The INDEPENDENT

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CRUCIAL PROGRESS TO STOP WOMEN AND BABIES DYING IN CHILDBIRTH IS NOW IN REVERSE



Thrusting buttocks and heaving bosoms – Jilly Cooper's Rivals is much needed TV escapism



Passengers evacuated from hantavirus-hit cruise ship

Twenty-two Britons were among those brought onshore from the MV Hondius near Tenerife yesterday

Starmer defiant as Rayner issues 'last chance' warning

Keir Starmer will pledge to 'face up to the big challenges' the country faces in a key speech today as he fights for his political life in the fallout from disastrous local election results – after Angela Rayner gave an ultimatum for the party to move to the hard left

DAVID MADDOX
POLITICAL EDITOR

The PM will defy his critics and claim he is best placed to "face up to the big challenges for this country" with a speech to save his premiership.

But the prime minister's speech today comes after a dramatic ultimatum by former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner who warned his government must take a hard turn to the left if he wants to stay in Downing Street.

With speculation mounting that she is ready to launch a leadership challenge, the former deputy prime minister has warned Sir Keir: "What we are doing isn't working, and it needs to change. This may be our last chance."

Editorials

Whether Starmer stays or goes, Labour cannot go left

As Winston Churchill said of parliamentary politics, Keir Starmer's enemies don't have the one great advantage that incumbency bestows on him. He can act, they can only talk. What, then, should he do to rebuild his premiership?

The prime minister is set to defy his critics in the Labour Party and claim he is the one best placed to "face up to the big challenges for this country" as he delivers a career-defining speech to save his premiership this morning.

"Strength through fairness. It's a core Labour argument. And you will see those values writ large in the King's Speech. And you will see hope, urgency and exactly whose side we are on." He will add: "People need hope. We will face up to the big challenges and we will make the big arguments."

Policy is something surprisingly absent from the febrile speculation about the Labour leadership in recent days. It has almost entirely centred on the various personalities involved, and their ideological differences with the prime minister. Even at its best, the argument tends to get tangled up with the psephological conundrum of which is Labour's most potent current threat – the Green Party or Reform UK – and therefore which way the government should tack to win back the half of its voters who've switched their loyalties since the last general election.

As things stand, Catherine West, a backbencher who has volunteered to be a "stalking horse", hasn't managed to find her way out of the paddock. That could all change very quickly if she finds the 81 MPs needed to launch a challenge. Labour MPs believe she is closing in on the number of parliamentarians needed.

As it is, Angela Rayner issued what amounted to an ultimatum yesterday afternoon, calling this Sir Keir's "last chance" to change direction. She demanded more economic powers for regional mayors, a higher minimum wage and that Labour be "unafraid to promote new forms of public, community and cooperative ownership across the board", as well as backing Andy Burnham's return.

It would take a spectacular leap of the imagination to conclude that the Labour Party is unpopular because it is not left-wing

enough. Keir Starmer must therefore stay true to both his centrist principles and the manifesto on which he and his party were elected. No amount of nudging from Ms Rayner should change that.

It is for the prime minister to settle questions about the future and set the course for the next phase of his administration. He has already done some of this, moving immediately to make it clear he won't be removed without a scrap. He will have ample further opportunities to command the headlines for all the right reasons in the coming days.

A "reset" speech today, the King's Speech on Wednesday, and no doubt more media attention, should focus on what the government will "do" next. As has been painfully evident for some time, Sir Keir's government lacks the kind of "narrative" that can sustain a reforming administration through times such as these – tough decisions but ones that will be vindicated and promote the wellbeing of the people and the national interest. There will be a programme of fresh legislation that will highlight priorities.

That gives the prime minister and his party something more consequential to chew on than how Andy Burnham is going to get back into parliament when there is no such thing as a safe Labour seat. It is ironic that the very electoral weakness that makes Sir Keir's leadership so precarious also makes it much harder for his most dangerous rival to usurp him.

So much for the speeches and the talk. The prime minister and his ministers must also act. Too much of the circular discussion within Labour is about whether it should be more left-wing or tack to the centre, when the simple truth is that it needs to demonstrate competence and – in the dread phrase – "deliver".

Sir Keir and his government, in other words, would not now be in such a mess if they had avoided such blunders as cutting pensioners' winter fuel allowance or trying to be too clever and appointing Peter Mandelson to be ambassador in a Washington. More to the point, Sir Keir would not now be fighting for his job if he had indeed "smashed the gangs", stopped the small boats and closed the "asylum hotels". The public would not be so disenchanted if the "number one priority" he set himself – restoring economic growth – had been achieved.

The same goes for reducing NHS waiting lists, rebuilding Britain's defences, boosting trade with the EU and protecting people from the worst effects of the continuing cost of living crisis. Europe has to be at the centre of these efforts, making the case for how closer links can make Britons better off and more secure in a more protectionist and unsafe world.

In some of these areas, there have been successes – too little trumpeted, but there is no point in denying the failures. Sir Keir's opponents and enemies, inside and outside his own party, will only be quieted if he can make a tangible difference to people's lives and address the voters' concerns rather than leaving them feeling ignored. The elections last week were the mother of all protest votes, but, as Sir Keir points out, it's doubtful that a majority of people want Zack Polanski or Nigel Farage to be prime minister of Britain.

That, clearly, doesn't mean they want Sir Keir to keep the job. He needs to prove he is up to the challenge, can get results and make the "change" he promised less than two years ago. That way his narrative almost writes itself – if he's still got time.

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Rayner warns Starmer to move left or lose his job



Angela Rayner told the prime minister he is not doing enough to help ordinary people (PA)

DAVID MADDOX
POLITICAL EDITOR

Angela Rayner has issued a dramatic ultimatum to Sir Keir Starmer that his government must take a hard turn to the left ahead of the embattled prime minister giving a speech to save his political career this morning.

With speculation mounting that she is ready to launch a leadership challenge, the former deputy prime minister, who still has to resolve issues over unpaid tax, has warned Sir Keir: “What we are doing isn’t working, and it needs to change. This may be our last chance.”

It comes as Labour MPs believe that former minister Catherine West is closing in on the number of parliamentarians she would need to launch a stalking horse leadership challenge.

While Ms West has not formally asked for nominations yet and made it clear she will wait to hear the prime minister’s make-or-break speech, it is understood that already around 70 of her colleagues are willing to back her to ensure there is a contest.

Ms West would need the support of 80 MPs to formally launch a leadership bid but could trigger the process simply by contacting the party’s National Executive Committee.

It comes as the prime minister was warned that he will need to “give the speech of his life” if he is to have any hope of remaining in office, with the number of Labour MPs publicly calling for him to quit increasing by the hour.



Catherine West has said she will launch a leadership challenge if nobody else does (Reuters)

Former home secretary Lord David Blunkett told Times Radio: “I think either Keir pulls out the stops and there’s a massive

transformation in how we relate to the public. Or he and [his wife] Victoria will have to talk about the best way of doing it in a seemly fashion and someone else will take over. The jury's well and truly out."

MPs have reacted with outrage over Sir Keir giving an interview over the weekend suggesting that he wants to be prime minister for a decade.

Meanwhile, Sharon Graham, the general secretary of Unite the union, warned: "The Labour Party is in danger of going extinct."

But along with Ms Rayner, health secretary Wes Streeting, energy secretary Ed Miliband and defence minister Al Carns, a former Royal Marines commander, are all thought to be preparing bids.

Looking at the results of last week's local elections, Ms Rayner noted: "We are in danger of becoming a party of the well-off, not working people."

And in a barbed attack on Sir Keir's time as prime minister, she said: "The Peter Mandelson scandal showed a toxic culture of cronyism. Decisions like cutting winter fuel allowance just weren't what people expected from a Labour government."

But laying out a left-wing agenda, she insisted: "We have the chance to fix this."



Wes Streeting is thought to be planning a bid for the Labour leadership (PA)

She called for more interventions in cutting household bills, increased planning reforms, more community ownership and taking private companies into public ownership. She criticised Sir Keir for blocking Andy Burnham from returning to parliament, claiming: “We can only prove we mean it by putting the common interest ahead of factionalism.”

And with an implied threat to the leadership, she added: “The prime minister must now meet the moment and set out the change our country needs. Change our economic agenda to prioritise making people better off, change how we run our party so that all voices are listened to, and change how we do politics. Labour exists to make working people better off. That is not happening fast enough, and it needs to change, now.”

The fallout from last week’s catastrophic results for Labour has fuelled fears on the left of the party that Mr Streeting is planning a coronation to replace Sir Keir.

A source close to Mr Streeting denied he had told Sir Keir he is ready to be prime minister but confirmed that, having failed to endorse the prime minister on Friday, the health secretary is not planning any further interventions until Thursday when new NHS data is set to be published.

Meanwhile, one member of the 2024 intake of Labour MPs confirmed that a leadership team is being put together for Mr Carns.

They said: “Why are we turning once again to the same familiar faces to solve problems they were involved in creating? If we want to demonstrate genuine change to the public, we need a fresh face leading that change. Members of the 2024 intake are still hopeful of persuading Al Carns to stand should there be a contest, and support for that view appears to be growing.”

Ms West’s move over the weekend has forced the different rivals to Sir Keir’s crown to reset their plans, but supporters of Ms Rayner have privately claimed that Mr Streeting will get some of

his backers to nominate her to launch a contest which he could then enter himself without taking the blame for starting it.

Nervousness in Downing Street over another crisis week for the prime minister ahead of the King's Speech on Wednesday was underlined by a delay in a trail for the keynote speech aimed at resetting his government.

It is understood that Sir Keir wants to discuss reversing key parts of Brexit as he tries to regain the initiative after his party was almost wiped out in Wales, suffered its worst-ever result in Scotland and lost around 1,500 council seats in England.

Almost 40 Labour MPs have come out publicly to call for him to go or set a timetable for his departure, with many more agreeing privately.

Earlier, education secretary Bridget Phillipson issued a defence of Sir Keir. She told Sky News: "I've knocked on doors right across the country and in my own community, as colleagues will have done too and as party members will have done as well. And what I heard was not a desire for a leadership contest, for the Labour Party to spend more time talking amongst ourselves.

"What I heard loud and clear from voters was their deep sense of frustration that they'd voted for change in 2024, they were hopeful that that change would be delivered and they don't feel that we as a party or we as a Labour government have delivered what they wanted."

But, among a number of MPs to come out demanding Sir Keir departs, Jarrow and Gateshead East MP Kate Osborne wrote for *The Independent*: "The direction Keir has taken the Labour Party has not only seen us lose councils and councillors who are delivering for the local people but it is also destroying the Labour Party."

Others urged the party to resist a coup and take time to choose a new leader.

Leeds East MP Richard Burgon, who chairs the Socialist Campaign Group and wants Mr Burnham to return and take the leadership, said: "What we need instead is for Keir to set a date

for his departure, followed by a full and proper democratic contest that can look at what went wrong and how we change course to win back trust and support, with a broad range of candidates and viewpoints represented.

“And that process has to involve all MPs, not just the Cabinet, as well as trade unions and party members, all of whom must have a democratic voice in choosing Labour’s future direction.”

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Tories' ambitious pledges in 'alternative King's Speech'

Badenoch says party would quit ECHR and drill in North Sea



The Tories have pledged to reduce legal obstacles which prevent new oil and gas projects being approved (AFP/Getty)

SOPHIE WINGATE

The Conservative Party has outlined a series of ambitious proposals in an "alternative King's Speech", including withdrawing from the European Convention on Human Rights

(ECHR), tripling stop-and-search powers, and resuming new North Sea drilling.

The package, released ahead of the Labour government's official priorities, aims to "reverse the disastrous decisions Keir Starmer has taken" while also seeking to "rectify the mistakes of previous Conservative governments".

Tory leader Kemi Badenoch said the document demonstrates that her "renewed" party, which she has pledged to rebuild after its significant 2024 general election defeat, "is coming back with a plan to deliver".

The 16 bills, spanning welfare, immigration, crime, energy, and defence, are the culmination of 18 months of policy work since the party lost power.

Ms Badenoch has previously apologised for "mistakes" made by past Tory administrations on tax and immigration, particularly the surge in migration under more relaxed post-Brexit rules introduced by Boris Johnson's government.

To address this, the party's proposals include legislation to repeal the Human Rights Act and authorise withdrawal from the ECHR, which it blames for hindering the deportation of individuals without a right to remain in the UK.

Shadow home secretary Chris Philp said: "Membership of the ECHR and the Blairite Human Rights Act has protected everyone except the British public. Our borders have been eroded and policing undermined.



Kemi Badenoch has previously apologised for 'mistakes' made by the Tory administrations she served in on tax and immigration (PA)

“It is essential for any future government to tackle the lawfare holding our country back if they are to succeed.”

Mr Philp also said the proposed Take Back Our Streets Bill “triples stop-and-search, deploys 10,000 additional officers, and rolls out live facial recognition to the worst crime hotspots, restoring the damage Labour have done in just under two years”.

The Tories have also pledged to reduce legal obstacles which prevent new oil and gas projects being approved in the UK with their draft Get Britain Drilling Bill.

They have argued this would bring down the spike in energy prices caused by the war in the Middle East, although opponents have said new licences would do nothing to lower bills.

Ms Badenoch said: “If you want a country with strong borders, a country that is properly defended, a country that is a great place to start and run a business, and a country in which the law is upheld, this alternative King’s Speech delivers just that.

“We are living through the painful reality of an opposition entering government without a plan. I am not making that same mistake, and this alternative King’s Speech shows the Conservative Party is coming back with a plan to deliver.”

Here is the full list of the Tories’ proposed bills:

- Welfare Reform Bill
- Back Our High Streets Bill
- Get Britain Working Bill
- Reducing Bureaucracy Bill
- Save British Industry Bill
- Cheap Energy Bill
- Get Britain Drilling Bill
- ECHR (Notification of Withdrawal) Bill
- Human Rights Act (Repeal) Bill
- Protecting Our Borders Bill
- Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship Bill
- Take Back Our Streets Bill
- Sovereign Defence Fund Bill
- Protect Our Veterans Bill
- Restoring School Standards Bill
- Youth Opportunity Bill

The Tories suffered significant losses in last week's elections, shedding hundreds of council seats in England. But Ms Badenoch said the results demonstrated "signs of renewal" after the Tories took back control of Westminster from Labour, held on to their majority in Bexley and in Kensington and Chelsea, and became the biggest party in Wandsworth.

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News

Britons taken off hantavirus cruise ship fly back to UK



Passengers in PPE as the MV Hondius arrives in Tenerife in the early hours of yesterday (Getty)

NICOLE WOOTTON-CANE

Twenty-two British passengers on board the cruise ship hit by a hantavirus outbreak have been evacuated from the vessel off Tenerife, with most of them flying back to the UK last night.

A chartered Titan Airways flight departed from the Canary Island's south airport yesterday evening, with the Airbus A320's

passengers expected to be taken from Manchester airport to isolate at the UK's initial Covid quarantine site.

It comes after the MV Hondius arrived in Tenerife in the early hours of yesterday, triggering an evacuation operation with passengers ferried to a port by small boat after medics in full PPE checked that all remained asymptomatic.

The 22 British nationals were taken ashore – with 20 getting on the repatriation flight and two dual nationals heading elsewhere.



The plane bound for Britain carrying passengers of the cruise ship MV Hondius departs from Tenerife Sud airport (Reuters)

While they were being bussed from the port at Granadilla de Abona to Tenerife South airport, some British passengers, clad in blue PPE, waved and gave a thumbs-up as they passed watching media.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) said its goal was to finish the ship's evacuation, with the exception of 30 crew members remaining on board, by 7pm tonight.

Passengers were told to leave their luggage on the ship and were only allowed to take a small bag with essential items, such as their phone and passport.

The UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) said British passengers and crew will be transferred to an isolation facility at

Arrowe Park Hospital on the Wirral, Merseyside, after being repatriated to the UK.

They will be held at the hospital for 72 hours, after which specialists will decide whether they can isolate at home for 45 days or at another suitable location.



British citizens from the cruise ship will be taken to specialist facilities at Arrowe Park Hospital in Merseyside (Getty)

The Merseyside hospital is known for its role as the nation's initial quarantine site for British citizens returning from Wuhan, China, at the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic in January 2020.

Spanish authorities said yesterday that no passengers on the ship were showing symptoms of the virus, with 14 Spanish nationals who formed the first group to be evacuated from the vessel being flown to a hospital in Madrid.

Eight people are suspected to have fallen ill with hantavirus, including three who died: a Dutch couple and a German national. Of the eight, six are confirmed to have contracted the virus, with another two suspected cases.

A joint statement from NHS England North West, NHS Cheshire and Merseyside ICB, Merseyside Police, North West Ambulance Service, and Wirral Council said: "In line with advice from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), on arrival [in the UK] they [British passengers] will be taken to a

managed setting for clinical assessment and testing. We expect this initial stay to be up to 72 hours.



Paratroopers and medics delivered aid to a Briton on Tristan da Cunha (Getty)

"Following this, public health specialists will assess whether they can isolate at home or at another suitable location, based on their living arrangements. The risk to the general population remains very low.

"Our partner organisations are working together to ensure that all returning passengers are welcomed, comfortable and well supported throughout their stay."

The two confirmed British cases are in hospital in South Africa and the Netherlands, while the third British national with a suspected case is being supported on the British overseas territory of Tristan da Cunha where they live.

Six paratroopers, an RAF consultant and Army nurse from 16 Air Assault Brigade were parachuted onto the South Atlantic island, while oxygen supplies and medical aid was also dropped on Tristan da Cunha, which is normally only accessible by boat.

