JOBS FIGURES ADD TO RATE CONUNDRUM

HARRY ROBERTSON

@harryrobertson

THE UK’s booming labour market grew at its fastest rate in nearly a year in the three months to November, data showed yesterday, as the economy sends out mixed signals ahead of a key Bank of England (BoE) interest rate decision at the end of the month.

The unemployment rate stayed at 3.8 per cent — its lowest since the 1970s — while the number of people in work rose by 208,000, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) said yesterday.

This was the best growth since the three months to January 2019 and well above analysts’ expectations.

It came despite the UK economy growing at its slowest pace in nearly seven years in November, which had fuelled speculation that the BoE will cut interest rates when policymakers meet on 30 January.

November’s data covers the month before Boris Johnson’s thumping election victory in the middle of December, however, following which a number of surveys have shown a considerable rise in consumer and business confidence.

The BoE’s monetary policy committee (MPC) is likely to make up its mind based on survey data due at the end of this week, which will cover December figures.

Thomas Pugh, UK economist at consultancy Capital Economics, said the survey “will confirm, or refute, January’s rate decision will be governor Mark Carney’s final act any ‘Boris bounce’ in the economy”.

In the September to November period, the employment rate hit a record of 76.3 per cent, up 0.5 percentage points on the previous quarter, the ONS said.

ONS statistician David Freeman said: “The employment rate is at a new record high, with over two-thirds of the growth in people in work in the last year coming from women working full-time.”

Traders reacted well to the data, pushing the pound up 0.3 per cent against the dollar to $1.305.

Total earnings — including bonuses — rose at an annual rate of 3.2 per cent in the three months to November, the same as in the previous three months.

When bonuses were stripped out, however, pay growth was 3.4 per cent, slightly lower than the quarter before.

Yet Freeman said: “While pay growth has eased since last summer, with inflation remaining subdued, earnings are continuing to increase in real terms.”

Suren Thiru, head of economics at the British Chambers of Commerce, said: “The jobs market remains a bright spot in the face of a challenging economic backdrop.”

The data came as a report from Whiteshield, Oxford University said Business School, Manpower Group, and the UK Institute for the Future of Work said the UK remained the ninth most resilient labour market in the world.

City hits undo button after DIXONS Carphone gets sales figures the wrong way round

JOE CURTIS

@joecurtis

DIXONS Carphone was left red-faced yesterday after admitting its morning trading update had cited negative sales growth as a positive.

The retailer updated the stock market on its Christmas figures yesterday morning, telling investors it had enjoyed a two per cent rise in reported sales.

However, six hours later the firm confirmed it had in fact suffered a two per cent fall. It blamed a “clerical error”.

The update hurt the company’s four per cent share price gain from earlier, leaving its stock up just 2.3 per cent at 145.7p.

Dixons Carphone stuck to the rest of its numbers after revealing the inaccuracy. Mobile revenue fell nine per cent in the 10 weeks to 4 January, as it had previously guided. Electricals revenue rose two per cent on a like-for-like basis as people bought oversized TVs from the retailer, which also sold 8,000 smart speakers per day over the Christmas period.

Dixons Carphone said it had outperformed the average electricals market decline of three per cent.

International like-for-like revenue rose three per cent, with the Nordics and Greece growing three per cent and six per cent respectively.

Chief executive Alex Baldock said the firm had had a “good peak in a weak UK market and we’re on track to deliver what we promised for this year,” as he stuck by the firm’s full-year guidance.

Shares stayed in the green despite the u-turn, and analysts remained positive about the retailer’s trading update.

Richard Lim, chief executive of Retail Economics, said that Dixons Carphone’s electricals business had helped it produce some “solid” numbers for investors.

ANSHARAD CARRICK

@angharadcarrick

FINANCIER and anti-Vladimir Putin campaigner Bill Browder has labelled the Russian leader “an absolute cancer on Russia”, and claimed that the latest threats against him are “hitting a nerve”.

Browder was speaking in reaction to media reports that Swiss authorities questioned two Russians claiming to be working as plumbers in the Davos resort in August.

Zurich’s Tages-Anzeiger newspaper reported that the pair, who had diplomatic passports, were allowed to return to Russia after being suspected of attempting to install surveillance equipment in hotels set to be used by high-profile delegates at the World Economic Forum in Davos this week.

The Times reported last night that Scotland Yard has warned Browder of risks to his safety during the conference, and that the Swiss had increased his personal protection.

Speaking earlier this month, UK foreign secretary Dominic Raab indicated that the UK would enact a targeted sanctions regime after Brexit. It will focus on those felt to be implicated in human rights violations, similar to the Magnitsky Act which Browder successfully campaigned for in the US.

Browder hit out at Russia after ‘spies’ caught ahead of summit... posing as plumbers

GREAT SCOT! WHERE TO GO FOR A BONNIE BURNS SUPPER IN LONDON P22

SHOWING HEART 10-MAN GUNNERS GRAB LATE DRAW AT CHELSEA P26

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THIS IS REAL ENERGY. THIS IS ARAMCO.
Can the UK deal with both Brussels and DC?

TO TAKE Donald Trump literally, but not seriously, is a mistake that many have made since he transitioned from waning reality TV star to political insurgent and leader of the free world. It is true that many of his chosen and oft-quoted facts are at best disputable, and his tweeted assaults on the English language are enough to make any linguist wince. But for all the smug fact-checkers pointing out his (literal) inaccuracies and inconsistencies, the serious message gets through — a business-friendly strongman who is willing to go further, and faster, than anybody else to get what he wants, no matter the international opprobrium. It certainly seems to have been understood by the French, who are retreating at some speed from their plans for a unilateral digital services tax after being hit by a particularly punchy presidential barrage. The EU, however, is very much a literal being: it lives and dies by rules and regulations, treaties with single clauses the subject of interminable negotiations between member states. The air wars are mere sound and fury: what matters in Brussels is the ink on the page. If the British government is to successfully navigate the next year of trade negotiations, with both Europe and the US, it will need to play both games at once. Over the weekend, Sajid Javid took the Trumpian route, though he won’t appreciate the comparison. In essentially repeating manifesto commitments to leave the single market and telling bosses to like it or lump it, he sent both UK businesses and European politicians into apoplexy, forcing the government to row back yesterday and promise car makers there will be no cliff edges and that Britain still wants an agreement with the EU that protects supply chains. So as the government’s policy remains to have a European cake and eat an American one, too, it is about to embark on extremely complex parallel negotiations with two wildly different entities: a White House that shoots from the hip and behaves in unorthodox ways to get what it wants, and a European Union that wraps itself in legalese in order to protect its interests. The formation of a joined-up team, as we report today, is a welcome sign that the government plans to take both strands seriously and attempt to keep both of its negotiating feet steady on what will be a narrow tightrope. This will be a mighty test for a country that hasn’t negotiated its own terms of trade for decades, but if approached correctly there are significant gains to be had.

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Corporation cites City force ahead of Brexit deadline

HARRY ROBERTSON

THE CITY yesterday outlined its importance to international finance ahead of crunch EU talks with a report that showed it continues to outperform other financial sectors in helping firms tackle risk.

It comes as a debate rages over how close the UK should stay to the EU after Brexit.

Chancellor Sajid Javid at the weekend said it would diverge and not be a “rule-taker”, prompting a backlash from industry groups who said supply chains would be threatened.

Yet Javid’s comments that financial services trade with the EU should be on the basis of “outcome-based” equivalence of rules won praise from City figures, although many banks are nervous about the changing relationship.

The report from the City of London Corporation and PwC, released today, showed that the UK financial sector continues to dominate foreign exchange trade, with a 43.1 per cent share of global turnover.

It said London is the only place where every top 20 insurance and reinsurance firm is active and that London’s share of global turnover from interest rate derivatives trading is 50.2 per cent, compared to the US at 32.2 per cent.

Lord mayor of the City of London William Russell said: “Ten days away from our formal exit from the EU, this important report reiterates the UK’s strengths in financial and professional services.”

“It is essential we continue to reaffirm why firms should come here to do business.”

The lord mayor is expected to use the report to promote UK financial services on trips abroad this year to countries including India and China, as the City seeks to keep itself at the top of the government’s agenda.

City of London Corporation policy chair Catherine McGuinness said the Square Mile must show that “it is perfectly positioned to help multinationals mitigate a diverse range of financial risks”.

Watchdog warns financial advisers on causing clients ‘significant harm’

ALEX DANIEL

FINANCIAL advisers were ticked off by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) yesterday for causing harm to consumers.

In a letter to chief executives, the FCA noted a growing number of cases where firms’ actions resulted in “significant harm to consumers’ financial well-being”.

It picked out four ways in which clients could be harmed:

- Receiving unsuitable advice;
- Falling victim to pension and investment scams;
- Not receiving redress from the ombudsman service or firms failing to compensate consumers;
- Paying excessive fees for products and services.

Subsequently, the regulator has said “preventing harm” should be a key priority.

It will put “increased focus” on this over the next two years.

“You need to ensure the advice you provide is suitable, costs and charges are disclosed clearly, and you act in the best interests of your clients,” the letter said.

“Conflicts of interest must be identified and where they cannot be prevented, disclosed and managed,” it added.

**IN BRIEF**

**RBS’ DIGITAL BANKING CHIEF TO STEP DOWN IN 2020**

The chief executive of RBS’ digital banking platform, is one of a number of executives who will leave the company in the coming months as part of a reshuffle under new boss Alison Rose.

