THE SPD'S NEW LEADERS MAY THREATEN GERMANY'S RULING COALITION
P15

CITY A.M.

BUSINESS WITH PERSONALITY

ARE BRANDS SPENDING TOO MUCH ON THE COVETED CHRISTMAS ADVERT?
P26

MONDAY 2 DECEMBER 2019 | ISSUE 3,512 CITYAM.COM FREE

RETAIL SURGE BRIGHTENS UP HIGH STREETS

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

UK RETAIL bosses are breathing a sigh of relief, after footfall on Black Friday unexpectedly jumped for the first time since 2016, providing rare good news at the end of a gloomy year for the high street.

Shoppers have been encouraged to spend more in the lead up to the crucial festive trading period as this year's discounting event, which continues today with the online-focused Cyber Monday, occurred after payday and closer to Christmas than in 2018.

Today's digital discounting is expected to help boost online sales in November and December to £20bn for the first time, a rise of £1.9bn compared to last year, according to research by property adviser Colliers International.

"This year in particular, we have the effect of the event coinciding with month-end payday which helps shoppers feel more flush and better placed to spend," Paul Souber, co-head of retail at Colliers, said.

"More businesses have adopted the event and as it becomes established and promoted, online sales have naturally followed".

Black Friday footfall increased 3.3 per cent across the UK — despite predictions that visitor numbers would drop 4.5 per cent — and was up at all types of shopping destinations including high streets, retail parks and shopping centres, according to research by Springboard.

Meanwhile, footfall in London's West End soared eight per cent compared to Black Friday 2018 as consumers incorporated shopping with other leisure activities.

CONTINUED ON P6

CALIFORNIA DREAMIN'

PLAYING COWBOY ON THE WEST COAST

P28–29

Carney secures post-Bank gig as UN climate finance envoy

HARRY ROBERTSON

@henrygrobertson

BANK OF England boss Mark Carney has been appointed the United Nations' special envoy for climate action and finance, it was announced yesterday, as he looks towards life beyond the governor's chair.

UN secretary-general Antonio Guterres has tasked Carney with pushing global finance to address the perils of climate change and help limit global warming.

Carney is set to take up the voluntary, part-time role at the end of his eight-year tenure as BoE governor on 31 January 2020.

The Treasury insists it is on track to appoint a new governor before Carney leaves.

A decision is highly unlikely to be announced during the purdah period before the election on 12 December, meaning there will be little time in between an announcement and the new governor starting.

Carney has pushed for action on climate change

FTSE 100▼7,346.53 -69.90 FTSE 250▼20,812.60 -210.95 DOW▼28,051.41 -112.59 NASDAQ▼ 8,665.47 -39.70 £/$▼ 1.294 -0.003 £/€▲ 1.174 +0.001 €/$▲ 1.102 +0.001

CITY A.M.

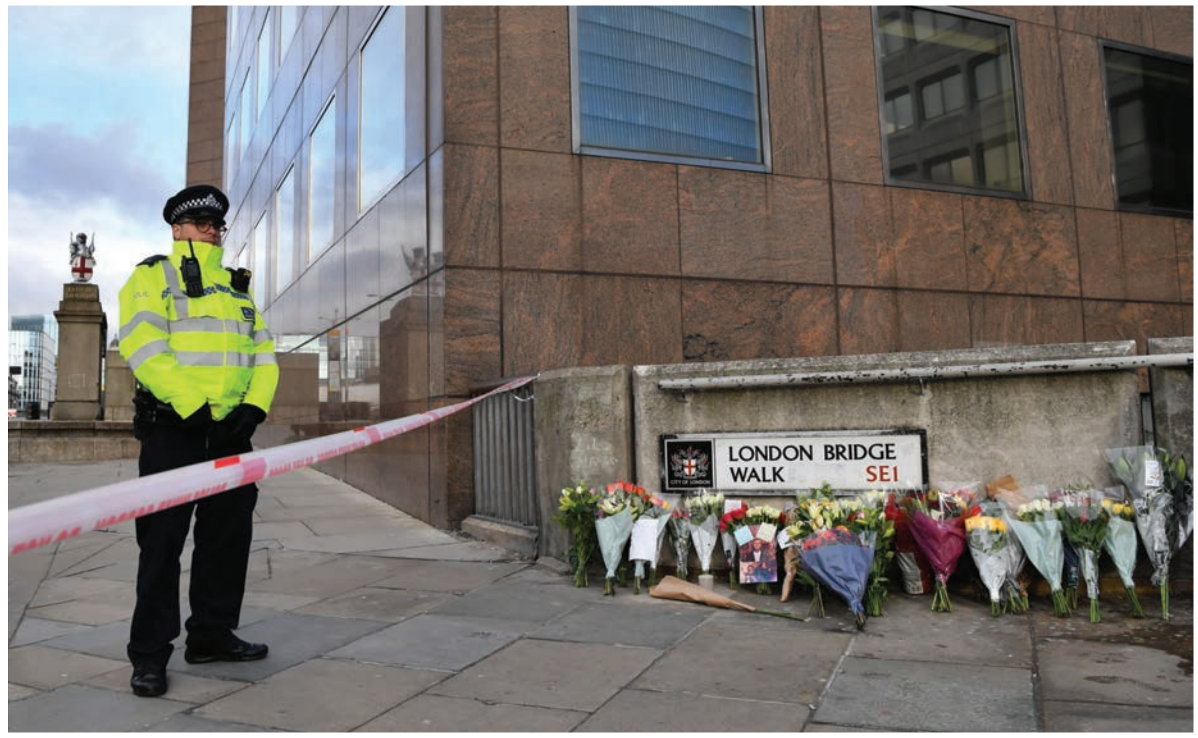
THE CITY VIEW

Hong Kong protesters should be welcomed

WHAT connects China's systematic abuse of human rights with the Tory party's commitment to a "global Britain" post-Brexit? The answer is Hong Kong. Even before the protests of recent months captured the world's attention, China's erosion of civil liberties in Hong Kong and its sprawling security presence meant that the rights and freedoms which the UK is treaty-bound to defend had slipped into a perilous state. Now, as the protest movement hardens its resistance, locals are braced for retaliation by the communist regime against which so many have demonstrated. Here in the UK, there are growing calls for the government to take a more proactive and supportive position. Since the summer, think-tanks and prominent parliamentarians have, much to the fury of China's ambassador in London, pressed the case for a reformed immigration policy that would give Hong Kong citizens the freedom to come to Britain. At present, around 250,000 Hong Kongers hold a British National Overseas (BNO) passport, the main benefit of which is the right to visit the UK for six months. Home secretary Priti Patel is understood to have pushed for a change in the BNO status that would grant the holders of such passports the automatic right to settle in the UK. According to reports, Patel has spoken of the moral imperative to allow those who fear for their lives or liberty to escape the former British colony without the threat of being sent back after six months. The home secretary knows how valuable a helping hand from Britain can be: her own parents fled Idi Amin's Uganda as ex-British citizens and settled here. Patel is right about the moral imperative and right to consider how China may seek to stamp its authority on Hong Kong. Changing the statues of BNO passport holders, and allowing others to apply for it, will not result in a wave of immigration to the UK. It will, however, give support and a possible escape route to an oppressed people whose fragile rights we have pledged to uphold. The home secretary and her officials believe that creating safe passage for Hong Kongers would make a statement about the kind of country we seek to be as we leave the EU. Alas, foreign secretary Dominic Raab is, according to the Sunday Times, blocking the home secretary's plans on the grounds that it would antagonise the Chinese. Let us hope that if Patel remains at the Home Office after 12 December, she wins this important battle.

Follow us on Twitter @cityam

CITY MOURNS Flowers laid on London Bridge and a service in Southwark Cathedral after terror comes to the capital once more



THE VICTIMS of Friday's terrorist attack on London Bridge have been named as 25-year-old Jack Merritt and 23-year-old Saskia Jones. Both Cambridge graduates, they were attending an event to mark five years of the university's prisoner rehabilitation programme Learning Together. A vigil will be held at Guildhall Yard at 11am today and a book of condolence opened.

Labour pledges fare cuts on nationalised railways

STEFAN BOSCIA

@Stefan_Boscia

THE LABOUR party has promised to cut rail fares by a third as part of its nationalisation plan, in a move that industry chiefs warned would put investment at risk.

The party would also introduce a one-stop shop for tickets and wants to create a uniform London-style ticketing system that allows contactless payments and sets out fares on a zonal basis.

Currently there are 55m different fares across individual private operators, according to the Rail Delivery Group (RDG).

Shadow transport secretary Andy McDonald called the current rail ticketing system "exploitative" and "bewildering".

The plans could spell trouble for third-party sellers offering a similar service, such as Trainline.

The company was listed on the London Stock Exchange in June and has an annual revenue of £200m.

The suite of policies come as a larger part of leader Jeremy Corbyn's plan to re-nationalise rail.

"Taking back control of our railways is the only way to bring down fares and create a railway network that is fit for the future," he said.

"Labour will bring about real change on the railways because we are on the side of passengers."

The RDG, which is a trade body of the UK's rail companies, has labelled the plans as misleading.

A spokesperson said: "Rail companies have been calling for some time for changes in regulation to enable an easier to use, better value range of fares but it's a red herring to suggest that reforming fares needs a change of ownership."

However, the group also said it would support a reduction in fares as long as "it is funded on an ongoing basis so that investment to improve the railway can continue".

Since 2004, successive governments have introduced above inflation increases to season tickets in a bid to put more of the cost on passengers instead of taxpayers.

RDG announced over the weekend that rail fares would increase by 2.7 per cent next year.

This is marginally below the latest retail price index (RPI) figure.

Transport secretary Grant Shapps said the public "simply cannot trust Corbyn to deliver what he claims".

"The Conservatives will improve punctuality by integrating parts of the rail network, make ticketing and pricing more transparent and will invest £500m in reopening branch lines closed under Labour," he said.

WHAT THE OTHER PAPERS SAY THIS MORNING

FINANCIAL TIMES

TCI CRACKS DOWN ON EMISSIONS REPORTING

Christopher Hohn's activist hedge fund TCI has outlined plans to punish directors of companies that fail to disclose their carbon emissions in a move that underlines rising investor concerns over climate change and the pressure on boardrooms to respond. TCI has warned Airbus, Moody's, Charter Communications and other companies to improve their pollution disclosure or it will vote against their directors and called for asset owners to fire fund managers.

BT TO DROP EXECUTIVE BONUS SCHEME

BT plans to end its performance-related bonus scheme and replace it with a smaller, guaranteed payout in moves to combat controversy over excessive rewards for senior executives as concern about excessive pay rises.

THE TIMES

HIGH STREET STORES PUSH SHOPPERS INTO DEBT

Britain's biggest high street stores are accused of pushing shoppers into record levels of debt as they pocket hundreds of millions of pounds from credit schemes that charge up to 30 per cent interest.

SNAP CHIEF'S SISTER SETS UP 'SPOTIFY FOR PORN'

An audio erotica website nicknamed "Spotify for pornography" has been launched by the sister of one of the world's most powerful technology tycoons. The company is the brainchild of Caroline Spiegel, 22, the younger sister of Evan Spiegel, chief executive of the £16bn social media giant Snapchat.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

POST-BREXIT EU VISITORS WILL NEED US-STYLE VISAS

Visitors to the UK from the EU will have to comply with a US-style electronic visa system after Brexit, under plans set out today by home secretary Priti Patel. The move towards a new Electronic Travel Authorisation will make it easier for border guards to screen arrivals and block people considered to be a threat, the Tories said.

RAIL STRIKE DELAYS MAY NOT BE COMPENSATED

Commuters stuck in queues at train stations because of Britain's longest ever rail strike may not be eligible for compensation. South Western Railway drivers began a 27-day walkout today.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

SAUDI ARABIA PUSHES FOR OPEC CUTS EXTENSION

Saudi Arabia will push for an extension of oil-production cuts through mid-2020 at a producers' summit this week in an effort to prop up Saudi Aramco's initial public offering share price, Persian Gulf officials said.

INVESTORS BET ON MORE PAIN FOR RETAILERS

Short sellers have revived their bets against bricks-and-mortar retailers in recent weeks, taking their most aggressive positions in months. Short positions against the SPDR S&P Retail fund, one of the biggest retail exchange-traded funds, last week hit 441 per cent of the fund's available shares.

Eddie Stobart: Ex-boss aiming for rescue deal

JAMES BOOTH AND JESS CLARK

@Jamesdbooth1 @jclarkjourno

ADVISERS to former Eddie Stobart boss Andrew Tinkler are planning to submit an appeal to the City mergers watchdog today ahead of a vote on a controversial takeover bid for the distribution company.

The appeal to the Takeover Panel is an attempt to prevent Dbay Advisors, which has made an offer for the company, from voting on 6 December, Sky News reported.

Tinkler is said to have acquired a 6.5 per cent stake in Eddie Stobart Logistics through his company TVFB.

Tinkler said yesterday he is aiming to offer Eddie Stobart shareholders a funding package to vote on at the firm's general meeting on Friday.

Eddie Stobart's board has recommended an offer from fund Dbay which would provide a £55m high-interest loan to the struggling haulier in exchange for a 51 per cent stake.

Tinkler told *City A.M.* he hopes to get support from Eddie Stobart's lenders for a rival package which would involve a £70m to £80m equity raise backed by both existing shareholders and new investors.

"We have got a lot of shareholder support for our deal at the moment. We are working with advisers and the banks to see if we can effect that proposal to give them a secondary resolution on Friday," he said.

It is understood that some of the cash raised would be used to pay down debt to Eddie Stobart's lenders.

Last week, Eddie Stobart said: "[Dbay's] proposal is the only concrete offer to date which has the support of the lenders and secures the long-term future of the company."

Allied Irish Bank, Bank of Ireland, BNP Paribas, and KBC — owed £200m between them — have granted Eddie Stobart a waiver relating to breaches of its credit facility until 13 December.

FLYING INTO THE PICTURE Easyjet set to replace Hiscox in blue-chip reshuffle

HISCOX appears set to lose its blue-chip membership on Wednesday, with Easyjet expected to fill its spot on the back of lower costs and higher capacity. The insurer's relegation would come after several weather catastrophes dented its balance sheet.

Last orders: PwC cracks down on drinking alcohol in the office

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

BIG FOUR accountancy firm PwC has cracked down on drinking alcohol in the office.

Under rules introduced this year, alcohol can only be drunk on PwC premises when it has been supplied by the firm's in-house catering team.

A spokesperson for the firm said: "We recently refreshed our policy on social events.

"Only alcohol sourced from our in-house catering company can be consumed in the office."

In April, Lloyd's of London cracked down on alcohol after reports linked drinking to sexual harassment at the 331-year-old insurance market.

Big Four clients slide, but FTSE hold continues

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

THE NUMBER of clients audited by the Big Four firms has fallen but they retain their grip on the FTSE 100, figures released today showed.

Figures from Adviser Rankings for the quarter to 6 November said the number of stock market clients audited by PwC (353), KPMG (312) and Deloitte (225) all fell, while EY's (242) remained flat.

However, the Big Four still audit all of the FTSE 100 and dominate the FTSE 250, with the only others represented including BDO (six), Grant Thornton (three), MHA Macintyre Hudson (one), and RSM (one). The figures come in the context of a capacity squeeze among audit firms, a more assertive regulator and a move from some firms to put up prices and end relationships with challenging clients.

Mazars, which added five clients for a total of 25, said the figures showed a need for market reform.

Mazars' David Herbinet said: "When you look at the FTSE 100 and FTSE 250, the concentration is increasing, that is what audit reform is trying to address."

Fraud investigation team at HMRC nets extra £5.4bn in fines and tax

JAMES BOOTH

@Jamesdbooth1

HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) has collected £5.4bn in additional tax and fines through its fraud investigation service in the last year, figures published today have shown.

Tax and fines collected through investigations into criminal gangs importing illegal cigarettes and alcohol represented £2.9bn of the total, law firm Pinsent Masons said.

Another £1bn was collected through investigations into VAT fraud, including carousel fraud — which occurs when fraudsters exploit rules allowing goods to be imported VAT-free from other countries then sell the goods to domestic buyers, charging VAT.

The sellers then disappear without paying tax to HMRC.

Jason Collins, head of tax at Pinsent Masons, said: "The fraud investigation service is considered to be HMRC's elite fraud squad and with good reason — it has been very effective in stopping billions of pounds in evasion."

Last year, the service launched over 31,000 civil and more than 760 criminal investigations.

An HMRC spokesperson said: "We're committed to ensuring that all companies and individuals pay."

ROYAL CRISIS

Prince Andrew hit with conflict of interest accusations

SCANDAL-HIT Prince Andrew is facing questions over a conflict of interest related to his alleged connections to controversial multi-millionaire financier David Rowland. The Mail on Sunday reported that the Duke of York used his trade envoy role to benefit Rowland's business.

Hedgies in court bid to increase Inmarsat value

HARRY ROBERTSON

@henrygrobertson

THE BUYOUT group seeking to take British satellite company Inmarsat private is facing a legal challenge from hedge funds that could scupper the deal at the 11th hour.

At a hearing tomorrow hedge funds led by Oaktree Capital will press the High Court to block the approval of the so-called scheme of arrangement, one of the final steps in the Inmarsat takeover.

The funds have built up stakes in Inmarsat after the satellite firm agreed in May to be bought by a consortium led by private equity firms Warburg Pincus and Apax Partners in a $6bn (£4.6bn) deal.

The hedge funds argue that the price tag is too low because Inmarsat is set to receive an income boost from a US project that could gain approval from regulators this month.

Oaktree, along with hedge funds Kite Lake and Rubric, say a venture called Ligado could push up the value of Inmarsat.

Ligado seeks to use the part of the spectrum of radio frequencies it rents from Inmarsat to create a wireless network across the US. It argues it could be part of the development of super-fast 5G internet.

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) would have to alter Ligado's license for the firm to develop its plans. Ligado's project has already been blocked once by regulators over fears it would disrupt GPS.

A person close to the deal said the hedge funds' challenge, first reported by the Sunday Telegraph, is "flawed on a number of different levels".

They said there is little evidence that Ligado could gain approval from the FCC anytime soon. They added that even should the scheme be approved, there would be a long way to go before Inmarsat would see a boost in earnings.

In High Court filings, Rachelle Chong, a former FCC commissioner and lawyer spoke as an expert witness for Inmarsat. She said: "It is pure speculation to opine that an FCC decision on the Ligado application is close to being made."

She pointed to a recent objection by the US defence secretary Mark Esper, who opposes Ligado's plans on the grounds that they could disrupt the US military's GPS systems.

US seeks extradition of UK tech boss Mike Lynch to face charges

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

THE US has formally requested that the UK extradites British tech billionaire Mike Lynch to stand trial on charges of securities fraud, wire fraud and conspiracy related to the botched sale of his company Autonomy to Hewlett Packard (HP).

The US embassy submitted the request on 21 November for Lynch, who is currently embroiled in a battle with HP in London's High Court, to face charges in America, according to a court filing published last night.

The entrepreneur and his co-defendant Sushovan Hussain, the firm's ex-finance chief, both deny the allegations.

The British businessman has been indicted in San Francisco on 17 counts, including wire fraud, conspiracy and securities fraud, which carries a maximum term of 25 years in prison.

In May Hussain was sentenced to five years in prison and fined $4m (£3.1m) after being convicted.

Peer-to-peer lending giant Zopa in talks to secure £130m cash injection

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY
@SebMcCarthy

ZOPA is said to be on the cusp of agreeing a £130m cash injection that will help the peer-to-peer lending giant meet regulatory capital requirements.

The fintech firm is in advanced talks to secure a major lifeline with an entity connected to US-based private investment firm IAG Capital Partners and its UK arm Silverstripe.

Over the weekend sources told Sky News, which first reported the deal, that an agreement was expected to be inked at the start of this week, coming days before Zopa's banking licence-with-restrictions expires a year on from being granted.

Insiders told the broadcaster that the funding had been negotiated at a steep discount when compared with Zopa's most recent capital-raising in 2018.

The move, which would reportedly give IAG Capital a majority stake in Zopa, would help the fintech group in its goal of becoming a challenger in Britain's banking sector.

The scramble for funding at Zopa, which allows lenders and borrowers to deal directly with one another, comes amid increasing caution over the peer-to-peer (P2P) industry.

Zopa declined to comment.

CBI: Growth set to slow despite PM's Brexit deal

HARRY ROBERTSON
@henrygrobertson

THE ECONOMY is set to slow next year even if Britain leaves the European Union with a Brexit deal, a new report has said, as business investment fails to significantly pick up.

The CBI's economic forecast is the latest report to suggest that Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Brexit deal will do little to help the economy in the short term, although it said things look brighter in 2021.

The CBI predicted the UK economy will grow 1.3 per cent in 2019 — its worst performance since the financial crisis — and then just 1.2 per cent in 2020. The business body expected growth to pick up to 1.8 per cent in 2021, however.

