CITY A.M.
BUSINESS WITH PERSONALITY

OFF PISTE IN A WINTER WONDERLAND SKIING, BUT NOT AS YOU KNOW IT **P24–25**

FLIGHT OF FANCY? WHY COMMUTING COULD BE ABOUT TO GET MORE EXCITING **P19–22**

MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2020 | ISSUE 3,552 CITYAM.COM FREE

TORIES MULL SOUTH EAST TAX ASSAULT

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REPORTS that the Treasury is considering a host of potential wealth taxes ahead of the upcoming Budget sparked outrage from Tory activists and backbenchers yesterday.

Boris Johnson and chancellor Sajid Javid are said to be mulling over a so-called mansion tax in order to pay for spending increases. Such a levy would be felt most in London and the south-east, where house prices are highest.

Johnson's election win provided a boon for London househunters

The proposal has been discussed on numerous occasions in Number 10 and at the Treasury, according to the Sunday Telegraph.

Yet in 2014, when he was mayor of London, Johnson described Labour's Ed Miliband's proposed mansion levy as a "tax on London" that would "clobber" families and the elderly.

The form that the tax would take under Johnson is unclear, however one option is a straight levy, similar to that proposed by Miliband in 2013, while another would be to modify council tax rates for properties over a certain value.

The government is also said to be considering cutting pension tax relief for those earning more than £50,000 a year from 40 per cent to 20 per cent, which would raise an estimated £10bn. The moves come on top of an expected clampdown on entrepreneurs' relief, and potential changes could also be made to capital gains tax.

Tory supporters, members and MPs took to social media yesterday to vent their frustration about the potential taxation changes.

Conservative backbencher John Redwood said the government "should be talking tax cuts not tax rises" and that the economy needed "a boost and some optimism".

Fellow Tory MP Lucy Allan also criticised the plans, saying: "Hard work being rewarded maximises aspiration, effort and achievement… A low-tax environment increases the tax take."

The proposed taxation measures could be seen as a way to appeal to newly won northern and midlands voters in December's General Election.

The Tories' 80-seat majority in the ballot came after it broke Labour's so-called red wall and picked up many traditional Labour constituencies.

Johnson has consistently said he would spend sizeable sums on transport and the health service to support these areas, with the go-ahead for HS2 expected to come within the next few weeks.

Matthew Lesh, policy director at the Adam Smith Institute think tank, said wealth taxes were not what these former Labour strongholds voted for.

"This 'squeeze the rich' approach stinks of the politics of envy," he said.

A Treasury spokesperson declined to speculate ahead of the Budget.

BRITAIN BATTERED Storm Ciara brings flooding and travel chaos

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THE UK was hit by gale-force winds and heavy rain yesterday as Storm Ciara swept across the country.

The system caused serious transport disruption with hundreds of flights and trains cancelled. Railway companies in particular were working to repair any damage in order to deliver a regular weekday service.

Ciara also continued to wreak havoc on the continent, with cancellations at Amsterdam's Schiphol and Frankfurt am Main airports.

The Thames Barrier will be closed today to prevent a tidal surge pushing up the river into the capital.

Yesterday's gales were so severe that one flight, from New York to Heathrow, reportedly broke sub-sonic records to make the journey in under five hours due to strong tailwinds.

FTSE 100▼ 7,466.70 -38.09 FTSE 250▼ 21,499.29 -73.57 DOW▼ 29,102.51 -277.26 NASDAQ▼ 9,520.51 -51.64 £/$▼ 1.291 -0.003 £/€▼ 1.178 -0.001 €/$▼ 1.095 -0.003

CITY A.M.

THE CITY VIEW

Levelling up does not require cutting down

TOWARDS the end of last year, this column suggested that 2020 "could be the year when the voice of the provinces is heard more clearly than the roar of the metropolis". We recognised that the seizure by the Tories of scores of formerly safe Labour seats would mean a recalibration of Conservative priorities, indeed — of conservatism. Determined to repay the voters who put their faith in Boris Johnson, this was always going to be a government more interested in Bassetlaw than Battersea. But our observation was not meant to be a warning cry. The government's commitment to "levelling up" the country and investing in regions beyond London and the south-east is as welcome as it is necessary. However, one month tomorrow the chancellor, Sajid Javid, will deliver his first Budget — and the first Tory Budget backed by Johnson's 80-seat majority. Reports emanating from Whitehall suggest that ministers (or at least their advisors and civil servants) view the new political landscape as fertile ground in which to plant some decidedly left-wing saplings. A brutal reduction in pensions tax relief and a possible mansion tax are just two of the ideas said to be in the air. The latter of these two is particularly concerning, given that it would clobber property-owners in London, the south-east and other affluent pockets. It could be a one-off levy or a higher band of council tax, but whichever route is favoured Tories used to consider such a destination used to be off-limits. The idea of arbitrary wealth taxes was proposed by Ed Miliband, and rejected by the voters. Jeremy Corbyn tried twice to win power on the back of such ideas and again, the public said no. That a Tory government (with supposed Thatcherites at the helm) should seek to resurrect such an agenda is deeply worrying. Levelling up should not mean dragging others down. That used to be a cornerstone of conservative philosophy. Cuts to pension tax relief and mooted wealth taxes join a planned assault on entrepreneurs' relief and rumoured hikes to capital gains tax and inheritance tax. Taken together, it's not a pretty picture. None of these measures are necessary in order to devise and fund policies to benefit the lives and economic conditions of those outside the wealthy south-east. Next month's Budget should be focused on boosting fresh growth rather than picking at the low-hanging fruit of high-earners and property owners.

" Taken together, it's not a pretty picture

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ALL UP IN THE AIR Preparations rumble on for Singapore Air Show but coronavirus concerns overshadow the flagship event

THE CHINESE Air Force's display team wowed spectators during practice flights ahead of the Singapore Air Show, which begins this week, but the event has been caught up in the fallout from the coronavirus outbreak. Lockheed Martin and Raytheon were among the dozens of exhibitors who pulled out ahead of the annual shebang. The Chinese government's actions in the early days of the outbreak have come under global scrutiny, with reports that doctors who tried to raise the alarm were silenced.

London business activity nears three-year record

ANNA MENIN AND JAMES BOOTH

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COMPANIES in London experienced a marked uplift in business activity at the start of 2020, with the easing of political uncertainty following the General Election helping new business in the capital to soar.

London recorded the strongest output growth of any region in the UK in January, according to new purchasing managers' index (PMI) figures from Natwest and IHS Markit.

The capital's PMI reading rose to 56.5 in January, compared to 51.6 in December — the sharpest rise in private sector output for 33 months. Any score over 50 indicates expansion.

"London businesses turned on the taps at the start of 2020," said Stuart Johnstone, a managing director at Natwest. "With the path to Brexit made all-but-certain by the election result, much of the previously pent-up demand was released."

London's strong showing showcased the capital's current economic strength, he said, adding: "Businesses were also a lot more confident for future activity, amid expectations of new investment and higher government spending in 2020."

The east of England recorded the second-highest output growth with an overall reading of 54.1. The rate of decline in the regions with the two lowest scores, the north-east and Northern Ireland, eased to 48.2 and 46.8 respectively.

All but one region — the north-east — recorded increased employment during the month. This general upturn was led by London, which saw the largest increase in workforce numbers for almost two years.

London-based firms reported that business activity grew in January due to "reduced political and Brexit-related uncertainty" following the General Election in December, Natwest said, while several firms noted greater investment at the start of the year.

A separate survey released by accountancy firm BDO showed that business confidence across the manufacturing and services sector rose for the first time in 18 months during January.

BDO's optimism index, which weights macroeconomic data from the UK's main business surveys, increased for a third consecutive month in January. The overall reading now stands at 95.84, slightly above the 95 mark which indicates growth and a 0.05 point rise on the previous month.

The firm's manufacturing optimism index edged up 0.05 points, while the services optimism index gained 0.13 points.

WHAT THE OTHER PAPERS SAY THIS MORNING

FINANCIAL TIMES

SHUT BUSINESSES HIT CHINA DRIVE TO RESTART ECONOMY

Many businesses across China are set to remain closed today, despite the government's efforts to restart the world's second largest economy following the deadly outbreak of coronavirus. China's state council has urged critical industries, such as aviation, to resume operations as soon as possible and most provinces have asked local businesses to reopen today.

'MASTERS OF MAYFAIR' ARE NO MORE, SAYS MAN CHIEF

Star traders earning eye-watering pay packets have no place in today's hedge fund industry, according to the head of the world's largest publicly-traded hedge fund manager. Luke Ellis, chief executive of London-based Man Group, told the Financial Times that the hedge fund emblem of star-trader culture had been damaging to the sector.

THE TIMES

ANNE SACOOLAS 'WAS KNOWN TO BE A CIA SPY'

Dominic Raab has been accused of hiding from a bereaved family that the woman charged with killing their son was a CIA spy. The United States is refusing to extradite Anne Sacoolas to be tried on suspicion of causing the death of 19-year-old Harry Dunn by dangerous driving near a US air base.

LABOUR AT WAR AS STARMER CAMPAIGN ACCUSED OF HACK

Labour's most senior official was accused yesterday of trying to derail Sir Keir Starmer's leadership bid by alleging that his staff had gained unauthorised access into an internal database of Labour party members.

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

CLIMATE PROTEST BILL MAY HIT PM'S POLICING PLEDGE

The cost of policing Extinction Rebellion protests is threatening to thwart Boris Johnson's plan for more police on the streets, the Daily Telegraph has learned. Metropolitan Police officials said they may have to cut recruitment officers to fight violent crime after being told they would have to foot a multi-million-pound bill for policing climate protests.

BIG BUS TOURS CHAIRMAN STEPS BACK ABOARD

Big Bus Tours chairman Pat Waterman has returned to the wheel of one of the world's biggest sightseeing companies after the departure of its chief and a week-long delay in filing its accounts.

THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

TRUMP TO SET $4.8 TRILLION BUDGET WITH STEEP CUTS

US President Donald Trump is expected to release a Budget plan today that reflects his priorities for a potential second term, including steep reductions in social programs and foreign aid and higher outlays for defence and veterans.

VOTING PROCESS UNDER PRESSURE AFTER IOWA WOE

US states conducting presidential nominating contests in the weeks ahead are facing new scrutiny of their voting processes from federal and law enforcement bodies, after glitches caused confusion over which candidate prevailed in Iowa's caucuses last week.

Shoppers head for retail parks over high street

JESS CLARK

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CONSUMERS abandoned the high street in favour of retail parks and shopping centres last month, as landlords' investments started to pay off.

Footfall fell 0.5 per cent in the five weeks to 25 January compared to a drop of 0.7 per cent last year, driven by a 1.4 per cent jump in retail park visitors.

Shopping centres also saw an 0.2 per cent increase, the first increase since March 2017 and the third month in four years that footfall has gone up.

Meanwhile high street footfall dipped 1.8 per cent in January, as consumers favoured the convenience of retail parks and improved shopping centre experience, according to the latest figures from Springboard.

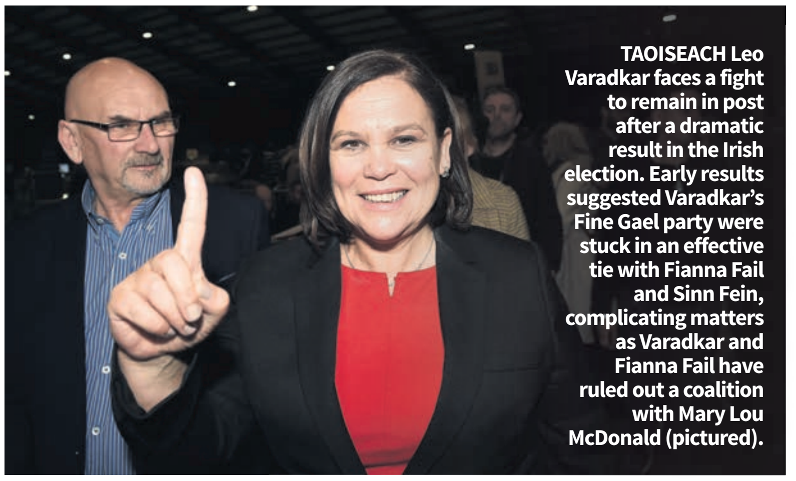
Experts said that investment in shopping centres was starting to pay off, as a single owner is able to deliver "meaningful change" more easily than the high street.

Springboard marketing and insights director Diane Wehrle said the improvement in footfall figures was an early sign that regeneration schemes to include more experiential elements are working and the offering at shopping centres and retail parks is starting to better reflect consumer demands.

Wehrle added: "This result reinforces the benefit of a single ownership structure and also demonstrates the realisation that the old format of 100 per cent retail is no longer relevant.

"Whilst the gestation period for shopping centre investment may be a long one, once the chess pieces are finally in place a single owner is often more readily able to deliver meaningful change than a high street, which can be weighed down by a multiplicity of owners all of whom have varying objectives and aspirations for their particular asset."

SHAM-ROCKED Leo Varadkar's future in doubt as Sinn Fein surge as the ballot box



TAOISEACH Leo Varadkar faces a fight to remain in post after a dramatic result in the Irish election. Early results suggested Varadkar's Fine Gael party were stuck in an effective tie with Fianna Fail and Sinn Fein, complicating matters as Varadkar and Fianna Fail have ruled out a coalition with Mary Lou McDonald (pictured).

Amazon withdraws from major conference on coronavirus fears

JESS CLARK

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AMAZON has withdrawn from an international telecoms conference in Barcelona scheduled for later this month due to the coronavirus outbreak, it emerged late last night.

The e-commerce giant said it will not attend Mobile World Congress 2020, which will take place between 24 and 27 February.

"Due to the outbreak and continued concerns about the new coronavirus, Amazon will withdraw from exhibiting and participating in Mobile World Congress 2020," the company said in a statement.

Last week Ericsson and LG said they would not attend, while Chinese firms Huawei and ZTE said they would sideline domestic employees.

Addison Lee to restore former boss in top job

STEFAN BOSCIA

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THE NEW owners of minicab firm Addison Lee are set to bring former chief executive Liam Griffin back into the top job as a part of a range of measures to try and save the struggling company.

Addison Lee was rescued by a group of eight banks last month, who vowed to inject £45m investment into the company and refinance £100m of the company's £250m of debt. US private equity firm Carlyle had been looking to sell the company after mounting debts meant it was on the verge of losing control to its lenders.

City A.M. understands Griffin — who is the son of company founder John Griffin and was previously chief executive for 10 years — will replace Andy Boland, who had been in the job since 2015, when he was replaced Griffin as chief executive.

Griffin, a former auto racing driver, remained on the board after his removal from the top job.

A City source familiar with the move told *City A.M.* that the new owners wanted a change that wasn't "a million miles away from current strategy".

Ex-Brexit secretary says Mike Lynch extradition damages sovereignty

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THE EXTRADITION of British entrepreneur Mike Lynch to the US would "cripple the City" and dent sovereignty, according to ex-Brexit secretary David Davis.

Lynch, founder of software company Autonomy, submitted himself for arrest in London last Wednesday after US authorities requested his extradition to stand trial for securities fraud, wire fraud and conspiracy in relation to the £8.4bn sale of Autonomy to Hewlett Packard (HP) in 2011.

He is also awaiting the outcome of a separate civil fraud trial in the UK, in which HP sued him for allegedly falsely inflating Autonomy's revenue prior to the 2011 sale.

Writing in the Mail on Sunday, Davis chastised the UK's extradition treaty with the US, which forces British authorities to extradite citizens to America. He said: "We are now looking at the bizarre prospect that a UK citizen could be tried and potentially acquitted by an English judge, where the burden of proof against him is lower, but find himself in a US prison facing a charge where the burden is higher.

"Why would we give the US justice system priority over our own?"

MAULED Joe Media loss widens as parent company cuts jobs amid turnaround plan

JOE MEDIA has posted a widening loss, weeks after its parent company announced a string of job cuts. The firm, which makes the House of Rugby podcast with James Haskell (pictured), reported a loss of £1.7m in 2018, from £1.6m the previous year. The firm said in its accounts it is "budgeted to become profitable" in 2020.

Government to announce up to 10 UK freeports

JAMES BOOTH

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THE GOVERNMENT will today announce a consultation on the creation of up to 10 freeports across the UK as the country prepares to leave the EU.

The government said it aimed to announce the location of the new zones at the end of this year so they can be open for business in 2021.

Chief secretary to the Treasury Rishi Sunak said: "Freeports will unleash the potential in our proud historic ports, boosting and regenerating communities across the UK as we level up. They will attract new businesses, spreading jobs, investment and opportunity to towns and cities up and down the country.

"This is all part of our mission as an open, outward-looking country, championing global free trade."

Liz Truss, secretary of state for international trade, said: "We are taking back control of our trade policy, and opening every corner of the UK to opportunities across the world."

She added: "Freeports will unleash the potential of our historic ports, creating jobs and regenerating communities across the UK. These hubs will also deepen partnerships around the world as we restore our economic and political independence."

Goods brought into a freeport would not attract tariffs until they enter the domestic market.

No duty is payable if goods are re-exported and when raw materials are imported and processed, duties are only paid on the final good.

Freeports could be located inland as well as adjacent to ports.

The government also said it was considering tax measures that aim to increase investment in infrastructure, construction and machinery in freeports to raise productivity.

Once the 10-week consultation is completed, the government will invite sea, air and rail ports to bid for freeport status on a competitive basis.

UK Chamber of Shipping head Bob Sanguinetti said: "Modern freeports should focus on positive change, improving efficiencies in the supply chain and creating trade infrastructure that supports the green agenda."

Salary requirement for new EU immigration set to be reduced

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THE MINIMUM wage requirement for incoming EU immigrants after Britain leaves the single market is expected to be slashed.

Freedom of movement between the EU and the UK will continue to at least 1 January 2021 during the second phase of Brexit negotiations.

Under Theresa May, the plan was to limit EU migration at this point to those with a job offer in the UK with a salary of more than £30,000 a year.

Boris Johnson and home secretary Priti Patel are now expected to announce plans to lower this to £25,600 at a Friday cabinet meeting, according to BBC News.

It is understood that those with a job offer of less than £25,600 may be able to make it up by earning points in other areas as a part of the new points-based immigration system.

Points are expected to be awarded for speaking English at a high-level, for possessing tertiary education qualifications and for working in a sector that has a skills shortage.

Tories accused of 'witch hunt' against Huawei

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TOP TORY politicians trying to overturn the decision to allow tech giant Huawei to help build Britain's 5G networks are carrying out a "witch hunt", China's ambassador to the UK has said.

Senior Conservatives have written to Tory MPs urging them to reconsider the government's verdict, instead calling for a total ban on the controversial Chinese tech giant.

But Liu Xiaoming yesterday branded the Tory dissenters "totally wrong".

"What they're doing is a kind of a witch hunt," he told the BBC.

"Huawei is a private-owned company; nothing to do with the Chinese government. The only problem they have is they are a Chinese company."

The letter, signed by Sir Iain Duncan Smith, Owen Paterson, David Davis, Damian Green, Tobias Ellwood and Bob Seely, said MPs were "working to find a better solution".

The government's decision means that Huawei, which has been classed a "high-risk" vendor due to national security concerns, will be allowed to build non-sensitive parts of the network. It will also be subject to a 35 per cent cap on its market share.

But Liu said Huawei operated independently from the Chinese state, adding that it was a 5G market leader.

"I think the reason why the prime minister decided to keep Huawei is he has a very ambitious plan for the UK — he wants to have 5G coverage in the UK by 2025 and Huawei can be a great help," he said.

However, the ambassador slammed the market share cap, which he said was not in keeping with the UK's principles of "free economy".

Boris Johnson's decision to give Huawei the green light enraged US President Donald Trump, who was reportedly "apoplectic" with rage during a phone call last week.

The Premier League is looking abroad amid a decline in domestic rights value

Premier League plots launch of Netflix-style streaming service

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THE PREMIER League is plotting the launch of a Netflix-style streaming platform in a bid to boost revenue from TV rights in overseas markets.

Richard Masters, the league's new boss, confirmed to reporters last week that plans to set up a direct to consumer offering are underway.

The service, which would allow viewers to pay directly for a so-called Premflix channel rather than access games through pay-TV services, could be available for the next three-year rights package from 2022.

The platform is unlikely to be rolled out in the UK, but could prove lucrative in Asian markets.

IN BRIEF

DUKE'S PITCH@PALACE TO LAUNCH A REBRAND

Prince Andrew's Pitch@Palace initiative has launched a rebranding effort as it attempts to distance itself from the royal, following allegations connected to the Jeffery Epstein scandal. The Duke of York's name has been removed from the initiative's website, which has announced it will unveil its rebrand in spring.

