocomponents	649.0	-0.2	749.4	480.0
Equiniti Group	217.0	3.6	266.0	186.2
Essentra	426.2	0.4	442.0	325.4
Experian	2442.0	-26.0	2631.0	1728.5
Ferguson	6108.0	-82.0	6556.0	4749.0
G4S	197.0	-3.0	245.8	168.3
Grafton Group Uni	740.0	-23.0	937.0	630.0
Hays	153.7	-1.6	210.6	135.7
Homeserve	1162.0	-9.0	1263.0	849.0
Howden Joinery Gr	555.6	-5.0	573.4	416.4
Intertek Group	5362.0	-18.0	5962.0	4387.0
Network Internati	550.0	5.0	628.0	500.0
Pagegroup	442.0	-4.8	583.5	407.2
PayPoint	905.0	-17.0	1118.0	748.0
Rentokil Initial	431.7	-4.2	465.3	284.8
Robert Walters	544.0	14.0	475.0	814.0
Serco Group	149.7	-1.5	151.9	84.1
SIG	128.8	-0.8	153.0	102.2
Travis Perkins	1397.0	-3.0	1465.0	970.0

TOBACCO

	Price	Chg	High	Low
British American	2904.0	-66.0	3669.0	2375.0
Imperial Brands	2157.5	-19.0	2750.0	1846.8

TRAVEL & LEISURE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Carnival	3775.0	-84.0	5000.0	3366.0
Cineworld Group	242.7	1.5	323.6	212.0
Compass Group	1955.5	-13.5	2138.0	1483.0
Domino's Pizza Gr	256.6	4.8	297.2	221.2
EI Group	280.8	-0.2	285.0	161.2
FirstGroup	129.8	0.2	131.6	79.3
Flutter Entertain	7508.0	-28.0	7556.0	5525.0
Go-Ahead Group	1967.0	-32.0	2208.0	1480.0
Greene King	843.0	1.0	850.0	480.0
GVC Holdings	721.0	-4.0	1031.0	507.5
InterContinental	5014.0	-45.0	5738.0	3958.4
International Con	445.1	-12.2	694.8	413.5
Marston's	125.0	-3.0	128.0	90.6
Merlin Entertainm	451.7	-0.3	453.4	307.1
Millennium & Copt	680.0	-5.0	685.0	436.0
Mitchells & Butle	367.5	-2.5	373.0	238.0
National Express	417.4	-3.8	438.4	361.4
PPHE Hotel Group	1770.0	-10.0	1990.0	1525.0
Rank Group	184.4	0.2	187.6	135.0
Restaurant Group	140.2	2.4	221.9	111.9
Stagecoach Group	133.1	-1.7	177.0	115.5
TUI AG Reg Shs (D	882.4	-2.6	1474.0	698.0
Wetherspoon (J.D.	1486.0	-64.0	1624.0	1066.0
Whitbread	4424.0	-70.0	5114.0	4086.0
William Hill	186.0	-1.0	265.5	132.3
Wizz Air Holdings	3372.0	-177.0	3769.0	2329.0

AIM 50

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Abcam	1138.0	-12.0	1500.0	1017.0
Advanced Medical	244.0	18.0	354.5	223.7
Alliance Pharma	69.9	2.4	93.0	60.0
ASOS	2780.0	49.0	6050.0	2107.0
Blue Prism Group	976.0	28.0	2375.0	862.0
Camellia	9550.0	-25.0	11750.0	9100.0
CareTech Holding	358.0	-12.0	406.0	325.0
Central Asia Meta	188.2	-0.8	266.5	180.0
Clinigen Group	889.0	-17.5	1069.0	721.0
CVS Group	900.0	10.0	1023.0	395.0
Dart Group	803.0	-4.0	983.5	709.5
Diversified Gas &	114.5	3.5	134.0	97.0
Draper Esprit	456.0	-18.0	625.0	445.0
Eland Oil & Gas	134.0	3.8	140.0	97.0
EMIS Group	1074.0	-20.0	1242.0	864.0
Fevertree Drinks	2288.0	8.0	3863.0	2070.0
First Derivatives	2355.0	25.0	4200.0	2050.0
Frontier Develop	1028.0	-20.0	1385.0	740.0
Gamma Communicati	1165.0	0.0	1200.0	688.0
GB Group	555.0	11.0	631.0	410.5
Gooch & Housego	1200.0	10.0	1880.0	954.0
Hurricane Energy	47.5	0.5	60.8	38.9
Impax Asset Manag	244.0	5.5	295.0	184.0
Iomart Group	344.0	4.0	475.0	308.0
IQE	57.7	1.8	98.0	47.6
James Halstead	516.0	20.0	532.0	367.0
Johnson Service G	179.6	2.6	179.8	113.6
Keywords Studios	1400.0	25.0	1954.0	900.0
Learning Technolo	118.2	-3.8	166.5	62.2
M&C Saatchi	194.0	0.5	394.0	193.0
M. P. Evans Group	657.0	-16.0	756.0	637.0
Midwich Group	511.0	32.0	685.0	474.5
Mortgage Advice B	573.0	3.0	684.0	490.0
Naked Wines	261.0	-5.0	420.5	219.0
Next Fifteen Comm	564.0	-2.0	658.0	469.0
Nichols	1640.0	-2.5	1880.0	1240.0
Numis Corporation	237.5	3.0	422.0	221.5
Polar Capital Hol	510.0	-8.0	626.0	448.0
Purplebricks Grou	119.4	-0.6	265.8	90.0
Redde	127.6	5.2	196.0	90.0
Renew Holdings	388.5	-2.5	436.5	333.0
RWS Holdings	544.0	-15.0	652.0	415.5
Scapa Group	249.5	1.0	473.4	157.0
Secure Income Rei	447.0	-1.0	450.0	371.0
Serica Energy	120.6	1.6	142.0	77.0
Smart Metering Sy	437.0	-25.0	665.0	426.6
Telford Homes	349.0	0.0	430.0	267.0
Thorpe (F.W.)	301.0	0.0	340.0	248.0
Watkin Jones	224.5	-2.0	233.0	192.2
Young & Co's Brew	1590.0	-2.5	1885.0	1322.5
Young & Co's Brew	1145.0	5.0	1235.0	1030.0

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EU SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
AB INBEV	86.98	-0.21	92.71	56.32
ADIDAS N	268.90	-3.20	297.95	178.30
AIR LIQUIDE	126.05	-0.75	128.70	101.85
AIRBUS BR	121.24	-4.26	133.86	77.50
ALLIANZ	210.30	-1.50	218.70	170.50
AMADEUS IT GRP BR-A	66.18	-1.02	82.20	58.06
ASML HLDG	223.85	-2.75	226.85	130.12
AXA	22.59	-0.15	23.99	18.40
BANCO SANTANDER	3.77	-0.06	4.68	3.39
BASF N	65.46	0.07	81.73	55.72
BAYER N	67.72	-0.43	79.69	52.00
BBVA	4.80	-0.07	5.79	4.19
BMW	65.19	-0.11	86.71	58.10
BNP PARIBAS A	44.59	-0.77	55.34	38.14
CRH PLC	31.17	-0.74	34.87	26.53
DAIMLER N	47.91	-0.60	59.90	40.35
DANONE	79.54	0.04	82.38	59.72
DEUTSCHE POST N	30.95	-0.19	32.01	23.43
DEUTSCHE TELEKOM N	15.16	0.08	15.88	13.63
ENEL N	6.48	-0.11	6.76	4.26
ENGIE	13.62	-0.06	14.39	11.31
ENI N	14.31	0.27	16.67	12.92
ESSILORLUXOTT	130.60	0.25	136.70	95.50
FRESENIUS	45.57	-0.30	69.76	38.50
IBERDROLA	9.16	-0.05	9.57	5.68
INDITEX	26.56	-0.35	29.00	21.85
ING GROUP	9.68	-0.16	12.14	8.20
INTESA SANPAOLO N	2.14	-0.04	2.47	1.80
KERING	463.25	-5.35	539.80	351.70
KON AH DEL BR	22.61	-0.29	24.01	18.60
L'OREAL	242.10	-2.30	257.80	182.00
LINDE	171.75	-3.05	0.00	0.00
LVMH	367.10	-14.90	392.65	242.30
MUENCHENER RUECKV N	228.00	-2.00	230.70	181.20
NOKIA	4.62	-0.05	5.76	4.17
ORANGE	13.91	0.04	15.25	13.08
ROY.PHILIPS	43.12	-0.07	43.67	29.05
SAFRAN	140.20	-3.60	144.15	99.98
SANOFI	79.09	-0.44	82.11	71.74
SAP I	106.60	-0.92	125.00	84.02
SCHNEIDER EL	80.56	-1.48	82.20	57.54
SIEMENS N	96.89	-0.11	112.12	84.72
SOCIETE GENERALE	25.72	-0.27	35.01	20.81
TELEFONICA	6.79	0.00	8.06	5.86
TOTAL	47.82	1.17	55.39	42.65
UNILEVER	53.96	-0.47	57.77	45.30
VINCI	97.08	-1.20	101.70	69.98
VIVENDI	25.08	0.02	26.69	20.80
VOLKSWAGEN VZ I	157.20	-0.80	163.70	131.02

COMMODITIES

Gold	1503.10	-12.10
Silver	18.15	-0.05
Brent Crude	62.38	-0.21
Krugerrand	1510.15	-13.75
Palladium	1608.00	10.00
Platinum	955.00	1.00
Tin Cash Official	17450.00	13.00
Lead Cash Official	2085.00	9.00
Zinc Cash Official	2364.50	-6.00
Copper Cash Official	5842.00	12.00
Aluminium Cash Official	1773.00	-5.50
Nickel Cash Official	18320.00	-510.00
Aluminium Alloy Cash Official	1181.00	-14.00
Cocoa Futures	2326.00	7.00
Coffee 'C' Futures	103.83	1.08
Feed Wheat Futures	135.00	0.60
Soybeans Futures Continuation Contract	898.75	1.40

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	-0.464	0.00
LIBOR Euro - 12 months	-0.320	-0.07
LIBOR USD - overnight	2.095	0.01
LIBOR USD - 12 months	2.049	0.05
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	2.25	0.00
US long bond yield	2.31	-0.06
Euro Euribor	-0.425	0.00
The vix index	14.67	0.93
The baltic dry index	2312.00	-19.00
Markit iBoxx EUR	248.11	0.61
Markit iBoxx GBP	355.09	3.76
Markit iBoxx USD	258.34	-1.93

WORLD INDICES

	Price	Chg	%chg
FTSE 100	7321.41	-46.05	-0.63
FTSE 250	20060.30	-135.45	-0.67
FTSE All-Share	4028.79	-24.52	-0.60
FTSE AIM All-Share	887.16	1.10	0.12
S&P 500	2997.96	-9.43	-0.31
Dow Jones I.A.	27076.82	-142.70	-0.52
Nasdaq Composite	8153.54	-23.17	-0.28
Xetra DAX	12380.31	-88.22	-0.71
CAC 40	5602.23	-53.23	-0.94
Swiss Market Index	9969.19	-78.15	-0.78
ISEQ Overall Index	6206.99	-75.28	-1.20
FTSEurofirst 300	1529.26	-8.59	-0.56
Hang Seng	27124.55	-228.14	-0.83
Shanghai Composite	3030.75	-0.48	-0.02
STI Index	3203.04	-7.38	-0.23
ASX All Ordinaries	6782.00	4.90	0.07

US SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3M	169.67	-1.77	219.75	154.00
ABBOTT LABORATOR	83.36	-0.91	88.76	65.44
ADOBE	282.93	4.58	313.11	204.95
ALPHAB RG-C-NV	1231.30	-8.26	1289.27	970.11
ALPHABET-A	1231.63	-8.40	1296.98	977.66
AMAZON.COM	1807.84	-31.50	2035.80	1307.00
AMERICAN EXPRESS	117.64	-1.56	129.34	89.05
APPLE	219.90	1.15	233.47	142.00
AT&T	37.31	-0.60	38.75	26.80
BANK OF AMERICA	30.13	-0.04	31.37	22.66
BERKSHIRE HATH RG-B	210.33	-3.28	224.07	186.10
BOEING CO	378.85	-0.91	446.01	292.47
CATERPILLAR	133.15	-0.63	159.37	111.75
CHEVRON	124.12	2.62	127.60	100.22
CISCO SYSTEMS	49.96	-0.07	58.26	40.25
CITIGROUP	69.83	-0.56	75.24	48.42
COCA-COLA CO	53.96	-0.30	55.92	44.25
COMCAST-A	46.27	-0.61	47.27	32.61
COSTCO WHSL	288.69	-3.21	307.34	189.51
DOW	49.01	0.81	0.00	0.00
EXXON MOBIL	73.73	1.09	87.36	64.65
FACEBOOK-A	186.22	-0.97	208.66	123.02
GOLDMAN SACHS GR	217.22	-2.68	238.52	151.70
HOME DEPOT	230.99	-2.99	235.49	158.09
IBM	142.48	-1.19	154.36	105.94
INTEL	52.20	-0.34	59.59	42.36
JOHNSON&JOHNSON	129.54	-1.24	148.99	121.00
JPMORGAN CHASE	119.16	-1.07	120.40	91.11
MASTERCARD RG-A	274.08	-2.24	293.69	171.89
MCDONALD'S	207.40	-2.41	221.93	156.56
MEDTRONIC	109.05	-0.62	111.24	81.66
MERCK	82.03	-0.58	87.35	66.10
MICROSOFT	136.33	-0.99	141.68	93.96
NETFLIX	294.29	0.14	386.80	231.23
NIKE -B-	87.27	-0.05	90.00	66.53
ORACLE	53.14	-0.61	60.50	42.40
PEPSICO	134.88	-1.56	139.18	104.53
PEPSICO	118.61	0.56	119.74	101.06
PFIZER	36.83	-0.08	46.47	33.97
PROCTER&GAMBLE	119.75	-2.37	123.43	78.49
SALESFORCE.COM	153.01	0.03	167.56	113.60
TRAVELERS COS	146.34	0.03	155.09	111.08
TWITTER	42.76	0.13	45.86	26.19
UNITEDHEALTH GRO	234.43	0.82	287.94	208.07
UTD TECHS	138.08	0.02	144.40	100.48
VERIZON COMM	59.50	-0.46	61.58	52.28
VISA RG-A	176.11	-1.16	187.05	121.60
WALGREENS BOOTS	55.34	-0.65	86.31	49.03
WALMART	115.57	-1.86	118.19	85.78
WALT DISNEY	135.80	-2.22	147.15	100.35
WELLS FARGO	48.98	0.06	55.81	43.02

FORUM

EDITED BY RACHEL CUNLIFFE

Chill out about Hong Kong's bid for the London Stock Exchange

Nick King

THE LONDON Stock Exchange is under siege. Despite initially rebuffing an unsolicited £32bn takeover bid from its counterpart in Hong Kong, it is expected to face an improved offer in a matter of days.

There has, inevitably, been a clamour for the UK government to intervene to block the bid. Many of those opposing the deal are raising concerns about a leading City institution coming under the sway of Beijing. For some, this would be an issue at any time – but it is particularly resonant given that China's actions within Hong Kong itself are coming under such scrutiny.

No doubt pressure is also being applied by the US government, given that hundreds of billions of dollars are processed by the London group and that President Trump is embroiled in an ongoing trade war with the Chinese state. One would assume that he would not be keen for such a prominent western asset to fall into Chinese hands.

The London Stock Exchange itself appears to be eager to enlist the UK government's help to resist these unwanted advances. In his initial rejection letter, the LSE's chair Don Robert pointed to the Hong Kong Exchange's "unusual board structure" and noted that the "relationship with the Hong Kong government will complicate matters".

Politicians are clearly taking these concerns seriously. Before the weekend, a government spokesperson was quoted as saying that "the London Stock Exchange is a critically important part of the UK financial system... the government and the regulators will be looking at the details closely".

But is it really appropriate for the government to act in this case?

Our government can intervene in mergers and acquisitions on public interest grounds through powers granted by the 2002 Enterprise Act. The most likely justification for intervention is on national security grounds, though they can also intervene to ensure that there is "financial stability".

But it is far from clear that either of these concerns are being breached through this takeover attempt.

The London Stock Exchange is, undoubtedly, an important institution – but it should not be considered in the same breath as our utilities or telecommunications networks.

These are critical pieces of national infrastructure upon which the whole country relies.

The LSE – like bourses all around the world – is a capital-raising structure that is all too used to international ownership structures and operations.

That much is clear in the approach of the LSE itself, which owns the Italian stock exchange and is currently undertaking its own takeover attempt, offering $27bn for Refinitiv, which would allow it to become a global giant in data. The LSE's shareholder base is also global, with the Qatari Sovereign Wealth Fund its biggest single owner.

The LSE should not be considered in the same breath as our utilities or telecoms networks

The Hong Kong exchange is just as international in its operations and outlook. Although its government is its largest shareholder, it only owns six per cent of the shares, with the rest in the hands of BlackRock, Fidelity, and other international institutions.

You can decry and deplore the actions of the Chinese government in Hong Kong without seeing the exchange itself as an instrument of Beijing's state diplomacy.

You might think from all of this that I believe Hong Kong should get a clear run at the LSE. On the contrary. This hostile takeover should be firmly rejected – but not on national security grounds or to protect an asset vital for the UK's prosperity.

It should be rejected because it is bad for shareholders, wrong-headed in its strategy for the LSE, and, as Robert puts it, "fundamentally flawed".

The question posed by this takeover attempt is not so much about ownership or control, but about where the future of the LSE lies. The proposal put forward by the Hong Kong exchange is predicated upon the LSE dropping the Refinitiv bid and no longer entertaining its ambitions to become a global data player.

In the midst of so much Brexit uncertainty, the UK government needs to show that it is open to international investment.

Over many years, we have cultivated a reputation for being a secure and enthusiastic recipient of foreign investment. Now would be the worst possible time to show that we are anything short of unstinting in our commitment to that principle.

There are plenty of good reasons for saying no to the Hong Kong exchange's takeover bid – but it is the LSE's investors who should be rejecting these advances, not the British government.

Nick King is head of business at the Centre for Policy Studies.

Unsung heroes: How migrants power our economy and transform lives back home

Ronald Millar

WITH all the debate over Britain's post-Brexit immigration policy, its relationship with other nations, and its place on the world stage as a supporter of global development, it is worth going back to basics and reminding ourselves of what exactly our migrants contribute, to both the UK and the world.

Because make no mistake, ambitious and committed migrants are powering London's economy and transforming lives back home at the same time.

Let's start with the view from the capital. According to the Migrant Observatory, 38 per cent of London's population in 2017 were born outside of the UK. This rises to 42 per cent in inner London. These people make a significant contribution to both the city and the nation – in fact, they generate around 22 per cent of the capital's overall economic contribution.

And while one accusation frequently heard is that migrants "take jobs" from native Londoners, the reality is the reverse. On average, the economic output generated by 10 migrant workers supports four additional jobs in the UK economy.

Some who are sceptical about the benefits of migration argue that this additional economic output comes at the cost of productivity, that the longer hours worked by migrants create lower marginal returns, reducing overall efficiency.

However, work done by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research suggests that migrant workers boost productivity overall. They are net contributors to the UK economy.

These economic facts bear repeating in the face of ongoing migrant-scepticism. But we must also not forget that the value of migrant workers is not limited to London.

As well as boosting the capital's economy, income generated by London's migrant workforce is transforming lives across the globe.

The World Bank estimates that global money transfers, whereby workers in one country send money back to their families or friends overseas, will soon overtake foreign direct investment as the biggest inflow of capital into developing economies.

The $689bn that the World Bank predicts people across the world will send back home this year is almost 10 times more than in 1990 – and is higher than global aid spending.

The World Bank also estimates that, in some countries, the money received will represent a third of the recipient nation's total GDP. These transactions can be life-changing for those that receive them.

Money earned in the UK often goes further in emerging economies – the salary of a foreign waiter or Uber driver in London might be spent on education or healthcare, or give families back home the ability to buy a home.

Rather than simply acting as a "hand-out", research from the International Fund for Agricultural Development shows that these remittances create independence and sustainability. They may provide the seed money for small enterprises and family businesses. This money can also generate economic opportunities for women, which would not otherwise exist.

The World Bank also believes that money transfer is encouraging the development of greater financial skills in developing countries, with recipients more likely to own a bank account. And UK fintech expertise has played a huge part in that transformation. What was once a laborious, slow and expensive process to move money across borders and currencies is now simple, quick and low-cost.

Sadly, views on migration are likely to remain diverse and impassioned for years to come. But those of us who value London's status as a global economic hub will recognise and celebrate migrant workers as the unsung heroes they are, boosting the UK economy, while changing lives with the money they send back home.

Ronald Millar is chief executive at Paysend.

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

One-note party

[Re: Lib Dems vow to ditch Article 50 if it wins election]

Based on reports, this is the Liberal Democrats' most popular conference in years, with packed fringe meetings. The party's fortunes have turned sharply this year. It was written-off after its disastrous performance in the 2015 General Election; now its ranks have been swelled by MPs and voters who no longer feel they belong with the big major parties. Unfortunately, the Lib Dems seem locked onto becoming a one-issue party like Ukip or the Greens – that issue being Brexit. The Lib Dem vow to ditch Article 50 might chime well with still-bitter Remainers, but it locks the party off from 17.4m voters who feel their voices have been silenced. Does Britain need another one-note party? What are the Lib Dem solutions to the UK's many other problems, such as social care and climate change? The party is currently united over its anti-Brexit stance, but fractures will appear in the future as its opposing Liberal and Social Democrat roots clash. Enjoy the conference while it lasts, Jo Swinson.

Name withheld

BEST OF TWITTER

Luxembourg PM gestures to the empty podium where Boris Johnson was meant to be standing: "You can't hold the future hostage for party political gains. It's on Mr Johnson – he holds the future of all UK citizens."
@breeallegretti

Any normal, neutral observer would be shocked by the violation of protocol and the deliberately provocative gesture. The fact that some British Remainers are now so far gone that they cheer this behaviour against a UK Prime Minister helps explain why they are losing.
@DanielJHannan

The thing is, even if the whole empty podiuming is a cheap stunt by the PM of Luxembourg, which is the new line, you are kind of admitting you got outwitted by the PM of Luxembourg.
@twlldun

Hint: headlines saying UK has been "humiliated" by EU, or footage of Boris being booed in an EU country, help the PM with the British electorate rather than hinder him
@jamesjohnson252

Jo Swinson urged to sack Galen Milne #Banff & #Buchan parliamentary candidate, who said "Johnson, Fox, Gove, Davis, Rees-Mogg should be hung, drawn & quartered, with each quarter being sent to the 4 corners of the UK to be burned at the stake"
@CPierceUK

Typical Lib Dem. Mr Milne should get his facts straight. As Lord President of the Council, I am entitled to the privilege of being beheaded.
@Jacob_Rees_Mogg

"It's late. It's rowdy. If you've not been before it is an experience..." A Lib Dem steward explaining Glee Club to what I assume is a first-time conference goer who must have been at least 70. She's not wrong, wonder if he'll go.
@emmamrevell

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Prorogation has meant dropping laws that we desperately needed

John Oxley

THE PROROGATION of parliament has been variously cast as an attempted coup or a smart move in delivering the referendum mandate.

Either way, many among both the fans and the critics have overlooked the impact that the end of a parliamentary term can have on real people.

For when parliament is prorogued, dissolved or dismissed, numerous putative bits of legislation get lost.

The rules of parliamentary procedure mean that any bill which has not cleared the entire legislative process has to go back to the beginning in the new parliament, unless the government explicitly carries it over. With time tight before the prorogation, only three budding laws will stay where they are this time. The rest will have to be reintroduced, and start again the full process of votes in both houses and committee approval.

At the very best, it can set back ordinary legislation a few years; at worst, the impetus behind laws can evaporate entirely, meaning that they are never made.

Often these are unsexy but important pieces of legislation. They are things that are unlikely to make it into a manifesto or inspire a march, but that have a tangible impact on people's lives. Losing them in the washing-up process at the end of parliament can have a real detrimental effect, sometimes setting reform back decades.

Two particular pieces of government legislation demonstrate this misfortune this time round. The Domestic Abuse Bill included a number of legal reforms that would help defeat domestic abuse – including introducing a statutory definition and improving the police and court process for complainants.

While the Prime Minister has pledged to reintroduce a version of this legislation when parliament returns, it is not hard to imagine the effects that any delay to such a bill might have on victims.