Mark Bailie, who was considered a potential challenger to Rose before her appointment in the autumn, will step down just a few months after the launch of Bo. Sky News reported that his departure would be announced at the same time as the taxpayer-backed lender reports its annual results on 14 February. Rose, who is the first female chief of RBS, is expected to use February’s results statement to lay out her initial strategy for the future of the bank.

Analysts expect further cost-cutting to feature heavily to tackle bulging costs and geopolitical tensions.

**UK DIGITAL BANK MONESE NEARING UNICORN STATUS**

UK fintech Monese is in talks to raise £100m from investors in a deal that would give it a valuation of more than £1bn. The fundraising would give the business so-called unicorn status. The Financial Times first reported the talks which are expected to lead to a deal with investors in the first half of this year.

The digital bank said last night that 2m people had signed up to its service. It said customer growth tripled last year with more than 9,000 people joining Monese every day. The bank said this meant it was on track for more than 5m sign-ups in 2020 at current rates.

Chief executive Norris Koppel said: “It took 42 months to get to 1m customers and only eight months to reach today’s milestone.” The bank declined to comment on its planned fundraising.

**STREAM TEAM**

**Netflix sails past revenue estimates as it brushes off rival pressure**

**NETFLIX** added more subscribers than analysts had expected at the end of last year, despite the debuts of several rival streaming services. The streaming giant added 8.76m paid subscribers globally in the period, thanks to hits such as the Witcher.

IN BRIEF

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LORDS SEND AMENDED BREXIT BILL BACK TO MPS

Peer in the House of Lords yesterday backed two further amendments to Boris Johnson’s Brexit legislation, bringing the total tally of amendments up to five after two days of debate. The changes included supporting the Dubs amendment to protect the rights of refugee children. Put forward by Lord Dubs, who fled the Nazis as a child, the bill calls for unaccompanied child refugees to be reunited with their families in the UK post-Brexit. The amendment to protect the rights of refugees to be reunited with their families in the UK post-Brexit. The amendment to protect the rights of the bill will pass between the two Houses until an agreement is forged.

SAI NSbury’S AXES MORE MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

Supermarket giant Sainsbury’s said yesterday it would cut hundreds of management roles. It said the move was part of its plan to further integrate Sainsbury’s with catalogue retailer Argos which it bought in 2016 in a £1.4bn deal. Sainsbury’s said it had reduced its senior leadership team by 20 per cent since the start of the 2019 financial year in March. The official confirmed.

VODAFONE EXITS FACEBOOK-BACKED LIBRA CURRENCY

Vodafone has left the Libra Association. Head of policy and communications for the Libra Association. Dante Disparte, ensures the Libra payment system will remain resilient, “said Dante Disparte, who was behind the Libra project. Mr Disparte, who was appointed as a member of the Libra Association, said that while the project had faced some challenges, it was still on track to launch later this year.

SAINSBURY’S AXES MORE MANAGEMENT POSITIONS

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UK immigration system set for a shakeup in 2021

CATH ARINE NEILAN

@CatNeilan

THE GOVERNMENT’s new points-based immigration system will come into force from January next year as part of Boris Johnson’s commitment to voters, cabinet ministers were told yesterday.

The Prime Minister yesterday told his senior colleagues that he was pressing ahead with plans for a shake-up of the system, which will reduce the overall number of immigrants coming to the UK.

As part of a cabinet discussion, Johnson said: “The public has been clear that they want us to end freedom of movement and take back control of our borders and it is up to us to deliver on that,” the official spokesman confirmed.

The update came ahead of the publication of the Migration Advisory Committee’s report into the new regime, based on an Australian-style points system. The report is due to be published this month.

Johnson and home secretary Priti Patel told their colleagues this approach would aim to attract talented people from around the world and reduce unskilled migration, while protecting public services like the NHS, which employ large numbers of overseas workers.

The “key guiding principles” are taking back control — Vote Leave’s campaign slogan during the 2016 referendum campaign — welcome “global talent”, and reduce low-skilled immigration.

Yesterday’s meeting was the last Downing Street-based cabinet this month. The next meeting of senior ministers will take place on 31 January — the day the UK leaves the EU — and will be held in a location in the north of England.

The spokesman said this was because government was “determined” to better represent all parts of the UK, and suggested out of London cabinet meetings could become a regular thing after Brexit.

It comes as the Conservatives last week suggested the party’s headquarters could move to a new location in the north or Midlands to better reflect new Tory-held seats.

Nandy receives boost as Phillips drops out of race for Labour lead

POPPY WOOD

@poppyeh

Lisa Nandy received a major boost in her bid for Labour leadership yesterday after securing the backing of the GMB union, while her main rival Jess Phillips dropped out of the contest.

The UK’s third-biggest union yesterday announced its support for the Wigan MP, with general secretary Tim Roache saying Nandy was a “breath of fresh air in the debate over Labour’s future”. The boost for Nandy came as Birmingham Yardley MP Jess Phillips announced she was pulling out of the leadership race after failing to gain a single nomination from constituency parties, unions and affiliates. Her departure leaves just four candidates in the bid to succeed current Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

Joining Nandy in the four-legged race are current frontrunner Sir Keir Starmer, shadow business secretary Rebecca Long-Bailey and shadow foreign secretary Emily Thornberry.
Bushfires knock production but BHP still ‘solid’

EDWARD THICKNESSE

THE ONGOING bushfires in Australia have hit BHP’s production of thermal coal, the world’s largest miner announced yesterday, but its 2020 guidance remains in line with forecasts. Mike Henry described his first set of results since taking over as chief executive from Andrew Mackenzie as “solid”, despite concerns about the situation in the company’s home country, where fires have now burnt an area the size of Germany.

In New South Wales, production of coal fell 11 per cent, which the company said was due to smoke from the bushfires reducing air quality at its operations.

BHP said: “If air quality continues to deteriorate then operations could be constrained further in the second half of the year.”

Extreme weather also impacted oil and natural gas output, with total production down nine per cent.

This was largely due to the knock-on effect of July’s Storm Barry in the Gulf of Mexico, which cut production to 26bn barrels.

Henry said: “We delivered solid operational performances across the portfolio in the first half of the 2020 financial year, offsetting the expected impacts of planned maintenance and natural field decline.”

Shares in BHP fell over 1.5 per cent.

MORAL SUPPORT

Venezuela’s leader of the opposition meets UK foreign secretary

VENEZUELA’S opposition leader Juan Guaido met with UK foreign secretary Dominic Raab yesterday, in a show of support for Guaido’s campaign to oust President Nicolas Maduro. A government spokesperson said: “The UK recognises him as the interim president.”

Bezos ‘hacked’ via Whatsapp by Saudi ruler

JAMES BOOTH

BILLIONAIRE Amazon boss Jeff Bezos reportedly had his phone hacked in 2018 after receiving a Whatsapp message from the crown prince of Saudi Arabia Mohammed bin Salman.

An encrypted message from the number used by the de facto Saudi ruler included a malicious file that infiltrated Bezos’ phone, the Guardian reported late last night.

The pair had been having a conversation on Whatsapp on 1 May 2018 when the unsolicited file was sent, the report said, citing anonymous sources.

The Saudis had previously denied accessing Washington Post owner Bezos’ phone. Digital experts started examining the billionaire’s phone last January after nude photos of Bezos and racy messages were leaked to a US newspaper.

The alleged hack occurred five months before the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi who was killed in the Saudi embassy in Istanbul.

Amazon and the Saudi embassy did not respond to requests for comment ahead of going to print.

POLICE BREAK UP MAJOR MONEY LAUNDERING RING

Police said yesterday they had broken up a major international money-laundering operation based in Northern Ireland. About £215m was laundered during an eight-year period from 2011. It is the second biggest money laundering operation ever uncovered in the UK, the BBC reported. Six men and a woman have been arrested. Four of the men have been released on bail. Police said they think fake companies were established to launder money for UK and Irish crime gangs engaged in human trafficking, prostitution and drugs. There is not believed to be a paramilitary link.

Police Service of Northern Ireland detective inspector Ian Wilson said: “We believe today’s operation is one of the most significant live investigations we’ve been involved in.”

Police detected a cash inflow of £625m from 2011-2018, with police seizing about £215m, generating debts of £300m. They uncovered a network of shares, company directors and bank accounts.

Police said they have seized an estimated £215m in assets and arrested six men and a woman in relation to the investigation.

A government spokesperson said: “The UK recognises him as the interim president.”

US FINANCE boss to exit alongside chief exec Dudley later this year

At one time Gilvary was thought to be a likely successor to Dudley, who will be replaced by Bernard Looney in April. Murray Aitchillloss, currently chief financial officer of the firm’s upstream division, will replace Gilvary.

During his tenure Gilvary had to handle challenges including resolving litigation from the Gulf of Mexico oil spill in 2010.

HALLIBURTON TAKES $2.2BN CHARGED ON SHALE SLUMP

US oilfield services firm Halliburton yesterday disclosed a $2.2bn (£1.7bn) charge to earnings as weakening North American shale activity continued to hit the industry. The charge for asset impairments was centred on hydraulic fracturing and legacy drilling equipment units, and employee severance costs, the company said. Halliburton dismissed eight per cent of its North American staff at mid-year, and later cut staff across several western US states. US producers are pulling back on drilling and completing wells, pressured by investor demands to focus on debt reduction and returns. Rival Schlumberger last Friday said it cut more than 1,400 workers, and would ido 50 per cent of its hydraulic fracturing equipment due to weak demand.