OUTGOING DELOITTE BOSS POCKETS £3.3M

The outgoing boss of Deloitte took home £3.3m last year, the audit giant's accounts have shown. David Sproul stepped down as chief executive and senior partner of the firm's north and south Europe partnership (which includes the UK) last year to take up the role of global deputy chief executive of the firm. Deloitte previously announced that its partners would receive an average profit share of £882,000 for the year to 31 May, up six per cent on the previous year.

HONG KONG'S LINK TO BACK INTU'S £1BN CALL

Hong Kong's Link Real Estate Investment Trust is reportedly in talks with retail landlord Intu to back its £1bn emergency cash call. The property giant is nearing a deal with the Trafford Centre owner about becoming a "cornerstone" investor in the fundraise later this month, the Times reported. Peel Group, which owns a 27.3 per cent stake in Intu, is also expected to support the cash call.

Fresh Woodford blow as biotech sell-off bid fails

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INVESTORS in the failed flagship fund of Neil Woodford are facing a further blow after a £550m deal to rescue a portfolio of his stakes in biotech startups collapsed, raising concerns the holdings will be offloaded in a fire sale.

WG Partners, a boutique investment bank specialising in life sciences, had been trying to assemble a group of investors to save most of the fund's illiquid holdings, but has missed the deadline to complete the deal, according to the Sunday Times.

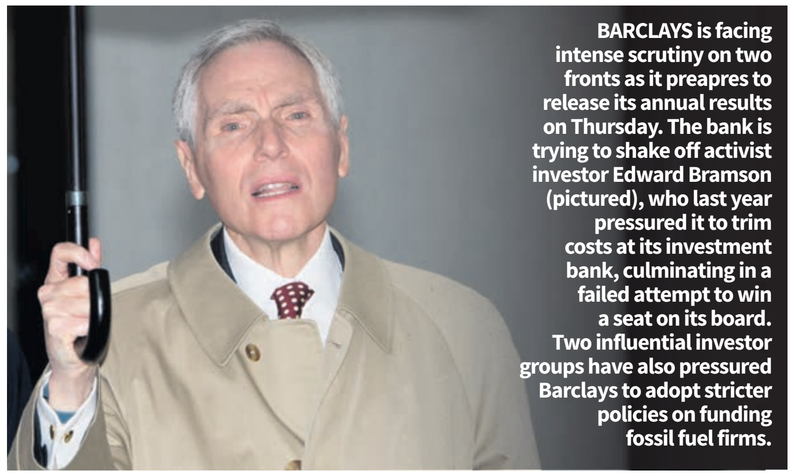
Administrator Link is overseeing the liquidation of the Equity Income Fund's holdings after deciding to wind it up last October. The fund had been frozen since June, leaving hundreds of thousands of investors trapped, after it became overwhelmed by withdrawal requests.

Equity Income investors received their first payout, worth between 48p and 58p on the pound, late last month following the sale of the fund's liquid assets by Blackrock. These liquid holdings made up 74 per cent of the total portfolio. Park Hill is still trying to find buyers for its illiquid holdings, which make up the remaining 26 per cent. These include stakes in small biotech firms, including drug developer Immunocore and gene-sequencing firm Oxford Nanopore.

Disgraced stockpicker Neil Woodford

WG Partners and Link declined to comment.

STORM COMING? Barclays braces itself for pressure on two fronts ahead of results



BARCLAYS is facing intense scrutiny on two fronts as it preapres to release its annual results on Thursday. The bank is trying to shake off activist investor Edward Bramson (pictured), who last year pressured it to trim costs at its investment bank, culminating in a failed attempt to win a seat on its board. Two influential investor groups have also pressured Barclays to adopt stricter policies on funding fossil fuel firms.

London Metal Exchange urged to investigate the nickel market

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THE LONDON Metal Exchange (LME) is under pressure to investigate the nickel market after it was hit by a supply shock late last year.

Stockpiles of the commodity plunged late last year while prices hit a four-year high after Indonesia, the world's largest nickel producer, brought forward a ban on exports.

Organisations including the European steel association Eurofer are urging the LME and Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to investigate the market, the Sunday Telegraph reported. The LME had asked members for details of nickel trades but declined to comment on whether it would launch a probe.

The FCA declined to comment.

Italy's Exor in talks over $9bn reinsurer sale

GIULIO PIOVACCARI

INVESTMENT group Exor, which controls car maker Fiat Chrysler, is in exclusive talks to sell reinsurer Partner Re to France's Covea in a deal one source familiar with the matter said was worth around $9bn (£6.98bn).

Exor, the investment vehicle of Italy's Agnelli family, said yesterday that talks over an all-cash deal were ongoing and there was no certainty they would result in a transaction.

It did not give further details on the discussions.

The group, led by Agnelli scion John Elkann, completed the $6.9bn (£5.35) acquisition of Partner Re in 2016, after a long, hostile takeover battle. The deal was the group's single biggest investment and a key step in diversifying the family's portfolio.

Exor, which also controls sports car maker Ferrari and is potentially interested in the deal because it would help accelerate Partner Re's strategy in a consolidating sector and would also offer an good premium on Exor's investment, a source told Reuters.

A Covea spokesman confirmed the talks were ongoing. *Reuters*

How the Credit Suisse spying scandal brought down boss Thiam

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TIDJANE Thiam was ousted as chief executive of Credit Suisse last Friday after months of fallout from revelations that the Swiss lender was spying on senior employees.

Thiam, who was poached by Credit Suisse from Prudential in 2015, had become locked in a bitter power struggle with chairman Urs Rohner since it emerged in September that the bank had hired a spying firm to tail former executive Iqbal Khan.

Thiam was exonerated by an internal investigation, which ousted his lieutenant Pierre-Olivier Bouee for ordering the surveillance without Thiam's knowledge. In December, it emerged that a second former executive had also been tailed, with Bouee blamed again.

The next month, relations between Thiam and Rohner soured after it emerged that the chairman had drawn up a list of candidates to replace Thiam as chief executive.

Last week, several of the bank's major shareholders — Harris Associates, Eminence Capital, and Silchester — threw their weight behind Tidjane, but their backing was not enough to tip the balance of power in his favour.

Former boss Thiam

HOW THE CREDIT SUISSE SPYING SCANDAL PLAYED OUT

JULY 2019	SEPTEMBER 2019	DECEMBER 2019	JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2020	7 FEBRUARY 2020
Iqbal Khan leaves Credit Suisse (CS). In August, UBS appoints Khan as head of its wealth management division.	Swiss police launch a probe after Khan complains of being followed. CS launches an investigation soon after.	It emerges that CS had also spied on a second executive — former head of human resources Peter Goerke.	Tensions grow between Thiam and chairman Urs Rohner. Several big investors back Thiam in board battle.	CS board accepts Thiam's resignation and appoints Thomas Gottstein as its new chief executive.

WH Smith pushes for rent overhaul

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WH SMITH is said to be urging its landlords to push back rent payment deadlines as the retailer seeks to cash in on high street troubles.

The stationery chain is set to push landlords to switch from receiving payment in advance to receiving it in arrears, the Sunday Times reported.

The move, which would come into effect when the firm's leases come up for renewal, would help to ease the retailer's cashflow.

It comes amid a shift in power away from landlords amid torrid trading on the high street, with a wave of shop closures allowing more resilient retailers to push for more favourable terms.

A spate of company voluntary arrangements (CVAs) — a rescue plan that allows rents to be slashed — has led chains such as Primark and H&M to demand lower rents in line with their struggling rivals.

On leases that were renewed last year, WH Smith secured an average rent cut of 35 per cent, according to the report. The firm is already paying in arrears on a handful of its high street stores.

WH Smith, which is the world's oldest retail chain and now has 600 stores, has roughly 300 leases up for renewal in the next three years.

WH Smith has been buoyed by strong trading at its stores in transport hubs

Business bodies call for greater private funding

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TWO OF the UK's leading business advocacy groups have urged the government to increase private sector investment and slash red tape in next month's Budget to help small businesses.

The CBI unveiled its budget submission to the Treasury today, urging the government to review the apprenticeship levy nd business rates, commit to building HS2 in full, increase research and development tax credits and increase skills investment across all regions.

The advocacy group said "private sector investment that will lift productivity" should be chancellor Sajid Javid's priority.

CBI director general Carolyn Fairbairn added: "This historic budget offers the chance to turn rising optimism into a surge in investment across the UK... Backed by a pro-enterprise Budget for skills, infrastructure and innovation, business can help kickstart a new decade of UK growth and job creation."

The Institute of Directors (IoD) also submitted its Budget wishlist today, calling for an increase in investment for "scaleups and startups", the creation of tax incentives for small to medium enterprises, a delay of the touted digital services tax and investment into "regional business support hubs".

Tej Parikh, chief economist at the IoD, said Javid's Budget had an opportunity to set out a long-term path for the British economy.

"The Prime Minister has talked about 'levelling up' the regions," he said. "Long-overdue upgrades to broadband, rail and roads will be crucial, but the government also needs to create the conditions for companies to take risks and innovate today to raise our game on productivity and sustainability."

UK tech sector growth stalls in fourth quarter

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THE UK's thriving tech sector suffered its worst quarter since 2012 at the end of last year as political uncertainty took its toll on growth.

Staff hiring declined and new business activity flatlined in the final three months of 2019, according to figures published today by KPMG.

UK tech firms reported that overall business was unchanged from the previous quarter, marking the worst performance for the sector in more than seven years.

Respondents said a combination of political uncertainty and subdued global trade contributed to the flat growth, while a number of tech firms blamed hesitation over spending among clients in the run-up to the General Election in December.

This uncertainty had its greatest effect on staffing levels as companies delaying hiring and became more risk averse, and the fall in payroll numbers was the steepest recorded since 2009.

New business also dropped in the fourth quarter, though the rate of decline was softer than in the previous three months.

Overall, KPMG's tech monitor index read 50.1 in the fourth quarter, down from 52.0 in the previous period.

This was only just above the 50.0 neutral threshold that separates expansion from contraction, and the lowest reading since the second quarter of 2012.

Despite the stark numbers, tech companies reported upbeat business expectations for 2020 due to hopes of greater clarity around Brexit and US-China trade tensions.

Firms pointed to opportunities from the 5G rollout, new product innovation and expansion into overseas markets, and the degree of optimism for the coming 12 months was the highest recorded since the third quarter of 2018.


British bookies are seeking to tap into the US sports betting market

William Hill closes in on CBS Sports tie-up

JAMES WARRINGTON

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BETTING giant William Hill is said to be close to signing a media deal with a US partner as it looks to tap into the American market.

The bookmaker has struck up talks with media firm CBS Sports and is in the final stage of negotiations, the Sunday Times reported, adding that an announcement was imminent.

The deal would enable the FTSE 250 company to advertise on CBS Sports' website, which attracts 42m visitors every month.

CBS Sports, which is owned by Viacom CBS, offers sports news, highlights and analysis, with a focus on basketball, American football and golf.

It comes as British bookies seek to boost their brand amid growing competition in the recently legalised US sports betting market.

They are also facing a squeeze on profits in the UK amid tighter regulation, including an upcoming ban on credit card gambling.

However, the firm last month posted better-than-expected profit for the full year due to "favourable sporting results", with its US business enjoying further growth.

SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST

Harry Robertson speaks to former Bank deputy governor Sir Charlie Bean on how the UK can beat the productivity crisis

Sir Charlie Bean worked alongside governor Mark Carney at the Bank of England

BREXIT has dominated conversations about the UK economy in recent years. But over the last week or so, the country's productivity crisis has come to the fore, with the Bank of England (BoE) downgrading its growth predictions and studies describing the worst decade for productivity expansion since the early 1800s.

Sir Charlie Bean, former deputy governor of the Bank and one of Britain's most respected economists, says this attention is overdue. Brexit is "small beer" compared to the UK productivity slowdown, he says, which is the country's biggest problem and even has the potential to undermine consent for British capitalism.

Few people are better-placed than Bean, 66, to talk about the issue. He was a professor at Stanford and the London School of Economics before arriving at the Bank in 2000. He is now the top economist at the UK's Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR).

A THREAT TO CAPITALISM

But why is the slowdown so important? Productivity is commonly defined as the amount produced per hour worked. Increasing productivity effectively means making more stuff in the same amount of time. It makes an economy richer and lets wages rise and prices fall. Without it, long-term growth can only come about through longer working hours or by dragging more people into the workforce.

This is exactly what's happened in Britain over the last decade, Bean says. Unemployment is at record lows, but productivity is now 20 per cent below its pre-crisis trend, having flat-lined since 2008. The BoE says this has severely limited the UK's growth potential.

As the economy has failed to become more productive, Britain has undergone "the longest period of stagnation of real wages since before the industrial revolution," Bean says.

"A lot of people feel left behind," he says. "They see a few people who've done very well at the top end of the income distribution, the billionaires, and feel they don't have a stake in capitalism... People start looking for alternative ways forward, alternative policies [that] actually turn out to be destructive."

TWO PRODUCTIVITY CRISES

So how does Bean explain the UK productivity crisis? Firstly, he says, it must be thought of as two crises, one international and one British.

Productivity has also slowed in the US and Europe. Of the various proffered explanations, Bean speaks positively of Thomas Philippon's argument about corporate power.

"Economies are becoming dominated by large companies," he says, "the likes of Google who have less incentive to innovate and a lot of incentive to take over competitors as soon as they come up with a bright idea."

He says the economy has become less entrepreneurial and more about "rent extraction", while the uncertainty of the post-financial crisis world has also acted as a drag.

Yet the UK has languished at the bottom of the productivity leagues. Brexit, and the uncertainty it has unleashed on the economy, is part of this story, Bean says. "Business investment just flattened off after the referendum result" and instead of investing, firms have hired workers they can sack later.

Rising employment has helped the economy expand, but not through new technology. Another driver is the "relatively low level of technical skills in the UK," Bean says, which prevents the incorporation of the newest, most productive technology.

HOW TO SLAY THE SLOWDOWN

Bean says Britain must "focus on the things that we know we can do something about", such as boosting skills, raising infrastructure spending and encouraging investment.

Yet he warns: "It won't simply be a case of spending more in the next year or two and suddenly seeing a huge increase."

Bean, who has been at the UK's budget watchdog since 2017, also cautions that changes to accounting standards, slower predicted growth, and previously announced spending have "greatly reduced the room for manoeuvre" when it comes to the public finances. Bean is clear in his warning that economists and policy makers must find some way out.

The UK economy can handle Brexit, yet without increased productivity, "you can't deliver the sort of increased living standards that people want" or deal with an ageing population and climate change. The stakes are high: "That does just challenge the legitimacy of capitalism."

HMRC dawn raids sink 27 per cent but amount of tax taken increases

JAMES BOOTH

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THE NUMBER of dawn raids carried out by Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs (HMRC) fell last year, according to new data released today.

HMRC raided 1,082 homes and businesses as part of criminal investigations into tax evasion in the year to 31 March, a 27 per cent fall from the previous year when it carried out 1,482 raids.

Dawn raids allow HMRC to gain entry to premises with a search warrant, using force if necessary.

Despite the number of raids falling, the amount of money collected by HMRC's compliance arm increased from £30bn in 2017/18 to £33bn in 2018/19. The total amount HMRC collected also increased from £600bn in 2017/18 to £627bn last year.

Law firm Pinsent Masons, which compiled the figures, said HMRC has more data at its disposal than previously, and so is able to be more targeted with its raids.

Andrew Sackey, partner at Pinsent Masons and former head of HMRC's offshore, corporate and wealthy enforcement division, said: "Thanks to the common reporting standard and a host of additional powers such as production orders and information notices, HMRC now has far more information on taxpayers, whether that taxpayer is a person or a company, than it had just a couple of years ago."

An HMRC spokesperson said: "HMRC is committed to ensuring all companies and individuals pay the right tax at the right time and will pursue those who fail to do. We use a range of civil and criminal powers to tackle those committing serious fraud."

The group is owned by tycoon Nick Candy, pictured with pop star wife Holly Valance

Podcasting group Audioboom seeks possible merger or sale

MICHAEL SEARLES

@michaelsearles_

AIM-LISTED podcasting group Audioboom has asked bankers to help it explore the possibility of a merger or sale.

The group, which is backed by property tycoon Nick Candy, has asked New York-based bank Raine to undertake a strategic review that could see the company taken over by a rival, according to Sky News.

Raine's appointment is expected to be confirmed as soon as next week.

Audioboom has more than 13,000 content channels, reaping in over 60m listens every month.

It includes podcasts from the Spectator magazine, the former rugby player Lewis Moody and broadcaster Sue Perkins.

PIC signs £1.6bn merchant navy pensions deal

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

PENSION Insurance Corporation (PIC) is expected to announce a £1.6bn deal to takeover retirement funding from the Merchant Navy Officers Pension Fund this morning.

The agreement will guarantee the pensions of around 14,000 members, after PIC converts its existing financial arrangement into a buy-in, Sky News reported last night.

PIC is one of the UK's biggest specialist pension insurers.

The merchant navy pension scheme, which was set up in 1937, has previously struck several pension insurance deals.

Its first deal in 2009 was with a company that eventually became part of Legal & General.

The scheme, which was set up to provide retirement benefits for shipping company officers, has around £3bn in liabilities, the broadcaster reported.

UK insolvencies jump as property firms struggle

JESS CLARK

@jclarkjourno

THE NUMBER of UK firms falling into administration jumped last year, driven by companies in the construction and property sectors.

In total, 1,403 firms entered administration last year compared to 1,341 in 2018 — a rise of just under five per cent, according to the latest research by KPMG.

Building and construction firms were the hardest hit by challenging trading conditions last year and the number of administrations in the sector jumped from 216 to 254.

Real estate companies were also badly affected, with the number of insolvencies rising to 69, up from 53 in 2018, due to a mix of political uncertainty and the knock on effect of the declining retail sector.

Despite the tough year for the UK high street, the number of retailers entering administration fell in 2019 from 170 to 133.

Karen Millen, Jack Wills and Bonmarche were among the fashion brands to collapse last year. Insolvencies spiked in the third quarter of the year, jumping to 420, including Late Rooms and Eversmart Energy.

In the final quarter, administrations fell back to 311, with Clintons and Toto Energy among the companies that collapsed between October and December.

KPMG head of restructuring Blair Nimmo said: "2019 was a year characterised by profound political and economic uncertainty, with consumer confidence remaining fragile and companies continuing to bear the brunt of rising overheads and increased costs.

"While many businesses battened down the financial hatches, adopting a prudent and cautious strategy, for some, the challenging trading conditions proved to be a bridge too far."

He added: "And of course, the demise and ongoing restructuring of a large number of high street retailers is having a profound impact on commercial property income and values."

Apple fined €25m for slowing down old iPhones on purpose

MICHAEL SEARLES

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APPLE was fined €25m (£21m) last Friday for deliberating slowing down its older iPhone models, and not making customers aware.

The fine, which was imposed by France's competition and fraud watchdog DGCCRF, was for failing to make this clear to consumers.

Apple admitted in 2017 that it slowed down some of its iPhones but only to "prolong the life" of the devices.

The company admitted to slowing down the older models as they aged, but denied doing so to encourage people to buy a new one as many had suspected.

Apple has been forced to display a notice on its French-language website for a month, which says: "[Apple] committed the crime of deceptive commercial practice by omission" and had agreed to pay the fine.

Daimler to slash 15,000 jobs as it boosts cost cuts

CHRISTOPH STEITZ

GERMAN luxury car maker Daimler is intensifying existing cost-cutting measures and plans to cut up to 15,000 jobs, Handelsblatt newspaper reported, citing company sources.

The group in had said in November that it would cut at least 10,000 jobs and reduce staff costs by around €1.4bn (£1.16bn) by the end of 2022, a number Handelsblatt said would be significantly exceeded.

The group plans to officially announce the expanded savings at its annual news conference tomorrow, the paper said.

Reuters

SURGE IN THE CITY: THE LATEST APP TO TAKE ON UBER

Jack Richardson and the boss bringing Ola to London

Simon Smith from ride-hailing app Ola, which is launching in London

TRANSPORT for London's (TfL) decision not to renew Uber's operating licence late last year split commuters down the middle, but the controversial ride-hailing app's rivals have seized the opportunity to stake their claim to the capital.

Uber's effective ban came over concerns it had not done enough to protect Londoners after TfL identified a "pattern of failure" regarding safety.

But critics of the decision said it sent a message that London is closed to innovation.

With an appeal in the works, Uber's rivals are trying to strike while the iron is hot, and today India-founded Ola became the latest ride-hailing app to launch in London.

