Angry-Rail: TfL confirms longer delay

STEFAN BOSCIA
@Stefan_Boscia

TRANSPORT for London (TfL) has confirmed that the central portion of Crossrail will not open before the autumn of 2021, making it a full three years late.

Speaking to the London Assembly’s Budget and Performance Committee yesterday, commissioner Mike Brown said TfL was working to a timetable of between September and December 2021 for the service to begin operating.

Brown’s statement comes after City A.M. first reported last month that the main section of the £18.25bn project would be delayed due to the timescales involved in trials of equipment and trains.

The line—which will connect Reading and Heathrow in the west to Shenfield and Abbey Wood in the east—was supposed to open in December 2018 at a cost of £14.9bn.

“We’re waiting for the Crossrail board to give an assessment of the opening date, but actually we’ve taken...a very pragmatic look at the demand forecasts,” Brown said.

“Both the chief executive of Crossrail [Mark Wild] and the board...know the imperative of bringing that date as far forward as they can possibly and safely do so because of the imperative that revenues will begin to flow in to TfL overall.”

Continues on P5

HARRY ROBERTSON
@harrygrobertson

BRITAIN’S financial services sector contributed a record £75.5bn in tax in 2019, according to a new report on behalf of the City of London Corporation, amounting to 10.5 per cent of all government tax receipts.

The report, carried out by accounting giant PwC and released today, highlighted the value of financial services to the UK economy. Across the country the sector employs around three per cent of the UK workforce but contributed 11.6 per cent of all UK employment taxes thanks to significantly higher average salaries.

City minister John Glen told City A.M. the figures showed “the significant contribution the sector makes”.

“Only by maintaining Britain’s world-leading status in financial services can we continue to attract business and bring in record amounts of tax for our vital public services,” he added.

Financial services are expected to be a sensitive issue in UK-EU negotiations. Catherine McGuinness, policy chair at the City of London Corporation, told City A.M.: “We mustn’t allow our enthusiasm to strike an early trade agreement either with the EU or with other partners around the world to lead us to a position where we accept a very flimsy trade agreement when it comes to services.”

The £75.5bn figure was only a slight increase from the £75bn collected in the year to March 2018, reflecting a challenging year for the sector. It was a notable slowdown from the £2.9bn growth in tax contributions seen between 2017 and 2018.

PwC’s report showed that of the 2019 figure, £33.4bn was paid by companies directly. The other £42.1bn was paid by employees through income tax and customers through levies such as VAT.

The amount of corporation tax financial services firms paid fell 9.5 per cent year on year, meaning the sector paid less than it did in 2008. McGuinness said this was a “worry” and said it was due to the lower profitability of firms.

Global trade tensions, political uncertainty and persistently low interest rates have created challenging conditions for much of the sector.

Barney Reynolds, head of financial regulation at law firm Shearman & Sterling, said he was positive about negotiations with the EU: “We are not only important to the UK, it’s an important global asset.”

CONTINUES ON P5
THE CITY VIEW

Retail landscape will continue to evolve

At first glance, the £50m deal to convert a north London retail park into a warehouse and logistics hub is a perfect representation of the forces upending an embattled sector. The relentless rise of online shopping and home delivery means plots like the Ravenside site in Edmonton, snapped up by warehousing giant Prologis, is worth more as a distribution centre for Amazon and Argos than as a space for Mothercare and Carpetright. Prologis acquired the site from M&G, whose commercial property fund was suspended last month after investors clamoured to withdraw their cash. Taken together, the elements of this story appear to provide yet more evidence that traditional retail operations may have had their day. But the truth is that a brand such as Mothercare falling into administration attracts more attention than investment into the future of retail. Furthermore, this shift from bricks and mortar to online shopping is only part of the picture. The Sunday Times reported over the weekend that the head of one of Britain’s biggest property investment firms, Hammerson, has “called the bottom of the shopping centre slump.” Chief executive Chris Oglesby believes that the tide is about to turn and physical retail sites now represent “a huge opportunity”. Not everyone agrees, and plenty of investors remain wary of the low rents and, therefore, low values of such assets, but the prospect of a smart revival cannot be written off. Oglesby thinks the shift to online in certain parts of the retail landscape “has probably plateaued” and that consumers still value experiences and interaction alongside the convenience of ordering from an app. The other element in the retail landscape is the high street, whose death has been greatly exaggerated or, at least, misinterpreted. For a start, independent retailers are enjoying a boom. According to consumer research giant Which, no fewer than 10 sub-sectors of retail have seen an increase in premises on high streets in recent years. These include eating out, services (such as salons), food and drink retailers and event spaces. In other words, offerings that cannot be replicated online. As the new decade gets underway, retail remains a mixed bag. There will be more failures but, also, many more openings. Physical space will be repurposed and investors will look for new opportunities. This is a complex and evolving sector, and while its fortunes remain far from certain there are plenty of green shoots among the rubble.

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FINANCIAL TIMES

CREDITORS OF JAMIE’S ITALIAN SET TO LOSE £80M
Creditors of celebrity chef Jamie Oliver’s failed Italian restaurant chain are set to lose most of the £80m they are owed after its collapse last May, according to administrator KPMG. Unsecured creditors of Jamie’s Italian would not recover the majority of their money, while HSBC and Oliver’s holding company, which owned £57.7m of the company’s secured debt, would also “suffer a significant shortfall”, KPMG said in a report.

BIG TECH RESISTS EU RULES ON CONTENT LIABILITY
Groups including Google and Facebook have urged Brussels not to hold them legally liable for content but accepted that their effort to remove harmful activity might require a watchdog’s oversight, as pressure grows on the regulation of tech giants.

WHAT THE OTHER PAPERS SAY THIS MORNING

BRITAIN’S MOST PROLIFIC RAPIST JAILED FOR LIFE
The UK’s most prolific rapist has been jailed for life after dragging and attacking nearly 200 vulnerable young men who he targeted outside nightclubs, Reynhard Sinaga, 36, who had been drinking heavily.

DUCHESS OF YORK QUITS ROLE AT WEST END FIRM
The Duchess of York has stepped down as an executive director of a Chinese-backed entertainment company from which she once borrowed £290,000.

SACKED DELIOTTE Partner TO PAY £125,000 IN COSTS
A Deloitte partner who was sacked over allegations of bullying and favouritism has been ordered to pay £125,000 after losing a legal claim against the accounting firm.

BELSTAFF ‘AT RISK’ WITHOUT RATCLIFFE AS DEBT MOUNTS
British leather jacket brand Belstaff is dependent on billionaire owner Sir Jim Ratcliffe to survive, its auditor said after the heavily indebted firm posted a £4.8m loss. The firm could struggle to operate without a financial lifeline from parent company Ineos, KPMG said.

LIFE BEFORE THE DINOSAURS... IN DULWICH
The Horniman shines a light on the little-known Permian in winter exhibition

Election bounce for service firms

HARRY ROBERTSON
@harryrobertson
SERVICES companies became much more positive last month following Prime Minister Boris Johnson’s thumping election victory, survey data showed yesterday, with firms grateful for some certainty.

The services purchasing managers’ index (PMI) — a closely-watched barometer of the economy — jumped to 50.4 from 49.4 in November. A score of 50 means business activity was unchanged. Economists had predicted a reading of 49.2.

Business optimism rebounded to its highest since September 2018, the survey showed. A number of respondents predicted a short-term boost to the sector after Britain leaves the EU at the end of the month.

Although the business community was largely opposed to Brexit, after three years of political wrangling firms are now grateful for some certainty upon which to base decisions.

Increased confidence and rising workloads led to a marginal increase in staffing levels in December, IHS Markit and Cips said.

“The decisive result of the General Election appears to have given the services PMI a bit of a boost,” said Thomas Pugh, UK economist at Capital Economics.

“That may start to come through in other data in the first quarter, although the fourth quarter was clearly very weak.”

Oil prices spike amid tensions in Middle East

EDWARD THICKNESSE
@edthicknese
OIL PRICES spiked yesterday amid inflated tensions in the Middle East, after the US exchanged threats with Iran over the weekend.

Brent crude crossed the $70 threshold for the first time since September’s attacks on Saudi Arabia’s state-owned oil company, before slipping back to $68.4. At one point, West Texas Intermediate touched $64.72, its highest level since April 2019, before dipping back to $62.75.

The rises follow a three per cent surge in prices on Friday after the killing of Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, raising concerns that unrest in the Middle East could disrupt oil supplies.

The region accounts for almost half of the world’s oil output, and a fifth of global oil shipments pass through the straits of Hormuz.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

WEINSTEIN FACES SEX CRIME CHARGES IN LOS ANGELES
Former Hollywood producer Harvey Weinstein was charged with sex crimes in Los Angeles yesterday as his criminal trial on similar accusations opened in New York. Weinstein was charged with raping one woman and sexually assaulting another in 2013.

YUM BRANDS TO BUY HABIT BURGER GRILL RESTAURANT
Yum Brands, which owns food brands KFC, Pizza Hut, and Taco Bell, said it would buy fast-casual burger chain Habit Restaurants for around $375m (£284.6m) as it seeks to broaden its range of restaurants and reach more customers with its offering.

@edthicknese
Xerox prepares $24bn funding for HP takeover

HP shares rose as much as one per cent in trading before settling flat, while Xerox fell 1.5 per cent yesterday. Visentin has previously said HP's refusal to engage in mutual due diligence for the bid “defies logic”. Activist investor Carl Icahn — who holds a 4.2 per cent stake in HP and a 10.9 per cent stake in Xerox — last month urged HP shareholders who agreed with a merger with Xerox to reach out to the computer maker’s directors for immediate action.

The takeover bid comes after Xerox sold off its £2.3bn stake in Fuji Xerox to Fujifilm. Honeywell will also end its office equipment sales partnership with Xerox in 2021, the Nikkei Asian Review reported yesterday.

BECAUSE YOU’RE WORTH IT

L’Oreal set to open new London HQ at White City Place

HAIR and beauty behemoth L’Oreal will move its 1,000 London staff into mammoth new headquarters in White City, near the former BBC TV Centre. The French firm will relocate from its current base in Hammersmith in autumn 2023.
SAJID Javid will deliver the government’s first post-Brexit Budget on 11 March, in what is likely to mark a shift in spending away from London and the south east.

Javid will this morning give Cabinet colleagues an economic update ahead of his first Treasury questions since Boris Johnson won an 80-seat majority last month.

He is expected to reiterate commitments made during the campaign, including raising the threshold for national insurance contributions as well as the pledge to “level up and spread opportunity” with a multi-billion-pound spending spree.

The environment, public services and the cost of living are expected to be prioritised at the Budget, and Javid will also introduce new fiscal rules, as outlined during the election.

