



Read Online

SECURING JUSTICE TO END SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Ella Lane
Head of Opinion

Sexual violence is something that nobody deserves to go through. This was the belief of those at the Annual General Meeting, who proposed the motion calling to end sexual misconduct on Cardiff University campuses. I interviewed Isabel Pelaez-Cooper, one of the speakers at the AGM in support of this motion, to gain some insight into why this cause is incredibly important.

When asked about the current issues on campus, Pelaez-Cooper, argued that "currently, there is a massive safety issue on campus. We have all seen the reports on Overheard, and the assault of the woman under the Senghenydd bridge. However, many are still suffering in silence or fear, so the truth is we really don't know how deep the problem runs. But it is safe to assume that campus is not as safe as it should be." Indeed, around University at night, I do not feel safe as a woman. Threatening individuals, who are frequently spotted in Cathays have been posted online, yet nothing has been done about this. We are left feeling at risk when walking home from work and nights out and encouraged to stay 'vigilant' when the issue is nothing to do with us, and everything to do with the individuals making us feel unsafe as well as the lack of support currently available.

When asked about what change needs to be enacted, Pelaez-Cooper said "I'd ideally like the Uni to implement every single one of our proposals in the AGM motion. These notably include every organisation relating to student life having clear preventative measures and investigative pathways when it comes to sexual misconduct, raising awareness for where to find support, promoting the university's reporting system, and pushing open dialogue about this issue. She went on to suggest that "it would be even more commendable if the Uni had further talks with us, so we could get possibly even more (proposals)." When questioned about what students can do to support the change that needs to happen on campus, Pelaez-Cooper stated that "students are always free to join time to act! There are only 4 of us who really work around the clock to do what we do. We would love it if people messaged us asking if they'd want to join our WhatsApp chats and meetings." 'Time To Act' is a student-led campaign tackling sexual misconduct within Cardiff University and beyond....

To read the full story, turn to page 17



The Food and Drink on Offer at Cardiff's Winter Wonderland

Heather Layton
Spotlight Editor

If you're like me and feeling Christmassy already, and craving some festive nibbles, I would definitely recommend a visit to Cardiff's Winter Wonderland this year, which has an unprecedented array of food options. It's the perfect place to drag your flatmates, go on a wintery date night, or show off to any friends and family visiting this festive season. Winter Wonderland's cosiest bar this year is undoubtedly Tafarn, which is new...

To read the full story, turn to page 4

Gair o Gefnogaeth gan UMCC i UMCA

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-od

Yn sgil bygythiadau i rôl Llywydd Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Aberystwyth (UMCA), mae Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Caerdydd (UMCC) wedi codi'u lla-is ac wedi datgelu eu bod yn sefyll yn gryf gydag UMCA ar yr achos. Rhyddhaodd Catrin Edith Parry, Islywydd y Gymraeg yn Undeb Myfyrwyr Caerdydd, ddatganiad ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol, ar y cyd gyda Llywydd Undeb Myfyrwyr...

Er mwyn darllen y stori gyfan, trowch i dudalen 8

Gladiator II: Great Acting, Terrible CGI Creatures, and a Laughable Rubber Head

Gemma Willmott
Review Editor

Gladiator II was easily one of the most anticipated films of the year. Starring Paul Mescal and Pedro Pascal, the reprisal of the *Gladiator* franchise seemed to promise all the glory and spectacle of the first film. It is unfortunate to say that I found this could not be further from the case. The most stand out failure of the film is the terrible CGI. At moments where Paul Mescal canters through Rome dramatically...

To read the full story, turn to page 22

Gair Rhydd 2024/25

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Write to the Editor
editor@gairrhydd.com

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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Nodyn gan y Prif Olygydd

Welcome to Issue 1204 of Gair Rhydd.

This will be our last issue of this semester and what a semester it's been. We have had so many incredible stories grace our pages this term. From our coverage of The Iris Prize to an interview with Lee Waters, we have had so many truly wonderful articles this year. This is our first online edition of Gair Rhydd for this year. We have been so lucky that we have had three print editions so far.

It feels strange that I am half-way through my third year already. Cardiff has been home for the past three years and, frankly, I don't want to leave. University has truly flown by and I can't believe I have less than six months left. Thinking about my life moving forward, I am unsure where I will end up. I've always said I would love to be a journalist and running Gair Rhydd has truly solidified this for me. At times, it is draining. Spending hours in the windowless media office, leaving the office in the dead of night on

Croeso i Rifyn 1204 o Gair Rhydd.

Dyma ein rhifyn olaf y semester hwn ac am semester a hanner! Rydym wedi cael cymaint o straeon anhygoel yn llenwi ein tudalennau'r tymor hwn. O'n sylw i'r Wobr Iris i gyfweiliad gyda Lee Walters, rydym wedi cael cymaint o erthyglau gwirioneddol wych eleni. Dyma ein rhifyn cyntaf ar-lein o Gair Rhydd eleni. Rydym wedi bod mor ffodus ein bod wedi cael tri rhifyn print eleni.

Mae'n teimlo'n rhyfedd fy mod i mor bell trwy fy nhrydedd flwyddyn yn barod. Mae Caerdydd wedi bod yn gartref i mi am y tair blynedd diwethaf, ac i ddweud y gwir, dydw i ddim eisiau gadael. Mae fy nghyfnod yn y brifysgol wedi hedfan a dydw i'n methu credu bod gen i lai na chwe mis ar ôl. Wrth feddwl am y dyfodol, rwy'n ansicr ble y byddaf yn y pen draw. Rwyf wastad wedi dweud y byddwn i wrth fy modd yn bod yn newyddiadurwr ac mae rhedeg Gair Rhydd wir wedi cadarnhau hwn i mi. Ar adegau, mae'n flinedig. Mae treulio oriau yn y swyddfa gyfryngau ddi-ffenstr, gadael y swyddfa yn hwyr yn y nos ar ôl terfyn amser print, ac Adobe InDesign ddim yn gweithio yn agweddau o fod yn Brif Olygydd sydd ddim yn ddeniadol. Fodd Bynag, ni fyddwn i'n dymuno newid dim. Y mae'n wirioneddol wedi bod cyfnod gorau fy mhrofiad Prifysgol.

Annabelle Lee

a print deadline and Adobe InDesign not working are some aspects of being editor-in-chief that are not as glamorous. However, I wouldn't trade it for the world. It has truly been the best time of my university experience.

We also have many exciting things coming up for Gair Rhydd, such as the SPA awards. As we have won Best Publication two years in a row, I hope we can win again for the third time. This year, hopefully, they are going to be hosted in person so we all get a night out out of the occasion. I also am optimistic we can make it to the national SPA awards this year.

In this online edition, we have so many interesting stories. The main highlight of this issue is the Cardiff University AGM coverage. Myself and a group of editors attended the evening where four motions were passed with little disruption, unlike last year.

We hope you enjoy this issue and have a lovely Christmas break!

Mae hefyd gennym ni lawer o bethau cyffrous ar y gweill ar gyfer Gair Rhydd, megis y gwobrau SPA. Gan ein bod wedi ennill Cyhoeddiad Gorau ddwy flynedd yn olynol, rwy'n gobeithio y gallwn ni ennill eto am y trydydd tro. Eleni, gobeithio byddant yn cael eu cynnal mewn person felly byddwn ni gyd yn cael noson allan ar gyfer yr achlysur. Rydw i hefyd yn optimistaidd y gallwn ni gyrraedd y gwobrau SPA cenedlaethol eleni.

Yn y rhifyn ar-lein hwn, mae gennym ni gymaint o straeon diddorol. Prif uchafbwynt y rhifyn yw'r sylw i CCB Prifysgol Caerdydd. Mynychais i a grŵp o olygyddion y noson ble pasiwyd pedwar cynnig heb fawr o aflonyddwch, yn wahanol i'r llynedd.

Rydym yn gobeithio y gwnewch chi fwynhau'r rhifyn hwn ac y cewch chi wyliau Nadolig hyfryd!



THE TEAM



Ari Plant



Henry Moxon



Neve Powell



Heather Layton



SPOTLIGHT



Winter Wonderland's Best Bang for Your Buck

Neve Powell
Spotlight Editor

It's that time of year again where Winter Wonderland has graced us with its festive presents! Whether you enjoy ice skating or even the ice bar, there's always someone who tries their luck at winning one of those massive octopuses (which I have acquired). So, the question is, which games are actually giving you the best chance at winning one of these oversized trophies? Thinking of skill, luck, and price, here's my take on our probability of leaving with something of the same value you've paid to play!

There's a tin can alley to start us off, costing £1 a ball, you need to knock down all 6 cans to win a prize! We're looking for all of those with good aim, so those of us in archery or shooting, this may be your game. Needing actual force and accuracy, this game

was a no-go for me, as my eyes can hardly see the cans a few metres in front of me. I did not end up with anything but sheer resentment for Specsavers. However, if you're willing to pay the pounds for more balls, there's a pretty good chance of some tins flying.

Calling all the netball girls and the basketballers of Cardiff, the shoot-a-hoop is your time to show what you've learnt in training! However, your luck must turn into skill as you need two baskets to secure a prize but then again at £1 per ball you need to put your money where your skill is as well as your mouth. I personally did not get the basket in the hoop once, but I am expecting every IMG team with a mascot by the end of the year, or your shooters clearly aren't your shooters. But this game is more skill than it is luck; therefore, we're thinking if you're splurging money at Winter Wonderland, it may as well be on something of value.

Ring toss—of course not. This game is nearly impossible and if anyone sends us proof they managed to do it, I will personally email you myself exclaiming my congratulations. The only part of this game that warrants making it onto this list is the amount of ring you get for your money. Yet again, the more you risk, the more you lose... Financially, anyways, because this game is £3 for ten rings, £4 or thirty rings and £6 for seventy rings and if you only need one ring for a prize you may as well just throw them all over Winter Wonderland in hope it lands on one of those oversized bottles. Therefore, seemingly the best value for money, but maybe not the best for your mental health this year.

Finally, there's the darts game. A suggested game of skill but a proven game of luck when the dart hits triple twenty on your first throw and not the one that was next to it. But needing to score under thirty

points for a small prize and under five for a large prize, this game is suggestively one of the easier ones, in the sense that you're just throwing darts at a dart board, how could you miss? Three darts for £4 doesn't make it the cheapest of the games, but the gamemakers of Cardiff are back with the small print in that you need to hit different numbers to accumulate your score. Leading me to question whether the massive crocodile is worth it any more, especially after spending small fortunes on Baileys hot chocolates!

Regardless of whether you end up winning or losing, Gair Rhydd is super excited at the return of our whimsical Winter Wonderland!

Pride Society's Second Coming

Cameron Wagg
Contributor

Despite being around for years, Cardiff University's Pride Society was disbanded last year after an unfortunate lack of applications for core committee positions. However, it was resurrected, and brought back for 2024–25 with over sixty members and ten committee members. With many active socials during the year, it is certainly not a society to be slept on.

In a climate of political uncertainty surrounding everyone's, let alone just queer people's future, the Pride Society has never

been more important. It provides a space for Cardiff University's queer students to be able to come together. CU Pride offers a place for queer students to flourish together, regardless of their backgrounds or courses.

Being co-president of this society has been an honour, and I'm delighted in being able to celebrate the whole of my community. This sentiment was especially important during a joint social we did with TANGGS, a society focused on building community between transgender and nonbinary people. With TANGGS, we went to a vigil together. The vigil held a wide array of transgender artists, who read poetry, sang, and gave speeches. It was both

a celebration of transgender and gender-diverse people, and also a way of honouring those who have sadly lost their lives.

This event is only one of the many successful socials held by CU Pride, which include both café socials and club nights. One of my favourites so far was a collaboration with Cardiff University's branch of the Make a Smile charity, a charity focused on helping all children enjoy the childhoods they deserve. For this social we held a pub quiz at the North Star, with there being a wide array of shorts for all three of the highest placing teams. With an amazing turnout, we raised £120 which was all donated to the charity.

With many more socials to come, CU Pride is holding a black-tie Winter "Yule" Ball at Revolution. It is definitely not a night to be missed, and we are all extremely excited about it. I personally, cannot wait, and have already brought my suit! This is only one of two balls we plan to hold this year, so make sure to keep an eye out.

Ultimately, I'm excited to see CU Pride grow, and cannot wait to see it flourish after I leave at the end of the year. I am both extremely humbled and grateful for my role in this society, and cannot wait for many more socials.

Ice Skating 101: How to Ace the Ice

Henry Moxon
Head of Spotlight

Ice skating is not for the faint of heart. With Winter Wonderland now set up in town, it seems important that someone explains how to ice skate for those that have never done it before. There's definitely a particular friend of mine that would have benefited from this guide this time last year.

Tip #1 – Slow and Steady Wins the Race!

Don't rush into skating expecting to be the next Torvill or Dean. It's not something that many people grasp instantly, so remember to take it slow! Hug the railings around the side of the rink, letting go so you can learn how

to balance yourself. If you try too hard to do complicated tricks, you'll end up hugging the cold ice floor beneath you.

Tip #2 – Simple Movements.

The key to skating is keeping it simple. The best way for beginners to learn is to do a sort-of-march in your skates, keeping your feet slightly pointing away from one another. If you think you look like a waddling penguin, you are probably doing it right.

Tip #3 – Dress to Impress.

While Anna Wintour is unlikely to be watching you ice skate, what you wear is extremely important to both your

success and your enjoyment. Wrap up warm and make sure to wear long sleeves and gloves to cushion any fall you may have! There's few things worse than falling on an ice rink with no gloves on. Your hands will get cold and wet, and unless you have a towel handy, you will be forced to dry them on your own clothes. Not ideal.

Tip #4 – Don't be Afraid to Fall.

Another key part of ice-skating is not being afraid to fall over. Everyone does it and I would

argue it's actually a key part of learning to ice-skate. Sometimes an aversion to falling can actually make it more painful when it inevitably happens. Hitting the ice isn't painful if you can put your hands out to break your fall.



Fast Fresher Food: Megan's Christmas Pesto Panini

Ingredients

Butter
Cranberry Sauce
Brie
Sourdough or Ciabatta Roll

Christmas is one of the most magical times of the year—the lights, the celebrations, and of course the food. A traditional Christmas dinner is something the majority of people look forward to all year, with Sunday Roast being a common weekly occurrence.

So, how can you bring the festive spirit into university life? While a Christmas dinner may be difficult to achieve, it's a fun thing to attempt with one of your housemates. When cooking for just

yourself how do you carry this festivity across? The solution is simple, take your favourite meal, swap a few things out and boom—festive dish.

My go-to meal at university is a pesto, tomato, and mozzarella panini/sandwich. It has very few ingredients and can never go wrong (unless you burn it, of course). All you need is for the festive version of this sandwich is—I usually go for sourdough or ciabatta rolls—butter, cranberry sauce (I recommend Tesco's), and some brie (any kind will do). You'll also need a knife, an air fryer (or oven), and foil.

To start, take your slices of bread and spread a teaspoon of butter on one slice of bread. Next, spread your cranberry sauce into thin slices (put as much as you like per sandwich), and cut your brie (use as

much as you like). Place them into the sandwich, and wrap with foil. This is key as it prevents the bread from burning while everything gets nice and toasty. Pop this into the air fryer at 180°C for ten minutes, and it's ready to eat.

You can even add bacon to this sandwich for a crunchy contrast to the creamy brie and tangy cranberry sauce. Just make sure the bacon is precooked before adding it in.

This warming sandwich is the perfect quick and easy Christmas dish, ideal for taking on the go. With just few ingredients, your Tesco shop will come to £5.89 (£2 Jason's sourdough ciabatta, £1.65 Flora Butter Spread, 55p Tesco's Own Cranberry Sauce, £1.69 Creamfields French brie) and can make you multiple servings, depending on how long the brie last.

The Ultimate Secret Santa Gift Guide

Ari Plant
Spotlight Editor

Secret Santa guides are often completely naff. They are now often written by robots who are given prompts and spit out whatever garbage they can come up with. If you told ChatGPT that your friend was an archaeologist who was into playing guitar, it would tell you to get a spade engraved with guitar chords. AI, in terms of gift-giving and Christmas joy, is fairly useless.

Secret Santa, as I've always thought of it, is primarily a good way of making snide jokes wrapped in lovely gift wrap. No one has to know you did it so, you can get away with a bit. If you've got someone who does STEM, you can get them a book on de-stressing. If you know a person who is always in the ASSS, you can get them a small stash of energy drinks. If you have a friend who doesn't go to Cardiff University, you can get them a Cardiff University sweatshirt.

There is nothing I can write that will make your gift choice for you. There is nothing in a newspaper that will be able to replace your real human con-

nection with another person. The best thing you can do is think about the person you've been assigned. How well do you know them? Do you share any interests? Can you recycle/regift something you've got in your room? What is something small that they would want? Sometimes, people are just happy with a bag of sour sweets and a nice card.

If you honestly genuinely do not know the person at all—like you have been through in the deep end at your job, in your society, or your seminar group—chat that's barely active, the best thing to do is be calm. No one is expecting a lot from Secret Santa. Maybe a trinket or something cool at but not ing more than that. For example, if you're trying to get a gift for a seminar friend, I think they'll be fine with just a nice-looking notebook—especially if they do any degree in the John Percival Building. If they are in a sports society, you can get them a nice souvenir or if they lift weights, protein bars.

The wonderful thing about Secret Santa is that it is secret so even if you think your gift is crap, no one had to know that you gave it to them.

The Food and Drink on Offer at Cardiff's Winter Wonderland

Heather Layton
Spotlight Editor

If you're like me and feeling Christmassy already, and craving some festive nibbles, I would definitely recommend a visit to Cardiff's Winter Wonderland this year, which has an unprecedented array of food options. It's the perfect place to drag your flatmates, go on a wintery date night, or show off to any friends and family visiting this festive season.

Winter Wonderland's cosiest bar this year is undoubtedly Tafarn, which is new to this year's selection. A large tent adorned with twinkly fairy lights gives the warmest and jolliest atmosphere to Winter Wonderland, with a full bar serving draught beers, ciders, spirits, and wines (mulled or not!). There are also non-alcoholic options, such as the creamiest hot chocolate, complete with marshmallows. I would be surprised if this hasn't already become a favourite of many students heading to the festivities, or fans flocking there from the stadium after the Autumn Nationals this year.

Once again this year, City Hall

Lawn is host to the largest variety of Christmas treats, with the large white canopy making an appearance once again and hosting many food vendors. Tuck in here to a hot chocolate with all the fixings, hot chips with rich curry sauce from Grill House, warm sugary donuts coated in Nutella or biscoff sauce from Doughstop, boozy apple crumble with custard, or even a delicious gyro, with mouthwatering tzatziki.

While enjoying your food under the canopy, you can sit at one of the many picnic tables and will be greeted with live music which is happening all season. In terms of drinks on the lawn, there are mulled wine stalls, or you can enjoy a refreshing beverage in Sur La Piste, the alpine ski-style bar, or the Ice Bar, where ticket-holders can enjoy a shot and drink of their choice amongst intricate ice sculptures.

Before getting your ice

skates on in the Castle grounds, you can tuck in to a Yorkshire pudding wrap complete with all the trimmings, and then wash that down with another hot chocolate, or a mulled wine if you fancy. As you walk through, you will also be greeted with the mouthwatering smell of bratwurst sausages, and toasted marshmallows, which can be bought and melted on one of the many open fires around the ice rink. Students can also use the 'skate and sip' offer at the ice rink this year, which includes a skating session followed by a selected drink from the bar.

Overall, this year's Winter Wonderland has a delicious range of food and drinks, which will be available until the 5th January, so there is plenty of time to head down and sample everything on offer.



It's The Most Wonderful Time Of The Year...

Ella Simmons
Contributor

Cardiff's iconic Winter Wonderland is back and is this one the best one yet? From the Cardiff Castle ice rink, the big wheel to the Christmas pub and markets, what can you expect this Christmas time? Well, this year is above and beyond anything I have seen before during my time in Cardiff. The city has been covered with frosted white lights and the shining decorations of red, gold and green.

Starting in the centre with the markets there are some wonder-

fully cosy and merry stalls. As you walk through the variety of independent stalls, stop by the fresh Welsh cake stall and treat yourself to a warm, traditional piece of Welsh culture as you take the adventure round the new attractions.

Moving closer to the main event you will pass the charming Christmas-themed pub on Working Street that is full of Christmas spirit. While the drinks are more on the expensive side as students I cannot recommend the Baileys hot chocolate enough! Two iconic Christmas staples wrapped into one festive drink to get you into the mood for the day old Saint Nick will come.

When you get to Cardiff castle you will be met with glistening golden reindeers standing tall outside of the castle ground and a brightly decorated tree lighting up the path directing you to the front doors. In the castle the Ice Rink is located and once again it requires no introduction, offering a fun and lively Christmas experience, perfect to go to with your housemates for a wholesome activity this holiday period! Good news for students too, you can get off-peak tickets for £12! A picture-perfect Instagram moment.

Finally, the main event! I went to Winter Wonderland on opening night and it blew me away.

A fan favourite at Winter Wonderland is the fun fair rides and games and it is for good reason. The colours light the field and the screams of laughter fill us all with the warm feelings of Christmas that we know all too well. This year, to go on the rides you will need to purchase tokens but for the individual stalls, games, and food and drink you can purchase it all individually and enjoy some festive treats as you explore Cardiff's own little North Pole.

Once again, the iconic Ice Bar is back! Inside the bar is a frozen themed wonderland, so wrap up and have a cheeky Christmas drink inside the city's most

cool bar. The Ice Bar is kept at a steady -10 degrees, so make sure to take out your winter gloves. To explore the Ice Bar, the off-peak price is £12.75 and the standard price is £16, which includes a thermal overcoat. Will you be braving the cold?

Winter Wonderland is bringing the magic and joy back to Cardiff once again. So wrap up, grab your friends and explore the festivities and fun!

THE TEAM



NEWS



Dilichi Dieobi



Tom Nicholson



Oliver Morten

Cardiff University Grad Found Dead in Türkiye After Retreat in Indonesia

Tom Nicholson
News Editor

On December 30, 2021, Josephine Tabor, a 30-year-old Cardiff University graduate, was found dead in a Turkish hotel room. Tabor, who had been travelling the world and exploring spiritualism, died by suicide, with her final diary entry reading: "I have tried everything except suicide. It is my final roll of the dice". An inquest into her death was held, with her family stating that they believe she was influenced by "cult-like" groups during her travels.

Evidence from her journals suggested that these groups administered her a so-called "truth serum" and encouraged teachings centred around mysticism, past lives, and self-fulfilment. Turkish authorities found no evidence of alcohol or drug use, and her GP in Somerset confirmed she had no diagnosed mental or physical health issues. Despite her family's concerns, there was no direct

evidence linking her death to these groups. Tabor had a degree in Psychology from Cardiff University and was a qualified yoga instructor who often shared her teachings on social media.