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said it was the first time medical personnel had been parachuted in to provide humanitarian support.

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News

England’s senior doctors to be balloted on strike action



The move comes after NHS resident (junior) doctors took strike action in November 2025 and again in April this year (PA)

JANE KIRBY

Senior doctors across England’s NHS are being balloted on potential strike action, a significant development initiated by the British Medical Association (BMA). This move follows a government pay offer of 3.5 per cent for these crucial medical groups, prompting a strong reaction from the professional body.

It has today commenced an eight-week voting period for both consultants and specialist, associate specialist and specialty (SAS) doctors. The ballot will close on 6 July, determining the appetite for industrial action among these key healthcare professionals.

The consultants' committee within the BMA has articulated a clear set of demands. They argue for increased protected time, which they deem essential for fostering innovation, mentoring junior colleagues, and enhancing overall patient services. Furthermore, the committee is advocating a reduction in working hours and improved recognition for demanding out-of-hours shifts, measures they believe are vital to combat burnout and improve staff retention within the health service.

Concurrently, the BMA's SAS committee is campaigning for substantial improvements in career progression pathways for its members, highlighting another key area of concern for these medical professionals. It also wants reform of how SAS doctors are recognised and compensated for their time, "particularly for extensive anti-social working hours", and more annual leave so doctors do not lose out compared to other medics.

The BMA said both groups have seen their pay fall by around a quarter in real terms since 2008/09. BMA consultants' committee co-chairs Dr Shanu Datta and Dr Helen Neary said: "When you or your loved ones go to hospital, a consultant is the most senior and skilled doctor in the department, in overall charge of your care. They are also responsible for improving services and designing new ones, as well as training the doctors of the future.



Tens of thousands of resident doctors previously took strike action during the Easter holiday (Getty)

"Yet the failure to value this expertise, and support and protect consultants from the demands of the job, means we risk losing them when patients need them most. Left unaddressed, the impact of this is early retirement, quiet quitting, and consultants leaving the profession in the UK, resulting in doctor shortages and even worse wait times for care. BMA consultants and SAS doctors in England are standing together and demanding better."

The pair said industrial action "is a last resort", but medics feel they have been left with "no choice".

The ballot comes after resident doctors in England walked out for six days in April over jobs and pay. Tens of thousands of resident doctors, formerly known as junior doctors, took strike action during the Easter holiday, when the NHS said many other staff had booked time off with their families.

Health secretary Wes Streeting had offered a 4.9 per cent increase in average basic pay from 2026 to 2027. According to him, this would have left resident doctors 35.2 per cent better off than four years ago.

The proposal also included an offer of 1,000 extra training places, although that was taken off the table due to increasing strike costs to the NHS. Dr Jack Fletcher, chairman of the

BMA's resident doctors committee, accused the government at the time of "quietly" watering down the deal on offer to resident doctors.

The strike was the 15th walkout by resident doctors in England since 2023. A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said consultant and SAS doctors are "highly skilled and much valued NHS staff, who have repeatedly stepped in over recent months to maintain high-quality patient care during resident doctors' strikes. As some of the best-paid workers in the country, consultants and SAS doctors have seen their starting basic pay go up by around 28.5 per cent over the last four years.

"We want to continue to work with senior doctors to improve their working lives. We urge consultant and SAS doctors to see the BMA's unreasonable and unnecessary bid for industrial action as the distraction it is from our shared endeavour of rebuilding our NHS and making it fit for the future."

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News

Thousands attend Whitehall protest against antisemitism



Cabinet minister Pat McFadden was jeered and booed as he spoke on stage (PA)

ATHENA STAVROU

Several senior politicians yesterday joined thousands of people gathered outside Downing Street for a protest against antisemitism. Organisers of the rally called on the British public to “face down extremists” after a series of arson attacks at Jewish sites in London, as well as a double stabbing in Golders Green that is being treated as an act of terrorism.

Politicians from a number of political parties took the stage to speak to the rally in London, where they were met with a mixed reception. Kemi Badenoch, leader of the opposition, was met with raucous applause and cheers, while cabinet minister Pat McFadden was jeered and booed as he spoke on stage.

The chief rabbi, Sir Ephraim Mirvis, also spoke at the event, telling the crowd it is “unacceptable that poisonous antisemitism has become normalised in the UK”.



Conservative Party leader Kemi Badenoch speaks during the rally in Whitehall (PA)

Protesters shouted “shame”, “it’s your party’s fault” and “when will you act” at Mr McFadden, while some held signs saying “British Jews deserve better”, “where is Keir” and “Brits against antisemitism”.

“I come to speak for something, for the freedom, for the freedom that marks us out as a great country,” Mr McFadden said. As his voice was drowned out by the boos, he added: “Friends, I hear you, I am with you, I am here to fight antisemitism.”

Meanwhile, Mrs Badenoch was cheered as she delivered a speech at the protest organised by the Jewish Leadership Council and the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

“There are many, many different pockets of antisemitism in this country, but I am most worried about the growth of extremism and terror around the world and how it targets many groups in this country,” she said. “Britain has been a sanctuary for Jewish people, and it must always be a sanctuary for Jewish people.”

Richard Tice, deputy leader of Reform UK, was also met with applause and praise as he told the rally: “The scourge of antisemitism has been allowed to flourish in our beloved country, and we have to say we are sick and tired of warm words from waffly politicians.”



Strict security measures were in place, with airport-style security at the Trafalgar Square entrance to the event (PA)

Sir Ed Davey, leader of the Liberal Democrats, went on stage to some jeers, but the MC of the event told the audience he was here as a friend, and the boos stopped.

Strict security measures were in place, with attendees going through airport-style security at the Trafalgar Square entrance to Whitehall before joining the rally.

Following a knife attack in Golders Green, the UK terrorism threat level was raised to “severe” by the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre, meaning a terror attack is “highly likely”. The Metropolitan Police announced this week a community protection team of 100 extra officers to help safeguard the

Jewish community, despite Sir Mark Rowley's previous call for 300 extra police officers.

The Metropolitan Police Commissioner warned of a growing "pandemic" of antisemitism in the UK and said he is "very concerned" about the sustainability of the force's current approach to protecting Jewish communities in the capital.

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News

Adolescence takes top Bafta awards including best actor



Owen Cooper, the teenage star of the Netflix drama, won the Best Supporting Actor award, while Stephen Graham was named Best Leading Actor (PA)

RACHEL MCGRATH

The winners of the 2026 TV Baftas have been announced at a star-studded ceremony in London, where the likes of *Adolescence* and *The Celebrity Traitors* were among the shows up for accolades. Stars of the small screen assembled at London's Royal Festival Hall for this year's ceremony, with *Taskmaster*'s Greg Davies on presenting duties. The TV Baftas took place last

night, with Jack Thorne's groundbreaking Netflix series *Adolescence* the frontrunner ahead of the event, with an impressive 11 nominations, including nods for five of its stars.

Young star Owen Cooper and Ashley Walters (who played a detective) both featured on the supporting actor shortlist, while Stephen Graham was up for best actor for his portrayal of Jamie's dad. Christine Tremarco (who played the mother) and Erin Doherty (who played a psychologist) were both recognised in the supporting actress category. Elsewhere, another of Graham and Doherty's projects, the Disney+ series *A Thousand Blows*, earned seven nominations and in the unscripted categories, *The Celebrity Traitors* host Claudia Winkleman and Channel 4's *Virgin Island* were among the nominees.

The winners are in bold below…

Drama series

A Thousand Blows (Disney+)

Blue Lights (BBC One)

Code of Silence **(ITV1) – winner**

This City Is Ours (BBC One)

Limited drama

Adolescence **(Netflix) – winner**

I Fought the Law (ITV1)

Trespasses (Channel 4)

What it Feels Like for a Girl (BBC Three)



Team teen: the cast and directors of ‘Adolescence’ celebrate winning the Limited Drama award (PA)

International

The Bear (Disney+)

The Diplomat (Netflix)

Pluribus (Apple TV)

Severance (Apple TV)

The Studio **(Apple TV) – winner**

The White Lotus (Sky Atlantic)

Leading actress

Aimee Lou Wood, *Film Club* (BBC Three)

Erin Doherty, *A Thousand Blows* (Disney+)

Jodie Whittaker, *Toxic Town* (Netflix)

Narges Rashidi, ***Prisoner 951*** **(BBC One) – winner**

Sheridan Smith, *I Fought the Law* (ITV1)

Siân Brooke, *Blue Lights* (BBC One)



Narges Rashidi in ‘Prisoner 951’ (PA)

Leading actor

Colin Firth, *Lockerbie: A Search for Truth* (Sky Atlantic)

Ellis Howard, *What It Feels Like for a Girl* (BBC Three)

James Nelson-Joyce, *This City is Ours* (BBC One)

Matt Smith, *The Death of Bunny Munro* (Sky Atlantic)

Stephen Graham, *Adolescence* (Netflix) – winner

Taron Egerton, *Smoke* (Apple TV)

Actress in a comedy

Diane Morgan, *Mandy* (BBC Two)

Jennifer Saunders, *Amandaland* (BBC One)

Katherine Parkinson, *Here We Go* (BBC One) – winner

Lucy Punch, *Amandaland* (BBC One)

Philippa Dunne, *Amandaland* (BBC One)

Rosie Jones, *Pushers* (Channel 4)



Katherine Parkinson with her Bafta (PA)

Actor in a comedy

Jim Howick, *Here We Go* (BBC One)

Jon Pointing, *Big Boys* (Channel 4)

Lenny Rush, *Am I Being Unreasonable?* (BBC One)

Mawaan Rizwan, *Juice* (BBC Three)

Oliver Savell, Changing Ends (ITV1)

Steve Coogan, *How Are You? It's Alan (Partridge)* (BBC One)– winner

Supporting actress

Aimee Lou Wood, *The White Lotus* (Sky Atlantic)

Christine Tremarco, *Adolescence* (Netflix) – winner

Chyna McQueen, *Get Millie Black* (Channel 4)

Emilia Jones, *Task* (Sky Atlantic)

Erin Doherty, *Adolescence* (Netflix)

Rose Ayling-Ellis, *Reunion* (BBC One)

Supporting actor

Ashley Walters, *Adolescence* (Netflix)

Fehinti Balogun, *Down Cemetery Road* (Apple TV)

Joshua McGuire, *The Gold* (BBC One)

Owen Cooper, *Adolescence* (Netflix) – winner

Paddy Considine, *MobLand* (Paramount+)

Rafael Mathé, *The Death of Bunny Munro* (Sky Atlantic)

Entertainment

The Graham Norton Show (BBC One)

***Last One Laughing* (Prime Video)– winner**

Michael McIntyre's Big Show (BBC One)

Would I Lie to You? (BBC One)

Entertainment performance

Amanda Holden, Alan Carr, *Amanda & Alan's Spanish Job* (BBC One)

Bob Mortimer, *Last One Laughing* (Prime Video) – winner

Claudia Winkleman, *The Celebrity Traitors* (BBC One)

Lee Mack, *The 1% Club* (ITV1)

Rob Beckett, Romesh Ranganathan, *Rob & Romesh Vs* … (Sky Max)

Romesh Ranganathan, *Romesh: Can't Knock the Hustle* (Sky Max)

Scripted comedy

***Amandaland* (BBC One) – winner**

Big Boys (Channel 4)

How are you? It's Alan (Partridge) (BBC One)

Things You Should Have Done (BBC Three)



Lucy Punch in 'Amandaland' (BBC/Merman)

Specialist factual

Belsen: What They Found (BBC Two)

Simon Schama: The Road to Auschwitz **(BBC Two) – winner**

Surviving Black Hawk Down (Netflix)

Vietnam: The War That Changed America (Apple TV)

Reality

The Celebrity Traitors **(BBC One)– winner**

The Jury: Murder Trial (Channel 4)

Squid Game: The Challenge (Netflix)

Virgin Island (Channel 4)

Current affairs

Exposure: Breaking Ranks – Inside Israel's War (ITV1)

The Covid Contracts: Follow the Money (ITV1)

Gaza: Doctors Under Attack **(Channel 4) – winner**

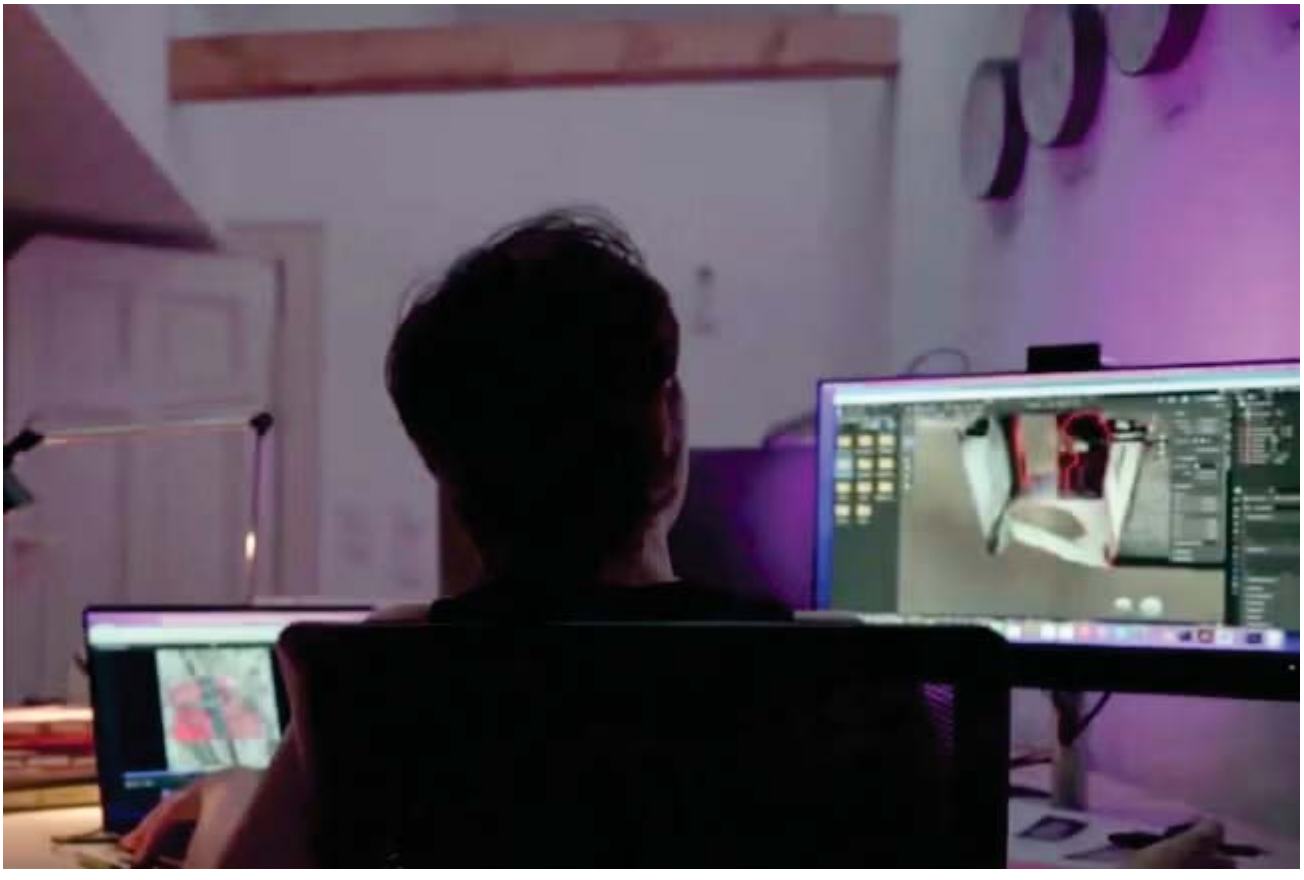
Panorama: Undercover in the Police (BBC One)

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News

How small team is taking on war criminals with a laptop

Human Rights Watch's digital investigations lab is employing AI technology to expose abuse and crime across the globe



The digital investigations team painstakingly analyses evidence (Human Rights Watch)

HARRIETTE BOUCHER

When reports emerged that hundreds of people had been killed in an attack on a primary school in southern Iran, a small team of investigators rushed to social media.

It was the first day of the joint US-Israeli strikes, and misinformation began to spread online. Restrictions imposed by Iranian authorities made it dangerous for people who witnessed the strike to speak out.

That left the Human Rights Watch's digital investigation team with the critical task of uncovering the facts and establishing the truth surrounding the attack.

The team of eight, which investigates war crimes worldwide, immediately got to work, painstakingly analysing every piece of digital evidence to reconstruct the events of what has been one of the deadliest incidents in the ongoing war in the Middle East.

From their offices in London, Berlin, Geneva and California, they scoured social media for any footage or information they could find.

Over the next week, they spent hours verifying and analysing scores of videos and photographs recorded immediately after the strike or during search-and-rescue operations, as well as from funerals.



The digital investigations team analysed the attack on a primary school in southern Iran (Human Rights Watch)

Satellite images from the past 25 years were reviewed by the team and compared to those captured following the attack. They showed both the site and the nearby cemetery where victims were apparently buried.

They revealed that at least eight structures across the compound had been directly struck by munitions, including at least one that had been hit and severely damaged the school.

Sophia Jones, who is part of the team, said: “A prompt and thorough investigation is needed into this attack, including if those responsible should have known that a school was there and that it would be full of children and their teachers before midday.”

A report was published a week later, which called for the US and Israel to immediately assess their responsibility and prosecute anyone responsible for war crimes.

What is the digital investigations lab?

The case is one of many for the team, whose work ranges from tracking down suspected criminals to analysing immigrant deportation patterns, using technology to investigate conflict violations and human rights abuses worldwide.