Similarly, the Divorce Bill, which sought to introduce no-fault divorce and pave the way for more amicable separations, has not been carried forward. This is a law which has a real impact on couples across the country. Those who are not prepared to make fault-based allegations must wait for up to five years to be divorced, while defending the divorce also offers a way for abusive partners to trap their spouses in marriages, weaponising the legal system.

This will worsen the lives of the 120,000 couples a year who choose to end their marriage, and of those closest to them – including, often, their own children.

Losing legislation at the end of parliament can set reform back decades

It is hard to build up the steam in parliament for them to pass again, especially where those who are affected lack the resources and accessibility to lobby politicians.

In my own work arguing for no-fault divorce, MPs were supportive, but few cared enough to put it at the heart of their work in Westminster – despite polls showing that 75 per cent of voters support the move. It is illustrative that a law on the same subject was quietly dropped after the dissolution of parliament in 1997, and has only now come back more than two decades later.

Whatever one's views on Brexit, lots of good legislation has been kyboshed by prorogation (for the record, an election would have had the same effect). This is a perennial problem with the system, and one which is often overlooked by Westminster watchers.

The political box office is dominated by big issues like Brexit, foreign policy, and public spending, with too little attention paid to the small changes which parliament can make to improve lives across the country.

The Prime Minister intends to have delivered Brexit by the end of October. Should he come good on his pledge, it can only be hoped that more parliamentary time can be made for issues away from the headlines, which nonetheless make a real difference.

With our divorce from the EU effected, parliament should start by streamlining the process for domestic disentanglements.

John Oxley is a divorce barrister at Vardags.

DEBATE

Fashion Week is drawing to a close, but does fast fashion stand up to ethical scrutiny?

YES

BILL WIRTZ

Every few weeks, there is a new environmentalist quest to ban something that consumers like. While activists in the UK are protesting "fast fashion", their German counterparts are shouting about SUVs,in the hope that a week of media attention will move someone in parliament to overreact and outlaw it.

The truth is this: certain consumers want to follow fashion trends on a seasonal basis, and that remains their prerogative. Hardly any consumer renews their entire wardrobe twice a year (mostly for financial reasons). They merely complete it with a new sweater or jeans. And they should be allowed to.

Sustainability is not ignored: many of the brands accused of contributing to climate change are already running sustainability commitments, and even have in-store recycling programmes.

Yes, some consumers follow trends as a way to express their personal style or artistic expression, while others opt for long-term and more durable options. The choice is key – and it would be unethical to limit that.

Bill Wirtz is a senior policy analyst at the Consumer Choice Center.

NO

AMELIA WOMACK

In the last two decades, we have seen the amount of clothes bought per person in the EU increase by 40 per cent, while more than 30 per cent of clothes in Europeans' wardrobes have not been used for at least a year. This has been enabled by cheap fashion readily available, with clothes whose price tags do not show their hidden costs in terms of sustainability.

From climate change and pollution to resource exploitation and appalling working conditions, fast fashion has a destructive cost. In a climate emergency, we need our government to take bold, radical actions to reduce our impact on the planet.

Stopping fast fashion by enabling a repairing culture and ensuring that companies report their impact is an important first step. The government needs to create a system whereby fashion is sustainable and long-lasting. Its aim should be protecting the environment, enabling consumers to be more environmentally-friendly, and making clothing companies pay for their reckless use of our planet.

Amelia Womack is deputy leader of the Green Party of England and Wales.

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TRADING & TECHNOLOGY

DIGITAL BATTLEGROUNDS

Rafi Azim-Khan looks at the war raging between consumers, regulators, and big tech firms

WE NOW live in the age of the internet of things, where voice-sniffing devices abound, and consumers have the convenience of tailored search suggestions. Perhaps it is Amazon's Alexa – revealed earlier this year to be forever listening to its users' conversations – that provides the emblem of the age.

However, while such devices can certainly make our lives easier in some respects, their development has caused understandable concern on the part of many consumers and regulators that we are sliding – almost inexorably – into a surveillance society.

The creation of the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) was a reaction to the rapid development of always-on tech and the drive to turn big data into big bucks.

But almost 18 months on from the birth of GDPR, the battle between businesses and regulators still rages, throwing up some important questions. Are regulations doomed to failure against the seemingly-unstoppable development of technology? And just how safe is your data in the hands of big tech?

SCOUTING THE BATTLEFIELD

So who are the participants in this battle? Apart from the tech giants themselves, we have the regulators, whose teeth have been set on edge by the perceived domination of the market by a handful of companies – which have access to vast oceans of data – combined with the rapid development of always-on technology.

And it's not just regulators – politicians are worried as well. US senator Elizabeth Warren has made breaking up big tech a centrepiece of her big for the Democratic nomination in the 2020 presidential race, placing a billboard in Silicon Valley threatening just this.

Indeed, Texas attorney general Ken Paxton stated last week that "Google's enormous economic power, fuelled by advertising, gives it unprecedented influence over Americans' lives", as 50 US states announced antitrust investigations into the big tech giants.

Amazon, meanwhile, was thrust into a battle with its shareholders over the development of facial recognition technology – which presents "unique privacy considerations, but also clear security benefits", according to a Congressional hearing in July. Amazon won that battle, but the war continues.

ONLINE WARFARE

This war is being fuelled by rising consumer awareness that their data is increasingly being used in "creepy" ways. This is evident from the 160 per cent rise in consumer complaints to the Information Commissioner's Office following the introduction of the GDPR.

EU regulators and policymakers have picked up on these concerns, particularly around always-on technology – marketed as being something that consumers should quickly adopt – as it arguably represents an encroachment into EU-protected human rights, not least the basic right to privacy and respect for family life.

Against such a backdrop, regulators have said that they are prepared to flex their new data law muscles, and we have seen the first wave of larger fines: for example, Google was fined €50m in January, while British Airways and the Marriott hotel chain were handed fines totalling almost £300m in July. Under GDPR, businesses can potentially be fined up to €20m or four per cent of global revenue or turnover per breach.

Importantly, GDPR has been carefully drafted to have extraterritorial reach in order to catch companies even if they are not based in the EU. It also empowers consumers with a quiver of new rights, including the right of erasure, to see how data is used, and to instruct data to be moved.

As people become more aware of their rights, we will doubtless see an increase in complaints to the regulators. Businesses which do not prepare now to properly respond to this will be those most likely to be fined, and also risk brand and reputation damage as a result.

FUTURE WEAPONS

It is worth noting that 2019 and 2020 will not only see a greater number of enforcement rulings and significant fines, but will likely see regulators offered further new powers.

One such weapon coming down the tracks is the ePrivacy Regulation, which has passed largely unnoticed to date, but will have just as heavy-hitting fines, and arguably impact more day-to-day aspects of doing business, such as marketing, selling, customer profiling, and website tracking.

Businesses are aware that the tide is turning. And they are starting to respond. Sundar Pichai, Google's chief executive, has been keen to talk publicly about his company's respect for its users' data, while the head of Microsoft went further by saying that GDPR should serve as the new global standard.

Whatever one's views on whether the tech companies are getting it right or wrong – or whether these are just Google and Microsoft's reactions to antitrust and competition law fines which have been imposed so far – what is clear is that status quo practices will no longer be acceptable. Businesses – and not just those in tech – need to act now to update and change how they operate.

Regulators and consumers have been handed powerful new weapons, and will no doubt look to use them as the battle for the age of the internet of things rages on.

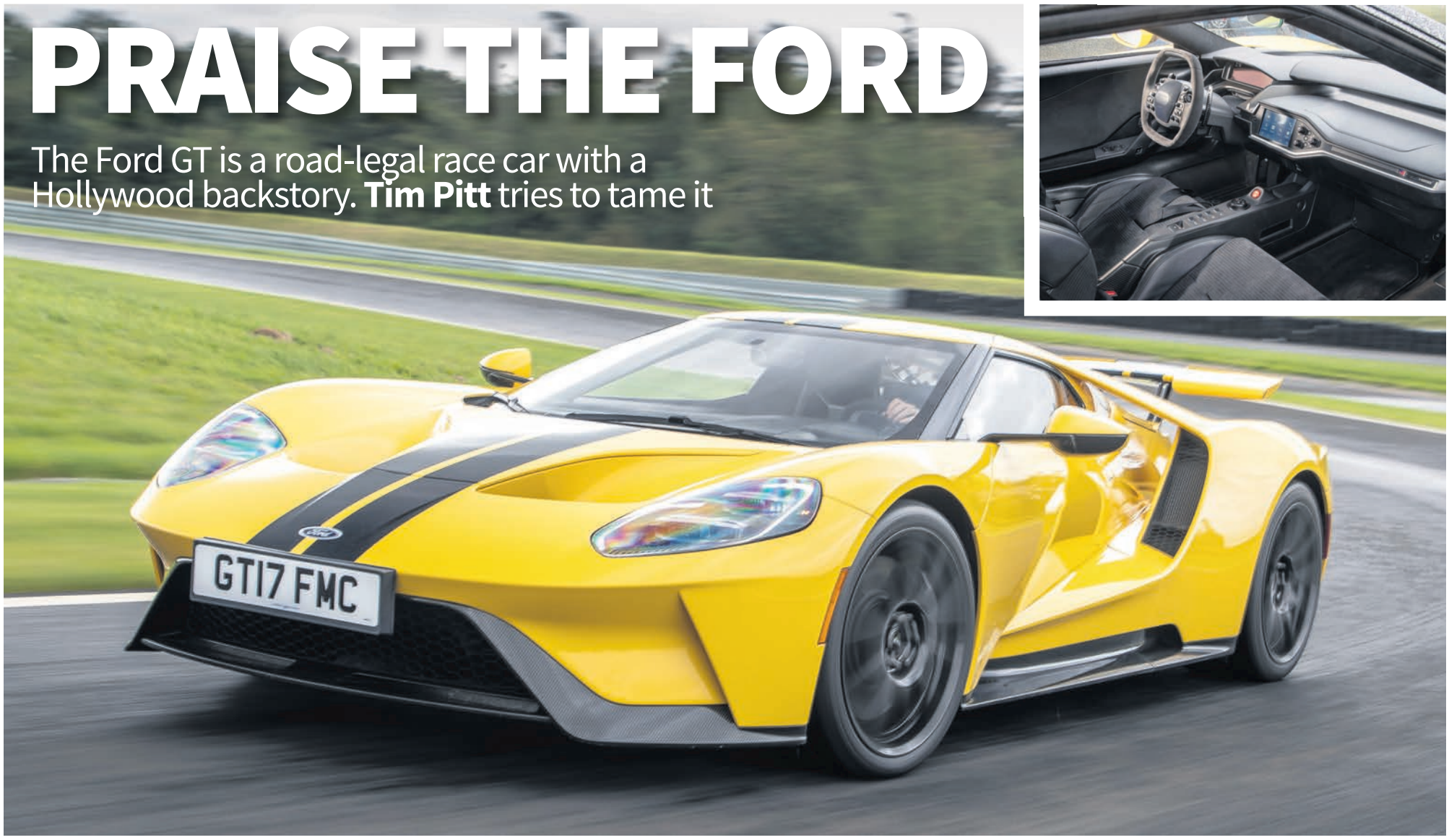
Rafi Azim-Khan is partner and head of data privacy, Europe, at Pillsbury Law.

MOTORING

BY MOTORINGRESEARCH.COM FOR CITY A.M.

PRAISE THE FORD

The Ford GT is a road-legal race car with a Hollywood backstory. **Tim Pitt** tries to tame it



Ford v Ferrari, a new docu-drama starring Matt Damon and Christian Bale, debuts in cinemas soon. It retells one of the most celebrated stories in motorsport: how Henry Ford II tried to buy Ferrari, was rudely snubbed by Enzo, then enacted his revenge on the racetrack. Ford's weapon of choice was the GT40 – so-called because it was just 40 inches tall – and it went on to dominate endurance racing.

Success for the GT40 took time. At Le Mans in 1964, all three cars failed to finish. The following year, Ford suffered the same fate. But an updated MkII model came good in 1966, with a legendary 1-2-3 finish in the 24-hour race. Ferrari's 330 P4 prototypes were nowhere to be seen. Incredibly, Ford would win Le Mans four times in a row, from 1966 to 1969, cementing the GT40's near-mythical status and inspiring Hollywood to tell its tale.