Boasting a focus on user-friendly safety features, Ola hopes to prove both that innovation is alive and well in the capital, and that it can succeed where Uber stumbled.

HOLA, OLA

Founded in 2010, Ola started UK operations in Cardiff in 2018 and now counts 3m passengers across the UK.

The company's head of international operations Simon Smith says Ola is committed to giving passengers the safest possible riding experience.

"We've taken out time to speak to Londoners, really understand the market, and we found that more than anywhere else they value safety and quality," he tells *City A.M.*

Ola wants to give passengers more control over their ride with a one-time passcode they can pass to their driver when they're sure it's the correct licenced vehicle.

"It's safer obviously for the customer and also for the driver, gives everyone extra safety and also peace of mind as well," Smith explains.

Another feature, dubbed Guardian, is a machine learning algorithm that traces the route taken by a driver. It alerts Ola's control centre if the car is heading towards an unusual, underpopulated or dangerous area, and Ola will then contact the rider and driver.

"Ola is an interesting entrant because of its safety features," said Paul Mackay, a senior analyst at research house Forrester.

But Ola isn't the only ride-hailing app hoping to differentiate itself from the competition.

WHO'S IN POLE POSITION?

Mayfair-based Wheely arrived in 2018 squarely aimed at the higher end of the market. BMW and Daimler-backed Kapten, meanwhile, took on Uber with an aggressive billboard strategy criticising the giant's record on social responsibility.

Viavan launched in 2018 to target the shared rides market. And Bolt, which launched last June, aims to give drivers a bigger cut of the profits. It also plans to offset its carbon emissions by at least 5m tonnes by 2025 as ride-hailing apps have been linked to rise in London's air pollution.

So can another new name compete with all these operators? On the question of green credentials, Smith says Ola is "encouraged by the number of electric cars already registered on our platform," but couldn't confirm the total number when asked.

BEHIND THE WHEEL

Black cab drivers have had a chequered relationship with Uber as the ride-hailing app has undercut them on price.

Yet London Taxi Drivers' Association general secretary Steve McNamara says the increasing number of ride-hailing apps in London could benefit drivers, who can work across the apps to find the best fares.

> "It's better for drivers and better for the public

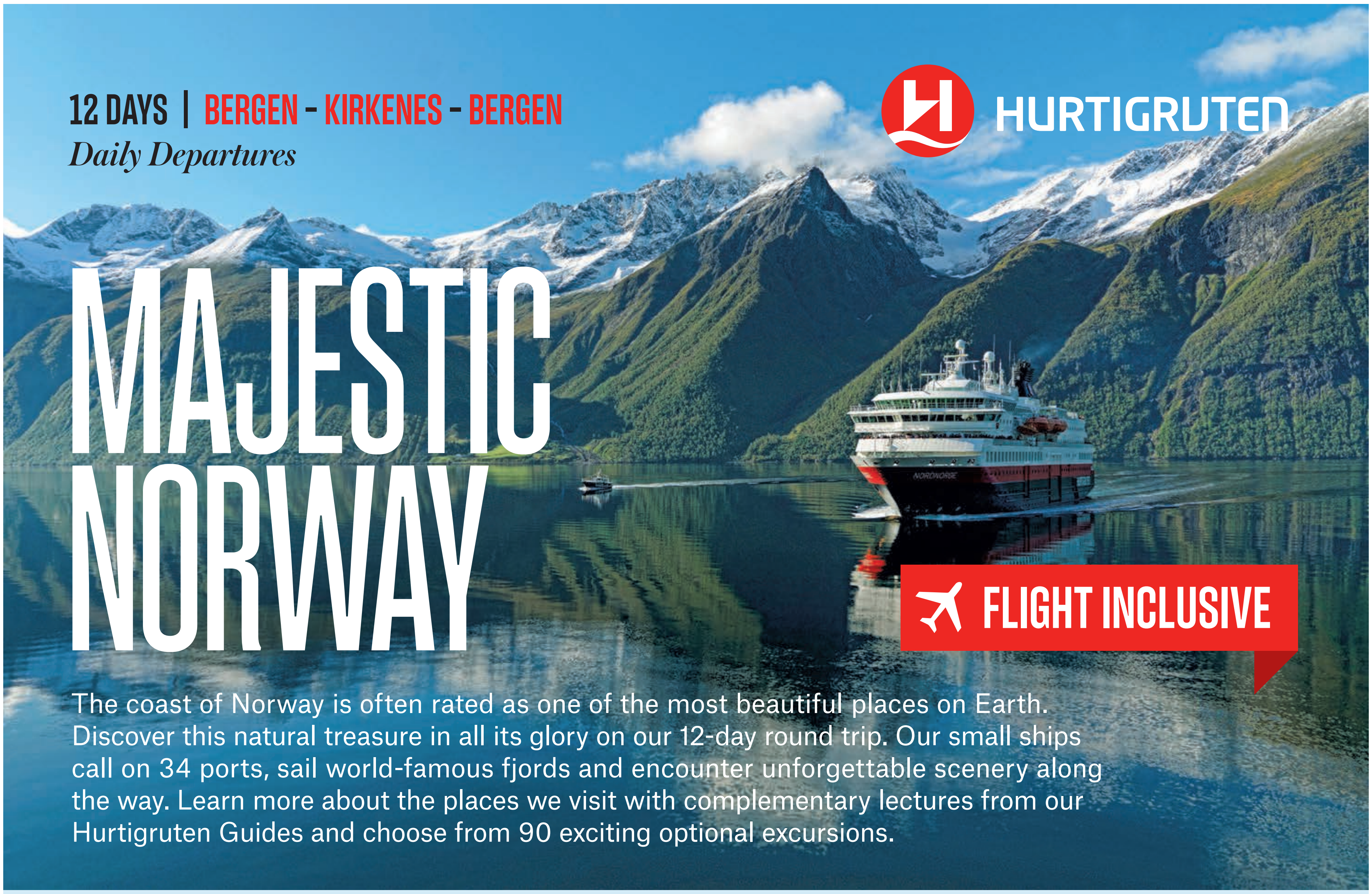
McNamara calls it "riding the surge", and it puts the onus on apps to attract drivers to their platforms.

Uber currently has 45,000 drivers in London, making Bolt its nearest rival with over 35,000. Kapten counts 20,000 London drivers and Ola launches today with 25,000.

If the drivers are better paid, they will be able to address many of the issues TfL raised, such as being unable to afford insurance, McNamara says. Earning a higher rate will also mean they are able to earn the living wage.

"It's probably better for drivers; it's probably better for the public," he says.

But for now, Uber is far from out of the picture, and continues to tout its own safety improvements like an emergency assistance button that connects to the police, and the ability to share your trip with loved ones.



MAJESTIC NORWAY

The coast of Norway is often rated as one of the most beautiful places on Earth. Discover this natural treasure in all its glory on our 12-day round trip. Our small ships call on 34 ports, sail world-famous fjords and encounter unforgettable scenery along the way. Learn more about the places we visit with complementary lectures from our Hurtigruten Guides and choose from 90 exciting optional excursions.

The ORIGINAL Coastal Voyage

DAY 1 | BERGEN
Before sailing, you may wish to explore this cultural gateway to the fjords. Then familiarise yourself with the ship and enjoy the tastes of Norway's Coastal Kitchen.

DAY 2 | FLORØ - MOLDE
If you wake up early, you'll be able to see Hornelen Mountain in the breathtaking Nordfjord. We'll then navigate through beautiful fjords, skerries and islands before exploring the Art Nouveau city of Ålesund.

DAY 3 | KRISTIANSUND - RØRVIK
Trondheim awaits, home to captivating architecture and cosy streets. Back on board, we pass Munkholm and its fortress, the beautiful Kjeungskjær lighthouse and the Vikna archipelago before arriving in Rørvik.

DAY 4 | BRØNNØYSUND - SVOLVÆR
As we pass the island of Vikingen, you'll see a globe installation marking the Arctic Circle. The crew will be sure to mark the occasion by performing an Arctic Circle ceremony on deck later that day.

DAY 5 | STOKMARKNES - SKJERVØY
A short stop in Harstad is followed by a prolonged stay in Tromsø – Gateway to the Arctic, with its landmark Cathedral, the Polaria Centre and a cable car that offers stunning views of the city.

DAY 6 | ØKSFJORD - BERLEVÅG
We arrive in Honningsvåg where you can visit the North Cape museum, North Cape House or Honningsvåg Church. Later we pass the ancient sacred Sámi site Finnkirka, the fishing village of Kjøllefjord, and the Smørbringa bird colony.

DAY 7 | BÅTSFJORD - BERLEVÅG
We arrive early today in Vadsø before docking in Kirkenes just 10 miles from the Russian border, where a King Crab expedition or a quad bike adventure awaits.

DAY 8 | MEHAMN - TROMSØ
Enjoy a breakfast at North Cape from Honningsvåg see the UNESCO-listed Meridian Column. Then take in beautiful views of the Lyngsalpene mountains, glaciers and narrow fjord channels.

DAY 9 | TROMSØ - STAMSUND
The Lofoten Islands is a highlight for many. Renowned for its steep mountains, sandy beaches, wild nature and picturesque fishing villages. We'll also make a short stop at Risøyhamn, and then on to Stokmarknes.

DAY 10 | BODØ - RØRVIK
Today we visit the Helgeland coast, the strange mountain Torghatten, famous for its distinctive tunnel in the centre, the Seven Sisters mountain range, Nesna, Sandnessjøen, Brønnøysund and Rørvik.

DAY 11 | TRONDHEIM - ÅLESUND
After a brief revisit to Trondheim we continue to Kristiansund, a city of four islands with a pretty harbour dating back to the Stone Age. Then we cross the open sea to Molde, known as Norway´s 'City of Roses'.

DAY 12 | JOURNEY'S END - BERGEN
We sail through picturesque Nordfjord beneath Jostedal Glacier before calling at Florø. We'll also navigate the mouth of the mighty Sognefjord and enjoy superb views of the island-studded coastline before you disembark in Bergen.

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COUNCILS MALL-IN ON RETAIL ASSETS

Jess Clark on the local authorities embarking on a shopping centre spending spree

BIN COLLECTION, parking restrictions and filling ever-more-terrifying potholes are what most people associate with local councils. To that list, we might now add retail property speculators.

Last year, councils across the UK doubled down on recent trends and spent around £232m buying struggling shopping centres, accounting for 36 per cent of all shopping centre deals according to new data from Knight Frank.

But just as councils are getting in on the market, the decline of shopping centres is continuing. Footfall declined in every month of last year, with an overall drop of 2.5 per cent.

TROUBLING TIMES

Unsurprisingly, many of the big shopping centre landlords are struggling to keep up.

Intu — the owner of Manchester's Trafford Centre — is gearing up for a £1bn fundraise as it seeks to fix its balance sheet. The owner of Birmingham's Bullring Hammerson reached £577m worth of disposals last year as it sought to pay down its debt.

And in November, Landsec — which owns the Bluewater Shopping Centre in Kent — took a £368m hit on the value of its properties due to retail failures.

Gloucester City Council bought the Eastgate Shopping Centre in December

Luckily for the traditional property investors seeking to exit or reduce their exposure to the troubled sector, local authorities are ready and waiting in the wings to snap up the assets, and they aren't necessarily pushy on the price.

Councils have a responsibility to their local area and residents, so their move to halt the decline of shopping centres is understandable.

When Canterbury Council bought the Whitefriars centre for £75m last year, the council leader justified the spending spree by saying it would "open up opportunities to shape the future of the city centre over the long term with decisions taken by a council working on behalf of its residents", rather than "investors whose interests do not necessarily align with those of the district".

> Free marketers are concerned at what they see as a subsidy coming back to bite taxpayers

Other councils to acquire retail assets last year include Gloucester City Council which bought the Eastgate Centre in December.

OUT OF THEIR DEPTH?

But whatever one's intentions, councils are not property experts. They often lack the in-house retail and property knowledge that real estate investment trusts and private equity backers are equipped with, meaning they can pay over the odds for a run-down retail asset.

In Canterbury's case, the council claims it will open up a new revenue stream. But free marketeers are unsurprisingly concerned at what they see as a subsidy — paid for with borrowing which could, in theory, come back and bite taxpayers if the investments turn bad.

"It is effectively a subsidy for a failing model, and the only people that are going to win are the big landlords," says a spokesperson for the Adam Smith Institute.

"What councils are doing is investing in effectively a failed model without understanding that the 'all shops in one place model' only works if you have a working or residential population nearby" they add.

Jonathan De Mello, head of retail consultancy at Harper Dennis Hobbs, says: "Sometimes they are the only bidder, and investors know that and they want to sell to councils because they can make money from something they couldn't make money from privately."

"But some councils have done smart deals and been well advised," he adds.

However, Knight Frank partner Mark Smith says it is a "defensive" move to stop a "spiral of decline" at the heart of the local community.

"The reality is in a lot of these cases, there is not an interested party that is going to stop and invest in the asset and maintain the vibrancy of the community," he says.

Smith has predicted that hundreds more shopping centres could end up in the hands of local authorities, as they are increasingly forced to step in and take charge.

LONG-TERM VIEW

Although the relative inexperience of councils could present some issues, the fresh strategy they take could pay off in the long run.

De Mello says councils are taking a long-term view on the investments.

"Councils can think 20 years ahead or longer, so what may not look like a smart deal now could be in the future," he says.

But the truth is that some shopping centres no longer serve their purpose as retail hub. As the planning authority it is relatively straightforward for local councils to demolish the shopping centre and build housing or office space.

"They can repurpose and push it through planning," De Mello adds.

However, professor Len Shackleton, research fellow at the Institute for Economic Affairs, says: "Councils should focus their energies on working to reform planning regulations to allow market forces to breathe life back into town centres.

"They don't have to become developers themselves."

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

LONDON REPORT

UK shares start to trip up after four-day streak

BRITISH stocks fell last Friday after four straight sessions of gains, as dealers locked in profits amid nagging worries over the coronavirus, and investment platform **Hargreaves Lansdown** slid following a discounted share sale by its largest investor.

The FTSE 100 declined 0.5 per cent, with losses inflicted by heavyweight oil stocks and miners as well as Hargreaves Lansdown, which fell 6.1 per cent to a near two-year low.

The FTSE 250 lost 0.3 per cent.

The China coronavirus has killed more than 800 people so far, including a doctor who was among the first to sound the alarm over the outbreak.

Markets surged in recent sessions after sharp losses last week. Beijing made firm moves to shore up its economy and cut tariffs on some US imports, while upbeat economic data from the United States also supported risk sentiment.

Suggestions that a drug had been developed to combat the virus also partly helped prop up markets last week, though the World Health Organisation later dismissed the reports of a vaccine.

Still, the FTSE 100 enjoyed its best week in seven weeks, while the midcaps recorded their biggest gain in six weeks.

Burberry fell as much as 4.7 per cent after it said the coronavirus outbreak was hurting luxury demand in key markets in the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong.

UAE-based **NMC Health**, whose shares have more than halved in value since the company came under criticism from shortseller Muddy Waters late last year, slumped another 22 per cent to its lowest level since April 2015.

Burberry shed 4.7 per cent as a result of the coronavirus

"This stock has been very volatile and we have seen big swings on no news," said CMC Markets analyst David Madden.

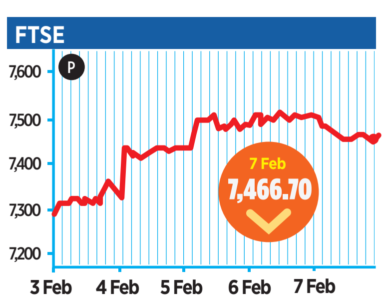
Outperforming the main index were holiday company **Tui**, which rose 1.5 per cent after agreeing to sell its Hapag-Lloyd Cruises unit, and telecoms firm **Vodafone** which gained 1.3 per cent after Jefferies upgraded the stock.

TOP RISERS

1. **Smurfit Kappa** Up 3.23 per cent
2. **Standard Life** Up 1.93 per cent
3. **Ferguson** Up 1.72 per cent

TOP FALLERS

1. **NMC Health** Down 22.22 per cent
2. **Hargreaves Lans** Down 6.09 per cent
3. **Antofagasta** Dwn 3.61 per cent



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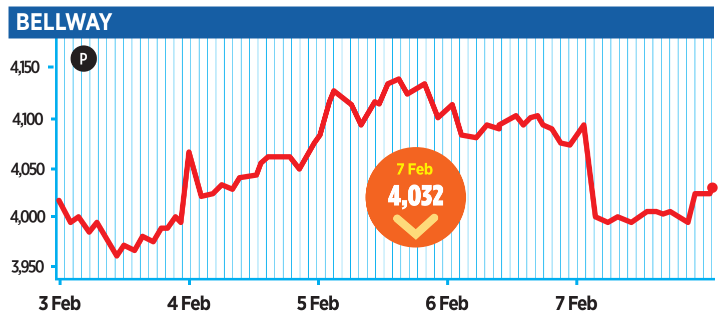
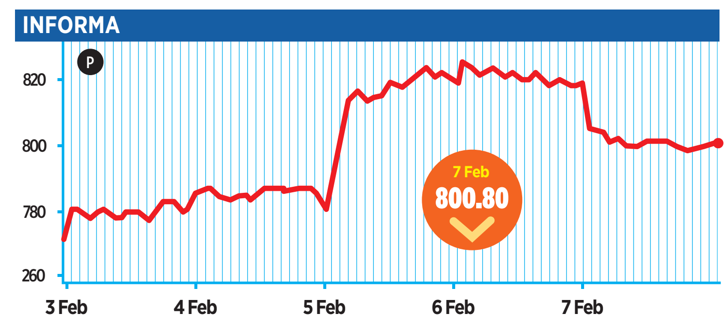
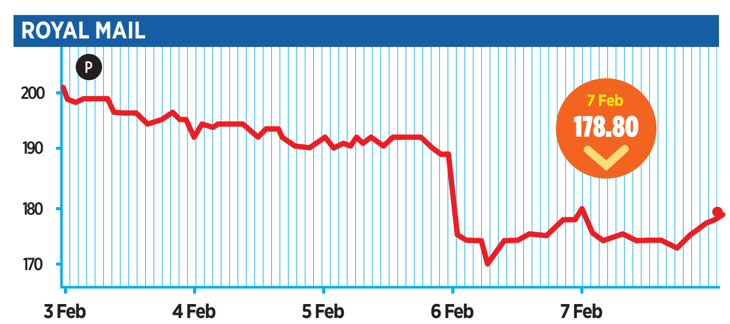


Bellway's first-half update beat expectations, thanks to a stronger than expected unit growth performance. The residential property developer reported that housing revenue increased by four per cent year-on-year, however it also saw its average selling price decrease by two per cent in the same period. Liberum said that "trading conditions are encouraging and early indicators suggest there will be a strong spring selling season". The analyst has retained its "buy" rating for Bellway, with a target price of 4,130p.



Event management company Informa has reacted to the outbreak of the coronavirus in China by postponing several trade shows in the region. This will impact planned events in February and March, but may spill over to April and May. The company derives about 14 per cent of its group revenue from China and Hong Kong. It is not yet clear what the total financial impact will be, however Peel Hunt has reduced its 2020 revenue forecast by £20m and profit forecast by £15m. Peel Hunt maintains a "hold" rating and has kept its target price at 910p.



Royal Mail's stock price sunk to its lowest ever ebb on Friday, with shares falling by 10 per cent. The impact of strikes and stiff competition made for a tough Christmas period for the postal service, however revenue was still in line with management expectations. The company's trading update said perceived industrial risk — the Communication Workers Union threatened strikes — led customers to switch to competitors over the period. Liberum said the longer term outlook for will remain challenging. The analyst maintains a "sell" rating, with a 175p target price.

NEW YORK REPORT

Wall St loses ground from record peaks

WALL Street pulled back from record levels last Friday, as investors assessed the US employment report that showed jobs growth accelerated in January but included a downward revision to some previous numbers.

Non-farm payrolls increased by 225,000 jobs last month, the US Labor Department's data showed, much higher than 160,000 jobs additions expected by economists polled by Reuters.

However, the economy created 514,000 fewer jobs between April 2018 and March 2019 than originally estimated, suggesting job growth could significantly slowdown this year.

"Where the market is right now, it likes to see an economy that's not too hot and not too cold because a much stronger economy suggests higher interest rates," said Rick Meckler, partner at Cherry Lane Investments, a family investment office.

"When you get the kind of upward move in markets, it's not surprising to see people wanting to go into the weekend," he added.