It said these forecasts assumed the UK leaves the EU by 31 January and is on its way to "an ambitious trade deal, involving alignment with EU rules where essential for frictionless trade".

There is no certainty this would be the case, however, with many Tory Brexiters hoping the UK will diverge from EU rules so it can strike trade deals with countries such as the US.

Johnson has argued that the certainty of a Brexit deal will cause a rise in business investment, which has fallen in 2019 due in large part to the country's political crisis.

The CBI today said it expects business investment to rise just 0.3 per cent in 2020, however.

It is not until 2021 that investment will significantly rise by 2.2 per cent, the organisation said, when business would have some more clarity over the UK's future trading relationships.

Other reports have also poured cold water on the idea of an economic Brexit boost. Last month, the EY Item Club predicted that UK growth would slow to just one per cent next year. Many economists have warned that trade negotiations will simply bring fresh uncertainty.

BULLSEYE Bonuses to be tied to targets as part of a Lloyds Bank payout shake-up

LLOYDS Banking Group is in talks with its investors over linking bosses' bonuses to certain governance targets. The lending giant is exploring connecting environmental and social goals to bonuses, according to the Sunday Times. Lloyds is proposing to slash the pension package of chief executive Antonio Horta-Osorio.

Experience is the key as UK high street seeks a Christmas revival

CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE

"This is the big move that we are seeing in retail and more stores are bringing in experiential opportunities," New West End Company director of external affairs Henry Gregg told *City A.M.*

"[A family might] go into Microsoft for gaming, then do some shopping, then have some food at Market Hall.

"That is definitely the future, saying 'come in for the day out' and there will be some shopping involved," Gregg added.

Diane Wehrle, insights director at Springboard, said: "I'm sensing that people went out for more of a leisure experience, for drinks or a meal out, and go shopping on the back of it."

However, the spike in footfall at the end of November could cause a slump in the weeks leading up to Christmas, analysts warned.

"The discounting seems to get earlier each year," Gregg said.

"It will be interesting to see what that does for Christmas figures."

ELECTION 2019

Parties row over terrorist release

STEFAN BOSCIA

@Stefan_Boscia

BORIS Johnson said he found it "ridiculous and repulsive" that London Bridge attacker Usman Khan was freed after just eight years of a sentence twice that length.

The Prime Minister blamed reforms brought in by Labour for Khan's release.

Khan — who murdered two people in an attack on Friday before being shot dead by police — was jailed in 2012 over a plot to bomb the London Stock Exchange.

Appearing on the BBC's Andrew Marr Show, Johnson pledged to take steps to ensure a similar release would not take place in future.

He has also pledged to undertake the "deepest review of Britain's security, defence and foreign policy since the end of the Cold War".

Labour's Yvette Cooper, however, said that it was the coalition government's decision to scrap "imprisonment for public protection" sentences in 2012 that meant Khan was released early.

Jeremy Corbyn also pointed the finger at the government and said that austerity measures were to blame.

Johnson vowed new laws to ensure terrorists are not released early

Speaking to Sophy Ridge on Sky News, the Labour leader also said that convicted terrorists should "not necessarily" serve their full prison sentences, depending on behaviour and their original crime.

CORBYN DOCTRINE
Labour sets out its new foreign policy

JEREMY Corbyn said Western powers were behind a rise in extremism and that Labour would "actively lead" efforts for a nuclear-free world.

He said yesterday that "the actions of successive government have fuelled" terrorism, and that the UK had erred in intervening in Iraq and Libya.

Corbyn also called for Nato to "de-escalate conflict" with Russia. Nato has strengthened its response to the Kremlin after Russia illegally invaded and occupied Crimea.

Labour's pharma plan 'reckless'

STEFAN BOSCIA

@Stefan_Boscia

THE UK's pharmaceutical industry is "under threat" from a Jeremy Corbyn government, according to a former Labour health minister.

Lord Ara Darzi criticised Corbyn's plan to set up a state-owned and state-regulated pharmaceutical company to prevent drug price hikes as "a blunderbuss remedy" and "reckless".

The Labour policy would ensure the government body could reproduce patented pharmaceuticals if they became too expensive.

Writing in the Sunday Times, Darzi — a health minister under Gordon Brown — said the pledge would risk innovation in the pharmaceutical industry.

"Such a move would threaten the entire pharmaceutical industry and Britain's world-leading role," he said.

POLL WATCH

Is that a wobble we can see? The latest YouGov poll shows Labour has narrowed the gap between itself and the Tories to nine points — **43 per cent to 34 per cent**. Experts think the Tories need a poll lead of about seven per cent in order to secure a majority. It is, as they say, still all to play for.

GOOD DAY

Whilst Boris Johnson's interview with Andrew Marr was mainly memorable for the two men talking over each other, Sky News' **Sophy Ridge** just got on with asking questions.

Yesterday she pinned Corbyn down on shoot to kill and his foreign policy, and had foreign secretary Dominic Raab on the ropes over his lack of detail on the number of terrorists on the streets.

BAD DAY

Senior Jeremy Corbyn aide **Karie Murphy** is in the headlines more than any adviser should be and it was more of the same yesterday. The Mail on Sunday revealed that in 2014 she went on a lengthy Facebook tirade in favour of Scottish independence ahead of the referendum. When the Tories are trying to paint Labour as willing to get into bed with the SNP in order to secure power, it's not a great look.

Uber scopes out London move in spite of city ban

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

UBER is eyeing larger office space in the Square Mile as it seeks to expand in the capital, despite Transport for London's (TfL) decision last week to not renew its licence.

The ride-hailing app is said to be on the hunt for a bigger European headquarters after the lease on its Aldgate office expires, and mulling options including 60 London Wall and 155 Bishopsgate.

Uber is searching for a new base almost three times the size of its current office in east London, despite the threat to its operating licence in the capital. The firm is reportedly seeking a five-year lease break on its new headquarters in the capital.

"It isn't because they are worried about their licence, it is because they don't want any obstacles to getting even bigger," a source told the Sunday Telegraph.

TfL banned Uber from London after discovering a "pattern of failures", including uninsured and unlicenced drivers being able to pick up passengers.

A spokesperson for TfL said: "A pattern of failures placed passenger safety and security at risk meaning TfL cannot renew the licence."

However, Uber's UK general manager Jamie Heywood branded the decision "extraordinary and wrong".

The tech giant was previously banned by TfL in 2017, but had its licence reinstated by a magistrate after addressing several issues raised by TfL.

Uber plans to appeal the current London ban and is able to operate in the city while the process is ongoing.

An Uber spokeswoman told the paper: "We are committed to London and the UK, and our search for a new office continues."

London is one of Uber's top five markets in the world, and it has roughly 45,000 drivers in the capital.

Bondholders were warned last month of a slump in returns from the retailer's stores

Holland & Barrett owner under pressure to provide extra funds

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

RUSSIAN billionaire Mikhail Fridman, the owner of health food chain Holland & Barrett, is said to be facing pressure from lenders to inject cash into the retailer amid ongoing struggles for the high street.

Holland & Barrett chief executive Tony Buffin last month warned bondholders of a slump in returns from the vitamin chain's stores.

Earnings in the year to September failed to meet expectations after falling to £104m, the Sunday Telegraph reported, sparking a sell-off of Holland & Barrett bonds.

The retailer owes a total of £1.3m in bonds and loans.

Goldman Sachs to cool Marcus bank expansion

HARRY ROBERTSON

@henrygrobertson

GOLDMAN Sachs is planning to cool the UK expansion of its new retail bank Marcus as it seeks to avoid the stricter regulations big lenders face in Britain.

So-called ringfencing rules drawn up after the financial crisis mean banks with more than £25bn in customer deposits have to separate retail banking activities from their much-riskier investment operations.

Top executives at Goldman are set to take their foot off the gas to prevent Marcus from crossing the threshold, according to the Sunday Telegraph.

The new retail bank, named after the US giant's founder Marcus Goldman, is about halfway to the limit at present. It is set to launch another UK marketing push for Marcus in the coming months after 50,000 Brits swarmed to the bank last year, attracted by a 1.5 per cent savings rate.

A source with knowledge of the plans said Goldman was "aware" of the £25bn limit, but said it was difficult to tell whether the US bank would get there after its next marketing drive.

Banks tighten lending to SME UK retail firms

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

LENDING to small and medium-sized retailers in the UK has edged down six per cent since 2016, with banks showing greater reluctance to hand out loans amid uncertainty over Britain's departure from the EU.

New figures have shown that lending to SME retailers has fallen from £15.6bn to £14.7bn in the years since the Brexit vote in 2016, while large retailers have benefited from a sharp rise in bank lending.

The research, released today by accountants and business advisers Moore, concluded that banks have become more risk-averse and favoured doing business with bigger companies that are typically seen as more able to repay any funds borrowed.

Over the same period that lending to SME retailers tumbled, lending to large retailers by banks jumped by 20 per cent from £31.5bn to £37.8bn.

Bridget Culverwell, director at Moore, said: "It is a real worry for smaller retailers if banks are treating them less favourably than larger retailers."

She added: "With the final outcome of Brexit still uncertain, it is expected that banks will continue to be apprehensive to lend to the sector in the months ahead."

"Small retailers are still big employers. They occupy space in high streets where larger retailers are not present and often not interested in being present. If too many small retailers fail then that leaves those parts of town centres with the highest level of vacant shops even emptier," said Culverwell.

The figures underline difficulties for smaller business in the retail sector, where insolvencies continue to mount amid growing industry pressures.

There has been a 31 per cent increase of insolvencies in the retail sector to 1,252 in the year to 30 September.

Private equity group Permira bought Dr Martens for £300m in 2014

Dr Martens' owner scouting for buyers with price tag of £1bn

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

THE PRIVATE equity owner of Dr Martens is considering a sale of the famous British footwear brand if buyers can stump up over £1bn, according to the Sunday Times.

Buyout group Permira, which snapped up Dr Martens for £300m six years ago, has told investors that the firm is on track to double its underlying earnings for the year to £170m. Kenny Wilson, the former boss of Cath Kidston, was drafted in as chief executive last year.

Rival private equity giant Carlyle Group is said to be considering a bid for the iconic boot maker.

Permira declined to comment.

Nuclear group given help over cyber warfare

SEBASTIAN MCCARTHY

@SebMcCarthy

A MAJOR nuclear power firm has been the victim of a cyber attack, according to reports over the weekend.

GCHQ'S National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) has been giving help to a company in the nuclear industry after it was hit by a digital attack, the Sunday Telegraph reported yesterday.

A Nuclear Decommissioning Authority (NDA) report, obtained by the paper using freedom of information legislation, said officials are "aware that an important business in the nuclear power generating sector has been negatively impacted by a cyber attack and has had to rely on expertise from the NCSC to help them with recovery". The damage from the attack is not known.

In October the NCSC reported that it has defended the UK against more than 600 cyber attacks in the past year — bringing the total number to almost 1,800.

"A significant number of incidents continue to come from hostile nation states," the group said.

amazon

Cyber Monday Sale

New deals all day
Ends midnight tonight

37% OFF
Echo Show 5

54% OFF
Philips 50 inch 4K TV

27% OFF
Nespresso Vertuo
coffee machine

UP TO
35% OFF
Facebook Portal

UP TO
20% OFF
Apple iPhone

30% OFF
G-Star

UP TO 48% OFF
Tile 4 packs & Echo Dot

55% OFF
Braun IPL Silk-Expert Pro 5

Limited stock availability.

London and Boris Johnson brace for arrival of Trump

HARRY ROBERTSON
@henrygrobertson

THE DONALD Trump whirlwind will rip into London today for the second time this year when the US President touches down to attend a Nato security summit.

The capital is bracing itself for Trump's arrival, with Boris Johnson expected to limit his time with the President and NHS staff planning protests outside Buckingham Palace.

Although the two-day security summit has been in the calendar for over a year, Trump's visit just days ahead of the 12 December General Election represents a minefield for the Conservatives.

Johnson last week urged Trump not to intervene in the General Election campaign.

The US President has already waded in once,

Trump will meet leaders during a two-day security summit in London

however, telling Nigel Farage on LBC radio last month that Jeremy Corbyn would be "so bad" for Britain and urging the Brexit Party leader to form a pact with the Tories.

China wants US tariffs revoked in phase one trade deal as a 'priority'

STEFAN BOSCIA

BEIJING's top priority in any phase one trade deal with the United States is the removal of existing tariffs on Chinese goods, Chinese state-owned newspaper Global Times reported yesterday, amid continued uncertainty on whether the two sides can strike a deal.

"Sources with direct knowledge of the trade talks told the Global Times on Saturday that the US must remove existing tariffs, not planned tariffs, as part of the deal," said the report.

Global Times, published by the official People's Daily newspaper of China's ruling communist party, also cited another unidentified source close to the talks as saying US officials had been resisting such a demand because the tariffs were their only weapon in the trade war and giving up that weapon meant "surrender".

US President Donald Trump said last week Washington was in the "final throes" of a deal to defuse a 16-month trade war with China, a few days after Chinese President Xi Jinping had expressed his desire for a conclusion.

A deal was initially expected to be completed by the end of November this year.

Reuters

Rae M
London Resident

‘@UberUK thank you guys. I’m disabled and don’t drive, you guys help me keep my independence when I’m visiting my family.’

We’re still here for the 3.5 million Londoners who rely on Uber to travel safely around the city, or make a living.

Uber

Best and worst bank accounts in UK are revealed

JAMES WARRINGTON

@j_a_warrington

A NEW league table has revealed which British banks score highly for customer service and communication – and which leave a lot to be desired.

A survey carried out by consumer magazine Which revealed that a trio of challenger banks are the most popular among UK customers.

First Direct topped the table in the rankings of current account providers with customer score of 84 per cent, followed by rival fintech firms Starling Bank and Monzo, which came in second and third place respectively with customer scores of 83 and 82 per cent.

Nationwide and M&S Bank also won recommended provider status after securing customer scores in the high seventies.

By contrast, the table was propped up Ulster Bank, which recorded the lowest customer score of 55 per cent. It received just two stars for service in branch and handling of complaints, and three stars for customer service, communication, and transparency.

Ulster was followed by Tesco Bank with a customer score of 60 per cent and RBS with 62 per cent.

BRITAIN'S BEST CURRENT ACCOUNT PROVIDERS

Provider	Customer score %
First Direct	84
Starling Bank	83
Monzo Bank	82
Nationwide Building Society	78
M&S Bank	76

BRITAIN'S WORST CURRENT ACCOUNT PROVIDERS

Provider	Customer score %
Ulster Bank	55
Tesco Bank	60
Royal Bank of Scotland	62
Clydesdale Bank	63
Bank of Scotland	64

TAKING THE LEAD City's M Restaurant hosts festive drinks for guide dog charity

M RESTAURANT yesterday hosted guests and their guide dogs to raise awareness of Guide Dogs for the Blind Association. Founder Martin Williams said: "In representing the restaurant industry [I want] to welcome anyone who has an assistance dog."

Airbus dismisses 16 employees in German compliance inquiry

CHRISTOPHER STEITZ

AIRBUS has dismissed 16 employees without notice in relation to an investigation into the potential misuse of client documents, a spokesman for the group said yesterday, confirming an earlier report by German weekly newspaper Welt am Sonntag.

Munich prosecutors launched the investigation in September after the company notified the authorities about potential irregularities involving the documents.

The irregularities are said to relate to two German procurement deals.

Reuters

Watchdog hits Heathrow with new cost clause

STEFAN BOSCIA

@Stefan_Boscia

HEATHROW airport will be penalised by Britain's transport watchdog if it fails to build its planned third runway efficiently.

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has placed a new clause into the airport's licence due to concerns the project could go over its budget. A CAA spokesperson said yesterday: "The licence condition… is one of the tools the CAA is developing so that Heathrow expansion is delivered in a way that is affordable, financeable and, critically, in the interest of consumers."

Airlines are concerned that construction of the runway could spiral out of control and eventually fall onto passengers, making flying via the airport unaffordable.

Willie Walsh, chief executive of British Airways owner IAG, has complained on multiple occasions that there was no incentive for keeping costs down, as the firm were able to pass on the costs with passenger charges.

A Heathrow spokesperson said: "Heathrow is extremely efficient and viewed as a benchmark for major infrastructure projects."

Sir Vince Cable calls Royal Mail's share slump 'vindicating' after privatisation

HARRY ROBERTSON

@henrygrobertson

FORMER Liberal Democrat business secretary Sir Vince Cable has said he has been "vindicated" by the collapse in Royal Mail's share price after his handling of the firm's privatisation six years ago drew criticism.

The coalition government was attacked at the time of the float for undervaluing Royal Mail after its shares soared by more than a third on the first day of trading.

The firm's share price has since tumbled back down to earth to sit around 50 per cent below its original price, at roughly 209p.

Cable told the Sunday Telegraph: "What the share price shows you is that this wasn't a very sound business. We knew that this was a business that was going to struggle."

Yet the former Lib Dem leader added: "It's been a big success in the sense that Royal Mail was in serious difficulty. In a world of email, Postman Pat is as much a part of us as the stagecoach. In order to do that the Royal Mail needed to borrow — it wasn't going to come from the government."

Royal Mail has had a torrid 2019 that could be capped by industrial action by workers during the Christmas period. The former state monopoly is tussling in the courts with the Communication Workers Union (CWU) over strikes.

Royal Mail strike action is planned over the Christmas and election period

GUEST OPINION

Germany's SPD following Labour's footsteps

GERMANY'S Social Democrats (SPD) have just elected Norbert Walter-Borjans, the former finance minister of north Rhine-Westphalia, and Saskia Esken, a member of the German parliament, as their party's new joint leaders.

The two left-wing candidates gained 53.06 per cent of the vote in the run-off election, clearly beating the moderate German vice-chancellor Olaf Scholz, and the Brandenburg state parliamentarian Klara Geywitz. The new leadership duo still needs to be confirmed at the SPD's party conference at the end of the week.

Kevin Kuhnert, the far-left leader of the SPD youth organisation Jusos and proponent of expropriating large corporations and banning private landlords in Germany, is clearly overjoyed at the result. As are members of Die Linke, the rebranded successor to East Germany's communist SED party. The leadership election is just the latest step in the SPD's left-wing radicalisation. In recent years, the party has increasingly moved to the left. It has got to the point that its positions on most issues are now indistinguishable from those of Die Linke.

Some conservatives and free-market enthusiasts in Germany will rejoice at the SPD's latest lurch to the left because they believe it will further accelerate the SPD's decline. But such an outcome is by no means guaranteed. And if the SPD's share of the vote really does continue to drop, then the Greens, who have topped some polls in Germany over the last few months, are well placed to pick up any voters who abandon the SPD.

For Germany as a whole, the current situation is nothing short of dramatic and no cause for celebration. After all, the SPD is the party that gave Germany chancellors Helmut Schmidt and Gerhard Schroder, both of whom did much to stabilise the free market economic system in Germany. In fact, after Ludwig Erhard, Schroder was Germany's most sincerely market-oriented chancellor. It was Schroder, after all, who breathed life back into the German economy by implementing labour market reforms and lowering taxes. If the anti-business Greens supplant the SPD, and the SPD follows in the footsteps of Labour under Corbyn and McDonnell, there is no reason whatsoever for gloating — it would be a catastrophe for Germany.

Chancellor Angela Merkel (right) heads up the Grand Coalition

A left-wing government of the SPD, Die Linke and the Greens, would ramp up the hostile economic policies of the Grand Coalition of Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and SPD under Chancellor Angela Merkel. Anyone who thinks things can't get any worse than they are now under Angela Merkel should take a closer look at Berlin, which has been transformed into a 'failed city' by its SPD, Die Linke and Green party coalition government.

The SPD is now going the way of the Labour party under Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell and moving further to the left than ever before. This would appear to be a global movement. In Germany, the SPD's current membership wouldn't even consider electing Gerhard Schroder anymore, not even as as a district chairman, let alone as party leader. The same is true of Tony Blair in Great Britain and Bill Clinton in the United States, neither of whom would stand a chance in the current political climate.

In the United States, Elizabeth Warren, one of the Democratic party's leading candidates for the presidency, recently unveiled her tax plans. The Wall Street Journal calculated that wealthy taxpayers would end up paying tax rates of over 100 per cent(!). Clearly, radical anti-capitalists are taking control of moderate left-wing parties around the world.

Whether Germany's governing CDU and SPD coalition continues with the SPD's new leadership duo remains to be seen. On the one hand, the SPD knows it would haemorrhage votes in any new elections — which speaks against the party pushing for elections anytime soon. On the other hand, those opposed to the Grand Coalition within the ranks of the SPD will now look to increase the pressure on the party's leadership to pull out of the coalition, which could lead to the collapse of the government. Whatever happens, if the Grand Coalition does muddle through and hold on to power, it is sure to pursue even more left-wing policies than it has in the past, which would in turn accelerate the decline of the CDU.