The story doesn't end there, though. Fifty years after its first historic victory, Ford returned to Le Mans in 2016 with a new GT (not christened 'GT44', despite being four inches taller) and won the LMGTE Pro class. Job done, you might think, but unlike the original GT40, this car has another mission to accomplish: taking on Ferrari on the road. That's where I come in.

Okay, so I didn't drive the GT on the road. Ford only has two press cars in Europe and didn't want either reconfigured by an over-excited hack confusing the M6 with the Mulsanne Straight. Instead, I was let loose on M-Sport's new test-track in the Lake District.

As the firm behind Ford's WRC rally cars, M-Sport knows how to design a tortuously twisty loop of tarmac. Whether such a circuit suits a barely-disguised Le Mans racer is another matter. Oh, did I mention it was raining?

FORD GT	
PRICE:	£450,000
0-62MPH:	2.8SEC
TOP SPEED:	216MPH
CO2 G/KM:	N/A
MPG COMBINED:	17.0MPG

THE VERDICT	
DESIGN	★★★★★
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
PRACTICALITY	★★☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★★☆

In the metal (sorry, carbon fibre), the GT looks stone-cold sensational, the voluptuous curves of the GT40 fortified by slash-cut intakes and aggressive aero. The rear view – past two afterburner tailpipes, over the transparent engine cover and through diverging rear buttresses – is like nothing else. In radiant 'Triple Yellow' with nose-to-tail racing stripes, it makes brightens up even a damp day in Cumbria.

I lift the scissor-style door and slide over a wide sill. Headroom feels tight with a crash helmet on and the bucket seat doesn't move; you pull a strap to slide the pedals instead. Ford anoraks will spot the infotainment screen from a Fiesta, but that's your lot for luxury – there are no cupholders and no carpets. No matter: this car is for driving, and its suede-wrapped wheel and anodised shift paddles feel superb.

In place of a good ol' V8, the latest GT packs a downsized 3.5-litre Ecoboost V6, but what it lacks in cubic inches is amply compensated for by twin turbos and a dry weight of 1,385kg (scarcely more than a new Ford Focus). With 656hp coursing through its carbon fibre rear wheels, it scrabbles for traction in first, second and third gears, but feels brutally quick. It's also fiercely loud: not sonorous like a Ferrari, but industrial and raw like a race car.

It responds like a race car, too. Anti-lag technology keeps the thrust coming, while the dual-clutch gearbox never pauses for breath. Its suspension is taut and tied-down, its steering telepathically direct. Switch into Track mode and the whole car drops by 50mm, but even in Normal it feels fiercely focused. However, while its sheer speed intimidates, its balanced, cohesive chassis does not. By the time my brief session comes to an end, I'm convinced I could win Le Mans.

Tim Pitt works for motoringresearch.com

NOT CONVINCED? CHECK OUT THESE ALTERNATIVES...

FERRARI F12 TDF

PRICE:	FROM £700,000
0-62MPH:	2.9SEC
TOP SPEED:	211MPH
CO2 G/KM:	360G/KM
MPG COMBINED:	18.3MPG

THE VERDICT:	
DESIGN	★★★★★
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
PRACTICALITY	★★☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★☆☆

LAMBORGHINI AVENTADOR SVJ

PRICE:	£360,000
0-62MPH:	2.8SECS
TOP SPEED:	217MPH
CO2 G/KM:	542G/KM
MPG COMBINED:	14.4MPG

THE VERDICT:	
DESIGN	★★★☆☆
PERFORMANCE	★★★★★
PRACTICALITY	★★☆☆☆
VALUE	★★★★☆

MCLAREN SENNA

PRICE:	FROM £750,000
0-62MPH:	2.8 SECS
TOP SPEED:	211MPH
CO2 G/KM:	280G/KM
MPG COMBINED:	22.8MPG

THE VERDICT:	
DESIGN	★★★☆☆
PERFORMANCE	★★★☆☆
PRACTICALITY	★★★☆☆
VALUE	★★★☆☆

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How do travel buyers keep up with business travellers' needs in 2019?

SCOTT DAVIES
CEO,
Institute of Travel Management

Today's travel buyer is bombarded with evolving challenges and priorities (data security, safety and security, distribution technologies to name a few) and now the ascending importance of traveller wellbeing. But whose responsibility is traveller wellbeing in an organisation?

Most organisations tend to place ownership of traveller wellbeing between Human Resources and the Travel function.[1] However, I think there are two other key stakeholder groups to add to the mix.

Firstly, the traveller's line manager has a clear responsibility as the individual responsible for the wellness and performance of their team. Secondly, and most importantly, the leadership team of the company – those who set the tone and culture of the business – must communicate and model the expected ways of doing things.

The need for inclusive policies and leading by example

As is the case for any strategy, consistent and authentically-endorsed behaviours are essential, or confusion will reign. In other words, it's no good having a policy that applies to some parts of the organisation, but not others. Similarly, it doesn't ring true for the CEO to say that employee wellness is a priority, if he or she doesn't approve a travel policy where travel comfort and work/life balance isn't equal for all employees.

Breaking behaviours and social acceptance

It's also important for leaders to debunk a dynamic that all travellers will be aware of – the loyalty scheme show-off. In many businesses, the colour of the loyalty scheme card, often accompanied by frequent social media check-ins all over the globe, is worn like a badge of honour to demonstrate commitment to the cause. But, surely the individual who achieves great results, despite never travelling enough to get a free checked bag, is at least as impressive?

> *"As is the case for any strategy, consistent and authentically-endorsed behaviours are essential, or confusion will reign."*

Optimising traveller wellbeing

There are many ways to optimise traveller wellbeing. Less travel can be one option, but let's be clear, when business travel is necessary for maximising the effectiveness of your team, it's incredibly important – indeed essential – for a thriving business.

Other factors to consider include risk, safety, class of travel and accommodation, access to technology, communication, disruption management, accruing hours, nutrition, health and fitness, etc.

There is no 'one size fits all'

Today's travel managers are up for the challenge. In practice, they will be tested by the limitations of cost control, a priority that is going nowhere, and rightly so. For me, the key takeaway is that wellness means something different to everyone and so flexibility within an organisation's strategy is important.

If people are the most precious asset in a business, their wellness while travelling is just as important as when they're sitting at a desk (and hopefully standing or taking regular breaks). It makes you wonder why and when was employee wellbeing ever not the top priority? ■

ITM

Institute of Travel Management (ITM) is the leading association for business travel professionals in the UK & Ireland, representing more than 4,000 members. www.itm.org.uk

MEDIA PLANET

1: ITM (2019). 'ITM Traveller Wellbeing Survey' in which 69.35% recipients selected Travel Procurement and 66.13%, Human Resources.

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Online booking tools, while critical, lack crucial employee adoption

As the expectations of the modern business traveller evolve, travel managers and the tools they use may need to adjust accordingly.

LEIGH BOCHICCHIO
Executive Director,
ACTE Global

Corporate travel policies exist for a reason – typically, to save the company money and help ensure a quality experience for employees. With concerns like cost and duty of care at risk, travel managers have an incentive to improve adoption rates among their employees.

In a recent study conducted in collaboration with American Express Global Business Travel, "Booking Tools and Technologies: One Size Does Not Fit All," 81% of travel managers surveyed said their business has a mandate in place requiring staff to book travel through company tools and platforms, yet 5% admitted adoption is currently lower than 10%.

Lack of education in the travel industry

According to the study, only 47% of travel managers educate their travellers on a regular basis about their company's online booking tools (OBTs). In fact, 8% of those surveyed said their organisation had never communicated with employees about OBTs – not even during the onboarding process.

This general lack of education is apparent across the industry and is likely driving the adoption challenges that survey respondents report. With that in mind, one of the key steps travel managers may want to consider is building a dedicated educational programme that helps travellers understand OBTs and, more broadly, corporate travel policies.

Improvement in user experience is needed

While a lack of information and understanding could be part of employee noncompliance with OBT policy, it's also possible that a lackluster user experience could be contributing to the problem.

> *"While a lack of information and understanding could be part of employee noncompliance with OBT policy, it's also possible that a lackluster user experience could be contributing to the problem."*

OBTs can prioritise both benefits to the company and the individual employee. More and more, employees expect the same functional, optimised user experience they receive when booking personal travel online.

In addition, employees want the ability to troubleshoot and speak with an experienced travel manager so that they can better understand and use the OBTs – but only 11% of our survey respondents said they use chat and instant messaging channels within their OBTs.

With employee training in OBTs already in need of improvement, a lack of communication options may further complicate the user experience.

Booking tools are not 'one size fits all'

Beyond supporting the traveller's experience, OBTs can be optimised for company policy and preferred options, which 90% of those surveyed agreed was important.

In order to optimise the online booking tool process for both employers and employees, travel managers should consider improving the technological education of their employees, as well as assessing their options for making the platform's user experience the best it can be. After all, booking tools and technologies are not 'one size fits all.'

By improving the implementation of corporate travel policies, employers are likely to see an improved traveller experience, but also benefits to the company's bottom line.

When it comes to the adoption of online booking tools, what's good for the employee is likely great for the organisation. ■

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businessandindustry.co.uk

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Managing Director,
Emea, Tripbam

Taking full advantage of these new technologies, buyers are adding and removing hotels from their programmes. Buyers are also renegotiating rates and terms, culminating in a highly competitive portfolio of properties.

Now that these 'stars are aligned,' why is it that preferred property bookings and rate compliance continue to struggle? The answer may lie in the traveller's online shopping behaviour.

Hotel listing and rate loading capabilities within online booking tools (OBTs) continue to evolve at a rapid pace, as they try to keep up with global travel programme needs.

It is critical that hotels are properly loaded and clearly identified as company preferred, ranked accordingly in display listings, and associated with the appropriate corporate IDs to ensure recognition and rewards.

If these and other OBT configurations are not properly set and maintained, the 'perfect hotel programme' will yield less than perfect results.

So, what should a travel manager do:

1. Only display preferred hotels if the negotiated rate is available. This will minimise last room availability issues and avoid hotels upselling travellers to higher cost rooms.

2. Ensure that chain-wide discounts are properly loaded. This will increase rate compliance and drive market share to preferred hotels, brands and chains.

> *"Potential vs realised savings by traveller reports can help companies reward frugal shopping behaviour, as well as maintain targeted communications to high spend employees."*

3. Consider establishing city rate caps. This can drive savings and improve traveller satisfaction by opening up a greater choice of properties from which to choose. Best to set the cap at the highest rate negotiated for that location or the average rate for the appropriate star rating.

4. Regularly audit hotel listings in the booking tool. This will ensure that the correct negotiated rates are associated with preferred property listings. Squatter rates can lead to counter-productive traveller booking behaviour.

5. Make sure all available discounted rates are available. Loyalty, consortia, agency and corporate rates may all provide savings.

When an OBT's hotel display configuration has been properly set, travel managers can use hotel programme compliance analytics to track effectiveness at the property and rate level. Consequently, incremental savings can be achieved.

Additionally, lost savings alerts can help travel managers and procurement professionals achieve even greater savings.

Potential vs realised savings by traveller reports can help companies reward frugal shopping behaviour, as well as maintain targeted communications to high spend employees.

The bottom line: If road warriors aren't led down a well-marked, online hotel shopping path, they tend to make decisions that can lead to greater expense. ■

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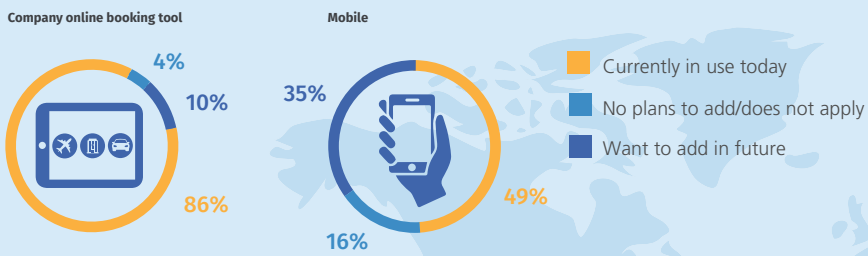
Read more at **tripbam.com**

ACTE RESEARCH
Release date: June

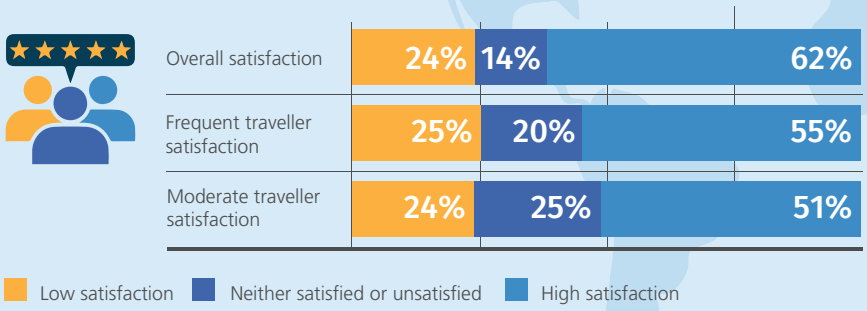
Booking tools and technologies: one size does not fit all

What exactly do today's corporate travel managers and bookers need from OBTs and other booking technologies – and are they meeting expectations? ACTE, in collaboration with American Express Global Business Travel, asked corporate travel buyers about their issues, concerns and objectives around online booking.