Technology stocks, which outperformed broader markets this week, slipped 0.7 per cent, weighing the most on the S&P 500.

A strong four-day rally last week put the benchmark index on pace for its best week in eight months as investors took comfort from China's efforts to limit the economic damage from the coronavirus outbreak.

More than 300 S&P 500 companies have reported fourth-quarter results so far, of which about 70 per cent have topped earnings estimates, according to IBES data from Refinitiv.

Take-Two Interactive Software slumped 10.6 per cent after the videogame publisher missed estimates for quarterly adjusted revenue.

Abb Vie gained 4.3 per cent after the drugmaker forecast 2020 earnings above analysts' expectations.

Uber shares gained about 5.7 per cent after the ride-hailing company moved forward by a year its target to achieve a measure of profitability to the fourth quarter of 2020.

CITY MOVES WHO'S SWITCHING JOBS

FUTURE LEARN

Social learning platform Future Learn has appointed Ron Kalifa to join the board as chairman. Ron, a strategic and operational leader in the field of ecommerce and financial systems, will bring his commercial and relevant experience to help Future Learn become a leading global platform for digital and online courses, particularly from his time spearheading the growth of Worldpay, the leading international payments platform, where he served as chief executive and vice chairman. Simon Nelson, chief executive of Future Learn, commented: "I'm delighted to welcome Ron to the wider Future Learn team as our independent chair. Of course, his experience speaks for itself so I have no doubt that he's going to be a tremendous driving force for our future success, but what I'm especially excited by is his shared passion and vision for our purpose."

URBAN INTELLIGENCE

Proptech business Urban Intelligence has announced that Joe Welch has been appointed to the board of directors. Joe will join the Urban Intelligence team from Arcadis where he was an associate director, formerly leading the residential development management team with a specialism in bespoke financial modelling. He had also been a key influence in the development of Arcadis' smart cities tool City Analytics. Urban Intelligence founder and chief executive Daniel Mohamed said "Joe will bring a wealth of industry experience and knowledge to the team at a very exciting time for our business as our market place evolves and further embraces the use of data and technology. We're keen to add to our ground breaking Site Score tool with Joe's extensive planning, development and viability expertise."

FOSTER DENOVO

Financial advisory business Foster Denovo has announced that it has appointed Philip Davies with the intention of him becoming the group chief financial officer. Philip will take over from Richard Horton who has been interim finance director since February 2018. Prior to joining Foster Denovo, Philip worked for more than 25 years in high profile firms in the financial services and commercial property sectors, with senior positions at Lloyds Bank, where he held director roles in finance and group audit and at NHS Property Services. He began his career with KPMG where he qualified as an accountant and then provided a range of consultancy and advisory roles across the financial services sector. At Foster Denovo, Philip will be responsible for overseeing all finance and commercial risk aspects of the business as the group seeks to make a number of acquisitions.

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

FORUM

EDITED BY RACHEL CUNLIFFE

If Boris wants to win, he can't afford to alienate his friends

Michael Hayman

EVERY time a friend succeeds, I die a little." Epigrammatic prose from the US patrician, Gore Vidal. The line serves as a cautionary note on how to lose friends and not influence people — one that another talented communicator of our time, the Prime Minister, might want to heed.

Boris Johnson went to bat last week. In a keynote speech in Greenwich, he used full rhetorical flourish to call time on Britain's remaining doubters and to tout a free trade tirade under the banner of "unleashing Britain's potential".

You might have been forgiven for expecting him to open with a toast to absent friends, as so many of the usual suspects hadn't made the guest list.

Make no mistake, this was no conclave of the cardinals of commerce. Gone were the reactionary forces of the CBI and the Institute of Directors (IoD), to be replaced by a new reformation — a rave of too-cool-for-school, free-trade-loving, breakthrough businesses.

The hurt of friends out of fashion is all too clear. The IoD's director general, John Geldart, opined that: "businesses are less interested in the rhetoric than they are with the practical implications of the government's approach".

But nothing seems to get the goat of this government more than the idea of business as usual, and such wincing words of woe from the uninvited will embolden the view that pessimism is Britain's fifth column.

Rather, the message is that this is a new era of progress through struggle. And without struggle, it's not worth doing.

At the energetic epicentre of this is the idea of the "blob", a word much in favour with the Prime Minister's adviser, Dominic Cummings. You might remember it from his time attempting to reform the Department for Education. It aims to capture a catch-all vision of the reactionary forces that hold the country back. The blob is the enemy.

Throwing down the gauntlet of leadership, and spotlighting the lack of it, is the playbook to beat the blob. Hence the Prime Minister's puncturing point that "free trade is being choked — and that is no fault of the people, that's no fault of individual consumers, I am afraid it is the politicians who are failing to lead."

> "Right now, this is a government that is defining itself at least as much by who it stands against as who it stands with

We've heard this rhetoric before. The entire General Election campaign was fought on the premise that the Westminster political class had failed to demonstrate leadership. Now it's the turn of others to feel the force of that approach.

At home, this game-plan means sacking off defeatist establishment doubters like old-school business groups or the august voices of BBC Radio 4's Today programme (ministers have been instructed by Cummings to boycott it, along with other well-known TV and radio shows).

Further afield, it speaks to the ultimate battle royale to come: the showdown with the European Union. General quarters, all hands to battle stations.

On the face of it, the Prime Minister's speech was swamped with a cacophony of call-outs to our "European friends". But the political digs demonstrate that he expects little, that the enemy at the gates of this speech is Brussels, and that our "European frenemies" is his real refrain.

And while the speech was an aria to commercial activism and Britain's historically globalist outlook — evoking the Vatican, Michael Angelo, and the "gorgeous and slightly bonkers scene" on the ceiling of Greenwich above him — we should not lose sight of the context.

Yes, it was a eulogy to the power of markets to deliver life-enhancing innovations and to lift people out of poverty. As such, this was Johnson's first big pro-enterprise set piece, and will be greeted with relief that the government has given at least some billing to the idea that wealth creation and entrepreneurship need to be in rude health if the post-Brexit project is to prosper. We have heard precious little of that since the election.

But much hangs in the balance. The calm delivered by the return of short-term confidence is tempered by the stormy uncertain prospects of long-term change.

A technicolour future awaits, for some offering the optimistic certainty of opportunity, and for others the obstruction of insurmountable obstacles.

It is also clear that, right now, this is a government that is defining itself at least as much by who it stands against as who it stands with.

Gore Vidal also said: "It is not enough to succeed. Others must fail." His life of bitter feuds was perhaps the ultimate testament to the limitations of this approach.

But it was another great American, the sports marketing supremo Mark McCormack, who made perhaps the more pertinent point: "All things being equal, people will do business with a friend; all things being unequal, people will still do business with a friend."

For Boris to win his war, he will need the love of friends.

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

The financial services sector will be key as we chart our course on the world stage

William Russell

THE UK'S financial services sector has charted a pragmatic course since the EU Referendum, and recent figures show that it continues to flourish.

Indeed, research from Innovate Finance revealed how investment in the UK's fintech sector reached a record high of nearly $5bn in 2019, with industry growth far outstripping that of the US, China, and Singapore. Separate findings show that a record amount of renminbi was traded in London last year.

The continued strength of the UK financial sector should not be underestimated, either in the coming trade negotiations with the EU, or in terms of our links to countries beyond Europe as we chart a new course on the world stage.

After all, our future trading relationship with the EU won't all be about fish or goods containers on the back of cargo ships. In fact, as readers will know, it is in services — not goods — that Britain operates a trade surplus with our European partners, with financial and professional services making up more than half of services exports to the bloc.

That's why we are calling on the government to prioritise this sector as trade talks get underway.

But with part two of Brexit still in its earliest stages, the UK's relationships with other partners around the world are more in the spotlight than ever before.

All of this makes my visit this week to the Gulf — whose countries together are our second-biggest non-European financial services export destination after the US — an important moment. Indeed, it is already my second visit to the region during my mayoralty.

I will visit three countries over the next few days: the UAE, our fifteenth biggest trading partner; Kuwait, home of the Kuwait Investment Authority which has some £16bn invested in the UK and has had an office here since 1953; and Qatar, for whom we are the biggest investment destination, with around £40bn invested here.

These countries have shown continued faith in the UK economy. But more than that, they are partners with whom we still have untapped trading potential — especially in green finance, an area where the UK has huge expertise, but will be crucial to tackling a great global challenge.

Ahead of the Dubai Expo in October — where sustainability is among the key themes — and COP26 in Glasgow in November, my visit this week is an opportunity to make a running start in a huge year of joint engagement.

In the UAE, Qatar and Kuwait, the UK has three key partners we can count on in this area, as we work towards a global agreement later this year to take urgent action and transition to a zero-carbon economy.

I saw this for myself when I gave a keynote speech at the Abu Dhabi Sustainable Finance forum last month, where I had several discussions about the opportunities to invest in the UK's green finance sector.

It's time now to renew our trade ties with old friends and forge new ones with others. Let's take that opportunity to work together on the world stage in a way that ensures the UK's financial services sector can continue its global success story for decades to come.

William Russell is the lord mayor of London.

LETTERS

TO THE EDITOR

Green speech

"Speak softly and carry a big stick" was Teddy Roosevelt's dictum for diplomacy. When it comes to business and social responsibility, the opposite tends to be true: speak often, loudly and piously, but don't necessarily back up your words with deeds.

When 181 chief executives signed the business roundtable letter last year, they committed businesses to responsibility not just to their shareholders, but to all other "stakeholders". That word returned at Davos this year, in the laughably titled theme of "stakeholders for a cohesive and sustainable world" — the perfect example of a meaningless platitude.

The impulse was notable again last week at the Siemens annual shareholder meeting in Munich. Blackrock has been making a lot of noise about its environmental chops of late, and just days before the meeting rebuked Siemens' leadership for the company's continued role in an Australian coal-mining project.

And yet, as has so often been the case, action did not follow the words. When it came to voting, Blackrock voted with the Siemens board on every suggested resolution. While none of these were specifically focused on a question of sustainability, the votes could have been an opportunity for Blackrock to follow Roosevelt's dictum and bloody the nose of Siemens' management, demonstrating how seriously the asset manager takes the issue of climate change. Instead, Blackrock stuck for loud words, and left the stick at home. "Blunt greenwashing", German Greenpeace called it.

This is a concerning moment for those of us who believe that business has a critical role to play in engaging with social ills. Business is waking up to anger about its role in the climate crisis. But it must begin to meet that anger with more than rhetoric — because rhetoric alone will beget much more anger than it dispels.

Josh Williams, speechwriter and director, The Draft

BEST OF TWITTER

Part of the problem is that the devil has the best tunes. "Dynamic alignment" is a phrase the UK should never use. How about "regulation without representation"?
@offpiste9

If you compare the BBC to Netflix (which has a fraction of the British content), you might also compare it to Sky...
Sky Entertainment: £264 a year
Sky Sports: £276 a year
BBC TV, radio, website: £154.50 a year
@henrymance

If Shamima Begum is losing her right to British citizenship because "she is a citizen of Bangladesh by descent", then what does that mean for every British national who has foreign-heritage though their parents? It means their citizenship is never secure
@Zubhaque

#ShamimaBegum case is undeniably difficult. She isn't exactly someone who engenders a lot of sympathy, particularly after her statements last time this case hit the news. Problem we face as a society is human rights and international law don't end because someone is unlikable.
@thefishareloose

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Stop clinging to the last century and let the high street evolve

Bill Grimsey

EVERY January, without fail, the hand-wringing begins. After predictably poor Christmas retail results, everyone wants to know: are we seeing the death of the high street? The gloom doesn't stop. Last week, the boss of John Lewis was the latest to lament the retail landscape, warning of potential store closures and job losses.

Why are we still questioning the high street's future? Haven't thousands of shop closures, the disappearance of household names, and the hollowing out of our town centres taught us anything? It's a bit like commentators in 2045 asking "is climate change a real problem?" when the first coastal town in Norfolk disappears under water.

Seven years ago, I gathered a team of experts to carry out a review into the challenges facing the high street and called on policymakers to accept that there is already too much retail space in the UK. But for many, the penny still hasn't dropped.

We need to accept that the twentieth-century model is over, and no amount of nostalgic hand-wringing is going to bring it back. It's time we asked what a future high street that is no longer dominated by retail looks like, and how can we ensure that they remain the beating heart of communities.

We know some of the answers already. Beyond gloomy headlines of closures and struggling retailers looking for the CVA escape route, a positive new landscape is already taking shape.

The experience economy is going from strength to strength, and Brits are forecast to spend £141bn on leisure by 2022. Research tells us that growing numbers of generation Z and millennials would rather spend their money on experiences than material items, and this is driving high street change through the growth of leisure, entertainment, and new dining experiences.

Likewise, as retail continues to shrink, we're starting to see more housing on the high street. The number of applications for change of use from stores to homes has doubled over the past five years.

The growth of co-working space, business centres and trendy office studios on high streets gives a further clue to what the future will look like. Research by the Centre for Cities shows that areas with higher levels of modern workspace are more likely to have vibrant and successful high streets than areas that don't. Leisure, living and working will be key drivers shaping the new landscape.

> Leisure, living and working will be key drivers shaping the new landscape

All these factors point to community being the biggest force powering change. You can see this in the new wave of high street food halls bringing together people from all walks of life to eat under one roof, and in the work by local authorities.

Stockton Council is buying up 1960s shopping centres to demolish them and create more green space and housing, while Bath Council is creating clean air zones to tackle pollution in the city centre. High streets of the future are going to be more liveable, social spaces.

The new reality is that high streets can no longer be synonymous with just retail. In Hull, there are proposals to replace an empty BHS store with an ice rink. In Southend, Havens Department Store was turned into a community hub. And in Stockport, an empty M&S building is being converted into offices and leisure space.

The real question we should be asking is what's holding up this change and preventing high streets from leaving the last century and grabbing the opportunities of a new one?

There is massive potential to be unlocked, particularly in building civic pride, people's sense of belonging and local identity. Yet there are still too many places in denial.

The 2020s must be a decade in which high streets finally move from crisis to hope. And we'll only do that when we move the debate away from retail, onto the future instead of the past.

Bill Grimsey is the former chief executive of Wickes, Iceland, Booker and Focus DIY.

DEBATE

Is 'level playing field' alignment a necessary and reasonable part of a UK-EU free trade agreement?

YES

ED DAVEY

Maintaining a common rulebook with the EU is in the UK's best interest. Boris Johnson claims that, like Canada, we shouldn't be expected to take on EU regulations. What he ignores is that our trading relationship with Europe is much deeper than Canada's.

The EU accounts for 45 per cent of British exports and 53 per cent of imports. Combined, they're worth a whopping £648bn. Canada, on the other hand, trades just 10 per cent of its goods with the EU, worth only £60bn.

Unlike Canada, The UK shares highly integrated industrial supply chains, and the EU is a key market for our services sector. No matter how much we expand trade with other regions, access to the European market can't be replaced — and regulatory alignment is what makes this access possible, reducing costs and delays for our businesses.

Scrapping it will be a huge blow to industry, swathes of which might find it hard to keep trading. Boris thinks that by tearing up the rulebook, he's taking back control. All he's doing is tearing up the UK's business plan.

Ed Davey is Liberal Democrat acting leader and economy spokesperson.

NO

VICTORIA HEWSON

A "level playing field" — a sporting analogy to appeal to the British sense of fair play? In reality, this is an effort by the EU to continue to apply EU rules and ECJ jurisdiction in this country.

The UK government has already said that it will accept the kind of commitments on competition policy, subsidies, environment and climate, labour, and tax that are usually found in free trade agreements. This would give the EU the right to take retaliatory action if we are unfairly subsidising British producers, but would give the UK government autonomy in making the laws within the parameters of high level, common standards.

The EU, though, wants more. It is pressing to "ensure the application of Union State aid rules to and in the UK".

The UK historically pays less state aid than almost any country in Europe, and has stronger employment laws and climate policies. So what is the EU really worried about? Surely if its regulations and policies are as good for growth and competitiveness as its advocates claim, they have nothing to fear.

Victoria Hewson is head of regulatory affairs at the Institute of Economic Affairs.

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SPECIAL FEATURE

PIE IN THE SKY?

With e-scooters, driverless cars and even flying taxis on the horizon, **Alex Daniel** takes a look at the technology that could shape the future of your commute

An air of tranquility hangs about Stratford's electric scooter riders. Their bodies are still, poised, as they glide by on this crisp February morning. I try to copy them and end up skidding along, struggling to figure out how to position my feet — but after a couple of wobbles I'm gliding too. As I thumb the accelerator, the electric motor on my back wheel whines reassuringly. It feels faster than it looks.

We are in London's Olympic Park. Somewhere around here, there are 50 electric scooters roving around as part of the first trial of its kind in the UK. Already widespread in other cities across the globe, they are one of several new modes of transport which could rewrite the rulebook on how people get to work in the coming years. The trial has been running for more than a year, but when I arrive there are only three available. They are clearly popular.

It is easy to see why commuters in the capital pine for something new. Drivers waste 227 hours each a year stuck in traffic, buses crawl through the centre at an average speed of 7mph, and getting on the Tube at peak times is stifling and claustrophobic. Meanwhile, the longest rail strike Britain has ever seen snarled up millions of Londoners' journeys to work throughout December.

There has to be another way.

But help could be at hand. Tomorrow, the bosses of some of the most forward-thinking — and best-funded — mobility companies will gather in London at the Move 2020 conference. With electric scooters, self-driving cars and even flying taxis on the agenda, *City A.M.* takes a deep dive into three modes of transport which could revolutionise the way we get to work.

Britain could make electric scooters legal in the coming months

MICROMOBILITY: E-SCOOTERS

Electric scooters are illegal on Britain's roads, pavements and cycle lanes. Anyone caught faces a £300 fine and six points on their driving licence — but you wouldn't know it. On my half-hour cycle into the City I count five of them. One sails past a parked police car, whose occupants seem indifferent to the flagrant law-breaking taking place at 15mph.

The truth of the matter is they are only banned by a 185-year-old law: the Highway Act of 1835. But that could soon change, with the government launching a consultation this month on how to regulate them — and improve safety in the process. London would join more than 100 other cities to facilitate the e-scooter trend, including Paris, New York and Tel Aviv.

Meanwhile, the companies popularising e-scooters across the globe are in their infancy. Bird, whose machines buzz around the Olympic Park by virtue of it being private land, and Lime, which already has an electric bicycle service operating in the capital, were both founded in 2017.

They use a subscription business model whereby travellers can use an app on their smartphone to unlock the dockless scooters, which cost 25p a minute plus a £1 starter charge.

Patrick Studener is vice president at Bird, and oversees the business across Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

SPECIAL FEATURE

"There's just so much traffic in cars that is really not needed," he tells me, citing Transport for London (TfL) statistics that two thirds of city car journeys in the UK are less than three miles. About 60 per cent of those are solo trips. "Does it really take a one tonne steel vehicle to move a person individually for that distance?"

That thought process has certainly found favour in Paris, where Lime and Bird arrived in summer 2018. Now, more than 20,000 scooters — called "trottinettes" over there — swarm the French capital, and according to the Odoxa Institute, 11 per cent of Parisians have taken them for a spin.

"If you could get that level of usage in London, it would be incredibly encouraging in terms of reducing vehicle journeys," says Alan Clarke, Lime's UK policy director.

Moreover, an internal Lime survey late last year suggested that about one in four of the trips in Paris replaced a car journey. Given that pollution kills nearly as many people as

> People look at the streets and see electric scooters everywhere. But they don't see the 50 cars on the same road. Let's challenge that assumption

smoking each year — and London is at the epicentre for dirty air in the UK — this can surely be no bad thing, Clarke says.

"The benefits of that for air quality could be really significant."

But Michael Hurwitz, director of transport innovation at TfL, is not yet convinced. "What we really would not want is that riding e-scooters discourages people from being physically active," he says. "Sure, some people come out of cars, which is much better to be on their feet. But then some people are not walking anymore, which from a health point of view is less positive."

And with new modes of transport come new perils. Paris saw its first trottinette death in June after a young man riding one was hit by a truck. The UK was alerted to the dangers the following month, when 35 year old Youtuber and TV presenter Emily Hartridge was killed in a collision with a lorry in Battersea.

Some Parisians have also been left embittered by the sheer clutter of tens of thousands of dockless scooters abandoned on the pavement. The pileups incensed the mayor of Paris' 13th arrondissement, Jerome Courmet, so much that he enlisted a crack team to round them up. "Enough of this bullshit," he menaces in a video posted in May, as workers load trottinettes into a van behind him.