Dubbed the team’s digital investigations lab, the team uses social media, artificial intelligence, and satellite imagery to identify and hold perpetrators to account by documenting crimes and abuses.

Their work spans protests in Europe and conflicts in the Middle East to deaths in custody in El Salvador, as well as violence in countries including Burkina Faso, Sudan and Myanmar.

The team was established a decade ago and investigations can take anywhere from days to years. Their findings are published in reports, which expose wrongdoing and aim to put pressure on governments and policymakers to act.



The team investigated Israel's displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank (Human Rights Watch)

Sam Dubberley, who directs the organisation's technology, rights and investigations division, said the work is essential at a time of rapid misinformation.

"It's definitely becoming a much faster space where human rights defenders are under a lot more pressure than they ever used to be," he told *The Independent*.

How are they using technology?

The team is constantly across social media platforms, hunting for photos, videos, or audio of attacks, which they verify and fact-check.

They investigate military units, alleged perpetrators, or victims to determine who they are, what they have posted online, and whether there is evidence they were involved in a crime.

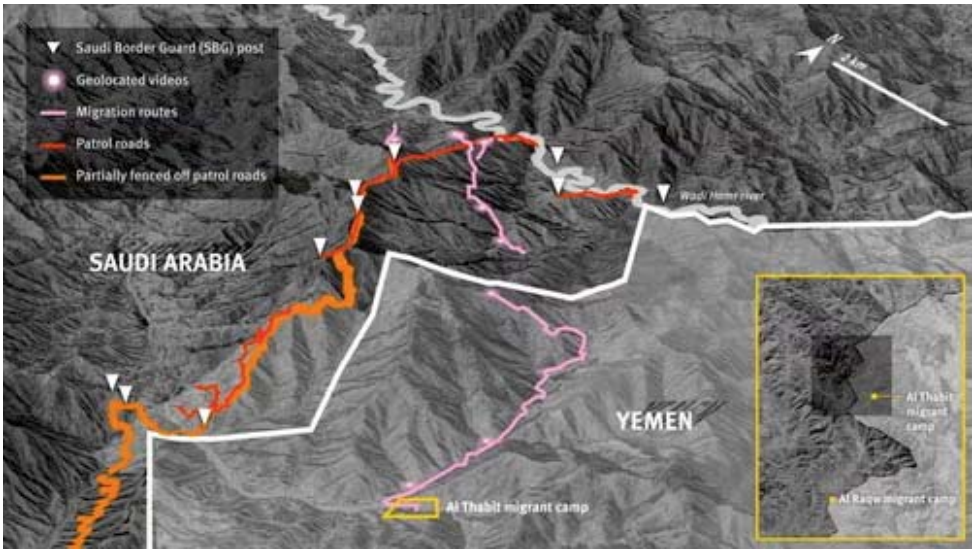
"People post videos that you think they never would, often in spaces where they think it's not so public, like smaller Telegram groups," Mr Dubberley explained.

One of their main tools is satellite imagery analysis, which is used to track the destruction of villages or sites. They reconstruct areas of attacks using 3D models to provide clear evidence of the before-and-after effects.

Artificial intelligence is an essential part of their operations, helping them gather data from foreign government websites or

mine data sets for patterns in arrest rates.

Earlier this month, they published a two-year-long report into civilian killings in Burkina Faso. The team used AI to uncover essential information and analyse nearly 40,000 posts, which exposed the activities of perpetrators at a scale that would have been impossible to cover otherwise.



A 3D model of likely Saudi border guard posts and patrol roads near fences identified with satellite imagery (Human Rights Watch)

Where are they working?

Digital tools have made it possible for the team to investigate alleged crimes everywhere, including in countries where they can't enter, such as Russia, Iran, or Myanmar.

Mr Dubberley said: "Technology allows us to look over those walls that are being built, even in places like China. Looking over the Great Firewall, it's very hard, it's very difficult, it requires brave people, but it's possible."

Iran's internet blackout has made it difficult for them to obtain and verify information, but they are still able to reach sources via WhatsApp, Telegram, and other social media.

"People know technology is key for them to have their stories told," Mr Dubberley added. "We know that capturing their stories and verifying them is a really important way for us to do our work, and for us to achieve accountability and prevention.

“It’s important, of course, to investigate what’s going on in the Middle East right now. It’s important to investigate what’s going on in Ukraine, and we do that.

“But it’s also really important to make sure that we have the resources to investigate situations that are forgotten.”

What have they achieved?

One of their biggest achievements, Mr Dubberley said, was a 2023 report which found that Saudi border guards had killed hundreds of Ethiopian migrants and asylum seekers who tried to cross the Yemen-Saudi border between 2022 and 2023.

The organisation was able to map the route used to cross the border, thanks to geospatial and open-source researchers from the digital investigations team, who verified videos and images recorded by migrants and border residents.

Analysis of satellite imagery allowed them to assess the development of security infrastructure on the border and identify burial sites near migrant camps, which had grown considerably.

Following the report, the German Justice Ministry suspended its training programme for Saudi Arabian border guards.

“We got so many media hits, that was part of the strategy, to embarrass Saudi Arabia as much as anything else, to see if we could get the killings to at least slow down, and for a while at least, they did,” Mr Dubberley concluded.

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News

Why trademarking a famous face can't prevent deepfakes



Taylor Swift is one of several celebrities attempting to combat illicit use of their images (Reuters)

NICOLE WOOTTON-CANE

In 2024, Jeremy Clarkson's face featured in a series of social media adverts which depicted the former *Top Gear* host extolling the virtues of a digital currency. The ads, designed to persuade unwitting fans to part with their money by using Mr Clarkson's image, spread quickly across social media. But Mr Clarkson's endorsement never actually happened. Instead, the

TV star had fallen prey to AI deepfakes, which used his likeness in a bid to persuade unwitting fans to part with their money.

The *Clarkson's Farm* star is one of a host of famous people who have seen their faces being used as marketing tools without their consent. Now he and an unlikely handful of other stars are fighting back in an unusual way – by filing trademarks on their faces.

Taylor Swift, Chelsea footballer Cole Palmer, and darts sensation Luke Littler are among the famous names who, like Mr Clarkson, have filed trademarks in a bid to fight back against their AI likenesses. Experts say that for celebrities it could be a "savvy move" to combat AI-generated deepfakes – but that it's unlikely to be a silver bullet for the famous and everyday Joe alike.

"A trademark in the legal context is a word, logo, shape or colour which distinguishes goods or services," Faris Dean, partner in the corporate team at Ison Harrison Solicitors, explains. "In basic terms, it is what allows a member of the public to identify and locate something they want to buy or experience."

Michael Rimola, intellectual property associate at law firm JMW, agrees that trademark law in the UK is "very much about business": "You'd only file a trademark if you're actually selling something, so it wouldn't be for personal use," he told *The Independent*. Celebrities hold a unique status in this area, he says, because for many of them, their face *is* their brand – or at least a large part of it.



Chelsea and England footballer Cole Palmer has also trademarked his signature celebration (Getty)

Even then, trademarking with the sole intention of preventing deepfakes is flawed. Mr Rimola highlights that while the Intellectual Property Office (IPO) granted Mr Clarkson's trademark, such cases have yet to be tested in court.

One reason its validity could be questioned is if the applicant doesn't have an intention to actually use their trademark. Filing for a trademark without a genuine intention to use it, or even specifically to prevent others from using it, could see an application being rejected for "bad faith". Equally, if you fail to use it within five years, it can be cancelled for non-use.

Another complication is what trademarking your face actually protects. If you are granted a trademark for a particular picture of your face, it could be argued in court that only that one picture is covered. Likewise, your trademark could quickly fall irrelevant with a new haircut or distinctive facial change, such as a piercing or growing facial hair.

"From a human rights and moral point of view, it could also present issues," Mr Dean adds. "What if one person registers a trademark which is actually the face of another person? There are substantial data protection and privacy considerations."

Celebrities who have registered trademarks with a clear commercial intent are likely to have an easier run of arguing their validity, Mr Rimola says. England footballer Cole Palmer, for example, has trademarked his signature "Cold Palmer" celebration (and the phrase itself) for use on a range of merchandise. But without this business purpose, applicants could find their trademarks ruled invalid.

Despite these limitations, celebrities are getting "creative" with trademarks because there is no provision in UK law for image rights, meaning your face is not protected under any existing legislation.

"There's no such thing as image rights in the UK, so celebrities are having to look elsewhere to protect their image against AI," he continues. "I think trademarks is one way to do that, but it's a bit of a shoehorn to be honest."

There could be some benefits to protecting your face in this way. Social media companies, he says, are more likely to order creators to remove certain content – including AI deepfakes – if they can prove it is infringing on a trademark. But both experts say that despite the moves made by high-profile celebrities, trademarking your face is no "silver bullet" against deepfakes.

Earlier this year, the UK government cracked down on non-consensual sexually explicit images, including deepfakes. But it has yet to legislate for deepfakes that aren't sexually explicit in nature – and how it could do so is still under discussion.

"These are issues which the UK parliament is currently grappling with to try and formulate legislation," Mr Dean explains. "I believe it is important that the UK parliament set the parameters, so this is not addressed [by people with legitimate concerns] through other forums such as trademark registration."

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Pictures of the Day



Letting fly

Bangladesh's Mahmudul Hasan Joy loses his bat while playing a shot against Pakistan in Mirpur, Bangladesh. *AFP/Getty*



Knit grit

A fan in a Kneecap-style knitted Irish flag balaclava raises a clenched fist at Celtic Park before the Celtic vs Rangers match. *Reuters*



Viennese whirl

Last year's winner, Austrian singer Johannes Pietsch, aka JJ, delights fans by posing at the opening ceremony of the

Eurovision Song Contest 2026 at City Hall Square in Vienna.
AFP/Getty



Right tangle

Kazakhstan's Aidar Arapov (white) and the Netherlands' Frank De Wit compete in the men's under-90kg bronze medal bout at the Astana Grand Slam judo tournament in the Kazakh capital.
AFP/Getty



Stretch and parry

Italy's Lorenzo Musetti hits a return to Argentina's Francisco Cerundolo during their men's singles match at the ATP Rome Open tennis tournament at Foro Italico. *AFP/Getty*

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Home news in brief



Former SNP leader Nicola Sturgeon with ex-prime minister Boris Johnson (Jane Barlow/PA)

Sturgeon 'liked' Cameron but has 'zero respect' for Johnson

Nicola Sturgeon said the prime minister she "liked best" in her time in office was David Cameron – adding that she had "zero respect" for Boris Johnson.

The former SNP leader said people "often" asked her to rank the five different Conservative prime ministers she dealt with during her time as Scottish first minister. While she insisted she was not going to do that, Ms Sturgeon told an audience at the Boswell Book Festival in the Scottish borders: "The one I liked best, in the sense that he was just easiest to get on with, was

David Cameron. The one I respected most, because she took the job seriously, always on top of her brief, even though we agreed on very little politically, was Theresa May."

Speaking about Liz Truss – who was in Downing Street for less than two months – Ms Sturgeon said: "I blinked and missed her." She added: "Literally the only interaction we had was around the death of the late Queen, because she became prime minister and then didn't last very long. And fair to say the one I have zero respect for was Boris Johnson, but there you go."

Ms Sturgeon described herself as being a "bit of weirdo", telling the audience she had been reading Albert Camus's *The Plague* when Covid struck in 2020. While she said it "sounds really grim", she added that the novel "really helped me get a sense of perspective".

Actor Morrissey opens up about being a 'recovering alcoholic'

TV actor and filmmaker David Morrissey has candidly revealed he is a "recovering alcoholic" and discussed the "self-destructive" behaviour he adopted following the death of his father.

Speaking on Radio 4's*Desert Island Discs* with Lauren Laverne, the 61-year-old shared how his father died from a haemorrhage at 54 when Morrissey was just 15, having suffered from a long-term and terminal blood disorder.

The *Sherwood* and *Gone* actor described being in a "terrible state" following the loss, experiencing "trauma responses", depression and anxiety. Reflecting on his childhood, *The Walking Dead* star said: "I knew that, academically, I was never going to be able to go to university or anything – that was never going to happen to me. So, I had to make it happen somewhere else."

On his alcoholism, the Liverpool-born actor said: "I worked with a guy on a job. He gave me his number and I knew he was in [Alcoholics Anonymous]. Then two years later, I was in a terrible, terrible state, and I phoned him quite late, early in the

morning time. He came round my house and just sat with me. And I've not drank since that day, really. So, it's been tough."

Two arrested after arson attack at former synagogue

Counterterrorism police have arrested two people following an arson attack at a former synagogue in east London. The 45-year-old man and 52-year-old woman were arrested yesterday on suspicion of conspiracy to commit arson and have been taken into police custody, the Metropolitan Police confirmed.

It follows an incident at a building in Nelson Street, Whitechapel, in the early hours of Tuesday morning which the force said is being investigated alongside a number of apparent attacks on Jewish sites in London since late March.

Commander Helen Flanagan, head of Counter Terrorism Policing London, which is leading the investigation, said yesterday: "Today's arrests are a significant step in our investigation into this attack and our enquiries are ongoing.

"Our aim continues to be to arrest and charge all those responsible for the arson attacks and other incidents targeted at Jewish, Israeli and Iranian sites in recent weeks. We will not tolerate these hateful attacks on communities."

Comic Davies reveals unexpected side effect of his Ozempic use

Taskmaster's Greg Davies has revealed he used a weight-loss drug – and that it left him experiencing unexpected side effects. The 6ft 6in comedian is famed for his imposing physique, but admitted in a new interview that he attempted to shrink his size using Ozempic.

"Three stone fell off me," Davies told *The Times*. "But I didn't really like it, it made me a bit gaunt." He added that he came off the drug, only to put the lost weight back on. However, he also revealed an unexpected side effect to using it. "My appetite's never gone back to the way it was," he said. "I can't ram things in the way I used to."

Davies was yesterday due to present the annual Bafta Television Awards at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall in London. "I see the whole event as an opportunity to wave a flag for this beloved medium and, with the exception of one commissioner, two execs and a co-star that I have personal beef with, I will do everything I can to ensure it's a night of warm celebration for all," he joked in a statement as his gig was announced.

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World

Foreign aid cuts are slowing maternal mortality advances



Busayna, 25, fled war in Sudan but nearly died in a refugee camp a few months ago while giving birth to her fifth child (Bel Trew/The Independent)

BEL TREW
NICK FERRIS
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

Hard-won successes in efforts to stop women and babies dying in childbirth have faced a serious setback with recent cuts to foreign aid – and the trend is now reversing in some countries, new figures show.

Significant progress in tackling preventable maternal mortality across the globe had seen the rate decline by 40 per cent in the last two decades. However, the latest data from the World Health Organisation (WHO) suggests this progress has slowed in recent years, and recent aid cuts by the US, as well as other countries including Britain, will start to reverse those crucial gains.

With Donald Trump in particular slashing America's foreign assistance programmes by 57 per cent last year, global aid fell by 23 per cent in 2025 compared to 2024, and is projected to drop by a further 5.8 per cent in 2026.

Maternal mortality is particularly acute in parts of Africa, and is already playing out in the Central African Republic, which has the second-highest rate of neonatal deaths globally, according to the UN. Along its border with Sudan, where a civil war has entered its fourth year, severe aid cuts have caused midwives to lose their jobs, mobile maternal clinics to close and medicines to run out, despite the need being greater than ever because of an influx of refugees.

Busayna, 25, who fled massacres in Darfur on foot after militants murdered her husband, told *The Independent* she nearly died a few months ago while giving birth to her fifth child. She had no money or food, and she had to walk to the nearest clinic while in labour.

According to the WHO, the average annual decline in global maternal mortality rate was 1.5 per cent between 2013 and 2023, a figure significantly below the 2.6 per cent recorded between 2000 and 2010, even before the slashing of billions of pounds from global aid. The benchmark is the UN Sustainable Development Goal, laid out in 2015, for the global maternal mortality rate to fall below 70 deaths per 100,000 live births by 2030.

The latest data puts the global maternal mortality rate at 197 per 100,000 live births, with a number of nations significantly above that. Seventy-five per cent of deaths are due to either severe

bleeding, infections, high blood pressure during pregnancy, complications from delivery, or unsafe abortion.

The impact of aid cuts on health programmes is set to be devastating, with one study published in *The Lancet* this year projecting 23 million extra deaths worldwide by 2030. When it comes to maternal mortality, one study – published in March – projected that Trump's termination of programmes by USAID could cause maternal deaths to increase by an average of 45 per cent across six highly vulnerable countries in West Africa.

The paper, which looked at maternal mortality in Burkina Faso, the Central African Republic, Chad, Mali, Niger, and Nigeria, projected that there would be approximately 1,000 additional maternal deaths per 100,000 live births across those six nations within a single year.



The Independent's Bel Trew has made a documentary film, 'Hard Labour', about mothers dying in childbirth in the developing world (The Independent)

In Central African Republic, mobile health clinics funded by USAID that serviced the refugee camp in Birao, where Busayna now lives, were cancelled following Trump's major cuts last year.

"My 35-year-old cousin, who had only just escaped Sudan, recently died in hospital while giving birth," she said from her mud hut around 40 miles from the Sudanese border. "After arriving here, she underwent an emergency operation, but the baby died. A few days later, she also passed away. We couldn't afford the medicine or blood she needed from the hospital, so

she bled out," she continued, her face a mask of grief. "When I gave birth, we had no money or food as well. I am alone and struggling to provide."

The head of the hospital where Busayna gave birth, Dr Ngonzo Lezin, said they had lost 12 staff members because of funding cuts, including eight from the maternity wards, among them all the midwives.