Online booking tools are the clear channel leaders for business travellers booking trips



Travel managers are generally satisfied with OBTs



Top 5 reasons for traveller non-compliance

But

56% of travel managers are concerned that travellers are booking out-of-policy

25% are concerned frequent travellers are not well-served

Get the whole picture –
download the *Booking Tools and Technologies: One size does not fit all* whitepaper from **www. acte.org** to see the results of our global study.


© DJILEDESIGN

Business taxis - balancing duty of care and traveller choice

JOHN MCCALLION
CEO,
GroundScope

With business travel estimated to double over the next 20 years, companies are trying to control costs and balance the requirements of meeting their legal duty of care obligations to ensure that the taxi firms they use are both safe and good value, as well as providing their travellers with an easy-to-book, global service with content choice.

Tail-end spend is also becoming an issue of increasing importance for many companies and organisations. Tail-end spending is the part of your company expenditure that is not actively managed - which often taxi spend is not - and this lack of management has an ongoing, negative effect on the financial performance of organisations as well as creating unnecessary work for procurement and finance teams.

Most companies do not have the internal resource to manage this time-consuming area of spend and are outsourcing to companies who provide a managed global taxi service. These companies take full responsibility for managing the supply base to deliver a guaranteed service to clients in over 500 cities, as well as a security service in 100 more dangerous cities.

When looking to select a supplier in this sector, companies should ensure that they work with a company who security vet all their staff and taxi suppliers to ensure that they are fully licensed and insured, and that all their travel data will be stored in a safe, highly secure environment. Suppliers will need to provide visibility on all spend with detailed management information reporting, as well as ensuring all trips have a valid VAT receipt to allow full VAT reclaim.

Travelling on business is generally a tiring experience, with city traffic congestion and airline delays making it increasingly stressful to get to that crucial meeting on time and present effectively. Bookers and travellers will want technology that allows bookings to be made easily via a mobile app, an online booking tool as well as connectivity to GDS systems to enable taxis to be booked alongside air and hotel reservations, all supported by 24/7/365 customer support. ■

GroundScope provide a safe, reliable and cost-effective global managed corporate taxi service, removing uncertainty from the general stress of business travel.

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GroundScope
Ground transportation solutions

Read more at
groundscope.co.uk


© TURKER MINAZ

The rise of the machines in business travel

ANDY HOSKINS
Editor,
Business Travel Magazine

The travel industry is powered by increasingly innovative technology but these developments are also creating complexity for business travel managers.

Technology has long been the driving force behind the travel industry's evolution, but the range and rapid pace of change can sometimes feel overwhelming.

Business travel booking tools are increasingly incorporating bots and articifical intelligence as travel management companies (TMCs) bid to deliver greater efficiencies and a degree of personalisation.

The race to offer a completely end-to-end booking experience on mobile devices is accelerating, with providers attempting to incorporate content ranging from airlines, hotels and ground transport options, to airport parking, wifi access and much more.

Meanwhile, the power of data and the forecasting that predictive analytics can provide is being widely touted.

Then there is the divisive topic of NDC (new distribution capability) in the airline arena – how airfares and ancillary options are presented and purchased – which is now gaining traction.

Industry disruptors are challenging traditional models

The industry is also witnessing a rash of start-ups and disruptors making their mark on the sector, such as tools that can predict the likelihood of certain flights being delayed or cancelled – and those that can recoup compensation when they actually are. Or, consider the likes of travel management platforms Travelperk and Tripactions, which are challenging the traditional TMC model.

The relevance of all these technological advances depends greatly on the size of your company, its culture and, of course, the volume spent on business travel.

Each trend or tool taken on its own can streamline a company's business travel programme, deliver savings and enhance the traveller experience, but identifying which are suitable for your particular needs is another matter.

Making sense of it all with a TMC

There are plenty of educational resources within the industry that can help – not least The Business Travel Magazine and The Business Travel Conference – but a travel management company can be a valuable partner here, not just a supplier.

Technology is at the heart of a TMC's operation, making service delivery more efficient and allowing them to be more creative and flexible in their offering. Ultimately, they are attempting to replicate trends in consumer travel booking habits and provide business users with an 'Amazon experience'.

What do you need from a TMC?

A TMC's technology armoury is vast, so decide – or be guided – as to what you actually need from them. An intuitive booking tool that incorporates company travel policy and perhaps an approvals process is a basic. Data management and mobile apps (for itinerary management and, ideally, for actually booking travel) are also fairly fundamental.

But, consider also expense management integration, a robust duty of care platform (including traveller tracking), interactive business intelligence reporting, hotel rate and airfare auditing tools, rebooking functionality, benchmarking software and even chatbots.

Naturally, larger companies with significant business travel spend will have a greater requirement for certain elements but, ultimately, all business travel technology must produce cost and time efficiencies for a business and a great user experience for the business traveller. ■

BTM

The Business Travel Conference is the major annual event from The Business Travel Magazine. It takes place on 17-18 September 2019 at the London Hilton Bankside and bookers and managers of business travel and meetings can secure complimentary attendance by registering at **thebusinesstravelconference.com**

Read more at
businessandindustry.co.uk


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How to keep stress levels low during a business trip

As rewarding as travelling can be, certain elements of the logistics can get tiresome. Booking the best flights and accommodation, fighting your way through the airport 'experience', being away from home for days on end and encountering delays can take the enjoyment out of travel.

CLIVE WRATTEN
Chief Executive Officer,
Business Travel Association (BTA)

Imagine a business traveller having to live this repeatedly in a short period of time – it's like Groundhog Day and you're Bill Murray going through the motions. Eventually it takes a toll and physical and mental burnout is likely. This is where working with a travel management company (TMC) to limit these negative impacts is worth its weight in gold.

Embedding guidelines into corporate culture

A TMC is your outsourced partner who manages your corporate travel requirements and your traveller's needs. Coming in all shapes and sizes, TMCs work with both SMEs and giant multinational corporations.

As well as taking away the time and effort needed to ensure the best or most cost-productive trips are booked, TMCs help clients work to policies that adequately consider duty of care and overall traveller wellbeing.

Embedding duty of care guidelines into the corporate culture, as well as into such policies will help corporates to ensure they are doing everything possible to support their travelling workforce.

Recognising duty of care and traveller wellbeing

The next generation of business travellers rightly value their wellbeing more and are keener than ever for their employers, who are legally bound to look after workers when travelling for business, to recognise its importance. Beyond the legal obligation, there must be a sincere commitment from corporates towards traveller wellbeing.

Furthermore, occupational health specialists also advise that time away from home and loved ones has an enormous impact on travellers' wellbeing, which should not be overlooked.

As the UK's authority on business travel, our aim is that traveller wellness and wellbeing remains high on the agenda. We work hard to create partnerships that allow our TMC members to offer their clients more products that enable them to look after their biggest asset – their employees.

> *"Occupational health specialists advise that time away from home and loved ones has an enormous impact on travellers' wellbeing."*

A well-managed wellbeing programme paired with a strong travel and duty of care policy enables staff to feel happier and therefore more productive.

Top tips for business traveller wellbeing

In my many years travelling around the world I identified some coping strategies to keep stress at bay during a business trip. Here are my top three tips to help you:

1. Sleep: sleepiness, poor cognition, foggy thinking and a lack of alertness can significantly impact your productivity, which is exacerbated when travelling across multiple time zones. Adjusting your bedtime for a few days prior to a long-haul trip can help you to be more in sync with your destination, minimising the effects of jetlag. Seeking light on arrival at your destination can also help to adjust your body clock.

2. Eat well: choose meals carefully, look at menus online beforehand to identify healthy options. On arrival at the restaurant stick with those choices, it will pay off in the long run by providing sustained energy! Also, resist the urge to drink alcohol. Its negative impact on your wellbeing when travelling should not be underestimated.

3. Exercise: use the hotel gym or ask the concierge for walks/running routes near your hotel. Plan to include exercise in your daily schedule. If waking early due to jetlag, make the most of the time with an exercise session, it will lift your mood and helps to raise endorphins and offset stress. ■

Representing a diverse range of travel management companies – from global companies to small independent specialists and top regional agencies – and their clients, partners and industry associates, BTA is the authority on business travel. Originally founded in 1967, it acts to lobby those who have an impact on the business travel community, together with promoting the activities of its members as the best in quality and value to the business traveller.

For more information on BTA please visit: **thebta.org.uk** or call **020 3657 7010**

Read more at **businessandindustry.co.uk**

Why is business travel tech lagging behind?

In a world filled with technology, where you can ask a virtual home assistant to order a takeaway from your favourite restaurant to be delivered via an app-based taxi service, why is business travel so behind the curve?

SUE CHAPMAN
Commercial Director,
Clarity

The technology is there; the demand is there. But historically, business travellers have had to use clunky, cumbersome tools, confined to their desktops, which have been designed with the business' objectives in mind and not the end user. But we can change the game; it doesn't have to be like this. Travel tools shouldn't be designed for the business or the traveller. They can, and should, work for both.

Technology improves travel efficiency

As we all become more demanding for (or dependent on?!) technology, businesses need to keep up with that demand, or run the risk of being left behind.

When travelling, people want speed, ease and reassurance. The right technology can give you this. Just imagine: your traveller can book their trip, receive alerts during their journey with information such as departure gates or platform numbers, check in to let you know their location, have local knowledge and information – all contained within an app on their phone.

No longer do they have to carry a ream of paper, run the risk of missing their flight because the departure gate is further than they thought or have to struggle to find where their hotel is. All these worries, pitfalls and problems can be removed.

Giving the user control over their privacy

But what about those who rally against technology? It is a contentious issue. Traveller tracking tools are vital for a number of clients who visit high risk areas. We often hear, however, that people feel like 'Big Brother is watching'. These concerns in tech must be addressed by including options for business travellers to opt in to – and out of – tracking. It is their choice and allows them complete control. After all, sometimes we could all do with a big brother or sister to look out for us, but we need to have the choice.

> *"When travelling, people want speed, ease and reassurance. The right technology can give you this."*

The freedom of choice

And this is one of most important things to consider when it comes to travel technology: choice. Let's harness the power of technology and give our travellers the freedom to choose. The choice to lean in to tech, alongside the choice to opt out if they want to. We're no longer in a 'business to business' world, but a people to people world. Let's make the move, place the traveller at the centre of technology and change the game. ■

Go2Track

With Go2Track, automated trip briefs containing your own corporate content are delivered direct to your travellers, giving them the best foot forward on their journey. Our GPS location tracking provides instant access to your employees anywhere in the world, presented on a clear map view with handy report functionality.

Global scale demands a scalable mobile expense solution

Mobile expense apps need to do more than save an executive time, they need to streamline global tax and expenses rules to save admin staff time as well.

PIETER GEERAERTS
CEO,
Mobilexpense

Many companies are seeing the benefits of apps that can capture travel and entertainment expenses to save executives from searching through a wallet to make sense of a faded, crumpled receipts. The problem is, though, these apps can often make more work back at the head office.

To be truly useful, a mobile expense app needs to both save an executive time and help streamline a company's global expense management effort.

For businesses with multiple offices around the globe, who send out executives to many countries, this can be far more complicated than it might at first appear, according to Pieter Geeraerts, CEO, MobileXpense.

"Global companies need a system that is set up in accordance with the tax laws where they send people to do business, as well as the countries where they have offices," he says.

"Every country will have different rules about VAT and what is permissible as an expense. Also, every company has different rules about what each person can claim against the business and what counts as personal expenditure."

