The INDEPENDENT

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TRUMP SAYS IRAN CEASEFIRE ON 'MASSIVE LIFE SUPPORT' AS TALKS STALL



## Exclusive Greece vows to fast-track UK visitors until EU border system is fixed



The prime minister yesterday said handing power to Nigel Farage would take the country 'down a dark path'

STARMER UNDER PRESSURE

# Cabinet ministers turn on PM and urge him to quit

Sir Keir insists he'll 'prove doubters wrong' as he takes blame for election drubbing and pleads for calm – but government aides resign and more than 70 of his own MPs call on him to step down

Editorials

# Starmer keeps battling but his luck could run out soon

There have been many moments, since the first disastrous election results began to filter through, when the prime minister's future has hung in the balance. A combination of sheer defiance and the epic ineptitude of his many rivals seemingly left him safe. Then the "herd" began to move. Calls to go, junior ministerial aides quitting, the rumble of rebellion growing. It has been a turbulent few days, and even a cabinet meeting might not quell it. Indeed, it may mark a crescendo. Only the British Labour Party could so mismanage its affairs to ensure its King's Speech might coincide with the resignation of the premier.

The "make or break" speech delivered by the prime minister, in a curiously small room with none of his cabinet colleagues present, turned out to be neither. It was certainly candid and bold enough to pacify some of his critics. But it was still short of ending the Labour psychodrama for good. Indeed, the leadership crisis seems to be deepening.

He "acknowledged" that the British people had grown "tired of a status quo that has failed them", and said "change cannot come quickly enough". Truth be told, he added, "I'm not sure that they believe that we care". He argued, less convincingly, that "I am their prime minister, and this is their government. Because I know whose side I am on."

So he offered, as a token of appreciation for those left-behind communities, the renationalisation of a significant part of the British steel industry. For those who yearn for him to come out as a full-throated European he promised a "big step forward" at the next EU-UK summit – and in the meantime a "youth experience scheme".

In a curious echo of Sir John Major, who had a similarly troubled premiership but survived against the odds, he said he wanted Britain to be "at the heart of Europe", a tantalising hint of a much more ambitious embrace of the continental dream. Most immediately, he was unequivocal that he was not going to oblige his critics either by quitting now (which would help some of them) or setting a timetable for an orderly departure in September. More than 70 MPs have called on him to quit as have four senior cabinet ministers, including home secretary

Shabana Mahmood and Yvette Cooper, the foreign secretary. Surely, the clock is now ticking for the prime minister.

Strange to say, one of the most perilous developments for the PM in recent days was when one of his less prominent backbenchers, Catherine West, emerged as a "stalking horse". Her intervention looked clumsy at first as she threatened to launch a leadership challenge before pulling out, but perhaps her move acted as a catalyst for the cabinet split and the challenge by Wes Streeting, said to be launched today.

For one of the more prominent figures in this saga, Andy Burnham, the challenge and the MPs' rebellion came far too soon. For those on the Labour right, such as Wes Streeting, it would plainly be advantageous if the deed were done quickly. Shabana Mahmood and Darren Jones, two impressive social democrats, are unpopular with the grassroots. Angela Rayner, for all her genuine strengths, remains in dispute with HM Revenue and Customs. If she ever became leader, she would be forever lumbered by the opposition and the right-wing media to the point of destruction with the tag of "tax dodger", justified or not.

Ed Miliband seems to be the less problematic default choice for the soft left, but he isn't obviously any more of an attractive offer to the wider electorate than when he was the alternative to David Cameron in 2015. He is a technocrat with too much "baggage", and is not what they call in this brutal trade a "retail politician". Heavy is the Ed Stone around his neck.

In fact, these are all more or less exactly the same considerations that faced the Labour Party as it suffered during its last leadership crisis going into its conference last autumn. Then, Mr Burnham's unofficial leadership bid foundered, mainly because he wasn't an MP. It is the same now: there is no such thing as a safe Labour seat for him to be parachuted into to make him eligible for the fight. Sir Keir's rivals were all compromised in one way or another, and never willing to make the first move, let alone to coordinate their attacks.

For all their frustration with Sir Keir and their own more or less honourable ambitions, the PM's rivals lack a convincing alternative "manifesto". To the extent there is any such plan, it would terrify the bond markets, Truss-style. None is so astonishingly charismatic that they'd transform Labour's poll ratings.

*Faute de mieux*, Sir Keir has survived so far. He has defied what he terms, politely, his "doubters", but his political enemies only need to be lucky or to get their act together once. Whether Sir Keir goes now or goes later, it will settle little, and the psychodrama will surely continue.

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# Mahmood urges Starmer to set timeline for resignation

## Home secretary among four ministers asking PM for orderly departure as speculation mounts about Streeting's challenge



'Things are going to kick off' today: Wes Streeting and Keir Starmer (AFP/Getty)

**DAVID MADDOX**
POLITICAL EDITOR

Home secretary Shabana Mahmood is among at least four senior ministers who have urged Sir Keir Starmer to quit ahead of a

crunch meeting of the cabinet today, with the besieged prime minister's premiership hanging in the balance.

As the number of Labour MPs calling for Sir Keir to go immediately or set a timetable for his departure passed 70 yesterday night, feverish speculation turned towards an expected leadership bid from health secretary Wes Streeting to be unveiled today.

Amid the revolt, Sir Keir was also hit by the resignation of four ministerial aides, including Joe Morris, parliamentary private secretary (PPS) for Mr Streeting, and Tom Rutland, a PPS to environment secretary Emma Reynolds.

Late yesterday it emerged that Ms Mahmood, who was appointed justice secretary and lord chancellor by Sir Keir two years ago, was one of those in the cabinet believed to have called on the prime minister to set out a timetable for his resignation. Foreign secretary Yvette Cooper is understood to be another.

Health minister Stephen Kinnock told BBC *Newsnight* that some cabinet members "may well" urge the prime minister to resign at their weekly meeting today.

The meltdown comes just hours after Sir Keir attempted a fightback, vowing to prove his doubters wrong yesterday morning. His make-or-break speech in central London was met with cheers from his audience in the room, but failed to impress furious backbenchers still reeling from last week's historically poor election results.

Some 78 Labour MPs from all wings of the party called on the prime minister to go, and there was growing speculation that Mr Streeting was about to launch a coup.



Home secretary Shabana Mahmood has stayed silent on the leadership issues until now (PA)

Several supporters of Mr Streeting joined the growing list of MPs calling for the PM to quit, including Chris Curtis, chair of the growth group, and MPs Josh Simons and Jas Athwal. Ministerial aides Sally Jamieson, Melanie Ward, Mr Rutland and Mr Morris also resigned from the government.

Allies of former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner were also said to be preparing for their own leadership bid, with an expectation that Mr Streeting would make an announcement today.

One senior Labour source said: “Things are going to kick off tomorrow [today].”

But in a defiant message to his critics, Sir Keir said: “I get it, I feel it, and I take responsibility. I know I have my doubters, and I know I need to prove them wrong, and I will.”

Addressing the challenges posed by Nigel Farage’s Reform UK and Zack Polanski’s Green Party, both of which took hundreds of seats from Labour at the local elections, Sir Keir urged his party to get behind him.

“This is nothing less than a battle for the soul of our nation, and I want to be crystal clear about how we will win it, because we cannot win as a weaker version of Reform or the Greens,” he said.

“We can only win as a stronger version of Labour, a mainstream party of power, not protest.

But while he was cheered in the crowded room of the Coin Community Centre in the City of London, his message failed to impress the wider audience outside.

There was concern that he dodged a question as to whether he would try to block the return of Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham to parliament, with support growing for him to replace Sir Keir.



Catherine West pulled back from launching a leadership challenge (PA)

Energy secretary Ed Miliband remained silent in the wake of the prime minister’s speech, but Ms Rayner reiterated calls first made on Sunday for Mr Burnham, himself a favourite to take over from Sir Keir, to return to Westminster.

Meanwhile, several MPs said they were disappointed by the PM’s speech, which included very little policy detail. There was a vague promise to put the UK back at the heart of Europe, but no details of how this would happen or if it meant undoing Brexit and setting a path to rejoin.

Sir Keir did confirm that British Steel would be nationalised, but did not follow this up with a new economic policy that either promised the growth desired by the right of the party or the nationalisation demanded by the left.

Newcastle North MP Catherine McKinnell said: “It’s become clear that it is time for a new leader to take us to the finishing line of this term and on to the next.” Her city saw a wipeout for Labour councillors as Reform took control.

Plymouth Moor View MP Fred Thomas, another previous loyalist, wrote in support of a leadership contest. He said: “I have nothing but respect for Sir Keir Starmer. He transformed our party and led us to an election victory. But sadly it is clear now that to deliver on our promise of change and to secure Britain’s future, we must look to a new leader.”

Mr Rutland said Sir Keir had “lost authority” within the Parliamentary Labour Party and across the country, and “will not be able to regain it”. Ms Ward, who served as PSP for deputy prime minister David Lammy, said: “The prime minister has lost the confidence of the public.”

Some loyalists of the PM had hit back at Labour MP Catherine West’s attempts to gather signatures to initiate a leadership election. After yesterday’s speech, she said she would now canvass support for a timetable for Sir Keir’s resignation by September – and is understood to have the support of 80 MPs.

Banbury MP Sean Woodcock shared his email response to Ms West, in which he asked her to “please stop”. “I think this is a wholly unserious way of going about this,” he said.

“While I too had disappointing results in my seat and would describe myself far from happy at where we find ourselves, this is not how the government of a major economy and nuclear power should be decided”.



Lisa Nandy is among cabinet ministers likely to lose their seat if last week's local election results were repeated in a general election (PA)

But last night, as calls ramped up for Sir Keir to go, Mr Kinnock told *Newsnight*: "It is clear for everybody to see that a lot of people are either coming out and calling for Keir to resign or whatever it might be, and it is possible that members of the cabinet might do that."

New analysis by RRD has shown which prominent MPs would lose their seats if last week's local election results were repeated in a general election, underlining why MPs were panicking.

Cabinet ministers Lisa Nandy, Yvette Cooper and Jonathan Reynolds, along with Ms Rayner, would lose their seats to Reform. Meanwhile, deputy leader Lucy Powell, Mr Lammy and veteran Labour MP Diane Abbott would lose their seats to the Greens.

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# Lonely at the top: Keir's only real ally is his autocue




Keir Starmer literally rolled up his sleeves at a make-or-break speech in London yesterday (Getty)

SEAN O'GRADY

I thought Labour was going to stop the psychodramas. No such luck. We're now in for many months more of the Labour version – every bit as angsty as the Tory sagas. The latest overhyped instalment, however, was a slight anticlimax.

Enter the prime minister. Jacket discarded, tie off, sleeves up. Was Keir Starmer getting on with the job – or fighting for his

political life?

Both, as he clearly knew. I don't know who billed this as a "make-or-break speech", but it was a poorly chosen venue in any case. And a few people seemed to have missed the memo. Here he was, in a smallish white room in London, harshly overlit, apparently abandoned by his cabinet colleagues – none of whom were in the front room, nor probably for miles around.

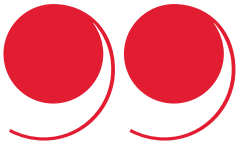
He's no Winston Churchill, as someone once said, but he's trying. "We are not just facing dangerous times, but dangerous opponents. Very dangerous opponents," he said, scouring the front row for them.

He was flanked only by Lucy Powell, the deputy leader of the party, whom he didn't even want doing the job in the first place. Everyone knows the only reason she had turned up was because, if Starmer fell now, her friend and colleague Andy Burnham wouldn't be able to succeed him.

But she was all Starmer had in the way of a senior figure wanting to sit anywhere near him in his hour of need. He looked lonely, nervous, and rather chastened, as well he might. But at least he acknowledged his responsibility for what had gone wrong.



**The prime minister, known for his pragmatic Fabian gradualism, declared, counterintuitively, that 'incremental change' won't cut it**



A sneaky follow-up question from the Sky News political editor, Beth Rigby, about whether he'd discussed recent events with his

wife, Victoria, caught him on the hop, and he could only say that she was his “rock” and that they always talk everything through together. I didn’t get the impression she’d said, “Yes, I’d love another 10 years of this”, as her husband did when he spoke to one newspaper this weekend. As they say, it’s lonely at the top.

Unfashionable as it may be, I thought Starmer was quietly impressive. Maybe a bit too quietly. When he raises his voice he can approach mediocrity as an orator. In any case, that’s not why we elected him PM less than two years ago. Few of us, maybe only those who’ve done the job, can imagine what it’s like to wade through abuse and, even worse, nonsense, and then get up first thing on Monday morning and subject yourself to it all again. Yes, he’s a poor speaker. No, he still hasn’t got a “narrative” for his administration.

His minders should have found him a better venue. Perhaps left the autocue outside. It’s a shame we never see him, nor the privately witty man those closer to him claim he is.

Yet for all his known shortcomings as a performer, he was feisty. He is not going to walk away from the job, he will fight and fight again to lead his party and the country, and he was hurt that things had gone so wrong. He had some radical-ish policies to offer, including nationalising (actually re-nationalising) British Steel (a Reform UK policy), putting Britain at the “heart of Europe” (maybe an appeal to some Lib Dems and Tories) and “energy independence” (which might appeal to some Greens). For a man who spent far too long ignoring Nigel Farage in the hope he’d go away, he is now vicious – calling him “a grifter and a chancer” who won’t be accountable for his only achievement, Brexit.

The prime minister, known for his pragmatic Fabian gradualism, declared, counterintuitively, that “incremental change” won’t cut it, and that he has caught the dismal national mood expressed so powerfully at last week’s elections: “For the British people tired of the status quo change cannot come quickly enough”, which sounds a little too ironic from his lips than it ought to.

As with the now forgotten speech he made at the Labour conference, during a previous burst of Burnham-mania, Starmer did enough to buy himself some time. His personal poll ratings have never been good – there has never been a "Starmer-mania". Perhaps that will play to his advantage.

Once again, he has been greatly assisted by the disarray among his many rivals. The Labour Party doesn't know who they want, what they want or even when they want a replacement to take over (it seems to be September now, rather than this week). His own bitterly divided colleagues are actually Starmer's secret weapon – "divide and rule", except they're doing that for him.

Starmer's not quitting, he wants to "turn this around", and he might – *might* – well last far longer than people think. Either that, or we'll just elect the autocue.




**What the PM's 'last chance saloon' speech really meant**

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# Critics are unconvinced as PM channels inner Major




Having survived the plotters, John Major led the Conservatives to what was, at that point, the worst defeat in their history (AFP/Getty)

DAVID MADDOX

Keir Starmer will have felt buoyed by the support of those in the room yesterday as he gave a make-or-break speech to save his premiership after a dire set of election results last week.

There were whoops and cries of “Come on Keir!” as well as heckling of journalists asking awkward questions. But the Labour loyalists crammed into the room in central London were

not the audience that this besieged prime minister needed to persuade.

And soon after his speech, he got his reply. Catherine West, the former minister, withdrew her threat to stand against him as a leadership candidate, but announced she would begin collecting signatures of Labour MPs to initiate a contest in September.

West said: “I have listened to the prime minister’s speech this morning. I welcome the renewed energy and ideas. However, I have reluctantly concluded that this morning’s speech was too little, too late. The results last Thursday show that the prime minister has failed to inspire hope. What is best for the party and country now is for an orderly transition.”