Dr Rainer Zitelmann is a German historian and sociologist. His latest book, Dare To Be Different And Grow Rich, has recently been published.

Brexit stalls new laws on business being enforced

STEFAN BOSCIA

@Stefan_Boscia

BREXIT is blocking parliament from passing legislation that impacts UK businesses, according to a new study.

Figures from Thomson Reuters revealed the number of laws passed by the government in 2018/19 that affected businesses, but were not Brexit-related, dropped 21 per cent from the previous year.

The amount of non-Brexit laws affecting businesses passed in the period was down from 864 to 685.

This is less than half of the amount passed before the EU referendum. It marks the fourth consecutive annual decline — however the report notes that it was the largest dip yet.

Report author, and legal expert, Daniel Greenberg said this was due to the time taken up by the two Brexit dates, which were both extended.

"Basic legislation aimed at keeping the statute book fit for purpose has been pushed down the agenda," he said. "Whether you support Brexit or not, the stark drop in business laws passed shows just how time-consuming Brexit is. As well as Brexit, the government's lack of a parliamentary majority continues to make passing business-related laws difficult."

Business groups, such as the CBI and the British Retail Consortium (BRC), have been rallying parties on the need for legislation to boost the struggling high street retail sector.

The Conservatives have pledged to cut business rates if they win the election, while Labour has said it would launch a review. Labour has also pledged to increase corporation tax to 26 per cent.

"There are clearly plenty of areas in the economy that experts believe urgently need updating," Greenberg said.

"Many businesses and trade bodies may be ruing yet another year in which Brexit has dominated the national agenda," he added.

The animated feature sees the return of beloved snowman Olaf

Box Office: Frozen 2 sets $85.2m record in Thanksgiving weekend

REBECCA RUBIN

DISNEY's Frozen 2 stuffed the box office competition during Thanksgiving, generating $85.2m (£65.9m) over the weekend and a record-setting $123.7m over the five-day holiday frame.

The animated adventure soared past the previous Thanksgiving benchmark held by 2013's The Hunger Games: Catching Fire.

After two weekends in theatres, Frozen 2 is nearing the $300m mark in North America with ticket sales currently at a massive $287m.

Propelled by critical raves and audience adoration, Lionsgate's Knives Out — a murder mystery directed by Rian Johnson, — launched ahead of expectations, securing second place on domestic charts with $27m over the weekend.

Reuters

Opec and allies may deepen oil cuts by a fifth

AHMED RASHEED

OPEC and allied oil producers will consider deepening their existing oil output cuts by about 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) to 1.6m bpd, Iraq's oil minister said yesterday.

The minister, Thamer Ghadhban, told reporters in Baghdad that the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies — together known as Opec Plus — will consider increasing the cuts in their supply pact at meetings in Vienna this week.

Opec Plus oil exporters have coordinated output for three years to balance the market and support prices. Their current deal, which agreed to cut supply by 1.2m bpd from January this year, expires at the end of March.

Ghadhban added that Iraq, as of yesterday, has exceeded 100 per cent commitment with the supply deal and that an agreement capping production from the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region will also aid compliance.

Iraq, Opec's second-biggest oil producer behind Saudi Arabia, exported crude at an average rate of 3.5m bpd in November, the oil ministry said yesterday.

Reuters

MIXED MEDIA

Silicon Valley's dominance of the digital ads market has forced old enemies to come together, finds **James Warrington**

THIS year's must-see TV show, HBO's Succession (pictured above), gives an insight into the cut-throat world of media dynasties. Ageing patriarch Logan Roy, a thinly veiled Rupert Murdoch, tries desperately to cling on in a modernising media landscape.

It's been a hit with critics and viewers alike, but the truth is there's no less drama in the real world. As tech giants flex their muscles ever further in the sector, once-fierce rivals are increasingly working together in a defiant effort to hold their ground.

With the digital advertising market dominated by Silicon Valley, publishers are banding together in a bid to hold on to the ad money that powers the media industry.

BURYING THE HATCHET

Given news publishers spent decades building up healthy rivalries, it's unsurprising that a detente has been years in the offing. After a stuttering start, publishers News UK, the Guardian, the Telegraph and Reach have now formed an alliance.

The coalition, dubbed the Ozone Project, launched last year with the aim of pooling the publishers' digital advertising space. In addition to granting publishers strength through scale, the system also creates a high-quality advertising environment for brands, explains its chief executive Damon Reeve.

Richard Reeves, managing director of the Association for Online Publishing, says the move is inevitable in the face of the "common threat" of Silicon Valley.

"Whilst they keep their independent personality and voice, they recognise that with some of the challenges, they're so much better if they become this irresistible force."

In theory, then, it's about becoming just about big enough to push back against Google and Facebook in the battle for customers' eyes and the cash that comes with them.

The public service broadcasters — the BBC, ITV, Channel 4 and Channel 5 — are also teaming up.

Sky has recently signed deals to collaborate with both Channel 4 and the BBC using its Adsmart technology, allowing the companies to deliver targeted ads.

Then there is Britbox, the jointly-run streaming service launched earlier this month by the UK's public service broadcasters with a promise to offer customers the best of British programming.

Gradually, it seems, traditional media companies are recognising the need to bury the hatchet and collaborate. And yet the moves are couched in a nagging doubt — is it too little, too late?

AN INDUSTRY IN CRISIS

Tension between the BBC and Ofcom reached fresh highs last month when the regulator published a damning report concluding that the corporation "may not be sustainable" in its current form.

The reach of the BBC's TV channels among 16 to 24 year olds has fallen below 50 per cent for the first time, and Ofcom warned the broadcaster was at risk of losing an entire generation of licence viewers.

Similar soul-searching has been going on at ITV. *City A.M.* understands that chairman Sir Peter Bazalgette has held crunch meetings with top executives amid fears the broadcaster is facing the same existential threat as the BBC.

As public viewing habits shift inexorably towards on-demand streaming, US tech giants such as Netflix and Amazon are taking an ever-growing share of viewing hours. Disney and Apple are now in the mix, too.

For publishers it is not yet clear whether collaboration will be enough to fight off the might of Silicon Valley.

For Ozone's Reeve, publishers are at the mercy of a fundamental imbalance in the digital ad market that stacked the odds in favour of tech giants.

The government's Cairncross Review, published earlier this year, set out similar concerns, and the Competition and Markets Authority has since opened a probe into the UK's digital ad market.

The review put the problem in stark terms: "the platforms' ability to impose terms on publishers threatens the ability of the latter to make money from their content, and hence to continue to provide trusted public-interest news."

New rivals such as Apple's The Morning Show (top) are coming to disrupt traditional fare like ITV's Downton Abbey (left). Will the alliance formed by News UK (above) et al. save the day?

IS CONTENT STILL KING?

It's been almost 25 years since Bill Gates declared that content is king. Although the BBC continues to produce hugely popular programming, it simply cannot compete with the deep pockets of its Silicon Valley rivals. Even Sky's production budget of £1bn pales in comparison to Netflix's estimated $15bn.

So if a battle over production is out of the question, for traditional broadcasters the challenge is ensuring that its existing output reaches audiences.

Ofcom rules have long ensured that channels from the UK's public service broadcasters appear high up in programme guides, but the rise in online viewing has raised concerns that their shows are getting lost in a sea of content.

For the BBC, progress has already been made. The Sky deal means iPlayer will now be fully integrated into the pay-TV firm's platform.

"Future business models will be increasingly driven by the quality of the programmes and the ease with which viewers can access them," says David Elms, head of media at KPMG.

"As long as they continue to be associated with engaging headline content, they'll continue to be a destination."

For digital publishers, however, being a destination may not be enough.

One example of this is Marie Claire. Having closed its UK print edition after more than 30 years, the women's monthly is now shifting its attention to fashion aggregator platform Marie Claire Edit and Fabled, a joint venture with Ocado snapped up by retailer Next.

Some companies, such as Future, have bucked the downward trend. But publishers are being shunned ever more from advertising — their traditional source of income — and they must adapt to survive.

TRADING AMBITION in association with IG

Joshua Mahony

Senior Market Analyst, IG

STUBBORN BORIS COULD SCUPPER 2020 GBP RECOVERY

As we enter the final pre-election stretch, markets are faced with a number of potential consequences; from a Conservative-led Brexit, to a referendum and potential withdrawal of article 50 under a Lib/Lab/SNP alliance. However, one thing is for sure; there is a huge amount of uncertainty irrespective of the outcome.

Should Corbyn manage to enter Downing street, we are looking at huge economic upheaval, another round of Brexit negotiations, and a second referendum. The Brexit genie is well and truly out of its bottle, and so even in the event of a referendum which revoked article 50, you are sure to see a huge upswell in Brexit party support from disenfranchised voters. If the Conservatives were willing to call a referendum to hold off the moderate advances of UKIP, it is highly likely that a third referendum would ultimately follow as the Conservatives attempt to regain power and appease their pro-Brexit leanings.

Perhaps the more interesting part for FX traders comes in the event of a Conservative majority. With Boris Johnson having reached a deal with the EU, his promise to 'get Brexit done' signals a swift conclusion to the deadlock that is holding back economic growth in the UK. However, the fact is that any harder form of Brexit would – by its nature – require a substantial period of negotiations to replace the current relationship enjoyed by EU members. At the least that means another year of discussions over what that trade deal will look like. What markets will soon realise is that there is a direct trade-off between the length of the transitional period and the quality of that eventual deal. Markets hate uncertainty, but it is unclear whether they will like a half-hearted or failed trade deal any better. By promising to end the transitional period by the end of 2020, Boris Johnson is creating yet another rod for his back.

Markets do want an end to this current quagmire, yet they also want to see a good deal that will ensure the best access for UK businesses to the EU market. Thus, traders should be aware that the sterling surge expected in the event of a Conservative majority could be short-lived if Johnson sticks to this timeline. The focus will soon turn to the next stage of this process, with doubts over the possibility of reaching an all-encompassing deal within 12-months restraining sterling upside.

From Boris Johnson's perspective, this process will likely look very similar to his recent push to amend the withdrawal agreement by utilising the threat of a no-deal Brexit. However, a trade deal doesn't appear in the final few weeks due to the existence of a deadline. Instead, we could see EU negotiators utilise this deadline

> Markets hate uncertainty, but it is unclear whether they will like a half-hearted or failed trade deal any better.

as a means to drive a hard bargain against their UK counterparts.

No one wants this process to be dragged out, and business sentiment has certainly been dealt a significant blow in response to the constant uncertainty that has loomed large over the course of this process. While we have seen low growth throughout much of the post-referendum period, the real economic damage only came once we approached the hard-Brexit deadlines (originally March). Without such a deadline, confidence in the UK should remain hopeful and optimistic. However, the imposition of such a hard deadline dents confidence and risks the UK being locked into a new relationship with detrimental terms of trade. Or worse, a no-deal Brexit.

Perhaps Johnson's strategy is to win the Brexit vote by ensuring the offering also provides the swiftness promised by the Brexit party. However, if Boris is willing to favour brevity over quality, there is plenty of reasoning behind the notion that any post-election sterling surge could prove shorter than many have been predicting.

Spread bets and CFDs are complex instruments and come with a high risk of losing money rapidly due to leverage. ***75% of retail investor accounts lose money when trading spread bets and CFDs with this provider.*** *You should consider whether you understand how spread bets and CFDs work, and whether you can afford to take the high risk of losing your money.*

Prosieben chief sees no merit in a merger with shareholder Mediaset

CHRISTOPH STEITZ

GERMAN broadcaster Prosieben sees no merit in a potential merger with top shareholder Mediaset, its chief executive told a newspaper yesterday.

Controlled by the family of former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi, Mediaset now holds 15.1 per cent of Prosieben and could raise that stake to just below 20 per cent, a source told Reuters last month.

"I'm very sceptical with regard to a structural merger of our companies," Prosieben chief executive Max Conze told Sueddeutsche Zeitung in an interview. "It wouldn't be impossible but the modest synergies would not justify a merger, because implementation would be complex, lengthy and expensive."

Conze said he would meet with Mediaset today to find out more about its intentions as a shareholder, adding he would not be surprised if the Italian group raised its stake.

He said it would make more sense to first launch Joyn, Prosieben's streaming joint venture with Discovery, in Italy, adding there was great interest across Europe.

Last month Conze, who joined Prosieben last year from UK home appliance maker Dyson, announced plans to pivot to digital forms of entertainment while looking to strengthen content production and build its e-commerce portfolio.

Conze has backed his turnaround by investing €2m (£1.7m) of his own money in Prosieben shares — so far a loss-making proposition. *Reuters*

Mediaset is controlled by the family of former Italian prime minister Silvio Berlusconi

Maltese PM exits over murdered journalist case

STEPHEN GREY

MALTESE Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, engulfed in crisis over the probe into a murdered journalist, announced yesterday he planned to step down, saying he would ask his ruling Labour party to start choosing a new leader for the country next month.

Calls for Muscat to quit had intensified after the investigation into the 2017 car bomb killing of anti-corruption journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia led to charges over the weekend against a prominent businessman with alleged ties to government ministers and senior officials.

In a televised address yesterday evening, Muscat said he was not leaving immediately, but rather announcing a process to replace him that will start on 12 January.

This drew immediate criticism from some opponents who said he should go right away.

"I will write to the president of the Labour party so that the process for a new leader is set for 12 January 2020. On that day I will resign as leader of the Labour party. In the days after I will resign as Prime Minister," Muscat said.

"Our country thus will start a short process of approximately a month for the Labour party to choose a new leader and a new prime minister," he added.

Thousands of people took part yesterday in an anti-government protest in Valetta, the capital of the tiny Mediterranean archipelago, with members of the Caruana Galizia family leading the march.

In his address, the Prime Minister struck a defiant tone, saying that every day since the murder he had shouldered responsibilities in "the interests of the conclusion of the case". He added, however, that "some decisions were good while others could have been better made".

"All the responsibility I had to shoulder surely does not compare to the pain that the victim's family is enduring," added Muscat.

There was no immediate reaction from the family, which had called for him to step down.

Muscat acted after businessman Yorgen Fenech, 38, was taken to a Valletta court late on Saturday and charged with complicity in the murder. He pleaded not guilty to that and other charges. *Reuters*

Adel Abdul Mahdi announced plans to quit as Iraqi Prime Minister last Friday

Parliament approves Iraqi Prime Minister Abdul Mahdi departure

AHMED RASHEED

IRAQ's parliament voted yesterday to accept the resignation of Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi, following weeks of violent anti-government protests that have rocked the country.

Abdul Mahdi's decision to quit last Friday came after a call by Iraq's top Shi'ite Muslim cleric grand ayatollah Ali al-Sistani for parliament to consider withdrawing its support for Abdul Mahdi's government to stem the violence.

"The Iraqi parliament will ask the president of state to nominate a new prime minister," a statement from parliament's media office said.

Politicians said Abdul Mahdi's government, including the Prime Minister himself, would stay on in a caretaker capacity following yesterday's vote until a new government was chosen.

Iraqi forces have killed nearly 400 mostly young, unarmed demonstrators since mass anti-government protests broke out on 1 October, plus more than a dozen security force members. *Reuters*

South African Airways set for shake-up funds

TANISHA HEIBERG

SOUTH African Airways (SAA) and lenders have had "intense discussions" to secure funds for the cash-strapped carrier's operational and structural transition, the country's public enterprises ministry said yesterday.

SAA, which hasn't made a profit since 2011 and is dependent on government bailouts to remain solvent, was hit last month by a crippling strike that pushed it to the brink of collapse.

The department, headed by minister Pravin Gordhan, issued a statement saying that the struggling state-owned airline could not continue in its present form and would need a "radical restructuring" to ensure financial and operational sustainability.

"Over the past few days there have been intense discussions with lenders to secure the necessary funds to cover the operational and structural transition over the next few months," the ministry said.

The ministry is pursuing various options to turn around SAA, it added without providing further detail. SAA last month said it could cut more than 900 jobs as it looks to stem severe financial losses.

Its financial position worsened dramatically after 15 November, when an eight-day strike over pay that forced SAA to cancel hundreds of flights. *Reuters*

Ursula Von der Leyen started her new role as EU Commission president yesterday

New EU Commission head to kick off with climate summit and Africa trip

FRANCESCO GUARASCIO

THE NEW head of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen will attend a climate summit in Madrid and travel to Africa in her first week in the job, highlighting two of the key priorities for the EU executive over the next five years.

Von der Leyen has set high targets in the European Union's policy to combat climate change, pledging to reduce the bloc's carbon emissions by at least 50 per cent by 2030.

Yesterday, her first day at the helm, she repeated to journalists her objective to make Europe the first climate-neutral continent by 2050, meaning carbon emissions should be fully offset by measures that cut CO2, like planting trees.

Emphasising the importance of the so-called Green Deal, she will be in Madrid today for the opening of the UN climate change conference, known formally as COP25.

That will be followed by legislative proposals from the Commission, expected on 11 December, aimed at turning her targets into legal texts that will need to be approved by EU states and politicians .

Von der Leyen told reporters she would then travel to Africa, in a move showing Europe's increased focus on the continent. *Reuters*

GUEST OPINION

A BETTER FIT WITH JAPAN

Why the UK should upgrade the EU trade deal with Japan

IT IS DEFINITELY in the interest of UK businesses to replicate (or "roll-over") as many of the EU's trade deals as possible after Brexit. But some relations are so economically vital that they require some thought. One of them is Britain's relationship with Japan.

With more than 1,000 Japanese companies operating in the UK, employing nearly 100,000 people (up since June 2016) — Japan is a crucial contributor to the UK economy. Among non-EU countries, Japan is the second-largest investor in the UK — which as of 2016 stood at £60bn.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has maintained that copy-and-pasting the EU deal would make little sense on the Japan-UK relationship. The UK should heed his call. In fact, the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement is not the best fit for the UK. The UK exports much less ham, cheese and luxury sedans than France or Germany. Naturally, the EU agreement with Japan produced considerably fewer gains for the services and investment-oriented UK economy.

In a report released today which I co-authored for the Initiative for Free Trade, we estimate that the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement only affords half the gains enjoyed by the other EU countries. Brussels prioritised negotiating market openings for farming products that absorbed much of Japan's concessions, whereas the UK may be more interested in developing new rules for e-commerce and services industries, or facilitating incoming investments from Japan.

In particularly thorny negotiation areas, the UK's position is more aligned with Japan than with the EU. For instance, the EU could not agree to curb unjustified blockage of lawful transfers of data. As both Japan and the UK embraces the opportunities of digitalisation, they do not need to repeat past mistakes.

Japan also wanted more comprehensive and cost-effective rules to protect foreign investments. Although no Japanese investor has filed a dispute against a government, they seek reinforced assurances. The increasingly unstable political environment (not least due to populism in Europe) could very well lead to discrimination of foreign investors. As the world's second-largest source of foreign capital, investment protection is Japan's number one negotiating priority.

Japanese multinationals are also much more interested in building plants overseas than selling us cars made in Japan. However, Brussels was constitutionally prohibited from engaging in comprehensive negotiations on investment rules.

Japan also matters for geopolitical reasons. It is not just the principal champion of a liberal rule-based order, and arguably the only adult in the room at G7 summits: Japan is in the driving seat of Asia's key regional trade agreements — CPTPP and RCEP. Japanese capital forms the backbone of the supply chains in the world's fastest-growing economies including south-east Asia and China. And when it comes to the UK seeking CPTPP membership, negotiations with Japan are effectively a pre-requisite. An upgraded Japan-UK agreement will also act as a "down-payment" for further regulatory cooperation with Japan in future, not least for equivalence decisions in banking.

In other areas, it may be challenging for the UK to improve on the EU-Japan Economic Partnership. Immigration policy is one of the worst barriers to trade — visas restrict business visits, internal corporate transfers and overseas projects. The EU allows not just Japanese service providers and corporate transferees to enter each others' markets, but also their spouses and children to accompany them. And Tokyo expects no less from the UK.

The UK paid a high price to shape its own trade policy according to its interests. Japan is a typical example of how the UK must use its new policy space.

In areas that matter for the UK economy — like e-commerce and investments — it can make incremental, yet significant, improvements on market openness where before, internal compromises with France and Germany constrained it.

Hosuk Lee-Makiyama is director of the European Centre for International Political Economy and co-author of the IFT report A Better Fit: Remodelling the EU-Japan EPA after Brexit

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

LONDON REPORT

Shares fall amid fresh polls that show Tory slide

LONDON-LISTED shares most exposed to the domestic economy took a beating last Friday, after a poll showed the Conservative party's lead over the opposition Labour party had narrowed ahead of the 12 December General Election.

On Friday Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Conservatives held an eight-point lead over Labour, compared with 10 a week ago, according to a Panelbase poll.

The mid-caps snapped a five-day winning streak and shed one per cent, their worst day in almost two months.

JP Morgan's basket of London-listed companies that make their cash at home skidded two per cent.