Her spiritual interests deepened after meeting an American man passionate about retreats, tarot readings, and New Age practices, who eventually became her boyfriend. She later attended a three-week retreat in Indonesia shortly before her death and is believed to have visited another in Türkiye. Described in court as an "independent and able woman", Tabor ran a thriving online marketing business, amassing a social media following of over 15,000 people. Despite her outward success, her journals revealed a darker side to her experiences, hinting at disillusionment and despair.

In a statement given to Taunton Coroner's Court, her family expressed their concerns about the unregulated nature of some spiritual retreats: "These retreats claimed to offer answers. They

have thousands of followers, but this does not make them qualified or altruistic." They described how such groups often isolate individuals from their loved ones: "When a vulnerable person is told a higher force can help them and that the universe is looking out for them, not friends or family, they have no one to turn to as they have been brainwashed into believing the answers lie elsewhere."

The assistant coroner acknowledged the family's concerns but noted there was insufficient evidence to link these retreats to Tabor's death. While her journals reflect her growing disillusionment and struggle with relationships, many questions stay unanswered about her movements and experiences leading up to her death. Tabor's tragic story underscores the need for greater awareness of the risks of unregulated spiritual practices, particularly for those seeking solace or answers in times of vulnerability. Her family hopes her story serves as a cautionary tale for others navigating similar paths.

Mermaid Quay Evacuated After Mystery Liquid is Thrown in Las Iguanas

Debolina Gayen
Contributor

Police launched a search for six men after a liquid was thrown at four people inside Las Iguanas restaurant in Cardiff's Mermaid Quay on the evening of 13 November. The incident, which South Wales Police described as a "targeted attack", is believed to have followed an earlier argument between the two groups. Emergency services, including South Wales Police and the fire service, were called to the scene at around 7pm on 13 November. The area was cordoned off, and members of the public were advised to avoid Mermaid Quay while investigations took place. Las Iguanas remained closed on Thursday morning as inquiries continued. A reporter from Wales Online who attended the scene described a significant emergency response. "People could walk through, but there was a cordon around the Las Iguanas restaurant with around a dozen fire service personnel present, along with police and Mermaid Quay security," they reported.

Detective Inspector Phil Marchant said: "Four men were sitting in the restaurant when two other men ran into the restaurant and threw a substance at them. Items of furniture were also picked up and thrown. Both the four male victims and the two male suspects then ran out of the restaurant. "We acknowledge the considerable public concern following this incident; however, no injuries have been reported and at this time the liquid is not believed to have been harmful".

It is understood that the two parties had previously had an altercation in another part of Mermaid Quay around 6:15pm that evening and therefore believe this to be a targeted attack. Enquiries are ongoing to identify and locate all six men. Police asked anyone in Las Iguanas or near the restaurant in Tacoma Square between 6:15pm and 8:30 PM to come forward with information. A spokesperson for Mermaid Quay confirmed the area is being investigated. "This incident has now ended and is under active investigation. Due to this, we are unable to comment further", they said. As the investigation continued, authorities reassured the public that the situation was being handled and urged witnesses to assist in identifying those responsible.

20-Year-Old Man Arrested for St Mellons Murder

Cerys Finch
Contributor

South Wales Police have issued a statement confirming the arrest and charge of a 20-year-old man from the Trowbridge area of Cardiff in connection with a serious incident. The individual, identified as Georgie Tanetta, originally from the Wiltshire area, has been charged with the murder of a 43-year-old man and possession of an offensive weapon. Emergency services were called to the scene of a reported stabbing on Tuesday November 12th, at approximately 4pm.

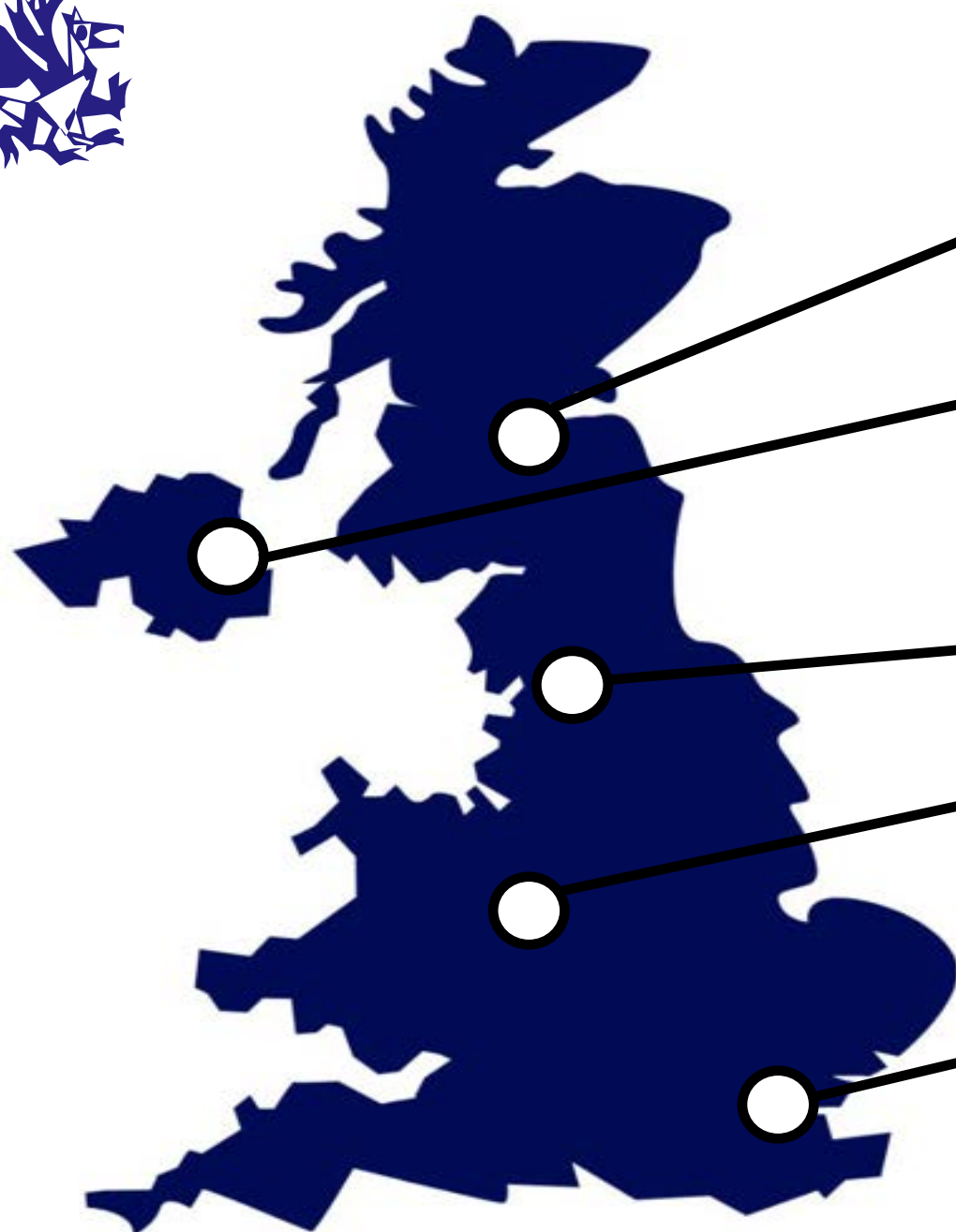
The incident involved a 43-year-old man, James Brogan, who was found on Coleford Road with severe injuries. Despite the efforts of paramedics, his injuries proved to be fatal. South Wales Police have confirmed James Brogan's family were promptly informed and

were being supported by specially trained officers. Following the incident, police cordons remained in place on Coleford Road for several days as an official murder investigation was launched. Detective Chief Inspector Lianne Rees of the South Wales Police Major Crime Investigation Team has issued a public appeal for assistance as the investigation into the murder of James Brogan continues.

DCI Rees urged anyone who was in the vicinity of Heol Trostre and Coleford Drive in the St Mellons area around the time of the incident to come forward with any information that could assist the inquiry. Urging residents with phone footage, dashcam recordings, or CCTV footage to come forward no matter how insignificant they may feel it is.



NEWS FROM AROUND THE UK



EDINBURGH

Bomb squad called to Edinburgh Airport after “grenade” found in hand luggage.

BELFAST

Queen’s University to implement 11pm curfew on all student house parties.

MANCHESTER

Man arrested for stalking after filming women in viral “Manchester Nightlife” videos.

BIRMINGHAM

Birmingham student sentenced after driving car wrong way down 70mph dual carriageway.

LONDON

Viral clip shows live worm in catered food of University College London accommodation.

The South West University Climbing Competition Kicks Off in Cardiff!

Michal Lewis
Contributor

On November 16th climbers from nine universities across the South West of the UK met up in Flashpoint, Cardiff, all to compete in the first round out of three in the South West University Climbing Competition (SWUCCs).

108 climbers competed in the competition, which was held by Cardiff University’s Mountaineering Club (CUMC). In the first stage, competitors had to try and send (complete a route) twenty-five different climbing problems, to achieve the best score in one of two categories: males and females. The six climbers

with the highest score from each qualified for the finals. Thirty-nine women competed in the female category: Leigh Shave (UWE, 170 points), Chloe Johnson (Portsmouth, 157 points), and Isabelle Purath (Exeter, 155 points) initially achieving the highest scores in the qualifications round. As for the men: Adam Frank (UWE, 205 points), Finely Stokes (Exeter, 204 points), Felix Vaudin (Exeter, 203), and Jamie Sherratt (Southampton, 203 points) got the highest mark from the qualification blocks round. At 7:30pm, lights were turned off in the gym, with spotlights shining only on the finals blocks, which were set especially for the occasion.

The top six from each category then battled it out for the top

three positions with prizes from Boulder flash, up and under and crag swag to be won. To gain points, members from each category had three different routes, which they had to try and climb in just four minutes. After a close, tense competition, it was Finely Stokes from Exeter and Chloe Johnson from Portsmouth who took the win.

Although no members of our club have made it to the final podium, we are super proud to have had Franka from Cardiff University qualify for the finals, of all of our CUMC members who together achieved enough points to place Cardiff second in the current league table, and of all of our members who participated and challenged themselves in this epic first round.





Hannah Williams



Charlie Thomas



Ffion Wyn Jones



Elen Williams



Hanna Morgans



Miloedd o Ffermwyr yn protestio yn Llundain dros newidiadau Treth Etifeddiaeth

Hanna Morgans
Golygydd Taf-od

Yn dilyn newidiadau Llafur i dreth etifeddiant ar ffermydd, mae ffermwyr yn pryderu am ddyfodol ei ffermydd.

Amcangyfrifodd y llywodraeth y bydd 27% o ffermydd yn cael eu heffeithio gan y newidiadau, fodd bynnag mae'r Undeb Ffermwyr Cenedlaethol – NFU, yn dweud y bydd 75% o ffermydd yn uwch na'r trothwy o Dreth Fferm Deuluol o £1 miliwn.

Teithiodd ddegau ar filoedd o ffermwyr Prydain i Lundain i brotestio yn erbyn hyn.

Beth yw'r dreth etifeddiant?

Mae Treth Etifeddiant (IHT) yn dreth o 40% ar werth ystâd person ar ôl iddyn nhw farw, gan gynnwys eiddo, meddiannau ac ar-

ian. Dim ond ar symiau sy'n uwch na'r trothwy di-dreth presennol o £325,000 y mae'n berthnasol.

Ers 1984 mae ffermwyr a pherchnogion tir amaethyddol wedi bod yn eithriedig o'r Dreth Etifeddiaeth, gyda rhyddhad trethi sy'n berthnasol i ystadau. Mae dau gategori eang gyda bob un yn cynnig rhyddhad llwyr o'r dreth.

O Ebrill 2026, bydd treth o 20% ar dir ac asedau amaethyddol gwerth dros £1 miliwn. Mae undebau amaethyddol yn rhybuddio y bydd y rhan fwyaf o ffermydd yn cael ei effeithio gan y trothwy hwn oherwydd prisiau tir uchel er nad yw ffermwyr yn gwneud elw mawr.

Dinistrio ffermydd teuluol a bygwth cynhyrchu bwyd

Mae ffermwyr yn mynnu y bydd y dreth yn dinistrio ffermydd teuluol ac yn bygwth cynhyrchu bwyd,

tra bod y llywodraeth yn honni fod hyn yn hanfodol i godi arian. Mae'r Trysorlys yn amcangyfrif y bydd y newidiadau hyn yn codi hyd at £520 miliwn y flwyddyn.

Yn ystod yr wythnos diwethaf mae 20,000 o ffermwyr wedi bod yn protestio yn Llundain i alw ar y llywodraeth i ddiddymu'r rheolau treth etifeddiaeth.

Yn ôl ymgyrchwyr, bydd ffermwyr sydd â llawer o asedau ond sydd ag incwm isel yn cael eu gorfodi i werthu'r tir i dalu'r dreth, gan beryglu diogelwch bwyd a pheri gofid i ddyfodol ffermydd teuluol.

Yn ôl ystadegau Defra Data, mae 30% o ffermydd wedi gwneud colled llynedd, tra bod 25% arall wedi gwneud llai na £25,000 y flwyddyn.

O dan y rheolau presennol, gall ffermwyr roi eu fferm i aelodau o'u teulu heb dalu treth, os gwneir hynny oleuaf 7 mlynedd cyn eu marwolaeth. Fodd bynnag mae

ymgyrchwyr yn honni bod llawer o ffermwyr hyn yn pryderu nad ydynt yn cael y cyfle hwn, gan nad oes amser ar gael iddynt neu oherwydd nad yw eu busnesau fferm yn gallu goroesi'r newid yn y rheolau, gan ei wneud yn anoddach i drosglwyddo'r busnesau hyn yn ddi-dreth.

Enw cyfarwydd a ddangosodd ei gefnogaeth i ffermwyr yn y brotest oedd Jeremy Clarkson. Dywedodd fod angen i'r llywodraeth fod yn "ddigon mawr" i gydnabod eu bod wedi "gwneud camgymeriad" trwy gyflwyno'r dreth yma.

Ymateb y Prif Weinidog

Dywedodd y Prif Weinidog, Kier Starmer wrth gynhadledd yn Llandudno, Conwy, y byddai'n amddiffyn y gyllideb "drwy'r dydd" am wneud "penderfyniadau anodd a oedd yn angenrheidiol i sefydlogi ein heconomi."

Cleddau ar S4C: Cyfrinachau'r gorffennol mewn mwy nag un ystyr

Fflur James
Cyfrannwr

Wel am wledd oedd Cleddau i'w wyllo dros yr wythnosau diwethaf. Cyfres ddiectif a rhamant ffuglenol, chwe phennod, sydd wedi llwyddo i'n cipio ni o'r eiliadau cyntaf, reit hyd at y diwedd penigamp (heb ddatgelu gormod!) sydd yma. Rhwng y gwaith ditectif a'r stori garwriaethol sy'n gwau trwy'r gyfres, mae'r ddwy thema honno wedi'u plethu'n grefftus wrth inni ddod i adnabod y cymeriadau, eu teuluoedd, ac achosion marwolaethau tair nyrs ifanc yng Nghoed Cleddau, yn Sir Benfro. Ai cyd-ddigwyddiad yw'r marwolaethau hynny felly, ai peidio? Nod y llw heddllu felly yw datrys y dirgelwch presennol yng Nghoed Cleddau, ond hynny dan gysgod marwolaethau'r gorffennol, sy'n peri'n broblem drwy'r gyfres. Wrth i'r prif gymeriadau, Ffion a Rick (dau ddiectif) balu i ddyfnderoedd y gorffennol, mae nifer fawr o gyfrinachau a chelwyddau'n cael eu datgelu drwyddi-draw, nid yn unig ynghylch y marwolaethau chwaith. Rhwng y sgriptio a'r actio, y dirgelwch a'r rhamant-mae gan Cleddau rhywbeth fydd yn apelio at bawb. Nid drama ddiectif gyffredin mohono, o na. Mae

yma glytwaith cain o straeon o orffennol y prif gymeriadau, D.S Rick Sheldon a D.I Ffion Lloyd yn dod i'r fei drwy gydol y gyfres, ac yn cael eu gwau yn gelfydd law yn llaw â straeon yr achosion sydd yn cadw'r ddau yn brysur yn eu gwaith fel ymchwilywyr trosedd. Mae holl hanes a chreithiau'r gorffennol yn dod yn ôl yn eu tro i holi cwestiynau i'r prif gymeriadau, a hynny mewn golygfeydd llawn tensiwn, emosiwn a drama.

Mae'r gerddoriaeth sy'n cydfynd â'r holl olygfeydd drwy gydol y gyfres yn ychwanegu'n helaeth at y naws sy'n cael ei greu hefyd. Mae'r gerddoriaeth ddramatig, fel curiad calon mewn golygfeydd dramatig yn cyflymu'r digwyddiadau heb yn wybod i ni fel cynulleidfa, ac yn ein cadw ar flaen ein seddi. Mae'r teitlau hefyd ar ddechrau pob pennod, ac am hynny; pob chwarter ym mhob pennod yn ychwanegu'n helaeth at osod y naws wrth ddychwelyd i wyllo'r gyfres, gyda'r darluniau o wreiddiau tu ôl i deitl y gyfres yn cyfeirio at sawl agwedd yn y gyfres- sef gorffennol Ffion a Rick yn ei gwreiddiau yn Noc Penfro yn ogystal â theitl y gyfres ei hun, Cleddau. Mae hwnnw wedyn yn tynnu ar orffennol y ddau, ynghyd â lleoliad y marwolaethau hanesyddol hefyd.

Mae cyfrinachedd yn thema ganolog i'r gyfres hon hefyd, rhwng cyfrinachau cudd perthynas Ffion a Rick a dwyster hynny, ynghyd â chymhlethdodau tair marwolaeth nyrs ifanc, sydd yn procio meddwl Ffion hyd heddiw- ai'r dyn iawn sydd yn y carchar? Aiff y gyfres felly ar daith gyda'r ddau ddiectif i archwilio hynny, a darganfod gwirioneddau newydd o orffennol niwlog ardal Doc Penfro.

Felly da chi, heb rannu mwy o wybodaeth, mynnwch brynhawn rhydd glawiog, a gwylio'r gyfres chwe phennod neilltuol hon, sy'n wefreiddiol o gynhyrchiad. Mae yma dalent hynod yn yr actio, y cynhyrchu, y sgriptio a'r egin-syniad. Dy m a inni gynhyrchiad gan S4C sydd wir yn ei gosod hi ar dir uchel, ar ei phen ei hun,

uwchlaw nifer o ddramau tebyg iddi. Campwaith o actio, cynhyrchu ac ysgrifennu sydd yma.

Tarddiad; Koolshooters (via Pexels)



Gair o Gefnogaeth gan UMCC i UMCA

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-od

Yn sgîl bygythiadau i rôl Llywydd Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Aberystwyth (UMCA), mae Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Caerdydd (UMCC) wedi codi’u llais ac wedi datgelu eu bod yn sefyll yn gryf gydag UMCA ar yr achos. Rhyddhaodd Catrin Edith Parry, Is-lywydd y Gymraeg yn Undeb Myfyrwyr Caerdydd, ddatganiad ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol, ar y cyd gyda Llywydd Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Bangor a Swyddog Materion Cymraeg Undeb Myfyrwyr Abertawe, yn datgan “Rydym yn sefyll gyda UMCA yn ystod yr ymgyrch hwn, gan obeithio bydd y swydd yn aros fel un llawn amser”.

Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg hynaf Cymru

Bu Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg Aberystwyth (UMCA) yn dathlu ei phen blwydd yn hanner can mlwydd oed yn gynharach eleni – yr Undeb Myfyrwyr Cymraeg hynaf yng Nghymru. Fodd bynnag, dim ond cyfnod byr wedi’r dathliadau daeth y newyddion bod Undeb Myfyrwyr Aberystwyth yn ystyried newid rôl Llywydd UMCA o fod yn llawn amser i fod yn rhan amser neu hyd yn oed gwirfoddol. Daeth y posibilrwydd hwn yn sgîl ystyriaethau i gael gwared ar un o swyddogion llawn amser yn Undeb oherwydd toriadau ariannol. Ymateb chwyrn sydd wedi bod i’r ystyriaeth gan fyfyrwyr Cymraeg y Brifysgol a thu hwnt.

“os all hyn ddigwydd yn Aberystwyth, gall ddigwydd ym mhob man arall!”

Roedd Swyddogion Cymraeg Undebau Myfyrwyr Caerdydd, Abertawe a Bangor yn gyflym i fynegi eu cefnogaeth tuag at UMCA a’i Llywydd. Yn eu datganiad ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol, dywedon nhw “Mae’r Gymraeg yn hynod bwysig i fyfyrwyr yng Nghymru ac mae gweld bod Undeb Aber yn edrych ar y posibilrwydd o newid rôl Llywydd UMCA o fod yn un llawn amser yn bryderus iawn i ni.”

Ychwanegon nhw, “Mae Undeb Myfyrwyr Caerdydd eleni yn dathlu dim ond yr ail flwyddyn o Swyddog y Gymraeg llawn amser, ac mae wedi bod yn wych i gael cydweithio fel pedwar dros y pedair Prifysgol fwyaf yng Nghymru”.

Dywedon nhw’n glir, “Gwelwn fygythiad fel hwn ar y Gymraeg yn un sydd yn ddychrynlyd, ac yn peri gofid i fyfyrwyr – os all hyn ddigwydd yn Aberystwyth, gall ddigwydd ym mhob man arall!”

Cefnogaeth gan sêr Cymru

Ymgasglodd myfyrwyr Cymraeg o brifysgolion ledled y wlad yn Aberystwyth ym mis Tachwedd ar gyfer y Ddawns Rhyng-golegol flynyddol i ddathlu’r un peth sydd gan bawb yn gyffredin – y Gymraeg. Yn ystod y digwyddiad perfformiodd sawl band Cymraeg megis Yws Gwynedd gydag arwydd â chòd QR yn arwain at y ddeiseb ‘Achub Dyfodol Llywydd UMCA’ ar flaen y llwyfan. Fe wnaeth Yws Gwynedd dynnu sylw yn benodol at yr achos, ac fe ymunodd Llywydd presennol UMCA, Elain Gwynedd, gyda’r band ar y llwyfan gan ddatgan bod digwyddiadau megis y ddawns rhyng-gol yn dyst i’r angen am Lywydd UMCA llawn amser.

Bellach, mae’r ddeiseb i achub y rôl llawn amser wedi casglu dros fil o lofnodion, ac mae Undeb Myfyrwyr Prifysgol Aberystwyth wedi dweud na fydd newid i’r rôl yn dilyn y pryderon sydd wedi’u mynegi.

Beth i’w wneud yng Nghaerdydd dros y Nadolig?