Other MPs who had remained silent over the weekend also publicly called for the PM to go. So while it was good news that there would be no stalking horse candidate, the threat of a challenge has not gone away.

The question will be whether the rivals who have been circling for months – health secretary Wes Streeting, former deputy prime minister Angela Rayner, energy secretary Ed Miliband – will have the bottle to take the plunge.

In some ways, the speech summed up everything about Starmer and what has gone wrong with his premiership. While he certainly had more vigour and energy about him in his presentation, the lack of a new direction was evident.

There was no lurch to the left, as Rayner had pressed for in her statement on Sunday and many other MPs had pleaded with him to do. There was a promise to renationalise British Steel, a vow to put Britain “back at the heart of Europe” and a reminder that “I got the big decisions right”.



**Major's response was to take off his jacket and tie and roll up his sleeves when he gave a keynote speech, to let people know he was getting to work**



The problem is that the last embattled prime minister to rely on "I got the big decisions right" as a defence was Boris Johnson, and we all know what happened to him.

It was another former Tory prime minister whom Starmer seemed to be channelling in his speech: rather bizarrely, he decided to unleash his inner John Major to win over his critics.

For those with a distant memory, Major found himself in a similar situation in the 1990s as he tried to unite an increasingly divided Conservative Party. Major's response was to take off his jacket and tie and roll up his sleeves when he gave a keynote speech, to let people know he was getting to work.

Starmer did exactly the same yesterday. He even used Major's "putting Britain at the heart of Europe" line.

In fairness, Major managed to see off the Eurosceptic wing of the Tory party – or "the bastards", as he put it – and maybe Starmer hopes he can now do the same with his Labour rivals.

He certainly did not seem ready to welcome Greater Manchester mayor Andy Burnham back into Westminster, which would almost certainly spell a change of leader and prime minister.

However, while Major was not ousted by his MPs, there is a warning from history. In 1997, having survived the plotters, he

led the Conservatives to what was, at that point, the worst defeat in their history.

For those worried about the prospect of Nigel Farage in No 10, that is a lesson from history to send a shiver down their spines.

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# Starmer announces plan to renationalise British Steel



The government intervened when Chinese firm Jingye proposed closing the two blast furnaces at its site in Scunthorpe last April (PA)

ANNA WISE

Sir Keir Starmer says British Steel is set to return to public ownership with new laws to give the government "options" to protect the industry and Scunthorpe workers.

New powers could be used to nationalise British Steel, 38 years since the firm was first sold off, and a year after the government

used emergency powers to take control of the firm and continue production at the site in Scunthorpe after its owner, Chinese firm Jingye, proposed closing the two blast furnaces.

It has since been in discussions with Jingye, but said it could not agree on a commercial sale, and that it did not think a deal could be reached that would deliver sufficient value to taxpayers.

The government said it believes introducing legislation to provide a route to public ownership was the right next step and will enable it to make decisions about the steelmaker's future.

The legislation, which will be brought forward this week, will be subject to a public interest test, which considers factors including national security, maintaining critical national infrastructure and supporting the economy.

The prime minister said: "Strong domestic steel production is vital for our economy, and this legislation would allow us to ensure stability for British Steel's workers, suppliers and customers and avoid damaging disruption to crucial supply chains, while we consider options for the site's future. The government recognises that securing the long-term future of the UK's steel sector relies on both public and private investment for modernisation."

A steel union welcomed the move to nationalise British Steel, which it said will "protect it from foreign owners".

Charlotte Brumpton-Childs, GMB national secretary, said: "This legislation will cover the whole steel industry – it isn't specifically for British Steel but it is what will protect it from foreign owners. British Steel is a nationally strategic asset; it is right that the government does everything in its power to secure its long-term future."

Gareth Stace, director general for trade association UK Steel, welcomed the decision that he said "provides vital certainty for the workforce, the company's customers and the wider supply chain at a critical moment".

But he stressed: "Nationalisation is not an end goal. This must now be the beginning of a clear and credible long-term plan for

British Steel."

*PA*

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# Greece to fast-track all UK visitors until system is fixed

## Athens is standing by its decision to drop the EU entry-exit system, the country's tourism minister tells **Simon Calder**



Blue-sky thinking: 'We really don't want anyone to have to face a lot of bureaucracy,' says Olga Kefalogianni (Simon Calder)

After Greece decided unilaterally to scrap biometric border checks for British visitors, the tourism minister has said the "UK

fast track" will continue until the EU entry-exit system (EES) is improved.

Olga Kefalogianni told *The Independent*: "We aim to actually make sure that this facilitation is not just valid for this year."

Since 10 April, the European Commission has insisted that "third-country nationals", including the British, should have their details registered on a central database when crossing Schengen area frontiers.

On the first entry or exit, the four fingerprints of the right hand plus a facial biometric should be collected. On subsequent crossings, only one biometric needs to be captured – almost always the face.

According to officials in Brussels, all the Schengen nations agreed that they were ready for EES. But at some airports across Europe, British visitors have waited for hours to get through the border. Many have found they have to provide their fingerprints multiple times. Some have missed flights home because the queue to leave was so long.

Speaking exclusively to *The Independent,* the Greek minister said: "In the very beginning of the season, we faced some delays in the whole process at the airports."

Under EES legislation, member states can briefly suspend biometrics at crossing points where long queues build up. But the government in Athens took a unilateral decision to drop the biometric requirement completely for British visitors until further notice.

Ms Kefalogianni said: "We really want our travellers to have the best experience and we understand that any inconvenience in getting into Greece or exiting would create a frustration. We really don't want anyone to have to face a lot of bureaucracy, so we have managed to facilitate the system in order for British citizens to not have any burden, especially at the airports.

"So it's just a very easy way to come in and exit the country. Up to now, it's been like a minute or so just to come in and out."

The move was expected to trigger an immediate demand from the European Commission for Athens to fall into line. But action has yet to be taken. Meanwhile, according to data from the Advantage Travel Partnership, sales of summer holidays to Greece have overtaken those for mainland Spain.



**Fuss-free: tourists visiting Greece to see the likes of the Acropolis will avoid any bureaucratic biometric burden at its borders (Reuters)**

The Greek tourism minister said: “We are part of the Schengen area. We aim always to abide by the rules, but at the same time we want our visitors to feel very welcome. And having a bureaucratic burden at the airports, we understand, is not really a fuss-free situation. So we just made sure for our visitors to have a fuss-free experience. That’s all potential visitors need to know.”

One reason for the shambolic introduction of the EES is thought to be the failure for member states to adopt a Europe-wide app. The “Travel to Europe” app is optional both for travellers and member states. So far, only Sweden has adopted it in full to allow third-country nationals to provide passport data and a facial image. Portugal uses it in a limited role to allow travellers to answer an entry questionnaire.

The European Union says: “The other European countries using the EES may make the app available later. The specific functionalities offered may also vary from country to country.”

Ms Kefalogianni said that technology should be used “to make sure that you can do the controls that you need to do, but at the same time relax the bureaucracy”.

She said: “Definitely we could make very good use of technology in order for visitors’ experience to be much smoother. Since technology is part of our everyday life, it should also make our life easier in all respects.”

It is understood Greece does not intend to collect biometrics until a better system is developed.

Dr Nick Brown, the data sleuth who has studied all the relevant EU legislation, said: “Presumably, the commission has other fish to fry right now, but I assume they will not let ‘One EU country making exceptions for the citizens of a non-EU country’ last for more than one season.”

But Ms Kefalogianni said: “I think that all European partners welcoming many British visitors have the same interest in making sure that we can facilitate their entry and exit.

“What is important for travellers is to know for a fact that they will not face any delays or any burden when entering or exiting Greece.”

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# British cruise passengers isolate at Wirral hospital



A coach with the travellers arrives at Arrowe Park Hospital on Sunday (PA)

JANE KIRBY

Twenty Britons from a cruise ship hit by hantavirus continue to isolate at a UK hospital as the captain praised the “patience and kindness” of those on board.

All 20 British nationals from the MV *Hondius*, together with a German who is a UK resident, and a Japanese passenger, were

taken to Arrowe Park Hospital on the Wirral on Sunday after the ship docked in Tenerife.

Arrowe Park will house the group for three days in total before they are sent home to continue isolating for a further 42 days. If people cannot go home, they will be placed in other accommodation to see out the isolation period.

The captain of the MV *Hondius*, Jan Dobrogowski, praised the crew and passengers for the way they have managed on board.

In a video message, he said: “I’ve decided to take this time to thank every single guest and crew member on board here, as well as our colleagues back home. The past few weeks have been extremely challenging to us all.

“What touched me the most, what moved me the most, was your patience, your discipline, and also [the] kindness that you showed to each other throughout.”

He continued: “I’ve witnessed your caring, your unity and quiet strength amongst everybody on board, guests and crew alike, and I must commend my crew for their courage and the selfless resolve they showed time and again in the most difficult moments.

“I cannot imagine sailing through these circumstances with a better group of people, guests and crew alike. Most importantly, our thoughts are with the ones that are no longer with us.

“Whatever I say will not ease this loss. I’d like you to know they are with us every day, in our hearts and our thoughts.”

Meanwhile, the French government said a French woman evacuated from the cruise ship tested positive for hantavirus, and her health worsened overnight in hospital.



MV Hondius passengers are sprayed with disinfectant at Tenerife airport (AP)

The woman was among five French passengers repatriated to France on Sunday from Tenerife. She developed symptoms on the flight to Paris, officials told the French media.

In the UK, Professor Robin May, chief scientific officer at the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA), told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme the passengers in Arrowe Park would be living as normal a life as possible.

"They're being accommodated, if they were travelling in a family group, they're staying in that family group, and they'll be living as normal a life as they can whilst they're in hospital," he said.

"During that time, we're going to be assessing them quite intensely to make sure that they are virus-free.

"So we're going to be… PCR testing to look for any possibility of the virus, and also testing their serums, their blood samples. for the presence of any antibodies."

He said each individual's circumstances were different and people were being supported to find the best place for them to continue isolating.

He continued: "So we're assessing on a kind of case-by-case basis whether their home is the best place for them, or perhaps, if they live in a very shared accommodation, it might need to be somewhere else. And we're discussing that with them.

“It’s going to be a very long period of time. During that period we’ll be supporting very closely with ongoing testing, still checking for virus and antibodies, but also, of course, emotionally, because this is clearly not what any of them would have wished.”

He told BBC *Breakfast* the passengers were supported with “the day-to-day stuff… So for example, people have left many of their belongings behind so they need clothes and supplies and those kind of things and a lot of emotional support for the next period of isolation.”

He said the passengers had “been really impressive in their willingness to work with us and their willingness to continue to isolate and protect the wider public, and we’re really grateful to them for that”.




Passengers leave the cruise ship (AP)

Scientists continue to work “quite intensely” on understanding more about hantavirus, Prof May said.

He told the *Today* programme: “What we’ve seen so far is the individuals who have apparently contracted it from each other, have been in very close contact.

“They’ve been sharing a cabin, for example, or had extremely close contact with someone who is strongly symptomatic.

“We think the virus primarily spreads only from people who have symptoms, so the risk from someone who is asymptomatic

is extremely low.

“And if you think about the cruise ship setting, you know, this is a very close living situation so perhaps an area in which spread is more likely.

“It’s not the same as most people’s private living arrangements, and it’s definitely not the same as people who might pass someone in the street, for example. So the risk there is essentially negligible.”

Public health minister Sharon Hodgson said: “I want to thank all those who have worked to bring our British nationals home and the NHS workers now caring for them at Arrowe Park Hospital – their dedication and professionalism show our NHS at its very best.

“None of the passengers are symptomatic but we will monitor them closely over the next 72 hours at the hospital, as part of a precautionary isolation period.

“With no cases or symptoms among them and our stringent monitoring and isolation measures, the risk to the public remains extremely low.”



People leaving the plane at Manchester airport (PA)

US officials said on Sunday that an American among the 17 being flown to Nebraska from the ship tested positive for hantavirus, but has no symptoms.

Yesterday, it was confirmed that an 18th American patient has dual British nationality and is among those isolating in Nebraska.

Overall, three people have died linked to the outbreak. One British man with hantavirus is still being cared for in Johannesburg and is thought to be improving, while another is in the Netherlands.

Another British national has hantavirus and is isolating where he lives on the remote South Atlantic Island of Tristan da Cunha.

Over the weekend, six paratroopers, an RAF consultant and an Army nurse from 16 Air Assault Brigade were parachuted onto Tristan da Cunha to help care for him.

Strict infection control measures were in place throughout the journey to Arrowe Park, with passengers, crew, drivers and medical teams all wearing personal protective equipment such as face masks.

The Arrowe Park site has six storeys of self-contained flats with their own bedrooms, en-suite bathrooms, kitchen and lounge facilities.

Janelle Holmes, chief executive of Wirral University Teaching Hospital NHS Foundation Trust, said on Sunday that Arrowe Park would carry out “welfare checks on each individual”.

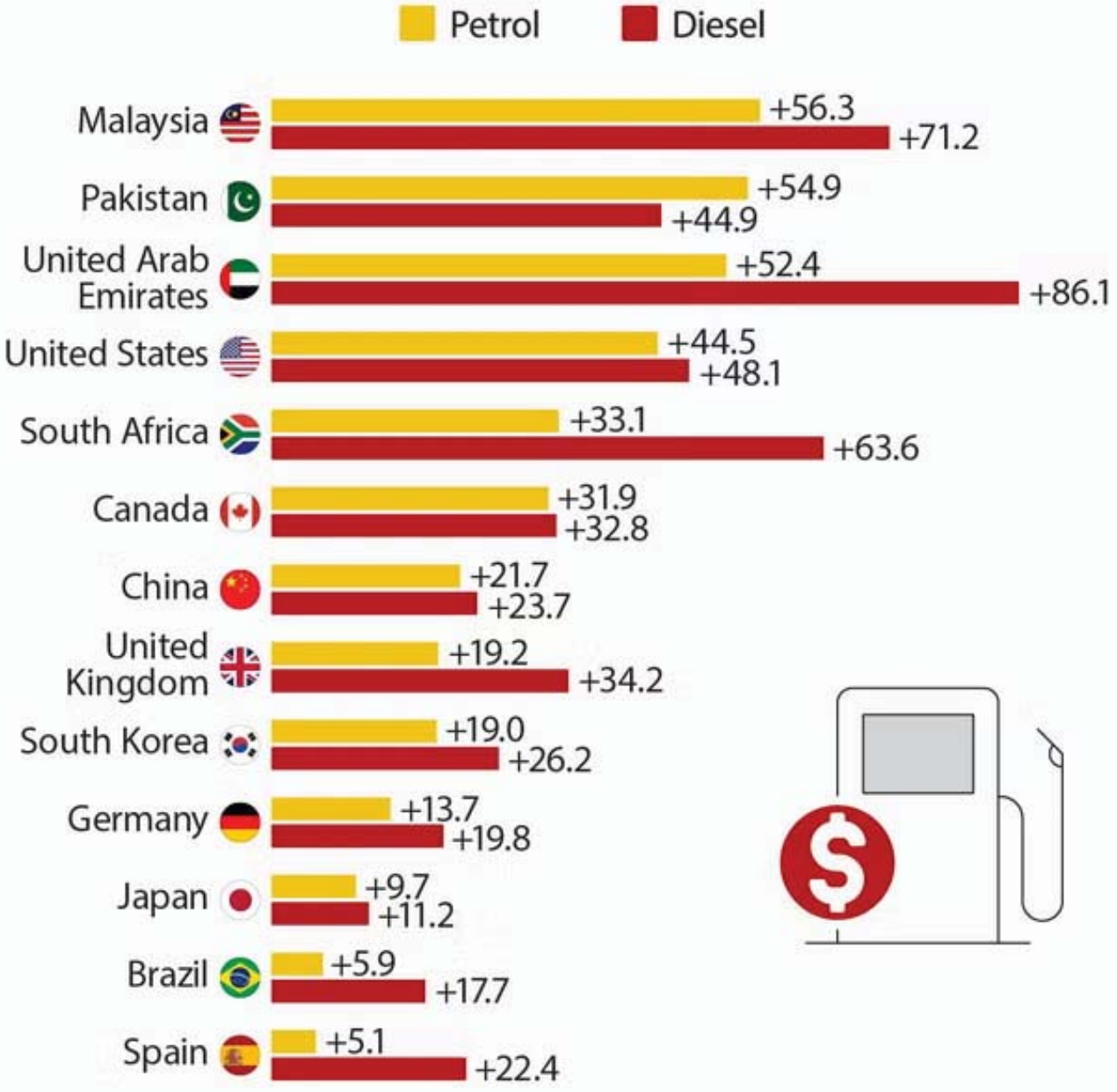
She said if passengers develop symptoms, they will be taken to Royal Liverpool University Hospital, which houses the regional Tropical and Infectious Diseases Unit.