The Budget date has been unveiled following a visit by the chancellor to Manchester’s Trafford Park tram line yesterday, underlining the government’s commitment to newly-wooed voters in the north.

Javid said: “People across the country have told us that they want change. We’ve listened and will now deliver.

“With this Budget we will unleash Britain’s potential — uniting our great country, opening a new chapter for our economy and ushering in a decade of renewal.”

The Treasury has already been told to change the formula used in its so-called green book, which guides investment decisions on everything from infrastructure to business development.

Currently the model favours investments in areas where the economy is already stronger but it is felt this entrenches regional inequality.

It will be Javid’s first Budget since becoming chancellor after the one scheduled for November was scrapped amid the election campaign.

The British Chamber of Commerce’s Carole Walker said it was “the first opportunity for the new government to demonstrate it listens to business.”

SHADOW business secretary Rebecca Long Bailey late last night entered the race to become the new Labour leader. It came as the party said it will announce Jeremy Corbyn’s successor on 4 April, with non-members able to vote for a £25 fee.

**Crossrail confirms delay as London Assembly calls for more investment**

**CONTINUED FROM FRONT PAGE**

Brown said the project was in “great disarray” in December 2018 and that individual Elizabeth Line stations were further from completion than thought.

He added that work to install signalling, wiring and other systems also took longer than expected.

Cardine Pidgeon, deputy chair of the London Assembly’s transport committee, said the comments were “a depressing start to the New Year.”

It came as a study by the Greater London Authority into transport expenditure found that London receives just £8 per rail passenger journey from central coffers, compared to £12 for the rest of the UK.

How City A.M. reported the likely delay in December

A spokesperson for the Department for Transport denied that London was being ignored at the expense of the rest of the country.

“The government recognises London’s vital contribution to the UK’s economy and will continue to support its success while also levelling up the rest of the country,” they said.

**Centre for Policy Studies names City tycoon Spencer as chairman**

HARRY ROBERTSON
@harryrobertson

THE CENTRE for Policy Studies (CPS) think tank has named City veteran and billionaire Michael Spencer as its new chairman to replace Lord Maurice Saatchi, who will step down after 10 years in the role.

Spencer founded the financial services firm Icap, which became the Nex Group and was sold for almost £4bn last year. The tycoon is estimated to be worth around £1.5bn.

The CPS, which champions low taxes and a small state, is one of Britain’s leading conservative think tanks. Its director is journalist Robert Colvile.

Spencer’s appointment maintains the think tank’s close ties to the Conservative party. He was treasurer of the party from 2006 to 2010, helping to turn its finances around.

A spokesperson for the Department for Transport denied that London was being ignored at the expense of the rest of the country.

“The government recognises London’s vital contribution to the UK’s economy and will continue to support its success while also levelling up the rest of the country,” they said.

**Labour leadership**

Party sets result date as Rebecca Long Bailey joins the race

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BEST EVER PRICES

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dfs
GERMAN discount retailer Aldi said yesterday that its Christmas sales increased 7.9 per cent year on year to break £1bn for the first time. The supermarket chain said its sales in the four weeks ended Christmas Eve were driven by strong growth in beers, wines and spirits, its premium Specially Selected range and fresh meat. Total beers, wines and spirits sales increased 9.2 per cent year on year, with sales of sparkling wine up more than 14 per cent. During the run-up to Christmas, Aldi also sold 55m mince pies, 22m pigs in blankets and more than 2m Christmas puddings.

Giles Hurley, Aldi UK chief executive, said: “Although we saw strong growth across all key categories, sales of our premium Specially Selected range surpassed expectations, as customers snapped up these products for a fraction of the price they would have paid elsewhere.”

Neil Wilson, chief market analyst for Markets.com, said however that Aldi had delivered a “disappointing trading update”, noting that its sales growth fell short of the 10 per cent in the same period last year and the 11 per cent growth across 2018. “Like-for-like sales were said to be positive but no figure was provided – for sure almost all the growth is coming from new stores,” he said.

Aldi currently has 874 stores and is aiming to expand to 1,200 stores by 2025. Thomas Brereton, retail analyst at Global Data, described Aldi’s number as “enviable”, but said that its five to six per cent growth in store numbers during the year meant that like-for-like growth would probably be around three per cent. “Aldi must now face the fact that it can no longer hope to achieve the same domineering double-digit growth it has done over the past decade,” he said. Morrisons will publish its results today, with Sainsbury’s, Tesco and Marks & Spencer set to follow later this week.

Glimmers of hope for Pandora as on-track trading drives up shares

SHARES in Danish jeweller Pandora leapt 12 per cent yesterday after the firm confirmed that it would meet its 2019 sales and profit guidance. In a trading update the company said it expected like-for-like sales to fall four per cent in the fourth quarter and eight per cent for the whole of 2019.

Full-year earnings, excluding costs related to ongoing restructuring, are set to be at the top end of the 26 to 27 per cent forecast the firm had previously indicated. Organic sales for the fourth quarter were down one per cent, and fell eight per cent across the whole year.

The company said: “The sequential improvement in like-for-like confirms the strategic direction and the effectiveness of Programme Now to bring Pandora back to sustainable growth with industry-leading margins.”

It added that like-for-like sales are expected to be negative in 2020, as previously forecast.

Merlin Entertainments seeks new chair following £6bn takeover deal

THE OWNER of Alton Towers and Madame Tussauds yesterday launched a hunt for a new chairman two months after it was taken private in a £6bn takeover deal. Merlin Entertainments has appointed headhunter Spencer Stuart to recruit a successor to its long-serving chair Sir John Sunderland. Sky News reported. The move follows Merlin’s £6bn acquisition by a consortium consisting of Kirkbi — the investment vehicle of the Danish billionaire family behind Lego — and private equity firm Blackstone.

Chief executive Nick Varney is set to remain in his post following the takeover. Merlin’s brands include theme parks Alton Towers, Chessington World of Adventure and Thorpe Park, as well as Legoland Parks around the world and attractions such as Madame Tussauds, London Dungeons and Peppa Pig World. Merlin’s takeover was part of a wave of take-private deals last year which included Advent International’s £4bn takeover of defence group Cobham and Thoma Bravo’s acquisition of software firm Sophos for £3bn.

Aldi’s Christmas revenue reaches whopping £1bn

GORDON SNOOK

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Nippon Active Value Fund set for a £200m float in first listing of 2020

INVESTMENT firm Nippon Active Value Fund (NAVF) is set to fire the starting gun on a £200m listing today in what could be London’s first initial public offering (IPO) of 2020. NAVF is a closed-ended investment company that invests in securities with the majority of their operations in Japan. It is set to file its intention to float today, seeking admission of its shares to trading on the specialist fund segment of the London Stock Exchange.

NAVF is seeking to raise up to £200m at an issue price of 100p per share. The news will be welcomed by the City after a grim year for listings in 2019. According to stock exchange data, only 36 companies went public on the London Stock Exchange in 2019, raising £4.8bn. In comparison 89 companies floated in 2018 raising £6bn in new cash.

Shore Capital is acting as financial adviser and sole bookrunner on the listing. NAVF is aiming to invest in a portfolio of quoted Japanese stocks with market capitalisations of up to $1bn (£760m) which its investment adviser deems to be undervalued. It has appointed Rising Sun Management as investment adviser.

Google deserted its values, says former executive

GOOGLE’s former head of international relations has hit out at the company’s human rights record and corporate culture in a blog post detailing why he left the tech giant.

Ross LaJeunesse, who left Google in May last year after 11 years at the firm, claimed that “standing up for women, for the LGBTQ community, for colleagues of colour, and for human rights — had cost me my career”.

LaJeunesse, who is now running as a Democratic candidate for a seat in the US Senate, said that the firm, whose old motto was “don’t be evil”, had lost its way.

Citing examples such as the development of a censored search engine, codenamed Dragonfly, for the Chinese government, and work with Saudi Arabia, LaJeunesse wrote: “Just when Google needed to double down on a commitment to human rights, it decided to chase bigger profits instead.”

Google, which quit China in 2010 in a bumper year for the London-based venture capital firm.

Google deserted its values, says former executive

Talis Capital does not raise time-limited funds and instead seeks a set amount of capital each year, and aims to invest the whole amount within the year.

The amount the company owes creditors fell substantially during the period, dropping from £71,661 to £361,211, the accounts show.

In June, Talis announced it had raised a record £100m (£76m) to invest in tech startups in the UK, US and Europe. Talis has previously backed startups including Darktrace, Threads, Onfido and Luminance.

London technology investor Talis Capital bags huge profit boost

Talis Capital has reported a 91 per cent jump in pre-tax profit following a bumper year for the London-based venture capital firm.

The company reported a £444,040 profit before tax for the year ending 31 March 2019, according to accounts filed with Companies House.

This represents a 91 per cent increase on the year before, when the figure was £216,564.

Unlike many venture capital firms, Talis Capital does not raise time-limited funds and instead seeks a set amount of capital each year, and aims to invest the whole amount during the year.

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Heir-raising Louis-Dreyfus borrowed $1bn from Credit Suisse for family stake

THE HEIRESS to Louis Dreyfus, one of the world’s biggest crop traders, borrowed $1bn (£760m) from Credit Suisse to finance her buyout from the firm, it was revealed yesterday. Margarita Louis-Dreyfus paid $825m for a 16.6 per cent stake in the firm.
ANDY SILVESTER
@silvesterldn
US DEFENCE secretary Mark Esper was last night forced to deny that the US was planning to withdraw troops from Iraq after multiple media agencies received a letter purporting to be from a senior American commander stating the country would be preparing for a “movement out of Iraq.”

Joint chiefs of staff chair Mark Milley told reporters that the letter, though genuine, “is a draft” and shouldn’t have been released. He confirmed that there were no plans to move troops out of Iraq, as per a non-binding motion passed in the Iraqi parliament after the killing of Qasem Soleimani in Baghdad last week.

The period between the letter’s release and the clarification was understood to have caused confusion among US allies. British foreign secretary Dominic Raab said the UK’s “overwhelming message is the importance of de-escalating the tensions and finding a diplomatic way through this crisis.”

Raab will travel to Washington this week for discussions with US secretary of state Mike Pompeo to ascertain US President Donald Trump’s next steps. Any decision on US presence in Iraq would impact the 400 UK troops stationed there. Last night it was reported that the government was reducing staff numbers at the UK’s embassies in Baghdad and Tehran.

Confusion mounts further as US letter ‘mistake’ stokes tensions in the region

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ANDY SILVESTER
@silvesterldn
THE LEADER of the free world and the President of the globe’s largest Islamic Republic ramped up their rhetoric via Twitter yesterday, as any surviving diplomatic channels appeared to break down completely.