Brazil charges ex-Vale chief with homicide over catastrophe

BRAZILIAN state prosecutors yesterday charged Fabio Schvartsman, former chief executive of mining giant Vale, with homicide for a dam disaster in 2019 that killed more than 250 people. A further 15 people were also charged with homicide.

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Easyjet is set for takeoff as firm raises guidance

LOW-COST airline Easyjet yesterday said that it had raised its first-half guidance after outperforming expectations for passenger revenue.

Total revenue for the quarter rose nearly 10 per cent to £1.43bn, up from £1.3bn in the same period last year. Passenger numbers rose 2.8 per cent to 22.2m, driven by a one per cent increase of capacity to 24.3m seats.

Total airline revenue per seat rose 8.7 per cent to £58.60, up from £53.90 in 2018. Cost per seat rose 4.3 per cent due planned lower growth, new aircraft deliveries and French national strikes, which saw 813 flights cancelled. The airline added that 75 per cent of their seats for the first half of the year had been added.

Richard Hunter, head of markets at Interactive Investor, commented: “Easyjet has started its new year in fine fettle, with an ongoing focus on costs and increased revenues propelling performance.”

Easyjet said that the collapse of Thomas Cook had helped the firm, which now predicts mid-to-high single digit revenue growth for the six months to March.

In November’s results the airline announced the launch of a package holiday business, which it expects to break even in its first year of trading. Easyjet was among the FTSE’s top movers yesterday, rising 4.4 per cent.

Trading business IG Group says future bright despite profit slip

ONLINE trading firm IG Group reiterated its medium-term targets yesterday, despite announcing a drop in operating profit.

Operating profit fell to £100m in the half-year period to 30 November, from £112m in the same half of 2018. IG has been hit hard by a Europe-wide crackdown on risky contract for difference trades.

However, the company remained bullish on its future prospects, doubling down on its goal to boost revenue in its core markets by three to five per cent in the medium term. Boss Jane Felix said IG was “on track” to deliver on its targets.

China’s markets show concern for virus spread

By the side of business in London

SKY’S THE LIMIT Private plane airport Farnborough hits record number of flights

FARNBOROUGH Airport enjoyed a record number of air traffic movements last year, beating its previous record set in 2018. The airport — one of Britain’s busiest for private jets — posted a year-on-year increase in air traffic movements of 5.3 per cent.

By the side of business
Javid denies ‘no alignment’ plan will hit car firms

ALEX DANIEL

SAJID Javid has denied the government’s policy of “no alignment” with European Union rules will damage the manufacturing industry.

The chancellor was asked whether comments made over the weekend that some firms would not benefit from Brexit meant he was prepared to sacrifice some UK manufacturers.

He said: “No, not at all. We look forward with confidence as we strike that new free trade agreement with our European friends.

“I can see a British economy that continues to go from strength to strength.”

Javid was speaking as he attended his final Ecofin — the regular meeting for EU finance ministers — as a member.

His stance appears to have softened since his comments over the weekend, made to the Financial Times.

Then, the chancellor said the UK will diverge from EU regulations after Brexit and said firms will have to “adjust”. “There will be an impact on business one way or the other, some will benefit, some won’t.”

Javid made clear that “there will not be alignment” with EU rules on trade in goods. The EU has warned that this approach will limit British access to its markets.

This position caused automotive industry body the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT) to warn that any disruption to the car industry’s complex cross-border relationships could cost “billions.”

Order books for the black cab, called the TX, will open in February, while the vehicles will start hitting the streets of Tokyo during the second quarter of 2020.

The plug-in hybrid is the London Electric Vehicle Company’s (LEVC) first electrified model. Geely bought the company, previously known as London Taxi Corp, in 2013.

The UK remains the firm’s biggest market — but the black cabs have already been exported to Holland, Germany, France, Switzerland, Denmark and the Middle East.

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- Customer Deposit
  - £6,019.00
- Total Amount of Credit
  - £26,012.00
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  - £10.00
- 48 Monthly Payments
  - £399.00
- Optional Final Payment
  - £14,878.00
- Total Amount Payable (including FDA)
  - £36,748.00
- Duration of Agreement
  - 49 months
- Representative APR
  - 3.9% APR
- Interest Rate (Fixed)
  - 3.82%

*Model pictured E-PACE R-Dynamic S D150 AWD Auto includes optional Black Hood Metallic paint £229; 21” Style 5032 Wheels £2,179; Black Pack £999; Dynamic Handling Pack £119 and Adaptive Dynamics £426 at an On the Road Price of £42,379.

*Modifications to E-PACE 20MY by JLR on request. Estimated prices based on current market conditions at time of printing. Prices are subject to change without notice. Please contact your local Jaguar retailer for more information. On the Road Price includes VAT, excise duty, road tax and first year’s road fund license. VAT recoverable on retail price applies to VAT registered businesses. Final price may be subject to variation due to changes in the UK retail price of excise duty and road tax. The Government has announced changes to the way in which Vehicle Excise Duty is charged from April 1st 2016. The previous system of bands based on CO₂ emissions is being replaced by a new system based on CO₂ emissions and list price of the vehicle. The changes apply to new cars sold on or after April 1st 2016. For cars on or after April 1st 2016, the vehicle excise duty will be determined from the higher of the CO₂ band or the list price band. CO₂ emissions for the R-Dynamic S 2.0 D150 FWD Manual PCP representative example model are 164g/km. CO₂ emissions for the 20MY R-Dynamic S 2.0 D150 FWD Manual is 168g/km. The figures provided are as a result of official manufacturer’s tests in accordance with EU legislation. For comparison purposes only. Real world figures may differ. CO₂ and fuel economy figures may vary according to factors such as driving styles, environmental conditions, load and accessories.
Cityfibre to buy Talktalk network in £200m tie-up

EDWARD THICKNESSE
@edthicknesse

BROADBAND provider Cityfibre yesterday announced the acquisition of Fibrenation, Talktalk’s fibre networks rollout business, for £200m.

The deal, which was delayed in November after Labour announced plans to nationalise BT, means that Cityfibre’s rollout target has risen from 5m up to 8m premises in the UK.

As a result of the purchase, Talktalk, which was advised by asset managers Lazard, will become a customer of Cityfibre’s fibre networks.

Cityfibre, which is part-owned by Wall Street giant Goldman Sachs, launched to deploy full fibre infrastructure and services across York.

Fibrenation was founded in 2018, four years after a joint venture between Talktalk, Sky and Cityfibre was launched to deploy full fibre infrastructure and services across York.

Greg Mesch, Cityfibre’s chief executive, told City A.M. that the deal was “completely synergistic” for the firm, as it would bring the company’s offering to new cities.

He added: “Customers are not just getting BT and Virgin’s offering, but something far superior. Fibrenation has been selling gigabit speeds at wholesale prices in York. We can do this across all 8m of our premises at a fraction of the cost.”

In order to do the deal, Cityfibre also announced that it had altered the terms of its partnership with Vodafone to open itself up to other internet providers.

Tritstia Harrison, chief executive of Fibrenation, said: “This agreement is good news for Talktalk and good news for Britain’s fibre rollout.”

Shaftesbury shareholder Samuel Tak Lee vows to oppose landlord’s bosses

JESS CLARK
@platajournal

BILLIONAIRE property magnate Samuel Tak Lee announced yesterday he will vote against West End landlord Shaftesbury’s board at a meeting this month, as a long running dispute between the pair rumbles on.

Lee, the owner of rival London landlord Langham Estate, is the largest shareholder in Shaftesbury, and launched legal action against the firm last year.

In a letter to shareholders, Lee said he will vote against the re-election of chief executive Brian Bickell, finance director Chris Ward and chairman Jonathan Nicholls.

He will also oppose resolutions that would allow the board to undertake further share issues, the ability of Shaftesbury to call a general meeting with 14 days notice and the directors’ remuneration report.

Lee’s legal case, which is expected to be heard in the High Court next year, alleges that Shaftesbury conducted a December 2017 share placing “improperly”.

Shaftesbury has denied the claims saying they have “no merit”.

In a statement Shaftesbury said: “The board wholly rejects the suggestion in Mr Lee’s statement alleging mismanagement of the company’s affairs.”

Facebook set to introduce up to 1,000 new jobs

ANGHARAD CARRICK
@angharadcarrick

FACEBOOK will create 1,000 new jobs in London by the end of the year, it announced yesterday.

Over half of the new jobs will be in technology, as well as development of its Workplace and WhatsApp platforms. Other roles will focus on detecting and removing harmful online content.

The new roles will take the number of Facebook employees in the UK to more than 4,000. The company also announced it will be opening a new office in King’s Cross in 2021.

Facebook is trying to rebuild its credibility after the Cambridge Analytica scandal in 2018, for which it was fined $5bn (£3.85bn).

Speaking at the World Economic Forum at Davos, Facebook’s chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg, said: “Our teams at Facebook are working around the clock to make progress on these challenges while also building great products”.

She added: “The... jobs we’re adding in the UK is going to help us accomplish even more and if we get all of this right the internet will continue to be a force for good.”

IN BLOOM

London firm Blossom Capital launches a $185m Europe-focused fund

LONDON-BASED venture capital firm Blossom has launched a second $185m (£142m) fund to support startups at an early stage, and take already successful startups, less than a year after its first raise.

The new fund, which Blossom Capital founder Ophelia Brown (pictured) said was “heavily oversubscribed”, will invest in European tech startups at an early stage, and takes the total raised by the company to $270m.

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General Election sparks a jump in property sales

JESS CLARK
@jclarkjourn

UK PROPERTY transactions soared at the end of last year, according to gov-
ernment data, as both sellers and buy-
ers made the most of renewed confidence following the General Election result.