Blue-chip banks **RBS** and **Lloyds** gave up 2.5 per cent each, while retailers and housebuilders also eased as the main index slid 0.9 per cent. The blue-chip bourse posted monthly gains for the eighth month.

Markets have been buying into domestic shares amid hopes that Johnson, who has said that he will deliver Brexit by 31 January if he retains power, will win a majority and put an end to three-and-a-half years of uncertainty over Britain leaving the bloc.

The poll exacerbated a decline in domestic firms after a survey earlier showed British consumer confidence reeling at its joint-lowest level since November 2013. Johnson's comment that he wanted to keep in place preparations the government has made for the possibility of a no-deal Brexit also fanned anxiety.

Bucking the trend, **Ocado** jumped 9.7 per cent on its best day since February, after signing a technology partnership with Japan's biggest supermarket operator, Aeon.

Publishing firm Reach jumped 15 per cent on Friday

Among small-caps, **Reach** soared 15 per cent on its best day since November 2013, after the Daily Mirror publisher said it was confident of meeting annual targets.

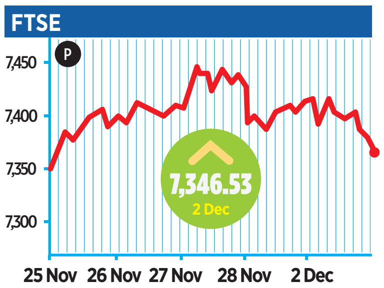
Commercial vehicle rental firm **Northgate** tumbled 10 per cent after a deal to buy accident claims handler **Redde**, which added 2.2 per cent.

TOP RISERS

1. **Ocado** Up 9.69 per cent
2. **Fresnillo** Up 1.16 per cent
3. **Compass Group** Up 0.64 per cent

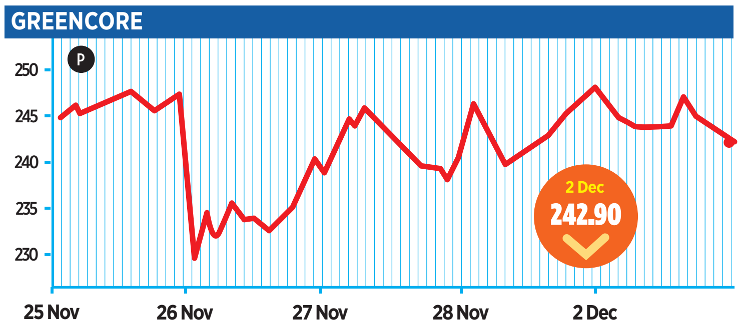
TOP FALLERS

1. **Tesco** Down 3.37 per cent
2. **Sainsbury's** Down 2.99 per cent
3. **St James's Place** Down 2.73 per cent

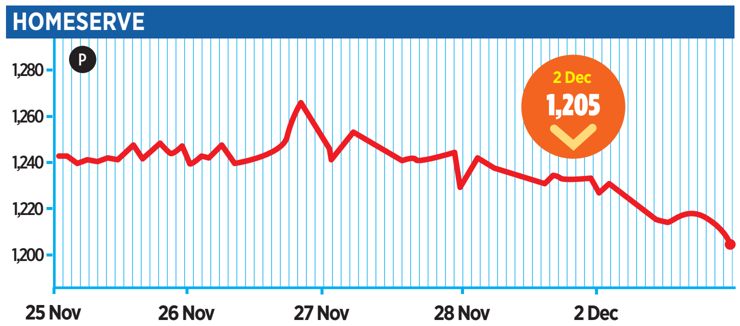


BEST OF THE BROKERS

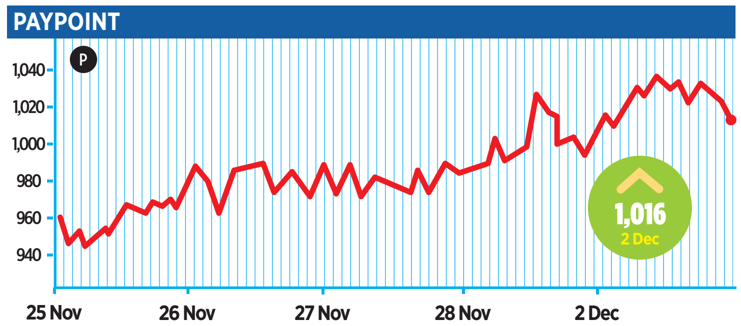
To appear in Best of the Brokers, email your research to notes@cityam.com



The luck of the Irish — alongside good management and strong sales growth — must have struck Dublin-based food company Greencore this year, as its share price has climbed almost 35 per cent. Analysts at broker Peel Hunt say the sandwich maker faces a tougher time in the coming months, however. It faced a sales slowdown at the end of the financial year due to unhelpful weather conditions and a subdued consumer market, conditions which may continue into the coming year. Peel Hunt says "hold" and cross your fingers, giving a target price of 220p.



Domestic repairs firm Homeserve is used to fixing problems. But one thing it does not have to worry about is its own business model, say analysts at broker Liberum. They say that although first-half earnings per share fell 13 per cent, this was due to increased investment. The acquisition of US advertising platform Elocal is deemed "exciting", as it provides a strong platform for an expansion in the country. They enthuse: "UK income per customer is rising, and operating efficiencies are coming through." Liberum says "buy" with a target price of 1350p.



Paypoint came of age as a company that lets Brits pay for their gas and electricity at the local off-licence. But analysts at Canaccord Genuity say the firm is maturing well, offering digital products such as Paypoint One. "Management is executing on the multiple opportunities to generate additional service fees from its network," Canaccord analysts say. They are happy to see parcel growth at Collect Plus accelerating, even though top-ups fall as the public ditch pay-as-you-go phones. Canaccord say "buy" with a target price of 1,110p.

NEW YORK REPORT

Wall St slips as US-China trade tensions linger

WALL Street's major indexes ended last Friday's shorter session lower as US-China discord over Hong Kong fuelled investor anxiety about trade talks and retail stocks dipped as in-store Black Friday sales appeared to draw smaller crowds.

China on Thursday threatened to retaliate against a US law backing pro-democracy protesters in Hong Kong with potential measures including barring drafters of the legislation from mainland China, Hong Kong and Macau, the editor of China's state-backed Global Times tabloid said in a tweet.

And on Friday a Reuters report cited two sources saying the US government may expand its power to stop more foreign shipments of products with US technology to China's Huawei, due to frustration that a blacklisting failed to end supplies to the world's largest telecoms equipment maker.

While the S&P closed above its session low, selling intensified in the last hour of trading after the report on Huawei.

All three of Wall Street's major indexes had registered record highs earlier in the week when hopes were higher for an imminent "phase one" US-China trade deal. The trade-sensitive Philadelphia Semiconductor index fell 1.1 per cent.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 112.59 points, or 0.4 per cent, to 28,051.41, the S&P 500 lost 12.65 points, or 0.40 per cent, to 3,140.98 and the Nasdaq Composite dropped 39.70 points, or 0.46 per cent, to 8,665.47.

The S&P 500 retail sector fell 0.8 per cent, with **Kohl's** dropping 2.7 per cent and **Gap** falling 1.8 per cent.

Top retailer **Walmart** rose 0.3 per cent while **Costco** fell 0.3 per cent and electronics retailer **Best Buy** also dipped.

Shares of **Tech Data** jumped 12.3 per cent as private equity firm Apollo Global Management raised its bid for the US information technology equipment distributor to about $5.14bn (£3.98bn).

CITY MOVES WHO'S SWITCHING JOBS

MEDIA SENSE

Independent global media adviser Media Sense has appointed Andrea Bernhardt as its strategy director. Andrea joins from Reckitt Benckiser, where she led global media and digital, developing media capabilities and a new integrated media strategy in the areas of media effectiveness, data driven marketing and communications. She brings extensive knowledge in the areas of global operating model evolution which includes agency and in-housing, data and tech strategy and the integration of media and creative through communications planning. Prior to this she held director and strategic development roles at Web MD and drove strategic planning within agencies, including Mindshare and Zenith. Ryan Kangisser, digital partner at Media Sense commented: "Andrea is one of the leading global thinkers and practitioners in media transformation... [She] brings a unique blend of brand, agency, publisher and technology experience to Media Sense as brands look to continually evolve and challenge their existing operating models and capabilities."

LGIM

Legal & General Investment Management (LGIM) has announced the appointment of Kim Brown as pension scheme director for the L&G Mastertrust and the Independent Governance Committee (IGC). Kim joins from the Pensions Regulator, where she was head of master trust authorisation and supervision. She has worked at the regulator for more than 10 years, managing complex cases, implementing new legislation and leading the regulatory transactions team. Most recently she led the design and implementation of master trust authorisation. Emma Douglas, head of defined contribution at LGIM, said: "Kim is a terrific hire, and as the L&G Mastertrust approaches £10bn of assets, her immense technical and supervisory knowledge will help us to keep pace with cutting-edge pension scheme developments."

THREE CROWNS

Global law firm Three Crowns has announced the appointment of Leilah Bruton as counsel in its London office. Leilah joins the firm from the London office of Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, where she was promoted to counsel in May 2018. Leilah has represented clients in both international commercial and investment treaty arbitrations, with a particular focus on disputes in the energy and telecommunications sectors. Commenting on her appointment, Leilah said: "Three Crowns has an impressive reputation for handling complex, international arbitrations, and I am delighted to be joining the firm, working alongside a formidable team of disputes specialists."

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
7346.53	20812.60	4066.73	28051.41	8665.47	3140.98
69.90	210.95	37.81	112.59	39.70	12.65

£/€	1.1742	0.0014	€/$	1.1019	0.0013
£/$	1.2937	0.0031	€/£	0.8517	0.0010
£/¥	141.63	0.2300	€/¥	120.62	0.0500

	Price	Chg	High	Low
GILTS				
Tsy 4.750 20	101.06	-0.04	105.0	101.1
Tsy 8.000 21	111.18	-0.12	118.2	111.2
Tsy 2.500 24	363.08	-0.30	377.9	360.6
Tsy 5.000 25	123.33	-0.21	126.0	122.9
Tsy 4.250 27	129.20	-0.31	132.8	125.2
Tsy 6.000 28	147.40	-0.38	152.1	143.1
Tsy 4.125 30	380.00	0.41	404.2	364.2
Tsy 4.250 32	140.52	-0.26	146.4	132.4
Tsy 4.250 36	148.37	-0.22	155.7	136.4
Tsy 4.750 38	163.23	-0.11	171.8	148.1
Tsy 4.250 46	170.41	0.17	181.0	147.8
AEROSPACE & DEFENCE				
BAE Systems	573.4	-3.6	588.2	443.9
Cobham	158.2	-0.7	168.3	96.8
Meggitt	643.0	-2.6	660.0	458.0
QinetiQ	334.2	-2.8	351.6	267.0
Rolls-Royce	711.6	-7.0	988.4	702.0
Senior	180.7	-1.3	243.4	174.0
Ultra Electronics	2086.0	-30.0	2252.0	1232.0
AUTOMOBILES & PARTS				
Aston Martin	550.4	-21.4	1374.4	399.3
TI Fluid Systems	226.5	-9.5	236.0	155.2
BANKS				
Barclays	171.5	-2.7	174.4	136.2
BGEO Group	1480.0	6.0	1755.0	1252.0
HSBC Hldgs	576.3	-4.5	680.6	569.7
Lloyds Banking	61.1	-1.5	66.6	48.6
Royal Bank of Scot	226.2	-5.9	270.4	177.7
Standard Chartered	697.4	1.4	736.8	575.7
TBC Bank Group	1240.0	-6.0	1706.0	1150.0
Virgin Money UK	178.8	8.8	220.1	104.4
BEVERAGES				
Barr (AG)	588.0	-27.0	975.0	540.0
Britvic	969.0	-21.5	1068.0	786.0
Coca-Cola HBC AG	2579.0	-1.0	3074.0	2299.0
Diageo	3165.0	-24.5	3625.5	2701.0
CHEMICALS				
Croda International	4980.0	-8.0	5375.0	4564.0
Elementis	169.4	-0.4	197.9	129.8
Johnson Matt	2874.0	-42.0	3454.0	2620.0
Synthomer	304.4	-1.0	420.8	279.0
Victrex	2300.0	-150.0	2522.0	1845.0
CONSTRUCTION & MATERIALS				
Balfour Beatty	220.8	-6.2	295.0	194.2
CRH	2950.0	-25.0	3014.0	1971.5
Galliford Try	734.0	-11.5	780.0	512.0
Grafton Group	838.0	-27.5	937.0	630.0
Ibstock	263.6	-4.0	267.6	193.1
Marshalls	779.5	-24.5	804.0	415.2
Polypipe Group	490.6	0.6	490.6	312.8
DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS				
Smith (DS)	381.8	-4.7	388.1	292.2
Smiths Gp	1661.0	-18.5	1692.0	1340.0
Smurfit Kappa Gp	2730.0	-18.0	2774.0	1934.0
Vesuvius	453.6	-4.4	642.0	341.0

	Price	Chg	High	Low
ELECTRICITY				
Contour Global	207.5	-2.0	222.5	159.1
Drax Gp	279.0	-8.0	413.8	251.0
SSE	1300.0	-18.0	1336.5	1008.0
ELECTRONIC & ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT				
Halma	2106.0	-29.0	2151.0	1282.0
Morgan Advanced	286.8	-2.2	289.0	232.4
Oxford Instruments	1594.0	-6.0	1626.0	853.0
Renishaw	3962.0	-6.0	4670.0	3232.0
Spectris	2803.0	-54.0	2898.0	2188.0
EQUITY INVESTMENT INSTRUMENTS				
3i Infrastructure	291.0	0.0	306.5	249.7
Aberforth Smlr Cos	1406.0	-2.0	1408.0	1114.0
Alliance Trust	819.0	-6.0	838.0	672.0
AVI Global Trust	779.0	-1.0	781.0	660.0
Baillie Gifford Japan	833.0	-7.0	840.0	663.0
Bankers InvTst	957.0	-3.0	970.0	766.0
BlackRock Smaller	1568.0	-24.0	1592.0	1160.0
BMO Global Smaller	141.2	-0.7	143.1	122.0
Caledonia Inv	3085.0	-15.0	3110.0	2740.0
City of London IT	426.0	-1.0	431.5	376.0
Edin Inv Trust	610.0	-3.0	652.0	535.0
European Opp	828.0	-2.0	875.0	666.0
F&C Investment	738.0	-5.0	745.0	616.0
Fidelity China SPE	216.0	-2.0	250.0	183.4
Fidelity Euro Values	254.0	-0.5	257.5	202.0
Fidelity Spec Val	269.0	-1.5	271.5	220.0
Finsbury G&I Tst	894.0	-3.0	958.0	741.0
GCP Infra Inv	130.2	-1.6	131.8	122.4
Genesis Emerging	766.0	-3.0	785.0	628.0
Greencoat UK	147.2	0.0	148.8	124.4
Harbourvest Glb	1724.0	6.0	1786.0	1326.0
Herald Inv Trust	1406.0	-8.0	1418.0	1055.0
HICL Infr	161.2	-2.6	174.0	156.6
JPM American	476.5	-1.0	494.5	386.5
JPM Emerg Mkt	1010.0	-4.0	1066.0	814.0
JPM Indian IT	732.0	-10.0	790.0	633.0
JPM Japan IT	472.0	-2.0	474.0	367.0
Jupiter Fund Mngt	364.3	-8.8	432.0	287.6
Law Debenture	610.0	-6.0	618.0	534.0
Mercantile IT	240.5	-1.0	241.5	168.0
Monks Inv Tst	935.0	-7.0	964.0	711.0
Murray Intl Tst	1202.0	-12.0	1248.0	1058.0
NB Glbl Fltg Rate Inc	90.8	0.1	91.0	87.6
Pantheon Intl Partn	2325.0	0.0	2330.0	1955.0
Perpetual Inc & Grth	318.5	-1.5	339.0	284.5
Pershing Square	1448.0	-2.0	1570.0	990.0
Personal Assets Tst	42200	-150.0	43150	38900
Polar Cap Tech Tst	1498.0	-8.0	1514.0	1066.0
Renewables Infra Gp	131.2	0.4	133.2	109.6
RIT Cap Partners	2170.0	-5.0	2180.0	1892.0
Riverstone Energy	422.5	2.5	1196.0	419.0
Schroder Asia	451.5	-5.5	469.5	389.0
Scottish Inv Tst	819.0	-7.0	843.0	748.0
Scottish Mortgage	529.0	-2.5	568.5	441.4
Sequoia Econ Infra	115.6	-0.6	117.6	108.5
Smithson Inv	1304.0	0.0	1304.0	1000.2
Syncona	222.0	0.0	294.0	213.5
Temple Bar IT	1370.0	-6.0	1376.0	1116.0

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Templeton Em Mkts	792.0	-8.0	829.0	670.0
Vietnam Enterprise	489.0	-1.0	509.0	421.5
VinaCapital Vietna	333.5	-0.5	357.5	323.0
Witan Invest	219.5	-2.0	225.5	189.6
Wwide Healthcare	2990.0	-5.0	3000.0	2325.0
FIXED LINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS				
BT Gp	191.6	-1.9	260.9	158.9
Talktalk Telecom	105.1	-0.8	126.5	96.5
Telecom Plus	1330.0	-6.0	1528.0	1130.0
FOOD & DRUG RETAILERS				
Greggs	2082.0	-48.0	2476.0	1257.0
Morrison (WM)	198.3	-4.0	245.8	176.9
Ocado Gp	1325.0	117.0	1435.0	749.8
Sainsbury(J)	214.3	-6.6	350.0	187.2
SSP Group	674.0	-10.0	721.0	608.0
Tesco	229.4	-8.0	253.0	189.6
FOOD PRODUCERS				
Assoc British Foods	2569.0	-11.0	2588.0	2041.0
Bakkavor	126.2	-3.8	170.0	93.3
Cranswick	3130.0	-58.0	3408.0	2472.0
Greencore Gp	242.9	-4.2	248.3	162.8
Hilton Food Gp	995.0	-27.0	1088.0	884.0
Tate & Lyle	731.4	-3.2	800.4	658.4
Unilever	4578.0	6.5	5324.0	3941.0
FORESTRY & PAPER				
Mondi	1675.5	-22.0	1898.0	1510.5
GENERAL FINANCIAL				
3i Group	1071.0	-9.5	1184.5	756.2
Ashmore Gp	476.0	-2.0	542.5	356.0
Brewin Dolphin	347.0	-0.6	347.6	287.6
Close Brothers	1487.0	-29.0	1605.0	1227.0
Coats Group	72.2	1.4	91.3	68.1
Finablr	208.0	13.9	208.0	140.2
Hargreaves Lans	1855.0	-45.0	2433.0	1633.0
IG Gp	675.8	-14.6	695.4	474.8
Integrafin Holdings	400.0	0.0	406.1	271.8
Intermediate Capital	1531.0	-32.0	1564.0	918.5
Intl Public Prtnshps	158.2	-1.6	165.4	146.8
Investec	438.9	-9.1	518.6	395.3
IP Group	60.2	0.4	122.0	55.7
John Laing Gp	380.2	-4.0	402.0	298.2
London Stock Exch	6872.0	-26.0	7514.0	3867.0
Man Group	151.8	-1.8	175.2	126.8
Onesavings	387.0	2.6	447.4	313.6
Paragon	497.0	-5.5	518.0	379.2
Plus500	770.0	4.6	1647.0	495.0
Provident Fin	429.1	-6.5	658.6	356.0
Quilter	147.3	-0.2	156.6	110.8
Rathbone Brothers	2130.0	-20.0	2540.0	2075.0
Schroders	3299.0	-37.0	3349.0	2334.0
TP ICAP	386.0	0.7	386.0	270.0
GENERAL RETAILERS				
B&M	378.2	-7.0	399.6	278.6
Card Factory	158.3	-2.7	209.0	151.2
Dixons Carphone	123.4	-1.1	162.4	104.9
Dunelm Gp	852.5	-15.0	981.0	482.8
Howden Joinery Gp	630.6	-5.8	636.4	416.4
Inchcape	651.0	-8.0	678.0	519.5