Ela Rhys
Cyfrannwr

Ystod eang o weithgareddau a digwyddiadau di-ri caiff eu cynnig i ni yma yng Nghaerdydd i’n diddanu dros gyfnod yr Ŵyl. Nid yw’n syndod felly fod y ddinas yn atynnu torfeydd sylweddol eto eleni i ymgolli yn y dathliadau ac ysbryd y Nadolig.

Gŵyl y Gaeaf - Sglefrio: Castell Caerdydd, Stryd y Castell. Y Bar Barrug a’r ffair: Lawnt Neuadd y Ddinas.

Un o brif atyniadau’r ddinas dros y cyfnod hwn yw ‘Gŵyl y Ddinas’. Nid yn unig fod y golygfeydd, y bwrllwm a’r ymdeimlad Nadoligaidd yn hyfryd ond, mae rhywbeth ar gyfer unrhyw un. Yno, gellir dilyn y ‘llwybr iâ’ drwy erddi’r castell nes cyrraedd y cylch sglefrio. Gair o gyngor, mae’n syniad archebu tocyn i sglefrio o flaen llaw yn sgîl y prysurdeb a gellir gwneud hynny ar wefan ‘Gŵyl y Gaeaf Caerdydd’. Profiad Nadoligaidd arall caiff ei gynnig o fewn yr ŵyl ond eto, rhaid archebu tocyn o flaen llaw, yw’r ‘Bar Barrug’ sy’n gyfle perffaith i gymdeithasu’n dilyn yr holl weithgareddau. Awyrgylch hudolus a geir yma hefyd wrth yfed mewn bar ble mae’r hyn o’ch amgylch wedi’u cerfio’n gywrain o rew. Yn sicr dyma un o brofiadau fwyaf hanfodol ac unigryw yr ŵyl. I’ch diddanu ymhellach beth am ymweld â’r ffair sydd eto wedi’i leoli’n gyfagos i’r castell? Amrywiaeth o reidiau sydd yno i ystod eang o oedranau ond heb os, mae mentro ar yr olwyn fawr yn gyfle gwych i weld Caerdydd ar ei gorau’n ysbryd yr ŵyl. Dyma gyfle gwerth chweil

felly i greu atgofion a chymdeithasu yng nghalon Caerdydd.

Y Farchnad Nadoligaidd – Canol y Ddinas, Caerdydd.

Os am ddianc o fwrlwm ‘Gŵyl y Gaeaf’ beth am ymweld â’r farchnad Nadoligaidd? Yno, mae degau o stondinau amrywiol sy’n arddangos talentau crefftwyr Cymru ac yn gyfle perffaith i ddechrau’ch siopa Nadolig. Gwaith gwreiddiol sydd i’w weld yno gan wneuthurwyr medrus gyda hynny’n amrywio o emwaith, tecstilau, gwaith pren, a darnau o gelf ar draws sawl cyfrwng. O frownis, caws, cnau a diodydd amrywiol, bydd digon o gyfle hefyd i lenwi eich boliau wrth ymweld â’r stondinau bwyd sydd unwaith eto’n gynnrych Cymreig blasus.

Y Llwybr Goleuadau – Parc Bute:

Lleoliad delfrydol arall i ymweld ag ef yn y ddinas yw Parc Bute ac mae archebu tocyn o flaen llaw yn cael ei argymhell. Cyfle sydd yno i ddi-llyn y llwybr golau, disglair wedi’i llunio gan artistiaid byd-eang. Mae’r parc eisoes wedi atynnu cynulleidfaoedd am y bedwaredd flynedd eleni. Heb os, dyma gyfle i weld y parc eiconig hwn yn ei hanterth dros gyfnod y Nadolig.

Sioeau Amrywiol -

Awydd cael seibiant o fwrlwm canol y ddinas, be’ well na’ archebu tocyn i fynd i wyllo un o’r sioeau sydd ar gael dros fissoedd y Nadolig? Cyfle hyfryd arall i gymdeithasu, i ymgolli yn yr ŵyl ac i ymlacio. Dyma awgrymiadau, gan enwi dim ond ychydig o’r hyn caiff ei gynnig:

- Cabaret Nadoligiadd, ‘My Favourite Things’ – Gerddi Sophia.
- ‘Welsh of the West End At Christmas’ – Gerddi Sophia.
- Cyngerdd Nadolig Tŷ Hafan – Canolfan y Mileniwm.
- ‘All I want for Christmas is Musicals’ – Canolfan y Mileniwm.
- Cyngerdd Nadolig Bandiau Pres – Canolfan y Mileniwm.
- Dathliadau Nadolig Cerd-dorfa Genedlaethol Gymreig y BBC - Canolfan y Mileniwm.

Heb os, mae gan Gaerdydd lond llaw o bethau i’w cynnig i’n diddanu dros gyfnod y Nadolig – o sglefrio, i stondinau ac i sioeau, yn sicr mae rhywbeth ar gyfer unrhyw un. Dewch yn llw felly i Gaerdydd, y lleoliad delfrydol i brofi cynnwrf paratoadau’r Nadolig.

Nadolig Plarven
wrth Gair Rhydd

Penodi Geraint Evans yn Brif Weithredwr parhaol S4C

Ifan Meredith

Cyfrannwr

Mae S4C wedi cyhoeddi y bydd Geraint Evans yn ymgymryd â rôl Prif Weithredwr y sianel yn barhaol ar ôl cyfnod cythryblus i'r sianel. Penodwyd Geraint Evans yn Brif Weithredwr Dros Dro'r sianel ym mis Ebrill 2024 am chwe mis ac ar Dachwedd 12fed 2024 cyhoeddwyd ei fod wedi ei benodi'n barhaol.

Tan iddo symud i S4C yn 2019, bu Geraint Evans yn newyddiadurwr gyda ITV Cymru am 25 mlynedd. Symudodd i S4C i ymgymryd â rôl Comisiynydd Newyddion a Materion Cyfoes a fu tu ôl i sefydliad gwasanaeth newyddion digidol S4C cyn iddo ddod yn Gyfarwyddwr Strategaeth Cynnwys a Chyhoeddi yn 2023.

“wir yn fraint”

Dywedodd Geraint Evans ei bod yn “frait” i gael ei benodi'n Brif Weithredwr parhaol ar y sianel mae wedi “gwyllo a chynhyrchu cynnwys iddi ar hyd fy ngyrfa”.

“Mae gan S4C rôl allweddol i'w chwarae i alluogi pobl i fyw eu bywydau drwy'r Gymraeg, i ddenu siaradwyr newydd ac i gynnal y Gymraeg fel iaith fyw a pherthnasol”. Daeth ei benodiad fel Prif Weithredwr Dros Dro'r sianel am chwe mis yn sgîl ymddiswyddiad Sian Doyle ym mis Tachwedd 2023 yn dilyn ymchwiliad i ddiwylliant y sianel a ddaeth i'r casgliad bod ei harweinyddiaeth yn “unben-naethol” a'i bod hi'n “creu diwylliant o ofn”. Arweiniodd hyn at ymddiswyddiad Cadeirydd y sianel, Rhodri Williams ym mis Mawrth 2024 gyda Guto

Bebb yn ymgymryd â'r rôl Dros Dro.

“arweinydd naturiol all uno staff a rhanddeiliaid”

Wrth ymateb i benodiad parhaol Geraint Evans fel Prif Weithredwr, dywedodd Guto Bebb y bydd Geraint Evans yn dod â “chyfoeth o brofiad a dealltwriaeth am y diwydiant yma yng Nghymru a thu hwnt i'w swydd newydd”.

“Fel y cyfarwyddwr sydd wedi bod yn arwain ar ddatblygiad digidol y sianel, mae ganddo weledigaeth glir o'r llwybr sydd angen i S4C i'w gymryd os am sicrhau dyfodol llewyrchus” meddai.

Ar ei benodiad, soniodd Geraint Evans am yr heriau sy'n wynebu'r sianel tua'r dyfodol hefyd.

“Wrth i'n harferion gwyllo newid, mae'n hanfodol bod S4C yn newid - ac yn denu, yn ysbrydoli ac yn diddanu ein cynulleidfaoedd, ar ba bynnag blatfform maen nhw'n dewis gwyllo” meddai.

“angerdd a gweledigaeth o gael sianel sy'n gwasanaethu Cymru gyfan.”

I gloi, dywedodd ei fod yn “edrych mlaen at yr her, gan wybod bod timau talentog a chreadigol yma'n S4C, yn y sector gynhyrchu ac ymhlith ein rhanddeiliaid allanol”.

Mae disgwyl i Geraint Evans ddechrau ar ei rôl fel Prif Weithredwr ym mis Ionawr 2024 gyda Sioned Wiliam yn parhau fel Prif Weithredwr Dros Dro yn y cyfamser.

Gwobr y Gân Bryn Terfel

Hannah Williams

Pennaeth Taf-od

Cyhoeddwyd yn ddiweddar y byddai gwobr newydd gwerth £15,000 yn lansio ym myd y celfyddydau yng Nghymru, sef Gwobr y Gân Syr Bryn Terfel. Bydd y Wobr yn cael ei lansio gan Goleg Brenhinol Cerdd a Drama Cymru (CBCDC) mewn partneriaeth gyda'r cantor a pherfformiwr enwog, Syr Bryn Terfel, er mwyn helpu cantorion ifanc. Yn ôl y Coleg, mae'r Wobr “yn un o'r rhai mwyafrwyd gwerthfawr yn unrhyw le yn y byd”.

Ysgoloriaeth yr Urdd

Bryn Terfel

Daeth Ysgoloriaeth yr Urdd Bryn Terfel i ben yn gynharach eleni, yn dilyn 20 mlynedd o'i fodolaeth. Yn y gystadleuaeth honno, dewiswyd 6 pherson ifanc i gystadlu am yr ysgoloriaeth bob blwyddyn, a'r perfformiwr buddugol yn derbyn gwobr ariannol o £4,000. Daeth yr ysgoloriaeth i ben yn sgîl partneriaeth newydd yr Urdd gyda Choleg Brenhinol Cerdd a Drama Cymru, wrth iddynt gynnig sesiynau men-

tora a chyfleoedd rhyngwladol i enillwyr prif gystadlaethau Eisteddfod yr Urdd.

Gwobr y Gân Bryn Terfel

Bydd Gwobr y Gân Syr Bryn Terfel yn gyfle newydd i gantorion ifanc gystadlu mewn gwobr ariannol wrth iddynt “symud o astudiaethau gradd i gyrsiau ôl-radd a phan fydd ffynonellau cyllid yn fwy prin i barhau i hyfforddi”, meddai CBCDC. Bydd conservatoires ledled y Deyrnas Unedig i chyfle i enwebu eu cantorion ar gyfer y Wobr, ac mae cynlluniau i ymestyn y cyfle hwn i conservatoires rhyngwladol yn y pen draw.

Yn ôl Elwyn Williams, a gystadlodd am Ysgoloriaeth yr Urdd Bryn Terfel cyn iddi ddod i ben, “Dwi'n credu bod hi'n hynod o bwysig bod cyfle newydd yn cael ei ddatblygu oherwydd nid yn unig oedd yr ysgoloriaeth yn rhoi gwobr ariannol i'r enillydd ond yn bwysicach fyth roedd yr ysgoloriaeth yn rhoi platfform mawr i'r cystadleuwyr i gyd. Roedd yr ysgoloriaeth yn rhoi cyfle gwyb i berfformwyr ar ddechrau eu gyrfaedd i gael eu gweld”.

Ychwanegodd, “Mae astudio ym maes y celfyddydau yn gallu bod yn ddrud dros ben.

Yn ogystal mae cynnal sgiliau ar ôl gorffen astudio hefyd yn gallu bod yn ddrud felly mae unrhyw wobwr ariannol yn werthfawr”.

Hybu'r Gymraeg

Bydd y cystadleuwyr yn canu yn y Gymraeg ac yn eu hiaith eu hunain wrth gystadlu am y Wobr, er mwyn cynrychioli gwahanol ddiwylliannau, a chyflwyno'r Gymraeg i bobl o bob cefndir.

Dywed Syr Bryn Terfel, Is-lywydd CBCDC, “Mae Caneuon Cymraeg wedi bod yn rhan o fy mywyd ers pan oeddwn yn blentyn. Drwy gydol fy ngyrfa, yn ogystal â bod yn ddehonglwr balch o Lieder mawr yr Almaen, Chansons Ffrainc a'r Gân Saesneg, rydw i bob amser wedi hyrwyddo caneuon gwerin a chaneuon celf y genedl gerddorol hon”.

Ychwanegodd, “Ond mae canu Cymraeg yn dal i fod yn rhywbeth sy'n weddol anhysbys tu allan i Gymru felly rwy'n llawn cyffro i gael rhannu'r perllau gwyb hyn gyda chantorion newydd ac i ddefnyddio Cronfa Syr Bryn Terfel, fy Sefydliad newydd a phartneriaeth gyda Choleg

Brenhinol Cerdd a Drama Cymru, i'w cefnogi yn eu datblygiad fel artistiaid”.

Yn ôl Tim Rhys-Evans, Cyfarwyddwr Cerddoriaeth CBCDC, mae eu cantorion, sy'n dod o bob cwr o'r byd gan gynnwys Awstralia, Hong Kong a'r Unol Daleithiau yn dysgu caneuon Cymraeg er mwyn canu gyda Bryn yn nathliadau pen blwydd 75 oed y Coleg. Dywedodd, “Mae'n bleser eu gweld yn syrthio mewn cariad â'r repertoire hwn, ac edrychaf ymlaen at weld dylanwad hyn yn lle-daenu wrth i Wobr y Gân ddatblygu.”

Cyfnod Preswyl

Bydd cyfle arbennig hefyd i'r rheini sy'n cyrraedd y rownd derfynol i breswyllo yn y Coleg am dridiau a mynychu dosbarthiadau amrywiol yn ystod y cyfnod hwn. Bydd hwn wedi'i ariannu'n llawn.

Bydd preswyliaid cyntaf y Wobr yn dechrau ar 5ed o Dachwedd 2025, a'r Rownd Derfynol gyntaf yn cael ei chynnal ar yr 8fed o Dachwedd 2025. Bydd yn cael ei chynnal bob dwy flynedd wedi hynny.

Traddodiadau Nadolig a Blwyddyn Newydd y Cymry ar hyd y canrifoedd

Gwenno Davies

Cyfrannwr

Mae digonedd o draddodiadau Nadoligaidd gennym ni'r Cymry heddiw - o ymweld â ffrindiau a theulu dros yr ŵyl, i addurno coed Nadolig, i adael gwydrau o laeth allan i Siôn Corn. Roedd Cymry'r gorffennol, hefyd, yn hoff iawn o gadw at draddodiadau penodol - rhai ohonynt yn hyfryd, ac eraill yn hollol ryfedd!

Plygain

Un o draddodiadau allweddol Cymry'r 19eg ganrif oedd mynychu gwasanaeth 'Plygain' rhwng 3 a 6 ar fore'r Nadolig. Yn y gwasanaethau hyn, byddai dynion yn canu carolau'n ddigyfeiliant yng Nghapel y plwyf lleol er mwyn dathlu bod y Nadolig wedi dod. Mae'r traddodiad hwn yn dal i barhau hyd heddiw mewn sawl ardal o Gymru.

Noson Gyflaith

Er mwyn aros yn effro nes ei bod hi'n amser mynychu'r gwasanaeth 'Plygain' ar fore'r Nadolig, un o weithgareddau'r Cymry oedd cynnal Noson Gyflaith. Byddai teuluoedd yn gwahodd ffrindiau a theulu draw i chwarae gemau, adrodd straeon, a chreu taffi. Mae'r traddodiad yma'n dal i fodoli mewn rhai mannau o Gymru, ac, mewn rhai lleoliadau hanesyddol o amgylch y wlad caiff twristiaid wneud eu taffi eu hunain er mwyn cael blas o'r traddodiad hwn.

Dydd San Steffan

Dathlwyd y diwrnod ar ôl y Nadolig mewn ffordd annifyr dros ben ar ddechrau'r 19eg ganrif yng Nghymru, gyda'r traddodiad o 'guro celyn', neu 'holming' yn Saesneg. Byddai dynion ifanc yn casglu canghennau celyn, a'u defnyddio i guro breichiau, neu goesau

merched ifanc, nes gwneud iddynt waedu. Mewn rhai ardaloedd, nid y merched, ond y person olaf i godi o'r gwely yn y bore oedd yr un anlwcus i gael ei guro. Poenus tu hwnt!

Mari Lwyd

Penglog ceffyl oedd y Fari Lwyd, wedi'i haddurno â rhubanau, clychau, a phapur, a'i gosod ar ben polyn pren. Byddai grŵp o Gymry'r 19eg ganrif yna'n cario'r ceffyl o ddrws i ddrws wrth herio'r trigolion i frwydr odl a phennill, o'r enw pwnco. Gobaith y ddefod anarferol yma oedd dod â lwc i'r flwyddyn newydd.

Calennig

Ar fore Ddydd Calan ar ddechrau'r 19eg ganrif, ai plant Cymru o ddrws i ddrws yn canu er mwyn derbyn 'Calennig' (arian neu losin) yn wobwr. Ystyr y gair 'Calennig' yw 'dydd cyntaf y mis', ond, gall hefyd

olygu dathliad Flwyddyn Newydd, neu wobwr Flwyddyn Newydd. Yng Nghwm Gwaun yn Sir Benfro, cynhelir y dathliad hwn ar y 13eg o Ionawr bob blwyddyn, am iddynt ddefnyddio'r calendr Julianiaid, yn hytrach na'r un Georgaidd.



THE TEAM



Ella Lane



Aneurin Davies



James Roberts



Emily Clegg



Adrian Miesik



OPINION



The Death of Twitter Post-Election

Bo Burt
Contributor

Being regrettably informed that Trump has rattled the states, it seems that there has also been a ricochet on one particular social media platform: X. Musk's social networking service has taken the debate too far, stepping over the line with controversial conversations and offensive threads that disregard any Democratic support. With this in mind, is time up for the app?

One reason for outrage following insensitivity on the platform comes from the lack of safeguarding, with Musk's early decision to cut 85% of staff having a detrimental impact on the management of hostile tweets. Without enough people overlooking dangerous comments, the app is a breeding ground for hateful content that faces no consequences. Therefore, the foundations were already built for chaos post-election.

Although the blame can be placed on the app itself, failing to monitor certain posts and content, the issue also lies with the app's users. People are free to glorify hateful tweets in a space where they can hide behind screens and encourage similar behaviour without any repercussions. Misogynist Andrew Tate found opportunity to jump on the bandwagon after having his account reinstated, posting harmful content. Having his say on female rights and conspiring in favour of extremely sexist ideas, Tate hasn't been the only one

adding fuel to the fire. Nick Fuentes, far-right American podcaster, coined the phrase: "Your body, my choice", receiving over 50,000 likes and thousands of retweets. With an army of Republicans placing pressure on already wounded women and abortion rights being openly mocked, X has become an exceedingly unsafe platform.

ISD researchers provide us with further information, suggesting that these tweets have opened new avenues for young people to spread extremely harmful messages written by themselves. They reported that young girls at school have been told to "sleep with one eye open tonight". The app has seen a huge decline in activity since the start of this rise in misogyny—all fuelled by the election results.

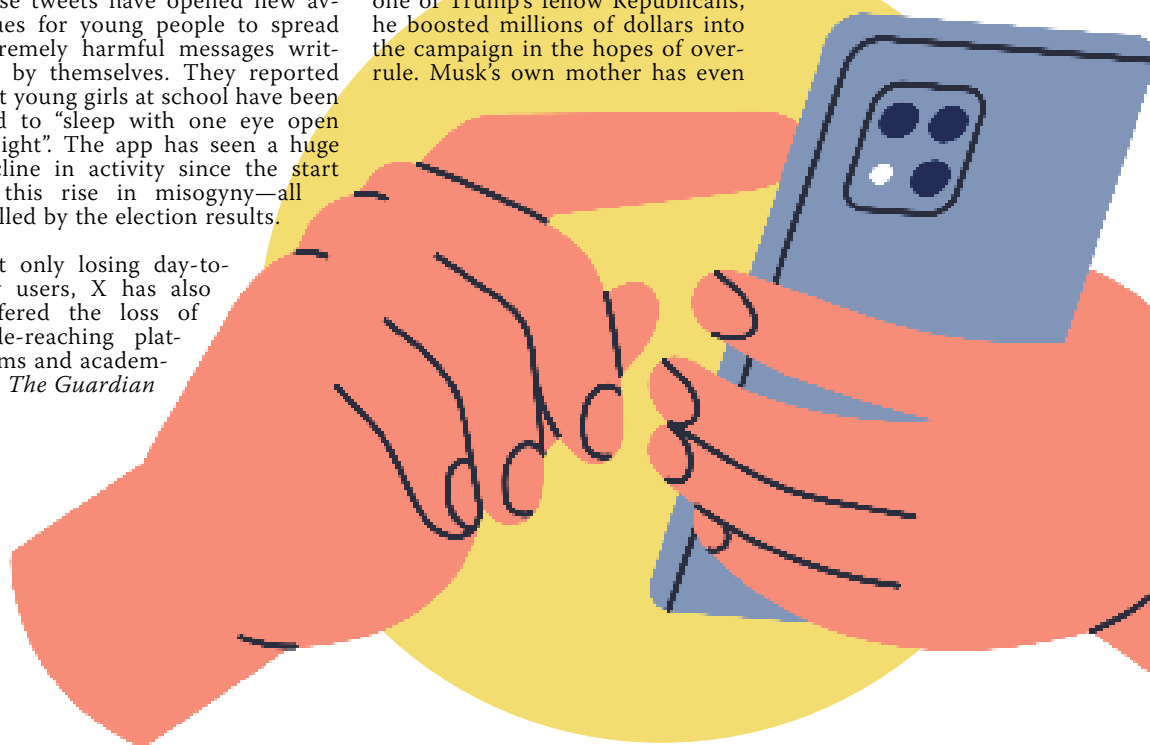
Not only losing day-to-day users, X has also suffered the loss of wide-reaching platforms and academics. *The Guardian*

has chosen to stop posting from their official X accounts, instead only using the platform for research purposes. It seems that the influx of hate speech has put off multiple academics too, including former Southern New Hampshire University president Paul LeBlanc, who has described the app as a "toxic cesspool".

It goes without saying that Musk's role in the backlash post-election has not benefitted his platform. As one of Trump's fellow Republicans, he boosted millions of dollars into the campaign in the hopes of overrule. Musk's own mother has even

been accused of a tweet using extremely racist language following the election.

Broadly speaking, there are multiple factors which have resulted in the app's decline, and given that users have become aware of Musk's own political standing and carelessness, the multi-millionaire hasn't helped his case.



Are UK Universities Still The Centres of Academic Excellence They Once Were?