"It is truly a catastrophe for the community. We will return to rudimentary practices, traditional treatments and care at home, which will only increase mortality," he said from outside the maternity ward. "Our prayer is that someone can step in to support our healthcare system. The number of maternal deaths will rise. The number of child deaths will rise. For me, it is a cry from the heart."

Reproductive rights research group the Guttmacher Institute has estimated that the termination of health programmes from USAID alone likely resulted in 34,000 women and girls dying from complications during pregnancy or birth last year. While the gutting of health programmes under Trump has been unprecedented in its scope and its severity, it fits a pattern of maternal mortality rates rising during Republican presidencies, according to a study from earlier this year.

Aid for family planning typically drops globally under Republican presidents and then rises again once Democratic presidents are elected, the paper, published in BMJ Global Health, found using data across the last 40 years. The fall in aid under Republican presidents correlated to an 11 per cent increase in maternal mortality, the study found, equivalent to around 45 additional deaths for every 100,000 live births. Trump's brutal cuts will likely only extend this, with health workers on the ground in Africa saying skilled birth attendants are losing their jobs, access to medicine for birth is on the decline, and services are being shuttered globally.

In the UK, the government is slashing aid spending to some of the poorest countries in the world, as part of moves to reduce spending by 40 per cent. Plans set out by the foreign secretary,

Yvette Cooper, will see bilateral support for African countries fall from £1.3bn a year to £677m over the next three years – a drop of 56 per cent – while countries such as Afghanistan, Yemen and Myanmar will also face severe reductions.

The drop in support to Africa will be between 2026-27 and 2028-29, with cuts likely to hit bilateral aid to countries including Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Zimbabwe, Ghana, Mauritius, Senegal and Sierra Leone.

The money that the UK spends on humanitarian crisis relief, such as for natural disasters, will also be reduced by 15 per cent to just under £300m a year. Total UK aid spending is expected to fall from £10bn in 2026-27 to £8.9bn the following year, before increasing slightly to £9.4bn in 2028-29.

Monica Ferro, head of the United Nations Population Fund's London office, said that the work over the last 20 years had given the world "hope that finally the world would be on track to reach zero preventable maternal deaths".

"We know that when funding is cut, services are shut down and women die. It is that simple. It may sound cruel, but it is that simple, and we have the evidence to prove it. It is very disappointing. The women and girls who are losing access to services will not forgive us for promising them a world with more dignity and then failing them because funding is being withdrawn."

This article has been produced as part of The Independent's Rethinking Global Aid project

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World

Aid cuts push struggling mothers to brink in Gaza

US ending $1m-a-year programme has reduced vital support for overwhelmed humanitarian groups, writes **Rachel Hagan**



A mother with her three-month-old in Gaza City (Photos AFP via Getty)

When Raneen went into labour in Gaza, she desperately called for an ambulance but the dispatcher told her the service only responded to injured people. A neighbour found a horse-drawn cart, which moved slowly through Khan Younis, in the south of the besieged enclave, with Raneen having little space to breathe between contractions.

Her daughter was born into a war that had already taken her son and left her husband too sick to work. She had spent the pregnancy malnourished, anaemic and short of vitamins. She tells *The Independent*: “Our suffering is immense. My daughter was born amid this tragedy.”

Months later, she found Wefaq, a women-led organisation in Gaza, through word of mouth. They gave her a mattress and access to a psychotherapist. Raneen is one of 50,000 people supported this year by Wefaq, which provides legal aid, psychosocial care, a gender-based violence hotline and humanitarian assistance – more than double the number it reached before the war.

The war inside Gaza was trigged by a bloody attack inside Israel by Hamas on 7 October 2023, in which around 1,200 people were killed and 250 more taken hostage. Israel’s retaliatory war against Hamas has killed more than 70,000 Palestinians, according to health officials in the Strip.

Two years into a five-year programme supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), worth roughly $1m (£734,000) a year, Washington cut the funding entirely in early 2025, according to Wefaq. That came as part of Donald Trump’s dismantling of the agency when he returned to the White House for his second presidential term.



A Palestinian medic examines a woman at a maternity clinic in Khan Younis

Buthaina Subeh, Wefaq's director, says: "Suddenly, everything stopped. It was a very difficult period. If that project had continued, the scale and quality of services would have been very different."

The US State Department has been contacted for comment on the cuts.

Wefaq found other funders and kept going, but at reduced capacity, absorbing a surge in need with a fraction of its former resources.

That need continues to balloon because the institutions women would normally turn to are also gone. Gaza's Sharia courts held exclusive jurisdiction over divorce, custody, inheritance and guardianship. A 2025 report by the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights documented the near-total collapse of the system: courts and archives destroyed, thousands of legal case files lost, judges and staff killed or displaced. At a UN human rights hearing in March this year, a representative of Palestinian women's organisations said dispute resolution had been pushed into displacement camps and makeshift mediation sessions "even under the rubble".

Into that vacuum, Randa, a lawyer working with Wefaq through ActionAid, says violence has moved. After the judicial headquarters were destroyed in airstrikes, the courts were suspended entirely, leaving women with no recourse to access their rights. She says: "This war has helped men evade giving women their rights, because of the absence of police and courts. So many men have stopped granting rights to women, such as expenses or child support."

She takes calls from women who need divorces, who haven't received child support in over a year, who cannot enforce custody arrangements that predate the start of the war. There are now believed to be at least 22,000 widows in Gaza and women's unemployment stands at more than 90 per cent.



Incubators at a maternity ward in Gaza

The Palestinian Centre for Human Rights alleges that the targeting of Sharia courts forms part of a systematic Israeli policy to dismantle Palestinian institutional and legal structures. Israel has repeatedly denied this, and says it does not target civilians or civilian infrastructure.

Nisreen, one of Wefaq's psychotherapists, runs sessions from a tent with a two-month-old baby. She describes women arriving unable to concentrate because of malnutrition, some fainting in the room. She says: "Many showed clear signs of trauma, many carried deep feelings of guilt – thinking that if they had kept their children at home, or stopped their husbands from going out, they would still be alive." She adds: "The hardest part of our work is that so often we are both the client and the service provider at the same time."

Women's rights organisations globally receive less than one per cent of humanitarian and gender-focused aid funding, according to UN Women. Despite being local, already embedded and operational when international organisations are still establishing logistics.

The USAID money that reached Wefaq worked, keeping lawyers employed and services running for women who had nowhere else to go. Nisreen says: "I now live in a tent that is neither safe

nor able to provide security or protection. These are all things we have now lost."

This article has been produced as part of The Independent's Rethinking Global Aid project

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Iran warns British warships will face ‘decisive response’



Royal Navy Type 45 destroyer HMS Dragon has been sent for a potential peace mission in the Strait of Hormuz (PA)

HARRIETTE BOUCHER

Iran has issued a stark warning to Britain, urging it not to “escalate the crisis” in the Middle East by sending warships to the Strait of Hormuz. Iran’s deputy foreign minister said that the presence of French and British warships in the key shipping route, effectively controlled by Tehran in retaliation for US and

Israeli attacks, “will be met with a decisive and immediate response”.

It comes after the UK’s Ministry of Defence (MoD) said the Royal Navy was sending the HMS *Dragon* warship to the Middle East, where it could join an international mission to safeguard shipping.

Sir Keir Starmer has said the mission, planned alongside French president Emmanuel Macron, would only take place once fighting in the region ends. A ceasefire has been in place between the US and Iran since April, but both countries have accused each other of launching attacks in the strait, through which 20 per cent of the world’s oil and liquified natural gas is transported.

In a post on social media, Iran’s deputy foreign minister Kazem Gharibabadi said: “Any deployment and stationing of extra-regional destroyers around the Strait of Hormuz, under the pretext of ‘protecting shipping’, is nothing but an escalation of the crisis. The presence of French and British warships, or those of any other country potentially accompanying the illegal and internationally unlawful actions of the United States in the Strait of Hormuz, will be met with a decisive and immediate response from the armed forces of the Islamic Republic of Iran. Therefore, they are strongly advised not to complicate the situation further.”



Donald Trump mocked Iran's drone threat, comparing its drones to 'butterflies' (AP)

Hours before the warning, Tehran announced it had responded to a peace proposal put forward by Donald Trump's peace plan proposal, which would end fighting before starting talks on more contentious issues, including Iran's nuclear programme. The response is said to focus on ending the war on all fronts, especially Lebanon, and on the safety of maritime traffic in the Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. It was delivered to Pakistan as a key mediator in the war. Pakistani government officials said the response had been received and sent to the US.

However, despite the two countries looking to reach a peace agreement, hostilities have continued in the Middle East. Iran threatened to tighten its grip on the Strait of Hormuz yesterday, with its army warning that countries complying with US sanctions against Tehran will now "face difficulties" crossing the key shipping route. Vessels have been repeatedly struck by Iran in the strait, as it continues to block the waterway.

The US enforced a blockade of Iranian ports in response to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, and it has continued to attack ships that attempt to pass through the waters. Iran warned it would launch a "heavy assault" on US assets in the Middle East if there are further attacks on vessels.



Iran has blocked ships from passing through the beleaguered strait (Reuters)

Last night, Mr Trump accused Iran of “playing games”. In a post on his Truth Social platform, he wrote: “Iran has been playing games with the United States, and the rest of the World, for 47 years (DELAY, DELAY, DELAY!)” It came a day after the US president mocked Iran’s threat by comparing its drones to “butterflies” and posting AI-generated visuals depicting a US warship firing laser beams into the sky, triggering explosions. The caption read: “Bye Bye, Drones”.

Qatari prime minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani warned that using the Strait of Hormuz as “a pressure tool” would only deepen the crisis in the Gulf. He told Iran’s Abbas Araghchi that all parties in the conflict should respond to mediation efforts to end the war.

The US ambassador to the UN said America would evaluate Iran’s response to its peace plan proposal. Mike Waltz told Fox News: “We’ll see what the Iranians just came back with overnight in terms of their response to our very clear red line. President Trump has been clear they will never have a nuclear weapon and they cannot hold the world’s economies hostage.”

Mr Waltz told ABC the president was “giving diplomacy every chance that he can before going back to hostilities”.

The MoD has been contacted for comment.

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Lai's son urges Trump to rescue jailed media tycoon

President has promised to raise case during visit to China



Jimmy Lai, pictured in 2020, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in February, after years of being held in solitary confinement (Photos AFP/Getty)

JAMES C. REYNOLDS

The son of jailed Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai has implored Donald Trump to secure his father's release from prison during a historic state visit to China this week.

Mr Lai, the 78-year-old founder of *Apple Daily*, the city's most vocal pro-democracy newspaper, was sentenced to 20 years in prison in February on disputed collusion and sedition charges, as part of a mounting national security crackdown on the former British colony by Beijing.

He has reportedly been kept in solitary confinement since his December 2020 arrest, despite mounting concerns for his deteriorating physical health.

Sebastien Lai told *The Independent* that he "held hope" that Hong Kong would "act rationally and release my father" if the US president presses the issue during meetings with Chinese leader Xi Jinping which are reported to be taking place next week.

Mr Trump pledged during his 2024 campaign to secure his release and earlier this week vowed to bring up the case on his trip to Beijing.

The younger Mr Lai lauded Mr Trump's record as "an incredible negotiator" and "one of the best deal makers" in his appeal.

"That's why we have so much hope on his visit," he said. "This is a case he genuinely, from my understanding, cares about and he's someone who's an incredible negotiator. So hopefully I'll get to see my father again."



Donald Trump with Xi Jinping in Busan, South Korea, in October last year

He separately urged the British government to make his father's release a precondition for resetting relationships with Beijing, lamenting that "had the government done more three, four years ago, who knows?"

Mr Trump's visit to China on 14-15 May will be the first for a US president in nearly a decade. The two leaders are expected to discuss a raft of issues, including Mr Lai's detention and the war in Iran. The US president raised the case during a summit with Mr Xi in South Korea's Busan last year.

Ahead of the trip, a bipartisan group of more than 100 US lawmakers, including some two-thirds of the Senate, signed a letter urging Mr Trump to seek the release of Mr Lai. A copy of the letter seen by the *Washington Post* read: "Your direct engagement is critical to securing Mr Lai's immediate release on humanitarian parole, so he can receive appropriate medical care and reunite with his family."

Sebastien Lai told *The Independent*: "I think as countries that believe in democracy and freedom, it's important to push the Hong Kong and Chinese governments in the right direction ... It's about saving [Jimmy Lai's] life. It's a very easy way for [Mr Xi] to show good faith to the American people and to show good faith to us, to the UK ... Of all these big geopolitical things, this is a very easy one to ask.

"It's well within their ability to release my father and directly beneficial to Hong Kong and China as well," he added, saying it seemed "mind-boggling that they are so determined to torture him like this".

Announcing their verdict in February, three judges said Mr Lai's offences fell within the harshest penalty tier for those of a "grave nature", accusing him of being the driving force behind persistent foreign conspiracies. The sentence drew uproar from the British government and other democracies around the world.



Sebastien Lai says he is 'incredibly proud' of his father for sticking to his principles

Lawyers for the elder Mr Lai told the BBC in March that he had decided not to appeal against his conviction. They did not say why and declined to comment further.

His son told *The Independent*: "From what I understand, my father decided not to appeal. I think anybody looking at the trial can see the reason why. It's essentially a stacked deck. He hasn't received a fair trial in any of his sentencing and this is not just my opinion ... this is a pretty black-and-white type of thing. So in this situation, what's the point of appealing? ... This isn't rational. They're out to get him."

Mr Lai was concerned about his father's ailing health, still held in isolation in Hong Kong's maximum-security Stanley Prison. Jimmy Lai suffers from diabetes and heart problems, and his health has declined dramatically in custody, supporters say.

His son said information has been more scarce, with his sister, Claire, campaigning and unable to visit him in prison.

"He's still in solitary confinement. I get less information from him now," he said. "I could write to him. I think he writes back, but I don't get as much health information from him now. I think many people would be very depressed in this situation, but he still keeps hope ... He still keeps fighting and it's very moving.

”It gives us a lot of courage as well because even though they’ve taken so much of his health, so much of his physical belongings, they haven’t broken his spirit.”

Britain raised its concerns for Mr Lai during Sir Keir Starmer’s visit to China in January. But just days later, Mr Lai, a British citizen, was handed down a staggering 20-year sentence.

The younger Mr Lai urged Britain to make the resetting of relations with Beijing conditional on his father’s release. He said: “If we want to reset relationships with them, the least they [China] could do is release a 78-year-old British citizen from jail. I don’t see how there’s warming in relationships without this happening as a precondition to this warming in relationships.”

He did acknowledge that this UK government seems to have taken the case “more seriously”.

“When I started this, it was a few governments ago, but it was an absolutely horrible time when they weren’t even calling for his release. And obviously my dad’s not out yet, but had they done more three or four years ago, who knows what might have happened? But it does seem like this government is keen to do this.”

The UK Foreign Office was approached for comment. In her most recent comments on the case in February, foreign secretary Yvette Cooper said Mr Lai’s sentencing was “tantamount to a life sentence”.

She said that the British government would “rapidly engage further” on the case.

“We stand with the people of Hong Kong, and will always honour the historical commitments made under the legally binding Sino-British Joint Declaration. China must do the same.”

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World news in brief



‘The Rip’, starring Ben Affleck and Matt Damon, is based on a 2016 drug bust in Miami (Netflix)

Damon and Affleck sued by Miami police over Netflix film

Matt Damon and Ben Affleck are being sued through their production company, Artists Equity, over their latest Netflix crime thriller, *The Rip*, which Miami police allege falsely depicts them as “dirty”.

Released in January, the movie, starring Damon and Affleck, opens with a disclaimer that it is “inspired by true events”. Writer and director Joe Carnahan has previously said it was based on the 2016 Miami Lakes drugs raid, during which the Miami-Dade Police Department – now known as the Miami-

Dade Sheriff's Department – seized more than $24m (£18m) in laundered cash.

In a new lawsuit, multiple officers involved in the original 2016 bust have claimed that the film has caused "unfair reputational harm", according to *7 News Miami.* Speaking to the outlet, Jonathan Santana, the lead detective of the 2016 case, said: "When you rip something, you're stealing something. We never stole a dollar."

"They portrayed police officers as dirty, they portrayed my clients as dirty," Santana's lawyer, Ignacio Alvarez, argued. "Now their reputations are hurt."*The Independent* contacted Alvarez and Artists Equity for comment.

Hikers confirmed dead after Indonesia volcano eruption

Two missing Singaporeans have been confirmed dead following the eruption of Mount Dukono on Indonesia's remote Halmahera island. Heng Wen Qiang Timothy, 30, Shahin Muhrez bin Abdul Hamid, 27, and an Indonesian woman died when the volcano erupted on Friday, local authorities said.

The bodies of the Singaporeans were found around the carter rim, and an evacuation mission was underway yesterday, said Iwan Ramdani, the head of the local rescue agency. Backpacks suspected to belong to the two Singaporeans were also recovered by a group of rescuers.

"Evacuation of the bodies is still hampered by eruptions that continue to occur and bad weather," Mr Ramdani said. The body of the Indonesian woman was recovered on Saturday and sent to a regional hospital for identification.

Around 20 climbers had set out on Thursday to ascend the nearly 1,355-metre volcano in defiance of safety restrictions, according to the North Halmahera police. They became stranded when Dukono erupted at 7.41am local time, spewing a thick ash column that rose about 10 kilometres above the summit.

Pakistan suicide attack kills 14 police officers

The death toll from a suicide attack on a security post in northwest Pakistan has risen to 14 police officers, authorities said yesterday morning. A self-proclaimed breakaway group of the Pakistan Taliban has claimed responsibility for the attack.