	Price	Chg	High	Low
JD Sports Fashion	760.6	-16.0	807.0	318.5
Just Eat	764.6	2.6	812.0	535.0
Kingfisher	209.9	-5.8	266.2	185.9
Marks & Spencer	194.3	-5.8	303.2	163.9
Next	6758.0	-162.0	6920.0	3991.0
Pets at Home Gp	252.0	-7.8	259.8	113.3
Sports Direct Intl	337.2	-1.8	340.2	214.0
Vivo Energy	117.8	-3.2	139.5	111.4
WH Smith	2448.0	-10.0	2458.0	1697.0
HEALTH CARE EQUIPMENT & SERVICES				
Convatec	191.4	-1.1	202.8	118.5
Mediclinic Intl	386.6	-12.0	401.3	293.4
NMC Health	2509.0	-61.0	3366.0	1801.5
Smith & Neph	1731.0	-16.5	1990.0	1396.0
UDG Hlthcare	825.5	-7.0	832.5	551.0
HOUSEHOLD GOODS				
Barratt Devel	666.8	-14.2	684.4	434.0
Bellway	3339.0	-81.0	3536.0	2419.0
Berkeley Grp Hldgs	4586.0	-126.0	4712.0	3230.0
Bovis Homes Gp	1225.0	-16.0	1242.0	828.0
Countryside Prop	395.8	-2.6	398.4	276.8
Crest Nicholson	384.4	-4.8	435.2	309.4
McCarthy & Stone	140.5	-0.8	158.8	123.5
Persimmon	2558.0	-56.0	2614.0	1836.0
Reckitt Benckiser	6066.0	-49.0	6688.0	5593.0
Redrow	661.0	-11.0	676.0	460.8
Taylor Wimpey	174.2	-3.6	192.2	129.3
INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING				
Bodycote	872.0	-5.0	903.0	652.0
Hill & Smith	1359.0	-4.0	1385.0	1049.0
IMI	1121.0	-16.0	1137.0	870.0
Melrose Ind	229.6	-3.4	237.9	146.3
RHI Magnesita	3802.0	-70.0	5000.0	3352.0
Rotork	327.8	-5.4	341.2	235.7
Spirax-Sarco	8925.0	-65.0	9400.0	5900.0
Weir Gp	1395.5	-38.0	1814.0	1240.0
INDUSTRIAL METALS				
Evraz	370.4	1.2	709.4	351.0
Ferrexpo	143.4	-5.8	301.3	123.0
INDUSTRIAL TRANSPORTATION				
Clarkson	2690.0	-5.0	2900.0	1878.0
Fisher (James)	1914.0	4.0	2260.0	1600.0
Royal Mail	208.5	-9.2	315.4	188.4
Signature Avi	324.9	0.0	406.0	258.8

	Price	Chg	High	Low
LEISURE GOODS				
Games Workshop	5730.0	-115.0	5845.0	2800.0
LIFE INSURANCE				
Aviva	403.8	1.8	438.8	352.3
Lancashire Hldgs	742.5	-3.0	746.0	561.5
Legal & General	280.9	-4.4	291.2	216.7
Phoenix Gp	745.5	1.1	745.5	544.0
Prudential	1376.5	-23.5	1790.0	1279.5
St James Place	1088.5	-30.5	1143.0	913.6
Std Life Aberdeen	316.9	-5.4	322.3	224.8
MEDIA				
4imprint	3100.0	0.0	3130.0	1800.0
Ascential	328.0	9.0	411.0	319.0
Auto Trader Gp	562.0	-8.2	606.0	418.1
Entertainment One	556.0	0.0	589.0	336.4
Euromny Inst Inv	1248.0	-6.0	1498.0	1132.0
Future	1322.0	-22.0	1572.0	465.0
Informa	791.4	-7.0	892.0	605.8
ITV	145.1	0.0	145.1	103.6
Moneysupermkt.com	340.5	-3.7	417.7	267.0
Pearson	646.6	-6.6	1027.5	640.0
RELX	1873.0	1.0	2011.0	1581.5
Rightmove Group	623.6	-3.8	630.6	420.9
WPP	1000.5	-4.0	1038.0	800.4
MINING				
Anglo American	2026.5	-27.0	2266.0	1556.4
Antofagasta	868.0	-18.0	1022.5	738.0
BHP Group	1710.0	-34.4	2049.0	1497.2
Centamin	111.1	-1.9	152.3	79.8
Fresnillo	577.6	6.6	1027.5	539.6
Glencore	243.9	-4.0	340.3	222.2
Hochschild Mining	163.0	-1.3	227.0	155.0
Kaz Minerals	489.5	-4.5	738.4	380.3
Polymet Int	1165.0	5.0	1272.0	772.6
Rio Tinto	4201.5	-68.5	4976.5	3513.5
Sirius Minerals	3.7	0.1	24.3	2.9
MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS				
Inmarsat	543.2	-1.8	608.2	362.8
Vodafone Gp	153.4	-0.8	168.1	123.3
NONLIFE INSURANCE				
Admiral Gp	2140.0	-19.0	2300.0	1958.0
Beazley	532.0	-8.0	628.0	492.6
Direct Line Ins	305.4	-5.0	366.5	270.5
Hastings Gp Hldgs	177.7	0.6	231.6	167.9

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Hiscox	1363.0	2.0	1777.0	1213.0
RSA Ins Gp	551.4	-8.6	597.0	496.6
OIL & GAS PRODUCERS				
BP	480.2	-5.9	582.5	480.2
Cairn Energy	179.9	-1.9	213.8	140.0
Energean Oil & Gas	897.0	-6.0	1082.0	568.0
Premier Oil	86.9	-2.4	106.2	55.6
Royal Dutch Shell A	2211.0	-29.0	2612.0	2211.0
Royal Dutch Shell B	2189.5	-34.0	2622.0	2189.5
Tullow Oil	130.9	-4.9	250.0	130.9
OIL EQUIPMENT & SERVICES				
Hunting	390.4	-14.6	657.0	390.4
Petrofac	384.5	-11.4	559.0	381.5
Wood Gp(J)	351.3	-20.5	674.4	327.4
PERSONAL GOODS				
Burberry Gp	2104.0	5.0	2345.0	1623.5
PZ Cussons	204.0	-2.0	230.4	178.6
PHARMACEUTICALS & BIOTECHNOLOGY				
AstraZeneca	7458.0	-42.0	7580.0	5325.0
Dechra Pharma	2834.0	2.0	3036.0	2022.0
Genus	3178.0	-28.0	3206.0	2146.0
GlaxoSmithKline	1754.0	-8.2	1782.0	1418.0
Hikma Pharma	1915.0	-20.0	2200.0	1510.5
REAL ESTATE				
Assura	75.8	-0.3	76.1	52.5
Big Yellow Gp	1105.0	-28.0	1192.0	858.5
BMO Comm Prop	118.6	-0.8	135.4	106.0
British Land	575.6	-6.6	638.4	468.3
Captl & Count Prop	242.4	-2.5	270.5	184.8
CLS Hldgs	290.0	-1.5	291.5	204.0
Daejan Hldgs	5340.0	-10.0	6160.0	4715.0
Derwent London	3698.0	-46.0	3744.0	2779.0
Grainger	283.6	-8.6	292.2	205.8
Grt Portland Est	830.8	-1.4	832.2	649.4
Hammerson	297.2	-6.4	388.4	203.9
Land Securities	958.4	-5.8	964.2	735.4
LondonMetric Prop	232.6	-3.2	241.2	172.7
NewRiver Retail	194.0	-3.6	246.0	147.6
Primary Hlth Prop	147.2	0.2	147.2	108.2
Safestore Hldgs	756.0	0.0	756.0	506.5
Savills	990.0	-19.0	1009.0	678.5
SEGRO	894.0	0.8	894.0	585.2
Shaftesbury	907.0	-17.5	979.5	739.5
St Modwen Props	457.0	-6.5	472.0	373.0
TR Property IT	465.0	-1.0	466.0	353.5
Tritax Big Box	148.2	-2.0	159.7	130.0
UK Commercial Prop	87.7	-0.9	92.7	79.9
Unite Group	1251.0	4.0	1251.0	797.5
Workspace Gp	1111.0	3.0	1113.0	789.5
SOFTWARE & COMPUTER SERVICES				
Avast	448.0	3.2	450.8	259.6
Aveva Gp	4558.0	4.0	4558.0	2284.0
Computacenter	1511.0	-9.0	1525.0	952.0
FDM Group	972.0	5.0	994.0	647.0
Kainos Gp	592.0	-14.0	676.0	430.0
Micro Focus Intl	1132.8	18.4	2160.0	1004.0
Playtech	384.1	5.8	457.7	360.5
Sage Group	753.8	-2.0	820.4	567.0

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Softcat	1126.0	-3.0	1176.0	565.0
Sophos	565.0	-3.0	577.0	298.2
SUPPORT SERVICES				
Aggreko	829.8	-8.0	855.2	691.8
Ashtead Gp	2350.0	-41.0	2450.0	1586.5
Babcock Intl Grp	590.4	-3.6	594.2	416.7
Bunzl	2123.0	4.0	2551.0	1943.0
Capita	158.4	-3.6	173.1	99.9
DCC	6608.0	-50.0	7496.0	5680.0
Diploma	1842.0	-46.0	1902.0	1150.0
Electrocomp	653.6	-6.0	729.8	480.0
Equiniti	194.5	-0.1	236.2	186.2
Essentra	421.2	-2.8	442.0	325.4
Experian	2563.0	4.0	2631.0	1843.0
Ferguson	6722.0	-118.0	7004.0	4776.5
G4S	209.1	-4.4	234.3	168.3
Hays	166.7	-2.4	169.1	135.7
Homeserve	1205.0	-29.0	1266.0	849.0
Intertek Gp	5516.0	-14.0	5962.0	4509.0
IWG	408.6	-2.9	421.9	199.8
Network Int	579.0	2.0	628.0	513.0
Pagegroup	481.4	-4.8	539.0	367.8
Paypoint	1016.0	19.0	1118.0	748.0
Rentokil Initial	444.9	-2.6	467.8	315.9
Sanne Group	645.0	-11.0	752.0	450.0
Serco	155.6	-2.3	160.0	84.1
SIG	124.9	-0.1	153.0	99.3
Travis Perkins	1539.5	-75.0	1614.5	1012.0
TECHNOLOGY HARDWARE & EQUIPMENT				
Spirent Comms	211.0	-5.5	219.0	112.8
TOBACCO				
Br Am Tob	3060.0	-12.5	3197.5	2375.0
Imperial Brands	1703.2	-10.8	2713.5	1669.4
TRAVEL & LEISURE				
Carnival	3253.0	3.0	4630.0	3056.0
Cineworld Group	207.8	3.9	321.0	191.0
Compass Gp	1894.5	12.0	2138.0	1583.0
Dominos Pizza	309.8	0.8	309.8	221.2
easyJet	1338.0	-17.5	1358.5	854.8
EI Group	281.8	0.2	285.0	171.4
FirstGroup	120.4	-2.4	137.5	79.3
Flutter Ent	8800.0	-58.0	8900.0	5525.0
Go-Ahead Gp	2186.0	-22.0	2278.0	1480.0
GVC Hldgs	851.6	1.4	897.4	507.5
Intercontl Htls	5007.0	-57.0	5738.0	4230.4
Intl Cons Airl	554.0	-8.4	667.6	413.5
Marstons	127.9	-2.6	131.4	90.5
Mitchells & Butlers	449.0	-10.0	470.5	238.0
National Express	463.6	-4.6	468.2	361.4
PPHE Hotel Gp	1880.0	-20.0	1990.0	1610.0
Rank Gp	246.5	-3.0	249.5	135.0
Restaurant Grp	148.0	3.9	160.2	111.9
Stagecoach Gp	136.4	-1.7	177.0	115.5
TUI AG	1063.5	-18.0	1213.5	698.0
Wetherspoon (JD)	1601.0	7.0	1624.0	1066.0
Whitbread	4601.0	-97.0	5114.0	3988.0
William Hill	178.7	-2.3	205.2	132.3
Wizz Air Holdings	3950.0	3.0	3950.0	2722.0

	Price	Chg	High	Low
AIM 50				
Abcam	1335.0	9.0	1500.0	1017.0
Advanced Medical	261.0	-5.0	354.5	225.0
Alliance Pharma	78.6	0.4	80.4	60.0
ASOS	3201.0	-84.0	5074.0	2107.0
Blue Prism	1130.0	18.0	1472.0	788.0
Camellia	8950.0	125.0	11750.0	8600.0
Caretech Holdings	380.0	0.0	405.0	325.0
Central Asia Metals	211.5	1.5	266.5	180.0
Clinigen Group	871.0	-4.0	1069.0	721.0
CVS Group	1084.0	-21.0	1105.0	395.0
Dart Group	1482.0	3.0	1483.0	709.5
Diversified Gas & Oil	101.0	-1.5	117.0	97.0
Draper Esprit	490.0	12.0	548.0	410.0
Eland Oil & Gas	163.8	0.8	165.4	101.0
EMIS Group	1062.0	6.0	1242.0	864.0
Fevertree Drinks	2188.0	-60.0	2475.0	1732.5
First Derivatives	2480.0	-80.0	3555.0	2050.0
Frontier Devs	1220.0	-32.0	1254.0	740.0
Gamma Comms	1250.0	-25.0	1275.0	730.0
GB Group	676.0	-12.0	713.0	410.5
Gooch & Housego	1250.0	-2.5	1527.5	954.0
Hurricane Energy	46.4	1.4	53.6	38.7
Impax Asset Mgmt	296.0	2.5	296.0	184.0
Iomart Group	355.0	5.0	398.0	308.0
IQE	48.5	-0.4	98.0	41.8
James Halstead	505.0	0.0	532.0	405.0
Johnson Service Gp	179.8	-2.2	183.2	114.0
Keywords Studios	1407.0	-23.0	1838.0	900.0
Learning Tech Gp	122.0	-0.2	130.0	62.2
M&C Saatchi	151.0	-5.0	394.0	146.0
M.P. Evans	685.0	5.0	703.0	612.0
Majestic Wine	219.5	-2.5	318.0	219.0
Midwich Group	605.0	3.0	633.0	474.5
Mortgage Advice B	695.0	5.0	695.0	546.0
Next Fifteen Comm	476.0	5.0	658.0	465.0
Nichols	1612.5	-10.0	1880.0	1350.0
Numis Corporation	242.0	2.0	280.0	212.0
Polar Capital Hldgs	546.0	4.0	604.0	448.0
Purplebricks Gp	105.0	0.4	132.0	96.0
Redde	111.0	2.4	127.6	100.6
Renew Holdings	390.0	-4.0	436.5	333.0
RWS Holdings	656.0	12.0	656.0	450.0
Scapa Group	250.0	6.0	403.0	157.0
Secure Income REIT	420.0	-2.0	454.0	371.0
Serica Energy	124.0	0.0	143.4	103.6
Smart Metering Sys	543.0	12.5	665.0	310.0
Telford Homes	349.5	0.0	358.0	267.0
Thorpe (F.W.)	311.0	5.0	340.0	248.5
Watkin Jones	233.0	3.0	241.5	192.2
Young's Brew NV	1195.0	0.0	1238.0	1030.0
Young's Brew-A	1650.0	-20.0	1885.0	1322.5

MAIN CHANGES UK 350

Risers		%	Fallers		%
Ocado Gp	1325.00	9.7	Victrex	2300.00	-6.1
Finablr	208.00	7.2	Wood Gp(J)	351.30	-5.5
Virgin Money UK	178.80	5.2	Travis Perkins	1539.50	-4.6
Sirius Minerals	3.69	4.0	Barr (AG)	588.00	-4.4
Ascential	328.00	2.8	Royal Mail	208.50	-4.2
Restaurant Grp	148.00	2.7	Watches of Switz	325.00	-4.1
Cineworld Group	207.80	1.9	TI Fluid Systems	226.50	-4.0
Coats Group	72.15	1.9	Ferrexpo	143.40	-3.9
Paypoint	1016.00	1.9	Aston Martin	550.40	-3.7
Micro Focus Intl	1132.80	1.7	Tullow Oil	130.95	-3.6

EU SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
ADIDAS	282.75	0.80	296.35	180.10
AIR LIQUIDE	123.05	0.90	130.80	102.40
ALLIANZ AG	217.35	-1.45	223.80	172.16
AMADEUS IT GROUP	72.30	0.26	72.16	42.30
ANHEUSER BUSCH INBEV	71.87	0.17	92.71	57.35
ASML HOLDING NV	247.00	1.05	249.00	130.88
AXA	24.70	-0.14	25.38	18.54
BANCO SANTANDER	302.05	-2.15	402.00	300.65
BASF	68.22	-0.53	74.49	56.20
BAYER AG	68.70	-0.24	72.81	52.53
BBVA	4.78	-0.03	9.56	4.19
BMW	73.30	-0.32	77.75	58.70
BNP PARIBAS	50.97	-0.07	51.55	38.55
CRH	2950.00	-25.00	3014.00	1971.50
DAIMLER	51.20	-0.76	59.31	40.53
DANONE	74.72	0.10	82.00	60.28
DEUTSCHE POST AG	33.84	0.12	34.44	23.72
DEUTSCHE TELEKOM	15.24	0.02	16.25	14.10
ENEL	6.86	-0.01	6.98	4.74
ENGIE	14.36	0.02	15.12	11.99
ENI	13.71	-0.09	15.94	13.04
ESSILORLUXOTTICA	128.75	0.00	128.75	128.75
FRESENIUS MEDICAL CARE	66.56	0.16	76.32	56.64
IBERDROLA	8.93	0.01	9.54	6.02
INDITEX	28.26	0.03	32.37	2.55
ING GROEP NV	10.44	-0.03	12.05	8.34
INTESA SANPAOLO	2.30	-0.01	2.38	1.83
KERING	546.70	-5.20	551.90	380.70
KON KPN NV	2.80	-0.02	2.96	2.47
L'OREAL	258.70	1.70	265.00	195.25
LVMH MOET HENNESSY	407.30	0.55	408.65	243.25
MUENCHENER RUECKVE	260.60	0.20	260.40	185.10
NOKIA	21.88	0.00	21.88	21.88
ORANGE	15.00	0.10	15.01	13.15
ROYAL PHILIPS	42.15	0.04	44.34	29.10
SAFRAN	148.45	0.00	149.90	100.70
SANOFI	84.51	0.05	85.25	72.24
SAP SE	123.48	0.96	124.38	85.79
SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC	87.60	-0.74	88.44	57.58
SIEMENS AG	117.12	-0.22	117.70	85.00
SOCIETE GENERALE	28.56	0.21	32.85	21.13
TELEFONICA SA	6.95	0.10	9.18	5.94
TOTAL	47.64	-0.35	52.27	43.18
UNILEVER NV	53.80	0.29	57.56	46.03
VINCI	98.98	0.08	102.40	70.50
VIVENDI	24.92	0.00	26.42	20.93
VOLKSWAGEN AG	175.48	-1.22	183.46	136.26

CRYPTO A.M. DAILY POWERED BY BEQUANT

CRYPTOCURRENCIES

Name	Price (USDT)	(24h)
Bitcoin (BTC)	$ 7,328.33	-5.82%
Ethereum (ETH)	$ 147.61	-5.03%
Ripple (XRP)	$ 0.22	-4.29%
Bitcoin Cash (BCH)	$ 213.47	-5.07%
Litecoin (LTC)	$ 46.58	-4.75%
EOS.IO (EOS)	$ 2.69	-3.91%
Bitcoin SV (BSV)	$ 103.13	-5.41%
TRON (TRON)	$ 0.01	-4.28%
NEO (NEO)	$ 9.08	-5.19%
Cardano (ADA)	$ 0.03	-7.13%
CryptoCompare Large Cap Index		-3.89%
CryptoCompare Small Cap Index		-6.73%

Market	$198,898,820,576	
Bitcoin Volatility		3.00%
Bitcoin Volume on BEQUANT Exchange (USDT)	411,254,237	

Sources: Bequant.io, CryptoCompare.com Prices and data are correct as of 09:00, 01.12.2019 Crypto AM features in City AM every Tuesday. Previous Editions: www.cityam.com/crypto-insider Read more at: https://bequant.pro/cityam

CRYPTO & COFFEE

Bitcoin managed to buck the recent trend and settle the week higher, as the holidays over in the US saw market participants front load re-positioning flow given the futures contract expiring last Friday. As such, even though the price action over the weekend was somewhat choppy, Bitcoin remains in a bullish price channel and a test on $8,000 level is imminent.

The options skew is turning more bullish, especially the longer-dated structure. However, the reports that Virgil Griffith, who has lately been working at the Ethereum Foundation, has been arrested for allegedly going to a conference in North Korea and sharing his expertise in using cryptocurrency, could undermine the renewed risk appetite.

Even though the named individual is not part of the Bitcoin core developer team, the fact that he allegedly discussed how blockchain and cryptocurrency technology could be used by the DPRK to launder money and evade sanctions; is unlikely to bode well with authorities across the globe.

What's more is that Ethereum is about to enter a critical stage given the Istanbul hard fork scheduled for December 4 and any drama at this stage is not something the Ethereum Foundation is looking for.

US SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3M	169.77	-0.84	219.50	150.74
ABBOTT LABORATORIES	85.45	0.03	88.74	65.56
ADOBE INC	309.53	0.47	311.27	205.16
ALPHABET INC VTG-C	1304.96	-8.03	1334.87	976.22
ALPHABET-A	1304.09	-8.04	1333.54	1116.79
AMAZON.COM	1800.80	-17.71	2020.99	1343.96
AMERICAN EXPRESS	120.12	-0.21	128.57	89.50
APPLE INC	267.25	-0.59	267.84	142.19
AT&T	37.38	-0.28	39.63	27.36
BANK OF AMERICA	33.32	-0.10	33.47	22.73
BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY	220.30	-0.20	222.74	187.76
BOEING CO	366.18	-1.82	432.69	294.16
CATERPILLAR INC	144.73	-0.96	148.16	113.38
CHEVRON	117.13	-0.94	126.54	100.99
CISCO SYSTEMS	45.31	0.07	58.05	40.28
CITIGROUP	75.12	-0.60	76.12	49.26
COCA-COLA CO	53.40	-0.55	55.77	44.69
COMCAST	44.15	-0.27	46.97	33.07
DOW	53.37	-0.91	66.65	40.71
EBAY INC	35.52	-0.33	41.57	26.14
EXXON MOBIL	68.13	-0.57	83.38	65.51
FACEBOOK	201.64	-0.36	204.87	124.60
GOLDMAN SACHS GROUP	221.35	-1.60	223.29	156.35
HOME DEPOT INC	220.51	-2.49	238.85	158.14
HONEYWELL INTERNATIONAL	178.55	-0.87	182.01	124.83
IBM	134.45	0.68	151.36	107.57
INTEL	58.05	-0.46	58.90	43.46
JOHNSON & JOHNSON	137.49	-0.26	147.84	122.84
JPMORGAN CHASE & CO	131.76	-0.30	132.06	92.14
MASTERCARD INC	292.23	0.53	292.08	174.65
MCDONALD'S	194.48	-1.82	221.15	170.28
MEDTRONIC	111.39	-1.08	112.47	82.45
MERCK & CO	87.18	-0.43	87.61	71.15
MICROSOFT	151.38	-0.94	152.32	94.13
NETFLIX	314.66	-1.27	385.03	233.88
NIKE INC	93.49	-0.65	96.22	67.53
ORACLE	56.14	-0.47	60.15	42.69
PAYPAL HOLDINGS	108.01	0.26	121.30	96.64
PEPSICO	135.83	-0.08	140.28	118.61
PFIZER INC	38.52	-0.11	45.99	34.24
PROCTER & GAMBLE	122.06	0.30	124.94	87.36
TRAVELERS COMPANIES	136.72	-0.12	154.83	112.63
TWITTER	30.91	-0.26	45.42	28.89
UNITED HEALTH GROUP	279.87	-0.80	286.33	215.26
UNITED TECHNOLOGIES	148.34	-0.48	149.36	102.06
VERIZON COMMUNICATIONS	60.24	0.14	61.05	53.05
VISA	184.51	0.14	185.74	168.86
WALGREENS BOOTS ALLIANCE	59.60	-0.51	76.05	49.29
WALMART	119.09	0.33	120.98	85.82
WALT DISNEY CO	151.58	0.10	151.64	100.35
WELLS FARGO & CO	54.46	0.12	54.34	43.38

COMMODITIES

Gold	1454.65	-0.72	Copper Cash Official	5881.25	-44.00
Silver (Pence)	1694.50	-11.00	Aluminium Cash Official	1764.75	-5.50
Silver (Cents)	1312.00	-11.00	Nickel Cash Official	14065.00	-375.00
Krugerrand	1477.71	+7.03	Aluminium Alloy Cash Official	1325.00	-20.00
Brent Crude	63.87	-0.19	Natural Gas	43.19	+1.27
Platinum	890.00	-11.00	Tin Cash Official	16445.00	+72.50
British Sovereign	345.35	+1.61	Zinc Cash Official	2312.25	-22.50
Lead Cash Official	1925.75	-19.75	White Sugar	343.20	+1.60

TOURIST RATES

Canada	1.6326	New Zealand	1.8695
Croatia	7.8755	Norway	11.29
Czech Republic	27.55	Poland	4.4552
Denmark	8.3321	Singapore	1.6447
Hong Kong	9.5858	Sweden	11.77
Iceland	140.05	Switzerland	1.2284
India	81.68	Turkey	7.0657
Israel	4.041	United States	1.2321

WORLD INDICIES

	Price	Chg	%Chg
FTSE 100	7346.53	-69.90	-0.94
FTSE 250	20812.60	-210.95	-1.00
FTSE All-Share	4066.73	-37.81	-0.92
FTSE AIM All-Share	922.48	-1.33	-0.14
S&P 500	3140.98	-12.65	-0.40
Dow Jones I.A	28051.41	-112.59	-0.40
Nasdaq Composite	8665.47	-39.70	-0.46
Xetra DAX	13236.38	-9.20	-0.07
CAC 40	5905.17	-7.55	-0.13
Swiss Market Index	10493.24	-35.90	-0.34
ISEQ Overall Index	6998.06	-28.32	-0.40
FTSEurofirst 300	1593.70	-6.64	-0.41
Hang Seng	26346.49	-547.24	-2.03
Nikkei	23293.91	-115.23	-0.49
STI Index	3193.92	-6.69	-0.21
ASX All Ordinaries	6948.00	-17.60	-0.25

ENTREPRENEURS

IN YOUR BLOOD

Katherine Denham finds out how Thriva is putting its customers' health to the test

STANDING in the middle of a street in Farringdon, it's hard to know if I'm in the right place. After scanning the list of businesses by the side of the door, I finally spot the name Thriva, and enter a reception-less building where I'm meeting co-founder and chief executive Hamish Grierson.

Thriva specialises in blood tests, and while I half-expect the office to be clinical, it feels far more like a tech company than a lab. This young business might not be big and bold, or even necessarily disruptive, but it is doing something potentially very useful.

If you've ever needed to take a blood test, you're probably familiar with how painful the process can be — and not just the needles. More often than not, you have to book the time off work to visit your doctors' surgery, where an over-stretched health practitioner will take your blood. You then have to wait weeks for the results, by which point you're probably feeling better anyway.

So what if you could take a blood sample at your own convenience and be able to see your results online within a couple of days? It's an inherently simple idea, but that's the basic premise of what Thriva does.

You don't need a doctor's referral to use the service. Instead, you answer some basic questions on Thriva's website to gauge what your health focus is. The firm will then recommend the types of things that you might want testing — from cholesterol to liver function, vitamin B12 to iron. Tests start at £24 for an "essential package", and you can also subscribe for regular blood testing to track your health.

Thriva sends you a test to collect a sample (a vial of blood, taken from your finger, can be tested against the different biomarkers), which you send back in the post. "The labs analyse that sample within four hours of it arriving," explains Grierson, who founded the business in 2016 alongside Eliot Brooks (chief operations officer) and Tom Livesey (chief technology officer).

"Once the results arrive, we put them in front of one of our NHS-trained GPs, and within 36 to 48 hours from the moment you posted it, you will get a notification saying your results are in and asking you to log in to your personalised dashboard."

In rare cases, Grierson says the results show up something that needs to be addressed with a GP. "For the vast majority of people who don't have a serious issue, but who want to improve their health, we help explain what that test marker is doing and explain what to do about it."

NOT IN VEIN

The inspiration for the company came when Grierson and Brooks were working together at payments company Travelex. Brooks was all too familiar with the hassle of blood tests for people with pre-existing medical issues, as he had to ask for time off work to get a test every three months because of an inherited cholesterol condition. The pair questioned why there had been such a shift across industries which have put consumers in control of services, but not so much in healthcare.

"We have seen these amazing innovations in the way we shop, bank and travel, but what was missing was consumer-centric proactive products to help with wellbeing," Grierson says. "It's still very much in its infancy."

Of course, wearable fitness trackers come to mind, and Grierson agrees that these devices can help achieve certain goals. But while wearables can give you a superficial idea of how your body is performing, he argues that Thriva does more. "It helps you understand something more deterministic of how you feel, and how exposed you are to long-term risk."

Eliot Brooks, Hamish Grierson, and Tom Livesey founded Thriva in 2016

Indeed, many of Thriva's customers are buying the home kits not because they are unwell, but to use the information to try to prevent illness later down the line. "If you get sick, you get caught by the healthcare system, but how do you stay on the front foot? That's the place we want to play."

Grierson says people often see health as binary — that you're either ill or well. But people, he says, can be anywhere on a spectrum. "For those who want to move towards optimal health, that's where we come in. The GP service can't help them do that, and in fairness it's not designed to."

The co-founder also acknowledges that if more people feel in control of their health and are able to stay well for longer, the NHS might be in better shape than it is today.

While you might expect Thriva's typical customer to be young health-conscious types who have replaced the pub with the gym, the customer base is broad, ranging from 20 years old right through to 80. "Some people want more energy, are looking to have kids, improve fitness performance or sleep better, and there are those that just want peace of mind," Grierson says.

INFAMOUS THERANOS

We can't talk about a blood-testing business without mentioning Theranos, the infamous healthtech firm that falsely claimed to have invented a machine that could test for hundreds of conditions with just a finger-prick's worth of blood. Theranos began its downward spiral in 2015, and eventually shut down in 2018. Its disgraced founder has now been indicted for wire fraud.

I ask if Thriva was affected by the scandal. What Theranos claimed to be able to do — test so many factors with so little blood — is currently impossible. Isn't Thriva promising something similar?

Grierson is of course keen to point out the differences between the companies — and not just because Thriva tests require more blood.

"While Theranos was building testing technology, we are deliberately using tried and tested technology. It's had no impact on our customers over here, but every single investor has been alert to the issue."

He admits that the early fundraising was tricky, because investors had to be persuaded that people were going to pay money to bleed into a tube. "But that's totally changed, because they now all see it's a means to an end — the end being the proactive health revolution, which is hard to argue with now."

This brings me onto my final question: could healthtech — a term which didn't exist a few years ago — be a fad? While today we are increasingly using gadgets to help us understand our health, that's not to say the next generations will.

Grierson, unsurprisingly, thinks this is just the beginning. "When you ask people if they would rather live longer, or live a higher proportion of that life well, it's always the latter," he says. "If you look at the core engineering of human psychology, there is something innate in our desire to live and live well — it's a survival mechanism. Does the idea of wanting to live better for longer go away? I don't think it does."

FORUM

EDITED BY RACHEL CUNLIFFE

Farewell to a decade of seismic change and existential anxiety

Michael Hayman

YOU'D be forgiven for not having a moment to notice, but this is a decade that is fast running out of time.

The 2010s began with the unease of the consequences of the financial crash. They end with another dose of unease, this time both political and economic.

Theresa May tried to win an election with the message that "nothing has changed", and on the face of it those words could also sum up the last 10 years. We're back where we started.

So when we reflect, what will we make of the 2010s? A decade where nothing much happened, or the decade that changed everything?

Anxiety might well mark the bookends of this era, but during that time we have seen a series of seismic transformations, from social attitude shifts to technology revolutions — and everything in between.

Throughout it all has been a perpetual seesaw, balanced between positivity and pessimism about the consequences of change.

Right now, these appear to be tough days for those with positive dispositions. While paid-up members of team optimism have spent much time making the case that change has been great for the public good, there has been no shortage of gloom-mongers — despairing on issues from climate catastrophes to economic insecurity — competing to capture the public mood.

And it's not hard to see where they are coming from — not least because, while people in previous decades faced many of the same challenges, this is one in which the free availability of technology has woken us up and made us hypersensitive to the consequences of such rapid change.

In 2010, smartphones were the preserve of the privileged. By the end of 2020, there will be 3.2bn worldwide, and the effect of this mass provision has been one of the biggest wakeup calls in history.

The last decade has been one of widespread regime change, and the insurgency has been driven not so much by governments as by technology companies, which have largely replaced traditional industries as the most valuable entities on the planet.

But with that power has come reaction, as yesterday's heroes — Uber and Facebook, to name but two — have been recast as today's villains.

Few could have thought at the London launch of Uber in 2012 that this symbol of progress would find itself banned and banished just seven years later. In the same way, the data scandal concerning Facebook and Cambridge Analytica would have seemed far-fetched — impossible, even — to a young and aspirational Mark Zuckerberg.

It's a major disappointment for those who believed that these companies were the change the world needed — even worse if you had faith that the tech giants would only improve things.

To some extent, they have lived up to the hype. While few can doubt the transformative effect of recent technologies, perhaps the most important legacy they leave to this decade is their role in accelerating social attitudes, lifting the expectations of people living in a digital age.

And so we come to the General Election, typified by visceral division played out and amplified online, underlined by a complete inability to find common ground

They have urged us into expecting more from our leaders and from those we buy from, empowering us with the tools to voice our displeasure when it isn't so.

But with the huge benefits derived from a better connected and more accountable world has come a cost. Rather than waking up fresh as a daisy, we've emerged from our slumber with a sore head — and a lot angrier.

And so we come to the current General Election, typified by visceral division played out and amplified online, underlined by a complete inability to find common ground or compromise.

To that extent, we leave the 2010s much more politicised than we entered it. Many will feel that ripping up the political consensus was well overdue, but we really have no idea where it goes from here.

The decade began with a coalition of compromise, and ends with leaders who cannot seem to even share a civil word. We are a world away from the Number 10 Rose Garden moment, when David Cameron and Nick Clegg appeared as the very model of a modern major political alliance, grounded in gentle utility and partnership.

Fast-forward, and it hardly seems plausible to imagine that today's most likely political double act, Jeremy Corbyn and Nicola Sturgeon, would even want to share the same country, let alone a garden.

But our current short-term obsessions with the machinations and manoeuvres of General Elections will soon become ancient history.

In looking ahead, it was Einstein who made the point that nothing happens until something moves. This has been a decade where so much has moved, and yet so little is really understood about what happens next. Our ability to find answers to this decade of questions will be the story of the next 10 years.

Michael Hayman MBE is co-founder of Seven Hills and co-author of Mission: How the Best in Business Break Through.

People from all backgrounds deserve the opportunity to succeed in our great city

Catherine McGuinness

AS WE draw closer to the end of another momentous year in politics, it's a time to reflect and look forward to the future.

With all the Brexit noise, social mobility is one of the many issues that just hasn't had enough airtime recently. Too often, people from less financially advantaged families lack opportunities, and sometimes struggle to find a place within the workforce or climb the career ladder.

As a society we must do more to increase social mobility, ensuring that people receive the guidance, support, and opportunities to find a career that they are passionate about. That's why the City of London Corporation launched our ambitious 10-year social mobility strategy, which seeks to help level the capital's playing field, and make it fairer too, helping everyone to participate and succeed.

We want to connect young Londoners to the career opportunities offered in the City and across the capital. So, in June this year, we linked over 175 global businesses, including Google, KPMG and Amazon, with more than 5,000 young Londoners from 130 schools, sixth-form colleges and youth groups for the City's biggest ever careers festival.

I was proud to watch first-hand as businesses talked pupils through the work experience and skills needed for successful careers in their industries.

But social mobility is not all about skills and talent. It's about care and education, too.

Evidence shows that during the school summer break, children from disadvantaged backgrounds make significant learning losses when compared to their more advantaged counterparts.

That's why, as part of our role as a major London academies sponsor, we set up a new summer holidays scheme, reaching over 200 children and providing cooking classes, sports, education, and cultural activities.

Schools are of course playing a leading role in increasing social mobility, but many businesses are too. That's why I was so delighted to help launch the world's first Social Mobility Employer Index, in partnership with the Social Mobility Commission and the Social Mobility Foundation.

It ranks the top UK employers which have taken the most action to improve social mobility in the workplace, incentivising firms to improve access to top quality jobs for candidates from all backgrounds.

But it is clear to me that many firms can — and must — do more.

When one in five people employed in London don't earn a wage they can live on, we all have a responsibility to consign this statistic to the history books.

Paying the living wage is an important part of that responsibility. This year, we took over the London Underground with a poster campaign that reached over five million people, encouraging more organisations to pay staff at least the London Living Wage. We want all firms to recognise that paying the rate is not just the right thing to do, it's good for their businesses too.

One year on from the launch of our social mobility strategy, we remain clear and determined to do as much as possible to ensure that people from all backgrounds have the opportunities to succeed.

Catherine McGuinness is policy chair at the City of London Corporation.

LETTERS
TO THE EDITOR

The gift of time

[Re: The UK's social care system is in crisis — but technology can help ease the burden]

There is an increasing need for care for vulnerable people — be they old, infirm or living with dementia, learning difficulties or mental health issues. However, public spending on adult social care in the UK fell by 9.9 per cent in real terms between 2009 and 2017, and continues to fall. An ageing population and younger adults with disabilities living longer mean that the system is under huge strain, and forecasts predict an £18bn shortfall by 2030.

The current workforce and infrastructure cannot cope with the numbers of people and the acuity of need. Forecasts show that social care will need at least another 500,000 workers by 2035, and this is in a sector where there is already great difficulty recruiting suitable staff.

One of the answers is real investment in new technology, not to take the place of people, but to ensure that those who do the caring have the "gift of time" to let them care more. To achieve this quantum shift, Care England (the largest representative body for independent providers of adult social care) is calling for the newly elected government to incentivise social care players to invest in technology with innovative new care systems, thereby allowing some of the need to be met.

At a recent Social Care TechBrek event, which brought together innovators and care providers, the participants urged the government to incentivise the social care sector to find new solutions to create a better and more efficient health and wellbeing offer for all of us.

Our future depends on it.

Professor Martin Green OBE, chief executive, Care England

BEST OF TWITTER

Who'd have thought when Boris Johnson was writing all those articles in the 1990s criticising Jacques Delors for his "social Europe" vision and for thwarting Thatcherism that he would end up wanting to leave the EU so he could give more state aid to failing industries
@GeorgeWParker

Whomever came up with this wrong-headed approach to changing state aid + procurement policy for the @Conservatives knows this is probably the kind of level playing field the EU cares most about. V strange set of priorities (on divergence) otherwise for a party on the right.
@AllieRenison

State aid, buy local, buy British. Bloody hell. Global Britain? Liberal Boris? Free market Tories? The parochialism of Theresa May lives on!
@TheScepticIsle

Shock as new poll reveals enormous increase in uninformed guesswork by overpaid political pundits.
@haveigotnews

An AI machine given 8,000 cats' names and then instructed to come up with its own suggested the following: Cheesemonger, Lilith the Vamp, Mr. Sinister, This Guy, Funky Moe and You're Telling A Lie.
@qikipedia

The gig economy needs creative regulation, not a knee-jerk ban

Sam Gyimah

THE GIG economy is a central part of what makes London the vibrant, world-class city it is. From Deliveroo to TaskRabbit to Uber, technological innovation is enabling people to work in ways they never could before and serve the needs of customers.

It should be no surprise that more than one in five of London's working-age population are employed in this fast-growing sector.

But regulation is lagging behind on how to support a kind of labour model that falls between traditional full-time work and self-employment.

Whether it concerns tax, pensions, paid leave, or other employment rights, politicians need to grasp the nettle and develop regulation that supports and enables the positive benefits that the gig economy can deliver.

Unfortunately, neither Labour not the Conservatives appear up for the task. Labour does not seem to comprehend the benefits of the model and would regulate it out of existence, while the Tories are ignoring the challenges it raises almost entirely.

What we need are imaginative and creative ways of regulating this thriving sector — and the Liberal Democrats have some. Wherever you are in London, you are touched by the gig economy one way or another. Failing to get the regulation of giants like Uber right will seriously hobble London's prospects. So what can we do about it?

First, we need to modernise employment rights to make them fit for this new way of working. Recognising that gig economy workers like Uber drivers have some of the characteristics of employees and some of being self-employed, what we need is a new "dependent contractor" employment status, that sits in between these two binaries, with entitlements to basic rights such as minimum earnings levels, sick pay, and holiday entitlement.

This should go hand-in-hand with a review of the tax and National Insurance status of employees, dependent contractors, and freelancers, to ensure fair and comparable treatment.

Second, this type of gig economy model isn't going to work unless we tackle the challenge of zero-hours contracts. The Labour party understands that this is a pressing issue, but its response is to ban zero-hours contracts entirely. This would be a mistake. Yes, they can be exploitative in some instances, but for plenty of people, this flexible model works.

However, in recognition of the insecurity they bring, especially at the poorly paid end of the market, the Liberal Democrats would set a 20 per cent higher minimum wage for people on zero-hour contracts at times of normal demand. This would go some way towards compensating them for the uncertainty of fluctuating hours of work. We would also give workers the right to request a fixed-hours contract after 12 months, not to be unreasonably refused.

> **We must modernise employment rights to make them fit for this new way of working**

There are other things we can do to ensure that gig economy workers don't lose out, such as reviewing pension rules, protecting portability between roles, and shifting the burden of proof in tribunals regarding employment status from individual to employer. Once we have a fairer overarching model, we can engage with the specific regulatory challenges facing parts of the sector — such as Uber's apparent breach of safety regulations, cited as the direct reason why Transport for London refused to renew its licence.