Thomas Mahoney
Contributor

UK universities have historically been considered as either: A) the obvious passage for any academically capable person aspiring for "big things" B) multitudinous centres for debate and analysis of society-improving ideas C) a way to fundamentally advance earning potential and employability, or D) all of the above. Perhaps such lofty expectations were always flawed or inaccurate, but if they weren't in days gone by, then they certainly are now.

The moment I advanced into sixth form back in 2018, a conversation topic suddenly surfaced to which I'd had negligible prior exposure: university. Head of year(s) began urging us to start UCAS applications, while universities' marketers lauded the vibrant social lives we were ostensibly guaranteed. No one in my school explained in detail to us what is, or at least was, part and parcel of every degree: academically styled writing, contact hours, and the shortcomings touched upon later in this article. Why? That's the first problem: sixth forms are judged largely by quantity of students siphoned off to university, irrespective of

whether it's the right choice for them.

Let's talk about Unconditional Offers. I needn't explain what they are and why universities utilise them. They are a direct consequence of the financialisation of universities in the 2000s—little more than a ploy to maximise universities' tuition fee revenue. However, many graduates don't fully repay their tuition fee loans, meaning the government picks up the hefty bill for this education. What impact can we expect on the overall quality of university discourse if sixth-formers are admitted before they've even taken their A-levels? Would the average taxpayer support unconditional offers at all, considering that impact?

From a humanities perspective, it cannot be denied that many courses offer a minuscule number of hours compared to the corresponding tuition fees. Humanities courses place emphasis

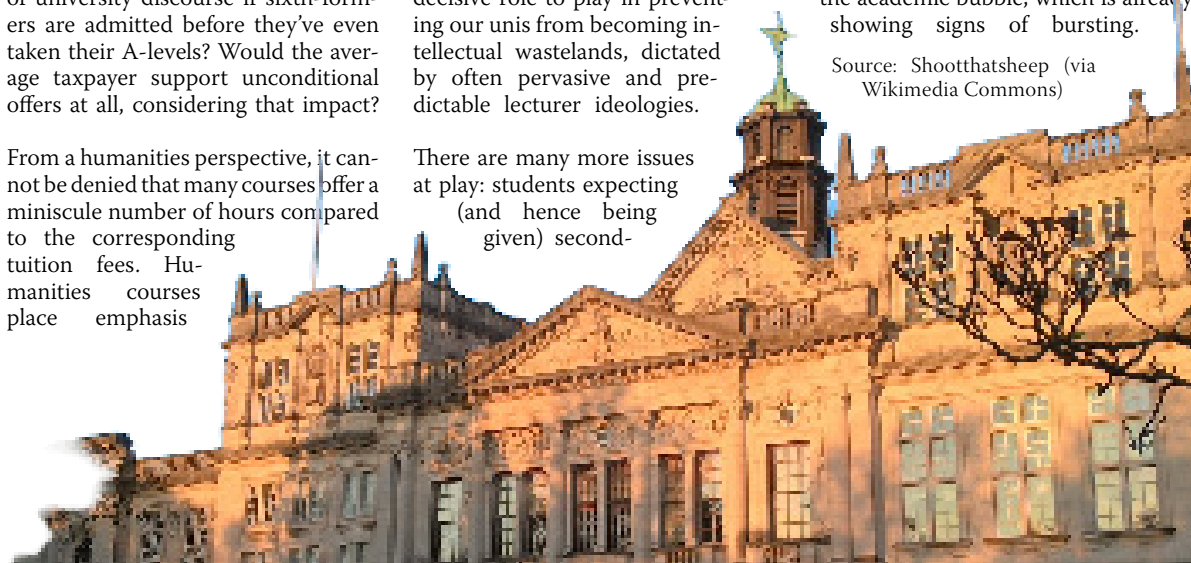
on independent study, yet with many offering well under ten fifty-minute sessions a week, it's extremely questionable whether the £9000+ per year fee reflects this. I think many of us wonder where all that money goes... That said, it doesn't help that student engagement in seminars across the board is low; each one of us knows all too well that crippling silence looming in the room following a lecturer's question. The fewer students contribute, the less they benefit and the more course quality plummets. We have the decisive role to play in preventing our unis from becoming intellectual wastelands, dictated by often pervasive and predictable lecturer ideologies.

There are many more issues at play: students expecting (and hence being given) second-

ary school-esque experiences, horrendous budget misallocation, or the swathes of bureaucracy relenting the simplest of university processes. But I'd need more articles to unpick those.

In summary, it would be beneficial to see institutions and students alike conduct more honest, healthy discussions regarding the state of 21st-century universities, and whether today's youth, economy, and labour market actually benefit from the funnelling of 18-year-olds en masse into the academic bubble, which is already showing signs of bursting.

Source: Shootthatsheep (via Wikimedia Commons)



The 2025 Grammys: Who is in Competition This Time?

Adrian Miesik
Opinion Editor

The Grammy nominations are everyone's favourite time of the year, where you can see fans of any artist have meltdowns on Twitter about their "fav" not being nominated for a specific category, or claim that once again the Grammys are biased or that the artist paid their way to the nomination. This, of course, is sprinkled with Twitter's favourite pastime: hurling misogyny at any female artist—whether it's about her looks, about her age, or to accuse her of only being successful because of popular collaborations. However, the only question I will bring to the table is this: Why were Ariana Grande's *Eternal Sunshine* and its songs not nominated for any of the main categories? Especially after the long wait for this album to drop, and especially after Ariana's controversy earlier this year about the whole debacle stemming from the cahoots with her current boyfriend Ethan Slater.

Being nominated for any of the big three of the Grammy awards—Best Record, Best Album, and Best Song—is an incredible achievement for any artist. Let alone winning one. This year finds itself with a very fierce competition for the main three awards between the powerhouses in the form of Charli XCX, Chappell Roan, and Sabrina Carpenter. Each of these artists had their massive breakthrough this year, with Charli XCX's *Brat* being claimed as one of her best albums (which I personally disagree with as I maintain that *Crash* reigns supreme over her other albums). *Brat* has garnered her another surge of mainstream popularity, which she last saw when she released

her songs "Boom Clap" and "Vroom Vroom". Some of the most popular tracks from *Brat* include "360", "365", "Apple", and "Guess" (both the original and the remix featuring Billie Eilish). Chappell Roan's newest album, *Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess*, has gained her the very first taste of mainstream popularity with songs that almost everyone has heard, specifically "Hot to Go!" and "Good Luck, Babe!", which have had huge success for good reason! But one must not forget her other songs—such as "Pink Pony Club", "Red Wine Supernova", and "Casual", to name just a few—all fully deserving of the hype they are getting. Finally, Sabrina Carpenter, who just like Charli XCX has been in the music industry for some time, has been steadily rising in popularity. Her previous album's title song "Feather" spurred her increased recognition within the music field, but it's her new "Espresso" that has truly catapulted her into superstardom, becoming a huge summer hit. This release was followed by a second single, "Please, Please, Please", leading into the release of her summer album *Short n' Sweet*. Its tracks "Taste" and "Juno" have given Carpenter even more hits under her belt, of which the public could not get enough!

So to say that this year's main categories will be a battle between these big three artists is basically certain. Other artists who are returning into the fray include Beyoncé, Taylor Swift, and Billie Eilish.

Record of the Year will come down to an intense battle between some of the year's most popular songs: Sabrina Carpenter's "Espresso", Chappell Roan's "Good Luck, Babe!", Charli XCX's "360", Beyoncé's "Texas Hold 'Em", Billie Eilish's "Birds of a Feather", Kendrick Lamar's

"Not Like Us", Taylor Swift's "Fortnight" with Post Malone, and—somehow resurrecting from the dead—The Beatles' "Now and Then". This year's competition will be a bloodfest for those who want to win this award, which I personally want to see go to either Roan or Carpenter, as you just cannot deny the impact of both "Good Luck, Babe!" and "Espresso". Charli's "360" and Beyoncé's "Texas Hold 'Em" are also picks that I personally would be happy to see win—so long as Taylor Swift doesn't.

Just like with Record of the Year, the Album category finds itself with tough competition on all sides: Beyoncé with *Cowboy Carter*, Sabrina Carpenter with *Short n' Sweet*, Charli XCX with *Brat*, Chappell Roan with *Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess*, Billie Eilish with *Hit Me Hard and Soft*, and Taylor Swift with *The Tortured Poets Department*. They find themselves in another big category alongside André 3000 with *New Blue Sun* and Jacob Collier with *Djesse Vol. 4*. Frankly, I have little to say about this award, other than that I expect it will be a close competition between Charli XCX, Sabrina Carpenter, and Chappell Roan due to the sheer number of songs from each of their respective albums that have been incredibly popular. Many of these tracks even rival their albums' title tracks. I am once again praying that the award does not go to Swift, who, frankly, does not deserve to win, as her album failed to make even half the noise of her previous releases.

Finally, the last of the main category awards: Song of the Year. To no surprise, just like in the previous categories, we see the same faces: Billie Eilish's "Bird of a Feather", Taylor Swift's "Fortnight", Sabrina Carpenter's "Please,

Please, Please", Chappell Roan's "Good Luck, Babe!", Beyoncé's "Texas Hold 'Em", and Kendrick Lamar's "Not Like Us". However, this time there is no Charli XCX and there are two new faces in the fray: "A Bar Song (Tipsy)" by Sha-boozey and "Die With A Smile" by Lady Gaga and Bruno Mars. My personal favourites from this category (to no one's shock) are Carpenter and Roan, both of whom equally deserve to win, as these songs are straight-up some of the best work of their entire discographies. Surprisingly, Charli XCX's "360" or other *Brat* songs were not nominated for this award, which does raise some questions about the criteria needed to be nominated for these categories.



Source: Suki Lee (via Pexels)

How Has Jack Antonoff Got His Hands on the New Kendrick Lamar Album?

Emily Clegg
Opinion Editor

Jack Antonoff's reputation as a prolific music producer is unquestionable. Known for his collaborations with pop powerhouses like Taylor Swift, Lorde, and Lana Del Rey, Antonoff has cemented himself as a go-to producer for emotionally charged, lushly arranged music. However, his latest venture, contributing to Kendrick Lamar's experimental rap album *GNX*, raises questions about whether his omnipresence in the industry has reached a saturation point—and about whether his distinctive style is truly adaptable across such a large number of genres.

GNX, Lamar's foray into genre-bending territory, has sparked much discussion, not only because of its bold sonic choices, but also due to Antonoff's involvement. It's not every day that a producer synonymous with indie-pop sensibilities partners with a rap titan known for his raw lyricism and avant-garde production. Antonoff's fingerprints are evident in the album's more atmospheric tracks, where layered instrumentation and sweeping string arrangements shine. Yet, in some moments, his contributions feel at odds with Lamar's lyrical grit, leaving certain songs sounding like an uneasy compromise between their disparate artistic identities.

The problem with Antonoff's omnipresence lies in the risk of creative dilution. While his

production style is undeniably polished, it often leans heavily on a familiar formula: cinematic builds, earnest melodies, and a dreamy, almost nostalgic aesthetic. This has worked brilliantly in pop contexts, but doesn't necessarily translate seamlessly to the rap genre. Critics have noted that some tracks on *GNX* feel overly ornate, as though Antonoff's tendencies toward maximalism clash with the stripped-back vulnerability that characterises much of Lamar's best work.

Moreover, Antonoff's ubiquity raises concerns about the homogenisation of mainstream music. When one producer becomes the common denominator across vastly different projects, there's a danger of losing the uniqueness that defines an artist's voice.

While it's commendable that Antonoff is pushing beyond his comfort zone, his presence on *GNX* underscores the broader question of whether his expansive portfolio is beginning to spread his creative vision too thin.

Antonoff's work on *GNX* isn't without merit—there are moments of brilliance where his artistry complements Lamar's vision. However, the partnership highlights the challenges of genre crossover and the potential pitfalls of a producer who seems to be everywhere. As much as the music world admires Antonoff's talents, perhaps it's time for him to step back, recalibrate, and let others shape the future of sound.

The Overlooked Crisis in Women's Health

Claudia Roberts
Contributor

If all the women currently waiting for NHS gynaecological appointments stood in a line, it would stretch from London to Exeter.

That's according to new findings from the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RCOG), with over 760,000 women across the UK yet to receive hospital gynaecological care. The RCOG's report is truly eye-opening, highlighting the lack of priority given to women's health, and the devastating impact on those enduring months and years without diagnoses or treatment.

I think it is fair to say that the healthcare system in this country is failing women on a monumental scale. In October, a report by

the NHS Confederation revealed that the UK has the largest female health gap among G20 countries and the twelfth largest globally.

Various factors have contributed to this dire situation. For one, there has long been a distinct lack of research into women's health. Dr Ranee Thakar, president of the RCOG, pointed out that five times more research is conducted into erectile dysfunction, affecting 19% of men, than into premenstrual syndrome, affecting 90% of women. Including this statistic does not aim to undermine men's health issues, but rather to highlight the striking inequality afflicting our healthcare system. And this inequality is destroying women's lives.

Heavy periods. Excruciating pain. Debilitating nausea. Crushing exhaustion. Persistent dizziness. These are just a few of the symptoms that plague countless women across the UK,

often on a daily basis. Conditions like endometriosis—where tissue similar to the lining of the uterus grows outside it—go undiagnosed for years, leaving women to suffer in silence. Hormonal imbalances, fibroids (non-cancerous growths in or around the uterus), and the challenges of menopause add to the burden. As Kristin Scott Thomas remarked in *Fleabag*: "Women are born with pain built in."

However, this health crisis isn't just about reproductive health. The RCOG found that 76% of women waiting for gynaecological care reported worsening mental health. Symptoms arising from undiagnosed and untreated conditions affect women's ability to lead normal lives. Work? School? Social engagements? When you're doubled up in pain, even leaving your bed feels impossible.

Some suggest the appalling waiting times for

gynaecological care stem from the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused backlogs across the NHS. Yet between 2014 and 2024, the waiting list for gynaecological care—the only specialty solely treating women—rose by 223%, faster than the overall NHS waiting list, according to *The Telegraph*. This suggests the crisis in women's health runs far deeper.

Historically, male bodies alone were deemed sufficient for understanding human health, which is laughable when we consider the complex yet under-researched health problems women face. It is essential that women receive the care they not only need but deserve after years of being ignored and underrepresented. The RCOG is calling on the government to provide urgent investment and support. Above all, I think it is time that we encourage open conversations about women's health. Suffering in silence is no longer an option.

Sleigh, Queen: The Boots Christmas Advert of 2024

Leigha Sanejo
Contributor

What do a Boots Christmas advert featuring a Black Mrs Claus with a troupe of drag-queen elves and a cold Greggs pasty have in common? They both make British men unjustifiably angry!

This year, Boots have released their annual Christmas advert, where they take us behind the scenes at Mrs Claus' (*Bridgerton's* wonderful Adjoa Andoh) "Werkroom", as she and her fabulous elves scramble to load Santa's sleigh with (Boots-exclusive) gifts before his annual world-round delivery. As Eve's "Who's That Girl?" plays in the background, the queens successfully finish their to-do list just before Mr Claus awakes from his slumber, sluggishly stepping onto the stage to smile, wave, and act as if he had participated in any of the festive preparations.

To top it off, Mrs Claus turns to the camera with a smirk and remarks "You thought it was all him?", then walks away from the cheering crowd that should ultimately be for her.

For many women across the UK, this is a scene known all too well (although I'm sure some of us could trade our kitchens and pinnies for ateliers and bedazzled gowns); women work hard to go unnoticed by the men who swoop in last minute and take credit. And just to refute furious Daves and Alans in the YouTube comments who state that this advert is "misandrist" and "fake", it reflects the sad truth that women bear the brunt of Christmas labour, with one in four women saying that their male partners do not contribute at all towards holiday festivities, encompassing shopping, cooking, and cleaning (OnePoll, 2023). What's more, a separate study stated that 62% of men

admit that they sneak away from their families to get "me time" during festive gatherings, with a variety of excuses up their sleeves, such as the notorious "I need a nap", or the infamous "I've got a headache". (*The Sun*, 2018)

Furthermore, the beautiful irony here is that men are upset as they feel underrepresented and wrongly portrayed in this piece of media—but women, BIPOC, and the LGBTQIA+ community have had to endure symbolic annihilation for their whole lives. Besides, the worst thing men are being portrayed as in this advert is "lazy", but men are calling it racist (anti-white) or sexist (anti-man), even when they know it is not truly applicable. Perhaps, this intense resistance against black female leadership is significant following Kamala Harris' defeat in the 2024 US election. This event has left women feeling silenced and

antagonised not just in the States, but globally. Following this, Boots hoped to use this advert to incite humour and light for the future, but many men had missed the memo.

Regardless, Christmas is a time for make-believe—if the UK's children are allowed to believe that Santa flies via sleigh-and-magic-reindeer, delivering gifts at 0.5% the speed of light (University of Leicester, 2018) to 500 million children worldwide, surely it is not too far-fetched to picture his elves as drag queens and his wife as a black woman?

Coca-Cola's Christmas Ads: AI Taken Too Far?

Keira Holmes
Contributor

One of my favourite parts of the run-up to Christmas has always been the warm, heartwarming bliss reflected through festive-themed commercials. Sure, these adverts have always had one goal at the end of the day: to sell products and make profit. But, inadvertently, there has always been something warm and personal about them. They are often produced by huge teams of creatives who work tirelessly for months to make them perfect, and to make consumers feel this warm feeling which subliminally messages us: "Buy our products!" But this year's trio of Coca-Cola advertisements are something altogether different. This year's advertisements have been gen-

erated as a homage to the classic 1995 *Holidays are Coming* ad campaign. Each of the ads was created with AI, two of which featuring various animals, and one of which featuring human characters, which have been notoriously difficult for AI to generate without looking plastic and robotic.

This clearly hasn't been an exception with the newest set of Coca-Cola ads, with the only appearance of Father Christmas we receive, in the ad titled *Secret Santa*, being his rubbery, modelling-clay-like fingers grasping a Coca-Cola bottle, while a familiar festive tune plays in the background, desperately trying to persuade our brains to not ignite the uncanny valley. In *Unexpected Santa*, a six-fingered hand can be seen opening a Coca-Cola bottle.

The truth is, a huge team of creatives never once touched upon the creation of these ads,

which were created with generative AI models made by AI studios Secret Level, Silverslide, and Wildcard. While in the words of many X users, the AI ads are "creepy" and "ugly", using AI in this way also creates a very problematic precedent for those in creative industries. AI doesn't just come out of nowhere, and it must be generated with pre-existing material created by human hand. In this way, AI could be said to be a form of plagiarism, and a threat to any creative industry which was previously tasked with not just creating these campaigns, but creating art in the form of designs, literature, or even acting.

Of course, these advertisements are not without their defenders. Pratik Thakar, Coca-Cola's vice president argued the use of AI saves money, and also time, stating "[it's] more than cost, it's the speed". But this is also something we should think about critically. The last fi-

nancial quarter placed Coca-Cola's profit margins at 2.85 billion US dollars. The company has the financial resources to create traditional ad campaigns, as it has done for decades previously, which create countless jobs for creative industries and therefore stimulate the economy, benefiting us as a society.

Arguably, the generation of these ads is not an unprecedented force. After all, if the point of a Christmas advertisement has always been to create money and get consumers to buy products, why would a company choose to spend millions and dictate time to creating a perfect ad campaign, when we can hand over these highly skilled tasks to the robots. Perhaps, the famous line in the song used for each of these ads, "tis the season, it's always the real thing", should begin to be taken with a pinch of salt.

The Consequences of Graduated Driving Licences

James Roberts
Opinion Editor

The grief of parents on the loss of their children is a powerful force, the energy created by it can be harnessed in many ways. Most commonly, it takes the form of personal anguish, but occasionally it can drive those who suffer from it to seek a solution to the very thing that caused them to experience such horror in the first place. Recognising this, it is not without a great deal of respect and empathy that I feel the need to speak out against the calls by Crystal Owen, with the support of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA), to bring in Graduated Driving Licences for young drivers.

Having lost her 17-year-old son in a tragic car accident in November last year, when he and his friends were driving in Wales, Crystal has been campaigning for the government to introduce a Graduated Driving Licence scheme. This would place heavy restrictions on drivers under the age of 21, although I have heard suggestions that this could be as high as 25. Limits like not being able to carry passengers of a similar age, or a ban on night-time driving, are intended to help prevent deaths on the roads. But even if we accept that young drivers are disproportionately more likely to be in a crash, is there not a principle at stake here? One which will be sacrificed on the altar of safety.

It is important to remember that except

for those under the age of 18, we are talking about legally-qualified adults. Who have the right to vote, get married, and engage in full-time economic activity, and who pay the same taxes as all other adult citizens. Restricting the freedom of movement of younger drivers could seriously undermine the principle of adulthood as something attained on one's eighteenth birthday.

Risk is a part of everyday life, and a reasonable degree of risk must be accepted in a free society. Yet it seems that increasingly there is an idea from some people that it is the role of legislation to abolish risk entirely. Yes, we should do something to prevent more deaths on the roads, but in doing so, why should we punish law-abiding young drivers, many of whom obey traffic rules to an extent you may struggle to find in their older counterparts.

The idea of restriction on nighttime driving is particularly relevant to my own experience. During both the year I spent working in a supermarket before going to university and over the last summer, I found myself regularly driving after dark, as a result of the hours that I was working. Since I was in both cases an adult, there was nothing wrong with this and I was entitled to work all the unsocial hours I wanted. Going home I simply turned my headlights on and drove with greater caution than I would during the day. Crystal Owen's campaign says that their reforms would exempt young drivers from night-time restric-

tions in cases of necessity or work. But I can't imagine that these changes would have any effect on the cases I have mentioned.

Instead, it is not hard to imagine as a result of this well-meaning reform, police and traffic officials staking out the roundabouts and junctions of the country, seeking to catch young drivers after dark, and demanding official work permits and travel passes from completely innocent people in some Soviet-like crackdown. And as anyone who's ever sold alcohol in a shop will know, the visual distinction between someone in their late twenties compared to those younger than them is often very hard to see. Thus the night-time driving crackdown will inevitably affect more than its intended demographic, and quickly make travel after dark a needlessly difficult thing.

Beyond the threat to young people's freedom and the potential imposition of more needless policing, Graduated Driving Licences unfairly single out young drivers as the singular threat to road safety. While it is undeniable that young people are over represented in accident statistics, with our aging population and thus a greater number of elderly and infirm people on the road, I pre-

dict that the latter age group may soon become a greater threat. With their dodgy knees and poor response times, they are already becoming more and more hazardous. Yet I doubt that this politically vital age group will be targeted. Instead, young people could become more and more infantilised in the pursuit of safety as a consequence of the good intentions of Crystal Owen and the AA.

Source: Dom J (via Pexels)



Spotify Wrapped: Tired or Inspired?