A suicide bomber and several gunmen detonated an explosives-laden vehicle near the post in Bannu, a district in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province bordering Afghanistan, late on Saturday, said senior police official Sajjad Khan. The attack triggered an intense shootout, with some officers being killed in the exchange, while others died later after the building collapsed.

A newly formed militant group, Ittehad-ul-Mujahideen Pakistan, claimed responsibility for the attack in a statement sent to reporters. While the group claims it was formed by splinter factions of the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, authorities have accused it of being a front for the TTP.

Pakistan has witnessed a surge in militant violence in recent years, much of it blamed on the TTP, a separate group but an ally of the Afghan Taliban, who returned to power in Afghanistan in 2021. Tensions between the two neighbours have persisted, and both sides have engaged in fighting that has killed hundreds of people since late February.

Williams 'driven mad' by co-star Field on Mrs Doubtfire set

Sally Field has revealed she "drove Robin Williams mad" on the set of their 1993 comedy *Mrs Doubtfire* by never laughing at his work. The Chris Columbus-directed family classic starred Williams as an actor who disguises himself as an elderly Scottish female housekeeper to continue seeing his children, after he and his wife – played by Field – decide to separate.

During an appearance this week on Stephen Colbert's US talk show, Field recalled that she didn't find Williams funny while working with him on the film, and that it bothered him.

"I would never laugh, ever," Field said. "And everybody else was laughing and carrying on." She said that Williams prided himself

on making his colleagues laugh, which only increased his frustration. “It drove him mad, actually,” Field added. “It wasn’t funny. It just wasn’t funny. Robin was always trying something different to make me laugh. It was so unfunny. I can’t begin to tell you.”

Despite their early tension, Field has always praised Williams as a co-star and as an individual, this week remembering another moment on the *Mrs Doubtfire* set in which he ordered she be sent home rather than work during a moment of personal grief. During the filming of a pivotal scene in which she and Williams’s characters fight for custody of their children, Field learnt that her father had died.

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Voices

Unless Starmer goes, Farage will be our prime minister



Labour MP Catherine West has threatened to challenge the prime minister as leader today (Labour Party)

CATHERINE WEST

Across the country, so many hard-working Labour councillors lost their seat on Thursday through no fault of their own. I want to thank them for their service and dedication.

In a bad week, I always find it helpful to go back to the words of the only Labour leader who triumphed in four general elections, Harold Wilson: “The Labour Party is a moral crusade, or it is nothing.”

Everyone needs a quality education, a secure job with decent pay, and a secure and affordable home. Every family needs the chance to thrive. That’s why I am incredibly proud that Labour’s Clean Energy Plan is delivering new jobs with good wages and protections. That’s why I am incredibly proud of Labour’s free breakfast clubs and the thousands of new council homes delivered by Labour local authorities. This is what a Labour government working with Labour mayors and Labour councils can do. But to keep on delivering, we need to stay in power.

I was honoured to serve under Keir Starmer’s leadership, both in opposition and in government. All of us in the Labour Party are thankful to Keir, for the great 2024 General Election result, for the previous period in opposition from 2020-2024 when we improved our credibility and electability, and the good work in government since. I personally get on well with Keir.

But his approach is not cutting through, and the results over the past 48 hours are nothing short of disastrous. Of course midterm elections often don’t go well for governing parties. But this is not a midterm blip. Unless things change, we risk Nigel Farage becoming prime minister.

The prime minister has not managed to articulate his vision. Keir had said himself that we need to rebuild. But we can only rebuild from here with a new leader.



That’s why, with much regret and sadness, I firmly believe that Keir should outline his intention to resign as prime minister and oversee an orderly transition.

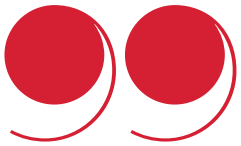
The Labour Party need the chance to have an honest conversation about how we deliver the change we promised in 2024, and that requires new leadership which understands the urgent and real concerns of people across the UK. We need to be much better at telling our story. Are people actually seeing the change that they voted for? Most importantly, what is change about? It's about hope. Sadly, the prime minister is not inspiring hope.

Labour has achieved so much in government since 2024. The Employment Rights Act, the Renters' Rights Act, the Hillsborough Law, and the new partnership with the European Union. But these catastrophic local election results show that, sadly, Keir has not found a way of taking people with him on the journey. In fact, most people think it's a journey with no destination. The prime minister has not managed to articulate his vision. Keir had said himself that we need to rebuild. But we can only rebuild from here with a new leader.

Keir has demonstrated strong leadership on the world stage and is well placed to represent the UK's national interest while this process takes place and may even continue in an international role in the future but, for now, I know I speak for more Labour people than just myself in wanting him to step aside as our leader.

The first step is for the Cabinet to try to find a solution that would not require a leadership election. If this cannot be agreed, then the Labour Party needs to set a process in place and agree a timetable for a leadership election at pace to elect a Labour top team to take on Reform. This should be respectful and collegial. But we cannot drag it out. The back of the Labour Party membership card says it all: "By the strength of our common endeavour we achieve more than we achieve alone." Now is the time for the party to unite and find a way forward. We owe it to families across the country who need Labour to stay in power.

Catherine West is Labour MP for Hornsey and Friern Barnet



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It's boom time! President has made war big business again



The president's trumpeting of US hardware is ringing in the cash for weapons contractors (Getty/@realDonaldTrump/Truth Social)

JAMES MOORE

Donald Trump has his most interesting thoughts at 5am. The 79-year-old president of the United States's recent early morning Truth Social blitz was – along with musings on his upcoming 80th birthday celebrations ("June 14th. Biggest ever!!!") – about warships and lasers. Obviously.

“Lasers: Bing, Bing, GONE!!!” read a post, featuring an image of an American battleship taking down a plane marked with an Iranian flag using a laser beam. His point, if there is one, is presumably to show off the sum of American military might. You might call it an advertorial. War used to destroy markets. Now it powers them.

It is a good time to be a weapons contractor. Wherever you look, war is scarily big business again. BAE Systems, Britain’s domestic defence giant, has declared that it will meet growth expectations thanks to “increased defence spending across all our key markets”. If you’d invested £100 in BAE five years ago, you’d be sitting on just over £400 today, not including dividends, which have been plentiful. War can be good for business.

What’s more, Shell has taken profits rocketing above £5bn, thanks to the impact of Trump’s war in Iran on the oil price. Brent crude did briefly dip below $100 a barrel on Thursday, but it wasn’t long before it was back in three-figure territory. The commodity has been hanging on the US president’s coat-tails ever since he sent the bombers into Iran – with the perverse result that the noxious regime in that country may end up stronger than it was before.

The post-Cold War peace dividend – the reallocating of funds from defence to domestic spending – died some time ago. Trump’s war, and Vladimir Putin’s obsession with crushing Ukraine, despite the damage it is doing to his economy and the young people in his country, are stomping on the remains.

Is the re-emergence of battle capitalism the final victory of the military-industrial complex we used to hear so much about, particularly during the Reagan era?

At this point, you’re probably wondering why I’m putting oil in there. Fair enough. But you need oil to fuel the complex, whose equipment is regularly used to secure oil assets. Oil has been either the primary or a secondary cause of many of the world’s conflicts since Vietnam.

This battle-resource capitalism might actually turn out to be one of the investment stories of the next decade



It was, ironically, a Republican, Dwight D Eisenhower, who coined the plain-vanilla term "military-industrial complex", warning in his farewell address that "we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex".

Ike was no flower-waving peacenik. He was the commander of the Allied Expeditionary Force in the Second World War, which capped a stellar military career. Mind you, it's hard to see how the self-described "moderate" and "progressive" Republican would fit into today's party.

Needless to say, the warning wasn't heeded by John F Kennedy, whom it was aimed at. Ditto his successor, Lyndon B Johnson. US defence expenditure hit a peak of 9.4 per cent of GDP in 1967 under him, with the Vietnam war raging.

It fell throughout the 1970s, despite the Cold War, only to rise again sharply under Ronald Reagan, after which it started to fall once more.

However, over the last decade it has, according to World Bank data, been fairly stable, at between 3.3 and 3.4 per cent of GDP – still far in excess of what most of Europe spends. Trump has a point when he chides Europe for its unwillingness to shell out to defend itself.

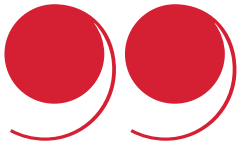
The UK's spending has followed a similar path, peaking a little earlier, at 7.1 per cent in 1960, before falling back until it, too, started to rise again under Reagan's ideological soulmate Margaret Thatcher, before falling again at the end of the Cold War. The low point was in 2018 at 1.9 per cent, since which point it has risen, reaching 2.3 per cent in 2023. Keir Starmer

has pledged to get it to 3 per cent. Maybe the nation's defence exports will help him get it there. The biggest helper, ironically, would be peace in the Middle East.

With rearmament also on the agenda in Europe and elsewhere, the defence industry, of which BAE is part, should be sitting pretty. Score one for the complex.

As for oil, we'll see. But both BP and Shell have gone distinctly cold on the green-energy transition. The US oil majors never really bothered. They're all still expecting a strong enough appetite for their product to keep their investors happy for the foreseeable future. The money they're making will justify that to shareholders.

This sort of battle-resource capitalism might actually turn out to be one of the investment stories of the next decade, as defence spending rises across the board and countries fight over resources, keeping the price of the black stuff high. People could make a lot of money from it. Perhaps they should spend the proceeds on prepping? It's not a happy thought, but when it's boom time for weapons contractors, it is a sensible one.



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Voices

Trump has brought justice in the US to a frightening low



Under Donald Trump, federal court nominees have been vetted for Maga loyalty (AP)

ERIC LEWIS

In his address to the United States Congress, King Charles delivered a wise, understated lesson about the rule of law as the foundation of a just society.

It is unclear whether the members of Congress understood they were being schooled by the monarch of the country against

which we Americans revolted 250 years ago because of grievances rooted in abuses of the rule of law.

The King invoked our common roots in Magna Carta “as the foundation of the principle that executive power is subject to checks and balances”. He referenced the indispensable common heritage of commitment to the “rule of law: the certainty of stable and accessible rules, an independent judiciary resolving disputes and delivering impartial justice”.

In the American system, federal judges are nominated by the president and must be confirmed by the Senate; the appointments are for life. There have been some dubious choices over the years, but senators from the states in which the judges were nominated could file a “blue slip”, which effectively vetoed the nomination. The net result was that wildly unqualified nominees or ideologues often had their nominations quietly quashed before coming up for a vote of the full Senate.

In earlier times, judicial nominations for federal courts below the Supreme Court were fairly perfunctory affairs to assess qualifications, character and legal experience. In the second term of Trump, his nominations have been vetted for Maga loyalty, leading to a clown show.

Forty-four nominees have come before the Senate since Trump came back into the office. All 44 nominees were asked by Democrat senators, “Did Trump lose the 2020 election?” Not one answered this simple question of fact in the affirmative. Clearly, the White House coordinated non-responsive talking points, with nominees in unison parroting only that Joe Biden was certified as president, not that he won and Trump lost.

Trump's demands for absolute fealty require the denial of truths which Trump seeks to bully into non-existence



Twenty-six of the 44 refused even to say Biden was "elected" president, but only that he "served" as president, suggesting that the legitimacy of Biden's term, now over for well over a year, remains a question. Biden won the election by more than seven million votes with a decisive 300 electoral votes. Many invoked the mantra that the Canons of Judicial Ethics forbid them from opining on what is a "controversial political question".

The attack on the Capitol, captured in moment-by-moment video and the subject of congressional investigation, also seemed to be a matter of hopeless complexity and political dispute for the Trump judicial nominees. All 44 nominees were asked either, "Was the US Capitol attacked by a violent mob on January 6, 2021?" or "Do you agree that the attack at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021, was an insurrection? Why or why not?"

Every one of them refused to agree either that the Capitol was attacked by a violent mob or that it was an insurrection.

One wonders how the families of the five law enforcement officials who died due to those events, or the law enforcement officers violently attacked, felt about their judicious reticence. Most invoked the approved Trumpian formulation – the January 6 attacks were the subject of "political debate", "political controversy", or a "political issue". As if "Hang Mike Pence" or the violent beating of police officers were simply debating points about appropriate conduct in public buildings.

Over two-thirds of nominees, 32 out of 44, said it would be “improper”, “impermissible” “inappropriate” or “not appropriate” to comment on the events of January 6. Others cited judicial ethics in that it could involve a pending case if they are confirmed. Yet because all those charged on January 6 have been pardoned, their cases by definition are over and cannot be pending in the future.

Whether Joe Biden won the 2020 election and Trump lost and whether there was a violent attack on the Capitol are questions of fact, not of politics. But Trump’s demands for absolute fealty require the denial of truths which Trump seeks to bully into non-existence.

Every federal judge swears this oath: “That I will administer justice without respect to persons and do equal right to the poor and to the rich, and that I will faithfully and impartially discharge and perform all the duties incumbent upon me under the constitution and laws of the United States. So help me God.”

They will be confirmed by a supine Senate; they will take the oath, and, it is likely, that King Charles’s invocation of Magna Carta to render impartial justice, will be superseded by a “Maga” Carta that will make the judicial branch join the legislative branch in capitulating to the unprecedented and increasingly unchecked powers wielded by the president of the United States.



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China and Russia grow ever stronger as Trump blusters



The US president will meet Xi Jinping in Beijing, as America looks increasingly vulnerable on the world stage (AFP/Getty)

BEN JUDAH

As Donald Trump prepares to depart for China to meet Xi Jinping, it is a moment for America's traditional allies to reflect on a sobering fact: the balance of power is rapidly shifting against the United States. Since becoming president, Trump's actions have fractured

America's alliance system just as Xi Jinping and Vladimir Putin have consolidated theirs.

As if to underscore this, the Russian president will likely arrive in Beijing days after Trump. His will be a red carpet welcome. Donald Trump's will be far more exposing – and we all know why. Instead of a mighty demonstration of American firepower, his Iran war has exposed huge vulnerabilities. And less discussed but no less consequential has been the outcome of the economic warfare Trump initiated on his tariff "liberation day": an American defeat.

Under Joe Biden, the Democrats admitted for the first time that China not only has a project to displace the United States as the world's most powerful country, but that it was already well advanced in that direction.

They saw America's alliances as Washington's diplomatic superpower. And as national security adviser and secretary of state, Jake Sullivan and Tony Blinken, set about strengthening and deepening America's alliances wherever they could. Not only did they restore warm relations with Europe's democracies after Trump's first term and support Ukraine in resisting Russia; they also systematically built up ties with the Asian democracies – both militarily and diplomatically. Team Biden launched the Aukus submarine-and-tech alliance with Australia, increased basing rights in the Philippines and Papua New Guinea, and initiated the first leader-level Quad meeting with New Delhi, Tokyo and Canberra.

Trump could not have been more different. Extortionate tariffs hit allies in a fanfare of disregard. Mexico was threatened with military strikes on its own territory over the cartels. American aid to Ukraine all but ended. Model ally Denmark was threatened with Greenland's annexation. Britain was humiliated over Chagos. Thousands of US troops were reportedly set to be pulled out of Germany on a whim. European diplomatic partners were left shocked and disoriented by dalliances with Putin that might sell out both their Ukrainian ally and their core security interests, while Gulf allies were aghast at the lack of consultation and serious planning over Iran.

Meanwhile, in Asia, Japan was reportedly told to cool tensions during a spat with China, South Korea was bullied into paying billions in up-front cash for a tariff deal, Taiwan's president was reportedly blocked from visiting New York, and India was heavily sanctioned. The list of humiliations directed at even America's most loyal and compliant friends goes on.

The reason for this violent and systematic swing in the way America treats its allies is bigger than Trump alone. The deep Cold War consensus between Republicans and Democrats – which allowed allies to build their foreign and security policies around Washington – is dead. Both parties now reflect fundamentally different worldviews. Democrats see allies as partners, multiplying American power and cooperating on challenges such as China or climate change. Republicans increasingly see those nations as freeloaders, draining American prosperity and requiring coercion to stay in line.

Trump will arrive in Beijing not as the make-believe 'Daddy' of Republican memes, but as the leader of a country the Chinese increasingly see as vulnerable



Washington's top strategists are now sounding the alarm to allies. Neither side is likely to vanquish the other, argues Thomas Wright, former senior director for strategic planning on Biden's National Security Council, in *Inflection Point*, a policy memoir and assessment of his time in government. The lesson is clear: America is now erratic and unreliable in the eyes of its allies.

Meanwhile, Vladimir Putin and Xi Jinping have been deepening their axis of authoritarians. The Ukraine war propelled far deeper coordination between Russia, China, Iran and North Korea. To prevent a Russian strategic defeat, China has provided

huge quantities of non-lethal military aid to Russia – almost everything the war needed except bullets.

Jake Sullivan reportedly came to believe that, had it not been for China, Putin might well have lost the war. Under the banner of what Putin and Xi call a "no limits friendship", Moscow and Beijing have reconstituted and fused significant parts of their defence industries, while Iran dispatched Shahed drones and technicians to assist Russian strikes on Ukraine. Russia has also inked a mutual-defence pact with North Korea in exchange for 12,000 troops, vast quantities of artillery shells and other weapons. Wright recalls in *Inflection Point* that the deepening axis of authoritarians "went far further than anyone expected".