Residential property transactions in December jumped 6.8 per cent year on year to 104,670, a 6.2 per cent rise from November figures.

The total number of non-residential UK property transactions reached 14,689 in December, which was 13.4 per cent higher than November and 9.8 per cent more than December 2018, according to Revenue & Customs (HMRC) data showed.

Finance director Shania Church said: “The end of 2019 saw a surge in property transactions, and house prices continue to rise. The new year looks set to continue into early 2020.

“The decisive outcome of the

General Election has generated a surge in interest from buyers and sellers, who now with greater clarity and certainty on the UK’s political future, are ready to make moves.”

The HMRC transaction data is the latest research that shows both the residential and commercial property markets benefited from a so-called Boris Bounce following the Conservative election victory.

On Monday, Rightmove’s House Price Index showed that the result of the election sparked a record-break-
ing 2.5% per cent surge in UK house prices in December and January, the largest since records began in 2002.

Andrew Southern, chairman of property developer Southern Grove, said: “The entire industry will be hop-
ing this jump will be a sign of things to come. It was a blistering finishing to the year and bodes well for 2020 and the rest of this decade as a mercifully-deci-

Tunnel Vision £300m Knightsbridge hotel set to feature a passage to Harrods

JESS CLARK
@jclarkjourn

London rental hits a four-year high as home availability falls

JESS CLARK
@jclarkjourn

A NEW £300m luxury hotel development with a secret tunnel to Harrods has been given the green light by local planning commissioners. The Knightsbridge hotel will include a disused underground pedestrian and goods tunnel linking the two sites.

Moira says: “It’s well worth checking whether

UNDERTAKING
JANUARY PLAN 20
With the end of January in sight, the team at interactive investor urge those thinking of ditching their new financial resolutions to consider:

REVIEW YOUR WORKPLACE PENSION
Moira says: “Getting under the bonnet of your pension is a good financial priority, and it needn’t be rocket science – a quick call and a couple of questions to your provider could have a big impact down the line.

“It’s well worth checking whether

Moira O’Neill, ii’s head of personal finance at interactive investor

INTERACTIVE INVESTOR
READ MORE ONLINE
Keep up to date on our news at: www.ii.co.uk

London rental hits a four-year high as home availability falls

JESS CLARK
@jclarkjourn

LONDON’S rental growth hit a four-year high last year as the number of properties available for tenants plummeted, according to the latest research.

In the capital, rents rose 2.8 per cent in 2019 – the highest growth in three years – reaching an average of £886 per calendar month in the fourth quarter, according to Zoopla.

“The trend for soaring rents was reflected across the UK, as nationwide rental growth hit 2.6 per cent – the highest growth in three years,” said Zoopla chief execution officer, Patrick McCann.

Moira O’Neill, ii’s head of personal finance, said: “It might seem counter-

CONTROLLING CHARGES, A GOLDEN RULE OF CAPITAL PRESERVATION

Moira says: “Investors cannot control the market but they can control how much they pay to invest, and it’s one of the golden rules of capital preservation. There are some great platform-comparison sites out there, and a good starting point is to think about your pot size.

“Where investors starting out with small pots will find a percentage fee more competitive, for larger pots a flat-fee charging structure, in pounds and pence, can be far more competitive. It also means as your assets grow, your charges stay the same. Over the long term, the differences can add up to thousands of pounds.”

This article is provided for information purposes only and is not intended to be a personal recommendation to buy or sell any financial instrument or product, or to adopt any investment strategy.

IN BRIEF

LEKOLI RECEIVES STAY OF EXECUTION FOR PAYMENT
Invention in embattled Lekoli, which was last week embroiled in an extraordinary saga involving a fake investment fund, could breathe a sigh of relief yesterday as the firm announced that the operator of the Nigerian oil field the fake fund was meant to support said it would delay payment of $5.6m (£4.7m) for six months.

Boris Johnson, the prime minister, said the fund would now have to pay $2m by 20 March, with the full amount due by 2 May.

Lekoli will also have to prove that it can fund 42.9 per cent of the costs for the first well on the new field.

RECORD 6.4M CUSTOMERS SWITCH SUPPLIER IN 2019
A record 6.4m customers switched energy supplier in 2019, roughly one in every five households.

On average, there were £3,000 savings per month – and 12 every minute. In the past five years, the number of people who have changed supplier has more than doubled as challenger firms such as Ovo, Bulb, and Octopus have loosened the so-called Big Six’s grip on the UK domestic market.

SABADELL SELLS UNIT TO AMUNDI FOR €430M
Spain’s Banco de Sabadell said yesterday it had agreed to sell its asset management arm to Amundi Asset Management for €365.5m. The sale of the unit, which has assets under management of around €31bn, will generate net capital gains of €35ml for Sabadell, the bank said.

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Flybe bailout won’t save airline in the long-haul

BRITISH airline Flybe, known for being the largest independent regional airline in Europe, entered the New Year reporting financial difficulties and that the brand was at risk of collapsing.

Not only would Flybe’s demise put 2,000 jobs at risk but many hard-to-reach areas would lose a vital connection to major cities, such as Northern Ireland, Newquay and the Isle of Man, where the company even has a government contract to transfer NHS patients to Liverpool.

According to YouGov Profiles, 17 per cent of Britons who flew with Flybe in the past 12 months live in the south-west region, 16 per cent in Scotland and 14 per cent in the west midlands. In contrast, only four per cent live in London and three per cent in the east of England.

Last week government ministers agreed a rescue deal for Flybe by allowing a short-term extension to allow the brand to settle its debt, much to the anger of British Airways and Easyjet bosses who have drawn comparison to the decline of Thomas Cook, which was not bailed out.

YouGov snap poll at the time showed a majority (54 per cent) of Brits agreed with the government’s decision not to intervene and save Thomas Cook. However, in a snap poll yesterday, 41 per cent of Britons felt that the government was right to delay tax payments owed by Flybe in order to prevent it going bankrupt.

This clearly demonstrates the public’s difference of opinion in regards to which airline should receive help.

YouGov Brand Index data shows that although public perception of Flybe struggled at the beginning of the year, buzz scores (a net measure of whether consumers have heard anything positive or negative about the brand in the last fortnight) were increasing and on a trajectory to enter positive numbers.

For a company that mostly relies on cheap, domestic flights, tax made flying regionally with Flybe an un-economic option. Delaying this tax doesn’t solve the problem long-haul.

Stephan Shakespeare

Strong traveller growth enables sales rise for SSP

JESS CLARK
@jclarkpuno

UPPER Crust owner SSP Group yesterday reported a slight rise in sales at the end of last year as the travel hub food operator benefitted from growing passenger numbers in the UK and North America.

Like-for-like sales in the three months ended 31 December grew 1.2 per cent, in line with expectations, the company said yesterday. Strong passenger numbers at travel hubs in the UK and North America offset the impact of transport strikes in France and disruption in Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, total group revenue increased 7.5 per cent on a constant currency basis following net contract gains of 6.3 per cent. SSP’s share price rose 2.7 per cent yesterday.

The firm secured several new contract openings last year, including Montparnasse Railway station, motorway service stations in Germany and railway Starbucks units in the Netherlands.

The company also announced yesterday that it will acquire the travel catering business from DB Station & Service, a subsidiary of Germany’s national railway company Deutsche Bahn. The deal will add 28 food and drink units to SSP’s portfolio when they are all fully operational next year, including food courts at Berlin and Cologne stations, and is expected to add £120m to SSP’s full-year revenue.

SSP

Germany and railway Starbucks units in the Netherlands.

GLOBETROTTERS can now manage multiple passports and visa requirements on their mobiles thanks to a new app. Passport Index was unveiled in Davos yesterday by Arton Capital, which advises clients on citizenship by investment schemes.

OFF TO A FLYING START New app allows jetsetters to manage passports on mobile
London and Edinburgh investment drives income jump for Apex Hotel

JESS CLARK
@jclarkjourno

APEX Hotels reported that profit soared in its last financial year following increased investment at its hotels in London and Edinburgh.

Profit after tax for the year to 30 April was £9.4m up 51.6 per cent from £6.2m in 2018, on increased turnover of £75.5m, up from £68.9m.

The number of rooms sold rose 5.3 per cent to more than 465,500 and revenue per available room increased year on year by 2.4 per cent.

The hotel chain – which has three London venues in Fleet Street, London Wall and near Tower Bridge – said investment helped boost its financial figures during the year.

Apex invested £90m in its Temple Court and City of London hotels, as well as Edinburgh’s Waterloo place, bringing the total investment on the three projects to £17.6m.

As part of the Temple Court refurbishment Apex created a 20-room extension with five luxury suites, meeting rooms and a new wine bar.

The company’s City of Bath hotel also reached its first full year of trading during the period.

Chief executive Angela Vickers said: “We are delighted to see this has resulted in a strong performance across the financial year and demonstrates our continued commitment to providing modern facilities and the best possible experience for our guests.”

Energy services firm Sureserve posts profit hike

ALEX DANIEL
@alexmdaniel

SURESERVE enjoyed a rise in core profit of more than one-quarter last year, as demand grew in its two core compliance and energy services markets.

The Aim-listed company maintains and installs boilers, and makes sure homes are energy efficient among other services.

Profit excluding exceptional items rose 16 per cent to £8.5m in the 12 months to September, reflecting “improved operational efficiency,” according to chief executive Bob Holt.

It comes after Sureserve sold off its construction and property services arms in a bid to become more efficient.