But Studener insists this is borne out of a skewed perception of how city roads should operate. "We have to fundamentally revisit the way we look at the street," he says. "Those people look at the streets and see scooters everywhere. But they don't see the 50 cars on the same road... Let's challenge that assumption."

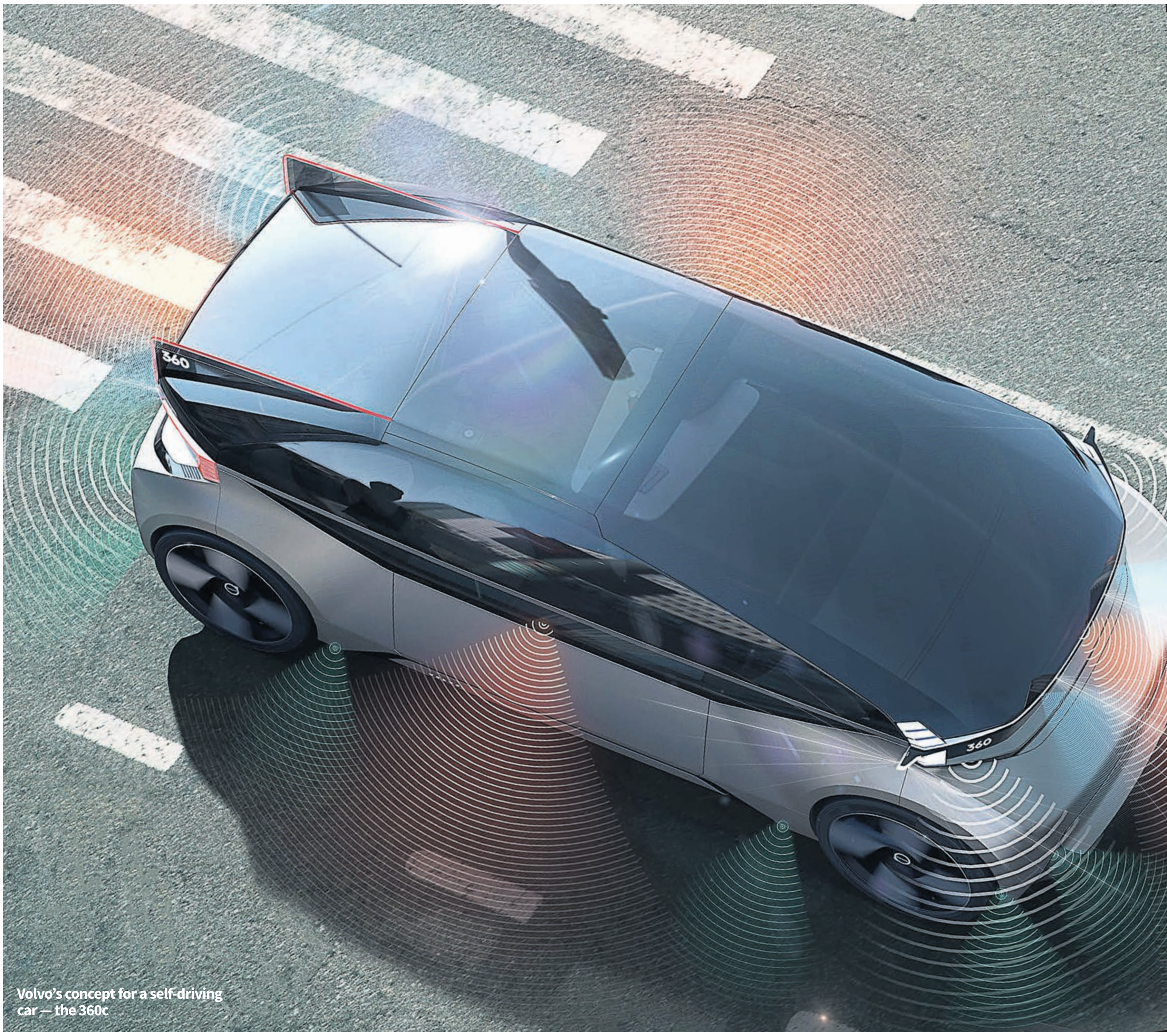
So will these scooters flood London's roads in the same way?

"That is one of my biggest worries, that the gates will just open," says Hurwitz. When TfL responds to the government's consultation, it will recommend a permitting system, he tells me. Then, the city can have a say in which companies operate and where the scooters are parked. "What I would really want to avoid is a situation where the market is opened, and then it is a free-for-all."

Nonetheless, Lime and Bird know that people will hop on the scooters for one simple reason: enjoyment. "Anyone who has commuted in London on a long term basis knows how it is getting the Tube in peak hours," says Clarke. "Lots of people would like an alternative to that."

Studener adds: "I have a smile on my face every time I get off a Bird scooter. There is definitely something to be said for being outside and having the wind in your hair."

And this is perhaps the most crucial point. By commercialising something genuinely fun as a means of public transport, companies like Lime and Bird are promising the commuters' holy grail: a journey to work that people actually look forward to.

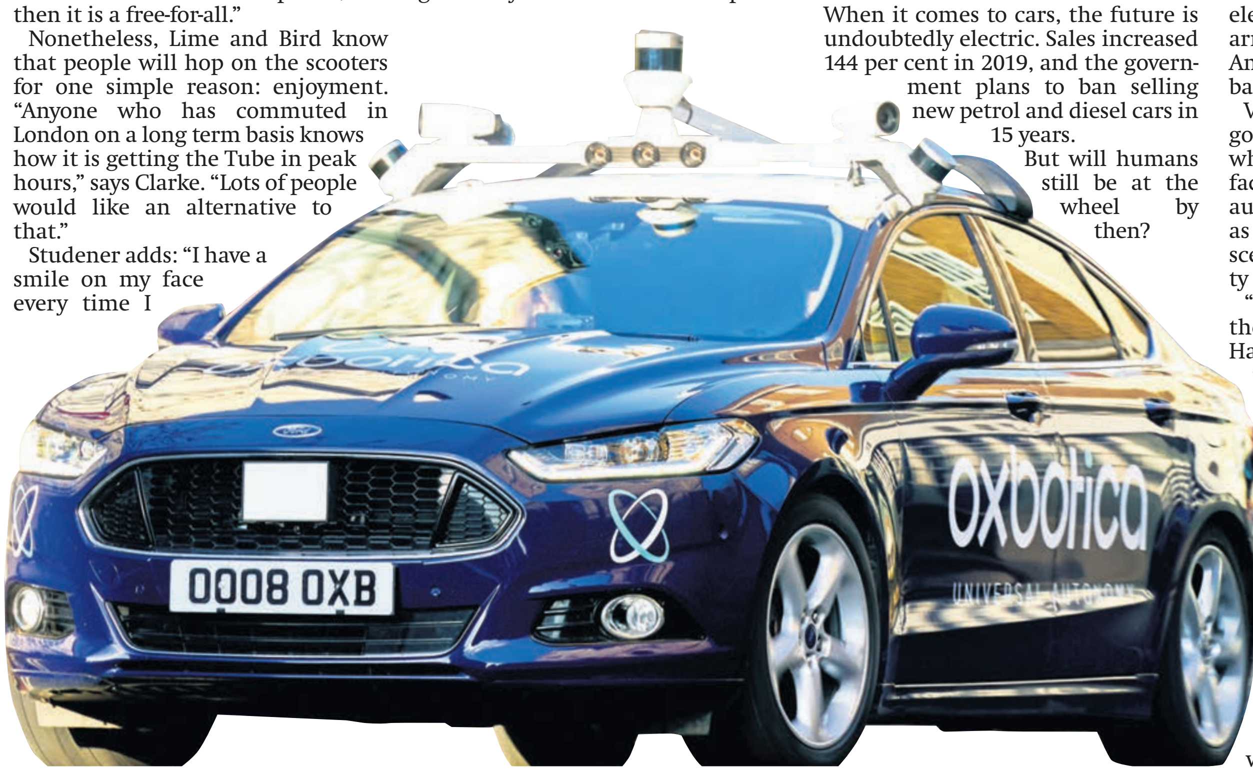


Volvo's concept for a self-driving car — the 360c

A MIND OF THEIR OWN: SELF-DRIVING CARS

When it comes to cars, the future is undoubtedly electric. Sales increased 144 per cent in 2019, and the government plans to ban selling new petrol and diesel cars in 15 years.

But will humans still be at the wheel by then?



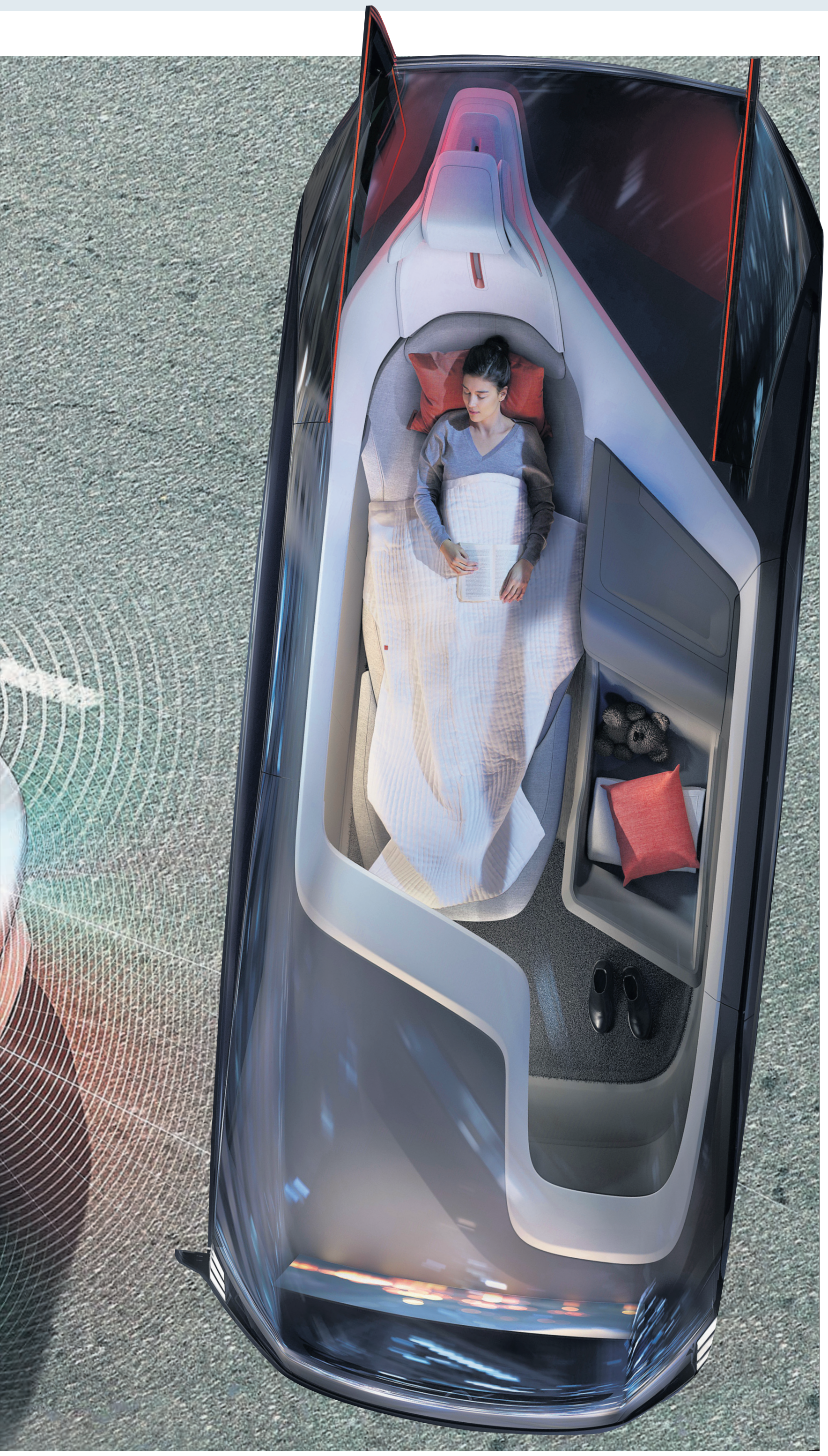
Predictions about the advent of the autonomous car have come thick and fast over the last decade. Some have been untested; others have been downright unroadworthy. Last year, Elon Musk, the outspoken chief executive of Tesla, proclaimed that his electric car giant would release an army of one million "robotaxis" onto America's roads in 2020. He has since backtracked on this.

Volvo's 2018 concept car, the 360c, goes a step further. It has no steering wheel, no driver, and the front seats face backwards. It is more of an autonomous transport pod than a car as we know it. Industry experts are sceptical that it could become a reality anytime soon.

"I'm not sure we're going to see it in the next five or 10 years," says Jamie Hamilton, of Deloitte's automotive team. "People will need some convincing that it's safe to get in a car with no steering wheel, and also that it's safe to be on the road with them."

Disquiet has been brewing since March 2018, when a self-driving car designed by Volvo and Uber struck a woman at 44mph, killing her as she tried to walk a bicycle across the road in Arizona.

The resulting court case found the car's safety operator was to blame; she was watching an episode of reality show The Voice while sitting behind the wheel. But



it also found that the self-driving system spotted the pedestrian five seconds before hitting her, and could have slammed on the brakes. It just failed to identify her as a human.

Nevertheless, Hamilton is sanguine about the technology's chances of entering the mainstream one day. "Don't get me wrong, it is a matter of when," he says. "Whether that's mass ownership, or if it's more of a niche like autonomous taxis, it's less clear."

Oxbotica is leading the charge in the UK on developing the software, and last year tested a fleet of driverless Ford Mondeos on public roads, also around the Olympic Park in Stratford.

Its founder, Paul Newman, tells me: "We are already getting close to a place where you could say we could run a small shuttle service in a city — something like the ultimate bus. That is within reach. But it is a long time before you can walk into a dealership and say: 'I will have a car without the windscreen and no steering wheel,' and it will have the same functionality as a car does now."

However, when that day comes, the effect on our lives could be "profound," Hamilton says. "The commercial opportunities are quite significant. Passengers could work, they could be entertained — and the autonomous car will know where they are too, so you could even have location-specific offers."

If commuters look outside, they may see narrower roads, as cars yield long-undisputed territory to cyclists and pedestrians. That is because of the superhuman precision of self-driving software, adds Michael Woodward, also from Deloitte.

"If you could have two vehicles a meter apart travelling at the same speed, you are going to get a damn sight more traffic going through the city. Commute times will actually come down."

All the same, even this space-age utopia is not without its flaws, according to TfL's Hurwitz. He is concerned that, like electric scooters, self-driving cars could stop people using more active modes of transport, like walking or cycling. "That is not going to be great for our ambitions to have a healthy city," he says.

Moreover, he frets that they could abet congestion just as easily as relieve it. "It could be heaven or hell. The worst-case scenario is someone going to the theatre, for example, and just pressing the button on their autonomous vehicle and getting it to drive around until they come back because it's cheaper than parking."

For now, however, autonomous tech tends towards making normal cars safer, and it is more commonplace than some might think.

Some 1,000 London buses already use self-driving technology that regulates their speed. Emergency braking, lane-changing and self-parking are permeating the new car market. The latest Teslas will even crawl out of the garage on their owners' command.

"Some of the building blocks are already there," Hurwitz says. "But what we are going to see is evolution, not revolution."

TAKING FLIGHT: FLYING TAXIS

If self-driving cars are a long way off, one could be forgiven for thinking that air taxis are a flight of fancy. But dozens of startups are betting that the so-called urban air mobility market is getting ready for take off. With futuristic names like Volocoptor, Eviation and Lilium, they are already jostling for a first-mover advantage. Some hope to launch a service in the next five years. London could be one of their first destinations.

> “ It is a proper aircraft, a serious tool. It's not going to land in your back garden

Last year, Lilium, a German company founded in 2015, celebrated the maiden flight of its sleek five-seater prototype jet. The aircraft, which is known to those in the industry as an eVTOL (electric vertical take off and landing vehicle), has 36 engines spread across four rotating wings. It can hit 186mph.

Remo Gerber, the company's chief commercial officer, tells me he hopes it will have a taxi service "operational and relevant in several locations around the world" by 2025.

He is quick, however, to dismiss the idea that people could use Lilium for short hops within the city, like a conventional taxi ride. "It is a proper aircraft, a serious tool — it is not going to land in your garden," he says.

Instead, Gerber envisages a situation where travellers can book a trip from London to Brighton the night before — "or an hour before" — via an app. "You go and show up at the pad at Embankment [for example], and then you fly to Brighton in about 15 minutes."

Perhaps, then, it is more appropriate for people coming in from commuter belt towns, many of whom currently rely on a rail network which has been blighted by strikes in recent months?

"Absolutely," he says, adding that a ride with Lilium would cost roughly the same as a rail fare. "But the big advantage that we have over trains is that you don't need to maintain the tracks in between. In the long run, you're looking at multiples less in infrastructure costs."

But is it a bluff to attract more investment, or are Lilium's ambitions realistic? In the long term, at least, analysts think the latter. Research drones are already flying in 64 cities around the world, and Morgan Stanley has predicted that the urban air mobility market will be worth $1.5 trillion a year by 2040. It thinks passenger traffic will account for more than half of that.

And it's not just startups. The biggest names in aviation are also working on eVTOLs. Plane makers Boeing and Airbus, as well as jet engine manufacturer Rolls-Royce are among them. Even Uber has joined the race.

Warren East, the chief executive of Rolls-Royce and an engineer by trade, takes a measured stance. "The technology is there," he tells me. "From a technical point of view it is absolutely possible." However, getting a business model like Lilium's past the UK's airspace regulator, the Civil Aviation Authority, may pose a challenge, he adds. "Our piece in the jigsaw puzzle is only part of it. There's a huge amount of regulation and air traffic control that would also need to be in place."

London already has the most complex, congested airspace in the UK, adds TfL's Michael Hurwitz, who tells me he has spoken with a number of the startups. "Normally the evolution of technology is such that you do not come and try things in the toughest areas. But what we said is 'look, if you want to start anywhere, it has to be the uses that have a social benefit.'

"Because of the cost, a lot of these technologies will start as premium services," he says. "That's all well and good, but I prefer it when a new mode of transport is available to everybody. I like it less when it is only available to the affluent and the tech-enabled."

Lilium is undeterred. Last year, it picked London as a base for hundreds of software engineers. Meanwhile, Parisian authorities have already agreed to let Airbus bring a flying shuttle service to the French capital for the 2024 Olympic Games. Uber has a similar arrangement with governors in Melbourne. Dubai first tested a drone taxi service three years ago.

> Because of the cost, a lot of these technologies will start as premium services

Flying taxis or not, more than two thirds of the world's population will live in cities like London by 2050. Rush hour is only going to get worse. The Royal Society for Public Health has even said the stress involved with getting to work is shortening people's lives. Commuters are increasingly snacking on the go, failing to find time to do any exercise, and struggling to get enough hours of sleep.

It is problems like these that exhibitors at the Move 2020 conference are trying to overcome. Along with e-scooters and self-driving cars, taking to the skies could form part of the solution.

Move 2020 runs from 11-12 February at Excel London. It includes speakers from Lime, Bird, Oxbotica, TfL and Lilium.