Trump's return to power has meant that the Ukraine war – instead of bringing the Atlantic alliance closer together, as it did under Biden – has pushed it further apart. Now Trump's Iran war risks driving Russia, China and Iran even closer together still. Russia has reportedly gone as far as assisting Iran with intelligence, cyberwarfare and drone capabilities, while China has provided radar systems, electronic-warfare support and access to commercial satellites in Tehran. Beijing also continues supplying critical non-lethal components to Iran's missile programme while importing the oil on which the regime depends. Worse still, there is also credible reporting that suggests China is toying with going even further on military aid.

Trump will arrive in Beijing not as the make-believe "Daddy" of Republican memes, but as the leader of a country the Chinese increasingly see as vulnerable. The fact that Washington was reportedly forced to withdraw forces from Gulf bases within range of Iran's drone and missile arsenal raises an uncomfortable question: would the Pentagon need to follow suit with bases close to China? Likewise, if Iran could damage some of America's most advanced radar systems, could China do the same? By prompting such questions, Trump has undermined America's deterrence in Asia.

Do the United States' historic "first island chain" bases in Asia – stretching from Japan's Okinawa to the Philippines – still look fully secure in the event of war?

But what happened in the trade war may matter even more: America lost. For more than 20 years, Beijing has built a stranglehold over the world's rare earths. According to the US Geological Survey, there are 50 minerals critical to America's economy and security, and China is the primary source for 22 of them. Xi Jinping's restrictions of these in response to Trump's 145 per cent tariffs pushed the United States towards a cliff edge at which it risked running short of key machine parts for hospitals, air conditioners and the defence industry. The White House yielded in May 2025, then gave way again in October 2025 after Beijing ramped up the pressure once more.

This is so significant we have to spell it out clearly. China put sanctions on the United States and it buckled in a geopolitical contest. Never was the Soviet Union able to do something like this. And as a result, a backfooted Trump has allowed China to gain access to Nvidia's H200 chips critical to America's lead in artificial intelligence. This has set off alarm bells in London, Brussels and Tokyo.

According to the Australian think tank ASPI, Beijing already now leads on 64 out of 74 of the world's most critical technologies, with Trump's giveaway certain to dangerously close the narrow gap where the US remains ahead in AI. Doubtless this will be discussed when the Chinese and Russian leaders meet. After all, Putin has long said when it comes to AI, "whoever becomes the leader will become the ruler of the world".

This week, as the world's two other most powerful men come to him, Xi Jinping has reasons to be pleased. The rest of us, America's traditional allies, have much to be concerned about. As Trump's return to power is only strengthening the axis of authoritarians – not the West.



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The youth vote isn't just Green – they are turning up for Farage's Reform too

Gen Z thinks anything is better than the status quo, says **Chloe Combi.** And, in three years, they may well get what they're wishing for, whether they like the reality of it or not



Young people are beginning to see Reform and the Green Party as worthwhile alternatives to the decades of Labour-Conservative rule (Nigel Farage/Facebook)

So here we are. As the country slices and dices the local election results, which delivered a pounding to the two main parties,

minds are now turning to Gen Z and Gen A to decide if they will be the ones to deliver the killer blow to the two main parties in three years' time.

Having grown up in a decade of political turmoil and dishonesty – we're now on our fifth PM in a decade – a declining job market, shrinking economy and spiralling costs are all hitting young people the hardest. Mainstream parties are waking up to the fact that the 18-35s, not pensioners with their protected triple-locked pensions, are now the ones who need some urgent attention.

Recently, we have seen Labour making elaborate promises about jobs, support, reorganising higher education and providing much-needed youth resources like clubs and hubs in every community. Similarly, the Conservatives' 2026 manifesto for young people promises a £5,000 job bonus, the abolishment of stamp duty to help first-time buyers, scrapping student loan interest and an Apprenticeship Guarantee scheme.



The Greens are clearly attractive to younger voters as they cast about for an alternative to the mainstream parties (PA)

The trouble is, when you talk to young people, it is all too little too late. I work with this generation every day and I struggle to find one young adult who thinks the current political system has made even one meaningful and positive change in their lives. And out of this desperation, a hunger for an alternative is

growing. There was an early assumption that Zach Polanski's Green Party was going to "do a Zohran Mamdani" in the 2026 council elections – and the hysterical portrayal of the leader in some quarters of the press as a kind of political bogeyman was telling. But, while the Greens made some significant gains, it's how this generation is relating to Farage's party that is just as telling.

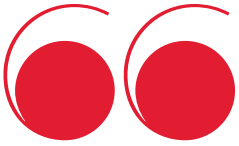
Young people who are throwing their lot in with Farage's Reform seem to fall into two camps. Firstly, there are the believers who align with Reform's narrative around betrayal by Labour and the Conservatives on issues like immigration, crime and the rule of law. Grant, 21, is a passionate Reform and Farage supporter, much to the disappointment of his parents, who are both lifelong Labour supporters.

He explains: "The two main parties have completely betrayed us. Immigration is a mess, we're seen as a soft touch, people are getting knifed on the streets, the police are more interested in locking people up for saying stuff online than people who commit crimes, and they haven't done one thing to help people our age.

"I think Farage will sort it out, and I think he'll be able to bring us back to what we used to be. Our parents could buy a house and raise kids on one wage. That's what we want. It's not a coincidence that went out the window when we started taking in the rest of the world."

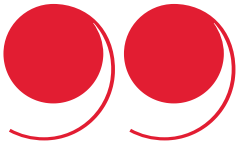
The second group of young people who are voting for Reform aren't the Farage-ideologues like Grant, but are simply desperate for change. While some of these types make up Zack Polanski's new army, others like Sarah, 22, are looking elsewhere for a shake-up. She explains: "Things have gone so wrong for young people, every one of us is living with parents and will probably be until we're 40 at this rate. There are no jobs, crime is getting worse. I'm not anti-immigration, but no one can deny that the system is a mess. I feel like Farage is an arsehole, but he might be *our* arsehole. A bit like Trump."

The belief that mainstream politics has not only not helped young people, but made things worse in every way is so ubiquitous, it's creating a youthful rage wave that current leaders would do well to take seriously.



I just want to scream at Labour, do one thing for us. Just one. An apprenticeship scheme that works. Cancel tuition fees. Make the Tube affordable for under-30s. Just one thing. Please

Rajesh, 21



Rajesh, 21, who's studying politics at UCL – and voted Green – told me how worried he is about the emotional and ideological climate that exists around his generation currently – something he believes is being underestimated by everyone in charge. "The country is a tinderbox. I've never seen so much anger and disillusionment. It's so close to the exact same political and economic climate that we saw in the 1930s.

"With how the media and social media are, and all the hate, it's just going to take one guy saying 'I can fix this and it's not your fault' and of course people are going to have their heads turned. I just want to scream at Labour, do *one* thing for us. Just one. An apprenticeship scheme that works. Cancel tuition fees. Make the Tube affordable for under-30s. Just one thing. Please."

The "just one thing" principle, where young people are so desperate for change and help, the small things would make a real difference, is frustratingly simple – and again, something mainstream parties seem to miss.

When young people feel that even the small things aren't improving, they have zero hope that the bigger things – jobs, childcare, house prices, etc – are ever going to improve and every belief, they will get worse.

In New York, 34-year-old Zohran Mamdani's age wasn't the only thing that helped win over the youth vote, his laser focus on making buses free was devastatingly simple and effective too, underlining just how important – and missed – the minutiae of political policy are.

Hallie, 22, describes herself as "Reform-curious". She explains, "I've lost any hope that politics means anything or cares about anyone. To my mind, Starmer is no better than Farage. The same problems get repeated over and over.

"My generation are skint and scared. I'll vote for the people who will sort out the economy and Farage has some ideas that aren't just recycling the same policy. It's harder to care about other people when no one cares about you – of course our generation is less 'woke' now – we don't have that luxury."

Elliot Bewick, 20, hosts the *Next Generation* podcast, one of growing popularity that genuinely tries to reach across the ideological divide. He interviews young, high-profile people of all political stripes from across the world who seek to encourage healthy debate and disagreement.



Elliot Bewick of the 'Next Generation' podcast says the mainstream parties 'don't care' about fixing young people's lives (Supplied)

He has recently moved from the UK to Trump's USA as he believes opportunity and help for young people in the UK is at an all-time low. He considers the failure of the mainstream parties to help young people to be one big reason for the current political fragmentation and youthful attraction to political extremism.

He thinks that young people are used as props for parties when they want power and then inevitably abandoned when they get it, ultimately laying the groundwork for the ascension of "outsider" parties like Reform and the Green Party.

Bewick explains: "Youthful engagement is nothing more than a ploy for power. These people don't care about fixing young people's lives or they would have stopped kicking the can down the alley for us to deal with later."

The major advantage figures like Farage and Polanski have in the eyes of young people is that they are an unknown quantity – which was certainly a major factor that propelled Trump to power in his first term.

Young people know with certainty that their lives haven't gotten better under Labour and they didn't after 14 years of Conservative rule, but there is a *glimmer* of hope that a "new" disruptor on the block might actually change things – disrupt a system that isn't working. Some young people genuinely like Farage's hardline stance over immigration, but more are just desperate for change and are willing to overlook his many shortcomings.

Under Farage's leadership, we are closer today to a Reform government than ever before, and unless the mainstream political parties start to make a material difference to young people's lives, the more smashing up of politics as we know it there will be. Young people have run out of patience, out of time, and out of trust for the current political status quo and if mainstream leaders want to undermine the promises of political leaders who ride high on what could turn out to be empty promises, they need to deliver on the ground to all young people.

Start with one thing and maybe young people will start to believe the bigger things can be fixed.

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WALKING'S THERAPY

Walking is one of the most under-prescribed medicines, according to foot mechanics expert Dr Courtney Conley, who tells **Harry Bullmore** how many daily steps you need



Walking improves your mental, as well as your physical, health (Geber86 - stock.adobe.com)

"Walking should be on every doctor's prescription pad", says Dr Courtney Conley, co-author of a new book *Walk: Your Life Depends On It*. "It is the panacea of medicine."

Her co-author, physiotherapist Dr Milica McDowell, likens walking to eating, sleeping, brushing your teeth and even

breathing: a non-negotiable daily activity that can combat back, knee and hip pain. It has also been shown to help fight anxiety and depression, regulate blood sugar levels and boost brain health to protect against dementia.

“When we walk, it affects nearly every system in our bodies,” says Dr McDowell. “And about 98 per cent of the world has the capacity to walk, so there is so much untapped potential for benefiting your health.”

But what does science tell us about how much we should be walking?

The myth of 10,000 steps a day

Our ancient ancestors didn’t own Fitbits or adhere to daily step counts. But life in 2026 is far removed from our former hunter-gatherer antics.

“We live in a modern society, and there is a reason technology has been introduced,” Dr Conley says. “But with that comes the responsibility to be aware that our movement capacity is being decreased by convenience.”

In other words, we’re moving less, and we need to consciously subsidise this lack of activity with regular movement. Walking is the most accessible way to do this – but how much?

“Most people think the ideal number of steps per day is 10,000, but that’s a myth that needs to be busted,” says Dr McDowell. “You can pick and choose what to aim for depending on the benefits you’re after and what works for you.”

This means there is no blanket prescription and it partly depends on your base level. If you are a sedentary person, her primary message is that “anything is better than nothing”.

The aim is to integrate walking into your life. This could mean taking a 10-minute walk before work or after dinner, or finding ways to work walking into everyday tasks – hopping off the bus one stop early or choosing a parking space slightly further away from the supermarket, for example.

“Think of it like a vitamin – something you take every single day that will benefit today’s wellness and tomorrow’s longevity,” she concludes.



To increase your activity levels, identify accessible walking routes in areas where you spend a lot of time (Getty)

500 steps

Walking 500 steps at a fairly brisk pace takes about five minutes. Dr Conley calls this a “micro walk”, and says it can have a significant positive impact on your health.

“A five-minute walk improves blood flow to our brain,” says Dr McDowell. “It improves your clarity of thinking, boosts creativity, elevates mood, helps reduce symptoms of feeling anxious or depressed, and it boosts a neurologic growth factor in your brain.

“Physically, as soon as you go from sitting to standing, it changes your blood pressure and elevates your heart rate. It’ll change your tissue temperature, contract your muscles and boost digestion too.”

The overarching message here is that if you can add a few micro walks into your regular routine, your body and mind will benefit.

Try identifying short routes you can use near places you often find yourself scrolling on your phone – your home, office or at

the school gates – then squeeze in a micro walk instead.



‘When I see patients that have a step count of 2,500 or less, almost 100 per cent of the time that comes with a diagnosis of depression or sadness,’ says Dr Courtney Conley (David Davies/PA)

2,500 steps per day

“When we talk about how many steps to take, this is the absolute basement,” says Dr McDowell. “If you walk less than that, your risk of death and disease is skyrocketing.

“We have both worked with people who are sick, deconditioned or coming off a devastating injury, and they might not be walking that much as a result. But if people are walking less than 2,500 steps per day, that’s the first goal.”

Any movement is going to enhance blood sugar regulation and burn calories, which can aid weight management by contributing to your daily energy balance. A short walk also has an uncanny knack of helping you feel better than you did before you set off.

“When I see patients that have a step count of 2,500 or less, almost 100 per cent of the time that comes with a diagnosis of depression or sadness,” she says. “If you’re only moving 2,500 steps a day, you don’t feel well, in your mind or in your body. So when I have a conversation with those people, it’s about slowly getting started.”

3,000 steps per day

“If you get up to 3,000 steps per day from 2,500, it will reduce your risk of death from any cause by seven per cent. If you increase it to 3,500, it reduces your risk of death by 15 per cent,” Dr McDowell says.

The message remains: something is better than nothing, and small daily increases have impressive cumulative effects.

Upping your daily step count to 3,800 delivers 50 per cent of the maximal benefits of walking for reducing dementia risk, adds Dr Conley.



Small increases in the amount you walk each day can add up to offer significant perks over time (Jane Barlow/PA)

5,000 steps per day

Studies suggest that when you get past the 5,000-mark, people start to see “cancer protection effects” as well as a reduction in depression symptoms.

7,000 steps per day

As a time-savvy approach for reaping the physical benefits of walking, 7,000 steps per day is often touted as the gold standard.

“Researchers have now shown that, if we focus on the risk of dying from cardiovascular disease, most of the benefits are seen

at around 7,000 steps," a team from the University of Granada claimed on the back of their 2023 study.

"This is also the range when we start to see a reduction in depression development over a lifetime," Dr McDowell says. This is supported by a 2025 meta-analysis published in *The Lancet*.

It found that, compared with walking 2,000 steps per day, 7,000 daily steps was associated with a 22 per cent lower risk of depressive symptoms, as well as a 38 per cent lower risk of dementia, a 47 per cent lower risk of all-cause mortality and a 25 per cent lower risk of heart disease. It also reported a 37 per cent decrease in cancer mortality, 14 per cent lower risk of type 2 diabetes and a 28 per cent lower risk of falls



Finding ways to take a break from your desk for a micro walk can have plenty of health benefits (Getty/iStock)

9,800 steps per day

"If you're somebody who has a family history of Alzheimer's and dementia, there are certain numbers that probably mean a lot more to you," says Dr McDowell. The number 9,800 is a considerable one: Dr Conley says this figure is associated with reducing your risk of dementia by half.

This statement comes from a 2022 study published in the *JAMA Neurology* journal, which found that "accruing more steps per

day was associated with steady declines in dementia incidence risk, up to 9,800 steps per day".

"The dose associated with 50 per cent of maximal observed benefit was 3,800 steps per day, and steps at a higher intensity (or cadence) were associated with lower incidence risk," it added.

In layman's terms, walking further and walking faster each day is associated with reduced dementia risk.



Walking should form a baseline of daily movement in your routine (Getty)

Is there a correct way to walk?

Everyone has a different body, and everyone will walk slightly differently as a result. But the fact you can usually tell a fit, active person from their gait suggests there are certain best practices to follow.

"There *is* a right way to walk: it is efficient walking," Dr McDowell tells me. To ensure you are meeting this criteria, she recommends considering the four points below.

Taller: "Think about lengthening yourself vertically to lift your head towards the sky. This creates a lot of muscular contraction, boosts your posture, engages your core muscles and allows you to think more about a natural arm swing."

Softer: "If you are walking with heavy steps, you are essentially slamming on the brakes with each foot strike. If you're walking more softly, rolling the earth away [with your foot] as you move forward, that's a way you can reduce force on your body and become more efficient."

Faster: "The average person walks at between 90 and 100 steps per minute. But a brisk walk is characterised as 120 or more steps per minute – think about how you would walk if you were late for a train. If you're turning your feet over faster, you're spending less time touching the ground, so again it boosts your efficiency."

Backwards: "Spending a few minutes walking backwards each week activates the muscle groups that are generally not working as hard when you are walking forwards. It's a great way to balance out your walking regime and can be very helpful for people with knee pain."



Efficient technique is the key to effective walking, Dr Milica McDowell says (Alamy/PA)

The other part of the puzzle: strength training

Walking backwards can develop strength in several underused muscles in the lower body, increasing mobility and reducing pain in nearby joints. But strength training remains the best way to build strength and muscle across the entire body.

That's why Dr McDowell shares a refreshingly straightforward formula for staying in shape: "Walk daily; strength train at least twice a week. It's pretty simple, you just have to have the motivation to do it."

This recommendation is echoed by the American College of Sports Medicine, World Health Organisation and the NHS.

"Women, especially, need to strength train at least twice a week," says Dr McDowell.

This bolsters bone health and builds a more robust musculoskeletal system, protecting against injuries and maintaining physical function as we age.

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What are the rules for my son, 12, to fly with friends?