The company doubled its dividend to shareholders to 0.6p a share.

“I am pleased to report an excellent year of both operational progress and improved financial performance, with our results exceeding market and internal targets,” said chair Bob Holt.

“The focus on driving growth within our core divisions of compliance and energy services has paid dividends, yielding strong increases in group revenue and profit, while at the same time continuing to reduce our debt and improve our cash conversion.”

Sureserve said an increase in energy efficiency standards for social housing, as well as high fire safety standards in homes had helped drive demand. The latter is thought to be a direct result of the Grenfell Tower fire in 2017.

Analysts at Shore Capital Markets said its energy services division has “opportunities in large national and regional schemes to tackle fuel poverty”.

Sureserve shares fell 0.6 per cent to 43.25p yesterday.

Aldi announces employee pay rise and 3,800 staff recruitment target

JESS CLARK
@jclarkjourno

ALDI has announced it will increase the hourly rate paid to in-store staff members and hire more than 3,800 employees this year as it pushes ahead with its UK expansion plans.

The budget supermarket said yesterday all employees will earn a minimum hourly rate of £9.40, a 30p per hour increase from the previous minimum wage of £9.10.

Within the M25, the hourly rate will rise from £10.55 to £10.90 from 1 February.

Employees with three years service will be paid £10.41 per hour across the UK, while members of staff within the Greater London area that have worked for the chain for two years will earn £11.15 per hour.

The new rates exceed the recommended living wage of £9.30 per hour nationally and £10.75 per hour within the boundaries of the M25. The supermarket also announced that it is seeking to hire more than 1,600 in-store workers this year, and is on track to boost its 874 stores to 1,200 by 2025.

Aldi UK chief executive Giles Hurley said: “We have the most efficient and productive workforce, and this is why they earn the highest rates of pay in the grocery sector.”

Uber Eats sells Indian delivery arm to Zomato

JAMES WARRINGTON
@j_a_warrington

UBER yesterday said it has sold its food delivery business in India to rival Zomato in an all-share deal worth a reported $350m (£268m).

The deal gives Uber a 10 per cent stake in Zomato, which is backed by Ant Financial, a fintech affiliate of Chinese conglomerate Alibaba.

The companies did not disclose the value of the deal but it is thought to be worth roughly $350m, local media reported, citing sources.

Zomato said the deal made it the “undisputed” market leader in the Indian food delivery business – putting it ahead of rival Swiggy.

“Our Uber Eats team in India has achieved an incredible amount over the last two years, and I couldn’t be prouder of their ingenuity and dedication,” said Uber chief executive Dara Khosrowshahi.

“India remains an exceptionally important market to Uber and we will continue to invest in our local rides business, which is already the clear category leader.”

The takeover is the latest example of consolidation in the highly competitive global food delivery market.

Earlier this month Dutch firm Takeaway.com snapped up UK rival Just Eat for £5.9bn, after a prolonged shareholder battle.

Noah Browning

Angola's richest woman Isabel dos Santos has faced scrutiny over her personal wealth and this pressure is likely to continue in 2020.

The daughter of King Jonas dos Santos succeeded her father in 2003, becoming the first female president of an African country. She has been involved in a number of corruption scandals.

Angolan President Joao Lourenco recently said the government was working on compensating those who had lost because of corruption, its domestic assets of former first daughter Isabel dos Santos, accusing her of “steering payments of more than $1bn” to “arinancia”.

The move is seen as a bid to place the country on a more stable footing and avoid international sanctions.

The Angolan president has been accused of incompetence at the World Bank for his failure to get the country's constitution implemented.

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The budget supermarket is aiming to boost its store numbers to 1,200 by 2025.
FTSE has its worst day in a fortnight

LONDON’s FTSE 100 suffered its worst day in two weeks yesterday as the spread of a new coronavirus in China curbed risk appetite and oil prices fell sharply, while jobs data eased some bets of an imminent interest rate cut by the Bank of England (BoE), which last month held rates steady helped domestic demand, said a senior economist at Genuity Capital Markets.

The FTSE 100 shed 0.5 per cent, as luxury and travel stocks led losses. British Airways-owner IAG fell three per cent and Intercontinental Hotels Group slipped 3.5 per cent. The FTSE 250 also gave up 0.5 per cent.

Shares of firms that book a major chunk of their earnings in US dollars weakened as sterling gained after a robust UK jobs report helped trim the odds of a Boll rate cut this month.

Imperial Brands, which owns Benson & Hedges and Gitanes, gave up 2.6 per cent. But markets have still priced in near-term policy easing, with the central bank still widely expected to pull the trigger on a 25-basis point cut. “There is a sense the bank doesn’t want to get behind the curve of market expectations,” said Markets.com analyst Neil Wilson.

Broader sentiment and Swiss bank UBS cutting its mid-term targets led a subindex of financial stocks to its lowest since mid-December.

Yet hopes that the BoE may hold rates steady helped domestic banks Lloyds and RBS add one per cent each.

Reuters

Joules store closures hurt half-year profit as it issues full-year warning

JOULES revealed a dramatic plunge in its first half of its current financial year. The British lifestyle retailer reported six deaths from the virus, which is being likened to the deadly 2002/2003 spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (Sars), just ahead of the Chinese Lunar New Year holiday.

The FTSE 100 shed 0.5 per cent, as luxury and travel stocks led losses. British Airways-owner IAG fell three per cent and Intercontinental Hotels Group slipped 3.5 per cent. The FTSE 250 also gave up 0.5 per cent.

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Reuters

US$ 1,000

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

**JOE CURTIS**

@joe_curtis

JOULES revealed a dramatic plunge in profit to just £1.7m yesterday as it took a £6.7m hit to close stores and relocate its head office in the six months to the end of November. Joules booked an 82 per cent drop in profit before tax from £9.3m this time last year to just £1.7m for the first half of its current financial year.

The British lifestyle retailer yesterday blamed a late Black Friday but also forked out £6m to close more than four underperforming stores and relocate its head office.

Extending its distribution centre lease also cost it £700,000. Joules had already warned full-year profit would fall far below a forecast £16.7m due to supply issues, triggering a 20 per cent drop in its shares, before recovering 10.4 per cent up to 202p at the bell. A revenue decline of 1.4 per cent to £111.6m on year compounded the decline in profit as Joules blamed a late Black Friday that fell outside of its first half.

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Joules chief executive Nick Jones said: “The UK retail environment has delivered a robust first half sales and margin performance in line with expectations, which was pleasing in the context of a challenging consumer environment.”

The firm said it had updated on our disappointing Christmas trading performance, resulting from a stock availability issue impacting our online channel,” he added. Joules said it had rebalanced the allocation of stocks between channels for the next season.

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@joe_curtis

JOULES revealed a dramatic plunge in profit to just £1.7m yesterday as it took a £6.7m hit to close stores and relocate its head office in the six months to the end of November. Joules booked an 82 per cent drop in profit before tax from £9.3m this time last year to just £1.7m for the first half of its current financial year.

The British lifestyle retailer yesterday blamed a late Black Friday but also forked out £6m to close more than four underperforming stores and relocate its head office.

Extending its distribution centre lease also cost it £700,000. Joules had already warned full-year profit would fall far below a forecast £16.7m due to supply issues, triggering a 20 per cent drop in its shares, before recovering 10.4 per cent up to 202p at the bell. A revenue decline of 1.4 per cent to £111.6m on year compounded the decline in profit as Joules blamed a late Black Friday that fell outside of its first half.

If Black Friday had been included retail revenue would have risen 3.1 per cent, the firm said.

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Joules chief executive Nick Jones said: “The UK retail environment has delivered a robust first half sales and margin performance in line with expectations, which was pleasing in the context of a challenging consumer environment.”

The firm said it had updated on our disappointing Christmas trading performance, resulting from a stock availability issue impacting our online channel,” he added. Joules said it had rebalanced the allocation of stocks between channels for the next season.
From A&E waiting times to the Windrush scandal, beware of bureaucratic targets

L

AST week, health secretary Matt Hancock signalled an important change of strategy. Accident and Emergency Departments have a target that 95 per cent of patients should be admitted, transferred or discharged within four hours. Hancock suggested that the target will be scrapped. Instead, waits will be determined by clinical need. Credible hyperbolic outrage. The president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine said the change was “staggering.” An example, claimed that this change would have a “near-catastrophic impact on patient safety.”

The NHS is not meeting the target by a long chalk. In December, the actual figure assessed within four hours slipped to under 70 per cent. A key reason seems to be increased demand for A&E services. Since the Conservatives came to power in 2010, admissions have increased by almost 25 per cent. It is inherently implausible to imagine that cases of genuine emergencies have risen by this amount. Road casualties, for example, fell by 24 per cent since 2010. There is much anecdotal evidence to suggest that people are bypassing GP surgeries and turning up at A&E with trivial complaints. Perhaps GPs are so overwhelmed that they cannot get appointments to consult patients, or that patients feel they have little choice if they fall ill at weekends.

We see this in other sectors too. Schools, for example, meet targets very rarely. The other is by queue. Even the most baseline free marketeer would surely balk at the idea of making people involved in genuine accidents wait for credit cards. So queue it has. And in such circumstances, it is entirely appropriate that decisions on who gets treated first should be made on clinical grounds rather than a purely arbitrary target on the length of wait.

This controversy demonstrates the wider problem with setting targets: sooner or later (and usually sooner), people work out how to game them. In A&E departments, once a patient has waited more than four hours, they have zero priority. The hospital incurs no more dockings if the wait is 14 hours rather than four hours plus a single minute.