*PA*

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# By Numbers Pump it up (and up)

Fuel price changes in selected countries between 23 February and 4 May 2026 (in per cent)




Based on weekly average prices in dollars per litre

Source: Global Petrol Prices

cc

INDEPENDENT statista

# Pictures of the Day



## Cell 'bye' date

Supporters of Thailand's former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra wait ahead of his expected release at Klong Prem Central Prison in Bangkok. *AFP/Getty*



### Prang the DJ

Singer and Heart Radio presenter Olly Murs falls off his bike at the start line for a five-day 400km challenge in Manchester. *PA*



### Roman reflections

Coco Gauff in action during her fourth-round match against fellow American Iva Jovic in the Italian Open in Rome. *Reuters*



**Ceramic creation**

Kate Malone's *Pumpkin of Plenty* features in the "Crafted" exhibition at the official launch of London Craft Week at Sotheby's. *Getty*



**Kenya kick it? Yes, he can**

French president Emmanuel Macron plays football at a sports demonstration during the Africa Forward summit in Nairobi. *AFP/Getty*

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# Home news in brief



GB News presenter Bev Turner and Donald Trump in Washington last year (The White House)

## Ofcom to investigate Trump interview

Ofcom is to investigate GB News over the broadcast of an interview with Donald Trump. The regulator will probe an episode of *The Weekend*, presented by Dawn Neesom, which aired at 12 pm on 15 November. The show featured an interview with the US president, conducted by GB News presenter Bev Turner.

An Ofcom spokesperson said: “We are investigating whether it breached our rules on due impartiality and material misleadingness.”

The watchdog confirmed in February that it would not probe an episode of *The Late Show Live*, presented by Turner and broadcast at 12 am on 15 November 2025, in which Mr Trump said London had "no-go areas" for police.

The broadcaster said: "GB News is surprised and concerned by Ofcom's delayed decision to investigate in circumstances where it had already published an 'assessed, not pursued' finding in relation to the original broadcast of the interview."

## Reform UK councillor resigns days after being elected

A Reform UK councillor who was accused of making racist social media posts has resigned just days after he was voted in. Stuart Prior was elected last week as a councillor for Essex County Council and for Rochford District Council.

Mr Prior, who denied making racist posts when approached by the *Daily Mirror*, had previously been accused by campaign group Hope Not Hate of describing white people as "the master race" and suggesting white people have "larger brains".

A Reform UK source said yesterday: "Stuart Prior informed us that he was resigning from his elected positions for personal reasons. We have also revoked his Reform UK membership."

## Man charged after car hit pedestrians in town centre

A 40-year-old man has been charged with five counts of attempted murder after a car hit a group of pedestrians in Nottingham town centre, leaving one man with life-threatening injuries.

Nottinghamshire Police said the incident involved a red Vauxhall Astra and occurred on Saturday morning at 1.12 am, following an "altercation" a short time earlier. The car was abandoned at the scene.

The force said Duane Anthony, 40, has been charged with five counts of attempted murder, aggravated vehicle taking, driving while disqualified and driving without valid insurance.

## Man accused of trying to kill brother wins £600k legal fight

A man disinherited by his mother after she became convinced he tried to murder his brother has won a High Court fight to share her £600,000 fortune.

Retired electrician Richard Dalton, 68, was cut out of the will by Peggy Dalton shortly before her death in 2021. The 93-year-old left almost all her £600,000 estate to Robert, 67, and his wife, Carly.

But Richard sued, claiming Robert and Carly – who had moved in with Peggy and "isolated" her from the rest of the family – were behind his mum's "false beliefs" in order to "coerce" her into making a new will in their favour.

The case went to the High Court, where a judge, Master Katherine McQuail, ruled in Richard's favour, reinstating a previous 2018 will under which he gets a one-third share, worth about £200,000.

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World

# Tehran ceasefire deal ‘on life support’, warns Trump

## Bombing fears as US leader rejects ‘garbage’ Iran proposal



Donald Trump during a press call in the Oval Office of the White House yesterday (PA)

ANDREW FEINBERG
IN WASHINGTON DC

Donald Trump has claimed that the standoff with Iran is an example of his “military genius” and that the US has no shortage of ammunition to throw at the war effort – even as he admitted the shaky ceasefire with Tehran is “on life support”.

The president rejected Iran's response to a peace proposal, raising fears of a resumption of hostilities in the 10-week conflict that has killed thousands, halted vital shipping flows and caused financial pain to millions worldwide.

Asked where the ceasefire stands, Mr Trump told reporters: "I would call it the weakest right now, after reading that piece of garbage they sent us. I didn't even finish reading it. Am I going to waste my time reading it? I would say it's one of the weakest right now. It's on life support ... I would say the ceasefire is on massive life support."

Tehran is demanding compensation for war damage, restating its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, and is calling on Washington to end its naval blockade.

"You know, a lot of people said, 'well, does he have a plan? ' Yes I do — I have the best plan ever," Mr Trump said.

"The plan is very simple. The blockade, first of all, was a part of military genius. Just like Venezuela was military genius. We have the greatest military in the world by far, and we're stocked up with great ammunition. We have much better stuff than we did two months ago when we first did the attack," Mr Trump added.



Tehran yesterday, where life is slowly returning to normal (Reuters)

His latest remarks came as the on-off talks to resolve the impasse over the Strait of Hormuz appear to have deadlocked

over Trump's insistence that any agreement to resolve the standoff over the key waterway also include Tehran's disavowal of any nuclear weapons program.

A spokesperson for Iran's foreign ministry, Esmaeil Baghaei, said Tehran had made a "generous" and "legitimate" proposal to the US.

He told reporters that Iran is asking for "an end to the war, lifting the (US) blockade ... and releasing Iranian assets that have been unjustly frozen in banks due to US pressure" and warned that any warships in the waterway would be met with a "decisive response."

Since the start of the war on 28 February, Tehran has threatened to attack ships passing through the strait without permission and has reportedly placed mines to ward off maritime traffic. The result has been a massive bottleneck with impacts on global trade in oil as well as other key sectors that have seen prices at the pump and of common retail goods skyrocket.

Trump also hit out at media reports that he's "tired or bored" of the two-month-old war.

"They didn't want to believe it. They think that well, I'll get tired of this... or I'll get bored, or I'll have some pressure. But there's no pressure. There's no pressure at all. We're going to have a complete victory," he said.

Hakan Fidan, the foreign minister of Turkey, will hold talks in Qatar today on the conflict and on ensuring navigational safety in the Hormuz strait, a Turkish diplomatic source said.

The next diplomatic or military steps remain unclear. Trump is expected to arrive in Beijing tomorrow, where Iran is set to be among the topics discussed with Chinese president Xi Jinping.

Mr Trump has been leaning on China to use its influence to push Tehran towards a deal.

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# A humiliated Trump will be played by China's 'Big Man'

## Donald Trump will arrive in Beijing tomorrow, exasperated that he has achieved none of his war aims in Iran; something that President Xi will use to his advantage, writes **Sam Kiley**



When he is in the room with Xi, it is membership of the club that Trump wants – needs – most (AFP/Getty)

Donald Trump had expected a "big fat hug" from China when he visits Xi Jinping this week in thanks for reopening the Strait of Hormuz.

He won't get one, though, because he's failed to end the throttling of Beijing's oil supplies. Good news for China, because Trump is indifferent to his own failure.

Bad news for Taiwan. Bad news for the West. Bad news for US allies around the world. Bad news for democracies in general.

The US president will arrive for his summit with China exasperated that he has achieved none of his many and varied war aims in Iran. He will arrive having been humiliated by a weaker but dogged regime that survives in Tehran.

The results are likely to be a sudden shift in the tectonic plates of geopolitics to China's advantage, and Beijing has done almost nothing to deliver it.

The key to understanding this lies in Trump's psychology. Vain and peevish, he has blundered, alongside Israel, into a war with Iran that had obvious, dangerous consequences, and now has to find a way to get out of it without looking weak.

He has threatened to reinforce failure with a genocidal threat to wipe out a whole civilisation.



Xi and Trump review Chinese honour guards during a welcome ceremony in Beijing in November 2017 (AFP/Getty)

But when he is in the room with Xi, it is membership of the club that Trump wants – needs – most. He needs to feel that he is an equal, or a first among equals, among the world's most powerful

and unhindered authoritarian leaders, and he'll do almost anything to win their approval.

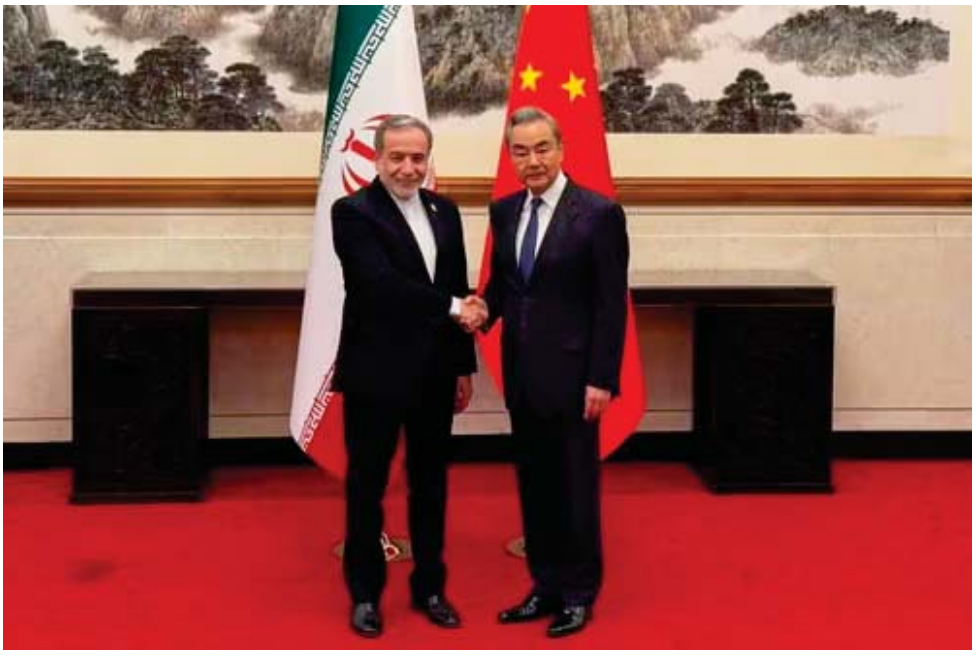
"Trump looks at people who are, you know, frankly in charge of everything, who have basically the bling … And that's what he wants to be. And he believes that he is elevated in everybody's minds, by their association, by being in their company," Fiona Hill, a former national security adviser to Trump now with the Brookings Institution, told the *World of Trouble* podcast.

"What this is really about is Trump himself wanting to be recognised by absolutely everybody who matters. And that's a very small group of people … And he only gets that [when he gets the approval] of people like President Xi of China, President Putin of Russia, the royal families of here, there and everywhere … That's the coin of the realm for him," she explained.

The Chinese president is likely to slip Trump the gold sovereign of "Big Man" association in Beijing, and it's unlikely that Trump will extract any advantage for America from his membership of this gilded club.

Xi has helped arm Iran. China is Russia's most important military supplier in its war against Ukraine. China controls most of the critical minerals that drive global technologies and is decades ahead in exploiting them in Africa.

China usually gets almost 50 per cent of its oil imports from vessels that sail through the Strait of Hormuz. By importing sanctioned oil from Venezuela, Iran and Russia, it has also enjoyed a discount on prices.



Iran's foreign minister Abbas Araghchi was in Beijing last week, ahead of Trump's visit ( Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs)

The disaster that has been Iran's response to the attacks by America – shutting the strait and bombarding the Gulf – should be offset by Trump's arm-twisting China into reducing its backing for Tehran and Moscow.

Xi is "somebody that needs oil. We don't", Trump said earlier this month, while confessing that he'd asked China to stop sending weapons to Iran.

Abbas Araghchi, Iran's foreign minister, was in Beijing last week, ahead of Trump's visit. China called on both the US, which is blockading Iran, and Tehran, which has closed the strait, to open the flow of oil and end the conflict. Beijing took a studiously balanced approach.

Trump, meanwhile, continues to threaten Iran while offering negotiations. His main option for getting out of the war without total loss of face may be in getting Iran to agree to send its nuclear materials to China for safekeeping. This would appear to end Tehran's ambitions to develop nuclear weapons.

That would be a bauble that China could offer a US president who wants to share the same space as Xi and Putin.

These men know how to play on Trump's weakness for their power.



Xi welcomed North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (right) and Russian president Vladimir Putin to Beijing in September 2025 (AFP/Getty)

Xi may be able to get Iran to agree to terms that allow Trump to get out of his war. In return, though, Beijing is likely to want to see the $11bn (£8.1bn) military aid programme for Taiwan, which it claims as Chinese territory, go away.

China would like free rein to continue its longstanding extensions of its claimed territory in the South China Sea, where it has been building artificial islands. It wants to own that sea, which, oddly enough, is a potential choke point of global trade.

These concessions would give China unlimited powers in its region, just as the deliberate weakening of Ukraine gives Russia a strategic boost in the realms that Moscow has traditionally dominated in tsarist and Soviet times.

Trump's Big Man mission is, he has repeatedly said, to see the world carved up into spheres of influence, with the US dominating the western hemisphere, China the east and Russia the middle, with its western faultline running through Ukraine.

That means ceding US power in these regions. Weakening the US global reach suits Xi and Putin just fine.

Xi will throw his arm around Trump and walk him through gilded halls and make sure that the US president feels very much part of the gang of three who can rule the world.

For now.

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# Work from home says Modi as India's fuel crisis deepens



PM Narendra Modi also urged people to use public transport and avoid foreign holidays (Reuters)

**NAMITA SINGH**
IN DELHI

Narendra Modi has appealed to Indians to reduce travel, hold off on the purchasing of gold, and work from home in an effort to

conserve fuel and foreign exchange as the fuel crisis caused by the US-Israeli war on Iran deepens.