US President Trump wrote “IRAN WILL NEVER HAVE A NUCLEAR WEAPON” after his threat over the weekend to wipe out “52 Iranian sites”, including cultural heritage sites, if Iran struck any American targets in revenge for Iranian general Soleimani’s killing. The figure refers specifically to the number of US hostages taken by Iran between 1979 and 1981, although all were released. Attacks on heritage sites would contravene the Geneva Convention.

Iranian President Rouhani warned that “those who refer to the number 52 should also remember the number 290” – the number of people killed when the US military shot down a civilian Iran Air flight in 1988.

Trump and Rouhani fire digital shots over Twitter

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www.ey.com/uktaxchat
London-based Solarcentury secures £50m to build Spanish power plants

HARRY ROBERTSON
@harryrobertson

UK-BASED solar energy company Solarcentury today announced that it has secured almost £50m of financing to build two large solar plants in Spain. Together, the developments will generate enough energy to power more than a quarter of a million homes each year with renewable energy. International trade secretary Liz Truss said the deal is an example of the UK’s commitment to tackling climate change “bearing fruit on the international stage for exporters”. London’s Solarcentury has been working in the renewable energy sector for 21 years. The £47.6m of funding will come from Natwest and HSBC, and is guaranteed by UK Export Finance, the UK’s export credit agency. The funding will secure the construction of two of the largest private subsidy-free solar developments in Spain to date. They are expected to start working before the end of 2020. Neil Perry, chief financial officer of Solarcentury, said: “Today’s announcement is testament to the strength of our business” and the potential of solar power.

Britain’s car sales plunge to lowest volume since 2013

ALEX DANIEL
@alexmdaniel

BRITISH car sales slumped to a six-year low in 2019, as widespread economic uncertainty put the brakes on an industry whose only glimmer of hope came from ever-increasingly popular electric and hybrid vehicles — a trend that enjoyed its biggest-selling year ever. New car registrations fell two per cent to 2.31m last year, according to the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders (SMMT), amid a protracted Brexit process and tough new restrictions on diesel vehicles. It caps the industry’s worst year since 2013 and marks the third drop in a row since 2016, when sales hit a record high of 2.60m.

“We’re facing a Brexit Brexit,” said SMMT chief Mike Hawes. “A third year of decline for the UK new car market is a significant concern for industry and the wider economy.” But the organisation also pointed to new emissions legislation pushing buyers towards electric and hybrid vehicles — which enjoyed their biggest-selling year ever.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

LEGAL AND PUBLIC NOTICES

CITY OF LONDON

THE PLANNING ACTS AND THE ORDERS AND REGULATIONS MADE THEREUNDER

This notice gives details of applications registered by the Department of The Built Environment Code: FULL/FULMAJ/FULEIA/FULLR3 – Planning Permission; LBC – Listed Building Consent; TPO – Tree Preservation Order; OULT – Outline Planning Permission

16 Toos’s Court, London, EC4A 1LB
19/01278/FULL
Change of use from offices (Class B1) to flexible non-residential institution (Health Centre) (Class D3) and/or offices (Class B1) (Total floor space 390 sq.m).

27 Throgmorton Street, London, EC2N 2AQ
19/01226/LBC
Installation of artificial green wall and plants at third floor level and associated works.

42 Livery Hall, Butchers Hall, 87 - 89 Bartholomew Close, London, EC1A 7EB
19/01263/FULL
Application under Section 73A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) to allow retention of works carried out together with minor amendments without complying with condition 22 (approved drawings) of planning permission 16/00358/FULL dated 11th August 2016.

55 King William Street, London, EC4V 9AD
19/01275/FULL
Installation and replacement of entrance doors with associated alterations to the entrance canopy.

17 St Helen’s Place, London, EC3A 6DG
19/01260/FULL
(i) Installation of plant equipment within new plant enclosure at roof level. (ii) Installation of replacement plant to roof level. (iii) Installation of seven louvre panels in rear elevation in lieu of existing windows, removal of redundant bollards to the front and rear elevations. (iv) Installation of two satellite dishes at roof level. (v) Removal of redundant roof lantern and handrails to perimeter of roof along with removal of redundant external upper stair.

1 & 2 Garden Court, Middle Temple, London, EC4V 9BL
19/01280/FULL
Replacement of windows within dormer at fifth floor level on the rear (west) elevation.

2 Garden Court, Middle Temple, London, EC4V 9BL
19/01286/LBC
Replacement of windows within dormer at fifth floor level on the rear (west) elevation.

160 Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4V 4BF
19/01301/FULL
Installation of: i) new entrance facade; ii) new canopy; and iii) additional roof plant.

160 Queen Victoria Street, London, EC4V 4BF
19/01302/FULL
Installation of two new doors, a balustrade and new floor lifts to provide access to amenity space on the fourth-floor terrace.

Flat 162, Blake Tower, 2 Fann Street, London, EC4Y 9BL
19/01274/FULL
The enclosure of two external terraces in Flat 162 (16th floor level). Existing terrace doors, windows and floor finish at the two terraces to be removed and replaced with new windows to match at the new facade line. Existing flat roof on 17th floor extended to accommodate enclosure of terrace.

Flat 162, Blake Tower, 2 Fann Street, London, EC4Y 9AF
19/01294/LBC
The enclosure of two external terraces in Flat 162 (16th floor level). Existing terrace doors, windows and floor finish at the two terraces to be removed and replaced with new windows to match at the new facade line. Existing flat roof on 17th floor extended to accommodate enclosure of terrace.

79 Curzon Lane, London, EC4V 5EP
19/01285/FULL
Construction of roof extension (28sq.m).

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‘Let it snow!’ becomes ‘let it snow’!

CITYLONDON.com
UK’s fossil-free power use sets a record in 2019

The UK recorded 83 days when no coal was used to generate electricity in 2019, almost four times as many as in 2018.

The UK’s first fossil-free day for electricity was in 2017, when there were only two such days, demonstrating how far renewables generation has come in a short period of time.

According to new data from climate platform Carbon Brief, last year there were four months in which renewable sources produced more electricity than traditional forms of generation.

In addition, there were 137 days in which electricity generation from renewable sources surpassed that of fossil fuels. In total, fossil fuel output fell six per cent in 2019, meaning that renewable sources produced more electricity than traditional forms of generation.

The government’s plan for 40 gigawatts of offshore wind production will need to be supplemented by other sources such as solar, onshore wind or nuclear to reach its goal.

Energy UK interim chief executive Audrey Gallacher said: “While these figures show just how much progress the energy sector has made in moving to cleaner sources of power and reducing emissions, they are also a stark reminder of how much further we have to go with the net zero target in place.”

London Stock Exchange denies reports of cyber attack amid probe into outage

The London index suffered its worst outage in eight years in August due to government measures to phase out coal-powered electricity by 2025.

Despite the promising figures, Carbon Brief warned that the UK still has a way to go if it is to meet its generation targets. An additional 100 terawatt hours of low-carbon generation — roughly 60 per cent of the current total — is required if the UK is to cut the carbon intensity of its generation to its target by 2030.

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London Stock Exchange denies reports of cyber attack amid probe into outage

The London Stock Exchange (LSE) in the past two months to request additional information about the outage on 16 August, the Wall Street Journal reported.

The incident, which delayed the market opening by more than an hour and a half, was the London index’s worst outage for eight years.

A spokesperson for the London Stock Exchange Group denied claims that the incident was related to cybersecurity and said it “was caused by a technical software configuration issue following an upgrade of functionality”.

The outage immediately triggered government cyber alert systems, and GCHQ is examining whether the software code could have played a role in the incident, according to the Wall Street Journal.

The paper reported that the status of the investigation and whether any action will be taken by regulators or the LSE is not clear. The Treasury is also reportedly involved in the probe.

The Treasury declined to comment on the reports.
Grays takes top spot for London commuter hubs

ALEX DANIEL
@alexmdaniel

AS THE price of annual train tickets continues to rise, life just got that bit trickier for those commuting into London every day.

But for people living in the Essex town of Grays, it is not all bad, after it was revealed as the most affordable London commuter town.

The report, published by Zoopla, combines the annual cost of a mortgage and a season ticket to get into work.

Grays took the top spot, offering a combined yearly cost of £15,008, with a 41-minute commute into Fenchurch Street station.

Leagrave in Bedfordshire came second, where home-owning commuters can travel to St Pancras in 55 minutes at a total annual cost of £15,399.

Crayford in Kent followed closely in third with a combined price of £15,662, with a 41-minute commute to Charing Cross.

Laura Howard, consumer expert at Zoopla, said: “As the new season ticket prices come into effect this month, much to the frustration of millions of commuters across Britain, those looking to relocate to save money should pay close attention to these figures.”

“The past decade has seen significant property price growth in prime London commuter belt towns but despite this our analysis still picks out pockets across southeast England that represent affordable value for commuters.”

For commuters to Bristol, across the water in Wales, Newport (Gwent) came in first place with combined costs of £10,166 and a travel time of 35 minutes into Bristol Temple Meads station.

Highbridge & Burnham and Bridgewater, meanwhile, took second and third respectively.

Heading up to Birmingham, Wolverhampton presented the best value at £7,483 with a commute time of 20 minutes.

Moving further north to Manchester, Hindley took the top spot with combined costs of £6,883 and a 58-minute journey.

Meanwhile, those working in Edinburgh should consider moving to Dunfermline to get the most affordable commute (32-minute journey). Here a combined annual mortgage and season ticket will cost £7,530 a year.

Howard added: “Areas outside London and the south east are generally more affordable, but commuters can still save money on their daily travel into the likes of Birmingham and Bristol by looking at towns they might not have yet considered, but still have good transport links.”

Westminster council set to hang up on hundreds of ‘depressing’ phone boxes

STEFAN BOSCIA
@Stefan_Boscia

UP TO 1,000 phone boxes may be removed throughout the borough of Westminster under plans to give the streets a much-needed facelift.

Westminster City Council has proposed scrapping the vast majority of the near 1,000 phone boxes that are in the borough, arguing they are not used.

The council is proposing a law that any phone box must be removed by telecoms companies if it is used fewer than 50 times a month.

However, this will not include the iconic red phone boxes often featured in tourist shots, and will instead only pertain to kiosks installed in the 1980s and 90s.

There are an estimated 100 red phone boxes and 900 of the more recent additions in the area.

Westminster City Council deputy leader Richard Beddoe said many of the boxes were “derelict and disused” and were a “depressing sight”.

“Most people haven’t used a phone box for 20 years and unfortunately, all too often these are left to fall into disrepair and just end up as bins for anti-social behaviour or crated display boards for private escort services and drug dealers,” he said.

“By drastically reducing the overall number of phone boxes we hope that telecoms firms will take more responsibility those that remain.”