FTSE 100	FTSE 250	FTSE ALL SHARE	DOW JONES	NASDAQ	S&P 500
7466.70	21499.29	4151.15	29102.51	9520.51	3327.70
38.09	73.57	19.74	277.26	51.64	18.08

£			€		
/€	1.1782		€/$	1.0950	0.0028
/$	1.2906	0.0026	€/£	0.8488	0.0001
/¥	141.63	0.5000	€/¥	120.22	0.4100

GILTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Tsy 4.750 20	100.29	-0.04	104.2	100.3
Tsy 8.000 21	109.81	-0.07	116.8	109.8
Tsy 2.500 24	362.29	0.07	377.9	358.8
Tsy 5.000 25	122.95	0.03	126.0	122.1
Tsy 4.250 27	129.23	0.10	132.8	125.5
Tsy 6.000 28	147.51	0.11	152.1	143.3
Tsy 4.125 30	381.95	0.48	404.2	364.5
Tsy 4.250 32	141.69	0.20	146.4	132.7
Tsy 4.250 36	150.18	0.27	155.7	137.9
Tsy 4.750 38	165.31	0.32	171.8	150.5
Tsy 4.250 46	173.65	0.43	181.0	1.0

AEROSPACE & DEFENCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BAE Systems	655.0	2.2	655.0	443.9
Meggitt	666.0	-1.0	697.4	489.9
QinetiQ	378.2	-0.6	378.8	267.0
Rolls-Royce	687.0	-6.6	988.4	636.6
Senior	162.7	-2.3	239.2	160.0
Ultra Electronics	2222.0	28.0	2292.0	1232.0

AUTOMOBILES & PARTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aston Martin	450.6	-14.4	1374.4	399.3
TI Fluid Systems	234.0	-6.5	273.0	155.2

BANKS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Bank of Georgia	1513.0	0.0	1755.0	1252.0
Barclays	177.2	0.4	192.5	136.2
BGEO Group	1608.0	24.0	1755.0	1252.0
HSBC Hldgs	581.3	7.8	680.6	551.8
Lloyds Banking	56.9	0.0	67.2	48.6
Royal Bank of Scot	222.9	-1.8	270.4	177.7
Standard Chartered	636.8	-2.0	738.6	575.7
TBC Bank Group	1250.0	16.0	1706.0	1150.0
Virgin Money UK	176.3	0.9	220.1	104.4

BEVERAGES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Barr (AG)	592.0	-2.0	975.0	526.0
Britvic	941.5	-2.0	1068.0	850.0
Coca-Cola HBC AG	2810.0	-32.0	3074.0	2299.0
Diageo	3163.5	-38.5	3625.5	2913.5

CHEMICALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Croda International	5055.0	-10.0	5375.0	4564.0
Elementis	128.1	-2.4	197.9	127.9
Johnson Matt	2660.0	-56.0	3454.0	2605.0
Synthomer	334.8	-3.6	420.8	279.0
Victrex	2306.0	-44.0	2540.0	1845.0

CONSTRUCTION & MATERIALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Balfour Beatty	267.0	-1.6	295.0	194.2
CRH	2978.0	-27.0	3100.0	2279.0
Galliford Try	161.9	1.9	177.2	102.4
Grafton Group	938.5	2.5	943.0	645.5
Ibstock	295.4	-3.2	322.0	208.6
Marshalls	819.5	2.0	876.0	496.6
Polypipe Group	553.0	-7.5	560.5	372.8

DIVERSIFIED INDUSTRIALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Smith (DS)	366.7	-4.2	394.8	307.9
Smiths Gp	1740.0	-9.0	1751.0	1378.0
Smurfit Kappa Gp	2938.0	92.0	2966.0	2096.0
Vesuvius	438.2	-11.4	642.0	341.0

ELECTRICITY

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Contour Global	190.2	2.6	222.5	162.4
Drax Gp	289.2	-9.6	399.4	251.0
SSE	1602.0	9.5	1602.0	1008.0

ELECTRONIC & ELECTRICAL EQUIPMENT

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Halma	2215.0	-18.0	2233.0	1487.0
Morgan Advanced	308.8	-4.8	324.8	232.4
Oxford Instruments	1600.0	-54.0	1654.0	945.0
Renishaw	4006.0	-36.0	4638.0	3232.0
Spectris	2733.0	-36.0	2962.0	2234.0

EQUITY INVESTMENT INSTRUMENTS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3i Infrastructure	315.5	1.5	315.5	267.1
Aberforth Smlr Cos	1432.0	-6.0	1546.0	1114.0
Alliance Trust	863.0	-3.0	872.0	730.0
AVI Global Trust	788.0	0.0	802.0	706.0
Baillie Gifford Japan	818.0	-12.0	848.0	719.0
Bankers InvTst	1018.0	-6.0	1032.0	843.0
BlackRock Smaller	1750.0	-26.0	1776.0	1298.0
BMO Global Smaller	144.2	-0.8	150.0	127.5
Caledonia Inv	3120.0	-10.0	3180.0	2910.0
City of London IT	432.0	-3.0	448.5	396.5
Edin Inv Trust	608.0	-4.0	652.0	535.0
European Opp	920.0	-6.0	926.0	688.0
F&C Investment	775.0	-5.0	783.0	675.0
Fidelity China SPE	236.5	0.0	253.0	205.5
Fidelity Euro Values	268.0	-1.5	269.5	218.0
Fidelity Spec Val	270.5	-2.0	280.5	240.5
Finsbury G&I Tst	909.0	-9.0	958.0	795.0
GCP Infra Inv	127.0	0.0	134.0	122.6
Genesis Emerging	791.0	-8.0	818.0	686.0
Greencoat UK	144.2	-0.6	152.8	129.6
Harbourvest Glb	1846.0	-12.0	1858.0	1406.0
Herald Inv Trust	1490.0	-40.0	1530.0	1190.0
HICL Infr	179.4	0.2	180.0	156.6
JPM American	513.0	-3.0	516.0	421.0
JPM Emerg Mkt	1046.0	-12.0	1088.0	878.0
JPM Indian IT	735.0	-4.0	790.0	633.0
JPM Japan IT	457.5	-2.0	477.5	369.0
Jupiter Fund Mngt	374.4	-4.6	432.0	314.0
Law Debenture	636.0	-8.0	654.0	552.0
Mercantile IT	270.0	-0.5	270.5	188.0
Monks Inv Tst	1004.0	-8.0	1012.0	804.0
Murray Intl Tst	1214.0	-18.0	1286.0	1114.0
Next Energy Solar	123.0	0.5	126.5	114.0
Pantheon Intl Partn	2525.0	-25.0	2620.0	2020.0
Perpetual Inc & Grth	325.5	-2.5	342.0	284.5
Pershing Square	1532.0	0.0	1578.0	1216.0
Personal Assets Tst	438000	-500	438500	398000
Polar Cap Tech Tst	1704.0	2.0	1704.0	1218.0
Renewables Infra Gp	136.0	-0.4	139.2	115.4
RIT Cap Partners	2095.0	-15.0	2180.0	1984.0
Schroder Asia	465.5	-2.5	485.5	424.5
Scottish Inv Tst	806.0	2.0	843.0	769.0
Scottish Mortgage	626.5	-2.5	629.0	472.0
Sequoia Econ Infra	114.8	0.4	118.6	110.0
Smithson Inv	1342.0	-16.0	1358.0	1074.8
Syncona	232.5	2.5	294.0	203.0
Temple Bar IT	1356.0	-34.0	1486.0	1162.0
Templeton Em Mkts	846.0	-8.0	876.0	731.0
Vietnam Enterprise	454.0	4.0	509.0	421.5
VinaCapital Vietna	312.0	-4.0	357.5	312.0
Witan Invest	228.5	-2.0	235.0	201.6
Wwide Healthcare	3260.0	-10.0	3270.0	2495.0

FIXED LINE TELECOMMUNICATIONS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BT Gp	154.9	-1.9	233.0	154.9
Talktalk Telecom	120.0	0.6	126.5	97.0
Telecom Plus	1506.0	-18.0	1552.0	1130.0

FOOD & DRUG RETAILERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Greggs	2268.0	6.0	2476.0	1554.0
Morrison (WM)	180.9	1.2	243.7	176.9
Ocado Gp	1229.5	-10.5	1435.0	886.2
Sainsbury(J)	202.0	-1.1	293.9	177.1
SSP Group	667.0	-12.0	721.0	608.0
Tesco	254.8	0.4	258.9	212.6

FOOD PRODUCERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Assoc British Foods	2693.0	-15.0	2708.0	2106.0
Bakkavor	140.0	0.0	170.0	93.3
Cranswick	3654.0	-2.0	3714.0	2472.0
Greencore Gp	238.4	-1.1	281.8	193.4
Hilton Food Gp	1042.0	-8.0	1118.0	894.0
Tate & Lyle	790.0	1.6	801.4	663.8
Unilever	4696.0	0.5	5324.0	3983.0

FORESTRY & PAPER

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Mondi	1649.5	-17.5	1898.0	1510.5

GENERAL FINANCIAL

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3i Group	1147.5	2.5	1184.5	910.0
Ashmore Gp	558.5	-1.5	567.5	397.8
Brewin Dolphin	358.4	1.0	375.2	287.6
Close Brothers	1451.0	22.0	1663.0	1227.0
Coats Group	71.3	0.3	91.2	68.1
Finablr	71.5	-1.9	215.0	71.5
Hargreaves Lans	1604.5	-104.0	2433.0	1604.5
IG Gp	669.4	7.4	708.0	474.8
Integrafin Holdings	514.0	1.0	514.0	337.0
Intermediate Capital	1753.0	6.0	1753.0	990.5
Intl Public Prtnshps	165.8	0.6	171.2	146.8
Investec	434.0	-4.7	518.6	395.3
IP Group	65.9	-1.1	109.0	55.7
John Laing Gp	349.0	2.0	402.0	345.6
London Stock Exch	8196.0	30.0	8196.0	4489.0
Man Group	155.9	0.2	175.2	130.5
Onesavings	424.4	0.0	452.0	313.6
Paragon	531.0	2.5	553.5	388.0
Plus500	911.0	5.8	1636.0	495.0
Provident Fin	476.0	-3.4	610.0	356.0
Quilter	171.6	1.4	174.7	120.8
Rathbone Brothers	1988.0	-2.0	2540.0	1966.0
Schroders	3380.0	-2.0	3419.0	2541.0
TP ICAP	404.3	0.9	417.5	270.0

GENERAL RETAILERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
B&M	375.5	4.5	420.9	315.0
Dixons Carphone	135.0	-0.4	152.4	104.9
Dunelm Gp	1200.0	-13.0	1213.0	717.0
Frasers Group	464.6	-18.4	518.0	214.0
Howden Joinery Gp	707.0	1.8	707.0	478.8
Inchcape	647.5	-6.0	720.0	545.5
JD Sports Fashion	835.0	-21.8	874.0	448.4
Kingfisher	211.9	-1.8	266.2	185.9
Marks & Spencer	183.4	-1.9	303.2	163.9
Next	6764.0	-64.0	7340.0	4724.0
Pets at Home Gp	307.0	0.2	307.0	129.4
Vivo Energy	111.8	-1.4	139.5	105.0
Watches of Switz	379.4	-10.6	392.8	270.0
WH Smith	2390.0	-68.0	2654.0	1896.0

HEALTH CARE EQUIPMENT & SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Convatec	212.3	-0.4	217.3	118.5
Mediclinic Intl	379.5	-2.6	415.3	293.4
NMC Health	700.0	-200.0	3000.0	700.0
Smith & Neph	1866.0	-17.5	1990.0	1424.5
UDG Hlthcare	775.5	-7.0	832.5	551.0

HOUSEHOLD GOODS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Barratt Devel	799.4	-5.0	839.4	552.8
Bellway	4032.0	-32.0	4100.0	2698.0
Berkeley Grp Hldgs	5122.0	-58.0	5412.0	3437.0
Countryside Prop	507.0	5.0	513.0	277.6
Crest Nicholson	495.4	-5.6	517.0	332.0
McCarthy & Stone	151.8	2.3	158.8	123.5
Persimmon	3043.0	-8.0	3138.0	1836.0
Reckitt Benckiser	6500.0	0.0	6688.0	5767.0

MAIN CHANGES UK 350

Risers		%	Fallers		%
Future	1250.00	7.4	NMC Health	700.00	-22.2
Network Int	636.00	3.9	Hargreaves Lans	1604.50	-6.1
Beazley	601.00	3.8	Kaz Minerals	475.00	-3.9
Smurfit Kappa Gp	2938.00	3.2	Hunting	307.40	-3.9
Games Workshp	7350.00	2.4	Cairn Energy	166.70	-3.9
Dechra Pharma	2916.00	2.2	Frasers Group	464.60	-3.8
Mitchells & Butlers	412.50	2.1	Antofagasta	849.00	-3.6
Std Life Aberdeen	317.10	1.9	Oxford Instruments	1600.00	-3.3
St Modwen Props	504.00	1.9	Drax Gp	289.20	-3.2
Ferguson	7440.00	1.7	Tullow Oil	47.83	-3.1

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Redrow	770.0	-10.0	822.0	533.0
Taylor Wimpey	217.6	-0.1	223.0	142.9
Vistry Group	1398.0	4.0	1420.0	975.0

INDUSTRIAL ENGINEERING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Bodycote	866.5	-20.0	971.0	652.0
Hill & Smith	1423.0	-20.0	1510.0	1049.0
IMI	1129.5	-19.0	1206.0	906.0
Melrose Ind	241.8	-6.7	248.5	159.8
RHI Magnesita	3260.0	-66.0	5000.0	3194.0
Rotork	306.8	-6.6	341.2	269.8
Spirax-Sarco	9185.0	-110.0	9400.0	6585.0
Weir Gp	1387.0	-31.5	1814.0	1261.5

INDUSTRIAL METALS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Evraz	397.5	-7.4	709.4	341.4
Ferrexpo	144.3	-1.2	301.3	123.0

INDUSTRIAL TRANSPORTATION

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Clarkson	3050.0	-55.0	3110.0	2200.0
Fisher (James)	1966.0	-30.0	2260.0	1790.0
Royal Mail	178.8	-0.1	286.7	178.8
Signature Avi	291.2	0.0	406.0	291.2

LEISURE GOODS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Games Workshp	7350.0	170.0	7350.0	2800.0

LIFE INSURANCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aviva	407.8	-1.2	438.8	352.3
Lancashire Hldgs	770.0	7.0	780.5	575.0
Legal & General	309.2	-2.7	317.7	216.7
Phoenix Gp	784.1	2.0	784.1	634.2
Prudential	1461.0	9.0	1790.0	1279.5
St James Place	1174.5	-0.5	1199.5	913.6
Std Life Aberdeen	317.1	6.0	336.9	231.1

MEDIA

	Price	Chg	High	Low
4imprint	3370.0	10.0	3500.0	1917.5
Ascential	386.4	-2.2	421.2	319.0
Auto Trader Gp	578.2	-9.6	607.6	450.9
Euromny Inst Inv	1204.0	-18.0	1498.0	1152.0
Future	1250.0	86.0	1572.0	556.0
Informa	800.8	-17.2	892.0	694.4
ITV	134.6	-2.3	156.5	103.6
Moneysupermkt.com	331.3	0.8	417.7	309.5
Pearson	584.4	1.6	943.6	563.4
RELX	2087.0	-8.0	2095.0	1606.0
Rightmove Group	691.0	-0.2	691.2	471.2
WPP	968.8	-4.6	1077.5	801.0

MINING

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Anglo American	2032.5	-55.0	2266.0	1666.6
Antofagasta	849.0	-31.8	1022.5	779.6
BHP Group	1673.6	-47.2	2049.0	1600.0
Centamin	132.1	1.1	152.3	79.8
Fresnillo	664.8	11.0	1027.5	539.6
Glencore	233.2	-5.8	340.3	216.9
Hochschild Mining	160.5	-0.9	227.0	152.0
Kaz Minerals	475.0	-19.5	738.4	380.3
Polymet Int	1275.5	15.5	1286.0	772.6
Rio Tinto	4187.0	-103.5	4976.5	3924.5

MOBILE TELECOMMUNICATIONS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Vodafone Gp	153.0	2.0	165.2	123.3

NONLIFE INSURANCE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Admiral Gp	2270.0	-5.0	2330.0	2014.0
Beazley	601.0	22.0	628.0	502.0
Direct Line Ins	341.5	-1.5	366.5	270.5
Hastings Gp Hldgs	185.0	0.9	231.6	167.9
Hiscox	1336.0	-9.0	1777.0	1213.0
RSA Ins Gp	566.0	-0.6	597.0	501.6

OIL & GAS PRODUCERS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
BP	470.0	-5.0	582.5	452.7
Cairn Energy	166.7	-6.7	213.8	143.1
Energean Oil & Gas	745.0	1.0	1082.0	648.9
Premier Oil	101.7	-2.7	118.7	65.1
Royal Dutch Shell A	1996.6	-12.9	2612.0	1964.4
Royal Dutch Shell B	1986.0	-14.5	2622.0	1963.2
Tullow Oil	47.8	-1.6	250.0	39.9

OIL EQUIPMENT & SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Hunting	307.4	-12.4	657.0	297.0
Petrofac	355.0	-5.5	527.2	344.4
Wood Gp(J)	375.0	-5.4	598.6	319.6

PERSONAL GOODS

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Burberry Gp	2015.0	-2.0	2345.0	1695.0
PZ Cussons	192.6	-2.2	227.0	178.8

PHARMACEUTICALS & BIOTECHNOLOGY

	Price	Chg	High	Low
AstraZeneca	7685.0	-56.0	7878.0	5644.0
Dechra Pharma	2916.0	62.0	3068.0	2348.0
Genus	3160.0	-10.0	3246.0	2178.0
GlaxoSmithKline	1700.2	5.4	1846.0	1497.4
Hikma Pharma	1912.0	12.5	2200.0	1556.5

REAL ESTATE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Assura	79.6	-0.1	79.7	56.7
Big Yellow Gp	1193.0	3.0	1200.0	933.0
BMO Comm Prop	108.4	-1.4	128.0	106.0
British Land	559.2	-7.6	638.8	468.3
Captl & Count Prop	240.3	-2.1	270.5	184.8
CLS Hldgs	280.0	3.0	312.5	212.0
Daejan Hldgs	5220.0	-10.0	6160.0	4715.0
Derwent London	4142.0	-24.0	4186.0	2884.0
Grainger	310.4	1.4	315.6	217.4
Grt Portland Est	937.4	1.8	948.6	649.4
Hammerson	222.9	-2.4	388.4	203.9
Land Securities	940.8	-3.0	1001.5	735.4
LondonMetric Prop	232.8	0.2	241.2	186.7
NewRiver Retail	188.6	-1.4	246.0	147.6
Primary Hlth Prop	160.0	0.0	160.2	116.0
Safestore Hldgs	798.0	12.5	817.5	573.5
Savills	1210.0	-5.0	1244.0	820.5
SEGRO	907.0	-1.0	915.8	636.6
Shaftesbury	872.0	-6.0	979.5	739.5
St Modwen Props	504.0	9.5	510.0	373.0
TR Property IT	485.5	-1.5	491.5	377.0
Tritax Big Box	142.6	-0.4	159.7	135.5
UK Commercial Prop	86.4	-0.5	92.7	79.9
Unite Group	1285.0	1.0	1305.0	873.5
Workspace Gp	1237.0	7.0	1247.0	806.0

SOFTWARE & COMPUTER SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Avast	459.8	2.0	551.0	282.0
Aveva Gp	5210.0	55.0	5210.0	2884.0
Computacenter	1920.0	22.0	1920.0	1049.0
FDM Group	1026.0	-12.0	1100.0	647.0
Kainos Gp	850.0	-18.0	880.0	430.0
Micro Focus Intl	772.1	4.2	2160.0	766.8
Playtech	359.9	2.4	457.7	343.7
Sage Group	773.2	0.8	820.4	640.0
Softcat	1220.0	0.0	1257.0	702.0
Sophos	571.0	-0.2	577.0	298.2

SUPPORT SERVICES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Aggreko	770.4	-11.8	869.2	707.2
Ashtead Gp	2635.0	-17.0	2652.0	1805.5
Babcock Intl Grp	568.2	-3.8	646.6	416.7
Bunzl	1979.5	-21.5	2551.0	1943.0
Capita	149.4	-2.9	183.0	99.9
DCC	6232.0	-62.0	7496.0	6132.0
Diploma	1960.0	-20.0	2084.0	1280.0
Electrocomp	706.2	-11.2	729.8	540.8
Equiniti	208.4	-1.6	236.2	186.2
Essentra	425.0	-3.4	449.0	373.4
Experian	2761.0	-8.0	2769.0	1960.0
Ferguson	7440.0	126.0	7440.0	4800.0
G4S	196.7	-1.1	234.3	168.3
Hays	164.6	-1.3	183.5	138.0
Homeserve	1321.0	5.0	1340.0	953.0
Intertek Gp	5866.0	-94.0	6170.0	4643.0
IWG	446.0	1.0	469.0	225.9
Network Int	636.0	24.0	645.0	513.0
Pagegroup	480.6	-2.2	539.0	367.8
Paypoint	975.0	-18.0	1118.0	844.0
Rentokil Initial	501.8	-4.6	506.4	329.0
Sanne Group	593.0	-7.0	752.0	498.0
Serco	163.1	-2.4	167.7	111.7
SIG	92.4	0.2	153.0	91.3
Travis Perkins	1583.5	6.5	1692.5	1166.0

TECHNOLOGY HARDWARE & EQUIPMENT

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Spirent Comms	219.5	-0.5	251.5	140.4

TOBACCO

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Br Am Tob	3444.0	-37.5	3507.0	2648.0
Imperial Brands	1832.2	-15.2	2713.5	1668.2