Addressing a public meeting on Sunday, the prime minister urged citizens to use public transport and electric vehicles, and revive the Covid-era measure of working from home.

Asking the people to help the “country above all else”, he said: “Use metros wherever metros are available. Use car-pooling to go to places, and use the railways if you have to transport goods. All of this will reduce dependency on petrol and diesel, and thereby cut the dependence on foreign currency.”

Stating that the Covid-era measures were the need of the hour, he asked people to revert to the methods developed during the pandemic, including virtual meetings and video conferencing.

A jump in crude oil prices after the US-Iran peace talks hit a stalemate and Mr Modi's appeal spooked currency traders yesterday, sending the rupee past 95 per US dollar.

Indian assets were under pressure across the board, with the rupee falling 0.75 per cent to 95.1850 per dollar, the benchmark equity index Nifty 50 shedding over 1 per cent and the yield on the 10-year benchmark note rising 5 basis points to 7.03 per cent.



Smoke rises from the site of an Israeli bombardment in the village of Tair Harfa in Lebanon yesterday (AFP/Getty)

Gold fell 1 per cent yesterday, as elevated oil prices stoked worries over inflation and prolonged high interest rates.

The renewed pressure on Indian markets came after US president Donald Trump on Sunday rejected Iran's response to a US proposal for talks to end the war, saying Tehran's demands were "totally unacceptable".

Brent oil futures jumped 4 per cent in Asian trade to $105.7 a barrel. Higher oil prices are a major risk for net energy importer India and threaten to widen the country's current account deficit, slow growth and stoke inflation.

Han Tan, chief market analyst at cryptocurrency exchange Bybit, said: "Inflation risks still weigh heavy on the market's collective mind, as attempts to end the Middle East conflict reached an impasse after the US and Iran rejected each other's peace proposals."

Gold prices have fallen more than 11 per cent since the war began in late February, pressured by higher oil prices. While gold is seen as an inflation hedge, high rates tend to weigh on the non-yielding asset.

The Reserve Bank of India has sold dollars from its foreign exchange reserves to defend the currency, cracked down on arbitrage activity, and is considering measures to shore up dollar inflows.

However, in a bid to conserve foreign exchange, the prime minister also urged the middle class to "postpone travelling abroad for at least a year", especially those taking vacations overseas and having weddings at foreign venues.



Gold rush: a jewellery shop in Kolkata (Reuters)

He also asked the people to reduce the use of cooking oil by 10 per cent, saying “this will not only help the nation during these times but also improve the health of your family”.

The prime minister advocated for greater use of indigenous products, asking people to list down the things they used daily and identify foreign-made items. “Efforts should be on to build self-reliance as soon as possible,” he said, while clarifying that he was not asking people to throw away foreign goods.

“We have to save foreign exchange by any means,” he said.

However, less than a day after the appeal, the PM held a roadshow in his home state of Gujarat to mark 75 years of the consecration of the Somnath temple.

The opposition leader, Rahul Gandhi, criticised the prime minister for his message, calling it “evidence of failure” of his Hindu-nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party government.

"Yesterday, Modi called upon the public to make sacrifices – do not buy gold, do not travel abroad, consume less petrol, cut down on fertilisers and cooking oil, take the Metro, and work from home," Mr Gandhi posted on X in Hindi. “These are not words of counsel. They are evidence of failure.”

He condemned the prime minister for shifting the “responsibility onto the people” during a time of crisis as a way to “escape accountability themselves”.

“Running the country is no longer within the reach of a compromised PM.”

Analysts at MUFG said in a note: "As energy-related disruptions linger, rising risks of fuel shortages could pose a more differentiated challenge... particularly for economies with relatively low crude inventory buffers. This includes India and several Asian markets such as the Philippines, Vietnam, and Indonesia.”

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# World news in brief



Israel's Eurovision Song Contest entry Noam Bettan asked supporters to vote 10 times (Reuters)

## Eurovision gives Israel formal warning over voting campaign

Israel's national broadcaster has received a formal warning from Eurovision organisers after it encouraged viewers to "vote 10 times". The Israeli public broadcaster, known as Kan, was found to have broken the rules of the song contest when it shared videos on social media encouraging fans to support its 2026 entry, Noam Bettan.

In the clips, Bettan, who is competing this year with the song "Michelle", told his fans to use all 10 of their allocated votes to support him in the first semi-final today. The message from

Bettan, 29, was apparently recorded in several languages, including French, German, English, Greek and Italian.

Kan's endorsement of the videos was found to have breached new rules designed to limit third-party campaigns. Eurovision director Martin Green said: "Within 20 minutes, we had contacted the Kan delegation to ask them to immediately stop any distribution of the videos and remove them from any platforms where they had been published. They immediately acted to do this."

Five countries withdrew from this year's contest – Spain, Slovenia, Ireland, the Netherlands and Iceland – after it was confirmed that Israel would be allowed to compete again.

## Spain calls for formation of EU army

The foreign minister of Spain has called on the European Union to create its own standing army in a bid to reduce dependence on the United States for its defence.

Jose Manuel Albares said that European countries must be prepared for countries such as Russia to test whether Washington would come to the continent's aid following months of attacks by Donald Trump on the Nato alliance.

Spain has been the most vocal critic of Mr Trump's war in the Middle East, branding it "absurd, cruel and illegal". "We cannot be waking up every morning wondering what the US will do next," Mr Albares told *Politico*. "Our citizens deserve better. We need a military, a common defence capacity."

## Former Thai leader Shinawatra freed from prison

Thailand's former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra was released from a Bangkok prison yesterday after serving eight months of a one-year sentence for a corruption-related charge. A crowd of about 300 gathered outside the Klong Prem Central Prison to greet the 76-year-old billionaire populist.

Mr Thaksin was a telecommunications magnate who founded his own political party in 1998 and served as prime minister from 2001 until a military coup ousted him in 2006 while he was abroad.

His ouster triggered about two decades of deep and sometimes violent political polarisation, while his political machine staged several comebacks even as Mr Thaksin himself stayed in self-imposed exile to escape what he said was political persecution through the courts. *AP*

## Quarter of Americans think assassination attempt staged

Almost a quarter of US citizens believe the attack on the White House Correspondents' Dinner last month was staged, a survey has found.

On 25 April Cole Allen, 31, is suspected of trying to storm the venue but was apprehended by the Secret Service before he could harm President Donald Trump.

Mr Allen, a computer programmer from Torrance, California, has been indicted by a federal grand jury in Washington DC, and charged with four felonies, including the attempted assassination of the president. He pleaded not guilty during a court appearance yesterday.

A YouGov poll published by NewsGuard reveals that 24 per cent of Americans believe the episode was fabricated on Mr Trump's behalf, perhaps to engineer sympathy for the president as his approval ratings slide, with 45 per cent confident it was legitimate and 32 per cent unsure.

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# *'Where's Wes?' The ball has landed in Streeting's court*



Devil is in the details: Peter Kyle says Wes Streeting spent his weekend at the cinema – not preparing a leadership bid (AFP/Getty)

**CHRIS BLACKHURST**

The health secretary and business secretary huddled in a darkened room together this weekend. Could it be a sign of leadership plotting? Sorry to disappoint, but Wes Streeting and Peter Kyle were watching *The Devil Wears Prada 2*.

“Somebody who was planning to pull the plug and launch a leadership bid in a couple of days time doesn’t go to the cinema with a friend,” said Kyle, as he tried to dampen speculation that Wes is planning to come for his boss this morning.

But these are febrile times and, while they may not have chatted during the film, there were opportunities before and after. After all, the plot is all about a boss staying on too long and behaving badly.

Such is the crazy atmosphere surrounding Keir Starmer’s tenure, following Labour’s disastrous local election results, that anything now feels possible.

Starmer duly came out swinging – emboldened and confident. He’s done this before, of course, and there seems to be an element of Starmer that almost enjoys the back-to-the-wall defence. It is as if he has to be dragged to the precipice before finding the passion that has so eluded him previously.

Whether he has bought himself more time remains to be seen. But here is what might happen now. First, and most likely, Starmer can delay, and delay, and just stay. What helps Starmer is that those ranged against him are a disparate crew. There he is – prime minister, at the top, on his own, the deliverer of a general election landslide. Yes, he takes responsibility for what has happened since. But it is also a chance for him to appear statesmanlike, to invite comparison with those who would dare unseat him midstream.

Catherine West? The so-called stalking horse moved to the UK from Australia in her thirties and was elected as an MP in 2015 under Jeremy Corbyn. Her “leadership challenge” appears to have disappeared like dew in the morning – she doesn’t have the 81 MPs to unseat Starmer – but she has now called for the PM to go by September, and for a leadership contest to take place before then. She says she’ll email every Labour MP to round up support for this. We now wait for her to see – again – if she has the numbers.

West’s preferred pick is Rayner. The former deputy prime minister is defiantly left-wing and, as her reaction indicated, still

firmly believes Labour should be heading in that direction – while many traditional supporters in its heartlands drifted right towards Reform. She has so far passed up any chance to declare her hand for herself, presumably because her tax affairs, which she thought were definitely going to be sorted out – and in her favour – before the elections, are still being investigated.

**Perhaps Streeting and/or Rayner may yet seize the moment. But history teaches us that those who jump first usually land badly**



Rayner herself has called for the return of the king on the Manchester Ship Canal, Andy Burnham. He is popular, no doubt about that. He speaks well and wins over the lads and lasses, but he is not even in the Commons. A seat must be found for him, and then he must win it – and there is no such thing as a safe Labour constituency these days. Nigel Farage and Zack Polanski would throw everything at it, splitting the Labour vote.

As for Burnham's mayoralty of the UK's self-styled "second city", that too could end up in Reform's hands. Manchester – home of the Co-operative movement, scene of the Peterloo Massacre, and once the residence of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels – falling to Nige. Such a prospect still feels unthinkable, but no longer impossible.

Some other rank outsider may, like West, come from nowhere to put up a challenge later in the year. This is the party that gave us Corbyn, after all. Twenty-four hours is a long time in politics, let alone six months.

The old dogs growl and chunter. John McDonnell is furious that West may have placed the ball in Streeting's court by going too early. Battles within battles, wheels within wheels, round and round. There will be plenty of talking this week, lots of

muttering and canvassing, but little sign of any concerted change of direction. Labour is a car without an engine. There is a steering wheel, and there are tyres, but no power.

Perhaps Streeting and/or Rayner may yet seize the moment. But history teaches us that those who jump first usually land badly. Can they really be sure of carrying sufficient support? It seems unlikely.

Starmer, too, has taken steps to reinforce his line. Whoever tackles him must deal with Gordon Brown and Harriet Harman. That may provoke laughter in right-wing tribal and media circles, but within Labour, they still carry weight. Certainly, Brown was a lacklustre premier – sounds familiar? – but there is no doubting his bruising political credentials. When he speaks, people listen – witness his dramatic last-minute intervention in the Scottish independence referendum campaign. Harman, perhaps less so, but her presence at Starmer's side heads off the charge from Rayner and others that his administration is merely a boys' club.

Unlike Streeting, Keir did not spend his Sunday buying popcorn and candy floss. He was thinking ahead. He is not departing, as others in his position might have done. He is delaying and delaying and, for now at least, staying put.



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# What the PM's 'last chance saloon' speech really meant




Keir Starmer was talking to the swing vote among his MPs who will decide his fate (PA)

JOHN RENTOUL

Only one thing mattered about yesterday's speech, and that was to give the 81st Labour MP tempted to sign Catherine West's nomination paper a reason to hold back. Having such a well-defined purpose meant that it was a good speech by Keir Starmer's standards,

because the content, delivery and staging were all bent towards a single goal.

That goal was to keep the number of MPs prepared to back a challenger below the 81 that would trigger a leadership election.

The content was calibrated with some skill to appeal to those MPs who are torn between the terror of the status quo and the roughly equal terror of the chaos that could be unleashed by change.

The new announcement in the speech was the nationalisation of British Steel, a plot twist provided by the collapse of attempts to sell the company. Some Labour MPs might think that if a commercial sale is impossible, then the state should not be picking up the tab for a loss-making proposition, but the Labour MPs who could decide the prime minister's fate this week are more likely to think that "public ownership in the public interest" is the kind of slogan they can sell to a sceptical electorate.

The stuff about Europe was well trailed in advance and nothing new – the only hint for the pro-EU crowd was Starmer's refusal to rule out rejoining the single market as an option in Labour's next manifesto. Labour's current position on Europe, he said, is "a platform on which we can build".

Apart from that, most of the speech was familiar fare, an attempt to blend an acceptance that the voters want change with a claim that the government is already beginning to deliver it. None of that will move the political market. Nor, I suspect, will the warning about the voters turning to Nigel Farage, who would take the country "down a very dark path".

**His form of words allowed MPs who support Burnham to fool themselves that there is a chance that he will come back if they stay their hand against Starmer now**



That is not a good way to talk to voters who are tempted by what Reform has to offer, implying that they are bad people for considering it, just as it was tactless to suggest that those who voted to leave the EU had been hoodwinked by a charlatan.

But Starmer wasn't talking to the voters; he was talking to his MPs, and specifically to the swing vote among his MPs who will decide his fate. They are very worried about handing over power to Farage at the next election. The trouble is that they fear that Starmer might be the person to hand that power over, and that another leader might have more chance of seeing Farage off.

One of West's reasons for going over the top against Starmer was precisely that she thinks any delay in changing the leader will make it harder to beat Reform.

Something that was missing from the speech, and from the answers to questions after it, was a definite No to Andy Burnham being allowed to return to the Commons. It is "a decision for the NEC", said Starmer, when everyone knows that he currently has a majority on Labour's National Executive Committee, so he decides. My view is that he will block Burnham come what may, but his form of words allowed MPs who support Burnham to fool themselves that there is a chance that he will come back if they stay their hand against Starmer now.

Starmer has done what he can to give them and their colleagues reasons to grant him a stay of execution. West, for her part, has given mixed signals – she has climbed down on her own challenge, but said she will seek the numbers to declare a new

leadership election “by September”. But there will be another attempt to dislodge him soon, and it will still come down to that unknown 81st MP to decide the prime minister’s fate.



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# *Grifter, not a grafter: Farage is nothing like 'Essex man'*



Flake it till you make it: the Reform leader in Walton-on-the-Naze last week (AFP/Getty)

VICTORIA RICHARDS

On the day that the local election results started pouring in, showing that the county of my birth – Essex – had turned turquoise, my WhatsApp groups exploded.

One schoolfriend told me her mum and her neighbours – who live in rural Essex, where the Conservative Party this week lost

control of the council for the first time in 25 years – decided to vote Reform together "as a protest". Alternative candidates (such as the Green Party) out in the countryside close to Epping, Chelmsford and Harlow, where England flags cling to lamp posts like limp confetti, were "invisible", they said. And so, wanting change, they went for the beer-swilling loudmouth who's had a prime ministerial "glow up": Nigel Farage.

Farage has had his eye on Essex since he began the electoral campaign he hopes will usher him in as prime minister – and for good reason. People like my friend's mum and her mates were discontented sitting ducks; fed up with Labour's inactivity and with the country in perceived decline. They were desperate for new blood – and who better than the "everyman" who pops into the local Wetherspoons to hear people's moans about the lack of jobs, the soaring crime rates and the "multiple occupancy houses" filled with people who don't look like them?