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Chilango rescue package backed by shareholders

ANNA MENIN
@annafmenin

CHILANGO’s creditors and shareholders have backed a rescue package to keep the struggling Mexican restaurant chain afloat, paving the way for the company to slash rents and exit some leases.

Chilango launched a company voluntary arrangement (CVA) in early December, which was first reported by City A.M., in a bid to avoid entering administration.

The chain has been struggling to continue trading amid increased operational costs and substantial debts, and is in the process of making both its co-chief executives redundant in a bid to cut costs.

At a meeting in central London yesterday, the company told shareholders that enough creditors had voted in favour of the CVA for it to go ahead.

“We are humbled to have received such strong support from our creditors and shareholders, and appreciate how pragmatic and understanding our stakeholders have been,” said co-founders and former co-chief executives Eric Partaker and Dan Houghton.

Creditors had been given until 3 January to vote on bailout proposals including cutting rent by 40 per cent at three of its 12 restaurants and exiting four leases on dormant sites.

Around 1,500 small investors who ploughed £5.8m into Chilango’s two mini-bond offerings are also set to have their investments converted into preferential shares in the company.

More than 80 per cent of creditors backed the bailout proposals related to the wider company, while 98.6 per cent backed the creation of the new shares for bondholders.

Over 700 investors backed Chilango’s first bond raise in 2014, while another offering supported by almost 800 investors closed in April 2019, raising a blowout £13.7m.

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Ford’s quarterly sales slip amid demand shrink

SANJANA SHIVDAS

FORD yesterday posted a 1.3 per cent fall in fourth-quarter vehicle sales as soft demand for passenger cars outweighed higher sales of pick-up trucks.

Ford’s figures rounded off US car makers’ sales for 2019, with passenger cars falling out of favour with buyers amid lower oil prices and as automakers focused on SUVs and pick-ups that are more profitable.

Total US light-vehicle sales fell by about one per cent from 2018, but still finished above 17m vehicles for the fifth consecutive year.

Discounts during the key holiday season and lower interest rates helped push sales of Ford’s trucks to 330,075 in the quarter, up from 284,859 trucks a year earlier.

However, passenger car sales at the company declined 41 per cent to just 63,400 cars over the period.

Fellow US car makers reported their quarterly sales numbers last Friday.

General Motors, which was hit by a month-long strike by its 48,000 hourly employees, reported a 6.3 per cent fall in sales for the fourth quarter.
January’s already looking up.

The Audi January Event. With savings on a range of models, 3-12 January.

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Boeing ‘mulls raising more debt’ as aerospace behemoth feels the pinch

ALEX DANIEL
@alexmdaniel

BOEING is said to be considering whether to raise more debt to boost its finances, which have come under intense strain from the grounding of its 737 Max jet.
The firm has already taken a nearly $10bn hit on the 737 Max since the second of two crashes involving the jet happened in March last year.
That incident, in Ethiopia, brought the death toll from Max-related crashes to 346 in under six months, and prompted global aviation regulators to ground the jet indefinitely. Former chief executive Dennis Muilenberg was booted out of the firm last month, more than a year after the first of the two crashes, which was in Indonesia.
Boeing has taken a nearly $10bn hit from the 737 Max grounding
Analysts expect the firm to raise up to $5bn in additional debt to help cover spending that could be more than $15bn in the first half of this year.
Boeing is also mulling deferring some capital expenditures, freezing acquisitions and cutting spending on research and development to preserve cash, according to the Wall Street Journal.
However, according to its financial results, the company still had about $20bn in available funds at the end of the last reported quarter. It admitted in December that it would have to halt production of the plane this year, amid growing uncertainty over when it will return to service.
On Sunday, it emerged Boeing had cut its annual bonus for UK employees. It had already said it would withhold bonuses for its white collar US workers, usually due in February.
The firm also scrapped its annual Christmas bonus for UK-based employees, according to the Sunday Telegraph. This is normally thought to range from £1,000 for juniors to ten times that for executives.

Former Brexit adviser joins Deloitte’s ranks

HARRY BANKS

A FORMER senior adviser for the Department for Exiting the European Union announced last night that he has joined the ranks of Deloitte in London.
Raoul Ruparel held a number of positions in government, including working as special adviser to David Davis in DexEU and then worked directly for Prime Minister Theresa May on European matters. A popular figure in Westminster, Ruparel was formerly the co-director of think tank Open Europe.
He said last night that he would be working for the professional services firm on “economic policy, trade policy and, of course, Brexit.”
Another former Conservative adviser under the David Cameron and Theresa May administrations also joined the private sector ranks.
Tim Smith, whose most recent role in government was as a senior adviser to Jeremy Hunt as foreign secretary, is joining startup apprenticeships outfit Whitehat.
Smith told Politico that “providing better options and outcomes for those who don’t go to university has to be part of the solution to bringing the country back together”.
Whitehat matches non-university-educated recruits with apprenticeships at growing UK companies.
Vice UK blames Brexit as media firm’s loss widens

JAMES WARRINGTON

VICE UK has taken aim at Brexit uncertainty after the youth-focused media group revealed ballooning losses and a decline in revenue.

The millennial mainstay reported a pre-tax loss of £2.9m for the 12 months to 31 December 2018, up from £2.2m the previous year, while turnover dropped a third to £17.3m.

Vice Media last year said it would lay off 10 per cent of its staff.

Vice UK, which operates a news and entertainment website, as well as third-party publishers and the Vice ad agency, suffered a decline in revenue from both its digital and production businesses.

The company said uncertainty surrounding Brexit negotiations was “one of the biggest drivers” of this downturn in business, with revenue from within the EU dropping by more than 50 per cent over the year.

Vice also booked an impairment charge of £1.4m in 2018, while a £1.8m exchange gain in 2017 was not repeated last year.

Vice UK TV, which operates the firm’s Viceland channel, posted a pre-tax loss of £1.9m, compared to a £1.6m loss in 2017.

The figures highlight the challenges faced by digital publishers in the face of fierce competition for advertising dollars.

The competition watchdog last month warned that online media firms were unable to compete with Google and Facebook “on equal terms” due to the sheer dominance of the so-called duopoly.

Vice said it will shift more attention to its Vice ad agency, which has identified as a key opportunity for growth.

London’s legal tech credentials burnished by $5m US investment

JAMES BOOTH

LONDON’S status as a hub for legal tech was boosted today by a $5m (£3.8m) investment into contract startup Juro led by a US fund that backed Twitter and Kickstarter.

Juro is an end-to-end contract management platform with customers such as tech firms Deliveroo and Skyscanner.

The company today announced it has raised $5m in a series A round led by New York-based Union Square Ventures (USV).

USV was joined in the round by London-based Latham & Watkins and Gunderson Wessing. USV was represented by Goodrich & Rosati and Taylor Deringer lawyer Richard Mabey in making their vision a reality.

Juro’s transformative vision for it said: “London is becoming a hub for legal tech and I think that is certain is.

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Juro said its platform uses machine learning to help clients agree contracts up to 96 per cent faster than using manual means.

The firm was founded in 2016 by former Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer lawyer Richard Mabey and Pavel Kovalevich and it has offices in London and Riga.

Speaking to City A.M. Mabey said: “London is becoming a hub for legal tech and I think that is being driven by a well-established and respected legal services industry whether that’s the court system or the international law firms that operate out of London.

“At the same time the UK is very strong regarding its engineering talent, particularly regarding AI [artificial intelligence] which is part of this product.”

Juro said it will use the funds raised to invest in its product and grow its customer base in the EU and US.

John Buttrick, partner at USV, said: “We look for founders with products equipped to change an industry. While contract management might not be new, Juro’s transformative vision for it certainly is.

“There’s no greater proof of the product’s ease of use than the fact that we negotiated and closed the funding round in it. We’re delighted to support Juro’s team in making their vision a reality.”

Juro was represented in the transaction by Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati and Taylor Wessing, USV was represented by Latham & Watkins and Gunderson Dettmer.

News Corp wins VAT dispute over Times’ digital edition

POPPY WOOD

NEWS Corp yesterday won a legal dispute against HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC) over whether the Times’ digital edition should be subject to VAT, in a landslide case that could save the company millions.

Rupert Murdoch’s newspaper group successfully argued that online editions of the Times and the Sunday Times should not be subject to a 20 per cent VAT charge because their websites are only updated four times a day.

The tax exemption is usually reserved for newspapers, books and printed products that are considered public benefits. However, the Upper Tribunal yesterday ruled that the periodic nature of updates to the Times’ digital edition means that it meets the legal definition of a newspaper.

It is “an essential characteristic of a newspaper that it is produced in periodic editions”, the tribunal stated. The decision peddled back on an earlier ruling in favour of HMRC that the VAT exemption should only be applied to physical products.

The verdict means that revenue from the Times’ and Sunday Times’ 300,000 digital-only paid subscribers could save the company as much as £15m per year, the Guardian reported.

“This ruling is also good news for those concerned about the future sustainability of journalism,” said Philip Munn, a VAT partner at RSM.

HMRC is expected to appeal the decision.

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HMRC is expected to appeal the decision.
Tax planning is best put into practice well before the end of the financial year. At the start of a busy time of year for investors and advisers, Calculus Capital is offering a discount of 2% off the initial fee on the Calculus VCT until 31 January. This makes it one of the most attractive open offers in the current marketplace.

GROWTH FOCUSED

Calculus Capital is a multi-award winning EIS and VCT provider with over 20 years invaluable experience investing in entrepreneurial businesses with strong growth potential, backing enterprises from a broad range of sectors and industries, including technology, life sciences, healthcare, environment and the creative. Calculus’ diversified approach helps reduce risk and offers investors access to a broad selection of sectors within one vehicle.

BENEFITS OF VCTS

VCT investments attract 30% income tax relief if held for five years. Dividends are tax free too, and there is no capital gains tax on the sale of shares. Calculus is looking to raise £10 million which it is looking to use to invest in both new investments for individuals when it created the UK’s first HMRC-approved VCT until 31 January. This makes it one of the most attractive open offers in the current marketplace.

ESTABLISHED PROVIDER

Calculus Capital launched its first VCT over a decade ago, having first established its reputation for managing investments for individuals when it created the UK’s first HMRC-approved EIS fund in 1999. In February, Calculus’ normal fees will apply – 5% for those investing directly, 3% for those investing in a financial adviser. Investors can commit from £5,000 to £200,000 per tax year.

The Calculus VCT offers instant access to a wide portfolio.

US considering applying additional sanctions on Venezuela as Maduro seizes control of congress

The US is looking at additional sanctions to put pressure on the Venezuelan government, the US special envoy said yesterday after Venezuela’s ruling Socialist party moved to install a new head of Congress.