There are no EU-wide rules for when and how children will be allowed to travel without their parents (Getty/iStock)

Q I have been struggling to find reliable information about children travelling abroad without their parents. During half-term, my eldest son (12) is travelling from the UK to Greece with a friend and their son, while my youngest, aged eight, is travelling from the UK to Spain with his uncle. I have heard that I may need a notarised letter, costing £250, for each of them. Can you advise?

Name supplied

A This summer, tens of thousands of young people will be travelling with people who are not their parents, typically other family members or families of friends. Much of the time, the frontier experience will be straightforward. Border officials are well used to such situations, and will assess travellers' behaviour: if everyone is relaxed and comfortable, they will usually conclude all is well. But sometimes they will question a difference in names, and so it is wise to prepare a letter in advance.

There are no EU-wide rules; each nation has its own policy. A few countries have specific requirements. Croatia requires a notarised statement giving the consent of both parents, as well as details of the stay and the adult accompanying them. Portugal goes one step further, demanding a copy of the parent or guardian's passport as well. But for Greece and Spain, as with most other nations, a straightforward letter of authorisation from a parent is sufficient. It should include the names and passport details (number and expiry date) of the child and the accompanying adult; the relationship between them; details of the planned trip; and contact details for one or both parents. There is no need for it to be notarised, though you might want to include a translation in the relevant language.

For round trips from the UK, travellers encounter three border checks: arriving in, and departing from, the foreign country; and coming back to the UK. (There is no check on the outbound departure). If you provide your mobile phone number as a contact, be aware of when your sons will be crossing borders and ensure it has coverage in the highly unlikely event that an officer decides to call.

Finally, once your children are old enough to travel on their own, they will need to check the rules on unaccompanied travel – which are generally much stricter – until they turn 18.

Email your question to s@hols.tv or tweet @SimonCalder

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Section 2

This week in history

Tizane Navea-Rogers delves into The Independent's archive to see which world events made the front page of our paper



Espionage, political upheaval, and historic firsts define this week's journey through the archives. The shadows of the Cold War loom large as infamous "Cambridge Five" spy Kim Philby dies in Moscow, while a decade later, the digital age brings entirely new security threats with the mass unmasking of MI6 agents online. On the world stage, unprecedented protests challenge the Chinese Communist Party, and in the UK, Gordon Brown's dramatic resignation marks the end of the New Labour era. From the devastating toll of the Aids epidemic in Africa to a supercomputer outsmarting a human chess

grandmaster, all is charted across the front pages of *The Independent*.

12 May 1988 – ‘Cambridge Five’ spy Kim Philby dies in Moscow

Kim Philby, a high-ranking British intelligence officer who secretly worked for the Soviet Union, dies in Moscow at the age of 76. His passing comes 25 years after his defection, marking the end of his role in the “Cambridge Five” spy ring that passed extensive classified information to the Kremlin during the early Cold War.



THE INDEPENDENT

No 495 THURSDAY 12 MAY 1988 . . . . Published in London 30p

SUMMARY

Coal industry set for privatisation

Degas record

Militant defeat

Police 'shame'

Speaker defended

Kim Philby dies in Moscow

By Peter Hennessy

Drawn from the upper-classes, the Kremlin's agent dealt in treachery for his masters

Tales of a retired Soviet spy

From Rupert Cornwell in Moscow

Interest rate fears batter markets

By Peter Wilson-Smith
Financial Editor

11 May 1988 – Gorbachev pushes perestroika

Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev publicly acknowledges that his ambitious *perestroika* reform programme is causing widespread confusion and resistance within the highest ranks of the Communist Party. Speaking ahead of a crucial June conference, he directly addresses the mounting pushback from conservative factions opposed to his drive to modernise the Soviet system.



THE INDEPENDENT

No 494 WEDNESDAY 11 MAY 1988 ....Published in London 30p

SUMMARY

Soviet satellite 'no threat'

NUS strike goes on

Police 'fabrication'

Green belt fears

Thatcher generation

Irán trains rebels

Olympic threat

Budd 'bitter'

Gorbachev flays conservatives

Soviet leader admits new ideas causing panic throughout party

Electrical union heads for TUC expulsion

Senate puts INF treaty in doubt

Mitterrand party rival to be Premier

Farewell to arms: Jacques Chirac warms goodbye to the Prime Minister's offices in Paris yesterday.

17 May 1989 – Mass protests challenge Chinese leadership

As China formally reconciles with the Soviet Union during Mikhail Gorbachev's landmark visit, the Communist Party faces an unprecedented challenge to its authority from massive protests in Tiananmen Square. As crowds approaching half a million gather in solidarity with a resolute group of students on hunger strike, party leader Zhao Ziyang issues a public appeal, promising the demonstrators they will not be punished.



THE INDEPENDENT

No 811 WEDNESDAY 17 MAY 1989 ....Published in London 30p

SUMMARY

Cons Gold wins bid battle

Heart success

Poll tax move fails

Government defeat

Police reserve call

Palestinian 'no'

Suzman goes

Unpopular Kohl

Boycott threat

Party leader promises no punishment and moves for 'honest and clean' government

Student hunger strikers being cared for at a makeshift hospital in Tiananmen Square in central Peking yesterday

Photograph: Sadayuki Mikamo/AP

Chinese challenge 40 years of communism

From Andrew Higgins and Rupert Cornwell

in Peking

Government split on EC grows wider

By Anthony Bevins

Political Editor

New pay offer may end dispute in universities

12 May 1997 – Deep Blue defeats chess champion Garry Kasparov

IBM's Deep Blue supercomputer defeats world chess champion Garry Kasparov in New York, winning the deciding encounter of their six-game match. The machine secured its historic overall victory in just 19 moves, a remarkably swift defeat that left experts questioning if the renowned grandmaster had ever lost a game so rapidly.



THE INDEPENDENT

MONDAY 12 MAY 1997

MEDIA + THE CARTOONIST'S VIEW OF BLAIR PLUS 16 PAGES OF APPOINTMENTS

DEBORAH ROSS INTERVIEW I LIKE JOHN REDWOOD. REALLY, I DO

JOHN WALSH A WEEKEND AT MONACO BACK PAGE

24 PAGES OF SPORT

Man mastered by machine as Deep Blue triumphs

William Hartston, Chess Correspondent

Well-set trap: Chess enthusiasts watch the world chess champion Garry Kasparov on a television monitor as he concentrates soon after the start of the decisive final match last night against the Deep Blue computer in New York. Kasparov lost in 19 moves

Photograph: AFP

13 May 1999 – Dozens of MI6 spies unmasked on the internet

As if lifted from the pages of an Ian Fleming novel, 100 covert MI6 agents are exposed, putting lives at risk after their identities are mysteriously published on a US-based website. As the Foreign Office urgently requests the British media not to disclose the site's details, the leak is later traced to Richard Tomlinson, a disgruntled former spy dismissed in 1995 for being a "loose cannon".



THE AWARD WINNING NEWSPAPER

THE INDEPENDENT

THURSDAY 13 MAY 1999

WANTED CLINT EASTWOOD, FOR CRIMES AGAINST CINEMA

INSIDE: 12-PAGE SUPPLEMENT EDUCATION WHY SPORT IN SCHOOLS IS MORE THAN JUST A GAME

MAN UTD EDGE CLOSER TO PREMIER PRIZE

MI6 agents unmasked on the Net

By Charles Arthur and Paul Lashmar

16 May 2006 – Special feature on Aids in Africa

The Independent dedicates a special cover to the devastating impact of the HIV/Aids pandemic across Africa, highlighting that the disease is claiming 6,500 lives every day. Emphasising that this staggering death toll equates to an entire village being wiped out every 24 hours, the publication issues a stark plea for the global response to urgently match the deadly pace of the crisis.



12 May 2007 – Search continues for Madeleine McCann

As the search for missing British toddler Madeleine McCann continues in Portugal, a solemn vigil is held on what should have

been her fourth birthday. Despite a flurry of reported leads in the local press, investigators remain completely baffled by the disappearance, marking the early stages of an unprecedented, decades-long mystery.



11 May 2010 – Gordon Brown resigns

Following a dramatic hung parliament in the general election, Gordon Brown announces his resignation as Labour leader in a final attempt to forge a “progressive alliance” with the Liberal Democrats. However, this proposed pact would ultimately collapse, paving the way for David Cameron to form a

Conservative-led coalition and ending 13 years of Labour government.



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DRAMATIC LICENCE

ITV true-crime drama ‘Believe Me’ chillingly captures police complicity in John Worboys’ crimes. But re-enacting his assaults for entertainment feels tawdry, writes **Nick Hilton**



The four-part drama cannot help but fixate on Daniel Mays as ‘black cab rapist’ Worboys (PA)

★★★☆☆

Between 2000 and 2008, John Worboys, the licensed driver of a London taxi, committed a series of sexual offences against women that created a media frenzy. “The black cab rapist”, as the tabloids dubbed him, was, however, only part of the story.

Before the fight for justice had even begun, a number of those women had struggled for something else: recognition. Recognition that they had been assaulted, recognition that it was not their fault, and recognition that their attacker was still at large. This is the struggle at the heart of ITV's new four-part drama, *Believe Me*.

Sarah (Aimee-Ffion Edwards) is a young mother on her first night out in ages. After her friends put her in a black cab, sending her home, the driver strikes up a strange conversation: "If you don't mind me saying, I think you look absolutely gorgeous tonight." That man is John Worboys (Daniel Mays), a prolific rapist.

Sarah is by no means Worboys' first – or last – victim. By then, he had already established a distinctive modus operandi, in which he tells women he has had a casino windfall and encourages them to share champagne with him, which he has laced with sedatives. Over and over, he executes this plan. And over and over, the women who report Worboys – including cases where he can be positively identified – find themselves demeaned and disbelieved by a police force whose imagination, apparently, can't extend to a licensed cabbie committing sex crimes.



Kafkaesque maze: Aasiya Shah, Aimee-Ffion Edwards, and Miriam Petche in 'Believe Me' (PA)

Believe Me is written by Jeff Pope, who has worked on other true-crime stories, including *See No Evil* (about Ian Brady and Myra Hindley) and *The Widower* (about Malcolm Webster) as a writer, and others, such as Jimmy Savile drama *The Reckoning* and Peter Sutcliffe procedural *This is Personal*, as a producer. In short, he is the closest thing the UK has to Ryan Murphy, the auteur behind *American Horror Story* and *American Crime Story*.

And *Believe Me* is another British Horror Story; the grimness of Worboys' crimes matched by the systemic failure of the authorities to take women seriously. "[Victims] will be supported, they will be listened to and they will be believed," a police statement pompously announces. Any evidence to support that assertion is thin.

Here's the thing: television drama is very good at exposing the myriad ways that people in power let down those who rely on them. And *Believe Me* is effective at evoking the trauma of having your experience invalidated. "I've never seen a rape victim behave like that before," an interrogating officer says dismissively. "She's not crying."

Another of Worboys' targets, Laila (Aasiya Shah), observes that the whole process is "like some kind of horrible joke", and the Kafkaesque maze these women face at every turn – like an officer suggesting that maybe they just got blackout drunk – is important to depict. "I think the impact of what the police did to me was worse than the actual rape itself," Sarah says.

TV drama is very good at exposing the ways that people in power let down those who rely on them

Yet the drama is balanced with recreations of Worboys' crimes. Mays is a fine actor, but his cheeky chappy persona is jarring. His interactions with women like Sarah and Laila have a strangely performative quality, Worboys' lilting voice coming from the front of the vehicle while the camera studiously avoids showing his face. It is, I suspect, designed to evoke the disorientation that his victims felt – this overfamiliar cabbie they felt was more "strange" or "pathetic" than dangerous – but it ends up feeling grotty.

In fact, these sequences are more reminiscent of the taxi murderer, played by Rob Jarvis, in the first series of *Luther*. Monstrous, unsettling, exploitative. There is an asymmetry too in that most of the women – other than Carrie Symonds (Miriam Petche), the future wife of prime minister Boris Johnson – are anonymised hybrids, whereas Worboys is flesh and blood, a deluded narcissist, but one the series cannot help but fixate on.

Does it help victims of these or similar crimes to see their experiences re-enacted as entertainment? The cast handle their characters – particularly those not directly based on real people – with sensitivity, and Pope does redirect the series' focus, in its second half, towards bigger concerns about the justice system.

But *Believe Me* appears to feel an obligation to show the offending, so that it can fully demonstrate the establishment's

complacency. In doing so, it punctuates an important story with something jarringly tawdry.

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Randy Rivals a rare treat in today's television landscape

Jilly Cooper's enormously fun, escapist romp is back with thrusting buttocks and heaving bosoms, writes **Nick Hilton**



Disney+'s 'Rivals' is returning this week for its eagerly awaited second outing (Disney+)

★★★★☆

"I like persons better than principles," Lord Harry Wotton, the libertine mentor in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, tells his impressionable friend. "And I like persons with no principles better than anything else in the world." This

manifesto of decadence could well serve as the county motto for Rutshire, whose randy residents form the ensemble of Disney+'s *Rivals*, returning this week for its eagerly awaited second outing.

In the wake of the first skirmish between Corinium Television – led by Lord Baddingham (David Tennant) – and Venturer – proposed by the ragtag trio of Rupert Campbell-Black (Alex Hassell), Declan O'Hara (Aidan Turner) and Freddie Jones (Danny Dyer) – the battle for the airwaves is heating up. "1987 is a franchise year and we are at war," Baddingham tells his staff, as he recovers from a head injury sustained in the first series' climax. He's lost none of his spirit. "An eye for an eye? We'll take their fucking heads off!"

He's aided by the lack of cohesion within the opposition. Rupert has shacked up with Cameron Cook (Nafessa Williams), leaving Declan's daughter Taggie (Bella Maclean) heartbroken. And neither Declan nor Freddie's marriage is running smoothly: Maud O'Hara (Victoria Smurfit) is away, acting on the stage in London, while Freddie is continuing his intrigue with married local Lizzie (Katherine Parkinson). As ever, there's a bit of politics, a lot of sex, and a good dollop of sexual politics.



There is a sense, across the cast, that everyone is enjoying themselves, whether they're romping on a pony or romping on a staircase (Disney+)

Adapted from the books by the late Jilly Cooper, *Rivals* took her impish hero, Rupert, and saw him steered towards domesticity,

like Alexander taming Bucephalus. But despite the apparent consummation of his affection for Taggie, this new saga represents a hard reset and he's back to his wild stallion ways. "I won't break you too," he tells her, as news of his many affairs and scandals starts to trouble his political ambitions. Really, however, it's just an excuse to include plenty of thrusting buttocks and heaving bosoms, as Rupert returns to bachelordom, and his neighbours follow his lead. "We can't all just do what we want, Rupert," Lizzie demurs. Yet, sure enough, she'll soon be dragged back into her own extramarital tangle.

This is Rutshire after all, a Disneyfied, sexed-up version of the Cotswolds. The appeal of Cooper's books was pure fantasy – the dashing polo player/Tory MP, with the sexual charisma of Don Juan – onto which readers could project themselves. With the TV version, the imagination takes a backseat to Hassell's smirk, Dyer's moustache, and Turner's arse cheeks.

The sex is silly – Declan is pleasantly surprised by a roaming finger in the shower – and never overly explicit, because, at its heart, *Rivals* is an expensive soap opera. Tension is ramped up ("quite the end-of-series cliffhanger," Baddingham notes of his head wound, in a meta moment) and then relieved. The plot moves forward and backward in a cha-cha-cha of delayed gratification. Will Venturer win the licence? Will Lizzie finally leave her feckless husband? Will Rupert open his eyes and acknowledge his feelings for Taggie? All of these questions stay pressing and unresolved, because therein the drama lies.

With the TV version, the imagination takes a backseat to Alex Hassell's smirk, Danny Dyer's moustache, and Aidan Turner's arse cheeks

Writer Laura Wade knows that her audience is not looking for reality. This is a hyper-saturated (indeed, the colour palette is, on occasion, a bit much) alternate history of the 1980s. Just as Rutshire is *not quite* Oxfordshire, so too is its moral framework familiar but different. Concerns about the age gap between Rupert and Taggie have to be dispensed with, while it is, apparently, a sign of good character to cavort with your sidepiece's kids. Who knew? Because it is such a cartoonish world, the actors feel liberated to have enormous fun.

Particular highlights of this second series include Lisa McGrillis as Val, Freddie's haplessly vulgar wife, and Claire Rushbrook as the quietly manipulative Lady Baddingham. Joining stars – like Hayley Atwell, as the former Mrs Campbell-Black, and Rupert Everett, as her new husband – slot seamlessly into the ensemble. There is a sense, across the cast, that everyone is enjoying themselves immensely, whether they're romping on a pony or romping on a staircase.