If we can solve Brexit. But a second straggler from Brexiteers’ May era has seemed likely to disrupt the post-Brexit equilibrium.

How the Prime Minister chooses to deal with it may have long-term effects as important in their own way as Brexit to the UK’s future path. The issue arises from an attempt to include the Chinese-owned telecommunications giant Huawei, offering within the UK’s 5G infrastructure network first arose, it sparked cabinet chaos.

According to discussions with the National Security Council discussion — which claimed the scale of the defence secretary Gavin Williamson — revealed that all the ministers of the government were divided on foreign affairs within their portfolios opposed the idea. After accusations that the government might be weighting trade and technology considerations above national security ones, the Huawei juncture was kicked into the long grass.

But time does not stand still. The Huawei decision is not off the agenda, requiring a resolution — and unfortunately for the government, the balance of public opinion has tipped against Huawei. Huawei enjoys a head start in the provision of 5G services, thanks to the massive subsidies it has received. Huawei’s presence within the UK market could be highly tempting for countries that are looking for a country to exert influence and to secure the critical 5G services currently available. If the vendor were a normal company in a liberal democracy, no eyes would be bated at this.

But Huawei is none of those things. It is a state champion of an oppressive regime that — through the 2017 National Intelligence Law — Chinese companies to cooperate with the intelligence services, and which has already used Huawei technology to enforce repression of Uighurs and other minorities in Xinjiang.

Huawei has also been accused of corporate espionage in the past, and of having personnel links to Chinese intelligence. The company’s relationship with the Chinese government has been questioned too, on account of the state’s aggressive foreign policy. Huawei’s reputation has been damaged by its connection to the Chinese military, its failure to solve rotations and decision-making is likely to blur the boundaries between core and peripheral areas of the network, this would be a major strategic objective, and which would say that, wouldn’t it.

The British government has conceded that if Huawei were restricted to providing services at the periphery of 5G, if Huawei were restricted to providing services at the periphery of 5G, this would not pose significant new risks in the UK telecommunications infrastructure. Yet, even if Huawei were restricted to providing services at the periphery of 5G, this would not pose significant new risks in the UK telecommunications infrastructure.

There are two ways to ration. One is by price — whoever is willing to pay the most gets dealt with first. The other is by queue. Even the most baseline free marketeer would surely balk at the idea of making people involved in genuine accidents wait for credit cards. So queue it has. And in such circumstances, it is entirely appropriate that decisions on who gets treated first should be made on clinical grounds rather than a purely arbitrary target on the length of wait.

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One may ask why successive UK governments have not, in the past, systematically delected the electorate on the economic impact of EU membership, and of course the answer is that they have generally chosen to support European integration as a geopolitical project, not discarded it as an economic reality.

Dr R. Cooper

One might take the insistence that the UK can forge its own economic path after Brexit to diverge into the EU with zero economic consequences a bit more seriously were these arguments not being put forward by individuals who seem to have convinced that our future success rests on whether or not we pay £300,000 to get a better passport. Personally, I have my doubts.

R. Levy

Britain’s Five-Eyes partners have effectively banned it from operating their critical infrastructure

Alan Mendoza

Our way, not the Huawei — for the sake of national security

P

ORS Johnson might have been the first to voice the worry that the biggest dilemma the inherited from Theresa May in 2019 would be how to resolve Brexit. But a second straggler from May era has seemed likely to disrupt the post-Brexit equilibrium.

The Prime Minister chooses to deal with it may have long-term effects as important in their own way as Brexit to the UK’s future path. The issue arises from an attempt to include the Chinese-owned telecommunications giant Huawei, offering within the UK’s 5G infrastructure network first arose, it sparked cabinet chaos.

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HS2 is vital — but it’s been critically misunderstood

David Beddell

HS2 will become a case study in the importance of having your corporate communications in order. Since the beginning, protestors have successfully framed the project as being about shaving 10 minutes of a journey between Birmingham and London, and this narrative has cut through to the media, members of the public, and even politicians.

While shortening journey time is, of course, a key consideration, it is not HS2’s only purpose. As well as faster services between our major cities, this is about the regeneration of urban centres along the route, rebalancing the national economy by improving links between the south east and the north, and releasing capacity across the rail network as a whole.

Through the detangling and removal of express services on the West Coast Main Line (Iluton to the west Midlands and north west), Midland Main Line (St Pancras to the east Midlands and Sheffield), and East Coast Main Line (Kings Cross to Leeds, Newcastle and beyond), HS2 will both ensure that more commuter trains are run on existing routes and allow them to be bunched together — essentially creating the opportunity for more frequent and “metro-like” services.

Indeed, it is for these reasons that city leaders who are pushing for investment in Northern Powerhouse Rail are not arguing that it should come at the expense of HS2. Far from being mutually exclusive, the two projects are symbiotic.

Much of our existing commuter rail network is already at saturation point. The National Infrastructure Commission’s own forecasts suggest that passenger numbers could increase by up to 43 per cent from today’s levels by 2050. We need solutions to overcrowding across our rail system — and HS2 is just that.

Instead of fixing on the overall budget (which has indeed increased from first estimates), we should be focusing on value. Infrastructure tends to deliver at least a two-to-one return on investment — and in many instances, such as the Jubilee line extension, the benefits have far outweighed what was initially expected. The current review of HS2 will be a great opportunity to reassess the project now all the benefits are better understood.

While critics are also quick to fantasise about spending the billions allocated to HS2 on other infrastructure priorities, the reality is that, if cancelled, these funds would simply disappear. Big infrastructure projects take years to plan and get off the ground, meaning we’d be scraping an over-ready, carefully considered scheme for the hope of hypothetical, uncosted ideas that don’t even exist yet.

As well as those concerned about value for money, HS2 has riled environmentalists who suggest that the loss of around 100 ancient woodlands is simply unacceptable. Once again, poor engagement on the issue has skewed the discussion, which also needs to take into account the range of environmental benefits the project brings.

HS2 will be crucial to taking more people and freight traffic off roads, as well as reducing domestic flights. This has to happen if we are to meet the UK’s net-zero ambitions and mitigate the worst effects of climate change. It is also clear that the communications and business case hasn’t kept pace with the project’s development.

Just look at how support from northern MPs and regional metro mayors has evolved over time. Many were initially wary, then backed HS2 in lukewarm terms, but now fully understand the transformative effects it will have for the communities they serve.

After examining the project in detail, they have reached the same conclusions as I have. It is the only common-sense solution to increasing capacity, unlocking the potential for new lines and services, and creating the environment to rebalance our national economy. If you can’t cancel HS2, you would only have to invent a very similar project in a few years’ time.

Lessons from history: central banks need to cut interest rates by about five percentage points in a recession. So if rates were six per cent, they would need to drop to one per cent.

Interest rates are a central bank’s ammunition to keep inflation stable. Cutting rates during a downturn works because it makes borrowing cheaper and coaxes consumers and companies to spend more.

The problem is that the Bank of England interest rate is already low, at 0.75 per cent.

Of course, central bankers do have other tools — namely quantitative easing and forward guidance. Clever people coaxes consumers and companies to spend more.

These new tools are less tried and tested, so their potency less certain, and they come with unpleasant side effects (such as financial risk and inequality).

Those concerns aside, 2.5 is not enough to fight a recession and the odds look stacked against Threadneedle Street. The Bank is not alone — the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank are facing similar issues.

Jumana Saleheen is chief economist at commodities consultant CRU Group.

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It is the only common-sense solution to increasing capacity and rebalancing our economy.

Is the Bank of England out of ammunition for the next recession?

NO

CHRIS PAPADOPOULOS

First, it can restart asset purchases. Unlike the European Central Bank, the Bank of England has plenty of government bonds to buy, and the government’s spending plans ensure that they will not run out.

Asset purchases were a key reason why the UK and US recovered from 2001–14, while the Eurozone stagnated. They can be highly effective, as the euro area found when it finally tried them. Concerns over increased inequality can be met through fiscal policy.

Second, the Bank can slash the counter cyclical capital buffer for banks, allowing them to lend more.

Third, it can change financial sector priorities, the reality is that, if cancelled, these funds would simply disappear. Big infrastructure projects take years to plan and get off the ground, meaning we’d be scraping an over-ready, carefully considered scheme for the hope of hypothetical, uncosted ideas that don’t even exist yet.

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### FTSE 100

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A colleague recently asked me what I thought had changed in cyber security over the last 10 years. We agreed that it had certainly been a time of momentous change.

In 2012, there was the Shamoon attacks in the Gulf region. In one stroke, 35,000 computers were wiped and disabled within a matter of hours.

Five years later, the “WannaCry” virus ripped through IT infrastructure like wildfire, encrypting hundreds of thousands of computers in over 150 countries. Not only was the scale of the attack deeply concerning—it also took down vital services. Travel networks were affected, and medical appointments throughout the UK were disrupted.

The second large-scale incident of 2017, NotPetya, became the most damaging cyber attack in history, causing destruction estimated to be in excess of $1bn globally. The transport industry was hit hard, with ships stuck at port and staff having to ferry around pieces of paper to keep cargo moving.

And just last year, our Cisco Talos researchers uncovered a global attack we named “SeaTurtle”, which undermined the DNS system that translates domain names into machine-readable IP addresses.

The risk of clicking the link in a malicious email is never going to go away. To be human is to commit human error. Indeed, despite working in cyber security, I personally fell for my own firm’s internal phishing test. At the very least, I learned that you can’t be complacent when it comes to security.