Cutting down on admin

A crucial part of mobile expense systems that is often overlooked is they often still need administrative oversight.

While more than half of companies still stick with paper-based expense procedures, most of those who have apps in place still manually check claims.

With a sophisticated system that knows the company's rules and each country's regulations, this can be cut back so those flagged as needing investigation are prioritised.

> *"Global companies need a system that is set up in accordance with the tax laws where they send people to do business, as well as the countries where they have offices."*

"We offer a manual checking service ourselves but, for companies who rely purely on the digital platform, we can help greatly by flagging up expense claims that don't match their rules so they can decide if action is needed," he says.

"It saves so much time for a company and, if employees know there is a robust system in place, they are less likely to file expense claims that will raise a red flag. On the other hand, because our system knows the rules, it can also benefit employees by ensuring a proper expense is never inadvertently treated as an extra payment on their salary, which is then taxed."

Such issues caused by the complications of travel and entertainment expense procedures could soon be brought into sharp focus as a result of Brexit.

Companies will find they have a renewed need for a sophisticated platform to cope with new sets or rules applying to British employees on work trips in the EU, and vice versa. ■

WRITTEN BY:
SEAN HARGRAVE

MobileXpense allows executives to photograph a receipt, which the system then matches up with a credit card bill, so currency exchange fees can be factored in. It can also establish what VAT was charged, or local equivalent, providing the data a business needs, where possible, to claim it back through the correct company office in the proper tax jurisdiction.


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The impact of technology on business and leisure travelers

There is a convincing argument that the travel industry invented e-commerce. In the 1960s, American Airlines and IBM developed the first-ever computerised customer reservation system.

Fast forward to the first internet age of the late 1990s and travel is one of the early adopters of this new technology. Today, travel is one of the most compelling digital commerce success stories, with four clearly identifiable trends at the heart.

Digitisation of the whole travel timeline

Technology has had a major impact on leisure and business travelers over the past two decades, and the biggest global players in the sector are all digital businesses. Travelers are familiar with researching, booking and paying for trips digitally, using a combination of desktop, mobile web and apps.

Digitisation for leisure travelers goes beyond buying the trip. Most travelers, even those who book offline, will have a smartphone with them on the trip. Travel firms can now engage with their customers in-destination, which has led to interest and investment in getting tours and activities providers to join the digital transformation of travel.

Business travelers are also seeing a holistic impact of technology on their work-related trips. Beyond booking, they are benefiting from smoother airport experiences thanks to biometrics. Receipts can be scanned in using optical character recognition (OCR) and integrated into travel and expense software. Corporate or personal connected devices can help ensure wellbeing on the road.

A customer-focus driving personalisation

Travelers' expectations are being shaped by what Amazon, Netflix and eBay offer. These non-travel businesses concentrate on personalisation, choice of product, user experience, service, payment security and data protection. Amazon puts the customer at the heart of everything it does, and travel firms are starting to think the same way.

Personalisation is a key component of customer-focus. Travelers generally allow their travel supplier access to personal data, so long as they get something in return. The value-for-data exchange is now business-critical for the travel industry. Without permissions, travel firms can only offer a generic service. ■

WRITTEN BY:

TRAVEL FORWARD

Read the full story at **businessandindustry.co.uk**

OFFICE POLITICS

Founders must change with the times

Here's how a startup's leadership team can stay relevant as the company scales up

YOU'VE had your brilliant idea, and others are backing you by working for or even investing in your startup. Your role as founder is clear: you need to make sure that all your people pull together to make your vision a reality, but the buck stops with you.

It will take all your energy and charm, sleepless nights, and last-minute ideas when faced with unforeseen challenges.

Once you've done a good job and have been fortunate enough for your business to develop and gain recognition, you'll find that your reward is more work – but now you have the chance to tackle a fresh peak as your business progresses to scaleup status. The appeal of your product or service is now proven, and it's time to take the business to the next level.

But how can you prepare for the next stage of the journey and equip yourself to keep on leading? It's a company based on your idea, but you will personally need to develop just as much as your business will need to in order to move forward and mature.

The stages of a company's growth require different leadership skills and increasing HR support. The secret to keeping on top of your job as the founder is to understand that you need to evolve. You may be the boss, but you should still follow some golden rules.

FIND THE RIGHT PEOPLE

Look for people with the right skills, but make sure that they also have the right attitude. If you're going to evolve, it's just as important that they have what it takes to grow and step up to lift you up in turn.

People who want to take on more responsibility but also work in teams will give your business the most flexibility. Review your talent pool today, and decide which talent you should develop, recruit or "borrow" for the next stage.

MOTIVATE THEM

Bring your people with you on the journey. If you articulate your purpose and make clear your corporate values, they will sign up rather than just sign in.

Your hard work has been motivated by a vision of where it could take you, so share that vision and give them the motivation to follow.

The secret to keeping on top of your job as the founder is to understand that you need to evolve

EMPOWER THEM

It may be hard to let go of the reins after having to hold them so tightly, but if you don't – or worse still, you micro-manage – you'll lose perspective and see your hard-found talent lose their spark or say goodbye.

For the business to keep growing, you need lots of people fired up by their contribution, so make some space and give them goals, not tasks. Consider that you're not the commander in chief anymore, but a gardener who helps grow business opportunities and talent.

ENCOURAGE COLLABORATION

Having small teams in silos engaged with separate projects can replicate the conditions in which rapid growth occurs early on in startups. It's efficient, but not resilient in a volatile and uncertain environment.

It's time to get your people working with each other to encourage cross-fertilisation. Develop a culture of trust, and support it with the right organisational design.

TAKE ADVICE FROM PROFESSIONALS

If you're struggling to adapt to your new role and style, find an experienced coach or mentor who can help you understand what your business needs from you now. They will help you develop your self-awareness and developmental goals.

The important thing to remember is that the transformation of your business must start with your own personal transformation.

Éric Pietrac is senior HR adviser at engineering firm Bladon Micro Turbine.

RECORD THE MEMORIES

Diary Book
Free

Starting a company can be exciting, with new challenges every day. But don't let those memories escape you, note them down so you can look back on them fondly or recall the lessons you learnt. This app makes keeping a diary easy, with reminders to update your diary and the option to speak to write an entry.

COFFEE BREAK

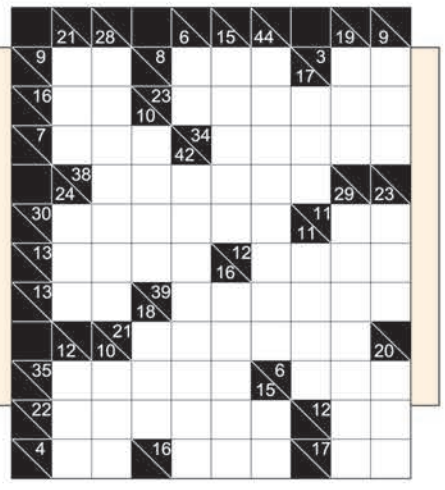
SUDOKU

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.

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

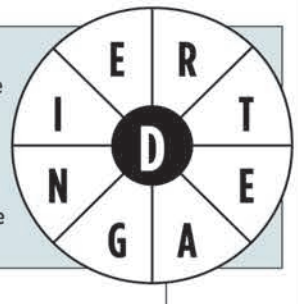
KAKURO

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.

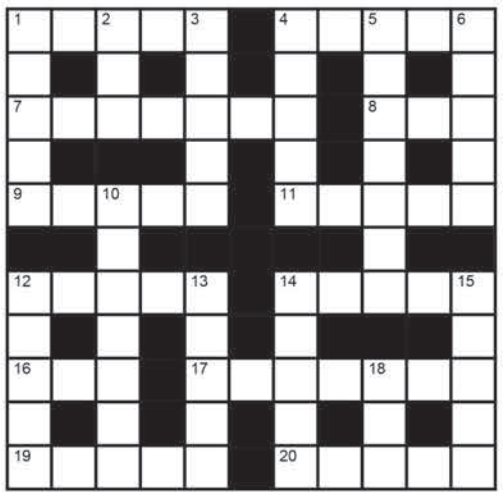


WORDWHEEL

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.



QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Device used to stop a vehicle (5)
4 Strength or power (5)
7 Citizen who has a legal right to vote (7)
8 Profound emotion inspired by a deity (3)
9 Having a smooth, soft surface (5)
11 Ticklish fish (5)
12 Avoid (5)
14 Ravine (5)
16 Evil (3)
17 Metal striker that hangs inside a bell (7)
19 Be similar in end sound, eg dove and love (5)
20 Machine tool (5)

DOWN

1 Sanctify (5)
2 Yes (3)
3 Access (5)
4 Worth (5)
5 Alluring beauty or charm (7)
6 Chirp (5)
10 Date: 29 February (4,3)
12 Glowing fragment of wood left from a fire (5)
13 Compère (coll) (5)
14 Holy vessel used by Christ at the Last Supper (5)
15 Eagle's nest (5)
18 Quarry (3)

LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTIONS

QUICK CROSSWORD

KAKURO

SUDOKU

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

WORDWHEEL

The nine-letter word was **TRANSFORM**

CRYPTO A.M.

Our series on AI, Blockchain, Cryptoassets, DLT and Tokenisation

PARTNER CONTENT

CITY A.M.'S CRYPTO INSIDER

JAMES BOWATER

Conference season is well and truly underway with many projects and companies coming out of the summer slumber, batteries well and truly recharged. The Ethereal Summit in Tel Aviv seems to have had a positive effect of the price of Ethereum, up at $190.17, meanwhile Facebook's Libra faced the music yesterday when meeting representatives of 26 central banks who make up the Committee on Payments and Market Infrastructure.

How will this play out? "Until Facebook announced its intention to launch Libra, central banks were largely dismissive of private cryptocurrencies," commented Claude Brown, partner at Reed Smith. "Some central bankers advocate blocking Libra, others have accelerated the developments of their own digital currencies. Libra will see it as an advocacy opportunity; the 26 central banks will want to lay down the law. That is one big expectation gap."

Looking at the cryptomarket at the time of writing Bitcoin (BTC) is slightly down from last week at US$10,191.30; Ethereum (ETH) is at US$190.17; Ripple (XRP) is at US$0.2584; Binance (BNB) is at US$20.21 and Cardano (ADA) is at US$0.04599. Overall Market Cap is at US$263.91bn (data source: www.CryptoCompare.com)

There is some positive news that came in yesterday from Sumner Global who featured in the Crypto AM Spotlight on 9th April 2019 (www.cityam.com/crypto-insider) as it has launched its SGHX tokens beta live for trading on the London Derivatives Exchange ("LDX") issuing 120,525,202 SGHX tokens, making it the first and largest security token hosted on LDX. SGHX tokens were issued by Sumner Global Singapore, and represent 22% economic interest of SGH Global, a diversified holdings company with interests in a range of sectors including mining, healthcare, clean technology, digital technology, real estate and protective services.

Yesterday I spoke with David Sumner, Chairman and CEO of SGH Global, explained that the listing is a significant milestone for his company, saying "bringing the first SGHX tokens to market for trading is the culmination of an ambition held since our inception - to incorporate digital technology into our business model enabling access to new pools of capital in order to drive growth across the SGH portfolio." This comes just days after SGH Global signed an MOU to form a strategic partnership with Maju Holdings, a multi-billion dollar Malaysian conglomerate, thereby expanding the company's footprint further in South East Asia.

Finally, with community support in mind, tonight I will be hosting the first in the series of Crypto AM Pitch Suppers at Smith & Wollensky where five companies: MIRIS, Digital Asset Custody Services, Prowd, Pynk.io and ARYZE will be presenting to a select audience. The next ones are scheduled for the 29th October and 19th November and any reader interested in attending should email me to apply to attend - CryptoInsider@cityam.com

DECENTRALISED DIGITAL BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Designed by Phill Snelling, Bowater Media

Blockchain seems to be everywhere these days but due to its clear association with popular crypto assets such as Bitcoin, there can be no doubt that it is the most misunderstood of all emerging technologies.

IS BLOCKCHAIN A FAD OR IS THERE A NEED?