Nigel Farage – the guy who eats ice cream on the seafront in Walton-on-the-Naze, the guy who chain-smokes while lamenting the smoking ban and the nanny state, the guy who eats chips and dodges seagulls while he "banters" with construction workers like a "bloke's bloke" – *he* looks like them.

He sounds like them, too, when he wants to. Yet of course, Farage *isn't* like them – he isn't actually anything like the typical "Essex man" shoring up support for his party, but (as the UK's most senior union chief Paul Nowak warned a year ago) a "political fraud and hypocrite" who is "cosplaying" as a working-class champion in order to win votes. Farage, the *real* Farage, is a public school-educated, ex-metals trader who fawns at the feet of Donald Trump and shares an £885,000 second home in Frinton-on-Sea in Essex, which is owned by his partner, Laure Ferrari.

Yet somehow, it's working.

Why? Well, he's appealing to – and taking advantage of – the county's core values. Essex, you see, is the heartland of the working-class-man-made-good; home to a generation of people whose parents and grandparents were – like mine – on the

breadline both before and after the Second World War in places like Stepney, Whitechapel, Bow, Bethnal Green and Mile End. Many of our ancestors worked on the docks and in factories, at metal and paint refineries and printworks. Some were grifters, but most were grafters and traders, selling goods at Brick Lane, or fish pedlars and butchers – my uncle and aunt still are, today.

**Farage appeals to the aspirational Essex man who mistakenly believes migrants are the reason he doesn't drive a Porsche – because that's what he tells them**



They were horribly poor, too. My mum recounts a sort of *Call the Midwife,* 1950s-style childhood that saw the entire family sitting around the dinner table, where there was only enough food for one person to eat: the breadwinner (my grandfather), while his wife and kids had to subsist on licking the dripping from the small joint of meat. It was only later that some of them (not all, by any stretch) "made good" and moved out from the East End to Essex.

Today, thanks to Reform pushing fear as a voting strategy and talk of mass deportations, the "Essex man" is deeply afraid – and inherently protectionist. He's scared of losing everything, of having his hard-won possessions snatched away; he's genuinely frightened of going back to the meagre beginnings of his forefathers. It underpins everything. In Essex, you learn to cling to what you've got, because just a fraction of a generation ago, you had nothing.

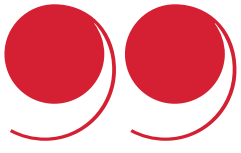
This isn't Farage's background – *his* dad was Guy Justus Oscar Farage, a City of London stockbroker. Farage was born in Kent and had a typical middle-class upbringing, attending fee-paying Dulwich College, playing cricket and rugby, going to work in the City at 18. Yet it is there, perhaps, that his path merges with the classic "Essex man", because in working-class Essex, you

don't go to university, but straight to work. I was the first in my entire family to go on to higher education – and it wasn't a very popular decision.

In that way, then, Farage as a hardworking "man of the people" – a sort of gruff, Alan Sugar-esque straight-talker with cash in his pocket (£5m of it a previously undeclared gift donation, apparently) and an axe to grind – works. In a county where appearances are everything – one drive through Chigwell will reveal a sea of faux-Grecian pillars and stone doorstep lions, plus enormous, 115-inch flatscreen TVs glinting through the windows like fairy lights – the guy with the showy Churchillian cigar is king. Farage appeals to the aspirational Essex man who mistakenly believes migrants are the reason he doesn't drive a Porsche – because that's what he tells them.

I've been travelling in and out of Essex my whole life, noticing my home county's visual, visceral changes. When I was young, it was full of nail shops and beauty salons, *Towie* stars and fake tans. Today, there are flags and barriers; the latter erected outside the Bell Hotel in Epping, where violent protests broke out last summer in response to news that it was being used to house asylum seekers (one of whom was arrested and later jailed for sexual offences, including against a 14-year-old girl).

I used to be ashamed of telling people I was from Essex. I'd say "northeast London" to offset any white stiletto stigma and jokes about me driving a white Ford Fiesta. Now, I know I need to shout it louder than ever before.



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# I was targeted by Worboys: just listen to his survivors

## As ITV drama 'Believe Me' recounts women's fight to put their rapist behind bars and hold the Met Police to account, **Anna Hart** recalls her own experience with the predator



Hart was given a ride home by 'black cab rapist' John Worboys, narrowly avoiding becoming one of his victims (Supplied)

In 2004, I got into a black taxi driven by a rapist. I was 23, and two months earlier I'd moved from Belfast to London for my first "proper job" as a junior writer at a men's magazine. That night was one of *FHM*'s big nights of the year, and the whole

editorial team was dressed up smartly, with some work to do – like interviewing celebrity guests – but mainly to drink free cocktails and mingle.

Around midnight, the office manager, Dani, grabbed me and said, "You know you can expense a black taxi home tonight, don't you? Don't mess around with night buses; this is a work event and we'll get you home safe." I remember the relief of being spared the 75-minute night bus from the West End to Fulham.

Later on, I called it a night and found a cash machine to take out £50, something I'd never done before because I was far too skint for black cabs. I was most definitely drunk, and swaying on my high heels in the black velvet dress I'd bought from TK Maxx. Near Leicester Square, I flagged down my first-ever black taxi. When I slid into the back seat, I cheerfully asked the middle-aged driver how his night was going, and his eyes darted at me in the rearview mirror. At the first set of traffic lights, he cleared his throat, reached down into the footwell of the passenger side, and pulled out a bottle of cheap cava. "I've had a big win on the lottery today, and since I can't drink because I'm working, I'm offering all of my fares a glass of champagne to celebrate," he said.

I said no. But I didn't say no because I was suspicious. I said no because I was hammered. I was suddenly aware that I had to be at my desk back in the West End by 9.30am, and I was in sobering-up mode. If he'd offered me water, I would have drunk it.



Worboys preyed on victims, offering them spiked drinks as he drove them in his taxi (Metropolitan Police)

This was 2004, and drink-spiking and drug-assisted rape weren't something I thought about much. Besides, everyone knows black cabs are supposed to be safe; expensive, but safe. Everyone knows black cab drivers are knowledgeable and vetted, a much-bragged-about London institution. Everyone knows that getting an official black taxi home after a night out is the safest way to get home. Being offered a glass of "champagne" by a driver seemed unusual, but not alarming.

He repeated this offer a few times, and I felt sorry for this middle-aged cabbie who was driving drunk people home rather than celebrating a lottery win, but the thought of sweet and fizzy alcohol made me feel sick, and nausea overruled any sympathy or obligation.

We chatted throughout the journey, mostly me asking him about the big buildings we passed; I was trying to learn about the city. We pulled up at my address (I was staying with my cousin for my first few months, to save money). I leaned forward to ask how much I owed him. He turned around in his seat, gave me a truly disgusting look, and said, "I'll forget about the fare if you invite me in for a coffee." Up until this point, he had done such a good job of seeming like a harmless and hapless London cabbie that I truly wondered if he was tired, and needed a coffee to keep on

working. Puzzled, I shook my head and handed over the cash. And I got out of that taxi.

It was only after I turned the keys in the door and stepped inside that it dawned on me he was suggesting sex. I felt sick, angry, and confused. I hate to admit this, but I remember wondering if I'd given him the wrong idea – an insane indication of how girls in the early 2000s were conditioned to blame ourselves for "unwanted advances", aka predatory behaviour. Did he think I was a sex worker? My cousin's address is in a posh part of the city. Did he seriously think I was this skint? In the morning, I knew I'd been in a car with a vile and deluded misogynist. But I didn't understand the full significance of this encounter until much later.

The next time I saw John Worboys's face was in 2009, his mugshot across the front page of the *Metro* newspaper I was reading on the underground. The words blurred as I read, "Black Cab Rapist John Worboys guilty of sexually assaulting 12 women". I got off the Tube one stop early and hid from other commuters in a shop doorway, to try and calm myself down before going to my job at a women's fashion magazine.



Hart had an encounter with Worboys when she was 23 years old (Supplied)

When I read up on the case, the details were sickeningly familiar. He used exactly the same lines on many of his victims, saying he'd won big at the casino, or in the lottery, and offering them "champagne", or a free trip home in exchange for sex. I know it sounds strange that, as a journalist, I hadn't picked up on these details sooner, but it was only when I saw his face published after his conviction that I knew this was the man who had driven me home five years earlier.

My first feeling was one of intense shame and distress for not reporting it or "doing something" to prevent him from attacking other women. (In fact, between 2002 and 2008, 14 women aged between 18 and 34 years went to the police to report suspected

drug-assisted sexual assault or threatening behaviour in a taxi, all with distinct similarities. The police failed to link them.) The victim-survivors were all just like me: students trying to get back to their halls of residence, office workers, even another journalist. I didn't feel "lucky". I felt devastated for the women exactly like me, women who had made a slightly different choice in the back of his taxi, and been drugged and sexually attacked.

I didn't report this to the Metropolitan Police right away; that took a few years. John Worboys had been jailed for life, and I had no new information to offer. I felt physically sick and shaky every time I thought about him. Unless my statement could genuinely help other women get justice, I couldn't face the ordeal of going into a police station and reporting something that had happened so long ago, something much more minor than an actual attack, when I was drunk, that brought up such awful emotions. I am sad to say that this is not the only sexually traumatic experience I've had at the hands of a stranger, and I was trying to protect myself.

So I am in awe of the women who reported their attacks to the police… only to receive exactly the police treatment I was so fearful about. Women who are now the subject of a groundbreaking four-part ITV series, *Believe Me*, written by Jeff Pope and directed by Julia Ford. The series is based on interviews with three survivors, including Carrie Symonds (now Boris Johnson's wife), who at the age of 19 was drugged by Worboys but not assaulted.



Worboys's horrific attacks on his victims are explored in the new series 'Believe Me' (ITV)

*Believe Me* relates how the Metropolitan Police's failings allowed Worboys to become one of the most prolific sex attackers in British legal history. When I speak to director Julia Ford about the series, it's the first time – other than to friends and my police report – that I've spoken about my own experience with John Worboys. Daniel Mays plays Worboys in the series, in a brilliant performance that demonstrates just how dangerously manipulative and unrelenting he was. I mention to Ford that at the time, I almost felt sorry for him. "That's what everyone has said," she says. "And speaking to you is a reminder just how widespread his attacks were, how it could have happened to any of us." None of Worboys's victims was stupid or reckless. We were young women paying to get home the safest way we knew how to: in a black cab.

Jeff Pope, the writer of *Believe Me*, says it made him angry how the women were treated by police, such as being asked if they were "the kind of woman who would wear red nail varnish".

"I spent a lot of time being angry on these women's behalf as each new insult, each new piece of degrading treatment, came to light," says Pope.

The series documents how two survivors joined forces with solicitor Harriet Wistrich and barrister Phillippa Kaufmann KC to sue the Metropolitan Police under the Human Rights Act for

its failure to conduct proper investigations into their allegations of sexual assault. And then, in 2018, Carrie Symonds waived her right to anonymity to successfully campaign against the Parole Board's decision to release Worboys after just eight years in prison.

As solicitor Harriet Wistrich says: "Sadly, because drug-assisted rape is even more commonplace now, and because the policing of rape is still riddled with poor investigations and treatment of victims, this storyline will resonate for anyone unlucky enough to have been the victim of a sexual offence and tried reporting it."

The timing of *Believe Me* is pertinent: John Worboys has a parole hearing this summer. Despite the murder of Sarah Everard by a Met officer, despite the MeToo movement, and despite the Epstein revelations, women are still not being believed. Police currently estimate that Worboys could have attacked as many as 100 women. I know he targeted many, many more of us.

*'Believe Me' is on ITV1 and ITVX*

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# Bargains in the air despite a world mired in uncertainty



Greece is the word: one-way flights to Mykonos are available from £55 (Getty/iStock)

**Q** You have been writing about cheap deals. I'm amazed fares are slumping with Iran ongoing. What's the explanation?

**Katrina H**

**A** Fares are looking more alluring than they have for several summers. I am focusing on a number of routes in the months ahead, and some of the prices are strikingly low. For example, between Luton airport and the cosmopolitan Greek island of Mykonos, the most common fare during the peak summer

months of July and August is just £55 one-way. I would normally expect the fare to be three times higher. Before then, I am looking forward to a trip to southwest France, for which I have paid a return fare of less than £40 from Stansted to Toulouse. There are many other examples, including London-Los Angeles in June on quality airlines – British Airways and Virgin Atlantic – for only £515 return.

As you indicate, for fares to fall at a time when aviation fuel is getting scarce and expensive feels counterintuitive. But in the short term – between now and the end of the airlines' summer season in October – carriers are locked into schedules that are likely to be maintained. Some flights may be merged: an airline with a half-full Manchester to Alicante departure at both 10am and 2pm may cancel one and move the affected passengers to the other. But most will go ahead as normal. Carriers will cut fares to whatever levels they need to fill seats. Ryanair has a term for this behaviour: "yield passive, load-factor active". While airlines are disappointed not to be commanding premium fares, they at least have the consolation that they are largely "hedged" for the summer – locked into a pre-agreed low rate for aviation fuel.

Make the most of the deals this summer, because I predict that by autumn, large-scale groundings of aircraft will begin, as it will prove cheaper than flying them. By next summer, if aviation fuel stays expensive, costs and fares will rise substantially.

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

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Section 2

# ON THIS DAY



The 11-month Soviet blockade of Berlin ended on this day in 1949 (US Air Force/AFP/Getty)

**1812:** Limerick writer Edward Lear, author of *The Book Of Nonsense*, was born in London.

**1820:** "Lady of the Lamp" Florence Nightingale, hospital reformer who tended the wounded during the Crimean war, was born in Italy.

**1916:** James Connolly and Sean McDermott were executed following their involvement in the Easter Rising in Dublin.

**1926**: The TUC called off the General Strike after nine days, although coal mine workers stayed on strike.

**1932**: The kidnapped baby son of aviator Charles Lindbergh was found dead in Hopewell, New Jersey.

**1935**: Self-help group Alcoholics Anonymous was founded by William Wilson in Ohio.

**1937**: The coronation of King George VI took place in Westminster Abbey and was broadcast worldwide by the BBC.

**1949**: The Soviet blockade of Berlin ended after 11 months. It had cost the Allies £200m to fly in food and essential supplies.

**1967**: John Masefield, poet laureate from 1930, died.

**1984**: South African prisoner Nelson Mandela saw his wife Winnie Mandela for the first time in 22 years.

**2002**: Jimmy Carter arrived in Cuba for a five-day visit with Fidel Castro, becoming the first president of the United States, in or out of office, to visit the island since Castro's 1959 revolution.

**2008**: An earthquake (measuring around 8.0 magnitude) occurred in Sichuan, China, killing more than 69,000 people.

**On this day last year**: Sir Keir Starmer said without controls on immigration, "we risk becoming an island of strangers, not a nation that walks forward together".

## Birthdays

**Lord Patten of Barnes** (Chris Patten), politician and former governor of Hong Kong, 82; **Steve Winwood**, singer, 78; **Gabriel Byrne**, actor, 76; **Bruce Boxleitner**, actor, 76; **Billy Duffy**, singer (The Cult), 65; **Emilio Estevez**, actor, 64; **Stephen Baldwin**, actor, 60; **Samantha Mathis**, actor, 56; **Jason Biggs**, actor, 48; **Rishi Sunak**, former prime minister, 46; **Rami Malek**, actor, 45; **Domhnall Gleeson**, actor, 43.