But before we get into the minutiae, what we need is an approach that embraces the changes going on in technology and the nature of employment and adapts our system in response. The Conservatives commissioned a review but have failed to act on many of its findings. The plight of workers in insecure, poorly paid work just doesn't seem to be a priority for them.

Our approach is pragmatic — not pining for the past like Labour, and not ignoring the issue like the Tories.

The Liberal Democrats are now the natural party of business. We would build a system that is both inclusive and flexible, protecting employees and giving them a voice, while enabling innovative business models to flourish in a modern, dynamic economy.

Sam Gyimah is the Liberal Democrat shadow cabinet business spokesperson.

DEBATE

Should we be concerned that the UK reportedly has a 'particularly extreme form of capitalism'?

YES

CHRISTOPHER MCKENNA

The proliferation of environmentally damaging industrial practices, the social divisions arising from monopoly power, and the inadequate response to the 2008 crisis have all eroded public trust in capitalism and contributed to the widespread view that the UK's capitalist system is no longer working.

When companies post strong financial results but fail to deliver adequate social and environmental standards, they are effectively claiming "fake profits" rather than "fair profits". The true cost of their activities has not been fully counted.

If it is to work, capitalism depends upon balancing those two goals.

As the new British Academy report outlines, we need to rethink the basic principles of capitalism to better reflect the inequities in the system and help corporations fulfil their social purpose. Capitalism is not an end in itself but a means to achieve economic progress in an equitable way. It is ours to create and also ours to reform. And systematic reform is always a better solution than settling for extremism.

Professor Christopher McKenna is co-director of the Global History of Capitalism Project at Oxford University.

NO

EAMONN BUTLER

This country is capitalist only in name. Business is already forced into the state's purposes — its push for social responsibility, its equality agenda, its "green" ambitions. Most regulation is counterproductive, cost-raising, and competition-killing. And don't complain about institutional investors when company law has stripped small shareholders of power. Fix the law.

Academics have no idea what capitalism is. They just want to spend investors' cash on their middle-class problems. But who should decide a company's "purpose" — the investors who put their money at risk, or academics and ideologues like the shadow chancellor?

The purpose of business is to make profits. In open markets, you can only make profits by creating more value for people than you use up. That's what has pulled a billion people out of abject poverty in just 30 years, not the previous 70 years of state direction.

Rising wealth is what empowers us to solve problems — and for that we need more and purer capitalism, not less.

Dr Eamonn Butler is director of the Adam Smith Institute.

CITY A.M.
Fountain House,
3rd Floor, 130 Fenchurch Street,
London, EC3M 5DJ
Tel: 020 3201 8900
Email: news@cityam.com

abc
Certified Distribution
from 30/09/2019 till
27/10/2019 is 86,084

Editorial Editor **Christian May** | Deputy Editor **Andy Silvester**
News Editor **Josh Martin** | Comment & Features Editor **Rachel Cunliffe**
Lifestyle Editor **Steve Dinneen** | Sports Editor **Frank Dalleres**
Creative Director **Billy Breton**
Commercial Sales Director **Jeremy Slattery** | Head of Distribution **Gianni Cavalli**

Distribution helpline
If you have any comments about the distribution of City A.M. please ring 0203 201 8955, or email distribution@cityam.com

Our terms and conditions for external contributors can be viewed at cityam.com/terms-conditions

Printed by West Ferry Printers Ltd, Kimpton Rd, Luton LU2 0SX

MARKETING

THE XMAS ENDGAME

Luke Graham asks whether retailers have wasted money on festive adverts

AN ESTIMATED £6.8bn has been spent on creating and buying airtime for this year's crop of Christmas commercials — up nearly five per cent on last year's spend.

Certainly, the ads boast high production values, but was this money well spent, or would these brands have been better off holding onto the cash and hoping that Santa brings them increased sales this festive period?

EMOTIONAL HIGHS

Let's start by looking at whether the adverts this year actually connected with viewers.

The most high-profile Christmas ad is always, of course, John Lewis. The retailer's annual offering has become something of an institution since it teamed up with creative agency Adam & Eve/DDB back in 2007.

But it's been a tough year for John Lewis, which reported its first ever half-year loss in September. To save money this Christmas, the retailer released a single commercial for both its John Lewis and Waitrose brands. The ad, featuring an excitable dragon called Edgar, still set the company back an estimated £7m.

So far, it has been viewed 8.7m times on YouTube. But was it effective at connecting with audiences?

According to research by video company Unruly, 38 per cent of consumers had a strong emotional response to the campaign. This is not bad. But it wasn't as successful at pulling viewers' heartstring as Very's "Get More Out of Giving", which came top with 40 per cent of viewers feeling very emotional — a result that's twice as intense as the UK norm. Very's ad sees a street of residents working together to give their elderly neighbour a present.

"Some may be surprised to see Very ahead of John Lewis and Waitrose, but this shows how valuable it is to test ads against a large sample of people who accurately represent the mood of the UK," explains Rebecca Waring, a global vice president at Unruly.

"Very has tapped into this year's zeitgeist with great success. The ad is whimsical, old-fashioned and innocent, with an emotive soundtrack."

Based on Unruly's research, several of this year's other Christmas commercials achieved strong emotional engagement with around a third of audiences. But while the adverts might pack an emotional punch, that doesn't necessarily mean their respective brands will be front of mind when customers go out to the shops.

"Most Christmas ads won't be remembered — 89 per cent are immediately forgotten, with a mere four per cent being remembered favourably," says Paul Mellor, co-founder and managing director of Mellor&Smith.

This, of course, is not to say that there aren't any good Christmas ads. "John Lewis' offerings have become a tradition in their own right," Mellor adds. "And Sainsbury's advert from five years ago, Christmas Eve 1914, doesn't leave a dry eye in the house."

It's worth remembering that Christmas adverts are also potentially lucrative opportunities for merchandising. Fans of this year's John Lewis offering can visit stores and buy their own Edgar the Dragon for £15, while there have been reports of huge queues outside branches of Aldi, with customers pushing and fighting to get their hands on a Kevin the Carrot plush toy.

But not everyone is a fan of the discount chain's festive orange mascot.

"Fine, it's a cute carrot," says Mellor, commenting on Aldi's Christmas campaign. "But generally these ads have no real message, and gives us nothing that we haven't seen before. Boring."

DIGITAL DECEMBER

Another knock against this year's campaigns is the fact that only 20 per cent of brands made a version that's optimised for mobile, according to the tech company Vidsy.

Instead, most of them simply posted their TV version across social media, a technique which generally underperforms versus content that's optimised for the platform. This is a problem, because roughly 60 per cent of audiences prefer watching content online, according to a Google study.

"Today, effective video advertising is about reaching people with quality creative at the right time, right place and, importantly, right fit for platform and ad placement," says Gerard Keeley, Vidsy's chief executive and co-founder.

"With huge budgets being spent at Christmas, it's certainly no time for exception and seems a missed opportunity not to consider mobile video best practice with your brand advertising."

The fixation on making TV adverts — and spending the huge amounts that a decent television campaign requires — is part of an outdated way of thinking in the marketing industry, according to Simon Pont, co-founder of brand growth agency Big Blue.

"The agency old guard will of course tout an old-school solution in protection of their own margin squeeze," he argues. "They still think that you have to spend your way into people's hearts and minds with £500,000-plus production budgets and £2m airtime spends, just to put 30 seconds of video in front of people — who will do both watching and up to 80 per cent of the Christmas shopping from the double-screening comfort of their sofas."

Pont adds that, in the age of Netflix and streaming, the Christmas TV commercial has become an anachronism.

"What stole our hearts and column inches in 2007 isn't a rinse-and-repeat practice that can still work with equal effect in 2019."

FOMO HO HO

Clearly, simply spending millions on high-profile TV adverts is not an efficient strategy. People might like watching them, but brands still have a lot to learn when it comes to optimising their content for online and digital.

Bearing in mind the increasing costs of rents and wages, it's a surprise that high street chains are still spending so much on glitzy commercials. But perhaps the reason they are doing so is simply due to an all-too-human fear.

"There is a sense that if you didn't do one of these ads, things would be worse for you," Kantar's chief growth officer Jane Bloomfield told the BBC.

"I think there is an element of fear of missing out. That's why brands try to stagger the release of their ads so they can achieve maximum impact."

Fear of missing out is an understandable emotion, but perhaps not a logical one. Brands need to get over this anxiety, and spend their money more wisely next Christmas.

Social media lessons from TikTok, Tencent and Weibo

THE AVERAGE consumer would be forgiven for not knowing their Tencent from their Sina Weibo. In fact, it's unlikely that they have heard of either platform. Yet these are two of the biggest social media companies in the world, bringing in billions in revenue each year.

From transferring money, playing games, and even booking doctors appointments, for Chinese consumers, most aspects of their lives can be controlled via a social network. And despite Whatsapp recently announcing plans to add in-app payments, the west lags behind.

But at Hootsuite, we expect more Chinese social customs and technologies to spread globally — creating a bigger need for businesses to stay ahead of the advancements from across the Pacific.

It's important to understand what sets the east apart from the west: namely, its willingness to quickly experiment and learn when it comes to new technology.

Chinese social platforms are constantly being updated, with new functionality added wherever possible. Features that don't get utilised are quickly canned, and those that flourish are then refined over time.

And this approach is paying off. China's traditionally closed tech market has been spreading globally. A prime example is the social media platform TikTok. The short-form video app has suddenly grown in popularity across the world, with 1.2bn downloads globally since its debut in September 2016.

And the brands outside of China which adopted the platform early have certainly seen the benefit.

Fashion label Guess, for example, was the first US partner for TikTok, with its #InMyDenim challenge.

The campaign had 33m users get involved, driving both reach and conversions, while also bringing the concept of a hashtag challenge to audiences worldwide.

It is rumoured that Instagram will soon introduce a feature that could rival TikTok. Given Instagram's history in quickly adopting popular features, western brands should already be implementing this short-form video content into their 2020 strategies.

Over the coming years, the lines are likely to blur between eastern and western social platforms. But western brands should watch the region closely. Those that get ahead of the curve by replicating, refining, and improving upon social strategies which have seen success in the east, may well reap the benefits in their own markets, getting a foothold over slower competitors in the process.

Stéphanie Genin is global vice president of enterprise marketing at Hootsuite.

OFFICE POLITICS

No, your CEO can't come paint our office

If your business wants to work with a charity, here's how to have the best possible impact

Alex Stephany

TWO YEARS ago, I launched Beam, a tech-for-good startup that crowdfunds employment training for homeless people and supports them into stable, paid work.

Ever since we started to gain visibility, a number of brands have approached us with different propositions for demonstrating their corporate social responsibility (CSR) agendas.

To paint a picture of what these approaches are like, the other day someone from a multi-billion dollar company got in touch to ask if their board could paint our office. They wanted some photos of their top brass in action.

Moving on briefly from the fact that many startups like us work from coworking spaces, I wanted to reply: "Nothing will make your employees laugh harder than the sight of their chief executive stuck up a ladder with a paint roller."

This is CSR that was stale as old biscuits 10 years ago. So why do companies still revert back to it?

With this in mind, here are my four pieces of advice for companies looking to partner with charitable organisations, especially in the run-up to Christmas and the New Year.

COLLABORATE

True CSR requires collaboration. It shouldn't start with a ready-baked idea where charities and social enterprises only have the option to say yes or no.

It's great to come with ideas. But also prepare to be challenged if what you suggest doesn't align with an organisation's current, urgent needs.

The right CSR will benefit your company in all kinds of ways. But if it's benefiting the giver more than the receiver, ask yourself if that's the CSR you really should be doing.

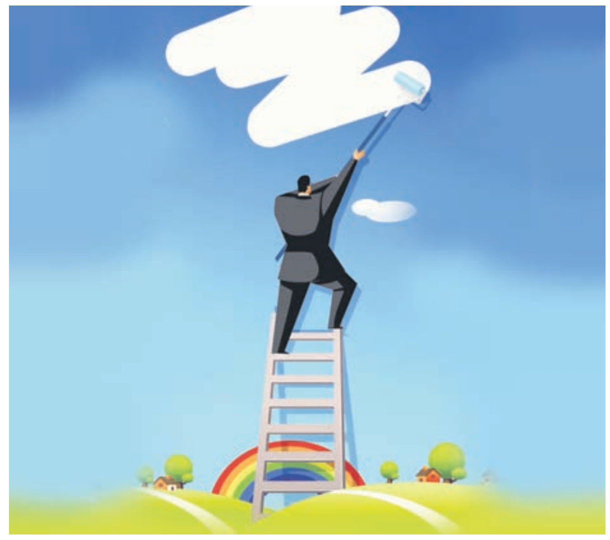
PLAY TO YOUR STRENGTHS

Rethink your "annual volunteering day". Would you want someone that you haven't even interviewed working at your business for a day a year? The coordination costs alone would be a huge time suck. The same is true for a charity or social enterprise.

Instead, why not leverage the skills within your own team?

For instance, Beam has long received pro-bono support from global law firm Herbert Smith Freehills. Its lawyers could help in various ways, but it has the greatest impact by focusing on its core expertise of providing legal advice.

And in the unlikely event that your company doesn't have any relevant skills, it may sound crass, but often the smartest thing to do is actually pretty simple: write a cheque.



Nothing will make your employees laugh harder than the sight of their chief executive stuck up a ladder with a paint roller

MEASURE YOUR IMPACT

Think again if the organisation that you're supporting can't measure its impact or the impact that you're having together. How else can you build a lasting partnership to deliver growing value for the organisation you've chosen to support?

Your company can't celebrate progress without knowing its financial numbers. Nor can you logically pat yourself on the back for CSR if you're not measuring your impact.

So don't give your charity partner lots of extra work that will cost them time and money, but make sure at least a couple of basic key performance indicators will be actively measured and worked on.

DON'T WASTE PEOPLE'S TIME

Many charities and social enterprises accept volunteering offers because they think that they'll lead to what they usually desperately need: cash to pay their team. If you won't donate, tell them upfront. If you might, estimate a range at the earliest opportunity.

Provide realistic timelines, and stick to them as you would for a client: they may be relying on those funds to deliver critical services. You need to prioritise your time, and so do they.

So these are my four golden rules for CSR. What have I missed?

Alex Stephany is founder and chief executive of Beam.

RUN FOR CHARITY

Fit4Change
Free

If you need the extra motivation to keep fit this winter, this app turns your exercise into charitable donations. Just pick an activity — such as walking, running or cycling — and Fit4Change rewards money per mile to a charity of your choice, which is paid from the advertising revenue the app generates.

COFFEE BREAK

SUDOKU

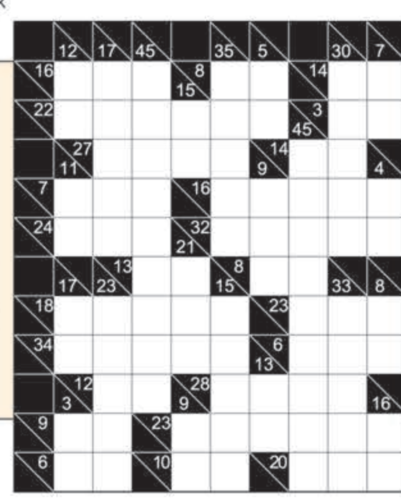
Place the numbers from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9 to solve this tricky Sudoku puzzle.

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

KAKURO

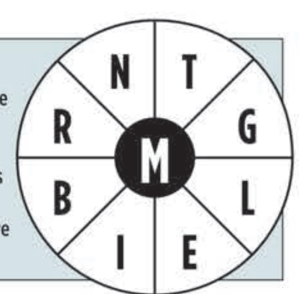
Fill the grid so that each block adds up to the total in the box above or to the left of it.

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.

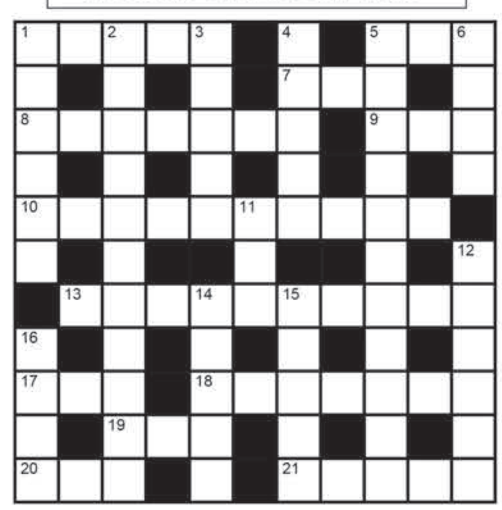


WORDWHEEL

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 Informal restaurants (5)
5 Remote place used by outlaws (3)
7 Fuss (3)
8 Cut into thin slices (5,2)
9 Mingle (3)
10 Readiness to embark on bold new ventures (10)
13 Basis (10)
17 Excavate (3)
18 Item eaten on Shrove Tuesday (7)
19 Plant with flowers used in brewing (3)
20 Punk rocker Stuart Goddard, better known as Adam ___ (3)
21 Encounters (5)

DOWN
1 Rides a bike (6)
2 Premeditation (11)
3 Cut the wool from (5)
4 Frolic (5)
5 Make docile and tractable (11)
6 Succeeding (4)
11 Fill out (3)
12 Heavenly beings (6)
14 Cold and invigorating (5)
15 Per ___, yearly (5)
16 Approximation of quantity, degree or worth (4)

LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTIONS

QUICK CROSSWORD

T	U	N	I	C	■	S	O	L	E	S
E	■	O	■	R	U	E	■	I	■	W
P	A	S	S	E	■	A	P	P	L	E
E	■	T	■	M	■	■	E	■	■	D
E	A	R	■	A	U	S	T	E	R	E
■	■	I	■	T	■	U	■	V	■	■
P	E	L	L	E	T	S	■	A	C	T
R	■	■	E	■	■	P	■	S	■	O
E	A	S	E	L	■	E	X	I	S	T
S	■	P	■	Y	E	N	■	O	■	E
S	N	A	K	E	■	D	E	N	I	M

KAKURO

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

SUDOKU

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

WORDWHEEL

The nine-letter word was EXPLOSIVE

TRAVEL

48 HOURS IN...

MINSK, BELARUS

WHERE TO STAY

Minsk is often voted Europe's least liveable city, but that's nothing to worry about so long as you don't actually live there. Check into **Hotel Europe**, keep your return ticket handy, and enjoy our guide to Belarus's capital.

WHERE TO GO

You don't go to Minsk and not check out **Mir Castle**. Crenellation fans look away now, but if you're into turrets this 16th century fortification will have you screaming in unbridled delight. And you'd better believe it's a UNESCO site.

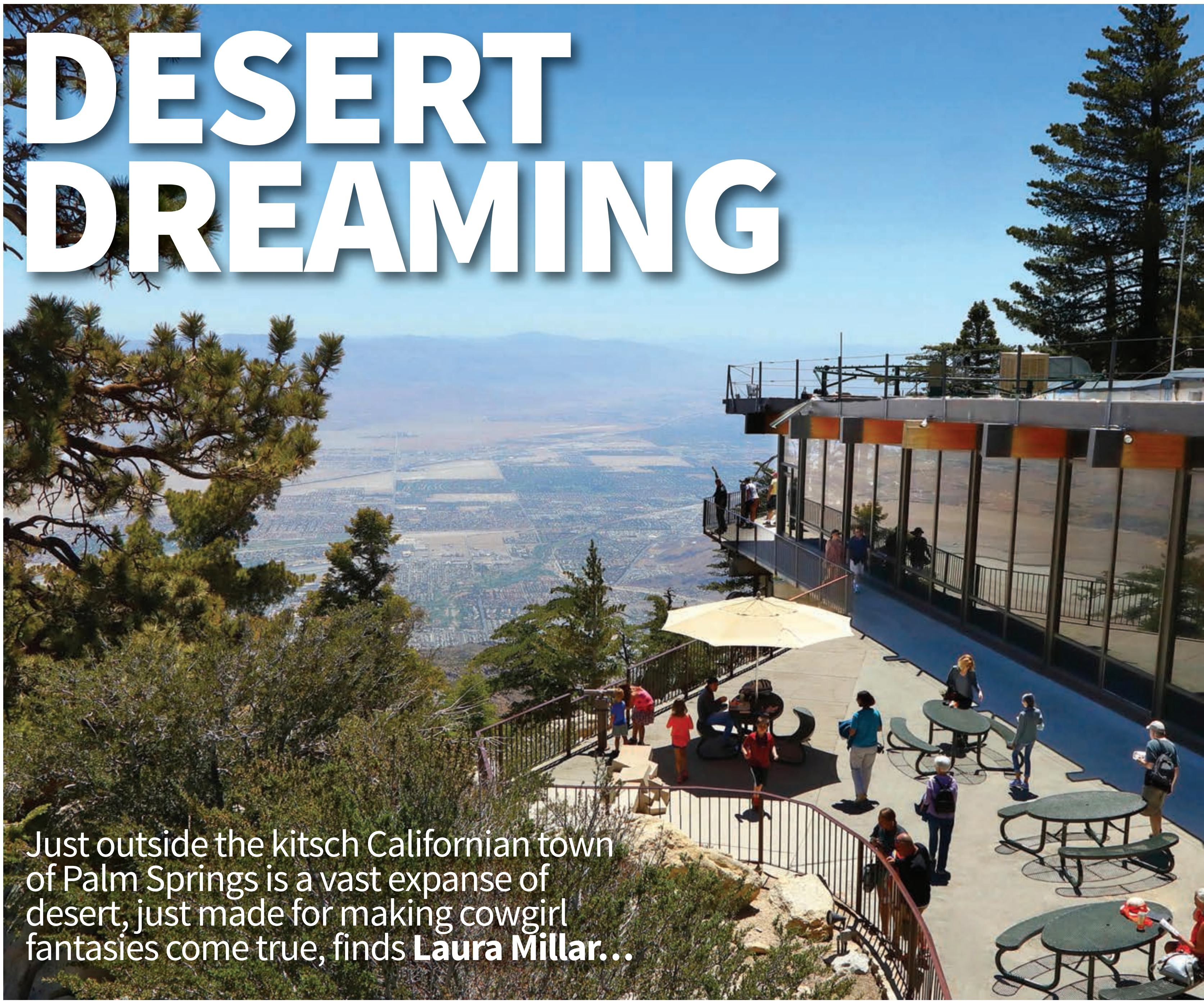
WHERE TO DRINK

Minsk has around eight Irish bars for every one Belarussian, but you can avoid the stout with a trip to **Embargo Bar**. It's a sophisticated cocktail bar with an incongruous menu of steaming hot soups and goulashes. Why not!