Elliott Abrams, envoy for Venezuela, told reporters that Washington was also looking at new measures to support Democrats in Venezuela, a day after armed troops blocked opposition legislators, including their leader Juan Guaido, from entering parliament.

Troops with riot shields blocked Guaido from entering parliament for what was expected to be his re-election as head of Congress, at one point pulling him off the compound’s iron railings after he tried to push past security forces. Guaido is backed by dozens of nations as Venezuela’s rightful leader. Last year he led a group of opposition leaders to push Maduro from power, denouncing his 2018 re-election as a fraud and assuming a parallel presidency that quickly won the recognition of most western and Latin American nations.

Maduro has denounced Guaido as a US puppet. The blockade on Sunday allowed the ruling Socialist Party to hand the post to legislator Luis Parra, who was recently expelled by an opposition party over corruption allegations.

The gamble by the government of President Nicolas Maduro, was slammed by the US, the European Union and a dozen Latin American nations.

HARRY ROBERTSON

EUROZONE investors started the new year in good spirits, a survey showed yesterday, as morale grew for the third month in a row thanks in large part to positive developments in the US-China trade war.

Research group Sentix’s morale index rose to 7.6 points in January from 0.7 in December, taking it to its highest point in over a year.

Sentix said the most important factor in the increased optimism among Eurozone investors was “the gain in momentum in other regions of the world, especially in Asia”.

Feeding into this was “the slight easing of the trade dispute between the United States and China,” Sentix added.

The US and China — the world’s two largest economies — have been locked in a trade war for more than a year. The sides slapped tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars worth of goods.

But the two countries are set to sign a phase one trade deal in the middle of the month. It is likely to contain a pledge by China to buy more US agricultural products.

A Chinese delegation led by vice premier Liu He is planning to travel to Washington on 13 January to sign the deal, the South China Morning Post reported on Sunday. Washington and Beijing are yet to officially confirm the visit, however.

Sentix said that the boost to morale means “a recession in the Eurozone seems to be off the table for the time being”.

The release of the survey came as data firm IHS Markit said Germany’s services sector grew at the strongest pace in four months in November.

Germany — Europe’s biggest economy — suffered in 2019 under the weight of trade tensions and Brexit negotiations. Investors will be hoping that it can recover in 2020 and boost the Eurozone.

David Brunnstrom
UK shares faller as Middle East weighs on trade

The FTSE 100 closed 0.6 per cent lower yesterday following financial stocks leading the losses on concerns over tensions in the Middle East, although oil-fuelled gains for Shell and BP provided some support. The FTSE 250 fell one per cent after US President Donald Trump threatened sanctions against Iraq and retaliation against Iran if it responded with force to last week’s US air strike. Apart from energy-related shares, which were lifted by oil price gains, all others closed the day lower. US-Iran tensions have dampened initial be based in sustained rally in global equities on the back of an imminent phase one US-China trade deal. “A severe escalation of tensions in the Middle East — or even outright hostilities — has the potential to easily subsume any benefits gained from the interim US-China trade agreement,” said Oanda analyst Jeffrey Halley. BP and Shell share price increases of 2.2 per cent and 0.5 per cent helped the FTSE 100, but were not enough to stop the index falling.

TOP RISERS
1. BP Up 2.03 per cent
2. BAE Systems Up 1.34 per cent
3. Polymetal Int Up 0.95 per cent

TOP FALLERS
1. NMC Health Down 4.49 per cent
2. Hikma Down 3.73 per cent
3. Evraz Down 3.47 per cent

An index of airlines recorded its worst two-day fall since early December, as higher oil prices raised concerns about a potential impact on their margins. Morrison and Sainsbury’s fell 3.3 per cent and 3.1 per cent respectively, after Bank of America said retailers faced structural challenges, including market share losses to discounters such as Aldi, which reported higher sales, and profit dilution due to e-commerce. Britain’s major supermarkets are forecast to report lacklustre Christmas sales this week, reflecting weak economic growth and comparisons with generally solid festive results in 2018. NMC Health, whose stock tanked 30 per cent last month after criticism from short-seller Muddy Waters, skidded another 4.5 per cent to the bottom of the main index. Hirka followed with a four per cent slide after a rating downgrade by JP Morgan.

Liborium expects “sound” reverse growth and “strong” margin progress for Serco Group. The public services provider is expected to perform well in its US activities, while at home it may not be as fortuitous. It has been given a contract for a US asylum, while it has also benefited from American naval spending. Liborium believes there are “opportunities in UK prisons” for the firm, and increases its projections of earnings per share for Serco by 10 per cent in December. Analysts at Liborium restate their “buy” rating with a target price of 180p.

Tremor yesterday bought advertising platform Unruly from News Corp through the issuance of 8.5m new shares. The announcement sent the advertising company’s stock price up as it increased by 4.41 per cent to 177.5p at the end of the day’s trading. It has also released a trading update, which revealed that second half earnings were in line with expectations. Analysts at Finn Cap say the company now trading. It has also released a trading update, which revealed that second half earnings were in line with expectations. Analysts at Finn Cap say the company now:

- “Buy. ”
- “Buy. ”
- “Buy. ”
- “Buy. ”
- “Buy. ”

Whilst the Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 66.5 points, or 0.24 per cent, to 28,703.38, the S&P 500 gained 11.43 points, or 0.35 per cent to 3,246.28, and the Nasdaq Composite added 50.70 points, or 0.56 per cent, to 9,711.47.

Boeing closed up 0.3 per cent, reversing slight losses earlier. The Wall Street Journal reported that the aeroplane maker was considering plans to raise more debt to bolster its finances after the grounding of its 737 Max jet. The S&P 500 communication services index was the top gainer among the major sectors, rising 1.2 per cent. The S&P 500 posted 23 new 52-week highs and one new low.

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**BROKERS NEW YORK REPORT**

Wall St ticks up despite US-Iran tensions rising

US STOCKS ended higher yesterday, rebounding from Friday’s losses as investors brushed aside worries about increased tensions in the Middle East and shares of Alphabet and other internet names gained. The S&P 500 energy index rose almost 2 per cent with oil prices after the US air strike that killed Iran’s top military commander last Friday, raising the threat of a new confrontation in the Middle East.

“The geopolitical shock knocked it down today, but in the absence of any additional escalation there, the market will end up shrugging its shoulders and I think that’s what you saw today,” said Michael Antonelli, market strategist at Robert W. Baird in Milwaukee.

Stocks investors remained jittery at the start of trade yesterday but the market gained strength heading into the close. Friday’s losses came a day after major indexes notched session highs on the new year’s first trading day 2020. Top internationals led the S&P 500 higher. Alphabet rose 2.7 per cent after Pivotal Research upgraded the stock to “buy.”

But chipmakers were among the day’s biggest decliners, after ranking as star performers in 2019. The Philadelphia semiconductor index, which surged about 60 per cent last year, was down one per cent. The Dow Jones Industrial Average rose 66.5 points, or 0.24 per cent, to 28,703.38, the S&P 500 gained 11.43 points, or 0.35 per cent to 3,246.28, and the Nasdaq Composite added 50.70 points, or 0.56 per cent, to 9,711.47.

Boeing closed up 0.3 per cent, reversing slight losses earlier. The Wall Street Journal reported that the aeroplane maker was considering plans to raise more debt to bolster its finances after the grounding of its 737 Max jet. The S&P 500 communication services index was the top gainer among the major sectors, rising 1.2 per cent. The S&P 500 posted 23 new 52-week highs and one new low.

**CITY MOVES WHO’S SWITCHING JOBS**

**Hiscox**
Specialist global insurer Hiscox has announced the appointment of James Millard as its new chief investment officer (CIO). James will be responsible for overseeing the management of its $6.4bn ($4.9bn) of assets, implementing overall investment policy and directing all portfolio management, research, trading and strategy. He will be based in London and report to Ali Hussain, group chief financial officer. James has a wealth of experience across investment management, most recently at Aberdeen Standard Investments, where he held the post of co-head of multi-manager strategies, overseeing the management of £7.8bn of assets. Previously, he was CIO at Sanlam Investment until its merger with Old Mutual Asset Managers, where he became director of investments and a member of the executive management team of Old Mutual Global Investors.

**Gett**
Corporate on-demand transportation firm Gett has appointed Evan Nacke as its new general counsel. Evan brings with him substantial capital markets, fundraising and regulatory compliance experience having worked in London for more than 12 years both in private practice and as an in-house legal advisor to top tier investment banks. He was previously a director in the Europe, the Middle East and Africa equity capital markets legal team at Bank of America Merrill Lynch, as well as a vice president in the investment banking and capital markets legal team at Credit Suisse. Prior to that Evan worked at Freshfields Brukhaus Deringer. Evan will be based in London alongside Gett’s new chairman, Amos Genish, Dave Wasserman, chief executive officer of Gett, said: “We are extremely fortunate to have Evan join us and bring his extensive capital markets experience as well as strong track record to the role of general counsel. Evan will play a vital part in supporting our international ambitions and potential

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
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TRADING & INVESTMENT

Luke Graham examines the outlook for the world markets in the year ahead

After the festive break, everyone in the City is slowly settling back into work. The opening week of 2020 has been hectic already, with oil and gold prices rising and stocks falling in reaction to tension in the Middle East. But what else are the financial experts and asset managers keeping an eye on for the year ahead?

LIVING IN AMERICA

US equities were the best performing asset class in 2019, according to research by investment platform Fidelity, producing a total return of 25 per cent. The next best performers were global equities at 21 per cent, and real estate at 20 per cent. In fact, 2019 was the best year for US stocks since 2013.

So will US equities continue to outperform this year? Not necessarily. There’s a great deal of geopolitical uncertainty hanging over American stocks, such as whether the US-China trade war will be resolved, and how Iran will react to the drone strike that killed its top general Qasem Soleimani. And then there’s the presidential election campaign and the question of whether Donald Trump will hold onto the White House in November.

“One issue that is uppermost in investors’ minds currently, but will become increasingly so, is the election cycle in the US and the potential for a lot more domestic political noise in the US,” warns Jeremy Podger, portfolio manager of the Fidelity Global Special Situations Fund. “This, in turn, could mean that other parts of the global equity markets will become more attractive than the US.”

LAND OF THE RISING SUN

One such region that may become more attractive is Japan. Its stocks produced a total return of 15 per cent for investors last year, according to Fidelity’s research.

This year, Naoya Oshikubo, senior economist at Sumitomo Mitsui Trust Asset Management, believes that the country’s economic growth will remain solid, boosted by the Olympics. “The Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics will have a significant economic impact of around 32 trillion yen (approximately $29bn) – much bigger than the 2019 Rugby World Cup – boosting inbound and domestic tourist consumption,” he says.