TRAVEL & LEISURE

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Carnival	3114.0	-96.0	4373.0	3056.0
Cineworld Group	183.0	0.9	321.0	176.0
Compass Gp	1951.0	-7.0	2138.0	1665.0
Dominos Pizza	298.9	-7.7	326.4	221.2
easyJet	1510.5	-24.5	1536.5	854.8
EI Group	284.4	0.0	285.0	194.0
FirstGroup	122.5	-0.2	137.5	89.3
Flutter Ent	8436.0	18.0	9456.0	5525.0
Go-Ahead Gp	2050.0	-14.0	2278.0	1783.0
GVC Hldgs	888.8	-3.8	939.0	507.5
Intercontl Htls	4793.5	-126.5	5738.0	4458.5
Intl Cons Airl	609.8	-12.2	671.0	413.5
Marstons	103.1	-1.3	131.4	93.3
Mitchells & Butlers	412.5	8.5	470.5	238.0
National Express	442.0	-3.4	476.0	387.4
PPHE Hotel Gp	2040.0	-20.0	2100.0	1630.0
Rank Gp	297.0	-5.0	302.0	144.0
Restaurant Grp	122.7	-2.3	166.4	111.9
Stagecoach Gp	133.8	-2.7	167.0	115.5
Wetherspoon (JD)	1531.0	-15.0	1734.0	1250.0
Whitbread	4619.0	24.0	5152.0	3988.0
William Hill	173.1	2.7	205.2	132.3
Wizz Air Holdings	4215.0	-30.0	4329.0	2880.0

AIM 50

	Price	Chg	High	Low
Abcam	1303.0	-8.0	1500.0	1066.0
Advanced Medical	282.5	0.5	354.5	225.0
Alliance Pharma	86.3	-0.2	87.5	63.0
ASOS	3340.0	-31.0	4066.0	2107.0
Blue Prism	1757.0	-22.0	1841.0	788.0
Camellia	8550.0	0.0	11750.0	8350.0
Caretech Holdings	490.0	5.0	490.0	325.0
Central Asia Metals	213.5	-1.5	266.5	180.0
Clinigen Group	960.5	2.5	1069.0	737.5
CVS Group	1210.0	-40.0	1250.0	431.0
Dart Group	1880.0	70.0	1880.0	709.5
Diversified Gas & Oil	89.8	-0.6	116.5	89.2
Draper Esprit	548.0	4.0	548.0	410.0
EMIS Group	1140.0	-14.0	1242.0	938.0
Fevertree Drinks	1374.0	-31.5	2475.0	1365.0
First Derivatives	2685.0	-5.0	3555.0	2050.0
Frontier Devs	1346.0	-58.0	1444.0	844.0
Gamma Comms	1360.0	-15.0	1460.0	786.0
GB Group	705.0	-14.0	800.0	420.0
Gooch & Housego	1415.0	-7.5	1527.5	954.0
Hurricane Energy	17.2	-0.3	53.6	17.2
Impax Asset Mgmt	372.5	2.5	405.0	201.0
Iomart Group	380.5	-0.5	400.0	316.5
IQE	55.7	1.7	98.0	41.8
James Halstead	534.0	-26.0	570.0	440.0
Johnson Service Gp	204.0	-5.0	211.5	128.0
Keywords Studios	1600.0	49.0	1838.0	959.0
Learning Tech Gp	164.6	-0.2	164.8	63.2
M&C Saatchi	93.0	-5.0	394.0	79.0
M.P. Evans	695.0	15.0	750.0	612.0
Majestic Wine	211.0	-1.0	318.0	210.0
Midwich Group	550.0	16.0	633.0	474.5
Mortgage Advice B	770.0	20.0	795.0	546.0
Next Fifteen Comm	514.0	4.0	658.0	465.0
Nichols	1370.0	2.5	1880.0	1322.5
Numis Corporation	293.0	15.0	306.0	212.0
Polar Capital Hdgs	560.0	2.0	604.0	482.0
Purplebricks Gp	111.2	1.0	132.0	96.0
Redde	101.0	-0.8	127.6	98.0
Renew Holdings	516.0	2.0	568.0	360.0
RWS Holdings	559.0	-12.0	670.0	460.0
Scapa Group	266.5	7.0	403.0	157.0
Secure Income REIT	472.0	-1.0	473.0	394.0
Serica Energy	109.0	-2.0	143.4	103.6
Smart Metering Sys	520.0	0.5	635.0	310.0
Telford Homes	349.5	0.0	358.0	267.0
Thorpe (F.W.)	324.0	0.0	359.0	267.0
Watkin Jones	245.0	-2.5	255.0	199.6
Young's Brew NV	1245.0	0.0	1310.0	1030.0
Young's Brew-A	1557.5	7.5	1885.0	1520.0

EU SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
ADIDAS	288.95	-0.55	316.05	197.00
AIR LIQUIDE	134.90	-0.35	135.25	105.05
ALLIANZ AG	227.70	0.75	226.95	184.04
AMADEUS IT GROUP	73.32	-1.34	78.60	42.30
ANHEUSER BUSCH INBEV	68.50	-1.39	92.71	65.77
ASML HOLDING NV	278.55	-2.10	280.65	158.30
AXA	24.81	0.07	25.47	20.27
BANCO SANTANDER	326.60	-3.40	402.00	294.70
BASF	62.54	-0.38	74.49	56.20
BAYER AG	77.79	-0.27	78.06	52.53
BMW	64.78	-1.55	77.75	58.70
BNP PARIBAS	51.83	1.42	53.58	39.32
CRH	2978.00	-27.00	3100.00	2279.00
DAIMLER	42.97	-1.03	59.31	40.53
DANONE	73.44	-0.32	82.00	64.80
DEUTSCHE POST AG	32.69	-0.19	34.91	25.88
DEUTSCHE TELEKOM	14.90	0.04	16.25	14.14
ENEL	8.18	0.05	8.13	5.14
ENGIE	15.64	-0.07	15.88	12.45
ENI	12.91	-0.06	15.94	12.61
ESSILORLUXOTTICA	128.75	0.00	128.75	128.75
FRESENIUS MEDICAL CARE	72.46	-0.32	76.32	57.92
IBERDROLA	10.28	-0.10	10.38	6.02
INDITEX	31.89	-0.07	32.37	2.55
ING GROEP NV	10.57	0.08	12.05	8.34
INTESA SANPAOLO	2.48	0.00	2.47	1.83
KERING	565.70	-6.30	610.20	425.05
KON KPN NV	2.48	-0.01	2.96	2.48
L'OREAL	270.70	2.90	275.30	220.30
LVMH MOET HENNESSY	413.95	-4.10	439.05	288.30
MUENCHENER RUECKVE	277.70	1.40	276.30	200.10
NOKIA	21.88	0.00	21.88	21.88
ORANGE	12.79	0.03	15.01	12.61
ROYAL PHILIPS	44.00	-0.07	45.61	34.01
SAFRAN	150.25	2.65	150.05	113.55
SANOFI	93.58	-0.07	93.65	72.24
SAP SE	124.08	-0.54	126.90	92.40
SCHNEIDER ELECTRIC	95.62	-0.36	95.98	62.94
SIEMENS AG	108.34	-0.56	119.90	85.00
SOCIETE GENERALE	30.55	-0.05	31.79	21.13
TELEFONICA SA	6.22	-0.01	9.18	5.94
TOTAL	45.26	-0.64	52.27	43.18
UNILEVER NV	54.51	0.09	57.56	47.05
VINCI	103.65	0.15	104.05	76.84
VIVENDI	25.49	-0.08	26.42	22.41
VOLKSWAGEN AG	166.50	-4.40	185.52	138.16

CRYPTO A.M. DAILY

POWERED BY BEQUANT

CRYPTOCURRENCIES

Name	Price (USDT)	/(24h)
Bitcoin (BTC)	$ 9,865.38	1.01%
Ethereum (ETH)	$ 224.25	1.51%
Ripple (XRP)	$ 0.28	-0.41%
Bitcoin Cash (BCH)	$ 445.77	1.84%
Litecoin (LTC)	$ 76.91	4.03%
EOS.IO (EOS)	$ 4.77	4.16%
Bitcoin SV (BSV)	$ 338.27	14.88%
TRON (TRON)	$ 0.02	0.09%
NEO (NEO)	$ 12.72	-0.34%
Cardano (ADA)	$ 0.06	0.98%
CryptoCompare Large Cap Index		0.35%
CryptoCompare Small Cap Index		0.11%

Market	$281,754,969,868
Bitcoin Volatility	-0.50%
Bitcoin Volume on BEQUANT Exchange (USDT)	221,856,690

Sources: Bequant.io, CryptoCompare.com
Prices and data are correct as of 00:00, 09.02.2020
Crypto AM features in City AM every Tuesday.
Previous Editions:www.cityam.com/crypto-insider
Read more at: https://bequant.pro/cityam

CRYPTO & COFFEE

The sentiment was well supported over the weekend, as market participants remained unfazed by the fact that Bitcoin failed to break above $10,000 last week. Nonetheless, month-to-date, Bitcoin (Btc) is already up 5%.

At same time, Ethereum (Eth) is up just over 20% as the surge in the total value locked in DeFi finally topped $1bn mark and prompted renewed sense of confidence in Eth roadmap. In turn, this weighed on Ethereum Classic (ETC) which has been riding the wave of the so-called “flippening” trade whereby disgruntled Eth miners look for better opportunities elsewhere. The underperformance by Etc relative to Eth is unlikely to last, especially as Eth continues to push ahead with its 2.0 upgrade. On that note, it was reported that the planned upgrade will no longer take place in Q2 2020 as previous expected, but researchers remain confident the initial network parameters will deploy in 2020. Anything less would be considered a “failure,” they said.

Looking elsewhere, the latest CME Commitment of Traders (COT) report has revealed that even as CTA/leveraged category remains overwhelmingly short, other reportable category saw an unexpected pick up in longs, which rose to its highest since August’19, while shorts fell to its lowest level since March’19, just before the price spiked up.

COMMODITIES

Gold	1572.87	+10.05
Silver (Pence)	1776.50	+14.50
Silver (Cents)	1371.00	+21.00
Krugerrand	1588.97	+8.85
Brent Crude	54.93	-0.35
Platinum	977.00	+3.00
British Sovereign	370.81	+2.02
Lead Cash Official	1843.50	+0.25
Copper Cash Official	5725.50	+12.00
Aluminium Cash Official	1697.50	+9.75
Nickel Cash Official	13007.50	+5.00
Aluminium Alloy Cash Official	1355.00	-10.00
Natural Gas	22.40	-0.39
Tin Cash Official	16562.50	+237.50
Zinc Cash Official	2205.00	-17.35
White Sugar	414.00	+0.40

TOURIST RATES

Canada	1.6382
Croatia	7.9441
Czech Republic	27.08
Denmark	8.3798
Hong Kong	9.5257
Iceland	144.16
India	81.29
Israel	3.9923
New Zealand	1.8692
Norway	11.41
Poland	4.4185
Singapore	1.6734
Sweden	11.92
Switzerland	1.2019
Turkey	7.3658
United States	1.2348

WORLD INDICIES

	Price	Chg	%Chg
FTSE 100	7466.70	-38.09	-0.51
FTSE 250	21499.29	-73.57	-0.34
FTSE All-Share	4151.15	-19.74	-0.47
FTSE AIM All-Share	961.94	-2.06	-0.21
S&P 500	3327.70	-18.08	-0.54
Dow Jones I.A	29102.51	-277.26	-0.94
Nasdaq Composite	9520.51	-51.64	-0.54
Xetra DAX	13513.81	-61.01	-0.45
CAC 40	6029.75	-8.43	-0.14
Swiss Market Index	11001.53	-10.83	-0.10
ISEQ Overall Index	7151.47	-35.70	-0.50
FTSEurofirst 300	1657.49	-4.21	-0.25
Hang Seng	27404.27	-89.43	-0.33
Nikkei	23827.98	-45.61	-0.19
STI Index	3181.48	-50.07	-1.55
ASX All Ordinaries	7121.40	-27.30	-0.38

US SHARES

	Price	Chg	High	Low
3M	160.08	-2.81	219.50	150.74
ABBOTT LABORATORIES	87.87	-1.60	91.86	72.88
ADOBE INC	366.09	-1.37	367.46	254.74
ALPHABET NON VTG-C	1479.23	3.00	1486.65	1036.23
ALPHABET-A	1479.11	3.14	1484.69	1116.79
AMAZON.COM	2079.28	29.05	2050.23	1591.00
AMERICAN EXPRESS	131.82	-1.43	135.11	105.41
APPLE INC	320.03	-5.18	325.21	169.43
AT&T	38.45	0.01	39.63	29.71
BANK OF AMERICA	34.61	-0.06	35.64	26.25
BERKSHIRE HATHAWAY	227.38	-2.23	230.20	195.81
BOEING CO	336.75	-4.68	432.69	309.00
CATERPILLAR INC	133.37	-3.88	150.53	113.38
CHEVRON	108.94	-0.55	126.54	106.28
CISCO SYSTEMS	47.97	-0.72	58.05	43.52
CITIGROUP	78.69	-0.28	81.91	60.33
COCA-COLA CO	59.19	0.20	58.99	44.69
COMCAST	44.74	0.14	47.50	37.00
DOW	48.03	-1.17	66.65	40.71
EBAY INC	36.20	-1.80	41.57	33.56
EXXON MOBIL	61.47	-0.41	83.38	59.97
FACEBOOK	212.33	1.48	223.23	174.60
GOLDMAN SACHS GROUP	238.00	-3.82	249.72	182.49
HOME DEPOT INC	237.30	-1.54	238.85	181.14
HONEYWELL INTERNATIONAL	175.28	-1.07	183.23	148.48
IBM	153.41	-3.35	156.76	126.99
INTEL	66.02	-1.07	68.47	43.46
JOHNSON & JOHNSON	151.89	-1.64	153.99	126.95
JPMORGAN CHASE & CO	137.17	-0.44	141.09	98.93
MASTERCARD INC	327.00	-2.30	329.30	217.10
MCDONALD'S	211.61	-1.26	221.15	173.97
MEDTRONIC	118.95	-2.35	121.30	84.15
MERCK & CO	85.08	-0.60	92.04	73.19
MICROSOFT	183.89	0.26	183.63	105.25
NETFLIX	366.77	-0.18	385.03	254.59
NIKE INC	99.44	-0.83	104.58	77.14
ORACLE	54.72	0.01	60.15	50.24
PAYPAL HOLDINGS	118.88	-1.01	121.30	96.64
PEPSICO	145.37	1.04	144.33	118.61
PFIZER INC	38.05	-0.21	44.40	34.24
PROCTER & GAMBLE	126.08	-1.06	127.14	98.27
TRAVELERS COMPANIES	136.01	-0.49	154.83	125.42
TWITTER	37.03	-1.38	45.42	28.89
UNITED HEALTH GROUP	289.22	-3.24	300.74	215.26
UNITED TECHNOLOGIES	156.83	0.63	156.20	122.72
VERIZON COMMUNICATIONS	59.94	0.50	62.07	54.03
VISA	202.74	-0.30	208.21	168.86
WALGREENS BOOTS ALLIANCE	53.24	-0.25	76.05	49.29
WALMART	116.45	0.14	121.28	96.20
WALT DISNEY CO	141.02	-1.68	151.64	107.79
WELLS FARGO & CO	47.84	-0.14	54.46	43.38

TRAVEL

48 HOURS IN...

BRECON BEACONS WALES

WHERE TO STAY

Set in 33 acres of mature woodlands and bordered on all sides by the Black Mountains, **Gliffaes Country Hotel** is South Wales's most melodramatic retreat and the area's only four star hotel. *Visit gliffaeshotel.com*

WHERE TO GO

The romantic ruins of **Carreg Cennen castle** are the highlight of the park and an unmissable sight. Situated near the village of Trap in the west of the Brecon Beacons, they perch on a formidable limestone crag 300ft above the river.

WHERE TO DRINK

Whisky lovers should pilgrimage to Wales's only distillery, **Penderyn.** It's a slick operation, with fascinating tours available daily, and plenty of tasty samples included. *Visit penderyn.wales*

WHERE TO EAT

Worth a visit for delicious smoked food is the family-run **Black Mountains Smokery** in Crickhowell, serving irresistible salmon, caviar, locally hunted game birds and cheeses. Visit *smoked-foods.co.uk*

THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Keith Perry heads off in search of virgin powder snow on an uphill skiing expedition

It's a still night on the mountain, with the full moon glinting on the snow. By the light of the torch on my head I can only see a narrow path as I trudge through the forests of Morzine in the French Alps.

Despite the freezing cold I'm rapidly stripping off layers, overheating with the sheer exertion of the 1,505m ascent up Pleney, a climb on skis of around 350 vertical metres. But the sweat and effort of this nocturnal expedition is more than made up for by the sense of being immersed in nature with no-one around. There are none of the interruptions of the daytime pistes: no learner skiers wobbling across my path, no kids zooming past, no raucous laughter and pumping music from the bars and no chance of a Gwyneth Paltrow style collision. The only noise is the sound of an owl hooting in the distance.

I am taking part in the fast-growing sport of ski de randonnée, or back country ski touring, which allows you to reach untracked slopes and go to places where there are no ski lifts to enjoy virgin powder snow. The Nirvana of off-piste skiers.

My instructor is ski mountaineering specialist Alain Premat from the Morzine Ecole de Ski Français who is helping to promote the sport in this huge Portes du Soleil ski area together with the Morzine Tourist Office.

Departing every Thursday afternoon from Morzine's town centre, Alain guides newcomers up the mountain with specialist lightweight ski touring equipment. The sport involves walking uphill on skis in the dark, with the tantalising promise of a completely serene and peaceful descent.

Our expedition starts at dusk where Alain briefly explains the differences between traditional Alpine skis and the touring skis we are using.

Skinning uphill (as opposed to skinning up) means attaching fabric skins to the base of the skis to allow your skis to slide forwards but crucially not backwards down the slope with your heel lifting away from the ski as you climb.

In the 1930s, the original climbing skins were made from real seal hides although they are now made from a mixture of mohair and nylon, allowing you to grip the snow and ski along.

Alain stresses the importance of keeping the skins dry and warm so they adhere well to the skis. He also advises me to remove my heavy ski jacket to avoid overheating - one hour of uphill skiing can burn 680 calories, compared with only 408 during downhill skiing.

Fully kitted up, we take one of the final gondola lifts up Pleney to test my downhill skiing skills on my new lightweight skis and touring ski boots, then we switch on our head torches and begin our ascent up the mountain.

Although we start climbing at a steady pace on the piste, Alain soon veers off onto a narrow forest trail where snow-clad tree branches brush against our clothing and night begins to fall.

Along the route Alain points out the animal tracks belonging to rabbits, chamois (mountain deer) and foxes. He explains that occasionally your head torch will light up the eyes of startled animal before it vanishes into the darkness. Fortunately any wild boar will hear us well before we encounter them.

It takes a while for me to find my stride and get used to the sliding motion of the skis but soon I am making steady progress with my three experienced touring companions following behind me in single file. Sensing my puffing, Alain advises that the best technique is to not lift my skis but slide them backwards and forwards along the snow for maximum efficiency.

When it comes to ski touring, Alain is something of a national champion. In 2010, aged 28, he was part of a team of three including his brother, Jean-François, that instigated the Lac Léman to Mont Blanc summit challenge. They climbed 11,000 vertical metres over a distance of 110km in 23 hours and 10 minutes, a record that has never been broken.

The same trio are former record holders of the Chamonix to Zermatt ski touring challenge (the Haute Route). Regular ski tourers would take up to seven days to complete this, staying in mountain hut refuges along the way. Alain did the whole itinerary in less than 19 hours.

But I am in a different league to Alain and after an hour and a half of uphill climbing, I am relieved to reach our goal: a wooden cross marking a hamlet called Nabor, near the top of Pleney.

As we stop for a breather and a welcome mug of steaming coffee, I admire the brilliance of the Milky Way in the cloudless sky – a very different view to London's smoggy skyline.

Fully re-energised, we adjust our ski bindings to downhill mode and head down through the soft knee-deep powder towards the twinkling lights of Morzine.

Back at the luxurious timbered Chalet Bizet, our hosts Anna and Will welcome us with vintage Bollinger and canapés in front of the roaring log fire.

The large eight-person hot tub under the canopy of stars is ideal preparation for our delicious six course taster menu with paired fine wines. After my exhilarating 90-minute mountain climb, I reckon I can overdo the calories.