WHERE TO EAT

Head to **Kamyanitsa**, a restaurant and live music venue with a frankly odd medieval theme. You couldn't find a more authentic taste of Minsk if you got down on your hands and knees and licked the ground beneath your feet.

DESERT DREAMING



Just outside the kitsch Californian town of Palm Springs is a vast expanse of desert, just made for making cowgirl fantasies come true, finds **Laura Millar...**

The wooden sign swinging in the breeze proclaims I'm at Smoke Tree Stables, just a short drive south of Palm Springs. Beyond the Western-movie-set compound of wooden buildings, stables, saddles hung on fences, and practice arenas sprawls the vast, rocky landscape of the Indian Canyons, carpeted in green and brown scrub, and peppered with the occasional cactus. Beyond them loom the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains, wordlessly challenging hikers and climbers to scale to their peaks and be rewarded with endless views.

I'm not going anywhere on foot today; rather, I'll be exploring one of many desert trails which meander along the Indian Canyons, on horseback. These gullies and gorges are the ancestral home of the Agua Caliente tribe of Cahuilla Indians, who have lived here for thousands of years. Evidence of their early life, in the form of rock art, irrigation ditches, dams, reservoirs and house foundations can still be seen in the area; I'm hoping to spot some on a guided hack with Joy, an experienced equestrienne who takes groups of all stages, from rank amateur to experts. Smoketree has been family-run for over 75 years, and is currently owned by Kenneth 'K.C.' Johnson and his wife Stacey. This affable couple oversee 80 horses, some of whom have been used for filming on TV, including on the Oprah network, and, mystifyingly – yet intriguingly – the Playboy Channel. Mine is a hardy, sizeable sorrel called Red, who whinnies softly in greeting as I scramble clumsily up onto his back (with the aid of a block). Under his armchair-comfortable brown leather saddle is a brightly patterned Indian blanket. If he is more used to nimble, agile Playboy bunnies on his back, he is too polite to show it, plodding off amiably behind Joy and our little group of six others as we start making our way over the dusty, rocky terrain scattered with sagebrush and mesquite trees.

AERIAL TRAMWAY FACT

The Palm Springs Aerial Tramway in Palm Springs is the largest rotating aerial tramway in the world. Wow!

Joy occasionally stops to point out the occasional rabbit scrabbling in the distance, or a landmark significant to the Cahuilla Indians. One of the reasons we're able to follow some of these riding trails today is thanks to an equestrian club called the Desert Riders, which was formed in 1931 by a handful of Palm Springs residents. And thanks to the starry nature of many of them, these keen amateur cowboys – and cowgirls – included the likes of Clark Gable, Olivia de Havilland, William Holden and Henry Fonda. Bonded by their love of the desert, they'd meet regularly, saddle up, and just head out into the horizon, often to see the sunrise. Ten years after the club was founded, they published the Desert Riders Trail Map, documenting their favourite trails, which are still used to this day by both riders and hikers.

This stardust, sprinkled over the actual dust, led to the environs being used as locations for a host of films over the years; from classics such as The Sheik with Rudolph Valentino in 1921, and Frank Capra's Lost Horizon, to more modern movies like Mission Impossible: Three and The Scorpion King. But today, we're untroubled by film crews, and meander along the base of the Santa Rosa Mountains, occasionally reaching a small bluff from which we can get a sense of the scale of the area, which stretches for hundreds of miles. And after a thoroughly enjoyable couple of hours' riding (which is only slightly marred by the aching my legs then suffer for the rest of the day), I head off to get a more birds' eye view. I'm going up.... 8,516 feet up, to be precise, to near the top of the San Jacinto Peak, the highest point of the mountains. I'm not built for climbing (plus, the aching legs), so the easiest way to get there is to board the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, which holds the distinction of being the world's largest rotating tram-car. It rises steeply along the cliffs of Chino Canyon, juddering alarm-

ingly every time it bumps over a pylon, but the twelve-minute ride is otherwise smooth, as well as scenic. At the top, the surrounding landscape is more alpine, and there are dozens of hiking trails which take you through thick forest. But I'm here for the view which is, to put it mundanely, spectacular. In the near distance are the iconic, serried ranks of wind farms which surround Palm Springs, while beyond, the valley floor sprawls. Criss-crossing it, unnervingly, is part of the San Andreas Fault; I put thoughts of apocalyptic earthquakes to one side and decide it's time for well-earned drink.

Back in Palm Springs, I have my pick of cool, stylish establishments. The town was made famous by the Hollywood stars who bought homes here, handily within easy reach of their work in LA, and the feel of the place still honours that forties and fifties glamour. I'm staying at the Arrive, one of a clutch of chic new hotels, with its don't-mind-if-I-do, cocktail-upon-check-in policy, hip motel feel, and outdoor pool littered with kitsch inflatables. But after a quick wash and brush up, I make my way to the rooftop bar at the new Kimpton Rowan. It's the perfect place to be as the sun starts to dip down below the horizon; the lilac light bestows an otherworldly feeling onto the desert scene. I like to think it's the same light gazed upon by the Cahuilla, hundreds of years ago, as well as by the likes of Tom Cruise, and Rudy Valentino. But my heart is with the cowboys and cowgirls who loved nothing more than losing themselves in the desert, and who indirectly inspired me to do the same.

NEED TO KNOW

Double rooms at Arrive hotel start from £186; book via arrivehotels.com. Norwegian Air flies direct to LA from London from around £305 return; Palm Springs is a two-hour drive. For more info about Smoke Tree Stables, visit smoketreestables.com, and for the Aerial Tramway, visit pstramway.com

THE LONG WEEKEND

LA PLAGNE
TARENTAISE, FRANCE

Sebastian Sparrow takes to the slopes of the French Alps

WHERE IS IT?

The ski resort of La Plagne, which is nestled in the heart of the French Alps, is famed for an abundance of wide, easy runs that make it popular with families, beginners and intermediate skiers. It is sometimes known, uncharitably, as the "ski factory" owing to overcrowding during the school holidays. But visitors who opt for a quieter week will be rewarded with short queues and quieter slopes. It is a relatively quick flight and transfer from London City, thanks to its proximity to Chambery airport, making it ideal for a weekend or a short break.

WHAT'S SPECIAL ABOUT IT?

Along with Les Arcs and Peisey-Vallandry, La Plagne forms part of the giant interlinked Paradiski area, which is made up of 130 ski lifts and over 420km of runs. The vast scale of the area makes it a good option for those who like to spend their days pootling from one village to another rather than honing their skills on a few breakneck runs.

Les Arcs is easily reached from La Plagne by the Vanoise Express lift, a feat of engineering that shuttles skiers across a vast gorge in huge double-decker glass cars. On this side of the ski area, the slopes feel more expansive, especially at the peak, known as the Aiguille Rouge or "red needle". At 3226m high, the summit's viewing platform boasts unrivalled panoramic views of Mont Blanc, while the 8km run that takes skiers back to the hamlet of Villaroger is among the longest in the French Alps.

ACCOMMODATION

Most accommodation in La Plagne comes in the form of self-catering apartments and chalets, but there are a handful of hotels for those who don't want to cook. A good mid-market option is the Araucaria, a recently-refurbished property in Plagne Centre that is adjacent to the lifts. The rooms are stylish if small, but it is the common areas that give the hotel an upmarket feel, including a spa, which offers massages and other treatments, and a modern bar with a Scandinavian vibe.

The food in the onsite restaurant is much better than one might expect and a welcome respite from the cheesy staples found in most ski resort eateries. A typical dinner buffet includes soups and cold meats, a hearty casserole or stew and a selection of fish options such as poached salmon or trout.

FOOD

For lunch in La Plagne, head to Le 360 in Montalbert village, which has a stunning wraparound vista of the surrounding ski area. The recently-opened restaurant serves rich meat dishes – the beef cheeks in red wine are delicious – alongside local wines. When skiing in Les Arcs, be sure to pay a visit to the more traditional Les Chalets de L'Arc to try their speciality, le chausson du boulanger, or baker's slipper, a gut-busting cross between a calzone pizza and a Cornish pasty.

If you adhere to the fallacy that you will burn enough calories when skiing to be able eat copious amounts of cheese without feeling guilty, there are plenty of places serving traditional slope-side fare like raclette and tartiflette. One of the most charming is La Spatule, a cosy postage-stamp sized restaurant that specialises in Savoyard dishes.

THE NIGHTLIFE:

Family-friendly La Plagne is not known for its night-life or après-ski scene, but in recent years the resort has tried to improve its offering for younger skiers. Floe in Plagne Centre is a coffee shop by day that turns into bar at night. The best time to visit is early evening, when drinkers can watch the sun set from one of the heated domes outside.

The closest thing to a party can be found at Scotty's, a raucous spit-and-sawdust joint that serves greasy bar food to soak up the beers and Jägerbombs. For a more refined pint, head to Le Brix, which serves local and guest brews from eight pumps as well as over 50 types of bottled beer.

OFF THE SLOPES:

La Plagne is venue to France's only bobsleigh and skeleton track, which was built for the 1992 Winter Olympics. Now open to the public, the track offers non-athletes three ways of experiencing the 1.5km descent and 19 hair-raising bends, ranging from a self-breaking raft that reaches 80km/h to the full bobsleigh experience with speeds of up to 120km/h. Make sure you practise your nonplussed face beforehand, as the sleighs are fitted with cameras that record your expression throughout the ride.

NEED TO KNOW:

Sebastian traveled to La Plagne with British Airways, which flies from London City Airport to Chambery Airport. The transfer time from Chambery is about 90 minutes, almost an hour less than from Geneva airport. For more information on La Plagne, Les Arcs or the Paradiski area go to *savoie-mont-blanc.com*

SPORT

Problems persist for Arsenal at Norwich despite Ljungberg step up, writes **Felix Keith**

NO QUICK FIX FOR GUNNERS

NO ONE was under any illusions about how deep the problems at Arsenal go. No one really thought the sacking of Unai Emery would be a move which would turn the Gunners around overnight. But Arsenal's first game under interim manager Freddie Ljungberg showed just how far they have fallen.

Norwich are an ambitious and exciting side to watch who were on the up following their 2-0 away win over Everton, but Arsenal made their task much easier than it should have been. A 2-2 draw in which Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's goals came from the penalty spot and a second ball from a corner was not an inspiring start for Ljungberg.

Arsenal are now without a win across eight games in all competitions and are being hamstrung by the same issues. They have 19 points and are eighth in the Premier League, seven points off the top four. No team with fewer than 21 points after 14 Premier League games has ever finished in the top four, but Ljungberg is convinced the Gunners can do it.

"People drop points here and there, we drop points, so it's a bit of a crazy league at the moment," he said post-match. "But of course I think Arsenal can go back to the top four."

Whoever succeeds Emery in the long term will have to make history to secure Champions League football next season.

IHEANACHO'S IMPACT

He was made to wait for it by the video assistant referee, but Kelechi Iheanacho ultimately enjoyed his best day in a Leicester shirt yesterday, coming off the bench to give Brendan Rodgers' side their sixth straight win.

Rodgers deserves credit for introducing the Nigerian striker. Iheanacho hadn't scored in the league since September 2018 but Rodgers knew he could change the game, throwing him on for Ayoze Perez in the 62nd minute when Everton were leading 1-0 thanks to Richarlison's header.

Iheanacho's pace and direct running in the channels gave Jamie Vardy a strike partner and he had a near-instant impact, crossing for the league's top scorer to fire in the equaliser.

PREMIER LEAGUE

NORWICH	ARSENAL
2	2
Pukki 21' Cantwell 45+2'	Aubameyang (29' pen, 57')

Vardy put a header over the bar and Everton appeared to be hanging on to give Marco Silva a much-needed point, but a Mason Holgate slip allowed Iheanacho in on goal and he cooly found the bottom corner in injury-time to win it.

The goal, dramatically confirmed after VAR corrected the linesman's flag, closed the gap at the top of the Premier League to eight points and ensured Liverpool are not out of sight just yet.

Iheanacho's performance was an indication of the squad depth Leicester have quietly assembled and the wild celebrations showed their team spirit.

UNITED STRUGGLING

The entirety of the Manchester United's side which played Aston Villa yesterday were excused from the midweek trip to Kazakhstan to face Astana in the Europa League, but watching on at Old Trafford you wouldn't have known it.

Like Arsenal, United have myriad problems. Yesterday's 2-2 draw left them with just four wins and two clean sheets in 14 Premier League games. Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's side are in fact unbeaten at home in the league, but their tendency to ship goals is cancelling out the good work being done by Marcus Rashford and others at the other end.

Yes, Jack Grealish's opener was a wonderful piece of individual skill, but the lack of urgency in closing down encouraged the shot. Tyrone Mings' equaliser was so straightforward – a volley from Matt Targett's chipped pass on the second phase after a corner – that the defensive organisation needs to be questioned.

"As a team we are improving but we want to improve a lot more. To not win games at home is disappointing. We huffed and puffed but we need to do better," said defender Harry Maguire.

"We were poor after their first goal. It knocked us and we were edgy and nervous. To concede straight away after going in front its disappointing."

Next up, Jose Mourinho returns to Old Trafford with Tottenham on Wednesday. If there was ever a game Solskjaer wanted to win, it's this one.

HAMILTON: IT MAKES SENSE TO CONSIDER MY OPTIONS

Lewis Hamilton refused to deny reports he could be swapping Mercedes for Ferrari after finishing a successful season in style with a win at the Abu Dhabi Grand Prix yesterday. Hamilton led from pole position and finished ahead of Red Bull's Max Verstappen and Ferrari's Charles Leclerc. The 34-year-old has one year left to run on his Mercedes deal and there is speculation he could leave and join rivals Ferrari next season. "Whatever you do behind closed doors is always private whoever you meet with," he said. "I love where I am, so it is definitely not a quick decision to go and do something else. So it is only smart and wise to sit and think about what I want if it is the last phase of my career."

SPORT DIGEST

WATFORD SACK SANCHEZ FLORES AFTER JUST 85 DAYS

Chris Hughton and Paul Clement have both been linked to Watford after the Hornets sacked Quique Sanchez Flores yesterday. The Spaniard was let go just 85 days into his second spell with the club following Saturday's 2-1 defeat by Southampton. Under-23s coach Hayden Mullins has been put in charge and is expected to manage Watford's trip to face Leicester on Wednesday. Hughton has been without a club since being sacked by Brighton in May, while Clement left Reading in December 2018. Watford are bottom of the Premier League, having taken just eight points from 14 matches.

MIEDEMA NETS SIX IN RECORD-BREAKING WIN FOR ARSENAL

Vivianne Miedema scored six times as Arsenal hammered Bristol City 11-1 in the Women's Super League on Sunday. Miedema ran riot for the Gunners, assisting four of the other goals, as the hosts racked up the biggest win in WSL history to stay top of the league. Jordan Nobbs, Leah Williamson and substitute Emma Mitchell also got on the score sheet, while Lisa Evans netted twice before Yana Daniels scored a late consolation goal. Elsewhere, Katharina Baunach scored two late free-kicks as West Ham beat Manchester United 3-2 and Manchester City beat Liverpool 1-0 to keep pace with the Gunners. Everton's game against Chelsea was postponed due to a frozen pitch.

LATE PENALTY SEES LONDON IRISH EARN DRAMATIC DRAW

Stephen Myler's late penalty earned 14-man London Irish a 27-27 draw against Bristol Bears in the Premiership yesterday. Irish went into half-time 10-3 ahead at Ashton Gate despite Ollie Hoskins being dismissed for making contact with Chris Vui's head in a ruck. The lead changed hands three times in a manic final 10 minutes and Bristol appeared to have won it through Harry Thacker's score, only for Myler to keep his cool and slot a last-minute penalty to draw. "The one thing you can't coach is attitude but I thought we had bucket loads of that today," said London Irish director of rugby Declan Kidney. "We are a growing team and I count myself lucky to be in this job."

CHEPTEGEI BREAKS 10KM WORLD RECORD IN VALENCIA

Joshua Cheptegei broke the 10km road world record in Valencia on Sunday. The 23-year-old Ugandan ran 26 minutes 38 seconds to beat the time Kenya's Leonard Komon set in 2010. The record completes a brilliant year for Cheptegei, who also won gold over 10,000m at the World Championships in Doha in October and the 10km cross country world title in Denmark in March. "What a year it has been," he said. "I can't believe it. I knew that Valencia was going to be a really fast course, one of the fastest in the world. So to get to achieve what we came here for is something really special." Cheptegei had an average pace of two minutes and 40 seconds per kilometre in Spain.

FAMILIAR FOES

Croatia and Czech Republic is a good draw at Euro 2020 for hosts England, says **Felix Keith**

THE start of Euro 2020 may still be 193 days away but there is already a degree of familiarity about the tournament for England.

As one of the hosts, Gareth Southgate's side have the advantage of playing all their of their group games at Wembley and Saturday's draw confirmed that the venue won't be the only familiar factor, with England facing Croatia and Czech Republic next summer, as well as one of Scotland, Israel, Norway or Serbia.

Considering England could have been paired with world champions France or defending champions Portugal in Group D, it was a favourable draw. But playing teams you have faced frequently in the past brings its own challenges.

"I'm never sure whether it's a good draw," said Southgate. "We have played two of the teams before and for us to play at Wembley is something special."

Both Croatia and Czech Republic have enjoyed success against England recently, and yet playing at home as joint favourites to win the tournament, Southgate's team will be confident.

Croatia knocked England out in the semi-final of the 2018 World Cup and are packed full of high class players, but there is a feeling they are a squad beginning a gradual decline. Star player Luka Modric won the Ballon d'Or last year, but is now 34 and starting to show signs of his age catching up with him.

Striker Mario Mandzukic is 33 and the much of the team's core – Ivan Rakitic, Dejan Lovren, Domagoj Vida and Ivan Perisic – are over 30 too. Their team make-up comes as a stark contrast to England, who named a team with an average age of 23 years and 255 days in last month's 7-0 win over Montenegro.

Although they inflicted England's first defeat in qualifying for 10 years with a 2-1 win in Prague last month, Southgate will not be concerned about facing Czech Republic once more. Jaroslav Silhavy's team are as limited as their No45 world ranking suggests.

England are the big fish in the group for a good reason. They will be expecting to come out on top and head into the knockout stages with momentum. Having come on leaps and bounds under Southgate and reached the last four at the World Cup they will feel their time is now.

"We have to accept that expectations have changed from where we were. We are very critical of ourselves," Southgate said. "We would rather be a team that are fancied than a team with no chance."

It is this heightened status which means England will go all out to try and finish top of Group D, despite the potential pitfalls. The group winner will play the runner-up in Group F, which has already been dubbed the Group Of Death after France, Germany and Portugal all landed in it. If England were to finish second they would play the runner-up in Group E, which features Spain, Poland and Sweden.

With the positive experience of the World Cup still relatively fresh, the team on a gradual upward curve and a favourable group in which to get up to speed, England have every reason to be confident about their chances at Euro 2020.

EURO 2020 GROUPS

Group A: Italy, Switzerland, Turkey, Wales
Group B: Belgium, Russia, Denmark, Finland
Group C: Ukraine, Holland, Austria, Path D/A
Group D: England, Croatia, Czech Republic, Path C
Group E: Spain, Poland, Sweden, Path B
Group F: Germany, France, Portugal, Path A/D