“Among the sectors which are due to benefit from this global sporting event are manufacturing, in particular companies producing electrical equipment such as TVs, as well as the leisure sector with companies in the fitness business (such as gyms), dining services, and hotels expected to reap great rewards.”

Oshikubo tips Sony, which controls a large share of the high-end TV market, and NEC, a tech firm whose facial recognition system will be used for security at the Olympic games, as two companies set to benefit.

He also predicts that Japan’s equity market will increase in 2020, backed by solid corporate earnings growth. “The stock market will also benefit from the Olympic games, as historic data shows that markets of countries hosting the games tend to rise,” he added. “In fact, since the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, every host nation has seen higher share prices at the end of the year following the games compared to the year preceding. Japan should be no exception.”

BACK IN BRITAIN

What about things back home? The performance of UK equities was similar to Japan, producing a total return of 15 per cent last year.

Of course, the UK has its own uncertainties to deal with, primarily focused around whether Prime Minister Boris Johnson will actually manage to “Get Brexit Done” and strike a trade deal with the EU this year. But beyond this political uncertainty, the economic picture for the UK has improved for 2020, according to Adam Avigdor, co-manager of BlackRock Income and Growth Trust.

“The employment market is strong, with underlying growth in both nominal and real wages for the first time in recent years. Combined with increasing fiscal spending, we believe the UK economic outlook is more encouraging,” he says.

THE PATH LESS TRODDEN

Away from the developed economies, emerging markets are also looking enticing to some investors.

Last year, emerging market equities produced a modest total return of about nine per cent, outperforming corporate and government bonds, as well as commodities.

Looking ahead, emerging markets offer potentially strong opportunities for long-term investors. Some stocks in this region are trading at low valuations and paying attractive dividends, according to Emily Fletcher, co-manager of BlackRock Frontiers Investment Trust.

“In terms of the regional outlook, we continue to like Latin America,” she says. “However, the upturn will be modest and clear risks remain – not least on the geopolitical front, as highlighted by the latest ratcheting up of US-Iran tensions. Renewed growth in corporate earnings is likely to be needed if equity markets are to sustain further gains.”

Making predictions about the future can of course often prove to be a fool’s errand – crystal balls don’t work in real life. And even with all the data and analysis at hand, unforeseen events can rapidly upset markets. What do we know is that the investment landscape in 2020 will be far from dull.
Let’s kick off the decade with a plan for ending the misery of the daily commute

Tom Thackray

I T’S THE start of the year, and you may have already had to suffer through a cancelled train, a工作效率卡ed out, and a traffic jam that’s cost you a meeting. Not the best way to kick off a new decade. Among those returning to their offices today are the newly appointed members of the government, with in-trays full of the promises made during the election campaign.

I’m not talking about short-sightedness of an “infrastructure revolution”, Boris Johnson’s government will be under pressure to deliver. Indeed, we’ve already seen metro mayors and local leaders pushing their own “wish lists” of regional infrastructure, eager to address the poor connectivity that is currently leaving their areas behind.

Commuter experience is key to this. A CBI poll of 2,000 employees across the country found that they lost on average 2.7 hours a week owing to travel disruption and delays. Over the course of a working year, the average employee loses 125 hours, or over five whole days, thanks to commuting problems.

Improvements in how people get to work are needed. London needs more investment, but simply turning on the spending taps is not sufficient. Businesses need the government to deliver certainty through a national infrastructure strategy and a Budget outlining how it will be funded.

This should be accompanied by a plan for a more accountable and transparent rail system, with greater alignment between those who own the tracks and those who run the trains; a focus on easing congestion on our roads and delivering seamless connectivity in our towns and cities; and a strategy to make transport systems greener and more affordable for all.

And if the UK is to move up the world’s most powerful economies, upon which the future of Europe and the United States is based, it is imperative that the new government set a vision that attracts business to invest in the UK by seizing the opportunities from technological innovations around mobility and the transition to a net-zero economy.

Businesses know that they too have a part to play. While they may already recognise that responsibility, stressful and unreliable commuting experiences take a toll on their staff, they could do more to make workers’ journeys easier and more productive.

CBI research found that a mere 16 per cent of employers had been offered a flexible start time to avoid rush hour, and just 23 per cent could decide the hours they worked.

As work patterns change, the potential for flexible working is set to increase, bringing significant opportunities to better use existing infrastructure capacity and reduce unnecessary commuting.

To help the UK on this journey, over the next 18 months the CBI is working with KPMG to outline the type of investments in infrastructure that can tackle the UK’s productivity gap, and how government and business can work together to make the commute greener, more affordable, and more reliable.

This morning, as the newly appointed ministers make their own commute, businesses across the country want to quickly see the detail behind the grand pledges of the election campaign. Meeting this challenge would not only start to address the UK’s longstanding productivity problem, but perhaps also build trust with those who “lost their vote” at the election, and will now be expecting a response.

○ Dr John C. Hulsman is senior columnist at City A.M., a life member of the Council of European Relations, and president of John C. Hulsman Enterprises. He can be reached for corporate speaking and private written briefings at www.chartwellspeakers.com.

○ Tom Thackray is infrastructure and energy director at the CBI.
The civil service needs new talent — and a cull of poor performers

DOMINIC Cummings has, once again, taken aim at the civil service — this time for Whitehall reform — and it should tell us something that this happens every few years — it is combined with the obligatory “there are many brilliant people in the civil service” line. That, in fact, is the first line of Cummings’ blog.

Having worked as an adviser to the work and pensions secretary during the coalition government, I agree. I also know that believing this is not contradictory to acknowledging that there are too many mediocre or poor civil servants.

But while I welcome Cummings’ plan, a Downing Street unit of data scientists and “misfits” won’t be enough. A more radical shake-up is needed — one that stretches beyond the doors of Number 10.

A Whitehall fit to meet the challenges of the coming decades must be less hierarchical, less bureaucratic, and more diverse. That means hiring new talent. But it also means getting rid of poor performers.

Most people will recognise that Whitehall has a shortage of the specific technical skills that Cummings identifies — computer scientists, data analysts, mathematicians. Technology is advancing at a pace that is far outstripping the government’s ability to manage it. There’ll be no opposition to rectifying that, though it will require an honest conversation about pay given the salaries that these skills can command in the private sector.

Just as important is his more controversial clarion call for cognitive diversity. Groupthink leads to failure; just look at the 2008 financial crash. Research has repeatedly shown that diversity — of experience and perspective — is a key ingredient of high performing teams. Yet the civil service is largely homogeneous.

A key observation from my time in government was the tendency to overlook potential unintended consequences of policy changes. It was a failure in critical thinking, and a classic symptom of groupthink.

Encouragingly, attempts are being made to open up the fast stream to people from less privileged backgrounds, but it’s not enough. These are the future civil service leaders, and for the most part they are identical models of each other.

Can Dominic Cummings deliver a revolution and keep the show on the road?

Cummings is right — a top Russell Group degree should not be the litmus test for Whitehall success. More maverick thinkers across the board would make a big difference, but to attract and retain them the old-school culture will need to change. You can’t break groupthink if, once hired, you force people to conform to a uniform model of a “good” civil servant or expect them to work through layers-upon-layer of hierarchy.

The real challenge, however, is clearing out the poor performers. That’s the uncomfortable part of the conversation, the part that triggers those visceral symptoms of groupthink. It was a key ingredient of high performing teams. Yet the civil service is largely homogeneous.

A key observation from my time in government was the tendency to overlook potential unintended consequences of policy changes. It was a failure in critical thinking, and a classic symptom of groupthink.

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Can Dominic Cummings deliver a revolution and keep the show on the road?

Charlotte Pickles is director of the think tank Reform.
Welcome to the first edition of Crypto AM and I hope you had a wonderful festive period and rang in the New Year and for this new and exciting decade—one in which AI, Blockchain and DLT will surely flourish!


The crypto market has opened its 2020 account in a positive fashion and inevitably the spectre of potential conflicts in the Middle East has played its part with BTC at the time of writing trading at US$7,34.15. (GB£1.743.48) Ethereum (ETH) is at US$1140.73 (GB£107.51), Ripple (XRP) is at US$0.2197 (GB£0.1664), Binance (BNB) is at US$4.65 (GB£0.11.8) and Cardano (ADA) is at US0.16069 (GB£0.02752). Overall Market Cap is at US$203.84bn (GB£154.90bn)

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

Cryptocurrency meet-ups in London. The first one will be Thursday 23rd January at WeWork Labs at 6:30PM. This free event is a great chance for networking with crypto enthusiasts and for further info in the events section www.conellence.com.

Eric Stanford has turned the Crypto Curry Club into one of the UK’s highest rated networking events for professionals in crypto, blockchain, fintech and emerging tech. January events with spaces left for Jan dinner on Outlook blockchain for the future of payments and 29th Jan lunch on ‘How to Start a Bank’. Email hello@cryptocurryclub.com for details.

On Van’s: Conellence Academy is hosting monthly crypto currency meet-ups in London. The first one will be Thursday 10th January at WeWork Labs at 6:30PM. This free event is a great chance to network with crypto enthusiasts and for further info in the events section www.conellence.com.

AmaZix is the blockchain industry’s leading full-service consultancy. AmaZix is now publishing free educational materials some of them: ‘Back to School’ edition. I thought you might like to know about them.

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Since launching Crypto AM, I have attended a number of regular London meet-ups and visited other resources that have been created by leaders in the wider blockchain space. Given this is the ‘back to school’ edition I thought you might like to know about some of them:

Changelly provides a non-custodial, instant cryptocurrency exchange service, which means no user funds are held on by the service. Changelly acts as an intermediary between crypto exchanges and users, offering access to 150+ cryptocurrencies. The company’s mission is to make the exchange process effortless for everyone who wants to invest in cryptocurrency. Operating since 2015, Changelly attracts over a million monthly visitors who enjoy the high limits, fast transactions, and 24/7 live support the services offers. Changelly has an intuitive interface, superb exchange rates, secure transactions, and it’s super quick, one can sign up in less than a minute with just their email address.

Changelly is giving back to the community in 2020. For the whole month of January, Changelly is giving a benefit from the ‘zero network fee’ campaign. Customers will be able to swap and exchange crypto at a floating rate, having to pay just a single transparent fee of 0.25%, while all other third-party fees, including network fees will be paid by the company.

Changelly also provides users with the chance to swap crypto using a fixed rate, both on desktop and mobile. While the user will not be utilising the ‘zero network fee’ campaign on fixed rate basis, as it is free of borders, restrictions and centralised control. Business can get done. There’s a long way to go. When all familiar with the annual rolling out of the ‘this year will be the year of the Linux desktop’ phrase. The dreams brought on by this betray an underlying issue: like Linux, blockchain and its surrounding technologies are hard, and decentralisation comes without the support and attention to detail that mere mortals need. The technology and its benefits are challenging to understand, and can appear uninviting and frightening. If this slumbered-door approach continues, we collectively stand to lose a lot and for those of us who understand the potential of decentralisation.