Tegan Davies
Contributor

At this time of the year, there are an abundance of holidays to be celebrated across the globe. Some are regional—Thanksgiving, Saint Andrew's Day; some are religious—Hanukkah, Christmas; others mark the close of a calendar and a promise of new beginnings and resolutions. But there is one event observed by all, a mutual understanding of importance regardless of age, race, or gender. As we close in on the final chapter of the year, we anticipate the arrival of Spotify Wrapped.

Let's face it. That first story post from an eager music connoisseur is akin to the first snowflake that lands on your palm, to the first leaf that crunches under your foot, to the first sensation of sand underneath your toes. Spotify Wrapped has had the world in a chokehold for eight years, and is arguably still one of the leading incentives that draws users to the platform. Every December, billions of people sit like a housewife waiting for her husband to return from the war, refreshing their emails and Spotify accounts for that fated pop-up that tells them everything that they already knew about their music tastes, but with a pretty background.

And then comes the actual war with its propaganda, fought solely on Instagram stories and defended in the trenches of X's trending page. The competition is rife, and it is brutal. Which one of you was in the coveted 0.0001% of Taylor Swift's listeners this year? What do you mean you only streamed music for 20,000 minutes? Did you really play *that* song 497 times in a random week in March?

I'll stop mocking. I must admit, I too fall into the inevitable trap that is Spotify Wrapped. You can't help but bite when all your friends are nagging you about what your top three genres were, or who made it into your five most streamed artists. I do always find it ridiculous, as I am indeed a victim of an ever-adapting taste. One of those people who will garner an obsession with one song for a week and play it on repeat, get sick of it and vow to never listen again, and find myself face-to-face, Western style, with it sitting comfortably in its top spot on my yearly summary. Year after year, I never learn. I already know what my number one song will be for this year, and I can comfortably say that "Both Ways" by The Script has pre-ordered celebratory glasses of Prosecco to sip upon its plush throne.

But there is a lingering dark cloud over the success that has been Spotify Wrapped, and that is boredom. Sure, the app makes small tweaks and adaptations to the event every

year in an attempt to renew and refresh the occasion, but for the most part, the conclusion of your annual music statistics remains the same in concept and design every single year. We know to expect our top five songs and artists, our top genres and the minutes for which we have listened to them, so at what point does this sacred ritual become less exciting and more predictable?

I think something I've learned since asking friends and fellow Wrapped enthusiasts, is that to a certain extent, predictability is key to each and every one of our lives. As human beings, we find comfort in the expected, and that warm sense of companionship we feel when sharing our yearly summaries creates a togetherness that otherwise is rarely felt. Also in line with our human nature is our need for a box, a label, something we can identify with that allows us to make sense of our own thoughts and actions—we are guilty of labelling everything, from our sexualities, to our styles, to our personalities. How many of us have done the Myers-Briggs test after seeing somebody else's results online? There's no harm in a label, if that's what brings you solace. Some of us need that personality check and to see just how much our music tastes influence our beings.

And as we crave that global group involvement, especially in times such as now where the world is so divided in nature, I would argue

that no, we are not bored of Spotify Wrapped. Okay, yes, I get it: it does get a little tedious after the twentieth story swipe, but who cares? There are people who roll their eyes and swipe after your summary. Spotify Wrapped is that unserious gem that we love to rediscover every year, an addiction that is completely harmless yet fuels your body and soul with enough motivation to make that fresh start in the following year. You can claim that it runs its course all you like, but the truth is that you'd miss it if they ever did away with it.

So, with those green soundwaves wafting slowly in our direction within the upcoming weeks, I urge you to find that childlike whimsy you experience when checking your own results and to see it in everybody else. Yes, the posts will feel like a feed ambush, not dissimilar from when it would snow overnight in high school and the entirety of your friends' Snapchat stories would be shots of their own gardens with a pathetic sheet of snow. It's the little things that matter to everybody. What's the harm in starting a conversation with someone if you have the same taste, either? We rarely get the chance to view such an intimate snapshot of the lives our acquaintances lead. Use Spotify Wrapped as the opportunity for curiosity, nosiness and celebration, and get to grips with the fact that the much-loved phenomenon is here to stay.

Apple Music or Spotify?

Spotify

Sam Wainwright
Contributor

In the ongoing debate between Apple Music and Spotify, it's clear that Spotify emerges as the superior platform for most users, considering its impressive 1/3 stake in the overall subscriber market share. While Apple Music has its strengths, particularly for those deeply embedded in the Apple ecosystem, Spotify offers a more dynamic, accessible, and engaging experience. From personalised music discovery to social sharing and innovative features, Spotify is arguably more successful in meeting the diverse needs of its listeners.

Spotify's greatest strength lies in its music discovery and personalisation. The platform uses a sophisticated algorithm to recommend music based on individual listening habits. Features like Discover Weekly and Release Radar create tailored playlists that help users find new artists and songs. Additionally, Daily Mixes offers a blend of familiar tracks and new discoveries, making it easy to explore music without ever feeling stale. Spotify also uses AI-powered tools such as Spotify DJ, which creates a radio-like experience by curating personalised mixes. This feature adapts over time, refining its selections to better match your tastes. Recently, Spotify has also rolled out an experimental AI Playlist feature, further enhancing music curation. This feature allows users to generate playlists on the fly, based on their mood, genre preferences, or specific requests, taking personalisation to a new level. Apple Music, by comparison, relies more heavily on curated playlists and less on algorithm-driven recommendations, which means its suggestions can feel less personalised and sometimes less relevant. In terms of user interface, Spotify's clean and intuitive design makes it easy to navigate and use, enhancing the overall user experience.

Another advantage Spotify has over Apple Music is its social integration. With features including Friend Activity, Spotify lets users see what their friends are listening to in real time, creating a communal music platform. Sharing playlists, albums, or tracks is simple and intuitive. Spotify allows users to share their music directly to social media features such as Instagram Stories, fostering a sense of connection around music that Apple Music lacks. While Apple Music of-

fers some social features through Apple Music Connect, they haven't been widely embraced, and the platform feels more solitary.

Spotify's free plan is more flexible and generous than Apple Music's. Apple Music's free tier is limited to curated radio stations without access to on-demand songs or playlists. In contrast, Spotify's free plan provides access to the entire music library, though with ads. Users can create playlists, explore new music, and enjoy personalised recommendations free of charge. While there are some restrictions, including limited skips on mobile, the flexibility and ease of Spotify's free plan make it a more attractive option for casual listeners. Regarding premium subscriptions, both services offer similar pricing, but Spotify often runs promotions and discounts, making it a more cost-effective choice for its users.

Spotify also excels in cross-platform compatibility. Whether using an iPhone, Android, desktop computer, gaming console, or smart speaker, Spotify works seamlessly across all these devices. While well-integrated into the Apple ecosystem, Apple Music is less compatible with Android or non-Apple devices. Spotify's versatility ensures a consistent listening experience, regardless of your platform.

Beyond music, Spotify has become a dominant player in the podcasting space. By acquiring companies like Anchor and securing exclusive content from well-known creators, Spotify has made podcasts an integral part of its platform. The seamless integration of podcasts with music means users can easily switch between both without leaving the app. Apple Music doesn't offer this level of integration, and podcasting remains separate through the Apple Podcasts app, making it less convenient for those who enjoy music and podcasts.

Spotify's innovative features also set it apart from the competition. Spotify Wrapped, a personalised year-end summary of listening habits, has become a beloved tradition for many users. The ability to create collaborative playlists, where friends can add tracks in real time, further enhances the platform's interactive nature. Despite offering features such as Lossless Audio and Spatial Audio, Apple Music has been slower in rolling out interactive, user-focused features that keep Spotify fresh and engaging.

Apple Music

Ella Lane
Head of Opinion

I'm an Apple Music user. There! I said it! Whenever I reveal this fact about myself to someone, they usually turn up their nose and feel the need to tell me that Spotify is better. Having used both audio streaming services, I can confidently say that I prefer Apple Music.

As an Apple Ecosystem owner, Apple Music simply works better on my devices than Spotify. The seamless integration with iOS means I can easily control my music from my watch. I can also ask Siri to skip a song, or to play me some new music, which is great for finding new songs which match my tastes.

Another benefit to Apple Music would be the added human touch that Spotify does not have. Apple Music prides itself as a streaming service that prioritises human involvement. They have a team of experts who personally create diverse playlists based on your music taste, meaning you are more than likely to enjoy the new songs they have selected just for you. Furthermore, Apple Music's radio sta-

tions are human-focused. For example, Apple 1, which used to be known as Beats 1, plays music constantly, and is manned by human DJs 24/7. In my opinion, this is far superior than a mindless algorithm or the AI generated playlists boasted by Spotify.

Apple Music also has a higher sound quality, compared to the competition. They provide free audio quality updates to all users, meaning I can listen to songs in spatial audio format for no extra cost. Apple Music also uses ALAC (Apple Lossless Audio Codec) meaning that Apple audio files compressed with this take up less storage space on my phone.

I'll keep my final point short and sweet: Apple Music has a download limit of 100,000 compared to Spotify's 10,000. This means you can listen to far more music offline, saving data when outside of the house. This is also good for long journeys and flights, where you cannot browse music not already downloaded on your phone.

Although Spotify may excel in other areas, personally, I will never make the switch.



Is Yolo Cardiff's Best Club Night?

Agree

Amelia John
Contributor

YOLO is a mid-week staple of Cardiff Uni, and is undoubtedly the best club night that the city has to offer, between ridiculous costumes, cheap drinks, and free entry till 10pm, what's not to love?

One of the standouts about YOLO is how cheap it is. In a country where pints and doubles have sky-rocketed in price over the last few years, drink prices in YOLO have stayed reasonable. From four VKs for £10, a double vodka lime and soda for £4.50, a shot of tequila for £3, and deals on Jägerbombs, the prices are unbeatable. Especially since the usual cost of a double in town is now close to £10.

YOLO also has free entry until 10pm. Over the past few years that I have spent in Cardiff, I've noticed several clubs that have had free entry for as long as I have been here are now charging from £2 up to £10 for entry alone. The SU itself is also in a great location, it's a half-hour walk from Taly Gate, and fifteen minute walk from the farthest part of Cathays, meaning that an overpriced taxi back from town that takes far too long to arrive isn't needed, and you can spend your money on a kebab instead!

Something else that's so incredible about YOLO is how acceptable it is to dress as stupidly as possible. Especially in first year, nothing was more exciting than coming back from my lectures, having a nap scrambling round my tiny Taly room or having to ask everyone I knew for random items of clothing or accessories and putting together a makeshift outfit. Then followed by getting way too drunk for 8pm on a weeknight and trying to not fall down the railway bridge as we raced to the SU. I've

had some of my best nights dressed as a piece of fruit and questionable-looking animals!

From togas to traffic cones, YOLO is full of people looking stupid and somehow that makes the evening ten times more entertaining. Not only this, knowing that most people would look equally as silly as me took away the initial pressure I felt having to look perfect on every night out I went out. I'm also almost positive that if you walked into any other club in town covered in blue paint dressed as a Smurf, you'd get some funny looks.

One of my personal favourite aspects of YOLO is the silent disco, because pretty much no other clubs in town offer it and you get to pick between three channels of music. It's also brilliant to watch a sea of people singing out of tune while queueing. Aside from silent disco, the music itself in YOLO is also great. From cheesy bangers, current pop hits, D&B and the R&B room, there really is something for everyone.

The SU and YOLO staff also make an immense effort to make YOLO as safe as possible. The bar staff offer drink stoppers for VKs and other bottled drinks, and secure lids to prevent spiking. There are bouncers on the door and throughout the SU as well, making sure that everyone is safe and that those that need to go home because they're too drunk, do.

There is also a first-aid tent, which is easy to locate and is quick and effective whatever time of night and whatever problem you may have. Furthermore, you don't need to panic about losing your mates there either, as the WhereYouAt app allows you to add your friends and check where they are at all times, meaning no one's left behind. The app also uses Bluetooth, meaning that if you have no Wi-Fi or data, it can still be used.

Disagree

Megan Whitmore
Contributor

YOLO, the student night everyone dreams of, is not the best club night in Cardiff. I found that after last year YOLO became very repetitive and I've stopped enjoying my time in there. During the second semester of my first year, I attended almost every week and thoroughly enjoyed it. However, after a couple of attempts at the start of this year, I decided to take a break.

There are a few reasons I've stopped enjoying YOLO:

The repetitive music: Although this might sound like a complaint about most clubs in Cardiff, the music at YOLO in particular isn't enjoyable and hearing the same tracks week after week became tiring. Even at my favourite club Live Lounge, where I love the music, I find I need the occasional break as the repetition becomes overwhelming.

The early starts: The idea of getting to YOLO by 8pm sounds great—it allows you to enjoy a full four hours and still get home early enough for a good night's sleep before a 9am lecture. Once you factor in pre drinks and getting ready, it becomes even earlier. Many socials begin around 6pm, and if you're anything like my friends, you'll want to start drinking before that.

The crowded space: As a popular student night, YOLO attracts a lot of people, making it difficult to move around as you're squeezed into tight spaces. As I start to sober up, I become more aware of just how cramped it is. I'm not claustrophobic, but being surrounded by sweaty students isn't enjoyable.



Aston Martin: Beauty and Innovation

Luke James
Contributor

An icon of British motoring, Aston Martin sits amongst the great car manufacturers. Each and every car produced is in its own way jaw-droppingly beautiful, with innovation making them seemingly better and better. Not only are the cars beautiful, but the latest generations are able to keep up with the highest ends of both the supercar and sports car markets. For years, Aston Martin always had the “sex appeal” in design, but when driver were not at the same standard as competitors, such as the DB4 Zagato and the DB5, two of the most beautiful cars ever made. Aston's post-WWII racing heritage is not as great as its rivals, with only one Le Mans win in 1959, the car driven by future GT-40 designer Carroll Shelby and Formula One driver, Roy Salvadori. The winning DBR1, named after its legendary designer, Sir David Brown, would go on to etch its name in history. A total of nineteen wins for Aston Martin through many different categories, such as the 1.5-litre class in the 1930s, and the GT1 class in the late 2000s, Aston Martin has proved its worth on occasion, but on far fewer than the likes of Porsche and Ferrari.

However, times have changed, and when we look at the newest generation of cars, there is a level of performance never seen before from Aston Martin Racing. The new Aston Martin Vantage, a variant of the DB12 family, has racked up wins in both America's IMSA series and in the FIA World Endurance Cham-

pionship, performing at the highest level and competing with the dominant Porsche 911 GT3 R winning the Circuit of the Americas, and coming second in both Qatar and Sao Paulo in the GT3 class. Furthermore, Aston Martin are branching into the Hypercar class with the Valkyrie for the 2025 season, a homologation of the road car designed by former Red Bull and now soon to be Aston Martin Formula One chief engineer, Adrian Newey. Not only is the car so incredible to look at, but the Cosworth V12 provides the perfect soundtrack, and has already showed great promise in testing at Silverstone.

Since Canadian billionaire Lawrence Stroll bought the company in 2020, Aston Martin has re-entered Formula One, with ten podiums total, eight of them coming in the 2023 season. As well as this, both the new Vantage and the DB12 have been released on sale to the general public, with many describing both as now leading cars in their fields. The DB12 challenges the likes of the Ferrari 812 Superfast and the Bentley Continental GT, but advocates itself as a “Super Tourer”, rather than “just” a Grand Tourer. Its throaty V8 growls with the perfect soundtrack and pushes out an astonishing 671 brake horsepower. There are also whispers of a V12 edition, which would be absolutely brilliant, as a British V12 is not only one of the best sounding engines, but in the modern day, a rival to some of the German versions.

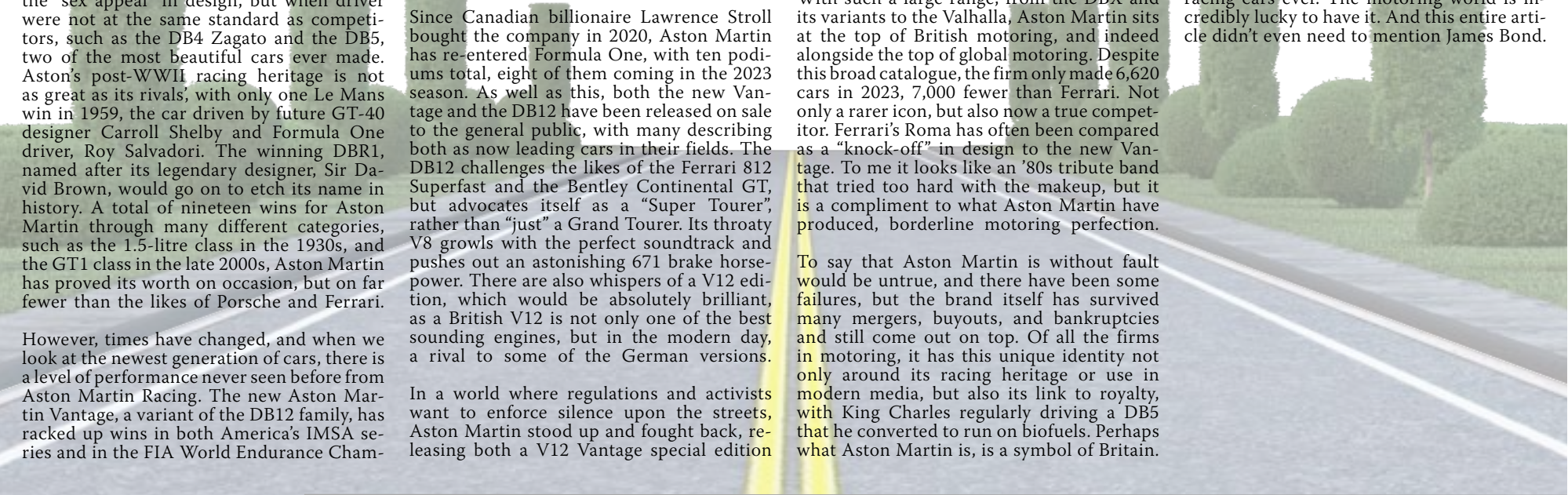
In a world where regulations and activists want to enforce silence upon the streets, Aston Martin stood up and fought back, releasing both a V12 Vantage special edition

and a new edition of the Vanquish, also fitted with their most powerful ever V12, built and designed inhouse. Again, both cars provide total eye candy, and are worthy of the badge that adorns their bodywork. Their roars have been showed off, particularly the Vanquish, at Goodwood Festival of Speed, setting a decent time, especially for a production car, and wowing the crowd. What Aston Martin and their V12s signify is not only performance in the modern day, but also recognition of a 111-year-old icon, that promotes its British identity as well as entertain everyone who sees their cars in public. With such a large range, from the DBX and its variants to the Valhalla, Aston Martin sits at the top of British motoring, and indeed alongside the top of global motoring. Despite this broad catalogue, the firm only made 6,620 cars in 2023, 7,000 fewer than Ferrari. Not only a rarer icon, but also now a true competitor. Ferrari's Roma has often been compared as a “knock-off” in design to the new Vantage. To me it looks like an '80s tribute band that tried too hard with the makeup, but it is a compliment to what Aston Martin have produced, borderline motoring perfection.

To say that Aston Martin is without fault would be untrue, and there have been some failures, but the brand itself has survived many mergers, buyouts, and bankruptcies and still come out on top. Of all the firms in motoring, it has this unique identity not only around its racing heritage or use in modern media, but also its link to royalty, with King Charles regularly driving a DB5 that he converted to run on biofuels. Perhaps what Aston Martin is, is a symbol of Britain.

Tough, resilient, always getting back up from a tough fight, and providing beauty and perfection in the most intricate and wonderful ways. As we turn towards alternatives to petrol and diesel combustion, Aston Martin is stubborn to keep those engines in use for as long as it can, and one can only admire how well they have done with their latest crop.

I'll finish here: Aston Martin is the coolest car brand in the world, all of its cars leading or at the top of their fields, and its wings are oh so very iconic. A brand that has stood the test of time and provided some of the best road and racing cars ever. The motoring world is incredibly lucky to have it. And this entire article didn't even need to mention James Bond.



WELSH STUDENT MEDIA

Gair Rhydd

Annabelle Lee
Editor-in-Chief of Gair Rhydd

It has been a great first semester for us here at *Gair Rhydd*. We have had four successful publications, three in print, and this one online. We have had many amazing articles in our pages, from contributors and editors, alike. Some of the highlights include the interview with Lee Waters and all our US election articles. As well as this, this year has seen the largest number of contributors that we have ever had before with over 300 members.

We are currently waiting for the results of the regional SPA awards where we are up for Best Publication, Best Design, Best Article, and Best Journalist. These are highly anticipated results for all of us at *Gair Rhydd*, as we wait to see if we are the best Welsh student publication three years in a row. We are also optimistic about making it to the national SPA awards this year as the quality of the newspaper now gives us a fighting chance to win.



Quench

Katie Storrie
Editor-in-Chief of Quench

What an incredible start to the academic year! It has definitely gone quickly, and I cannot tell you how proud I am of everyone at *Quench Magazine*! Your hard work and dedication have really paid off. Whether you are a contributor, editor, page designer, photographer, or social media manager, you are all beyond talented. I cannot wait to see what you do in the new year!

This term at *Quench Magazine* has been big for us; our website is back up. We have launched our Pitch Portal, produced two magazines, collaborated with multiple student societies, and revamped our Beyond section at *Quench*, which features some notable interviewees including Sasha Nugura, Property Journalist at *The Times* and Jasper Wilkins, Senior Producer at the BBC. The launch of *Tonic* has also been a great success, with submissions now up! This new literary magazine created by *Quench* allows you to spotlight your creative writing pieces.

That being said, we still have so much coming up, and we are always welcoming new members

and contributors! If you are interested in getting involved with *Quench* in the new year, you still can! Please join our Facebook contributors page or reach out to editor@quenchmag.co.uk.

Thank you for all of your efforts this term, and I hope you have a restful winter break! I am looking forward to seeing you all in the new year.



The Mouth of the Ystwyth

Iestyn Tudor
Editor-in-Chief of The Mouth of the Ystwyth

Aberystwyth is an anomaly. It can only be described using a series of paradoxes: modern yet traditional, quaint yet lively, a town with all the characteristics of a city. All of this is bordered by sublime vistas of hills and views of the sea. Aberystwyth's influence throughout Wales is quiet but certain. One would not expect such a town to be a cultural and intellectual hub—even with the university topping Penglais Hill and the gargantuan National Library of Wales just beyond campus.

But there is so much happening here! That's why it is such a pleas-

ure to edit the university's student newspaper. *The Mouth of the Ystwyth* (MOTY) was only founded two years ago but has steadily grown into a prominent publication. Seeing the paper develop has been one of the most fulfilling aspects of studying here. Playing a role in said development has been my pleasure.