*PA*

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# Today's special: top quality and tackling homelessness

**Hannah Twiggs** calls into 130 Primrose, where 'MasterChef' judge Monica Galetti is helping lead a restaurant that offers paid work, training and a route out of life on London's streets



Galetti: 'It has to run as a great restaurant – it just happens to be for a great cause' (Photos 130 Primrose)

On one side of the street, an advertising agency: well-fed, well-paid people heading out for lunch. On the other, a queue stretching down the pavement – a couple of hundred people waiting for a meal at a soup kitchen. For Michael Brown, the

contrast became impossible to ignore. “We’d be off to go and get a seven-quid sandwich from Pret,” he recalls. “And we passed the soup kitchen daily… one day I just said, ‘What are we doing?!’”

That moment – that small, uncomfortable realisation – set in motion what would eventually become 130 Primrose, a glamorous new restaurant in north London built on a simple but ambitious idea: that employment, not charity alone, can be a route out of homelessness.

The premise is straightforward. Recruit people with lived experience of homelessness, train them, pay them, give them qualifications and help them move into long-term jobs in hospitality. A restaurant that functions both as a workplace and a bridge – somewhere people can rebuild not just skills, but confidence, routine and independence.

But as with most simple ideas, the reality has been more complex – and more revealing.

Brown, who previously ran an advertising agency, became involved with homelessness charities more than a decade ago, when he started volunteering at the very soup kitchen he used to walk past. What began as a practical offer of help – lending staff to fill volunteer gaps – quickly became something more sustained. He went on to become a trustee, working closely with the team.

“It’s a real perspective flip,” he says. “You get to know people on the streets and see their backstory… it’s not just the image that gets conjured up when someone mentions the word homeless. It can happen to anyone.”




130 Primrose sits in north London – a stylish neighbourhood restaurant and stepping stone into work

Over time, that understanding evolved into a broader ambition. Alex Brown (no relation), the director of Soup Kitchen London, began to shape an initiative that would later inform the model behind 130 Primrose. If the issues these people were facing weren't simply a lack of support, but a lack of access – to jobs, to structure, to opportunity – then perhaps hospitality, an industry perpetually short of staff, could offer the solution.

"At the time when we launched this," Brown says, "there were half a million jobs in UK pubs and restaurants that went unfilled… and at the other end you've got hundreds of thousands of people who would kill for that opportunity." The result was Home Kitchen, the restaurant that preceded 130 Primrose – a first attempt at putting that theory into practice.

The initial model was ambitious: 16 people recruited from the homeless community, many of them entering their first job. Training, qualifications, wages and tips – all wrapped into a functioning restaurant environment. "It wasn't a walk in the park by any means," Brown says candidly. "When we got busy, it tended to fall down."

The idea itself held, but running a restaurant is demanding at the best of times; layering in training, support, and varying levels of experience added complexity. Recruitment is handled externally through charity partners such as Beam and Crisis, with each trainee referred via local authorities and supported by

a case worker, while training and qualifications are delivered through external providers. “In theory, we thought we could get all 16 a job,” he continues. “As it transpired, we got five of them a job. It’s progress, but we knew we could do better.”

That first year has shaped what 130 Primrose is now: not a complete reinvention, but a refinement. A version of the same idea, built with a clearer sense of what’s needed to make it sustainable. Part of that rethink has come in the form of Monica Galetti, who has joined as executive chef and trustee. Known for her work at some of the UK’s most exacting kitchens, she brings a clarity of purpose that cuts through any lingering romanticism about what this kind of project entails.



The focus is on creating a space that feels like a welcoming local eaterie

When I meet her, she emerges from the basement kitchen still in her chef whites, having been working with head chef Eric Zhang. Much of her focus now is on ensuring he feels confident running the kitchen independently, building a structure that can hold without her being there day to day.

“It has to run as a great restaurant,” she says simply. “It just happens to be doing it for a great cause.”

That principle shapes everything, from the menu to the pace of service. There’s no attempt to overcomplicate things; if anything, the opposite.

“It’s very seasonal at the moment, very Mediterranean-based – aubergines, artichokes, tomatoes, bruschettas, anchovies,” she

explains. “Simple, but delicious. It’s a neighbourhood restaurant… you want to be able to drop in, have a couple of plates, on the go.” She hopes to eventually incorporate elements of her Samoan heritage, but for now, the simplicity is intentional. With trainees at the start of their careers, the focus is on building confidence and consistency first.

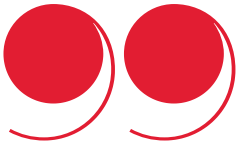
“Why build something that they can’t adhere to or manage?” she says. “Let’s do something that they can deliver.”

That approach extends beyond the menu. Training here isn’t just about cooking – it’s about adapting to the rhythm and expectations of a working kitchen, something that can be as much a mental shift as a practical one. Galetti says. “They have a six- to eight-week training period first… and also, can you imagine that training and having them prepared? It’s a lot mentally – arriving on time, having to be answerable to someone.”



**It’s a feeder for talent. They come here, they have a period of employment… and then we help them move on to other jobs**

*Michael Brown, co-founder and trustee*



At its core, the restaurant is balancing two priorities: delivering a quality dining experience for customers and creating an environment where people can learn and grow. It’s a balance that requires patience, investment and a willingness to build gradually. For Ade, a father of three and one of the first cohort to

come through Home Kitchen, that opportunity has been transformative.

“I was homeless, I got referred… and I went for the interview. Then I got the job”, he says, adding how he had to wait a year for his role to begin.

Before starting, he spent time in training, learning the basics of kitchen work. When he eventually joined, the impact was immediate. “When I came to Home Kitchen, finally I had a new life,” he says. “I met with different people who had been through the same stress and process… we didn’t just work as a team, we were like a family.”

His role in the kitchen evolved naturally – from kitchen porter (KP) to taking on additional responsibilities, from stock rotation to maintenance, finding where his strengths lay.

“One of our coaches figured out what we were good at,” he explains. “I like to tidy up a lot… so I was doing KP, a bit of DIY, helping wherever I could.”

The changes weren’t dramatic or instant, but they were steady – the kind that come from routine, structure and being part of something.

“The stress has not completely gone away,” he says. “You have to deal with it… but everything became very easy for me.” Now, he has stability – something that once felt out of reach. “I have a roof over my head now.”




Drink it in: the downstairs bar at the Primrose Hill restaurant

When Home Kitchen closed for its relaunch, Ade moved into a full-time role at Soup Kitchen London, part of the same wider network as 130 Primrose, continuing the cycle that first brought him into the programme. The work there brings him back into close contact with people in situations he knows all too well. “I know what it is to be homeless,” he says. “I know what it is to not have a good sleep.”

At first, the transition was challenging – supporting people in vulnerable situations requires resilience, particularly when you’ve experienced similar struggles yourself. “It was a bit strange when I started,” he says. “You have to deal with people who are vulnerable… people coming to swear at you, not because they want to be rude but because mentally they are not stable.”

Brown notes that around 80 per cent of people experiencing homelessness have a mental health issue, many of them undiagnosed – something that led the team to fundraise for and establish a mental health drop-in centre.

But over time, that experience for Ade has become something else entirely – a way of giving back.

“I got help from people I don’t even know,” he says. “So you have to care for people as well… I should be able to manage people the way I was managed.” Now, he’s part of the support system for others. “They say to me, ‘you’re a lifesaver,’” he says. “When I walk in in the morning, I see smiles on their faces… that gives me gratification.”

That kind of progression is central to the model at 130 Primrose. The aim is not to create a permanent workforce, but to act as a stepping stone – a place where people gain the skills and confidence to move on.

“It’s a feeder for talent,” Brown says. “They come here, they have a period of employment… and then we help them move on to other jobs.”

**I want to see how much I can be able to give back. To Michael, to Alex... all of them that really came up for me when I was really down**

*Ade, kitchen porter*

In that sense, success looks slightly different from a typical restaurant. Staff are not expected to stay indefinitely; in fact, their departure is part of the goal.

For Galetti, that idea is fundamental.

“If they move on to bigger, better things, you’ve done something,” she says. “You’ve done a little bit for someone else… and it makes room for someone else to take their place.”

It’s a model built on movement – on the idea that opportunity should be passed on, again and again.

Back in the kitchen, preparations are ongoing. The menu is being refined, the team trained, the final details brought together ahead of reopening. For Galetti, the focus remains firmly on the fundamentals: good food, a welcoming space, and a team that feels supported enough to perform.

“You want people to come in and just feel welcome,” she says. “Great value, great food, good company, good service.”

The mission may be significant, but the experience, for diners at least, should feel effortless. Behind the scenes, though, the work is anything but simple, but it clearly has the potential to change lives – not in abstract terms, but in practical, everyday ways.

For Ade, that change is already tangible. “I want to see how much I can be able to give back,” he says. “To Michael, to Alex… all of them that really came up for me when I was really down.”

At 130 Primrose, the idea is that there will always be someone next in line – someone else ready for that same chance.

*130 Primrose is now open. For more information, visit 130primrose.org*

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# ‘It is a tough thing to be creative and have children’

## Elizabeth Strout is back with a brand new protagonist in ‘The Things We Never Say’. She tells **Jessie Thompson** why her novels are so full of loneliness (but she’s not lonely herself)



The ‘Olive Kitteridge’ author has sold 2 million books (Leonard Cendamo)

Elizabeth Strout found the hero of her latest novel, *The Things We Never Say*, in an unlikely place. Well, actually, her friend did. “We’ve known each other forever, and he sent me a page of old obituaries that he found from, like, the Sixties and Seventies. It sounds weird, but whatever,” she tells me. “So I was looking at

them and there was this man's face that was so ordinary and kind and pleasant, and just as ordinary as a face could be."

The man's face stayed with her, until one day she realised this was Artie Dam, an unassuming history teacher in late middle age whose life was full of secrets. After crochety Olive Kitteridge, who won Strout the Pulitzer Prize in 2009, and quiet, courageous Lucy Barton, who Laura Linney played at London's Bridge Theatre in 2018, Artie is Strout's first major new protagonist for many years, in her first novel set outside of her native Maine. "He was just so quotidian-looking, you know?" says Strout, 70.

"Quotidian" is a word often used to describe the charm of Strout's books, which have sold over 2 million copies around the world. They revel in seemingly unremarkable lives, communities where people come and go, harbouring secret grudges and passions, suffocating in private shame or plagued by a sense of loneliness and disconnection. Literary heavyweights from Hilary Mantel to Elena Ferrante to Zadie Smith have praised her work, but what moves her the most are the shy, shaky readers who queue up to meet her in book signing lines and whisper about what her novels have meant to them. A nervous Italian woman once told her, through an interpreter, "You have seen into my soul."

The *New Yorker* described Strout's fiction as "both cosy and eerie, as comforting and unsettling as a fairy tale". That's true of the story of Artie Dam; he's a respected teacher, a loyal husband, caring father and good friend, but he's also dogged by thoughts of suicide. A moral man troubled by the political direction of his country, he's lost the ability to make small talk at dinner parties, inviting bewildered looks as he tries to initiate discussions about free will. "I wonder why people never say anything real," he wonders aloud to his wife after one depressing social event.

At the heart of the novel is a revelation that shifts the ground underneath Artie's feet, suddenly turning those closest to him into strangers. One of the only people he can really talk to is an old friend called Ken Moynihan – who turns out, to Artie's surprise, to be a Republican. Does Strout have Republican

friends? “Yes. I have a very, very good friend – who sent me that obituary,” she says. She and her friend get around their political differences by ignoring them, just like Artie and Ken. “We simply never talked about it,” she tells me, adding that she has seen “families where there are very deep fractures” because of the febrile state of American politics.



Strout with actor Laura Linney and playwright Rona Munro at the Broadway opening night of ‘My Name Is Lucy Barton’ (Getty)

*The Things We Never Say* was written in the lead-up to Trump’s second presidential victory, and the result of the election is a dividing line in the novel, after which the world around Artie seems to slowly start to degrade. When I asked if Strout’s famous empathy extends to the president, she’s blunt. “No.” In America, she says, “there are many rumblings and divides, and I have no idea how it will turn out”.

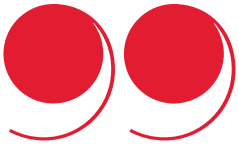
It’s a political novel, and, like many of Strout’s books, a desperately sad one. She says she didn’t realise how sad until she read it back. Loneliness hums through her stories like a low, blinking lightbulb. Does she often feel lonely herself? “I was thinking just the other day – I don’t actually feel lonely. I mean sometimes, once in a while, I think, ‘Oh, I feel so lonely.’ But that’s very rare. But I’m aware that it’s a theme in my work and so I think I must be plugging into the isolation that we all have just by being inside our own selves and our own bodies, and

bumping up against each other, trying to have these moments of grace."

Her novels are full of that strange incongruousness. There's something hypnotic about her spare prose, her homely, wise storytelling, which lures you into a false sense of security until it pierces you with a moment of unflinching emotional insight. Conversation with her is like this, too. Appearing on my screen in tortoise shell glasses, wearing a pink scarf, her blonde hair pinned back, she's matter-of-fact. She doesn't elaborate if she doesn't want to, but almost glimmers with a sense of fascination about other people. "All my life, that's all I've ever wanted to know: what it feels like to be another person, just even for five minutes. So I guess I have to make them up in order to know."



**All my life, that's all I've ever wanted to know: what it feels like to be another person**



Strout grew up in Maine, where her father was a professor and her mother an English teacher. It wasn't until the age of 42 that Strout published her first novel, *Amy and Isabelle,* about a single mother living in a small town with her daughter, who has been groomed by a teacher. By the time it was published, she had a teenage daughter of her own. Influenced by William Trevor, Alice Munro, Virginia Woolf (she used to re-read *Mrs Dalloway* once a year) and Russian writers from Tolstoy to Chekhov, Strout worked at a number of jobs, from waitressing to temping as a secretary to training to be a lawyer, and kept writing all the while.

Her imagination was able to flourish, she thinks, because she "grew up with a background of such stillness". Her childhood home was in "the middle of nowhere", and her parents didn't believe in having a TV. "My daughter used to joke, 'Mum lived through the Sixties, but she missed it,'" she laughs. "I look back and think that was actually helpful for me as a writer, because my mind just kept doing whatever it needed to do. I would read and be outside by myself all the time. But I don't see young people having that sense of quietness within them. And I don't know what that will lead to."

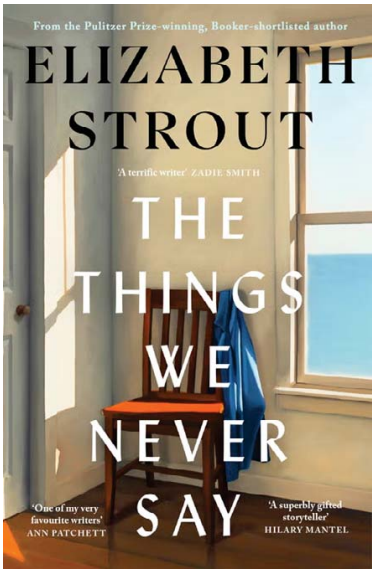
Part of Artie's disillusionment in *The Things We Never Say* is the creeping arrival of AI in the classroom, as students start to use it in their work. Strout herself isn't very "online". ("I mean, I'm on email…") Back when she used to ride the subway in New York, she'd see people reading everywhere – now she notices most people walk around on their phones. "They must not be reading like they used to," she wonders.