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Eric Benz, CEO of Changelly believes that, “Being able to provide the best and most efficient rails to acquire and swap crypto has been our focus from day one. Changelly is an important tool in this ever growing ecosystem and as a result we want to provide all of our users with zero fees this holiday season and for the beginning of the new year.” He also added that Changelly’s customers “have been a special part of what makes our company successful and this is our way of showing our appreciation.”

For more information check out: www.changelly.com

Changelly provides users with the chance to swap crypto using a fixed rate, both on desktop and mobile.

The crypto market has opened its 2020 account in a positive fashion and inevitably the spectre of potential conflicts in the Middle East has played its part with BTC at the time of writing trading at US$7,34.15. (GB£1.743.48) Ethereum (ETH) is at US$1140.73 (GB£107.51), Ripple (XRP) is at US$0.2197 (GB£0.1664), Binance (BNB) is at US$4.65 (GB£0.11.8) and Cardano (ADA) is at US0.16069 (GB£0.02752). Overall Market Cap is at US$203.84bn (GB£154.90bn) (source data: www.CryptoCompare.com)

Since launching Crypto AM, I have attended a number of regular London meet-ups and visited other resources that have been created by leaders in the wider blockchain space. Given this is the ‘back to school’ edition I thought you might like to know about some of them:

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there. Blockchain can and should be things done better than if it was not there. It’s in the background, invisible, be your own hospital? Fire station? No, everyone wants that responsibility, or and control your own identity, but not blockchain let you be your own bank well and good to say that bitcoin and lem is the community’s continued baf-

front of our very eyes. 
salisation, it’s grim to watch centrali-

sation of blockchain ooze into place in 

tralisation, it’s grim to watch centrali-

bination. Payments company founded by Jack Dorsey, has 

Binance isn’t the only company adding support of late for the cryptocurrency ecosystem. It goes wrong. For everyone else, we 

ative to suit a changing world. 

far grander that will touch all of our 

paper. We’re at the start of something with Satoshi Nakamoto’s 2008 bitcoin 

more mature space that recognises 

it was: decentralised, with value and 

tion resets the Internet back to where 

properly incentivised disintermedia-

to support their record of having made 

identity of the provider and verifier of 

solutions in the insurance space. Today 

even automate payouts. 

policies are packaged and vetted 

system to ensure sufficient compliance. 

price is already up 3% since the 

One dynamic possibly behind the price 

A.M. SECTION SHOULD NOT BE TAKEN AS 

AND OPINIONS PROVIDED BY CITY A.M. ‘S 

Wall in 1989, several networks, often 

American, emerged with a catch-all re-

response to the need for trade “beyond 

But a one-size-fits-all concept poses 

persistent problems linked to exchange 

and regulatory constraints affecting 

of trust. Users, especially those that 

is partially convert-

able despite many regulatory con-

ables in different 

and all their respective needs, each 

is made up of countless stakeholders 

As with the technology, the same 

could be said of the rise of a 

global, decentralized, and trustless 

marketplace: our age of 

businesses, finding its way 

braced by businesses, finding its way 

and one of those is 

payment systems are the greatest op-

The Chinese Yuan is partially convert-

able despite many regulatory con-

With blockchain, one can 

C 

Payouts. Reinsurance. Underwriting. The insurance industry is layered, complex - and filled with opportunities to provide support where trust is lacking. And where trust is 

lacking, blockchain can add real value. 

The insurance industry has made 

great strides in moving away from paper 
towards digital formats for data 
collection, storage and processing. 

However, they still lack trust. 

Making a claim may start with a phone 
call, but will often require multiple pieces of 
supporting information to move through the process of evaluating and ultimately settling the claim. All too often, data submitted as part of a claim is lost, incorrectly entered or somehow “stuck” in the system. In other situations, 

potentially fraudulent data is used to support a claim providing no way of identifying the source of information. 

When recording a claim on the blockchain, all of the relevant information is accessible. Information submitted by one person can be verified or validated by another person. The identity of the provider and verifier of the data are stored on the blockchain, making audit trails easier. A byproduct of this transparency is that it can discourage fraud. 

A cross-industry claims blockchain can provide a rich source of data. Artificial intelligence can identify patterns and improve risk assessments. Individuals and businesses can refer to the system to report their record of having made 

no claims. Regulators can access the 

system to ensure sufficient compliance. 

Reinsurance companies can ensure that 

policies are packaged and vetted appropriately. 

Underwriting contracts, insurers can 

even automate payouts. 

There are numerous companies currently working to provide blockchain solutions in the insurance space. Today, most of them are still 

intermediaries trying to charge a fee for their services, e.g., they aren’t blockchain solution providers. The real opportunity is for the industry to work together to build a multi-party 

blockchain ecosystem. 

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

C 

the vast increase in terms of usage and 

regulatory constraints affecting 

the unbanked, financial inclusion and 

adoption. We can’t talk about banking 

without thinking 

about the future of the 

payment industry must teach users not 

to expect to be of service in this world. 

Whether they’re cars or protocols, they need roads, and rails, to get to cus-

tomers, or at least enlist customers to 

show them what doesn’t yet exist, but 

what will be. But what can they show for 

it? Ironically, the tech built on the 

value of a trustless system has yet to 

find a collaborative yet decentralized 

framework. 

Payment systems are the greatest op-

portunities to transform our world through blockchain technology 

3.

INTEROPERABILITY Is The Key 

While identity and agreement to a global setup of shared digital identity is key, we still need ecosystems that can 

Interoperability is crucial to the use-

fulness of any technology. An yet, we’ve 

failed to produce products, services, or a superior customer experience at a low 

cost that encourages mass adoption. 

This is what happens when everyone 

presumes the preciousness of their own 

babies in bubbles, without thinking 

ahead as to how to grow that child re-

spectively to be of service in this world. 

We can’t talk about banking 

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3.
Tim Pitt

The McLaren GT combines supercar thrills with grand touring comfort.

The McLaren GT

Superflex reviews don’t usually begin by discussing boot space, but this isn’t a supercar. At least, not according to McLaren. The GT is a Gran Turismo – or perhaps the anglicised (and somewhat less exotic) ‘Grand Tourer’, given it hails from Woking.

It’s designed for going far and fast, but this isn’t a supercar. At least, not according to McLaren. The GT is a Gran Turismo – or perhaps the anglicised (and somewhat less exotic) ‘Grand Tourer’, given it hails from Woking.

The £163,000 GT is easier to live with than most McLarens, too. It retains the marque’s signature buttery softness, but it’s less active anti-roll and less tenacious. The hydraulic power steering is an upgrade compared to the 720S, and while it doesn’t inherit that car’s active anti-roll system, it feels tied-down and tenacious. Proactive Chassis Control suspension is a carry-over from the 720S, and while it doesn’t inherit that car’s active anti-roll system, it feels tied-down and tenacious. Proactive Chassis Control suspension is a carry-over from the 720S, and while it doesn’t inherit that car’s active anti-roll system, it feels tied-down and tenacious.

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The GT lays siege to B-roads with aggressive turn-in, shattering speed and abundant tactility. Proactive Chassis Control suspension is a carry-over from the 720S, and while it doesn’t inherit that car’s active anti-roll system, it feels tied-down and tenacious. Proactive Chassis Control suspension is a carry-over from the 720S, and while it doesn’t inherit that car’s active anti-roll system, it feels tied-down and tenacious.

It also sounds less rambunctious than you’d expect, albeit still loud enough to wake your neighbour at 5:30am (she texted me later to complain). With smaller turbochargers than the 720S, it makes 620hp at 3,000rpm, then a torrent of turbocharged boost scoops you up like a tsunami. The whoosh to warp-speed is like opening a shaken-up can of cola: an explosion of energy that makes you laugh out loud before glancing warily at the speedo. On public roads, you’ll need iron resolve to resist it.

Especially once you escape the city. The 4.0-litre V8 feels a little flat until you hit the tarmac. Only the iron brakes feel slightly soft, lacking the bite of McLaren’s usual carbon-ceramic discs (they cost extra).

As for the GT’s grand touring credentials, the picture is more mixed. Its canopy-style cockpit offers excellent visibility, the dual-clutch auto gearbox can be left to its own devices and the front splitter isn’t so low that speed humps provoke a buttck-clenching sense of fear.

On the minus side, the boomy exhaust gets tiresome on motorways, its infotainment is baffling and ride quality is unflinchingly firm.

Ultimately, the McLaren isn’t as comfortable as the benchmark Bentley Continental GT, yet it’s more rewarding on the right road. Nor is it as outrageously exciting as the 720S, but it costs nearly £50,000 less. Assuming its well-heeled customers don’t simply buy the Bentley and a 720S, McLaren may have found a new niche.

Tim Pitt works for motoringresearch.com

NOT CONVINCED? CHECK OUT THESE ALTERNATIVES...

ASTON MARTIN DB11 AMR

BENTLEY CONTINENTAL GT W12

HONDA NSX

CITYAM.COM
It’s 2020 and you’re probably already feeling stressed and tired. Will Williams has some ideas that might help you out.

Everyday we feel more stressed and anxious than ever. One of the problems with the usual pursuit of productivity is that regimes of extreme organisation or meticulous time management create tension and encourage a controlling mindset that leaves no room for anything else.

There is one small change that any-one can make that will send their productivity sky-high in the workplace and elsewhere — without a corresponding increase in stress. And that’s meditation — the simplest, most effective, and cheapest way of getting more value out of the effort that you put into your life.

Far from inducing a blissed-out, anaesthetised state, meditation sharpens your mind, boosts your creativity, and moves you into a higher gear, while reducing the risk of burnout in a way that your coffee habit won’t.

The ways in which meditation increases productivity are diverse. It isn’t just about being calmer or having more energy. Vedic meditation — the kind of meditation that I teach — has a powerful pacifying effect on the entire nervous system, one of the first effects of which is vastly improved sleep. We all know that a good night’s sleep leaves no room for anything else.

But there’s more. If you practise before work, for example (and you can practise meditation on your commute or in almost any context) you are effectively charging up your prefrontal cortex with adaptation energy. This is the energy you have to respond to new events as they occur throughout the day. The accumulation of events like these can leave you feeling rundown, but meditation gives you the composure and resistance to stress needed to stay productive — even when everything around you seems to be falling to pieces.

This is particularly useful to those working in dynamic and high-pressure industries. The corporate world is a hotbed of change, and the ability to remain calm and adaptable is not just desirable, but necessary.

What meditation gives to workers in the corporate world is this kind of calm responsiveness to change, which stops firms from sliding into the kind of fearfulness and rigidity that can set in when change happens too quickly and workers are caught off-guard.