The timbered lounge of luxury catered ski chalet, Chalet Bizet

NEED TO KNOW

A week's stay at Chalet Bizet costs from £1,195pp. For more info visit alikats.eu/chalets/chalet-bizet or call 0203 514 6012. ESF Morzine offers introductory evening ski tours costing £42 pp. For more info visit esf-morzine.com/adultes/hors-piste. Transfers were arranged with Skiidy Gonzales (+33 (0) 450 37 36 85, skiidygonzales.com) For infor about Morzine and to plan your trip visit: en.morzine-avoriaz.com

THE LONG WEEKEND

ICKWORTH HOUSE
SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

Julian Harris escapes to the country at this luxurious retreat

THE WEEKEND: Lose yourself at the National Trust-owned Ickworth estate, spanning 1,800 acres of soothing Suffolk countryside. More importantly, lose your kids at the creche while you indulge in the Ickworth hotel's deluxe treatments.

THE SETTING: Ickworth House is an opulent palace dreamed up by typically eccentric aristocratic minds back in the 18th century. Today, it is democratised through a neighbouring hotel and a range of National Trust activities and attractions. For history-lovers there is a choice of tours, focusing on Ickworth's medieval roots, the extravagant buildings that emerged in subsequent centuries, the antics of inhabitants and visitors over the years, and modern conservation work.

THE STUFF FOR BIG PEOPLE: Coinciding with the two hours of creche time, book yourself a treatment. We went for the full body massage, which unearthed and dispelled even more stress than expected, and a one-hour facial. For the more adventurous, Ickworth also offers a wellness retreat package including a mindfulness bathing experience in the forest itself.

THE STUFF FOR LITTLE PEOPLE: From toddlers to 10-year-olds, even the moodiest of children will find fun at Ickworth. Beside the hotel our bundle of joy discovered an idyllic playground within a walled garden, while further out in the estate we stumbled across an adventure playground that could have used up at least half a day. Most crucially, the "Four Bears' Den" creche proved a hit – kids emerge face-painted and cheery, not a tear was shed. Ickworth is very much modelled as a family-friendly destination; trunks of toys and books line the hotel's halls, the restaurant provides plastic cutlery as standard, and the staff are trained to smile sweetly at all their screeching, demanding customers – young or old.

WITCH FACT
The largest ever witch trial took place in Bury St Edmunds.

THE SPORT: Hire a bike to explore the enormous grounds (child-seat already attached), passing large numbers of bemused sheep and the occasional deer. Undulating pathways loop you around the estate, passing streams, woodland, fields and, remarkably, St Mary's Church, a building dating back to medieval times that benefitted from a £1m restoration back in 2013. Alternatively, join one of the many hikes around the estate alongside keen ramblers who arrive at Ickworth each morning. Start or finish your days by diving into the delicious heated pool for a few laps before dinner. There's every chance you'll return home thinner than when you arrived.

THE FOOD: Inclusive packages come with breakfast and dinner. If you want to venture beyond the estate, however, consider the Six Bells in Horringer – a nearby pub with a child-friendly beer garden and gastro-standard grub. Alternatively head into Bury St Edmunds, just a 10-minute drive away.

NEED TO KNOW: To book your stay or to find out more, call 0844 482 2152 or visit luxuryfamilyhotels.co.uk

OFFICE POLITICS

The power of the workplace Picasso

Forget the office fruit basket — art is food for the soul, so why not put up a few pieces?

Patrick McCrae

IN RECENT years, we have seen businesses commit to new mental health initiatives, from training mental health first aiders to developing mindfulness apps, yoga classes at the office, plants, and bringing in pets.

Employers of all sizes are looking for ways to keep their workforce happy and motivated. And rightly so — the global cost of mental illness through lost productivity and staff turnover is estimated to be around $2.5 trillion annually, with burnout, stress, depression and anxiety a growing epidemic affecting both the team and the bottom line.

Most of us are affected by our visual surroundings in some way — whether we suffer anxiety and stress due to building works at home, anger because of a packed ride on the Bakerloo Line, or a faint ennui as we wake up to another overcast day. And harsh strip lighting, crowded and cramped desk arrangements, and the nondescript white walls of the workplace can have a detrimental impact on our happiness more than people realise.

To combat this, more businesses are using art to engage their employees and clients alike. Whether it is prints on the walls in the meeting rooms, a sculpture in the foyer, or an audio-visual performance for an event, art can provide a variety of tools to improve how we feel in the workplace.

The benefits are real. The All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing in the UK published a comprehensive report in 2017 that collated research showing an undeniable positive link between art and mental wellbeing.

One example from the report showed that an art-on-prescription service, consisting of an eight-week course of two-hour sessions, and led by a professional artist in ceramics, poetry, painting, or drawing, resulted in a 37 per cent drop in GP consultation rates. This simple solution returned a saving equivalent to £217 per patient to the NHS each year.

The research also showed that, after engaging with the arts, 82 per cent of people reported greater wellbeing, and 77 per cent engaged more in physical activity.

After engaging with the arts, 82 per cent of people reported greater wellbeing, and 77 per cent engaged more in physical activity

How does this translate through the revolving door and into the office? A few years ago, we commissioned our own research, and the results showed that people are 14.3 per cent more productive when they are in a workplace that includes art compared to a workplace that does not.

Half of all office users believe that artwork makes them more effective, while 61 per cent believe that art inspires them to think and work more creatively, and 82 per cent of people believe artwork to be an important addition to the workplace. These are all good stats to show how employers can help to keep their workforce engaged and happy.

Our studies have also shown that changing the artwork on display can further improve creativity and wellbeing. Art does not just function decoratively, but proactively within the working environment.

In practical terms, what does this really mean for employers? Improving your team's daily visual diet does not have to be a drain on resources, but instead can become an integrated part of the office day to day.

A regular change in the visual surrounding once or twice a year will provide a return on investment that isn't hard to gauge. Taking just a little more effort in thinking about your employees' immediate surroundings could result in them thanking you for brightening up their day.

Of course, we're not arguing that you should ban yoga at lunchtime or take away training budgets for mental health first aiders. But art is a simple and straightforward provision that will improve your office's visual surroundings — the surroundings that impact heavily how your staff feel and ultimately perform.

Patrick McCrae is chief executive of ARTIQ.

ART ATTACK

DailyArt
Free

Want to become an art historian without needing to read any massive books? This app sends you one new masterpiece every day, along with the history behind it. Broaden your knowledge by reading biographies on over 700 artists and browse information on around 500 museum collections. You'll be full of trivia.

COFFEE BREAK

SUDOKU

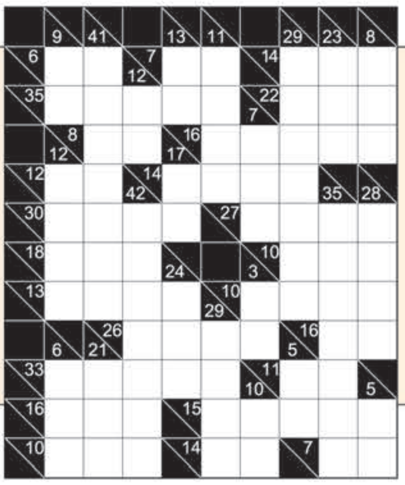
Place the numbers from 1 to 9 in each empty cell so that each row, each column and each 3x3 block contains all the numbers from 1 to 9 to solve this tricky Sudoku puzzle.

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

KAKURO

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

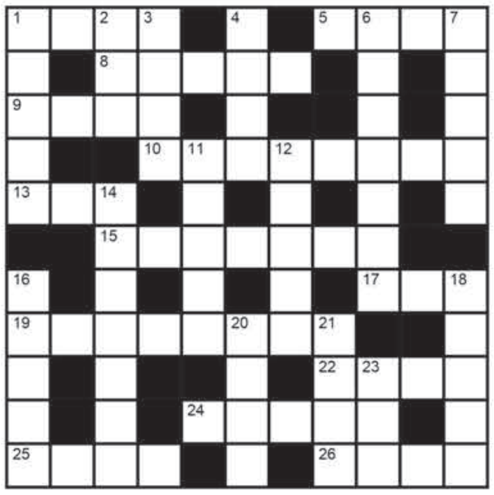
You can only use the digits 1-9 and you must not use the same digit twice in a block. The same digit may occur more than once in a row or column, but it must be in a separate block.



WORDWHEEL

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

QUICK CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1 Lyric poet (4)
5 Arabian ruler (4)
8 Characteristic of a city (5)
9 Feeling of intense anger (4)
10 Debris (8)
13 Continuous portion of a circle (3)
15 Placate (7)
17 Large open vessel (3)
19 Reply (8)
22 Have on (clothing) (4)
24 Legal tender (5)
25 Was certain (4)
26 Charter (4)

DOWN

1 Country also called Myanmar (5)
2 Small carpet (3)
3 Depicted (4)
4 Natural underground chamber (4)
6 Mosque tower (7)
7 Brightest star in the constellation Orion (5)
11 Copy that is not the original (abbr) (5)
12 Packs to capacity (5)
14 Overturn (a boat) accidentally (7)
16 Separate into pieces (5)
18 Explode (5)
20 Gas used in lighting (4)
21 Large jug (4)
23 Organ of sight (3)

LAST ISSUE'S SOLUTIONS

QUICK CROSSWORD

KAKURO

SUDOKU

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

WORDWHEEL

The nine-letter word was OBSTETRIC

Money talk obscuring the real change at governing bodies

Guest Comment

Casey Harwood

SINCE private equity company CVC paid £200m for 27 per cent of Premiership Rugby just over a year ago, new money entering sport has gathered pace. While talk of this trend has focused on the size and value of such investments, it has missed the most interesting aspect of what is happening: that the world of sports governing bodies is on the brink of seismic change.

While big cash sums are always fascinating, the catalyst for this change isn't money but the realisation that fans have myriad options to engage with sport beyond traditional channels. The inherent business factor in this is that where people go, their hearts, minds and wallets travel with them. This battle for audience is widespread; governing bodies might own major events but non-traditional platforms have done a great job in winning over fan conversations.

One example of this is in horse racing. Betting brands have done an outstanding job in engaging with punters, resulting in a deeper relationship with racing fans than many major events or bodies which regulate the sport. One hugely effective response to this has been the creation of World Horse Racing, a joint venture between Ascot, Breeders' Cup, Victoria Racing Club and Goodwood Racecourse. Through a combination of social and digital story-telling, using powerful and unique content, they have built and engaged an audience – without showing a single live racing event.

There are many other instances of this and it isn't that governing bodies have been slack; it is just that commercial brands – driven by a financial imperative – have often worked out how to speak to fans more effectively, quicker. If you are a runner, triathlete or cyclist, the social and digital offerings of Reebok, CrossFit, Adidas, Strava or Nike probably take priority in your app or social hierarchy, especially during non-competition periods. Investors have spotted this and the associated revenue potential, so are playing a big part in response-driven change in the industry.

Some of the brands leading the charge include the International Swimming League and Kosmos, the force behind the revamped Davis Cup. In acquiring or creating exciting sports rights, they are not pretending to be traditional governing bodies but are charting new waters around the role federations have historically played, focusing on creating commercially viable businesses through "owning" targeted fan groups.

It would be wrong to imply that all sports governing bodies have been caught napping – some, such as World Rugby, have been as astute as any of the other entities disrupting the sector and plenty have been developing exciting plans in this space. Another recent initiative is GB Sports Media, a streaming platform for Olympic and Paralympic sports, now spearheaded by former BBC and Discovery executive Dominic Coles, an experienced and broad-thinking agent of change.

That said, the headline-grabbing talk about over-the-top broadcast is something of a misdirection. Broadcast is only part of the story since the true business proposition is building and – in some cases – reclaiming audiences. It isn't feasible to create a sustainable revenue stream and fan acquisition strategy from content when control of a sport's grassroots or big-event social conversation is uncoordinated and narrated by someone else.

Sit back and watch as this situation evolves over the next decade; the winners are almost certainly set to be rights owners – traditional or new – who correctly blend IP with staging great events, supported by engaging social content.

Casey Harwood is commercial director at Engage Digital Partners, a full service digital engagement agency with offices in London, India and Australia.

ENGLAND SPIN IT TO WIN IT

Combination of Moeen and Rashid proves its worth again as England level ODI series, writes **Felix Keith**

Adil Rashid took 3-51 to earn the man of the match award

THE SERIES may have suffered from an after-the-Lord-Mayor's-show feel but, thanks to their win yesterday, England did at least extend a proud record.

Victory by two wickets over South Africa in Johannesburg meant that England ensured the three-match One-Day International series was drawn 1-1 and their three-year unbeaten record remains intact.

England's domination of the 50-over format is such that last year's World Cup came in the middle of a purple patch which stretches back to January 2017, when they were beaten 2-1 away in India.

There have been many factors which have sustained that period of excellence – former head coach Trevor Bayliss removing the shackles of conservatism; Eoin Morgan's leadership; the ultra-attacking, ultra-consistent opening partnership of Jason Roy and Jonny Bairstow – and it was fitting that Sunday's win was built on the back of another.

Moeen Ali and Adil Rashid have both spent most of the winter away from the glare of the England side, but both displayed just how important they are to Morgan's side in Johannesburg.

SPIN TWINS

Moeen's stock has fluctuated in recent months after he chose to take a break from the red-ball side following the first Ashes Test and was dropped for the closing stages of the World Cup. The all-rounder has spent his time playing Twenty10 cricket in Abu Dhabi and ruminating on his future after featuring in New Zealand.

Meanwhile Rashid, who has struggled with a shoulder injury for some time, featured on the tour of New Zealand before joining his friend on the T10 circuit in the Middle East.

Back bowling in tandem in South Africa, their importance to the white-ball team was clear. Moeen's steady, reliable off-spin creates a fantastic combination when coupled with Rashid's attacking, hard to read leg-spin which allows Morgan the luxury of being able to control the run-rate without being defensive.

After Tom Curran and Saqib Mahmood had kept things tight up front, conceding just 36 runs and taking one wicket from the opening powerplay, it was England's spinners who turned the screw.

Rashid out-foxed Temba Bavuma with a googly to break a 66-run partnership with Quinton de Kock before doing the same to Rassie van der Dussen the very next ball. However, because Bavuma's unsuccessful review for lbw had not included Ultra-Edge technology, Van der Dussen was incorrectly allowed to review and earn a reprieve.

Thankfully for England it didn't last long, the right-hander comprehensively bowled playing back to one which kept low from Moeen (1-42) seven balls later. Rashid (3-51) then snared the big wicket of De Kock (69), generating some dip to evade the Proteas captain's heave and hit the leg stump.

Jon-Jon Smuts was run out before Andile Phehlukwayo became Rashid's third victim, missing a sweep shot to be pinned lbw.

NOT OVERAWED

David Miller provided some late impetus with some much-needed legside hitting, but South Africa's total of 256-7 always looked light on a pitch with decent bounce and a short boundary on one side.

The successful return of England's spinners was not the only positive either. Roy and Bairstow did what they do best, putting on 61 runs in just 6.2 overs to take out what little sting there was from the chase.

After a minor wobble, experience and youth combined to stabilise. Joe Denly and Tom Banton made 70 runs together, with Denly reaching his second half-century of the series and Banton making a 32 which suggested he is not overawed at this level.

England lost three wickets in the space of 16 balls to stumble at the finish line, but fittingly it was Moeen who struck the winning runs as the visitors got home on 257-8 with 40 balls remaining.

England have learned a few things about new players at the start of their latest cycle. But the final match of the series also proved beyond any doubt how crucial an old, well-established combination is to their success.

SPORT

SPIN WINS IT Rashid and Moeen return to help England level South Africa series PAGE 27

FRENCH FIREPOWER Les Bleus move top of the Six Nations table with a win over Italy

France beat Italy 35-22 at the Stade de France to move top of the Six Nations table with a bonus-point win yesterday. The hosts started brightly and took the lead when Teddy Thomas touched down Romain Ntamack's kick. Captain Charles Ollivon added another from close range before winger Matteo Minozzi scored in the corner for Italy to make it 13-7. Gregory Alldritt widened France's lead before the break and Ntamack (pictured) ran in off the back of a rolling maul to establish control at 28-10. Federico Zani hit back for Italy but replacement scrum-half Baptiste Serin scored a wonderful solo try to ensure that Mattia Bellini's late score for Italy was only a consolation. The win took France, who have not won the tournament since 2010, ahead of second-placed Ireland on points difference. Fabien Galthie's side will travel to Cardiff to play Wales next on 22 February.

SPORT DIGEST

STORM CIARA FORCES SPORT POSTPONEMENTS

Manchester City's Premier League game against West Ham was postponed yesterday as Storm Ciara caused chaos with the sporting calendar. City called off the game due to "extreme and escalating weather conditions" in the north west, while all six Women's Super League matches also fell victim to the storm. England's Women's Six Nations match against Scotland is set to be held at Murrayfield behind closed doors today at 1.30pm because of safety concerns for fans. Racing at Exeter, Southwell and Punchestown was also called off, along with two Super League games.

BLADES MOVE FIFTH WITH VICTORY OVER CHERRIES

Sheffield United moved to within two points of the Premier League's top four yesterday with a 2-1 win over Bournemouth. Callum Wilson netted from a rebound to give the Cherries the lead, but the hosts hit back through Billy Sharp's goal from close range to make it 1-1 at half-time. Dean Henderson made a superb save to deny Ryan Fraser and substitute John Lundstram then steered in the winner in the 84th minute to send the Blades past Tottenham and into fifth place.

WEST BROM GO CLEAR WITH WIN OVER MILLWALL

West Brom increased their lead at the top of the Championship to four points with a 2-0 win over Millwall at The Den on Sunday. Filip Krovinovic curled in from the edge of the box to open the scoring after 42 minutes before Kyle Bartley missed a good chance to double the lead. Jed Wallace twice came close for Millwall but the away side sealed it when Dara O'Shea headed in Kamil Grosicki's corner late on. The win leaves Slaven Bilic's West Brom on 59 points, four ahead of Leeds, who lost 2-0 to fourth-placed Nottingham Forest on Saturday.

ENGLAND SURVIVE STORM

Eddie Jones got the win he needed at Murrayfield but very little else, writes **Michael Searles**

IT WAS A Six Nations match that will be remembered for everything but the dire spectacle on the pitch as England walked into the eye of the storm at Murrayfield on Saturday.

A hostile reception was guaranteed for Eddie Jones and his team on their arrival, but not many would have foreseen a stray bottle landing on the head of Neil Craig, England's head of high performance, as he stepped off the team bus.

Jones called it, and the behaviour of the Scottish crowd, "disrespectful", after they jeered Owen Farrell every time he kicked for posts. The Scottish Rugby Union said the bottle was plastic and that there was no evidence of it being thrown rather than blown by a gust.

"We weren't expecting beer bottles to be thrown, that's a new trick," said Jones. "Neil has a hard head, I know that and there's not much inside it. He will be alright."

Having weathered the storm off the pitch, England had to deal with one on it as they came out on top of a game that could have gone either way, winning 13-6.

The wind swirled and the rain hammered down as Storm Ciara arrived in the UK and wreaked havoc on a game littered with errors.

Scotland captain Stuart Hogg called the conditions the most difficult he had ever played in but going into the final 10 minutes, with the game still poised at 3-3, they were in with a shot of winning.

Unfortunately, it was a second crucial mistake from Hogg in as many weeks that gifted England the Calcutta Cup.

The 27-year-old meant to let a loose ball bounce back over his try-line before grounding it, but instead conceded a 5m scrum from which Ellis Genge scored the winning try.

By this point England had firmly established superiority at set pieces as Scotland struggled to build momentum in attack.

The hosts lost eight of their 19 lineouts and also conceded 20 turnovers as Jones's use of three No7s in the back row – Tom Curry, Sam Underhill and Lewis Ludlam – paid dividends at the breakdown, although there still remains a Billy Vunipola-sized ball-carrying hole in this team.

Genge's late try decided a contest ruined by weather

Despite those efforts, it was a game ultimately defined, and ruined, by the weather. It left both sides relying on kicking for territory, hoping to pin their opponents back and force errors. But with errors on top of errors, any gains were quickly nullified in a match where points were a rare commodity.

There were 79 kicks from hand – just about one a minute – with England's 42 almost as many as their 66 passes.

It allowed Farrell and George Ford to take the initiative and, bar an early up-and-under that almost went backwards, it was a plan that largely played to their strengths.

But if there were any doubts about how blustery the conditions were, Farrell's three missed penalties that veered off either side of the swaying posts ended them.

Jones faced a number of questions about his team coming into this game after a dismal defeat to France, but the performance on this occasion vindicated his decision to play three flankers and put six forwards on the bench. It also went some way to answering questions about the team's ability to manage games and adapt on the pitch.

But while the result was hugely important for England in their quest to win the Six Nations, it was impossible to draw any real conclusions about where this team stands ahead of what looks set to be a crucial tie with Ireland in two weeks' time.