In her twenties, before studying law, Strout lived in Oxford for a year, working in The King's Arms pub. It was in England that she says she noticed class differences "in a way that I'd been unaware of in America". Class has been a rich seam in her stories, "because it's just part of the fabric of life". She quotes something that her character Lucy Barton says: "I think it's the lowest part of who we are, this need to find someone else to put down." Strout suggests, "That's just what happens with class, whether it's British or American. And it's just so sad. And it's there all the time."

When she was forging her early writing career, Strout was juggling jobs with life as a new mother. For over 10 years, she taught at a community college, with some classes starting at 7am, so she could be at home with her daughter when she finished school, and might get two hours to write every other day. "It's a tough thing to be creative and have children. I think especially for women, I'm sorry to say that, but I think the women issue is still very real, you know?"

She means the practicalities. "I don't know, I mean I'm old now so I don't know what's going on with younger people necessarily,

but I think that still it's probably easier for men to say, 'I am a writer and I am going to go inside this room and close the door for four hours and just do that.'" Did Strout ever do that? "No, I never did that. I never took myself away from her if she was home," she says. "I'd been trying to write for all those years, and I think there's some connection between the fact my daughter was almost about to leave the house by the time *Amy and Isabelle* came out. Then I was just publishing a lot. I don't think that's a coincidence."



Strout's 11th novel tells the story of history teacher Artie Dam (Penguin)

Since then, that career has included spots on both the Booker Prize and Women's Prize shortlists, and a handful of major screen adaptations. *Olive Kitteridge* was adapted into an acclaimed but underwatched HBO miniseries in 2014 (although it won several Emmys, including for its starry cast, including Frances McDormand and Bill Murray). Strout says there is a plan in the works to adapt *The Things We Never Say*; she mentions her first choice for the role of Artie with some regret. "I just keep thinking of poor Philip Seymour Hoffman [the actor who died in 2014]," she says. She had several meetings with Robert Redford before his death, after the actor bought the rights for her 2013 novel *The Burgess Boys*. "I liked him, but it didn't get done."

Last year, Strout brought Olive Kitteridge, Lucy Barton and Bob Burgess from *The Burgess Boys* together for a kind of *Avengers Assemble* of the Strout-iverse in her Women's Prize shortlisted *Tell Me Everything*. She thinks that will be the last time she writes about Olive, her most beloved protagonist. "I feel that I'm done with her, but I have said that so many times and been wrong, so I honestly don't dare say it." Artie Dam's story, she always knew, would be told in just one novel.

How many books does she have left in her? "Probably one," she says decisively. "I was waiting for a while and I thought, 'Oh,

wow, I'm actually done,' but there's a bit of bubbling going on, so we'll see." No more Elizabeth Strout novels; it's a shattering thought. "I feel that I've probably pretty much said what I need to say, or given my readers what I can. I don't want to be one of those writers that continues with stuff that's not as good." She shrugs. "I might just be exhausted. I might just have said it all, you know?"

*'The Things We Never Say' is published by Penguin Viking*

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# All hail Queen Anne!

## ‘Amandaland’ won Best Comedy at the Baftas, but Philippa Dunne’s hilarious character would make a brilliant spin-off of the spin-off. Anyone for ‘Anneland’, asks **Charlotte Cripps**



BFFs: Dunne as eager-to-please Anne (left) and Lucy Punch as Amanda (BBC/Merman)

*Amandaland* star Philippa Dunne, who plays the endearing, kind-hearted and relatable mum, Anne, Amanda’s long-suffering, loyal friend and minion, was making jokes last night at the Baftas about the show being called “Am-An-daland”.

It’s not really surprising. The Irish actor, who, along with Lucy Punch as Amanda, was nominated for the Best Female Comedy Performance award for her work in the *Motherland* spin-off, took

to the stage with her co-star to present another award, when Punch, in typical Amanda fashion, wondered why Dunne would be up for an award.

“I play Amanda and the show is called *Amandaland* and uh, well, there’s no Anne in *Amandaland*,” said Punch. “Well, there is,” replied Dunne. “Am-An-daland.” Then she continued: “Actually, there are two. Am-An-dal-An-d. And there’s only one Amanda, so actually, when you think about it …”

While the show won Best Comedy, this lighthearted banter might be more poignant than we think. For many viewers, Dunne is the secret star of *Amandaland*. Dunne’s character has amassed a cult following as the underestimated sidekick, with some fans demanding an *Anneland* – a spin-off of the spin-off.

The hit comedy returned to the BBC this month for a new six-part series – and it’s only made it more apparent that Dunne’s character is worthy of her own show. She emerges with a newfound confidence as she deals with an increasingly problematic Amanda and juggles being a mother to a large family, including, most taxing, a teenage son, Darius (Jack Veal), while still keeping her warmth.




The ‘Amandaland’ team with their Best Comedy Baftas (PA)

Anne first stole our hearts in season one, when she asked who wrote the 1994 hit by Aaliyah, “Age Ain’t Nothing but a

Number", her mum friend Fi (Rochenda Sandall) answers, "R Kelly", and a clueless Anne replies, "Your Kelly wrote that song? Fair play to her."

With some of the funniest lines in the show, Dunne's character is someone we all recognise at the school gates. She's the "silent crusader", as Dunne has referred to her character, who brings a down-to-earth relatability to Amanda's SoHa-pretentious parenting scene. The ultimate people pleaser, she's the one who is always volunteering for activities at her son Darius's school and is forever loyal to her best mum friend, whose vulnerability Anne can spot behind her superior front.

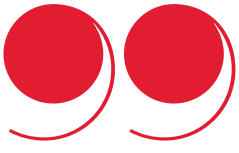
Dunne spoke about similarities between her and her character, saying that "there's definitely part of me that is Anne" in an interview with *The Independent* last year. "Anne is basically me when I was 13, starting school: awkwardness personified. Really wanted to fit in, really wanted people to like me, really shy, really awkward, just trying my best. I don't try that hard any more. I've grown up. But there's definitely part of me that is Anne."

She added: "I think that's why people might relate to Anne a bit; they spot a bit of an underdog in her, and they're rooting for her."



**I think that's why people might relate to Anne a bit; they spot a bit of an underdog in her, and they're rooting for her**

*Philippa Dunne*



She's the face of proper parenting with a no-nonsense approach that is the opposite of Amanda's self-centredness. In episode two, she's got Darius on a tight lead after what she calls "Anusgate" when the school alerts her that he's posted a photo of his "bumhole" on Snapchat, which turns out to be his clenched fist.

"It could have easily have gone viral," says Anne in a panic, who takes things into her own hands and posts a pot plant with the caption "Please repost to show my eejit son how fast things spread online."

She offers instant identification to any parent struggling to bring up teens. It's impossible not to think that her fictional Instagram handle "motherofteenys" could also do well in real life if some fan kept it going off-air with hilarious Anne-style posts.

A quick video of how she cares for a peace lily – which Amanda initially laughs off as embarrassing – gets over a million views. "How has that got a million views?" asks Amanda. "It's just some little fat hands on a plant." But, still, it doesn't take long for Amanda to turn up at Anne's house with her portable light to jump on Anne's strong follower base.



Dunne's character Anne always has Amanda's back – despite her 'best friend' often forgetting she's there (BBC/Merman)

Viewers love Anne for so much more than being the yin to Amanda's yang. She's a force in her own right. She sticks to her guns with often heartbreaking results – such as when her naked

breasts are reflected on the shiny pot plant vase in her most recent post and her appearance on *Alan Titchmarsh* is cancelled.

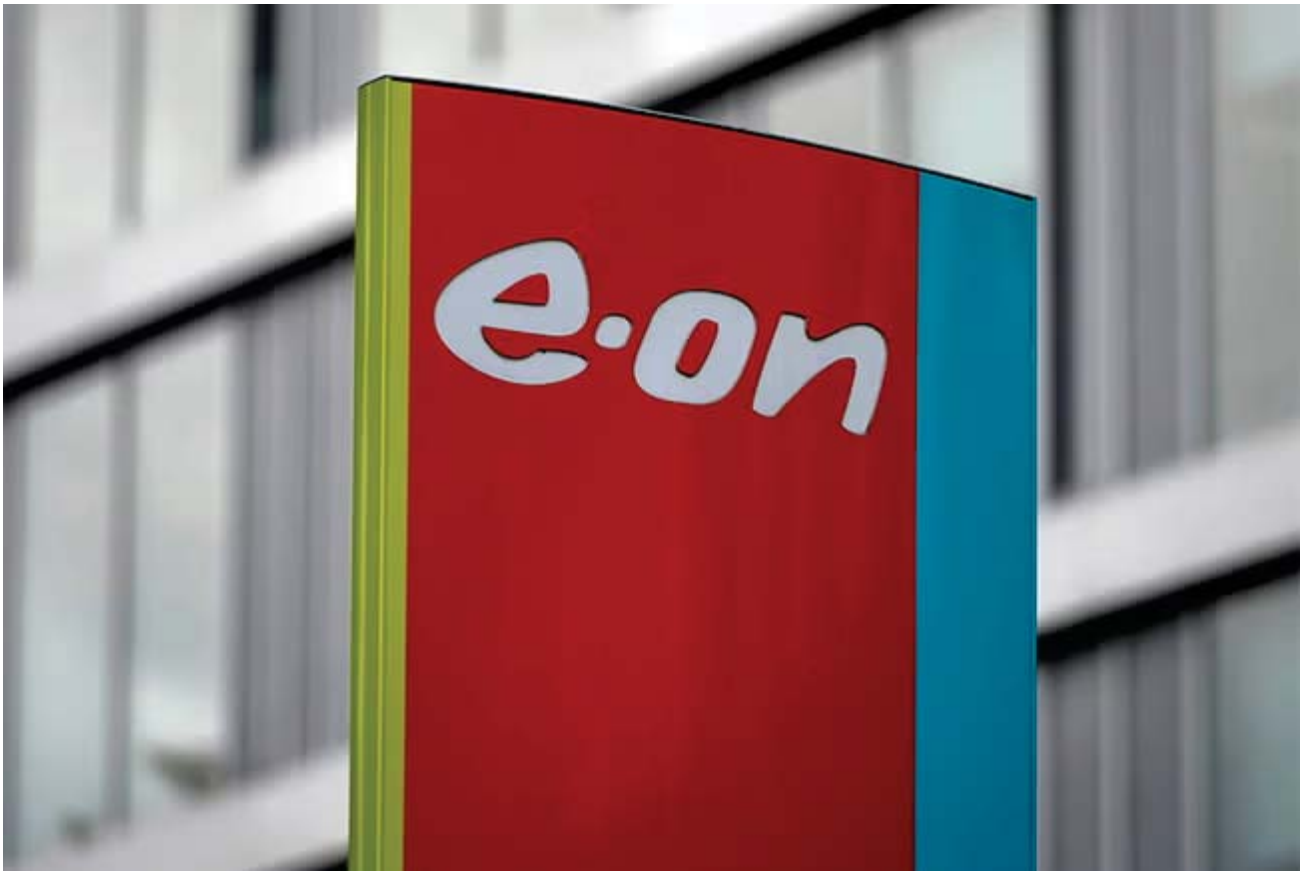
Anne may serve as a pivotal, comedic counterpoint to the main character – but she now holds her own. As Dunne said: "[*Amandaland*] gets key moments of child-rearing quite well – it's not a glamourised version, it's a nice, sloppy, real-life bells and whistles sensory overload.

"It's very imperfect, very messy, very stressful, and I think the show really allows you to laugh at the mess. They're not perfect mothers. They're trying their best and life is not straightforward and kids are not straightforward. But you're allowed to laugh at it together. And we can all watch and relate and that makes it easier, doesn't it?"

Yes, it does. And *Anneland* might be even better.

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# Business news in brief




The German energy company has reportedly paid around £600m for its rival (AFP/Getty)

## E.On to buy Ovo to create UK energy supply giant

German energy firm E.On has agreed to buy rival Ovo in a deal which would create Britain's largest supplier. The combined business will serve about 9.6 million customers, surpassing current top supplier Octopus. The firms did not disclose the value of the deal, although previous reports indicated that it could be as much as £600m. The takeover is subject to regulatory hurdles, including potential scrutiny from the UK's competition watchdog, and is expected to complete in the second half of 2026. Both firms said there would be no change

for customers while regulators review the deal and that tariffs would be “honoured in full”. Stephen Fitzpatrick, founder of Ovo, said: “Energy retail is now more regulated, more capital intensive and increasingly dependent on long-term investment and scale. In that context, bringing Ovo together with E.On is the right next step for customers, for colleagues, and for the long-term commitment that decarbonisation requires.” Ovo has also agreed to sell its home services division, which provides boiler servicing and insurance, to Hometree.

### Heathrow blames dip in passenger numbers on Middle East war

Heathrow airport reported its passenger numbers fell by 5.3 per cent last month because of the war in the Middle East. The west London airport said 6.7 million passengers passed through its four terminals in April. That is compared with 7.1 million during the same month last year. The reduction reflects “the ongoing impact of the Middle East conflict on some markets and short-term adjustments to travel plans”, the airport said. Chief executive Thomas Woldbye said: “We know passengers want certainty when planning their hard-earned summer holidays… while we have seen some short-term disruption linked to the Middle East conflict, demand for travel remains strong with current fuel supplies stable.” The airport insisted “underlying demand remains resilient” as it noted its number of transfer passengers in April was 10 per cent higher than the same month last year. It attributed this to an increase in passengers flying into Heathrow and then boarding flights to Asia and Oceania.

### M&S snaps up Asos warehouse amid huge digital expansion

Marks & Spencer has agreed to purchase a warehouse from online retailer Asos in Staffordshire, a move expected to create 600 jobs and bolster its plans to double online sales. The 437,000 sq ft site in Lichfield is set to become one of M&S’s largest distribution centres upon its opening in 2027. M&S stated the facility will add capacity, allowing quicker order processing to achieve its long-term target of doubling its online

fashion, home, and beauty business. Asos mothballed the warehouse in 2023 as part of an overhaul to reduce stock, cut costs, and improve profitability. While a few hundred workers were employed there, Asos clarified they were not directly employed by the group.

## Compass cashes in on firms opting to outsource catering

Catering giant Compass has cheered a boost in sales and profits as more businesses opt to outsource food services in the face of complex regulation and the risk of allergies. The UK-headquartered business – the world's biggest catering group with around 590,000 staff – generated revenues of $25bn (£18.4bn) for the six months to the end of March. This was 9 per cent higher than the same period a year before, at constant currencies, and was partly driven by a 2.7 per cent increase in prices. Compass said sales were boosted by it winning new business contracts worth $4.1bn over the period, which was 14 per cent higher than the previous year, with around half coming from clients who were outsourcing catering for the first time. Dominic Blakemore, the group's chief executive, said the company was operating in a "highly attractive" market and it was targeting new sub-sectors for growth and tapping into the "AI ecosystem". The company's operating profit totalled $1.84bn for the half-year, up 12 per cent on the previous year.