As we move further into the era of big data, mobile communications, and online services we all hope that our personal information is going to be secure. In an increasingly digital and interconnected world, businesses are, on the one hand, expected to know who their clients really are and be able to verify that transactions are legitimate and, on the other hand, be able to ensure that business and personal data is protected. This was hard enough to achieve when transactions were slower and only two parties were involved. Now we are expected to be able to purchase almost instantly from an invisible network of suppliers, safe in the knowledge that our money and personal data is safe. For example; there was a time when you wanted to buy a book and went to the bookshop, picked the book from the shelf, paid in cash and left with the goods. Little or no information changed hands and your money was secure. Today you can simply make a verbal command to Alexa, Amazon's artificial intelligence-based voice service, and ask it to send the book directly to your home. To complete that transaction, information about who you are, your voice profile, your financial details and address is used to complete the purchase.

In today's world, to complete that customer journey efficiently, various parts of that information will be used to inform either suppliers, dispatchers, accounts teams, and couriers. Perhaps more importantly; however, is that your personal information is now so valuable it could be misused for fraud or used to generate information on your behaviours, which can be processed to sell you more services in the future. We would all like to think that this information is secure, that there are good records should a dispute arise, and that whatever systems are being used they can cope with high-speed automated trading.

As the race for digital supremacy has become increasingly competitive, data breaches have become more common, yet paradoxically, the value of this metadata will increase ensuring governments will push businesses to adopt tighter standards. Data protection laws such as GDPR, anti-money laundering regulations and the general requirement to "Know Your Customer" have put great pressure on businesses to change their practices to protect customers and so contain the dark side of business. All this must be underpinned by a technology that provides absolute security, transparency when required, and that can reduce, rather than increase the transaction costs of any high-speed digital business. Furthermore; in a world where customer journeys are no longer linear events, businesses will require a technology that can deliver a digital experience whereby customer value is derived in far more meaningful ways. If you're not focussing on blockchain technology today, you place

Crypto A.M. shines its Spotlight on Prowd

The world is changing rapidly and with this change we have seen a huge shift in the global employment landscape. There is a greater desire for freedom and job satisfaction which brings with it a raft of challenges for employers and presents a unique opportunity for employees.

You've all probably heard the term "gig economy" and while this catch all phrase has come to signify the freelance trend it can also be misleading. Sites like Fiverr provide a marketplace of sorts for freelancers to complete gigs which tend on the whole to be small, pieces of work. Many professional freelancers prefer to avoid the "gig" mentality and focus instead on a well-defined career based on projects that suit their particular skillset.

According to Morgan Stanley, the freelance trend is pushing upward fast and there are a steadily growing number of fortune 500 companies who now use freelancers. This creates a whole new agility and flexibility around labour costs which in turn brings a unique set of challenges. This is where we'd like to introduce the Prowd platform developed by Project Crowd.

Prowd has been specifically developed to act as a conduit for Employers, Recruiters and Freelancers. A way to connect each with the other based around a range of key criteria including culture, utilising AI and Blockchain to build trust and add unique insight and thereby solve a range of the legacy issues that have crossed over from the traditional employment market into the freelance space.

> "The flexibility offered by Britain's freelancers is worth £21 billion to the UK economy in added value

Dennis Hauck, COO and Kathrin Hauck CEO of Prowd

Prowd is the brainchild of Kathrin and Dennis Hauck, two entrepreneurs with a track record in the freelance space who basically got sick of waiting for someone else to solve these problems. Together with their Silicon Valley based tech partner they have been working for over 18 months to develop the Prowd freelance recruitment platform, which will be ready to launch in Q4 2019.

"We will initially be focused on IT professionals," says CEO and co-founder Kathrin "because this is a sector that we know particularly well and there is a huge demand for freelance IT skills in the corporate space. The Prowd platform will launch with a focus on servicing markets in Europe and the UK before we expand globally. We believe it is vital that we hone the algorithms and build up a user base, although from the initial Beta and feedback we have received so far we are confident that we will be able to deliver far greater value to our users than anything currently on the market."

While they are currently seeking investment and have already engaged with VC's and family offices, Prowd are also proud to be the first venture to launch their STO via the Own platform. The private sale will commence on the 24th of September and the public launch will follow in mid-October.

For investors this represents an opportunity to tap into a steadily expanding market and for freelancers there is also a unique ownership reward which will effectively see early adopters become shareholders in a platform that will ultimately shape their future careers.

For more information on Prowd please visit their website at Prowd.io and to register for the STO please use this link https://projectcrowd.weown.com

E: CryptoInsider@cityam.com @CityAm_Crypto In association with CryptoCompare

yourself at risk from being irrelevant tomorrow.

TRANSFORMING DIGITAL EXPERIENCES

Many businesses are unnecessarily complex, processing disparate versions and formats of data on complex and inefficient legacy IT systems. This often causes data and culture silos as managers focus on making sure they can 'keep the lights on', in their specific area of focus; rather than how they can improve things 'end-to-end'. Such inefficient businesses processes can lead to an untold amount of revenue opportunities being wasted, poor customer experiences and fraud.

Customers' expectations; however, are changing more than ever before. The next generation of consumers are less loyal and will have grown up accustomed to the digital experiences on offer from Google, Netflix, Amazon and Uber. If you're not able to satisfy their demands they'll use someone that can. It is for this reason why businesses cannot overlook the transformative impact of blockchain. It is the only technology that will provide businesses with an opportunity to improve their data security; whilst providing them with a clean data structure that will allow them to uncover more immersive and much more meaningful digital experiences for their customers. Something Smarter Contracts has termed "Decentralised Digital Business Transformation".

Indeed, through the power of Blockchain we believe businesses will be able to take what are typically seen as mundane back office processes and move them front and centre as a means of creating far more meaningful digital experiences for the internal and external customers of every business, across all industries and sectors. Ultimately, Blockchain is a way to ensure that all manner of business transactions can be secure, have necessary records attached, and can work where information needs to be distributed between a number of transacting parties simultaneously. For the first time ever, Blockchain can provide businesses and business leaders with the ability to power the entire end-to-end of their operations in real-time. The opportunity is as powerful as the advent of the internet and cannot and should not be overlooked.

> Blockchain offers the opportunity to power businesses in real-time

Lord Waverley, a strategic advisor to the blockchain consultancy, Smarter Contracts (www.smartercontracts.co.uk), in conversation with James Bowater./

IMPORTANT INFORMATION: THE VIEWS AND OPINIONS PROVIDED BY CITY A.M.'S CRYPTO INSIDER AND IN THE CRYPTO A.M. SECTION SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS INVESTMENT OR FINANCIAL ADVICE. ALWAYS CONSULT WITH YOUR FINANCIAL ADVISOR.

CRYPTOCOMPARE MARKET VIEW

Leading Exchange Coinbase Invests in Decentralised Finance (DeFi)

Major news last week included the announcement that Coinbase is investing $2 million worth of its USDC stablecoin (pegged 1:1 to the USD) to support the adoption of two popular decentralised finance (DeFI) projects. The funds will be allocated to encourage users to borrow from lending platforms Compound and dYdX.

DeFi has emerged as one of the major areas of interest for 2019, with more than $532 million currently locked in protocols including Maker, Synthetix, InstaDapp and Uniswap.

In other news, crypto exchange Binance opened trading on its new Futures platform. Traders will initially be able to trade BTC/USDT pairs with 20 times leverage, though CEO Changpeng Zhao has hinted that more pairs – and greater leverage – are on the way.

In the markets, bitcoin has remained relatively stable trading at the time of writing at $10,351 after surviving a midweek attempt by bears to push price below $10,000. The lack of decisive price action likely reflects uncertainty about the effects that Bakkt Bitcoin Daily Futures, due to open 23 September, will have on the market. While Bakkt is generally seen as a positive development for the asset, the possibility of a 'sell the news' event may temper bullish sentiment short-term.

This week, attention will be on the performance of Ethereum. ETH is trading at the time of writing at $194.31, approximately 15% up from the major sell off in late August. Perhaps of greater interest to altcoin traders, the ETH/BTC pair finished the week over 6% up, giving hope to bulls of a change in trend. Down 85% from its bull market peak, the pair is often viewed as a bellwether for the health of the whole altcoin market, which is currently struggling with 28% market dominance versus BTC's 72%.

CRYPTO A.M. INDUSTRY VOICES

CC Forum London: Investment in AI & Blockchain 14-16th October at QE II Conference Centre

WHAT IS IT SO SPECIAL ABOUT CC FORUM LONDON?

Well, first of all CCF is not just a blockchain event. It goes beyond that in that in embraces a variety of emerging technologies although it does have blockchain as a backbone. There is a great deal of AI, IoT, Big Data and Fintech involved, and of course Crypto related content is paramount. Most importantly, however, CC Forum has been conceived as a global platform on which to make public announcements, launch services and products and where aspiring startups would have an opportunity of connecting to both private and institutional investors.

WHO ARE CC FORUM'S ATTENDEES?

We have a number of categories. These range from thought leaders and C-level executives down to developers as well as blockchain and AI enthusiasts.

THERE SEEMS TO BE A STRONG GOVERNMENT PRESENCE. WHAT MAKES CC FORUM SO ATTRACTIVE FOR POLICY MAKERS?

Again, that goes in tune with the concept of CC Forum - that of its being a global hub for movers and shakers. Apparently, despite the Brexit implications for the industry, or perhaps because of them, good old England is keen to jump on the bandwagon of embracing emerging technologies. We have four MPs already confirmed to speak and two domestic Ministers with whom we are currently fine-tuning the schedule alongside with a few top foreign government officials for our epic panel "Innovative Technologies as a Means of Attracting Foreign Direct Investment" inter alia. We also have two members of the European Parliament specially coming to join our brainstorming regulatory panel.

YOUR LINE-UP IS AMAZING. WOULD YOU LIKE TO SINGLE OUT SOME OF THE MOST RENOWNED SPEAKERS AT CC FORUM LONDON?

Most of these are indeed well-known in the space. We have the world famous macro economist Prof Nouriel Roubini confirmed thanks to our official partner TNC IT Solutions Group. Roubini will be participating in our heated debates on some of the existential issues with the likes of Roger Ver, Brock Pierce, Bobby Lee and Tone Vays. We will be having members of the world's royal families including HSH Prince Michael of Liechtenstein and HE Shaikha Noora of Bahrain's Royal Family confirmed to name but a few. But we also have another tier of speakers who are leading investors who having had hands-on experience investing in blockchain and crypto projects.

WHAT IS THE INVESTOR'S HUB?

It is a crucial feature of CC Forum and a special area where startups will have have direct access to the decision makers in situ and will be able to pitch their projects subject to a prior arrangement. We have 20 participating VC capital firms, investment funds and family offices with around US$50bn AUM including some of the biggest Middle Eastern family offices interested in investing in the space.

IS THERE A NETWORKING PROGRAMME?

Absolutely. Networking is key with a 1,000 sq m exhibition floor. The opportunities also range from networking drinks and private retreats to our traditional black-tie investors' Gala Dinner and Awards Giving Ceremony. We are also finalising minutiae of holding a special VIP event at the House of Lords as part of CC Forum London.

CITY AM READERS OFFER

Attending the exhibition and the conference is FREE for City AM readers. Navigate to cc-forum.com/register and use the promo code CRYPTOAM for a Standard Pass. Alternatively use CRYPTOAM20 to get 20% of Business Pass or VIP Passes.

James Bowater interviews Max Studennikoff Chairman of cc-forum.com

PRIVATE BLOCKCHAINS

Jon Walsh, Associate Partner, Blockchain Rookies

The Bitcoin blockchain is public and permissionless. Anyone can access the entire contents of the blockchain, and anyone with the right equipment can join the network to support verifying and validating transactions and adding blocks to the blockchain. To purists, this is the only correct way to have a Blockchain.

In the enterprise environment, however, it may make more sense to have a private blockchain. In a private blockchain, there are limits on who can read what information and rules regarding who can verify transactions and add blocks to the chain.

In the case of a blockchain for supply chain, it would make little sense for everyone to be able to see all of the information relating to each other's transactions. Some information is commercially sensitive and should not be shared. Other information, such as data related to the provenance of goods, can be openly shared.

Today's enterprises require strict control over who will have read and write access to core business information, whether stored in a database or on a blockchain. Public blockchains do not support this and thus the need for private blockchains.

Blockchain protocols such as Hyperledger Fabric or Corda are precisely the type of technologies that private industry should use. They are purpose-built for robustness and the demands of enterprise customers. There are numerous enterprise blockchains being developed today utilising these and other enterprise ready private blockchain protocols.

Even if Blockchain purists despise their existence, private blockchains have their place as do public and permissionless blockchains such as Ethereum, EOS and others.