Fighting back
As cybercrime has evolved over the decade, so have our responses. The chief information security officer has emerged as the C-suite role responsible for protecting networks and systems. The government has also stepped up. In 2010, the UK National Security Strategy rated cyber attacks as the highest level of threat. The government later published the “30 steps to cyber security”, giving practical advice on how organisations should manage and counter digital risks. In 2016, the National Cyber Security Centre was formed to provide a single point of contact for the government on cyber security matters.

And 2018 brought further legislative changes. The Network & Information Systems Regulations mandated that providers of essential services must implement security measures to prevent disruption due to cyber attacks. The EU’s General Data Protection Regulation has also promoted rights for individuals over their personal data, backed up with the possibility of heavy fines for transgressions.

It’s never over
It has been a hugely eventful decade for cyber security, and the battle against cybercrime is advancing. Eventually, our understanding will reach the point that cyber attacks will be things of the past. But the ingenuity of those who seek to cause harm by subverting technology means that, although we are progressing, there is at least another decade of battle ahead.

Martin Lee is manager of outreach for cyber security intelligence firm Cisco Talos.
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Investing in financial markets involves the risk of loss. There is no guarantee any invested capital will be repaid. Past performance does not guarantee future performance. The value of investments and the income from them will fluctuate with world financial markets and international currency exchange rates.

1As of 31/10/2019. Includes Fisher Investments and its subsidiaries.
businesses alike consumers and can benefit cashless economy their head above water in challenging and their bottom line. Ditching cash are ATM withdrawals. terms by the app Swish than there and today there are more daily pay- of transactions are done with cash, Sweden, for example, only 13 per cent mirrored in the US and Europe. In small businesses, and it’s happening the country too. This is a phenomenon dominated by small businesses, and it’s happening across the world. The growth of the cashless economy in the UK has been mirrored in the US and Europe. In Sweden, for example, only 13 per cent of transactions are done with cash, and today there are more daily payments by the app Swish than there are ATM withdrawals. These businesses are taking advantage of modern payment technologies to better serve their customers – and their bottom line. Ditching cash is helping independent shops keep their head above water in challenging retail conditions.

NOSTALGIA TRIP Clearly, cash is in terminal decline. A decade ago, physical coins and notes were used in six out of 10 payments. Today, under a quarter of retail payments occur in cash, and forecasters predict that this will drop to fewer than one in 10 over the next decade. Between 2007 and 2017, cash payments by volume halved, and debit card transactions more than doubled. Meanwhile, e-commerce and mobile-commerce are booming, and on current trends, over 40 per cent of retail spending will be online within the next eight years. However, the future-facing march away from cash is not without its critics. According to the Access to Cash Review, published in March 2019 and supported by Link (the UK’s largest operator of ATMs), Britain is “sleepwalking into a cashless society” – and towards the economic isolation of millions of vulnerable people. The Review’s author, Natalie Ceeney, states that over eight million adults would be at serious risk if the UK becomes a cashless economy, and claims that 17 per cent of UK adults would be unable to pay for milk.

This is obviously a situation we all want to avoid. But is it really a risk? In fact, the Access to Cash Review itself has an entire section on how digital technology can help improve financial inclusion. It implies that we are on the eve of being able to make purchases with bionic implants or facial recognition technology.

A future where commuters can buy their train tickets with implants but pensioners are unable use debit cards seems unlikely. Rather than clinging to the payment methods of the past, we should look to the technologies of the future to make sure that everyone can participate in the economy.

INCLUSIVE ECONOMY As I argue in Cashing Out, a new report for The Entrepreneurs Network, instead of preserving cash indefi- nitely, the government should en- courage innovation to improve financial inclusion by expanding ac- cess to digital finance.

In 2015, the Financial Inclusion Commission recommended that the government ensures all adults in the UK have access to a bank account by 2020. As recent research from the Financial Conduct Authority’s sandbox suggested, access to a fully-functional bank account is an essen- tial precondition for all people to take part in modern British society. Sadly, we are still far from achieving that goal. Today, around 1.5m people living in Britain are unbanked, and it is primarily their interests that politi- cians have in mind when they criti- cise a cashless economy.

But concern for the unbanked can alter this trend, nor will it help those unable to make electronic payments. Cash is falling out of favour for many reasons, and not because of the rise of card-only coffee shops and craft beer bars. Banning card-only shops will not alter this trend, nor will it help those unable to make electronic payments. As the overwhelming majority of people in the UK drop cash in favour of electronic payments, policymakers and politicians should focus on help- ing the most vulnerable fully take part in the modern economy, instead of holding back the innovators who have helped to build it.

Cash is falling out of favour for many reasons, and not because of the rise of card-only coffee shops and craft beer bars.

Fred de Fossard explains how the cashless economy can benefit consumers and businesses alike.
How to rustle up a killer Cullen skink for your Burns supper

From Cullen on the southern shore of the Moray Firth, while skink is the name for a broth or soup. Follow it with haggis and neeps with a whisky sauce and a simple cranachan for pudding. Of course, the really smart ones among you will just pop down to Hix Oyster and Chop House (Smithfield) or Hix Oyster and Fish House (Lyme Regis), where I’ll be doing all the hard work for you, and you’re guaranteed to have an absolute blast. Go to hixrestaurants.co.uk to book.

INGREDIENTS

- 30g natural-smoked haddock
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 200g natural-smoked haddock fillet
- 200g natural-smoked haddock
- 1 tbsp chopped parsley
- 200g natural-smoked haddock
- 1 litre fish stock
- 1 leek, roughly chopped and washed
- A good knob of butter
- Sea salt to taste
- Ground white pepper

METHOD

1. Melt the butter in a pan and gently cook the leek for a few minutes with the lid on, until soft. Add the fish stock, potato, bay leaf and smoked haddock. Bring to the boil and simmer for 15 minutes.
2. Carefully remove the haddock from the pan with a slotted spoon and put to one side.
3. Simmer the soup for another 15 minutes. Remove the bay leaf and blend in a liquidizer until smooth. Strain through a fine-meshed sieve into a clean pan.
4. Mornacht, remove the flesh from the skin of the haddock, checking for bones, then flake it into the strained soup.
WHY NEW YEAR IS THE MIND KILLER

The best way to keep your new year resolutions is to tear them all up, says Harry Thomas

We’re already into the final furlong of January and I bet most of you are already close to packing in your new year’s resolutions – especially the ones that involve eating more healthily and going to the gym.

It’s become a cliche, but January resolutions set us up to fail – they encourage a short-termist mindset and are usually poorly planned and executed. They can actually be bad for your overall fitness as a setback this early in the year is enough to put many people off altogether.

So I want you to tear up your new year’s resolutions and instead think about how you can take the positive mindset you had on 6 January and turn it into a yearlong reality. The first, and perhaps most important thing to do is be more mindful in your decisions when it comes to food. It makes your body more efficient in the way it burns fat, and eventually it gets easier.

A common mistake is to simply try to give up “bad food” – be that carbs or sugar or whatever the latest fad dictates. That’s a terrible idea. Tackle problem areas of your diet in small pieces. Try not to change everything at once. Instead, try being there to witness your journey. Build up a solid foundation that you can build upon week after week.

We can help, not only by shouting at you (wary of any trainer who shouts at you), but by being there to witness your journey. Even online personal training sessions can be useful, giving you accountability and structure to keep you focused on your goals. We can help, not only by shouting at you, but by being there to witness your journey. Online personal training sessions can be useful, giving you accountability and structure to keep you focused on your goals.

Forget the fact it’s a new year, and a new decade. The important thing is it’s another week in your life, and one in which you can start to make little changes that may one day lead to great achievements.

To book a session with one of the trainers at No1 Fitness, visit no1fitness.co.uk or call 0207 403 6660
WITY the official Chinese New Year celebrations getting underway in Hong Kong, racing fans will be looking to make a fistful of dollars to pay for the weekend festivities at Happy Valley today.

The nine-race card is full of head scratching puzzles, with luck sure to play an important part yet again.

The best advice could be to double up on a couple of Zac Purton rides at the inner-city track.

The reigning champion already leads his rivals at the Valley this season, with a 20 per cent strike-rate and having combined for six wins and two places from just 15 rides so far this season.

There are question marks about the majority of his rivals staying the distance – 1m3f is considered a marathon trip in Hong Kong – although keep an eye on Young Glory, who won easily on his first attempt at the distance in October and has Neil Callan in the saddle.

Purton can successfully double up at the meeting when he partners last-start winner Winning Method in the closing six-furlong Hoi Yuen Handicap (2.50pm). Having ended last season as a two-year-old on a high, winning his last two races in spectacular fashion, trainer Danny Shum was hoping he had a potential sprint champion in his stable – then the wheels fell off! With expectations running high, he failed dismally in his first four races of the season, three as a short-priced favourite.

His trainer continued to tweak his equipment, finally relying on blinkers and a tongue tie, and got his rewards when the son of Holy Roman Emperor never looked in danger of defeat in a highly-competitive handicap over course and distance on Boxing Day.

An 8lb penalty obviously makes life tougher, especially with the likes of front-running Speedy Vision and three-time winner Quadruple Double desperate to dictate the early pace from the front.

Purton, however, will be quite happy to stalk the early pace just behind the leaders and can then show his class when making a bid for the winning line early in the straight.

**WINNING TASTES LIKE GARLIC AT HAPPY VALLEY**

Douglas Whyte has been one of the highlights of the racing season so far, with the former jockey enjoying plenty of success in his first year as a trainer.