Anyone who meditates will notice an increase in their ability to absorb information, prioritise, and make good decisions quickly. There’s a corresponding increase in empathy and compassion — vital traits for any team player or manager.

Arguably, the most powerful cognitive effect of all is on your creative functions, which benefits those in creative roles but also anyone who has to problem-solve. To those who worry that by meditating they will lose their “edge”, I say this: you’ll only become more creative, not less. The only thing you’ll lose is your edginess — the stress that stops you from thinking clearly.

Simply put, meditation allows you to “do life” better. It doesn’t end or even have to start with work. Its effects colour your social and family life as well. It helps you to be successful at 100 per cent of life, not 50.

There are some who think of meditation as “hippie-ish”, and others who say that they “don’t have time to meditate” — which is a bit like saying you’re “too hungry to eat”. But they are only depriving themselves of a very simple, efficient way of becoming an altogether more effective human being. And that should appeal to everyone.

Will Williams is the founding teacher at Beeja Meditation in London.
IS tenure as Arsenal manager may be only 18 days old so far, but Mikel Arteta has already been witness to the many sides of his new side. Having crumbled to succumb to a 3-1 defeat by Chelsea and shone in a 24 win over Manchester United, the Gunners last night combined their previous performances to create the epitome of football’s favourite cliche: a game of two halves.

Completely out-played on home turf in the first period by a spirited, organised and talented Leeds. Arsenal returned in the second to remind everyone of their qualities.

Reiss Nelson duly scored the only goal of a highly enjoyable game and put Arteta’s team through to play Bournemouth in the fourth round of the FA Cup.

**BIELSA BALL**

The first half was all about Leeds, who put on a 45-minute demonstration of the benefits of Marcelo Bielsa’s coaching. The Championship-topping visitors looked every inch the Premier League side, dominating possession, pressuring Arsenal into making mistakes and peppering Emiliano Martínez’s goal with attempts.

Bielsa’s attention to detail and tactical prowess was clear, with Leeds dis- mantling a shaky Gunners midfield and back line time and again. Unfortunately for them, they didn’t take any of their chances – 15 of them in total.

Martínez palmed away a drive from Jack Harrison, Patrick Bamford smashed the crossbar, Calvin Phillips’ low free-kick tested Martínez and the long-serving reserve goalkeeper had to push away a back-post header from Ezgjan Alioski.

Leeds limited Arsenal to 37 per cent possession in the first period and just 71 per cent in the second but Bielsa’s side won only admirers and confidence that they can compete in the top flight, if they were to be promoted in May.

**THREADBARE GUNNERS**

As impressive as Leeds were, Arsenal were every bit as poor. Playing out of position at right-back Sokratis was harried constantly by Alioski, while on the other flank Sead Kolasinac was run ragged by the tricky Harrison.

Matteo Guendouzi and Granit Xhaka struggled with the ball and were powerless without it, unable to prevent the onrushing stream of Leeds attackers. Arteta is keen to strengthen his squad and watching his side being out-classed by a Championship team – albeit it one top of the division and coached by one of the world’s most influential football thinkers – showed exactly why.

**RECOVERY JOB**

We are just four games into his managerial career but thanks to Alexandre Lacazette’s post-match interview we have already gained an insight into Arteta’s style. Despite his softly-spoken voice, Arsenal’s new manager is not afraid to use the stick as well as the carrot. Arteta’s captain for the night said the former Manchester City assistant “shouted a lot” at the break and it certainly had the desired effect.

The Gunners shot out of the blocks, with Nelson charging forward immediately on a counterattack and Lacazette skimming the crossbar with a free-kick.

The game’s only goal was a potential blueprint for how Arteta wants Arsenal to attack: quickly and decisively. Nicolas Pepe combined with Lacazette down the right before Nelson scuffed in a loose ball from close range.

Having been out-shot 15 to three in the first half, Arsenal turned the tables in the second, taking 13 attempts to their opponents’ three. It wasn’t just a renewed attacking purpose, but a physical, aggressive bite to their play which had been absent under Unai Emery.

Xhaka has been the lightning rod for criticism this season and was very fortunate to avoid at least a yellow card for four late challenges, but his efforts to hurry Leeds were influential in turning the tide.

“We saw two different teams from the first to second half,” Arteta said. “We changed our attitude, desire and organisation at half-time and then we were completely different.”

He is right – and the fact he can have that effect is extremely encouraging for Arsenal going forward.

**Turnaround**

Faith in Arteta grows after half-time anger sparks Arsenal revival, writes Felix Keith

**Five key sports technology trends to watch in 2020**

The FA Cup.

Network Engineering

Five key sports technology trends to watch in 2020

**INDUSTRY COMMENT**

Rebecca Hopkins

Driving subscriptions, selling tickets or lowering costs to increase profits, brands are looking to maximise revenues, not simply flag-wave.

**IF YOU’RE NOT PAYING FOR IT, YOU ARE THE PRODUCT**

This was never truer than in 2019 and sits interestingly alongside brands’ quest for financial returns. But how will the exchange of data for rewards continue? Two clear factors influence sports fans when data sharing: whether they trust the brand harvesting the information; and whether the brand is specialising in sports technology, events and consultancy business, or lowering costs to increase profits, driving subscriptions, selling tickets or lowering costs to increase profits, brands are looking to maximise revenues, not simply flag-wave.

**AR V VR**

Virtual reality has been hyped – wrongly – for imminent, widespread adoption for years; it will undoubtedly achieve traction at some point but augmented reality is far more embeddable. AR has two forms: marker and markerless, which roughly means digital imagery either related to a product or posted in the sky. Some AR executions have been dramatic – see Estudiantes de La Plata’s AR lion if you missed it – but its core value is in bringing fan engagement to life. For example, at live games, rather than firing merchandise into the crowd, fans can catch prizes virtually via their phones. Expect more of this in 2020.

**5G OR NOT 5G**

In years past, there has been very excited about the speeds and capabilities of 5G but with fewer than 20 UK cities currently enabled, it’s still far from a major factor in fan engagement. As the saying goes, quick downloads don’t compensate for boring content so backing 5G in 2020 is an even-way bet at best.

**SOCIAL POLITICS**

Any brand operating in sport which hasn’t yet reviewed its environmental, diversity and equality behaviour is already behind the curve; a sports battle to win young fans, these will be key.

Sustainability is probably at the forefront of this charge, as evidenced by recycled-material medals promised at the Tokyo Games, 300 per cent renewable energy at the Aviva Stadium and eco-cups keeping 9m plastic beakers from landfill annually. But with live sports fixtures generating around 41 tonnes of carbon dioxide, fans will look to sports to improve both its behaviour as well as theirs.

****Rebecca Hopkins is chief executive of The STR Group, a sports communications, events and consultancy business, specialising in sports technology, operating across sport globally.****
Opener's century puts victory in England's grasp

England need to take eight wickets on the final day of their second Test match against South Africa at Newlands today to level the series at 1-1 after the hosts held firm yesterday. South Africa reached 126-2 in pursuit of a Test record 438 to win, with opener Pieter Malan remained unbeaten on 63 alongside nightwatchman Keshav Maharaj. Opener Dean Elgar was adjudged caught behind by Joe Denly for 34, while Jimmy Anderson struck in the penultimate over to remove Zubayr Hamza and Axar Patel. England's position came courtesy of a first Test century by Dominic Sibley, who finished unbeaten on 131, and Tom Curran's quickfire 72, which saw them declare on 394-6 in Cape Town.

Opener's century puts victory in England's grasp

Opener's century puts victory in England's grasp

Opener's century puts victory in England's grasp

UGSTIN Thomas played beautifully for much of his win at the Tournament of Champions in Hawaii on Sunday, but the world No1’s route to victory wasn’t without a few twists. It was quite a surprise to see Thomas finish his final round bogey-par-bogey, squandering the two-shot lead he’d held with three not particularly difficult holes to play and sending him into a play-off with Xander Schauffele and Patrick Reed. His second shot into 18, which landed in the hazard, was extraordinary. He had half of Hawaii on the right but overhooked it, perhaps trying to play the perfect shot because he feared playing partner and overnight leader Schauffele would make birdie.

As it was, Schauffele missed the chance to take the win when he three-putted the last – another big shock. He had putted really well all day but was just too aggressive with his first effort from 15 feet, which didn’t break and sailed seven feet past the hole.

Reed, meanwhile, was already in the clubhouse on 14 under par, having carded a closing 66 despite not playing very well. Time and again he missed greens – he was 33rd out of 34 players for making greens in regulation – but repeatedly got up and down. Reed led the field by a distance for strokes gained: putting.

Thomas eventually prevailed at the third playoff hole, after Reed had passed up chances to win at the first two, taking his tally to 12 wins on the PGA Tour. It is the most of any player in their 20s, while only Tiger Woods and Jack Nicklaus had won more before turning 27.

He seems very hungry for more success – after this win he said he felt he should in fact be winning more – and you are never more hungry than at the start of a new year. You’ve had Christmas off to rest so in January you are ready to push yourself again.

Having gone 12 months without a title until last year’s BMW Championship, Thomas has now won three times in his last seven starts. When he is hot, he is very hot indeed and when you are that good you do expect to be challenging every time. Maybe that’s where his hunger comes from.

2017 US PGA Championship winner is always one of the leading contenders for Majors and that will surely be the case in 2020 too.

I think it’s interesting that both Thomas and Schauffele were taught by their fathers, as I was, too. Because they love you, dads don’t hold anything back – unlike some coaches, who may fear destroying their players – and that’s why there is nothing better.

KING LOUIS TO DEFEND CROWN

The European Tour cranks up again this week in Johannesburg with the South African Open, where home favourite Louis Oosthuizen will be looking to defend his crown.

Front of players’ minds in Europe and the United States is Ryder Cup. All will have planned the schedules with the Ryder Cup in mind. Those who have experienced it before will be eager for another shot, and those who haven’t will be desperate to make their debuts.

We’ll be talking about it a lot more as September approaches but for now it’s exciting that the ball is rolling.

Follow him @torrancesam
WHERE ARE YOU FROM? IS IT WHERE YOU WERE BORN? HOW ABOUT YOUR PARENTS? THEIR PARENTS? MAYBE THE ANSWER LIVES IN AN OLD STOMPING GROUND, OR AN ERA OF MUSIC THAT TWISTED YOUR MELON, MAN. COULD IT BE WHERE YOU LOST YOUR HEART, OR IS IT WHERE YOU FOUND YOURSELF? PERHAPS, WHERE YOU’RE REALLY FROM IS SIMPLY WHERE YOU FEEL AT HOME.

WE ARE NOT AN ISLAND. WE’RE HOME TO SO MUCH MORE.