Arguing over whether private blockchains are "real" blockchains or if they are just another form of distributed ledger technology (DLT) is unimportant in the grand scheme of things.

To drive broad blockchain adoption, we need a variety of protocols which support both public and private blockchains.

Get in touch with us: info@blockchainrookies.com / Twitter @igetblockchain

SPORT

THE END OF TWO ERAS

Can Gatland or Schmidt end their glorious reign with the biggest prize, asks **Harry Jones**

3 2019 RUGBY WORLD CUP DAYS TO GO

WHILE it is normal to see coaching turnover at the end of a Rugby World Cup cycle, the aftermath of the 2019 tournament will be particularly poignant.

Steve Hansen, a current world champion, will leave his post as New Zealand head coach. However, it is two of his countrymen, Joe Schmidt and Warren Gatland, whose departures will be felt the most, curtailing unique chapters in Irish and Welsh rugby history.

Wales head coach Gatland and Ireland counterpart Schmidt have been two of the most influential coaches in the last decade of European rugby. Their achievements speak for themselves: six of the last eight Six Nations have been won by a Schmidt or Gatland side.

This World Cup is a golden opportunity for one of the two to end their international stints with the trophy their work deserves.

BEST EVER

Schmidt and Gatland may not be as ferocious and forthright as Eddie Jones, or as creative as Sir Clive Woodward, but they have set a blueprint for modern-day international coaches, using intense attention to detail to create steely, hard to conquer sides.

It would be difficult to dispute that they are both their nation's greatest professional-era coach. They are certainly the most successful.

Schmidt, for example, has comfortably the best winning percentage (72.5) of any Ireland coach and has won three out of Ireland's four total Six Nations in just six years.

His defining achievements have been those which have taken Ireland to heights that previously did not seem possible, whether it be comfortable Grand Slams or their current place at the pinnacle of the world rankings. In 2016, he led Ireland to victory over his country of birth, New Zealand, for the first time in their history. Two years later, they would do it again without conceding a try.

Schmidt's six years at the helm are lightweight compared to Gatland, though, who has held the job since 2007. It is perhaps more difficult to define the Gatland era on account of the fact that he has won Grand Slams with completely different teams, in 2008, 2012 and 2019. The easiest way to summarise his tenure, therefore, is simply through unwavering success.

Thanks to Wales's triumph this year, he is now the first coach in history to secure a hat-trick of Six Nations Grand Slams.

The one international accolade missing from both of these coaches' glittering cabinets is the World Cup. In Japan, both will be aware that this is not only their last shot at the game's landmark trophy with Ireland and Wales but also a far better chance than they have had in the past.

WORLD CUP: NOW OR NEVER?

While describing New Zealand as vulnerable is a stretch, they are perhaps not quite as invincible as they were four years ago.

Indeed, their draw at home to South Africa and loss in Australia this summer suggest that this side is not completely impenetrable. This edition of the World Cup promises to be the most open since 2007.

Both Schmidt and Gatland have learned from the 2015 tournament, where their squads lacked the depth needed to adapt to injury-hit campaigns. This time, both coaches have a deeper pool of quality to call upon, something they were both praised for after their respective 2018 and 2019 Grand Slams.

For Wales, only Alun Wyn Jones would be utterly irreplaceable if he were to get injured, although Liam Williams and Jonathan Davies would be sorely missed.

Ireland's only potential undoing is an over-reliance on their "axis of excellence", the combination of Johnny Sexton and Conor Murray. When neither are on form, Ireland tend to struggle, as demonstrated during this year's Six Nations.

If both win their groups, it is entirely possible that these two teams meet in the World Cup semi-final, pitting Schmidt and Gatland against each other one last time. Although for that to happen Ireland would need to beat one of South Africa or New Zealand – hardly a simple way to end a quarter-final hoodoo.

If one of Gatland or Schmidt were to conclude their stints in European rugby with a World Cup win, it would be the perfect note on which to end a remarkable job. If they do not, however, it should not tarnish their reputations in Ireland and Wales.

After all, with a promising crop of both Welsh and Irish youngsters emerging, Gatland and Schmidt are certain to be leaving rugby in the two nations in a much better state than they found it.

MY SPORTING LIFE

SPORTS EVENT ENTREPRENEUR **ALEX ROSE** ON A LOVE OF RUNNING AND ROWING – AND BEING A 'RUGBY WIMP WITH TWO LEFT FEET'

WHAT IS YOUR SPORTING PASSION?

At Let's Do This we're building the best place to find and book your next challenge – everything from 5k fun runs to double Ironmans. As a result I'm lucky enough to spend almost every waking hour involved in the sports I love. I'm a passionate runner, cyclist and swimmer, and will take any opportunity to find new ways to test myself. I completed my first Ironman a month ago in Kalmar, Sweden.

HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INTO SPORT?

My early sporting career was unspectacular. I was a wimp on the rugby pitch and had two left feet. My sporting salvation came with rowing, which I suited largely on account of being lanky and not giving up easily. It showed me how much sport can give you: being part of a dedicated team, a brutal training schedule, and the unbridled joy and pain of winning and losing.

DO YOU ALSO PARTICIPATE IN SPORT?

I only participate in sport. I'm a terrible sports fan, a trait I think I've inherited from my dad. Fortunately, having recently moved to San Francisco, my ignorance of US sport is general excused on account of being British.

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE SPORTING MEMORY?

Despite my confession of being a terrible sports fan, I have had a few lapses. I was foolish enough to arrange a date this summer that clashed with the end of the Cricket World Cup final and the men's Wimbledon final. I completely ignored my date for at least an hour whilst I switched between the two on my phone. Amazingly, she's still talking to me! Murray's Wimbledon, Wiggins's Tour de France win, and Mo's double Olympic gold have to be my all-time top three.

WHAT IS YOUR GREATEST HOPE IN SPORT?

I'd love to see more people taking part in sport and in particular in endurance events. Signing up to an event like a 10k run with a measurable goal at the end is proven to be the best way of changing long term behaviour and getting fitter.

IF YOU COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT SPORT, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

Times are definitely changing, but I think a lot of people still find taking up a new sport intimidating. Sport is for everyone, and everyone started their journey as a beginner. If you run you're a runner – it doesn't matter how fast you run, and you don't need to wear lycra or ride an expensive bike to be a cyclist.

Alex Rose is the co-founder of Let's Do This, the world's largest platform for mass participation sports events.

STALEMATE Aston Villa draw a blank against 10-man West Ham

Aston Villa moved out of the Premier League relegation zone despite failing to score past 10-man West Ham in a 0-0 draw last night. Arthur Masuaku was sent off for a second yellow card in the 67th minute but the home side couldn't find a way past Lukasz Fabianski. John McGinn twice tested the Hammers goalkeeper, while Jack Grealish and Wesley both spurned chances. The game's most notable incident came when Villa's Tyrone Mings and Anwar El Ghazi squared up in the first half following a disagreement. The draw moved West Ham into eighth place and extended their unbeaten run to five games in all competitions, while Villa climbed above Newcastle into 17th.

SPORT DIGEST

KENT'S STEVENS, 43, HITS CAREER-BEST SCORE OF 237

Darren Stevens scored a career-best double-hundred to roll back the years and put Kent in a strong position against Yorkshire in the County Championship yesterday. The 43-year-old struck 237 from 225 balls in a sixth-wicket stand of 346 with Sam Billings, who made 138, as Kent ended day one on 482-8 at Headingley. Elsewhere, title hopefuls Somerset ended the day 30-2 after bowling Hampshire out for 196 and Surrey reached 137-4 before bad light halted their game against Essex.

TONGA WILL BE BRUISING OPENER, SAYS ITOJE

England have not underestimated Tonga and are expecting a physical battle with their opening World Cup opponents, according to Maro Itoje. England begin their campaign against the world No15 side in Sapporo on Sunday, but while Tonga are the lowest ranked side in Pool C they have lots of qualities. "We know that they're an incredibly physical side," Itoje said. "From one to 31 they have big boys who are physical and aggressive. They have huge athleticism as well."

CAVENDISH TARGETS TOKYO OLYMPICS MADISON IN 2020

Mark Cavendish says he retains the ambition to race for Great Britain in the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. The 34-year-old won silver in the omnium at Rio 2016 and is competing at Six Day London next month. "Riding the madison at Tokyo is still an interest," he said. "Any time on the track is good preparation for it and Six Day racing is good because it stays true to the foundations of madison racing."

VALENCIA TURMOIL WON'T AFFECT CHELSEA METHOD

Frank Lampard has played down the chaos behind the scenes at Valencia ahead of Chelsea's opening Champions League group game against the Spanish side tomorrow. Valencia are getting used to new manager Albert Celades after Marcelino Garcia Toral was sacked last week and suffered a 5-2 defeat by Barcelona on Saturday. "It doesn't affect our approach," Lampard said. "Sometimes it can be a positive as much as a negative on the pitch."

REFEREES CHIEF: DON'T EXPECT LOTS OF RED CARDS

Referees have not been instructed to lay down markers at the World Cup by punishing high tackles with red cards. A new directive has been rolled out in rugby to protect players. But World Rugby's referees boss, Alain Rolland, said: "We are not here to lay down markers but officiate and adjudicate on actions."

GOLF COMMENT

Sam Torrance

SOLHEIM CUP THRILLER AS GOOD AS IT GETS

Europe's Solheim Cup team beat the United States in late drama on Sunday, while Garcia's (left) drought ended

IT HAS been a big week for many people in golf but none more so than those involved in an extraordinary Solheim Cup. Europe's 14½-13½ win over the United States at Gleneagles was exciting beyond belief, up there with any finish in the men's or women's game.

First, Bronte Law looked to be in trouble in her singles match with Ally McDonald when she found a bunker at 15 but managed to halve the hole and avoid going one down with three to play.

Law then won 16 and 17 to beat McDonald 2&1, meaning it would come down to Suzann Pettersen's match with Marina Alex.

Pettersen – a wildcard pick by Europe captain Catriona Matthew after taking a year out to have a baby – was also magnificent. At 16, she had to follow Alex's third shot to within six inches of the pin and duly chipped it stone dead. Then when both hit good shots into 18 it was Pettersen who rolled in a birdie to clinch the match and the cup.

The whole three days of competition was a huge advertisement for women's golf. We know how good they are and they showed it.

We shouldn't forget that the Americans, who had six rookies in their side, played fantastically well but Europe were just too strong.

INSPIRATIONAL CAPTAIN

As a team, they gelled brilliantly. Representing your continent on home soil, there is an almost indescribable pressure – and they were up against opponents who, on paper, were much stronger.

But, as we've seen before in Solheim and Ryder Cups, it doesn't matter what it says on paper or who is ranked higher. It is about who stands up on the day.

At one point during Saturday afternoon the US were ahead in all four of the fourballs and poised to take an almost insurmountable three-point lead into Sunday's singles.

Europe rallied, though, and finished Saturday 8-8. That was huge. You don't want to highlight individuals too much, but England's Georgia Hall showed so much grit to finish with four points – joint top-scorer on either team.

She made a bad start every day but dug in and proved her class by beating world No3 Lexi Thompson 2&1 in the singles.

Pettersen announcing her retirement after winning the Solheim Cup for Europe was a great story too. I think she still has plenty to offer the game but she wants to bring up her child and of course that's a very personal decision. What a way to finish.

Ultimately, Europe's win was testament to Matthew's quality. Players need no motivation on these occasions but they can give an extra few per cent for an inspirational captain, and she was fabulous.

GARCIA BOUNCES BACK

It has been a dry season for Sergio Garcia but he will be delighted to be back in the winner's circle following his success at the KLM Open in Holland on Sunday.

This will be an injection of positivity, a reminder that Garcia can still do it. We saw him finish strongly last year and it would be no surprise if he carried this into the final few weeks.

> "In the Solheim or Ryder Cup it does not matter what it says on paper. It's about who stands up on the day

There are some big events still to come, such as this week's PGA Championship at Wentworth, and Matt Wallace will also go into them with confidence after playing his last two rounds in a combined 13 under par to finish third behind Garcia.

Finally, it was good to see Joaquin Niemann become the youngest foreign winner on the PGA Tour for 96 years. We have heard lots about the 20-year-old from Chile and it is nice when a former amateur No1 translates that into winning in the pro ranks so quickly.

Sam Torrance OBE is a multiple Ryder Cup-winning golfer and media commentator. Follow him @torrancesam