Connections between student media groups and student publications within Wales aren't often highlighted or even considered. But we do not exist in a vacuum. Last academic year, MOTY decided to reach out to *Gair Rhydd*, and we first visited Cardiff in February, 2023. (You can read about our trip in *Gair Rhydd* Issue 1196). This visit was a whirlwind. After touring the BBC Cymru building in Cardiff Central, MOTY's former president and *Gair Rhydd*'s former editor-in-chief hosted workshops in the universi-

ty's Student Media offices. Both newspapers then went on a great night out—the hangovers were worth it.

Mouth of the Ystwyth are planning another visit to *Gair Rhydd*. It will take place around the same time as last year, in late January / early February. It will follow the same pattern of a trip to the BBC studios, journalistic workshops, and some light(ish) drinking. We're really looking forward to it! We hope it will help extend our already productive, mutually beneficial relationship. We will see you in a few months. Running a student newspaper has shown me how many unique, important stories and perspectives there are within a university. MOTY and *Gair Rhydd* illustrate this point perfectly. What is journalism about if not connection?

Cardiff Union TV Xpress Radio

Adam Gaston
Station Manager of CUTV

After a successful 2023/24 year seeing the society nominated for multiple awards at the NASTAs, CUTV have come out of the blocks with a fantastic semester one of regular current affairs content, interviews with charities and exhibitions as well as coverage of the AGM and Cardiff University Bake Off. The quality of our content has gone up massively with new camera equipment and more importantly, the diligence, skill, and hard work of our members. We have multiple documentaries coming up in travel, dance and sport with us finishing filming for our sports documentary on the Cardiff University Ladies' Football (CULF) entitled *More than Just a Game*. Other promising productions include our *Student Gogglebox* production, a dating series called *Crushing in Cathays* and regular sports and entertainment shoots with highly anticipated Cardiff Clash coming up soon. Exciting things ahead for the station as we build towards the National Student Television Awards in the spring of 2025.



Ben Lewis
Station Manager of Xpress Radio

Xpress is back and in full force this year with exponential growth on socials and members this year. Starting off with record-breaking viewing figures on our 24-hour election coverage. This saw full radio coverage from evening to late morning with expertly led shows and guests showing off the full power of Xpress Radio's networks in journalism and politics. Xpress have also hosted the prestigious annual SRA chart show which saw us announce the top twenty charts in the UK from Student Radio. Recently, Xpress have been doing their annual "24-hourathon" where the station has non-stop shows from midday to late into the night. This was in aid of Millie Mittoo Children's charity. Total funds are still being calculated as of writing. Xpress has also seen an increase in memberships and growth in our community through an increase of socials and shows! This has led to investment being made into the podcast studio, which has seen an upgrade in recording tech. There will also be a slight re-deco-

ration phase as part two of the project. This has seen podcasts and audio dramas from Act One and the Creative Writing Society, with more upcoming projects happening in future. So, if you have an idea for a podcast or show, come down and we can get you on air. We also were on podium for 50% of our nominations at the SRA awards with special mention to Giles Crosgrrove's freshers for getting silver for Best Creative Speech Programming. Next year, Xpress are looking forward to Xprestival where we will be bringing the show back, live for students alongside our popular varsity coverage! Next year is not a miss for Cardiff's Students' Union's award-winning radio station.



CARDIFF UNIVERSITY AGM

A Reflection on This Year's Annual General Meeting

James Roberts
Opinion Editor

I confess now that my main reason for covering this year's AGM at the Students' Union was an expectation of drama and strong discourse. We all remember last year, when at the height of the Palestinian situation, a group of fairly well-organised students took to the stage and demanded that the Students' Union call a ceasefire. They were countered by others who pointed to Hamas' legal designation as a terrorist group. I will not pass comment on the merits of these positions, but

it was obviously a tense and dramatic affair, which took up the whole of its allotted time without getting through the entire agenda.

The footage filmed by members of the audience was put onto social media, and was commented upon by significant members of the Senedd and the House of Commons. By contrast, this year was a smoother event, without the tension and controversy of last year. Every motion on the agenda was passed without opposition, and despite a bit of booing when a few attendees voted against a pro-Palestinian motion, there was no disruption or disorderly behaviour. Nor was the hall as full as last year,

and from up on the balcony above the hall I could see very few people not sat down, as well as a smattering of empty seats. There was some debate over the union's affiliation with the NUS, and there were a significant number of votes against renewing it. Nonetheless, the AGM voted to maintain the link by a strong margin.

Despite the lower attendance and more subdued atmosphere, important motions were passed, and those proposing a motion to tackle sexual assaults on campus gave powerful speeches on the need to act against that scourge. Members of the union's executive gave clear

and substantial answers to the question that were put to them, proving their commitment to student issues and the many ways they are seeking to resolve them.

After all business was complete, the meeting was terminated by a vote of all present, well before the previously declared endtime of nine o'clock. Reactions have been mixed on social media, with many disappointed at a lack of drama and debate. But it seems that this year's AGM was a more civil affair, that gave great attention to the problems faced by Cardiff students day to day.

Motion 2: Oppose Cuts to Teaching Opportunities for PhD Students

Hannah Prince
Science Editor

Historically, PhD students have been provided with the opportunity to teach undergraduate students during their time studying at Cardiff University, which not only benefitted undergraduates, but was invaluable for the PhD students. Unfortunately, since last year, these opportunities for postgraduate students to teach have been drastically cut across the university. This has resulted in a significant decrease in teaching roles being offered to PhD students, with some schools, such as Social Sci-

ences, cutting postgraduate teaching opportunities completely. This motion was presented in opposition to these cuts.

In August 2023, after several years of campaigning by students, postgraduate students were finally provided with official contracts of employment that gave the rights and recognition for the work that they do and paid them the amount that they deserved. In the proposal of this motion, it was suggested that the reason why the university were removing postgraduate teaching roles was to save money. Teaching experience is imperative to PhD students, providing them with skills that not only assist them in their fu-

ture careers, but also aid their knowledge and understanding in their subject and contribute to their professional development.

PhD students bring fresh and new perspectives to undergraduate students and help to improve the quality of education that the university offer, so cutting these jobs and opportunities is incredibly impactful. The removal of these roles not only impacts the professional development of PhD students, but greatly affects the financial situations of many people, as most postgraduate students rely on the income of the teaching roles to make ends meet.

The motion asked the Students' Union to oppose the university's decision to reduce teaching opportunities for PhD students, lobby the university and advocate for the expansion of teaching opportunities for students, run awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of PhD teaching roles and work with relevant departments to explore alternative solutions to maintain or increase teaching opportunities for postgraduate students.

This motion was proposed by Michaela Panes and after she gave a passionate speech to the AGM, the motion was passed, almost unanimously.



Securing Justice, A Renewed Call to End Sexual Violence: An Interview with Isabel Pelaez-Cooper

Ella Lane
Head of Opinion

Sexual violence is something that nobody deserves to go through. This was the belief of those at the Annual General Meeting, who proposed the motion calling to end sexual misconduct on Cardiff University campuses. I interviewed Isabel Pelaez-Cooper, one of the speakers at the AGM in support of this motion, to gain some insight into why this cause is incredibly important.

When asked about the current issues on campus, Pelaez-Cooper, argued that “currently, there is a massive safety issue on campus. We have all seen the reports on Overheard, and the assault of the woman under the Senghenydd bridge. However, many are still suffering in silence or fear, so the truth is we really don’t know how deep the problem runs. But it is safe to assume that campus is not as safe as it should be”. Indeed, around university at night, I do

not feel safe as a woman. Threatening individuals, who are frequently spotted in Cathays have been posted online, yet nothing has been done about this. We are left feeling at risk when walking home from work and nights out and encouraged to stay “vigilant” when the issue is nothing to do with us, and everything to do with the individuals making us feel unsafe as well as the lack of support currently available.

When asked about what change needs to be enacted, Pelaez-Cooper said “I’d ideally like the uni to implement every single one of our proposals in the AGM motion. These notably include every organisation relating to student life having clear preventative measures and investigative pathways when it comes to sexual misconduct, raising awareness for where to find support, promoting the university’s reporting system, and pushing open dialogue about this issue. She went on to suggest that “it would be even more commendable if the uni had further talks with us, so we could get possibly even more [proposals]”.

When questioned about what students can do to support the change that needs to happen on campus, Pelaez-Cooper stated that “students are always free to join time to act! There are only four of us who really work around the clock to do what we do. We would love it if people messaged us asking if they’d want to join our WhatsApp chats and meetings”. Time to Act is a student-led campaign tackling sexual misconduct within Cardiff University and beyond. You can find them on Instagram @timetoactcardiffuni. I urge you to follow and get involved. She also stated that “another way students could help is just simply talking about the issue. It is so important it doesn’t become a silent issue. We must speak up about it, we have to have these tough conversations for the sake of the safety of students on campus”.

Pelaez-Cooper also suggested that students need to make themselves aware of bystander training. This training teaches people how to intervene when they see harassment or violence, by urging you

to to notice an event, recognise there is a problem, take responsibility for doing something, and possess the necessary skills to act. Obviously, this approach to a situation is not a universal method to handle situations concerning sexual misconduct. You should research this further to learn when you need to escalate a situation to someone who is more equipped to help, to ensure your personal safety. Pelaez-Cooper also suggested that “societies should have nights where they talk about bystander training and consent,” which I feel could be beneficial when trying to educate large groups on what they can do to help someone in a dangerous situation.

By actively supporting this motion on campus, alongside the changes the university is required to make (which can be found in the AGM Agenda 2024), we can create the change we want to see. The main thing I want to relay in this article is that standing by and allowing these things to happen on campus is simply not an option.

Motion 3: “Protect our Freedom to Express Solidarity with Palestine”

Aneurin Davies
Opinion Editor

The third motion of the AGM, “Protect our freedom to express solidarity with Palestine”, comes amid the active turmoil that exists between some students and Cardiff University itself. In June of this year, seven students who attend the university were arrested in Cardiff for pro-Palestine activism. All seven were suspended from the university as a result. Many viewed this as an injustice, leading Luke Palin to table this motion.

This motion also follows on from last year’s AGM. Here, the motion “Ceasefire Now” was passed. The purpose of the motion was to have the SU publicly call for an immediate ceasefire and for the SU to lobby Cardiff University to do the same. Within the same motion, the SU was called upon to provide material support for students who have, and currently are, being affect-

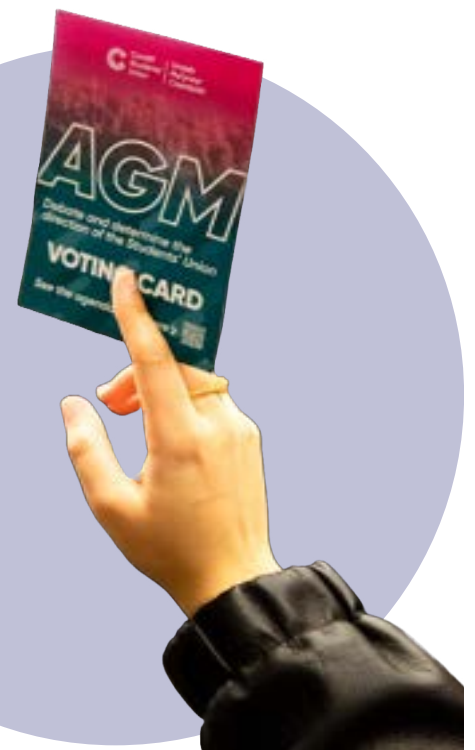
ed by the war. Educational resources were also to be supplied by the SU as a result.

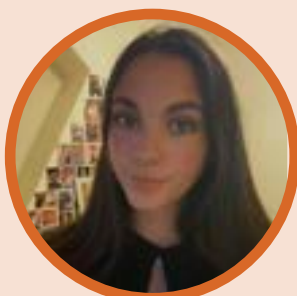
Palin’s motion, as its title suggests, was to allow students within Cardiff University to speak freely about their solidarity with Palestine—without fear of suspension, or worse. The students speaking on behalf of the motion stated that they were “appalled that communications [by the SU and university, relating to the war] haven’t increased” and that “suppressing student action in the name of peace, isn’t peace at all”. While summarising the motion, Palin added that “we must vote for this motion in order to protect freedom of expression on campus”. Putting the motion forward to a vote, it passed almost unanimously, with only three voting against.

The resolution of this motion includes five actions to be undertaken by the SU. Firstly, they have promised to “publicly express solidarity with universities in Palestine that have been destroyed by Israel”. Secondly,

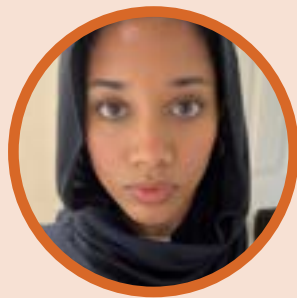
“to publicly express solidarity with students at Cardiff, in the UK and around the world who are exercising their right to peacefully protest”. Next, “to publicly condemn and resist punitive measures against pro-Palestine student activists enacted by Cardiff University and other external bodies”.

The fourth and fifth resolutions relate exclusively to Cardiff University itself. The SU is aiming “to lobby the university to request provision of legal guidance to support and empower students to take part in peaceful activism in solidarity with Palestine”. Within the fifth resolution, the SU has guaranteed that they will write to the university’s executive board for a public statement. The motion’s goal is to get a statement from the university, declaring a commitment to protecting students’ rights to express solidarity without fear of repercussions (for example, arrest, harassment, or defamation) and that they will not work with police to punish students who protest.





Lauren Tutchell



Laila Dawelbeit



Adam Dunstan



Luke Tonkinson



Thomas Wilson

UK Government Considers Weight-Loss Jabs for the Unemployed Obese

Lauren Tutchell
Head of Politics

In a controversial move to tackle rising obesity rates and boost economic productivity, the UK government is considering offering weight loss injections to the unemployed.

According to NHS data, two in three Britons are classed as overweight or obese, with obesity-related illnesses costing the NHS a whopping £11bn a year. Obesity has also been linked to the development of type 2 diabetes, an area the NHS spends roughly 9% of its entire budget on. Additionally, the cost of our benefits system is predicted to go up by 1/3 over the next five years.

In a subsequent bid to “think differently” about easing pressure on the NHS, the government has announced they will be launching a five-year trial of the weight-loss jab Mounjaro; a weekly injectable pen that helps regulate blood sugar and balance energy levels, reducing appetite and cravings. Initially, the drug will only be given to individuals categorised with severe obesity (BMI over 40) who have at least three obesity-related health conditions. The trial aims to explore whether the medication can boost productivity and

help bring more people back to the workforce. Advocating for the drug, health secretary Wes Streeting said: “For all the challenges facing the health of our nation, we have two huge advantages: some of the world’s leading scientific minds, and a National Health Service with enormous potential. If we can combine the two, patients in this country can reap the rewards of the revolution in medical science unfolding before our eyes.”

Amanda Pritchard, the chief executive of the NHS, also voiced her support for the drug, celebrating it as a “game-changer” for public health which could reduce the risk of diabetes, heart attacks, and strokes.

However, not everyone is in agreement. Some point out that the NHS lacks the capacity to oversee such a program effectively, and that addressing the fundamental issues in the NHS, such as chronic underfunding and unequal access to care, is an important factor that isn’t being sufficiently considered. Additionally, there is a concern that the drug may encourage a “dependency culture” where people become reliant upon the jab and do not continue to engage in healthy eating or exercise. Critics also emphasise the need for a more holistic approach to obesity, focusing more on prevention over medication. This includes promoting healthy lifestyles, increasing education, improving food la-

bell, and making healthy food more accessible.

Initiatives such as the sugar tax, which was introduced in 2018, are celebrated for their efforts to tackle obesity; so, perhaps continuing along this route of pushing food and drink companies to provide healthier products may be the better move forward instead of solely placing the blame on consumers. Other policies, such as Labour’s recent ban on junk food advertisements before the 9pm watershed and proposed measures to provide patients with smartwatches to track health conditions, may also play an important part in tackling the obesity crisis. A crucial aspect often overlooked in this debate is mental health, which is closely intertwined with unemployment.

While this policy may appear promising at first glance, it risks oversimplifying a complex issue. The root of the problem lies in the intricate relationship between inequality, poverty, and poor health. Addressing these fundamental societal challenges should take precedence over medicalization. Relying solely on weight loss injections is akin to applying a superficial fix to a deeper structural problem. A more comprehensive approach that tackles the underlying socioeconomic factors is necessary for lasting change.

Rachel Reeves Determined to Stick to Inheritance Tax for Farmers

Laila Dawelbeit
Politics Editor

The chancellor of the exchequer, Rachel Reeves, is understood to be standing firm against a U-turn on inheritance tax for farmers that came out of the recent Autumn Budget, despite the treasury analysing ways of mitigating the impact.

A No 10 spokesperson said: “We’re committed to implementing the policy as set out in a budget. We’re not considering any mitigations. It was obviously a difficult decision, but the economic situation the government inherited has required us to make tough choices.”

Since 1992, a tax exemption called Agricultural Property Relief (APR) has been in place, allowing farmers to pass on their property tax-free. This was done to strengthen farming and food security in the UK, since farming is not always a profitable business, with many farmers being described as asset rich, but cash poor.

What has been proposed in the Autumn Budget will change this. From April 2026, 100% inheritance tax relief will only apply to the first £1m of combined agricultural and business property. Above this amount, inheritance tax will be applied at a reduced rate of 20%, rather than the standard 40%. Farmers will be able to pay the tax in instalments over ten years, interest-free.

The environment secretary, Steve Reed, said that the tax change could raise £200m a year for the NHS and other services. He claims that this will not affect most farms, with the government estimating that

only about 500 estates a year will pay more under the new scheme.

However, the accuracy of this figure is questioned, with many in the farming community arguing that only using figures from estates that qualified for APR last year is misleading. The new policy includes both APR and Business Property Relief (BPR)—which used to give farmers separate allowances for business assets, such as farming machinery, and APR could be claimed for their land. Because BPR was not considered when producing the estimate, many are concerned that the number of estates that will be affected has been underestimated.

Filling the news these past few weeks have been images of huge tractors rolling through Parliament Square and outside Venue Cymru, where the recent Welsh Labour Party Conference was held. Thousands of farmers have gathered in London and Llandudno to voice their opposition to inheritance tax for farmers announced in the Budget, causing many within the Labour Party to be concerned about the political implications of the tax change.

While some in Downing Street believe that the backlash from farmers will not be a major problem for the government as they do not represent the typical Labour Party voting base, around 100 Labour MPs have a rural aspect to their constituencies and won them for the first time in July by

fairly tight margins. According to *The Guardian*, one Labour MP, who represents a heavily rural constituency, has spent much of the last few weeks sitting at the kitchen tables of farmers who were certain they would be affected by the tax changes, even if the new rules didn’t apply to them.

The MP said that social media was causing a lot of confusion for people regarding the policy but that it was crucial for Labour to be “in full listening mode” to farmers if they wanted to keep their rural seats at the next election. They felt that there was a lot of pent up anger in the farming community “because for the last fourteen years, the government has promised things and not delivered them”.

While the Treasury insists that there will be no U-turns on the policy, some Labour MPs still believe that it will be softened, with potential future mitigations being put in place. There has been an attempt to soften the blow. Steven Reed has met with the National Farmers’ Union (NFU) numerous times over the past month, while Huw Irranca-Davies, Deputy Welsh First Minister and Rural Affairs Secretary has met with a delegation of farmers and spoken to farming unions. However, it remains to be seen what the true political impact of this will be, especially ahead of the 2026 Senedd election which will be a month after the introduction of the tax change.



Ex-PM Liz Truss: “We need a British Trump”

Nye Jones
Contributor

Speaking at a summit in New Delhi last Monday, former Prime Minister Liz Truss claimed that in the wake of Trump’s historic second election victory (which he may claim as his third), Britain needed a copycat version. “Frankly I think we need a British Trump; the question is who that individual might be”.

She asserted that the British public want to see the “same kind of revolution that Trump is delivering in America”. Having spent just forty-nine days as PM back in the autumn of 2022, Truss is perhaps not the first figure one would turn want to lead such a revolution, yet her statement is by no means far-fetched.

The UK general election results from July revealed a “loveless landslide” for Labour and it is in this lovelessness which Truss is finding her argument. The right-wing party Reform UK—headed by the ever-controversial Nigel Farage—achieved 4.1 million votes, some 14.3% of the total vote share, putting it ahead of the Liberal Democrats by 600,000 votes.

Up and down the country, Reform produced strong results, coming second in 98 constituencies of which 89 were to Labour. The argument therefore for a “British Trump” to round up the rest of these votes is not totally far-fetched, and Truss is confident therefore that personifying mass discontent—as Trump has done to such success—is exactly what the UK needs.

2024 has been a turbulent year for democracy in the west, and right-wing gains have been made in the US, Austria, France, and Germany, with the latter facing a snap election in February which could completely alter the progressive pro-migration stance Western European democracies have adopted in the twenty-first century.

Truss therefore argued a need to mirror such change in the UK and explored the idea of a “fighting force” being formed of “the best of Nigel Farage’s Reform, and Tories such as Suella Braverman”. Based on the aforementioned voting information Truss claimed it to be only a matter of time before we are “going to see major changes in Europe as well as in Britain”.

With a UK general election not likely to happen until the earliest date of 2028 (if Labour perform well), it is unlikely that such a “revolutionary” change will occur in the UK for a while. Yet there is doubt that such a Trumpian figure could succeed in the UK at all. Differences in democratic structure between Britain and the US mean in the UK we vote for individual constituents rather than a presidential head of state and therefore one could argue that the personification of change which Trump illustrates across the pond would be difficult to mirror simply due to our voting structure.

Furthermore, would the British public really have the patience for a character such as Trump? Would a Trumpian figure of such criminal negligence be able to survive the midweek scathings of PMQs? Given the media outrage regarding the Labour Party’s “freebiesgate”, would a leader like Trump, which Truss is calling out for, be able to manipulate our political landscape with the same success?

Truss as a character best aligns with the conspiracy-infected world of MAGA, and she claims her disastrous mini-budget was forced out by the bureaucratic deep state, rather than by any of its own faults. Yet despite her MAGA tendencies, she was the first to admit that “I have already put my fingers in the fire and had them severely burnt.” What gives anybody else the right to believe that the torch of Westminster, an alien world to those in the States and therefore anybody aligning with the idealism of MAGA, would not leave them just as scarred?

Council of Nations Tackles the Challenge of British Power-Sharing

Harvey Knowles
Contributor

In the aim of increasing cross-governmental coordination, relations and engagement the Labour Party has overseen the creation, and inaugural meeting of the Council of the Nations and Regions. The idea was initially proposed in the commission on the UK’s future in 2022, which was chaired by former Prime Minister Gordon Brown, and finally came into fruition on the 11th of October.

Having now been in office for over one-hundred days, Keir Starmer will surely be pleased to have successfully created and held the council’s first meeting, especially due to the context the union finds itself in. Following the narrow decision by the Scottish electorate in 2014 to remain in the union, calls for independence once again filled the political discourse of Holyrood as a result of the Brexit referendum and years of austerity. This is coupled with the fact that Northern Ireland’s nationalist party, Sinn Féin, find their leader, Michelle O’Neill, in the position of first minister, with Welsh nationalism also steadily rising in younger voters.