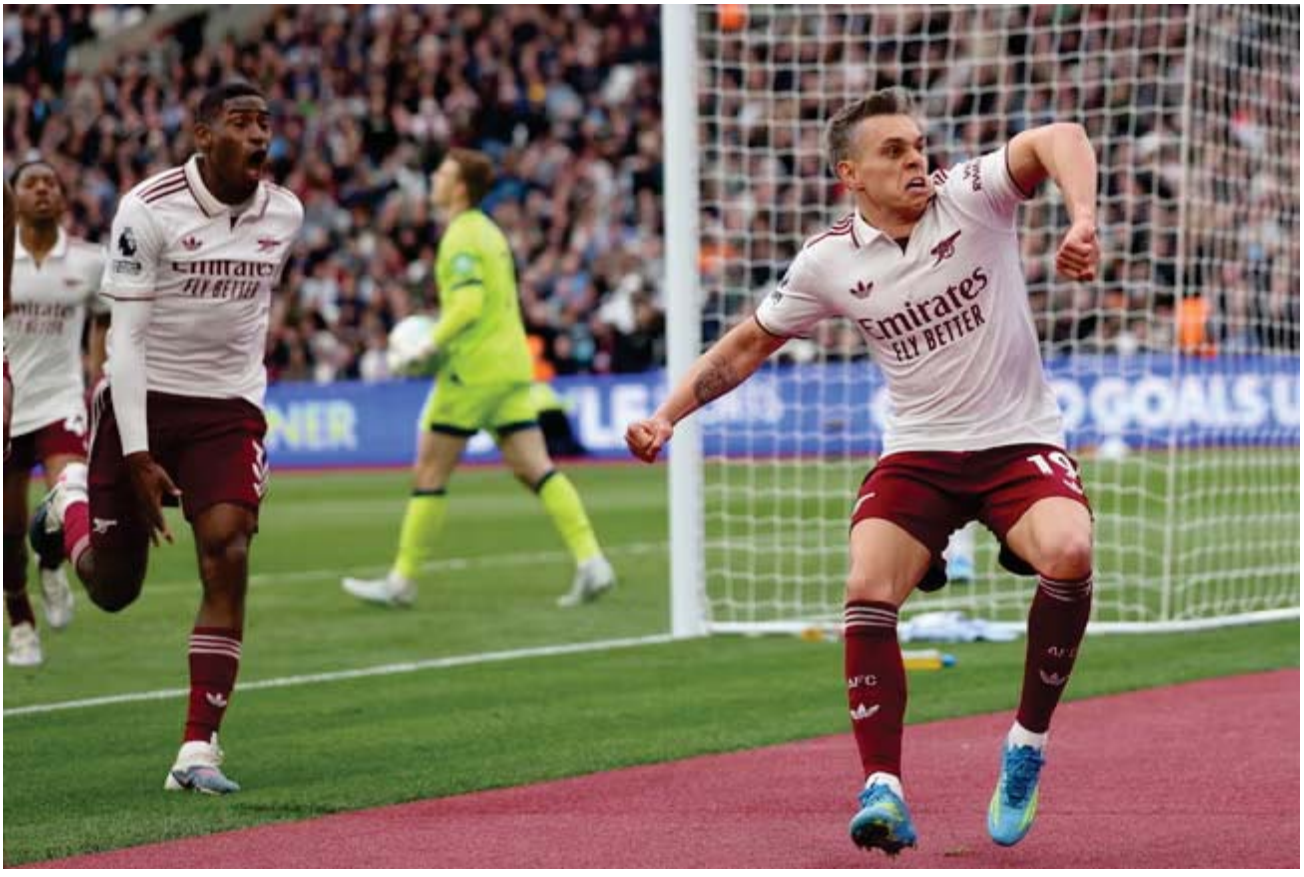
That's what makes *Rivals* such a rare treat in today's television landscape. It is well-written and well-acted, but it aspires to nothing more than being fun. Real, associable human emotions are kept at arm's length in favour of stylised bucolic horniness. "You can make television without being a cunt," Declan informs his nemesis. "Not nearly so much fun though, is it?"

Baddingham replies. This is a secret that *Rivals* knows only too well – that, in the words of Wilde again, the "only way to get rid of temptation is to yield to it".

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VAR decision might have won Arsenal the title

West Ham 0-1 Arsenal: The hosts were denied a point as Callum Wilson's stoppage-time goal was chalked off in a huge moment at both ends of the table



Leandro Trossard earned a 1-0 victory for Arsenal against West Ham (AP)

MIGUEL DELANEY
AT THE LONDON STADIUM

An arm extended, and one hand on the title.

Arsenal are now two victories from ending a 22-year wait, which was about what referee Chris Kavanagh's survey of Pablo's foul on David Raya felt like.

A crucial 1-0 was only stopped from becoming a costly 1-1, in the 94th minute, by one man's interpretation of "wrestling" – as Nuno Espirito Santo put it – at a set-piece.

Even Mikel Arteta, who knows a thing or two about the subject from this season alone, was marvelling at the "huge" pressure on Kavanagh.



A VAR decision denied West Ham a point with David Raya deemed to have been fouled (Getty)

"Probably today I have realised how difficult and how big is the referee's job," the Arsenal manager said. "Because you're talking about a moment that can decide the history, the course, of two massive clubs that they are fighting with their lives to achieve their objectives."

Indeed, very few moments in modern football history will rival that one for tension, even if it said a lot about where modern football is.

Players from both sides were lined up behind Kavanagh, some arguing with each other about what happened.

The emotion was spilling over. This was the title and relegation on the line, so much coming together in one game - and one

moment - in a way the Premier League has actually rarely seen.



Chris Kavanagh ruled out West Ham's would-be equaliser against Arsenal (Reuters)

There was almost a cinematic element to it. Football has rarely seen it. This was maybe the biggest VAR decision the game has seen, and perhaps the refereeing decision that was going to have the biggest influence on a title since Colin Suggett was adjudged to not be interfering with play in 1971 - when Arsenal won a double.

Kavanagh had to get it right. He looked at it 17 times, over four minutes and 17 seconds.

He probably just did get it right. Pablo's arm clearly impedes Raya, while Jean-Clair Todibo had pulled his shirt. It is the correct decision.

Arteta of course said "it is an obvious error". Nuno Espirito Santo seemed to accept it was but touched on a much bigger debate now raging about what the Premier League has generally allowed in terms of "wrestling in the box" – many were pointing to the movements of Declan Rice and Leandro Trossard in the same action – as well as a leniency in similar moments throughout the campaign.



Jarrod Bowen was disappointed after West Ham's equaliser was ruled out (AP)

On that, Nuno somewhat philosophically said: “It's frustrating the duality of criteria. It seems like the rules have changed. Everybody feels confused.”

But Kavanagh is there to referee the moment - not the whole season.

Maybe it’s a strangely fitting way for the 2025-26 title to be decided – if it is actually to be decided. Even in the few minutes remaining after the Callum Wilson strike, Arsenal were struggling to just clear the ball, panicking in every kick.

By the end, even before celebrating, many of their players sank to the ground in emotional exhaustion.



Leandro Trossard's goal gave Arsenal a 1-0 victory (Reuters)

It’s one of the remarkable things about football. This was a dog of a game but one that was utterly absorbing, and had at least three moments that could yet go down in Premier League history.

The last was obviously Kavanagh’s call.

The first was another “magic moment” - as Arteta put it - from Raya himself. After so much debate about player of the season, the goalkeeper has a huge claim. “The story of the season again,” Arteta said.

Raya rightly got man of the match here.



David Raya's save from Mateus Fernandes was crucial (Getty)

He may well have secured the league, too. The save from Mateus Fernandes felt the equivalent of Manchester City's Stefan Ortega stopping Spurs' Son Heung-Min to also stop Arsenal two seasons ago.

It was at that point an anguished 0-0, with both sides needing to win but visibly suppressed by the tension of it all.

Arsenal's strong start had been disrupted by the departure of Ben White - who Arteta said faces scans in the morning, from an injury that "doesn't look good".

The manager's decision to move Declan Rice to right-back was the intervention that really broke their rhythm, and Arteta spent the next half-hour trying to correct it. He eventually took Martin Zubimendi off, having brought him on, the Spaniard's one big moment an overhit pass just when Eberechi Eze looked to break.

At that point, Arsenal were toiling. They need someone to make the difference. It didn't have the feel of a champion team gradually upping the tempo and building wave after wave.



Martin Odegaard made a crucial impact to take Arsenal closer to the title (AP)

It did have Martin Odegaard, though. After a season when the Arsenal captain has barely been involved in key moments, here he was setting up what might be the most important of all. The pass for Trossard was just a follow-on from the way he had got on the ball and finally got Arsenal moving again.Odegaard was actually trying to hurt West Ham, seizing the moment in the manner a passive Arsenal badly needed. “He had an incredible impact in the game, an action that he's now in a top position to score the goal,” Arteta said.

And there was Trossard to fire home. “Well, there is a player that makes a difference for us,” Arteta quipped.

It will do the same for West Ham. They now have a real fight to stay up, but they did show they are up for it. Nuno rightly praised his team for their performance. Konstantin Mavropanos personified that, with two brilliant stops.

It somehow wasn’t enough. Arsenal just had more. And it means more on the table. This defeat also has the effect of ensuring Leeds United are mathematically safe, and that on the day before they are due to travel to Tottenham Hotspur, who West Ham badly need to lose.



West Ham were denied by VAR against Arsenal to slip closer to the drop (Getty)

Again, there's rarely a game like this in terms of consequences. There's never been a moment like that VAR stoppage.

"What an afternoon," Arteta said. "What a week it's been for us."

And after a game like that, that seemed to bring in all of the emotions and themes of this campaign, it might end up quite a season for them, too.

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Wardley should have been saved sooner from Dubois



Fabio Wardley absorbed immense damage during his WBO heavyweight bout against Daniel Dubois (Getty)

STEVE BUNCE
AT CO-OP LIVE

In rare heavyweight fights like Fabio Wardley vs Daniel Dubois, all the traditional safety measures can get lost in the drama and savagery of the night.

The corner, the referee and the doctors are ringside in boxing to make sure the fighters leave the ring healthy. But on Saturday night on the outskirts of Manchester, close to midnight at the Co-op Live arena, 18,212 fanatics played their part in an unforgettable fight that crossed several of the sport's boundaries.

It was a bloodthirsty Saturday night crowd, and they packed the new arena in anticipation of something special, something memorable, and something brutal – they got all three. The WBO heavyweight title was just a trinket attraction.



Wardley dropped Dubois twice in the first three rounds (Reuters)

Wardley was rescued after 28 seconds of the 11th round, and Dubois was hauled away to celebrate the win; it was the end of a fight that took both men to the very extremes in a boxing business where total sacrifice does happen. Wardley against Dubois on Saturday had that feeling very early. It was not always easy to watch, but it was also impossible to look away.

The raw statistics are impressive enough, but they fail to tell the whole story; Dubois was down after 12 seconds of the first round, and again in the third. He survived on stiff legs and with petrified eyes. Wardley started to take a beating from about round six; the referee, Howard Foster, called the doctors up

onto the ring canvas to inspect him at the start of the ninth and 10th rounds.

Wardley's corner looked worried, but still he walked out at the start of each round for more. Wardley was cut, hurt, staggering repeatedly, and both eyes were closing – yet he kept swinging; Wardley has come back in fights he was losing before. That is his trademark, his signature in the boxing rings.



A ringside doctor (left) and referee Howard Foster checked on Wardley before rounds nine and 10 (Getty)

Saturday, however, was different. It was a lost cause and he was too damaged for a fairytale finish. Dubois was smart, accurate and hurtful. And still the crowd roared louder when the medics gave Wardley a clear to continue sign. That is raw, that is fanatical. Yes, it did feel Iike a barbaric fight to the end.

It is far too easy and convenient from the safe side of the ropes to condemn the brutality, too easy to find flaws with the outcome. In the boxing business, the fighters make those ridiculous sacrifices and people get dragged in – the corner, the ref, the doctors, the opposite team, and the wild-eyed paying public.

On a calmer night, with less at stake, the fight would have ended earlier. On Saturday night, it finished only when Wardley was close to collapse, helpless in defence and still resisting. It was a

stunning last stand, and that is how some of our greatest fights end.



Wardley was ultimately stopped in round 11 (Getty)

The Independent's Alex Pattle – also ringside in Manchester – admitted to feeling equal amounts of intrigue and discomfort in the later rounds. "The boxing fan in me wanted to see more action; the human side wanted an earlier, merciful end for Wardley."

Nobody in boxing needs to make apologies for what they signed up for; this business is total. In the ideal world of sport, Wardley would have been rescued earlier, but Saturday's glorious fight was not part of that "ideal" world; it was part of our heartless, savage, addictive and crazy sport.

Working six feet from the canvas for Five Live with Richie Woodhall, we both wanted it stopped in about round nine, but we still urged the pair on as they fought for six more minutes and 28 unforgettable seconds. At 2am, I found Wardley's blood splatters on my shirt; boxing is like no other bloody business.

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Acrobatic Maeda goal helps Celtic close gap on Hearts

Celtic Yang (23), Maeda (53, 57)	3
Rangers Moore (9)	1



Daizen Maeda scores for the home side in the Old Firm derby with a spectacular overhead kick (Photos PA)

GAVIN MCCAFFERTY

A resurgent Daizen Maeda delivered a memorable Celtic Park goal as the champions cut the gap on Premiership leaders Hearts to one point with a 3-1 comeback win over Rangers.

Maeda looped an overhead kick into the top corner to net his second goal in four minutes and his sixth in four games. The Japan attacker had already fired Celtic ahead with a first-time finish in the 53rd minute.

Mikey Moore gave Rangers the lead in the ninth minute before Yang Hyun-jun levelled in controversial circumstances midway through the first half.

The opening half was end-to-end, but Celtic proved too strong for Rangers in the early stages of the second half and stood firm as the visitors pushed to get back into the game.

The result, coupled with Hearts' draw at Motherwell on Saturday night, leaves Celtic knowing that even a point at Fir Park will ensure they have the chance to beat Hearts to the title when the two teams meet next Sunday.

Hearts' goal difference advantage is now down to three, although that can only come into play if Celtic draw at Motherwell and the leaders lose at home to Falkirk.

Rangers have been consigned to a third-placed finish following their third consecutive defeat.



Danny Rohl (left) is the first Rangers boss to lose three league games in a row since 2000

It is the first time a Rangers team has suffered a hat-trick of league losses since 2000.

They now need the Hoops to beat Dunfermline in the Scottish Cup final to avoid dropping from the Europa League qualifiers to the Conference League.

The derby started in frantic fashion. Maeda's pressing immediately caused Rangers issues and the Japan forward almost pounced after Jack Butland spilled an Arne Engels strike.

Luke McCowan was a surprise choice on Celtic's right wing and he was twice dispossessed in strong challenges that led to Rangers breaks.

Youssef Chermiti shot just wide after Moore broke, and the same pair were involved in the opener after McCowan was bundled off the ball by Emmanuel Fernandez. Chermiti's shot was blocked and Moore knocked the rebound inside the near post.

Maeda shot several yards wide after being played through before Celtic equalised when Yang swept home from an Engels cutback after McCowan's excellent reverse pass.

Benjamin Nygren was standing in an offside position in front of Butland but the goalkeeper appeared to have a clear sight of Yang as the winger shot, and video assistant John Beaton decided the Sweden international was not interfering.



Yang equalised for Celtic after the goal survived a VAR check, with Nygren in an offside position in front of the goalkeeper

The hectic action continued at either end before the break. Chermiti continued to look a threat and McCowan and Maeda were denied by last-ditch challenges.

O'Neill brought on Sebastian Tounekti for McCowan at half-time and switched Yang to the right as Celtic turned the screw. Maeda was inches away from reaching Nygren's cross before the centre-forward converted Kieran Tierney's volleyed cross.

The Japan attacker soon produced his moment of magic after Tounekti's cross was half-cleared into his control. Maeda knocked the ball into the air and launched himself into a bicycle kick, and Butland could only watch as the ball looped under his crossbar.

Celtic Park was in full voice even as Rangers pressed in the final 20 minutes. Viljami Sinisalo saved Dujon Sterling's header before Bojan Miovski headed against the crossbar in stoppage time.

PA

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Sports news in brief



Elliot Anderson scores Forest's equaliser against Newcastle (PA)

Anderson earns vital point for Forest against Magpies

Elliot Anderson scored a late goal against Newcastle yesterday that earned Nottingham Forest a vital 1–1 draw in their bid for Premier League survival. The England midfielder, who joined Forest from the Magpies in 2024, cancelled out Harvey Barnes' opener for the visitors to the City Ground.

Aston Villa could only draw 2-2 with relegated Burnley at Turf Moor. Swathes of empty seats reflected what a miserable season

it has been for Burnley at home, but Jaidon Anthony gave them an early lead and Zian Flemming clinched a point in the second half after Ross Barkley and Ollie Watkins had scored for the visitors. A point means Villa are not yet assured of Champions League qualification through the league, although they are four points ahead of Bournemouth with only two games to play.

Everton's hopes of qualifying for Europe were dealt a huge blow after Jean-Philippe Mateta came off the bench to win Crystal Palace a point in a 2-2 draw at Selhurst Park. After Palace's Ismaila Sarr had cancelled out a sixth-minute goal for the Toffees' James Tarkowski in the first half, Beto scored what looked like being a winner for Everton but, in the 76th minute, Mateta was on the spot to finish from a Tyrick Mitchell cross. *PA*

Yates withdraws from Giro d'Italia after crash

British rider Adam Yates has been pulled out of the Giro d'Italia after suffering concussion following a crash on stage two.

The 33-year-old sustained abrasions and a laceration to his left ear during an incident involving almost 30 riders on Saturday's rain-soaked 221km route from Burgas to Veliko Tarnovo in Bulgaria.

Yates, who hit a barrier at high speed, eventually finished almost 14 minutes behind the leading pack after he battled on in a bloodstained kit. His UAE Team Emirates teammates Jay Vine and Marc Soler were also injured. An update from the team's medical director Adriano Rotunno read: "Adam Yates suffered heavy abrasions and a laceration to his left ear. He was initially assessed on site for concussion, and cleared to continue, but subsequently he has shown delayed concussive symptoms."

Yates did not take the start for the 175km stage three from Plovdiv to Sofia, which was won by flying Frenchman Paul Magnier (Soudal Quick-Step). There was no change in the general classification, with stage two winner Guillermo Thomas Silva holding onto the leader's jersey, four seconds ahead of

Florian Stork and Egan Bernal. The race moves to Italy for stage four tomorrow. *PA*

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