Whyte, a 13-time champion jockey in the territory, saddled his first winner in the opening race of the new season back in September and has never looked back.

The 48-year-old had travelled the world before taking up his new role, learning his new trade from a number of champion trainers, including Sir Michael Stoute and is now reaping the rewards.

Despite having a stable full of horses, of which nearly half are average handicappers, Whyte has managed to accumulate 23 winners, putting him fourth in the champion trainers’ title race.

There is every chance the South African maestro could add another one to that already impressive record when he saddles a handful of contenders at the Valley, including Private Rocket in the Hoi Yuen Handicap (2.15pm) over six furlongs.

This former UK galloper, who ran under the same name when trained by Clive Cox, has taken some time to acclimatise to conditions in Hong Kong, but produced an encouraging display when defeated by just under two lengths to the smart Cue The Music in a hot handicap at the Valley last month. That form reads well, with the winner finishing runner-up in a highly competitive Class 2 event at Sha Tin recently.

Private Rocket trialled well against Sunday’s Group One Stewards’ Cup winner Waikuku at Sha Tin 12 days ago and his trainer was aboard him for his final gallop on Sunday.

With in-form jockey Karis Teetan booked and a low draw a bonus, the omens are looking good in what appears to be an open betting race.

**ALL ABOARD WHYTE’S PRIVATE ROCKET IN PENULTIMATE HANDICAP**

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SPORT

They didn’t get the win, but Arteta’s side displayed a valuable trait, says Michael Searles

Mikel Arteta had attempted to rally his Arsenal side for last night’s 2-2 draw with Chelsea when Freddie Ljungberg was appointed as a must-win if they were to have any chance of finishing in the top four. While they failed to come away with all three points, the 37-year-old former midfield player would have been the happier of the two managers as his side came from behind to draw level twice, despite having 10 men for most of the match.

Much had been said about Arsenal’s inability to hold onto leads, for most of the match. Arteta will still be left to rue his opponents’ spot-kick with ease to give Chelsea a 1-0 lead after 28 minutes and the home crowd would have hoped for. While they failed to come away late on when captain Cesar Azpilicueta got Chelsea’s second from a cross sent in by Callum Hudson-Odoi after a short corner.

Leaving it late

As Arsenal’s backline pushed out, the right-back was quickest to move over jumps for the last four seasons, looks like he will be a major concern. Their creative output actually appeared to reduce after the sending off and they struggled to fashion chances against the deeper lying defence, just as they did in costly home defeats against West Ham, Bournemouth, Southampton and even their 3-0 victory over Burnley.

ARTETTA SHOW FIGHT

Martinelli Magic

Arsenal were lacking creativity themselves and going down to 10 men did little to help, encouraging them to rely on springing a surprise counter-attack.

It took until the 63rd minute for the Gunners to register a shot on goal, but one shot was all it took as Gabriel Martinelli equalised. The 18-year-old broke from a Chelsea corner, running 67 yards before coolly sliding past Kepa Arrizabalaga in front of the away fans. It just took 13 seconds between Chelsea taking a corner and the ball ending up in the back of their net.

Just as Martinelli looked to have let the ball move too far ahead of him, N’Golo Kante slipped at a crucial moment, and the teenager went onto pull the Gunners level.

LEAVING IT LATE

For large periods the game had been a relatively subdued affair but it burst into life in the final 10 minutes as Chelsea proactively searched for a winner.

Azpilicueta’s strike in the 84th minute looked to have sealed the victory, but after that goal Arsenal decided to go gungho themselves.

As they searched for a way through, the ball came out to the right-back, Bellerin, who cut inside onto his left foot and curled the ball into the far corner to make it two goals from two shots.

Arsenal stood firm in the final minutes as Chelsea peppered their box to ensure the spoils were even and the gap between the pair remains at 10 points.

SPORT DIGEST

VILLA AND BOURNEMOUTH PICK UP HUGE VICTORIES

Oston Villa scored a dramatic late winner to beat Watford 2-1 in the Premier League last night. Tyrone Mings finished 11th last season and are in the final showpiece. Borthwick’s 8th

SARBIES PLAYERS MIGHT BE PICKED IF THEY MOVE ABOAD

The Rugby Football Union has hinted that Saracens players who chose to move abroad after the club’s relegation to the Championship would still be eligible for England selection. Currently only “exceptional circumstances” would mean a player based overseas would be eligible. But with Sarries set for the second tier following sustained salary cap breaches, many of their England-qualified players may choose to play abroad.

We want to make sure that whatever happens, the players aren’t disadvantaged in any way,” said RFU boss Bill Sweeney.

FAH: ‘I’m happy for wada to test any samples

Marc Anghel has insisted that he is happy to hand over any of his previous blood and urine samples for testing. The World Anti-Doping Agency plan to investigate all athletes who worked with coach Alberto Salazar, who was banned after being found guilty of doping violations. UK Anti-Doping has said it would need “credible evidence.” Fahad’s sample would contain banned substances before handing it over. But Farah tweeted: “I was not consulted about this and as I’ve said many times, I am happy for any anti-doping body to test any of my previous samples anytime.”

BROKEN ARM MAKES JOHNSON A DOUBT FOR CHELTENHAM

Richard Johnson, the champion jockey over jumps for the last four seasons, looks unlikely to make if he is not cleared to ride. The 42-year-old is set to be out of action for up to two months after being unseated from Westend Story in a novice chase at Exeter.

Johnson, who trails his main rival Brian Hughes by three wins in the campaign, is a major doubt for Cheltenham Festival, which starts on 10 March. However, trainer Philip Hobbs said his stable jockey “sounded very positive” about being fit for the season. showpiece.

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I prefer watching Liverpool to City’s title winners

Michael Edwards’ stats-based work has been key to club’s revival. By Michael Searles

WITH the ever-increasing presence of statistical analysis in football, and particularly in player recruitment, there has come the rise of the transfer guru.

Leicester City’s 2015-16 title success prompted Everton to poach Steve Walsh, the man credited with spotting N’Golo Kante, Riyad Mahrez and Jamie Vardy, but he proved unable to unearth similar hidden gems and was replaced two years later.

One man who has been delivering consistently, however, is Liverpool sporting director Michael Edwards.

In collaboration with head coach Jurgen Klopp, former Fenway Sports Group and his team of analysts, Liverpool have assembled what is increasingly looking like the best team the Premier League has seen.

Andy Robertson and Gini Wijnaldum were purchased for a bargain £22m, while Sadio Mane and Mohamed Salah were no means certain to be stars when signed from Southampton and Roma respectively.

Then there is Virgil van Dijk, Alisson, Fabinho and, more recently with an eye on the future, teenager Harvey Elliott and Takumi Minamino.

Of course, Klopp deserves the credit for getting the best out of his players and has been instrumental in identifying the right type of signings for his high-energy system.

But every transfer has been a success, either. Dominic Solanke didn’t hit the heights hoped, although Liverpool still able to shift him on to Bournemouth for a profit.

FAIR MORE ADVANCED

The club’s sound recruitment has been well documented, but the man responsible remains something of an enigma. Edwards, 40, has ascended through the ranks quickly and is considered by FSG, who also own baseball’s Boston Red Sox, to be a huge asset due to his Moneyball-like, stats-based approach.

He was reported to have had a strained relationship with Klopp’s predecessor Brendan Rodgers, but when results tailed off it was Rodgers who was let go while Edwards was promoted to technical director.

The University of Sheffield graduate established himself as FSG’s go-to guy in England, sending them daily emails, analysing the team’s performances and providing key data on transfer targets.

“A sporting director needs to be independent of the head coach in order to offer a different point of view,” former senior advisor of football operations at Swansea City and founder of scouting platform smartscout Dan Altman told City AM.

“I’m sure Liverpool’s models are reminiscent of other models, but they are slightly more advanced in terms of their analytics and far more advanced in terms of integrating analytics in their decision processes. Analytics aren’t worth a damn if you don’t have a good decision process.”

Edwards is more than a stats man, however. He studies targets live, seeks out the best players and, more recently, has been involved in analysing the game, having played for Norwich City’s youth team before an unsuccessful stint at Peterborough United.

Clearly lacking the talent with his feet that he has developed for analysing the game, Southampton-born Edwards earned a degree in informatics before being recruited by Harry Redknapp’s Portsmouth as an analyst. A year later he would become head of performance analysis when the department expanded.

In this role he analysed Portsmouth’s performances, held weekly meetings on opponents and studied transfer targets, using sports performance analytics software Prozone.

HEADHUNTED

He would reunite Redknapp in 2009 at Tottenham, where chairman Daniel Levy trusted Edwards to reshape the performance analysis department. It coincided with Tottenham’s first top-four finish in more than 20 years.

After two years at White Hart Lane he was headhunted by Damien Comolli, then sporting director of Liverpool. Successive promotions saw him become technical director in 2015 and sporting director just over a year later, giving him a greater remit encompassing everything from scouting to contract negotiations.

Earlier this month, Liverpool extended the deal of Klopp and James Milner. It is not a one-man show, though. Edwards is aided by head of recruitment Dave Folows and chief scout Barry Hunter, backed by FSG’s John Henry and Mike Gordon, and of course there is the man who brings it all together on the pitch. How well these players would fare without Klopp is debatable.

But with Edwards at the club, Liverpool have scaled the Premier League, claimed a sixth European Cup and just reported an increase in annual revenue to £333m.

His success may not be permanent and every transfer may not match that of Salah or Mane, but Edwards’ involvement and Liverpool’s success appears to be more than a coincidence.
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