It has been clear since COVID-19 that more communication was needed between the nations of the union, with the COVID-19 inquiries highlighting the issues behind the scenes. Former prime minister, Boris Johnson, spoke on this lack of communication saying that he avoided cooperating with the devolved governments for political reasons, stating it would have been “optically wrong”. Becky Kummer, a spokesperson for COVID-19 families for Justice UK said that these actions were a sign of someone “not fit for power”, a comment Keir Starmer would not want to be made about himself, perhaps revealing the political reasons for such a council.

However, some discontent has appeared due to the make-up of the council, which includes not only the three devolved governments, but also re-

gions of England, which seem to have been put on par with the three nations. Notably, each region of England has been given a representative to sit at the council, meaning England itself has twelve representatives, compared with Northern Ireland’s two, and Scotland and Wales’ one. Glasgow council leader, Susan Aitken, revealed her outrage with the imbalance of representation, in particular due to the exclusion of Glasgow as its own entity at the council. However, Labour sources say this is due to the fact that Scotland is yet to have devolved powers within the nation to cities such as Glasgow.

Moreover, with the aim of the council being to increase cooperation amongst the nations and regions of the UK, it is perhaps surprising that the council is only to convene twice per year. A further criticism can be made with the appointment of Keir Starmer’s former chief of staff, Sue Gray, as an envoy for the government, with her responsibilities including duties concerned with the council. While the Labour Party will aim to explain the appointment as a sideways move, many will of course see it as a demotion, following the controversies in the last few weeks. In fact, Sue Gray failed to attend the first council meeting having “taken a short break”. This perhaps highlights the position the devolved governments find themselves in on the list of Keir Starmer’s concerns. With an aim of increasing relations within the UK, it is also worth mentioning that no room was found in the council for representation on behalf of Cornwall.

It is clear that from a political position, the creation of the council makes sense. However, it remains to be seen whether the council will bring about the changes that the Labour Party so dearly hopes for, or whether it will merely be another talking shop.

Jill Stein: a Lame Duck Candidate?

Thomas Wilson
Politics Editor

Going into the election, many feared that Jill Stein would be the key factor in inadvertently securing the presidency for Donald Trump. After all, third-party candidates had decided elections before—notably in the race for the White House in 2000. In the state which decided the presidency, George W Bush received 2,912,790, compared to Al Gore who received 2,912,253—yet it is undeniable that Gore failed to take the key state of Florida as a result of 97,488 of the electorate casting their votes for Ralph Nader. However, Stein underperformed, gathering just 685,550 votes nationally.

Fears had begun to develop in the weeks prior to the polls opening of her potential detrimental effect on the outcome among Stein’s Green Party colleagues in Europe. The European Green published a statment on November 1st: “Donald Trump has promised that if he becomes President again, he will extend abortion bans, deny members of the LGBTQIA+ community their rights, and deport migrants en masse. We are clear that Kamala Harris is the only candidate who can block Donald Trump. We call on Jill Stein to withdraw from the race, and endorse Kamala Harris for the presidency of the United States”. Intriguingly, when it comes to the concerns of the European Greens of the denial of “members

of the LGBTQIA+ community their rights” or fears over limiting access to abortions, such accusations could be levelled not only at “The Donald” but Stein’s running mate Butch Ware.

In an interview with The Black Authority, Ware stated “I don’t think that biological males should play in female sports. I think it gives an unfair competitive advantage”, as well as stating: “Of course, there should be limits on everything. I won’t go into the finer points of it, but of course there have to be limitations,” when Ware was asked if there ought to be limitations on abortion. Either the European Greens were unaware to the opinions of Ware, or they consciously decided to not criticise them in

an act of inexcusable hypocrisy. Disregarding concerns “progressives” on the left would have had with the Green Party over the remarks of Ware, many Americans were perturbed by the attitudes of Stein on foreign policy. From her baseless claim that that NATO “pursued a policy of basically encircling Russia”; to her lie that the US “helped foment a coup (The Revolution of Dignity in 2014 against pro-Putin President Viktor Yanukovich) against a democratically-elected government”, before egregiously claiming that the post-revolution government contained “ultra-nationalists and ex-Nazis”, Stein has made a habit of not only propagating Kremlin conspiracy theories, but also fundamentally misunderstanding the integral role NATO plays in fostering security for former Soviet states who have become NATO



members; a right they are afforded under the NATO–Russia Founding Act 1997, which specifies the “door to membership will remain open to all emerging European democracies.”

Alongside these deceptions, animosity to her candidacy rose exponentially following her interview with Mehdi Hasan on the October 10th, as during the interview, Stein refused to call Vladimir Putin a war criminal, before lying that no arrest warrant had been issued by the ICC, when in fact there had been a warrant issued in March 2023.

Aside from her shameful reticence to condemn Putin, Stein squirmed when questioned if she thought Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad was a war criminal. “Yes,” Stein replied, “in so many words, yes, we have said as much”, after a period of heavy deliberation. For reference, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights has attributed 83,500 civilian deaths to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as well as detailing the illegal use of chlorine gas and torture by Assad forces. To conclude, the Green Party failed to break through not only because they succeeded in alienating progressives, but the majority of the electorate, due to Stein’s flagrant pandering to war criminals and vilification of self-determining former Soviet states.

Keir Starmer: 81% Emissions Cut by 2035

Cameron Wagg
Contributor

With the United Nations Climate Change Conference recently ending, Keir Starmer pledged the UK would reduce all emissions by 2035. This is revising the previous Conservative Government's pledge, which was 78%.

This year's Climate Change Conference had a wide gap in attendance, with Starmer being one of only seven leaders who showed up, with thirteen leaders being absent including the US. In 2023 the UK is estimated to have admitted 384.2 million tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent, a decrease by 5.4% from the previous year. This falls in line with the steady decline of emission output from the UK.

Keir Starmer said that 81% mark was put in place after talks with the UK's climate change committee. In line with this, the United Nations has released a warning that Earth's temperature is set to rise 3.1°C above pre-industrial levels by the end of the century without further action and has implored other countries to match this target too. As per the 2015 Paris Agreement, an international treaty placed in combatting climate change, the UK's set to follow its legally-binding carbon-cutting path to have net zero emissions by 2050. In

addition to this, the Climate Change Act 2008 also has the UK set in legally-binding domestic agreements to place carbon budgets every five years up to 2050. Differently to the NDC, this also targets both international aviation, such as flights, and shipping emissions. With this aim to reach net zero by 2050, the UK has been moving from non-renewable energy to greener and more renewable sources, such as wind and solar energy. Although it has been warned by the CCC that without lifestyle changes it will be difficult to continue making these cuts in greenhouse gas emissions, the UK is on set to reach both the 2035 and 2050 targets.

Starmer's new policy is helping enforce this. Examples of these lifestyle changes include the UK moving away from both mass meat and dairy consumption and a change from petrol cars to other more sustainable sources of transport. Furthermore, the interim chair of the CCC, Professor Piers Foster said that with the UK's national circumstances and the latest advancements in technology and science that the new 81% target is practical and achievable. The new and higher target is a massive step in the right direction when it comes to fighting climate change, especially in a climate of uncertainty about the world's future.

Can Labour Woo Investors While Protecting Workers' Rights?

Ewan Sanders
Contributor

Over the last one hundred days of the Labour government, we have been promised that the prime minister's priority has been growing the economy and leading Britain to global economic prosperity. However, can the Labour Party balance private investors and the working people Starmer pledged to support and protect during the election campaign?

This question follows a controversy within Keir Starmer's own cabinet office, as Transport Secretary Louise Haigh has publicly stated that she is boycotting P&O cruises following the company's actions in 2022, when 800 employees were fired via a pre-recorded Zoom call only for the company to re-hire cheaper agency workers. Haigh branding P&O a "rogue operator" is not a breach from the party line, since Keir Starmer and his then shadow cabinet condemned the actions of the cruise company back in 2022 and have continued with their criticisms in the form of the Employment Rights Bill, which prevents companies like P&O from continuing in their "firing and re-hiring" policies.

The tension between the transport

secretary and No. 10 is due to the private investment summit Starmer is holding in an attempt to draw private investment into the UK economy where, unbeknownst to ministers, P&O's parent company DP World was attending. The Dubai-based conglomerate threatened to withhold an investment of £1 billion due to Haigh's comments, however, Starmer has reassured investors that those "were not the view of the government" and DP World went ahead with the summit.

This debacle raises the question: Can Labour successfully sweet-talk private companies to invest in the UK by cutting red tape and continuing to support the environment and the regulations and protections workers currently enjoy? The other question is how the chancellor's budget is going to impact the government's relationship with the private sector, as rumours are swirling over tax rises; for instance, the rumour that national insurance contributions for employers will increase in an attempt to both narrowly keep Labour's manifesto promise, while also filling the £40 billion black hole which the treasury claims was left by the previous Conservative government.

Reeves is attempting to assist Starmer in their joint approach to bringing

investment into the economy, along with the new National Wealth Fund, Reeves is supposedly redefining the law around national debt to increase borrowing specifically into infrastructure this country desperately needs.

Speculation, however, can only go so far, as the budget will remain completely confidential, to maintain stability in the markets, until Reeves announces the budget to parliament in the first labour budget in 15 years and the first-ever budget delivered by a female chancellor of the exchequer. This leaves us with the question, will labour be able to balance on the knife edge that is workers' rights and private investment?

MPs Vote on Assisted Dying for First Time in Nine Years

Dylan Webster
Contributor

Labour backbench MP Kim Leadbeater's private members bill on introducing assisted dying has been officially launched in the House of Commons, the bill will first be voted on after the second reading of the bill by MPs on the 29th of November.

Through the random selection process Labour MP for Spen Valley, Kim Leadbeater, has been able to bring forward her bill on introducing assisted dying to the UK. Leadbeater stated the bill would provide adults who are terminally ill the choice to shorten the period of death, for them and their loved ones. Leadbeater has addressed challenges from critics by ensuring that the bill

would have safeguards to protect all terminally ill people would not be made to agree to assisted dying against their will and judgement, specifying the bill will not undermine palliative care.

Opposition has come from an array of places, such as House of Lords cross-bencher Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, who plans to fight against the bill from the Lords. The former Paralympian believes passing such a bill would risk forcing disabled people into a choice that they do not want to take, due to the growing costs of health and social care, and the strain that these costs cause on loved ones, stating to *Sky News* in January of this year; "The consequences for people who don't have a choice are really serious." Grey-Thompson began voicing her opposition after Dame Esther Rantzen announced she has joined Dignitas, the famed

Swiss assisted dying clinic. Founded in 1998, Dignitas is probably the most well-known assisted dying clinic globally, who stand for 'living with dignity, and dying with dignity.'

Former cabinet secretary Simon Case announced that the eventual vote on the bill will not fall under the governments collective responsibility, stating "ministers can vote, or not, however they wish." Leaving the bill to the mercy of individual opinion. The polls suggest the majority of the British public are in favour of the general idea of assisted dying, but the Labour Party seem to be less united, PM Keir Starmer suggests there are "certainly grounds for changing the law." Whereas his Health secretary Wes Streeting has reservations, raising concerns over lack of end-of-life care available for people who need it.

The first reading of the bill took place on the 16th of October, with the Senedd holding a debate and vote on the 23rd of October. The bill will not apply in Scotland, but a separate, similar private member's bill was brought forward by Liam McArthur MSP. The final vote in parliament will take place on the 29th of November, the first of its kind in almost a decade.

Trump Names Fox News Host as Defence Secretary

Dylan Webster
Contributor

President-Elect Donald Trump has announced he will be replacing current defence secretary, four-star general Lloyd Austin, with *Fox News* star Pete Hegseth. But is there more to Hegseth than meets the eye?

Hegseth, renowned for his conservative views and "anti-woke agenda" earned a degree in Politics from Princeton before gaining a Master's in public policy from Harvard. Post-university. Hegseth joined the National Guard, completing tours of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Guantanamo. After leaving the army, he became director in organisations such as Concerned Veterans for America. On the surface, organisations such as Concerned Veterans for America appear to stand for veterans' rights, but in reality they use this huge issue in the States to promote a

conservative ideology, standing against further funding to Ukraine. Hegseth joined the *Fox News* team in 2017, becoming a regular host on "Fox and Friends Weekend".

I am sure in saying, most of my lectures would agree an undergraduate degree in politics does not quite fully prepare an individual to become a Secretary of State, so why has Trump selected Hegseth, a man with zero experience in any civil service role, to run his entire defence system. I would argue Hegseth's comments about the military over the past seven years while being on *Fox News* might have something to do with it. He has staunchly opposed what he describes as a "woke" military, further stating his desire to fire all top military figures who are involved in diversity and inclusion policies.

His right-wing rhetoric is also prominent in his literature. In his book *American Cru-*

sade: Our Fight to Stay Free he critiques the rise of "progressive leftism", claiming that "woke" policies are a threat to traditional values and even the Constitution.

On a popular chat show podcast, He stated he wished to take the military back to 1995, the time of "don't ask, don't tell", conveniently. These sort of views make him the perfect candidate to join Trump's sarcastically crazy cabinet, featuring individuals such as Linda McMahon and Robert F Kennedy Jr. In the past few days, the US police have reported details on a sexual assault case brought against Hegseth in 2017. Hegseth was not arrested or charged over the matter and his lawyer has indicated that a pay-off agreement has been made outside of the courts, deterring the victim from perusing the case. Hegseth still denies any wrongdoing.



THE TEAM



REVIEW



Emily Jo Cottle



Gemma Willmott



Lowri Jones



Angela Griffith

Defying Gravity: A Wicked-Filled Week!

Lowri Jones
Review Editor

This past week I've conveniently had the joy of seeing the touring cast of *Wicked* the musical at the Millennium centre, a couple days before the release of the long-awaited film adaptation. Therefore, I will be reviewing the new film release with reference to the original. I highly recommend you take yourself to the cinema to experience the film in its entirety before reading this as it may also include some spoilers.

I've been a frequent theatregoer from a young age, meaning I have had the pleasure of seeing many shows. That said, nothing quite compares to *Wicked*, meaning that the film was a tall order with high expectations and it's safe to say they surpassed my own. The opening scene of "No One Mourns The Wicked" has been spine-tingling the four times I've had the pleasure of being in the theatre audience. Seeing the opening on the big screen allowed for the audience to empathise and experience the song through a new lens entirely, as the musical feels like you're watching a bird's-eye account of events, whereas the film makes it as if your eyes are on the ground. Ariana Grande's casting as Glinda is utter perfection, her first appearance is enough to prove anyone who thought differently wrong. It is evident that Grande undertook a vocal transformation in order to play the role, as Glinda sings in an operatic style for this number (and many others) which she does masterfully

as well as the subtle yet brilliant acting choices she makes, conveying Glinda's inner tug of war. It was safe to say after sobbing throughout the entirety of this number I was hooked.

Soon after, the film takes us back to a time before the "Wicked Witch" existed. Back when she was known as Elphaba Thropp. Cynthia Erivo is nothing short of exceptional in this role, she brings a depth to the character that hasn't been seen by audiences before and has an incredible ability to resonate in an individual manner with all. A prominent example of this is the scene that takes place in the Ozdust ballroom, where Glinda has previously deceived Elphaba into wearing the iconic hat associated with the Wicked Witch and is mocked by the attendees of the ball. Erivo's acting conveys Elphaba's brave outer exterior in a way that we can all relate to, though Glinda sees through this, which creates a moment in which Elphaba and Glinda truly see each other. Glinda realises her error and evens the playing field by making a fool out of herself, which is when we feel Elphaba exhale, and she allows her vulnerability to shine through.

The importance of the music throughout the film must be understood also, as the songs are not only excellent and executed with the utmost perfection, but they are also imperative to the overall narrative of the film. Director John M Chu has also stated that the music was all performed live, even "Defying Gravity". I believe this choice allowed for more connection

with the audience and ultimately feels more authentic. Erivo and Grande's vocals on their own are nothing short of enchanting and chilling, though when put together they sing as one and melt perfectly together. Though songs such as "Popular" and "One Short Day" deviate from the original, the changes work best for the film. The same applies to the other minor changes made in order to capture this world correctly. The track "Popular" allows for Grande's effortless comedic ability to shine through, as it does throughout the film. Her natural delivery of comedy was unexpected and had the whole theatre chuckling along. "One Short Day" is a magical number for any fan of the stage musical. Fair to say, I will not spoil it but it was intensely emotional!

Standout performances are evident throughout the entirety of the film, though Jonathan Bailey's casting as Fiyero is nothing short of magnificent. The charm, flirtatiousness, and lovable arrogance that he portrays on screen is sure to have anyone in the audience blushing. He is widely known for his role in Netflix's *Bridgerton*, though I'm sure many were surprised by his phenomenal vocals and effortless dancing in "Dancing Through Life". Charisma comes as naturally to Bailey as breathing and I was beyond blown away by his performance and hope to see him flexing his musical muscles again in the future. Other performances of note include Oscar winner Michelle Yeoh (*Everything Everywhere All At Once*) as the cunning Madame Morrible

and Jeff Goldblum (*Jurassic Park*) as the wonderful Wizard of Oz. The characters respectively are revealed as prominent figures of system and hierarchy towards the closure of the film. Both actors were masterfully able to deceive the audience with charm and likability before the switch is flipped and their true natures are revealed.

John M Chu deserves all the flowers for bringing this musical to life on the big screen, the practical sets and their design, unique costuming, ensemble cast, and everything in between—to put it simply—could not have been more perfect. Loyal audiences and perhaps new audiences will fall in love with this magical world and the friendship that is the heart of the film. It's a perfect film to watch with your friends that will have you laughing out loud, astonished, and most likely sobbing also. Though set in a world so far from our own, *Wicked* has an ability to resonate with audiences like no other musical. I implore you to rush to the cinema to watch this if you haven't already, though I am sorry in advance for the cliffhanger at the end. It goes without saying this next year will be a long one waiting for *Part 2*, and I already feel changed for the better.

“Saturday Night at the Movies” on Xpress Radio: Scream Meets Student Radio

Emily Jo Cottle
Head of Review

Giles Cosgrove's "Saturday Night at the Movies" appears as a Halloween Xpress Radio special, but takes a sinister turn. Cosgrove, as well as writing the piece, acts as himself in a seemingly ordinary radio show where he takes requests for the best Halloween hits from classic horror movies. Cosgrove does well to allay any suspicion to anything out of the ordinary as he plays the intro for "Saturday Night at the Movies" straight into a few songs alongside chatty commentary and alerting the audience how to call/text in. After a few classic hits and some horror movie trivia, Giles receives a call from Blair, a friend, who tells Giles and his producer Glenn that she is locked in at the cinema. Giles initially laughs at the irony of the show's title and Blair's

predicament, before trying to help her get out of the cinema. We quickly learn that Blair is not alone and that Argento, Quentin, Flo, and Alice are also subjected to the same fate when the movie they went to see fades out and they are stuck in darkness. From the darkness emerges a masked killer who begins to work their way through the group while the friends must unveil the murderer "live" on air. Cosgrove plays with Xpress Radio as the setting of a fictitious murder mystery plot as the audience sees what would happen if *Scream* met student radio.

Cosgrove is loyal to the radio setting, which allows for an interesting and humorous intersection between the colloquialisms of Xpress with the absurd murderous narrative that unfolds. The carefully curated soundtrack is gripping and sets the tone for the piece. Any horror fan will be able to pinpoint each track. One thing I really liked was how the music acts as an eerie preventive to the narrative which leads to the anticipation of each scene. Like calls being cut off as a character screams and Giles playing the next track while trying to

regain contact with his friends. This radio show, to me, feels like a real homage to horror as a genre.

The meta idea around this concept plays with the tropes of horror in an entertaining and playful capacity. All the characters embody classic horror archetypes: clueless teens/young adults, screaming girls, and comic relief characters. I want to commend the portrayal of Blair, Argento, Alice, Quentin, and Flo as the vocal performances of the actors were clear and evident, making it easy to follow and visualise the murder mystery plot. Giles and Glenn worked really well to steady the realist radio elements alongside the outrageous narrative. I would also commend the portrayal of the secondary characters Nube, Professor Matlock, and Mrs Nadine Whitehouse for adding to the horror elements with great vocal articulation and their work driving the plot forward.

I think the acting in this piece is incredibly strong and the sound is really well edited and very slick. I would recommend listening to this show

with headphones to enhance the listening experience. Not only can you better enjoy the music, but you can really experience those sound effects that complement the horror genre and make you jump.

I would really recommend listening to "Saturday Night at the Movies", especially to find out what happens at the cinema lock-in. I won't tell you any more. I will just leave you with some words from Giles: "You can't have a scary movie without a twist". When watching, please wait till the very end to hear a note from Giles and some of the cast. They all worked so hard on this show and Giles credits everyone. I will certainly be looking out for more work from Giles and his talented cast and crew and I really recommend you do the same.

You can find Saturday Night at the Movies and many more shows by going to Mixcloud.com and searching for Xpress Radio—happy listening!



Gladiator II: Great Acting, Terrible CGI Creatures, and a Laughable Rubber Head

Gemma Willmott
Review Editor

Warning: This review contains spoilers!

Gladiator II was easily one of the most anticipated films of the year. Starring Paul Mescal and Pedro Pascal, the reprisal of the *Gladiator* franchise seemed to promise all the glory and spectacle of the first film. It is unfortunate to say that I found this could not be further from the case. The most standout failure of the film is the terrible CGI. At moments where Paul Mescal can- ters through Rome dramatically, or declares to troves of soldiers that no more blood should be shed, the only thing I could focus on was how awful the CGI was behind him. If I'd wanted to see someone gesture vaguely at a greenscreen, I would've turned on the weather report.

Not even to mention the incredibly ran- dom choice to have Mescal fight some indis- tinguishable CGI monkey-hyaena-baboon creatures. Did the Gladiators not fight lions? Bears? Surely there were plenty of animals they could have used before resorting to the inven- tion of some *Hunger Games*-esque creature.

My favourite, and by far the most ridiculous, moment of the film was after the beheading of Joseph Quinn's character, Emperor Geta. Macrinus (Denzel Washington) pulls the sev- ered head of Emperor Geta from a bag, and slams it onto a podium, dramatically declar-

ing his murder. The camera pans around the room of shocked Romans, and cuts to a close up of the severed head. A severed head that categorically bears *no* resemblance to Joseph Quinn whatsoever. I hate to say that I start- ed laughing at such a dramatic moment of the film, but every time the camera returned to the head, I simply could not contain my- self. If the props department hadn't plopped a ginger wig and some shocking eyeshadow on to this head, you would have absolutely no idea who it was supposed to represent.