*PA*

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# Foolish tackle could cost Spurs in relegation battle

| | |
|---|---|
| **Tottenham Hotspur**<br>Tel (50) | 1 |
| **Leeds United**<br>Calvert-Lewin (74 pen) | 1 |



Mathys Tel concedes a penalty for an attempted clearance as the home team drop crucial points (Getty)

**MIGUEL DELANEY**
AT THE TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR STADIUM

Yet another game dictated by VAR now, rather fittingly, looks set to bring the 2025-26 relegation battle down to the tightest of margins. That, however, is only going to cause emotions to waver as wildly – and as cruelly – as we saw in this 1-1 draw between Tottenham and Leeds.

A big week for officials somehow had another crescendo. Some might say a nadir, given it makes for an even bigger season for officials. Two successive VAR calls saw Roberto De Zerbi and most of the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium quickly go from exhilaration to exasperation.

James Maddison, finally returning as a sub after Dominic Calvert-Lewin had equalised from a VAR-granted penalty, was denied what would have almost been a *deus ex machina* of an intervention. He ghosted into the box to be felled by Lukas Nmecha… only for Jared Gillett to quickly rule that it wasn't a foul.

And, from all that, what must Nuno Espirito Santo be thinking?

Just 28 hours before this, the West Ham United manager was philosophically lamenting the "duality" of Premier League directives on grappling. He now might be left musing – a little more hopefully – on the duality of VAR. It takes away. It gives. A bit like Mathys Tel with his performance here.

Referee Gillet was almost as big a character as Chris Kavanagh had been at the London Stadium on Sunday.

There should be significant mention of Antonin Kinsky, however, who offered a brilliant save that could yet be as important as David Raya's – and was probably even more difficult.




**VAR again had a pivotal role to play at the climax of the Premier League season (Reuters)**

For now, two successive decisions have ultimately granted West Ham a huge reprieve after Sunday's dejection against Arsenal. The 1-1 draw from Calvert-Lewin's penalty and that Maddison decision now leaves West Ham a mere two points behind Spurs rather than four.

That can turn in one match, rather than requiring two. And next up is Newcastle United away for West Ham, and Chelsea away for Spurs. This is going to be nerve-shredding.

This one was bad enough for Spurs, if also so frustrating in its own way.

They saw glimpses of what this season could have been, what Tel might yet be, without all the immense weight of this campaign.

Leeds only added to that by not letting any satisfaction at survival dim their intensity.

That was the other twist to that West Ham result. The 1-0 Arsenal win ensured Leeds secured survival, but they looked in the mood to build on it right now rather than rest on it.

They were up for it. Their fans were even up for goading Spurs by singing "Leeds are staying up".

This was just another game under De Zerbi, however, which showed how Spurs should never have been in this situation in

the first place.

When you see how aggressive they look now, how tactically coherent they are, a proper identity already, it's impossible not to wonder why they wasted such time with the Igor Tudor experiment. Why not go bigger for De Zerbi earlier, if this was what it meant?



Antonin Kinsky made several stunning saves for Spurs (PA)

Long before Tel's supreme opener, they were laying siege to the Leeds goal. Joao Palhinha burst through for a shot that was somehow blazed over. Rodrigo Bentancur had a header he should have scored. Pedro Porro was creating chaos from one side, Tel from the other.

It looked like something had to give – only for Spurs to give up space at the other end. This obviously remains a flawed and stretched squad, which is why they were always going to be stretched on the actual pitch, too.

There was already one warning when Calvert-Lewin got through shortly before half-time, only to be felled by Destiny Udogie. It looked a certain penalty – until it was shown that Calvert-Lewin had trailed offside by a toe. That's how much there was in it.

If only the gaps in the Spurs team were as tight.

A further issue for De Zerbi was that he was fighting against time in another way. With so few attacking options on the bench beyond Maddison, the Italian essentially had to bank on his

forwards producing before they significantly flagged. Just another exasperation on the night was that they did that.

On 50 minutes, Tel fulfilled some of the potential he has shown in an occasionally frustrating spell at the club. He scored a goal that would have been worthy of keeping them up. Opportunistically placed to receive the ball in plenty of space from a deflected corner, the winger still had a lot to do. And how he did it.

Tel guided a supreme shot into the top corner of Karl Darlow's net. It was gloriously soaring, and suggested that Spurs might just keep going with it. They of course tired, however, and came down with a bang.

Or, rather, Tel did.




Dominic Calvert-Lewin scores Leeds' equaliser from the penalty spot (PA Wire)

On 73 minutes, after a spell where Leeds had started to get on the front foot again, Ethan Ampadu looked like he might get in behind. All that was blocking him was Tel. And if the winger's first major moment made you wonder how he did it, the question here was again what was he thinking.

Tel inexplicably tried to bicycle kick the ball away with Ampadu so close, ensuring he also made contact with the midfielder's head.

Referee Jarred Gillett really had no choice, even though a needlessly long wait eventually saw him have to make a very definite choice by going through the protocol of looking at the monitor.

There was no such hesitation about Calvert-Lewin. He finished the penalty brilliantly, to reignite this survival battle.

There was one more VAR call to come, and one huge Kinsky save to come. As regards what will tell more by the season's end, the margins are now so thin.

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# The dilemma at the heart of United's Rashford decision

## Marcus Rashford has excelled on loan at Barcelona, and his Man United career had appeared to be over – but the ground has shifted this season at Old Trafford, writes **Richard Jolly**



Rashford celebrates his goal that helped Barcelona beat Real Madrid on Sunday and seal the LaLiga title (Getty)

A club with a long and proud tradition of homegrown players clinches their league title by beating their major rivals with a spectacular goal by Marcus Rashford. For Manchester United, it may have long seemed the dream. Although the reality is that

the newly anointed champions are Barcelona, Rashford's curling free kick setting them on their way to a Clasico win over Real Madrid.

History for Rashford, becoming the first Englishman to win LaLiga with Barca, and joining what remains a select group to triumph with anyone, alongside Laurie Cunningham, David Beckham, Kieran Trippier and Jude Bellingham. If the circumstances were different, it would surely prompt Barcelona to take up the €30m option to turn his loan into a transfer.

Although, were the circumstances different, Rashford may not have got the move to Camp Nou he seemed to covet when his relationship with United broke down; the Catalan club were also interested in the costlier Luis Diaz and Nico Williams last summer. Rashford seemed like plan C, available without an immediate transfer fee in part because of United's inability to sell him.

He has nevertheless been a success as a high-calibre squad player, his outings split almost equally between starts and substitute appearances. A tally of 14 goals in 47 games is decent, if unexceptional. More impressive, though, is that he also has 14 assists, giving him 28 goal contributions, an average of one every 87 minutes on the pitch. There is an argument that Rashford has been flattered by the figures and, unlike United, Barcelona have been in Europe, but he has as many goal involvements this season as Bruno Fernandes.




Joshau Zirkzee was largely ineffective against Sunderland (PA)

Which, in its own way, may offer an insight into what United are missing. Though arguably not missing too much, given that they have qualified for the Champions League and have taken the most points in the Premier League since Michael Carrick's return to Old Trafford.

Yet that has been built on a small core. With European commitments next season, United require more players. It is also evident they need attacking reinforcements; it was clear even before Joshua Zirkzee laboured ineffectually in Saturday's stalemate at Sunderland to show why he is not good enough.

Their squad, reshaped by Ruben Amorim in his quest to play a 3-4-3 that didn't suit Rashford – or virtually anyone else, for that matter – does not contain a natural left-winger. Patrick Dorgu started Carrick's reign there, acquitting himself well before getting injured, but it remains to be seen if that was a short-term gambit or a long-term strategy. Matheus Cunha has occupied the role more often, but is essentially a No 10. Fernandes and Bryan Mbeumo have taken turns there. Rashford would have the potential to be a regular.

Meanwhile, Benjamin Sesko is the only specialist No 9 in the squad, and though Rashford probably would not describe himself as such, he is better qualified to fill the role than anyone

else on United's books, with the exception of Rasmus Hojlund, whose loan to Napoli is set to become a permanent deal.




Rashford has impressed as a starter and a substitute for Barca (Reuters)

As United's recruitment drive last summer shows, when they spent around £200m on Cunha, Sesko and Mbeumo, they can end up paying at least £60m for forwards; the club would concede that they paid towards the upper end of their valuations for players who, in some cases, are less gifted than Rashford.

And selling him for €30m would represent a figure at the lower end of his valuation, even accounting for his sizeable wages and the fact he turns 29 in October. The numbers have significance when the summer spending has to be focused on the midfield, in what might be a £200m rebuild, with at least two signings required – preferably three. They may want other additions, too: perhaps a left-back, unless Dorgu is pencilled in for defensive duties.

Meanwhile, there is no guarantee that Barcelona, their funds ever tight, their preference for trying to get quality players on the cheap, their greatest need arguably for an out-and-out centre forward to replace Robert Lewandowski, would even try to buy Rashford anyway. They may prefer the brinkmanship of aiming to borrow him again.



Things fell apart for the player under Ruben Amorim (Getty)

The sense has been that Rashford feels his United career is over, even beyond the feeling that his first choice is to be in Catalonia. Certainly, there may be some at Old Trafford and in the fanbase who do not want him to return. As things unravelled in the 18 months following his outstanding campaign in 2022-23, there were more incidents beyond those that got into the public domain.

But it was nevertheless true that he was exiled with remarkable speed by Amorim, whose United then scored very few goals. It was a damaging decision, but Amorim is gone. Carrick is a former teammate and coach; indeed, no player scored more goals or got more assists for Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's United than Rashford.

Last month, United's temporary manager said no decision had been made on Rashford. Nor on Carrick himself, perhaps, though he is likely to get the job on a lengthier basis. And if he provided a non-answer last week, Rashford may yet be a logical answer for United.

Some bridges may have to be rebuilt, but he is a scorer of 138 United goals, a player good enough to excel for Barcelona. They are not obliged to give him to the new champions of Spain on

the cheap. Especially not when he could fill in at least two gaps in United's plans for next season.

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# Sports news in brief




Mohamed Belloumi celebrates after scoring the opener for Hull against Millwall last night (PA)

## Hull dash Millwall's Premier League dream

Substitutes Mohamed Belloumi and Joe Gelhardt ended Millwall's Premier League dream as Hull City reached the Championship play-off final last night. The duo climbed off the bench to secure a 2-0 win in southeast London to book a Wembley date with either Middlesbrough or Southampton a week on Saturday.

The Tigers only sneaked into the play-offs on the final day in sixth place and looked like big underdogs to get through after

Friday's goalless home leg. But now they will bid to emulate the Dean Windass-inspired side of 2008 and Mohamed Diame's class of 2016, by sealing a return to the top flight for the first time in nine years.

## Ramsay-Peaty to compete at Commonwealth Games

Adam Ramsay-Peaty has signed up for this August's Commonwealth Games in a major boost to organisers. The three-time Olympic champion will be named in Team England's 42-strong swimming squad today as he targets gold at a fourth consecutive Games. The inclusion is a coup for Glasgow organisers, who stepped in to stage a scaled-down version of the event after Victoria in Australia pulled out as hosts three years ago.

Ramsay-Peaty, 31, admitted he came close to quitting the sport after failing to defend his 100 metre breaststroke Olympic title in Paris. He described the period as a "self-destructive spiral" as he battled injury problems and mental health struggles.

He married model Holly Ramsay – daughter of celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay – in December and spent part of their honeymoon in Australia training with former coach Mel Marshall.

The addition of the shorter 50 metre breaststroke to the Los Angeles Olympic programme has reignited his passion. But he was reminded of the challenge ahead when he finished fourth in his signature event at a meet in Edinburgh in March.

## Brazil in recovery after 'life-saving operation'

Broadcaster Alan Brazil has revealed he recently underwent a "life-saving operation" and is now in recovery. The former Scotland and Ipswich striker, 66, has been off air for several weeks and issued the health update on social media yesterday morning.

“Some of you will have noticed that I’ve not been around,” he said. “I recently had a life-saving operation, and I’m deeply grateful to the brilliant medical team who have looked after me. It will be some time yet before I’m fully back to myself and for now I am focused on my recovery in private.”

Brazil has presented various shows on TalkSport since the station was launched in 2000. He made 13 appearances for Scotland and scored 76 goals for Ipswich in a six-year spell at Portman Road between 1977 and 1983.

### Mead to leave Arsenal after nine years

Beth Mead will leave Arsenal at the end of the season, following nine years at the club. The England forward, 31, has made 265 appearances for the Gunners, scoring 86 goals since arriving from Sunderland in 2017.

Mead won the Women’s Super League, three League Cups and the Women’s Champions League, providing the assist for Stina Blackstenius’s winning goal against Barcelona in last season’s final in Lisbon.

During her time at Arsenal, Mead also won two European Championships with England, including their triumph at Euro 2022 where she won the Golden Boot and was named player of the tournament.

Mead, who leaves at the end of her contract with the Gunners, has been strongly linked with a move to Manchester City, the club of her partner and former Arsenal teammate Vivianne Miedema.

### Morgan returns as Wales name six uncapped players

Captain Jac Morgan has been named in Wales’ squad for their summer fixtures, with six uncapped players also included in an extended 48-man group. The British and Irish Lions flanker missed the entire Six Nations after dislocating his shoulder in

the 2025 autumn opener against Argentina but made his comeback for the Ospreys in March.

Gloucester centre Max Llewellyn and Cardiff lock Teddy Williams also feature in the group selected by head coach Steve Tandy after sitting out the Championship because of injury.

Among the uncapped players is Exeter back row Kane James, who was born and raised in Wales but played for England Under-20s in 2024, winning the age group's world championships that same year.

Tomas Francis, the 34-year-old Provence tighthead, has been given the summer off with next year's World Cup in mind, while Bath prop Archie Griffin will undergo surgery and miss out.

Wales launch their summer with a non-cap international against the Barbarians at Allianz Stadium on 27 June, after which Tandy will reduce his squad for the Nations Championship games against Fiji, Argentina and South Africa.

### Wales' 48-man squad

Forwards: K Assiratti (Cardiff), R Barratt (Cardiff), A Beard (Montpellier), L Belcher (Cardiff), J Botham (Cardiff), R Carre (Saracens), B Carter (Dragons), O Cracknell (Leicester), R Elias (Scarlets), K James (Exeter), D Jenkins (Exeter), H Keddie (Dragons), D Lake (Ospreys), D Lewis (Dragons), E Lloyd (Cardiff), A Mann (Cardiff), J Morgan (Ospreys), T Plumtree (Scarlets), T Reffell (Leicester), N Smith (Leicester), G Thomas (Ospreys), F Thomas (Gloucester), A Wainwright (Dragons), S Wainwright (Cardiff), B Warren (Ospreys), T Williams (Cardiff), R Woodman (Dragons).

Backs: J Adams (Cardiff), E Bevan (Cardiff), B Bradley (Harlequins), S Costelow (Scarlets), D Edwards (Ospreys), J Evans (Harlequins), M Grady (Cardiff), K Hardy (Ospreys), G Hamer-Webb (Leicester), J Hawkins (Scarlets), L Hennessey (Bath), E James (Scarlets), M Llewellyn (Gloucester), E Mee (Scarlets), R Morgan-Williams (Ospreys), B Murray (Scarlets), L Rees-Zammit (Bristol), J Roberts (Scarlets), T Rogers (Scarlets), B Thomas (Cardiff), T Williams (Gloucester).

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