I began to wonder whether the film was paying tribute to *The Hunger Games*. Matt Lucas (who I simply cannot see without picturing *Great British Bake Off*) repeatedly appears as a rip-off Caesar Flickerman character. Unfortunately, he announces the gladiators' tournament with none of the panache of Stanley Tucci. Further- more, for one round of the tournament the gladiators walk up the steps to the arena, and are shocked to find it full of water and sharks (*Catching Fire* anyone?). When you put all of these elements side by side, it sounds rather like a *Gladiator*-themed *Hunger Games* film.

I feel that I should note that Paul Mescal and Pedro Pascal's performances were both great. Though Mescal's English accent bore an uncanny similarity to Harry Styles' speak- ing voice, the acting of both men was far and away the best part of this film. It rather felt like these two great actors were tied to a sinking ship, weighed down by severed heads, CGI, and far too many monkeys.

Heretic: Blending the Domestic and Demonic

Amelia Quarm
Contributor

A24, known for its wacky and all-encom- passing horror films, recently released its newest addition: *Heretic*. Directed and written by Scott Beck and Bryan Woods, the film follows the classic style of the cat-and-mouse horror movie as the two protagonists, Sister Barnes (Sophie Thatcher) and Sister Paxton (Chloe East), attempt to escape from the clutch- es of the antagonist, Mr Reed (Hugh Grant). The film raises several questions about the concept of there being one true religion, leading audiences to question their beliefs as they depart the com- fort of the cinema. The film was by no means groundbreaking in its explorations of religion

raised by Grant's character, instead it tried to connect to an everyday audience's queries about faith. This elevated the film above the usual hor- ror films that are commercially released around Halloween each year.

Grant was mesmerising as Mr Reed, stepping out of his usual bumbling British rom-com lead role. He is a complex character, as—despite the truly evil strain that runs within him—you can't help but connect or agree with him while he uses *Monopoly* metaphors to try and make sense of the different religious teachings. By incorporat- ing *Monopoly*, a board game many of us are sub- ject to at Christmas time, the film contrasts the domestic with the demonic. Only a scene later, our two protagonists are locked in his dark and ghostly basement and greeted by an emaciated

The Secret of Us: A Review

Ellie Evans
Contributor

American indie singer-songwriter Gracie Abrams is renowned for her ferocious ability to capture intimate, yet relatable, emotions apart from the experience of girlhood; her recent 2024 release of *The Secret of Us* is no exception. She has recently risen to fame by opening for Taylor Swift on The Eras Tour, where she was discovered by the global pub- lic. The Grammy-nominated album revolves around the emotional vulnerability of young love while simultaneously discovering one's self- identity, a frighteningly accurate depiction of the rollercoaster of growing up. At the core of *The Secret of Us* is a profound resilience, as Abrams grapples with the inescapable—but nonetheless painful—recognition of expiration on relation- ships through outgrowing a version of your life. Music sensation Taylor Swift features on the album with their whimsical duet “Us”, which narrates a relationship that was treasured un- til it eventually decayed. Describing the grief and frustration of losing such extraordinary love, Abrams sings of “false prophets and profits”, spiralling about if anything they did was real or if it was all a performance of love. The pair are a match made in musical heav- en—even sharing a similar vocal delivery and producer (Aaron Dessner)—but if the folk sound and iconic bridge are anything to go by, this duet is unmistakably the work of Swift.

In the fan-favourite from the album, “I Love You I’m Sorry”, Abrams parallels her 2020 single “I Miss You, I’m Sorry” with a new-found matura- tion, as she thanks her former partner for deal- ing with her admitted toxicity in relationships. This self-awareness distinguishes Abrams from the typical blameless songwriter victim per- spective as her striking honesty admits she is not innocent herself, painting herself as an anti- hero. The production builds tension without climax, leaving an unfinished end to the story.

Instead, she acknowledges “that’s just the way life goes”, consoling listeners that you can still love someone deeply while letting them go if they do not have a purpose in your life anymore.

The album closes with the much-anticipat- ed “Close to You”, which fans have implored Abrams to release since 2017. Although, the years of undying anticipation for the track do not disappoint—we are shown a new side to Abrams as she subverts from the wispy vocals and indulge this final track with an upbeat and lively atmosphere, as she directs to her muse that she would “burn for you” but “you don’t even know my name”. This bubbly single per- fectly encapsulates the excitement and whole- someness of giddily liking someone, conclud- ing the album by returning to girlhood and her longing for true connection.

The Secret of Us is so hypnotically raw that it almost feels like a journal entry, the intimacy is emblem- atic of the advice from an older sis- ter. Abrams’ brutal vulnerability and honesty have an ad- dictive appeal that reaches a new re- flection from each track, symbolis- ing the album as a journey of introspec- tion through the growing pains and longings of growing older.



Gracie Abrams at El Ray Theatre
Justin Higuchi (via Flickr)
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Credit goes to Beck and Woods's writing, as the pace and rhythm of the film particularly stood out by not relying only on jumpscare to keep an audience interested. There were many good jumpscare, but the film's structure and dialogue weren't discarded in the process, resulting in a well crafted horror film that's perfect for those wanting something different.

As the film reaches its climax, East's character, a young Mormon girl, defies Mr Reed's cyni- cism, saying: “I think it's beautiful that we pray for each other even though we know it probably doesn't work”. This is a wonderfully poetic line for a horror movie with many gruesome plot twists, demonstrating a deeper level than just the adrenaline-rush roller-coaster ride of most other horror films. Chloe East was excellent in this film as she captured this slightly awkward but happy girl and successfully captured the au- dience's attention.

jolly but sinister smile plastered to her face, and delight in repeating that “nothing is suspicious” is a fun addition to the franchise's characters.

The best, most heartwarming part of this film is its notions of belonging. Although Paddington has never shied away from its engagement with the theme of immigration—Paddington himself has been argued to be an “asylum seeker” by some reviews—even one article argu- ing a immigration lawyer's perspective on Paddington. Even though we begin the film with Paddington officially receiving a British, post-Brexit passport, the film transports us to his home in Peru. Without spoiling what hap- pens next, let's just say that, towards the end of the film, we're not quite sure where Paddington belongs—should he stay in Peru—or go back

to Britain, as a newly official British citizen? Paddington contends with his “split” identity - between Peru and Britain in a way that can be related to by many, ultimately concluding that it doesn't matter where you come from - home can be anywhere as long as it is filled with loved ones. Overall, Paddington in Peru is a wonderful third film in the trilogy - funny and heartwarming - what Paddington does best!

Source: Bobulous (via Wikimedia Commons)
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Paddington In Peru: Heartwarming Fun

Angela Griffith
Review Editor

Paddington in Peru is the third film in the beloved franchise. Seven years in the making, it continues the adventures of the marmalade-loving bear with a new direc- tor Dougal Wilson, and a new actress Emily Mortimer to play Mrs Brown, who is strug- gling to come to terms with her children (played by Madeleine Harris and Samuel Jos- lin) growing up and looking at universities.

The film begins with Paddington receiving his official “British” passport—following a comical scene involving a passport photo booth, seagulls, and marmalade sandwiches—much to the ex-

citement of the Brown family. He then receives a mysterious letter from Reverend Mother of the Retired Home for Bears (Olivia Coleman), asking Paddington to visit his sad Aunt Lucy.

The film then sees Paddington (voiced by Ben Whishaw) returning to his homeland of Peru with the Brown family to reunite with Aunt Lucy, only to discover she has gone missing. What follows is a hilarious adventure of suspi- ciously behaved nuns, riverboat captains, and gold-hunting ghosts, all set in the heart of the jungle-clad Peruvian mountains and rainforest.

Played by Olivia Coleman, the Reverend Moth- er is the film's standout character. Her hilari- ous all-singing, guitar-strumming introduction nods to the Sound of Music, and her phony,



THE TEAM



SCIENCE



Natasha Fray



Hannah Prince

A Scientific Christmas

Natasha Fray
Head of Science

With Christmas just a couple weeks away, many of us are getting ready to head back home and participate in Christmas traditions and activities with loved ones. Growing up, Christmas is a time of magic and wonder for everyone involved and Santa himself has plenty of work to do this time of year as his own deadlines approach.

Santa's job is no small feat as he figures out what every child wants and then has to ensure the elves have enough time to make it all. Once his sleigh is packed, he then must deliver all the gifts in just one night meaning he has to fly at 600 miles per second. At that speed, relativistic time dilation kicks in—so while it's hours for us, Santa experiences mere moments. Einstein's theory of relativity: making Christmas possible since 1905. The drag force experienced by Santa's

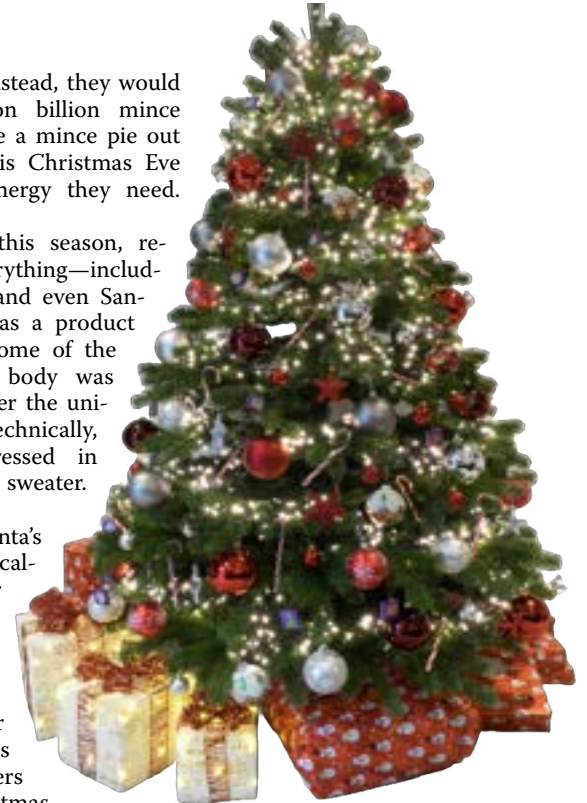
sleigh would be 56 billion newtons. In comparison, you only experience 50 newtons of resistance (on average) when cycling into university. To overcome the resistance, Rudolph and the others would have to generate 54 thousand megajoules of energy per second. To fuel this, they would have to consume 7.5 billion billion carrots, which seems very unlikely given that the North Pole is just floating sheets of ice, making for less than ideal root vegetable farming conditions. However, miracles can happen in the North Pole, such as snowflakes, which are miracles of physics. Snowflakes form when water vapour freezes around a speck of dust, creating intricate hexagonal patterns that are completely unique due to their chaotic molecular structure.

If Rudolph and company improved their aerodynamics to fly in a more Supermanlike pose, it could cut their estimated food consumption goal by more than 50% and they would only need 3.25 billion billion carrots. Alternatively, if you decided to feed

them a mince pie instead, they would only need 1 billion billion mince pies, so maybe leave a mince pie out for the reindeer this Christmas Eve so they get the energy they need.

If you hear bells this season, remember that everything—including you, the bells, and even Santa's sleigh—started as a product of the Big Bang. Some of the hydrogen in your body was forged moments after the universe began. So, technically, you're stardust dressed in an ugly Christmas sweater.

Whether it's Santa's time management, calculating the fuel for his journey, or the speed of the journey itself, raise a mug of hot chocolate or glass of your favourite Christmas spirit to the wonders of science at Christmas.



Source: William Warby (via Wikimedia Commons)

Understanding the Biological Impact of Daylight Savings

Matthew Skinner
Contributor

It is that time of year when the annual tradition of commenting on quite how dark it is by 4 pm is in full swing. While it makes for some convenient small talk, major biological changes occur every time we turn the clocks back.

The seemingly innocuous reversal of daylight savings time towards the end of October often has us rejoicing over an extra hour of sleep. However, this sudden adjustment of daylight directly interferes with our circadian rhythms. These rhythms are vital cycles embedded within our very biochemistry providing our cells a sense of time. Across the body are a series of internal clocks that control our circadian rhythms

with the master clock located in the brain, known as the suprachiasmatic nucleus. This master clock relies on a series of cues in our environment, allowing coordination of vital bodily functions synchronised to the time of day, with light being the most crucial of these cues.

Adjusting the light levels so suddenly at the end of October can throw our circadian rhythms off balance. Our bodies' clocks do not adjust quite as quickly as the clocks on our phone, so we are left experiencing a mild form of jet lag. A disrupted circadian rhythm can have far-reaching consequences for sleep quality, immune function, performance ability, and mental health.

Research indicates that even a single hour's disruption can lead to increased fatigue, difficulty concentrating, and mood changes. Luck-

ily this effect is seen more in the spring when the clocks go forward. But sleep data suggests we do not benefit from quite as much sleep as we think in the October shift—gaining only around 30 minutes of extra sleep. Regardless, this time alteration impacts our sleep schedule and accompanies an increased incidence of heart attacks and strokes. Impacting upon our blood pressure and cortisol levels when our circadian rhythms are thrown off balance, it becomes apparent why our cardiovascular system has elevated risk of dysfunction.

It is not just our heart that takes a toll, our mental state can also be affected. This is in part due to the regulatory role our circadian rhythms play in maintaining our concentration. A disruption to our sleep schedule can quickly interfere with our ability to remain produc-

tive and engaged, so it's not just that you may be feeling that little more groggy in lectures in the days following the clocks changing.

As winter looms with the prospect of darker days to come, it is important that we continue to support our circadian rhythms as best we can to mitigate the risk to our biology. As with most parts of our biology, our internal clocks have an impressive ability to adjust to changes in our environment. We can support this by making sure we get sunlight as early as possible in the day and try to avoid excessive light in the evening. And while it may be tempting to take that cheeky nap following your 12pm lecture—it may do you more harm than good when it comes to keeping your circadian rhythms in check.

The Astronomical Accuracy of Van Gogh's Starry Night

Charlotte Hardie-Watts
Contributor

Vincent Van Gogh's iconic painting *The Starry Night* has long captivated viewers with its swirling, turbulent sky and vibrant colours. The painting represents the view from his window in the south of France asylum he was staying in due to hallucinations from a severed part of his ear. Recent scientific research has revealed that this masterpiece demonstrates a surprising level of astronomical accuracy. Indeed, researchers have discovered that the swirling patterns, pulsing stars and bright moon in the painting align remarkably well with the principles of fluid dynamics, particularly turbulence in the atmosphere. The canvas' fourteen main whirls in the sky closely follow Kolmogorov's law of turbulence, a scientific theory that explains the distribution of energy in turbulent fluids.

These whirling shapes are more commonly known in the scientific world as eddies: big or small whirls that form with air when encountering, for instance, a solid object. A more common example of an eddy would be a swirl of air blowing around some leaves. Turbulent fluids and eddies have some distinctions: turbulent flows describe the overall chaotic state of air motion, while eddies are specific swirling structures that often occur within turbulent flow in the atmosphere.

Scientists analysed the relative scale, spacing, and brightness of the brushstrokes, finding that Van Gogh's depiction accurately captures the rules behind atmospheric hidden turbulence. Specialists in fluid movements examined the artist's brushwork by measuring the relative scale and spacing of the strokes and compared their size to the average scales expected from turbulence theories. Yongxiang

Huang, a scholar of fluid dynamics at China's Xiamen University, made these measurements and noticed that fourteen of the swirls align with Kolmogorov's theory.

This alignment with Kolmogorov's theory is noteworthy as it wasn't formulated until decades after the painter's death. His intuitive understanding of natural phenomena at multiple scales is truly fascinating, as his night sky corresponds to Bachelor's scaling, which looks into energy fluctuations in small-scale turbulence. Most likely a coincidence, the intensity of yellow in his painting represents inertial energy in fluid dynamics—the force from the momentum of a flow. The brighter yellows in the art depict the stronger flows very well. The overall use of colour and brushstrokes create a dynamic and magical representation of the sky that aligns with real physical processes occurring in our atmosphere.

The twinkling of stars, known in science as stellar scintillation, is beautifully captured with straight brushstrokes around each orb. This pulsating effect, created by his use of different shades of colour in broken-up strokes, mirrors how turbulence in the atmosphere can cause stars to appear to twinkle. However, studies show that at the time of the creation of the painting, the moon would have been three-quarters full, and not a crescent like he represented.

While Van Gogh couldn't have known about these scientific theories, researchers believe his accurate representation stems from careful observation of nature and an innate sense of capturing nature's dynamism, such as the night sky. This demonstrates the potential for art to intuitively capture scientific theories before they are formally discovered.

A Shift in the Magnetic North Pole

Bhamini Khandige
Contributor

The magnetic North Pole has changed location as a result of the changing contours of Earth's magnetic fields. Scientists have recently detected that, after five years of slower movement, the magnetic North Pole is headed towards Russia. The magnetic North Pole is not the North Pole that most people are familiar with—in fact, that is known as the geographic North Pole, or the true north, which remains stationary at the intersection of all longitude lines.

While movement of the magnetic North Pole has been tracked for years, a global geomagnetic field modeller at the British Geological Survey explained that “while we can monitor and see how it's changing, it is quite difficult to predict

exactly how it will change”. This is due to the fact that “it's a big, chaotic and turbulent ball of molten iron going around in the middle of the earth that generates the magnitude”. The movement of the magnetic pole was primarily along the northern Canadian shore for centuries and later drifted into the Arctic Ocean in the late nineties. Since the late nineties, the movement has accelerated and headed towards Siberia.

The pole's movement is caused by unpredictable fluctuations in the churning of the molten iron which makes up the majority of the Earth's outer core. This liquid metal moves due to the heat escaping from the planet's core, creating the Earth's magnetic field. Variations in the motion of this liquid metal impact the field and the location of the magnetic pole, despite the molten iron being 2000 miles below ground. Data shows that from 1600 to 1990, the mag-

netic pole moved approximately 10–15km a year, and sped up in the early 2000s to around 55km a year.

The British Geological Survey worked in collaboration with the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to track the movements of the magnetic pole and provide estimated models for future movements. The collected data comes from the World Magnetic Model, which forecasts the location of the pole at any given time, with the latest model set to be released in December. The model contributes to GPS systems and is used by the military to navigate submarines across Arctic waters. Additionally, the model assists in guiding a phone's compass tools. This means that “the world magnetic model is embedded in pretty much any piece of technology, from smartphones to cars and military jets” and is an es-

sential part of navigation through technology.

Despite the sped-up movement in the early 2000s, the last five years have seen a significant slowdown in movement, to about 25km a year, which is why scientists are surprised at the magnetic pole's current movement towards Russia. Exact movements are nearly impossible to predict, but the movement of the Earth's magnetic field can be and is currently monitored. The collaboration between the British Geological Survey and the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration utilises a network of ground stations and satellites to map the field in different locations.

The latest model which will be released in December is something to watch out for, as it will make clear the speed of the movements, as well as the general direction.

Beyond Music: The Legacy of The Eras Tour

Lila Smith
Contributor

When Taylor Swift took to the stage at Edinburgh's Murrayfield Stadium for her first of seventeen UK performances of The Eras Tour, any one of the over 70,000 “Swifties” in attendance probably felt her three-hour performance rocked their world. It also rocked everyone else's, as nearby monitors belonging to the British Geological Survey recorded a peak in seismic activity, comparable to a minor earthquake, as tens of thousands of fans sang, stomped, and danced in unison. This convergence of pop culture and scientific intrigue (now known as the “Swift Quake”) is just one example of the seismic cultural impact The Eras Tour had—and is still having.

The tour started as a way for fans to celebrate Swift's epic career, with performances from her debut album up to her latest album, *The Tortured Poets Department*, released April 2024 while she was on tour. The tour has since taken on a life of its own, becoming a global cultural phenomenon which has transcended music. Perhaps the clearest indication of this is in its remarkable audience reach, extending beyond teenage girls penning lyrics in their bedroom to bridge generations, genders, and cultures, bringing people together who would otherwise have nothing in common. But what is the appeal?

Many have praised the tour for being a safe space for all. It wasn't an uncommon sight to see an ageing dad exchanging friendship bracelets with an eager 9-year-old (a practice inspired by a lyric from her song “You're on Your Own, Kid”). Nimco Ali, a journalist for *Glamour* magazine, recalled apprehension before attending the tour due to a lack of diversity represented at such events; however, upon going described the tour as a moment of “real power”. Swift has discussed LGBTQ+ and women's rights in her music, and in her documentary *Miss Americana*, she discussed the importance of speaking out on social issues she is passionate about as an artist, despite the negative feedback she receives. Perhaps that is why a study by Dajches and Aubrey in 2023 revealed many fans' connections to her music are tied to the development of their sexual identity. Whether through colourful pride flags or heartwarming fan interactions, The Eras Tour has proven to be a melt-

ing pot of community and acceptance.

But here's the contradiction. Critics have argued that Swift's activism can at times feel performative. She is often dubbed a “white feminist” by those who argue that her agenda only benefits her and those like her, and that she must make more of an effort to speak up for women of colour who can be swept aside in the conversation around women's rights. Or maybe it was her relationship with The 1975's Matty Healy—who once described artist Ice Spice as a “chubby Chinese lady”—that led people to believe her activism is purely self-serving. While the diversity and inclusion reflected in the audience and atmosphere seem to speak to her success in fostering a safe and welcoming space for all, it is easy to see why not all would feel accepted there. So is the tour inclusive or divisive?

The Eras Tour is more than just a heartfelt love fest, it is a financial monster. The first North American leg of the tour generated \$22.2 billion in

profit from ticket sales alone, with Ticketmaster reporting that fans paid an average of \$254 per ticket. On top of the enormous ticket sales, fans spent on average \$40 per

show on merchandise which racks up to an estimated \$500 million—and the tour still runs until December 2024. There has also been a cinematic release which assisted in making Eras the highest grossing tour of all time as of November 2024.

The economic windfall wasn't confined to Swift alone with data from MasterCard's economic reports revealing a 68% spike in spending at restaurants, hotels, and local businesses within a 2.5-mile radius of the concert venues. Concerts taking place in smaller cities felt a greater boost, with fans flocking to previously quiet areas, injecting life into the local economies. This demonstrates the unparalleled ability of The Eras Tour to act as a catalyst for economic activity.

Yet once more the contradictions come. An event at this scale comes with costs. Approximately 72,000 people descending on already overcrowded cities often for multiple nights puts a strain on the infrastructure and local environment. In Edinburgh, there were reports of homeless people being displaced from hotels to make room for incoming fans.

The carbon footprint of the tour is astounding. Taylor Swift's private jet emissions for the 2024 leg of the tour alone are estimated at 511,154 kilograms of CO₂. This is equivalent to the energy use of 67 homes for an entire year. This figure doesn't even account for the emissions generated by the transportation of her staff or the fans themselves.

The aforementioned \$500 million in merchandise takes a toll too. The production of textile and dye for tour keepsakes contributes to the large amount of waste and pollution already generated by the fast fashion industry. Other notable artists, such as Coldplay and Billie Eilish, have adopted sustainable practices—using recycled materials for merchandise production or committing to reducing carbon emissions.

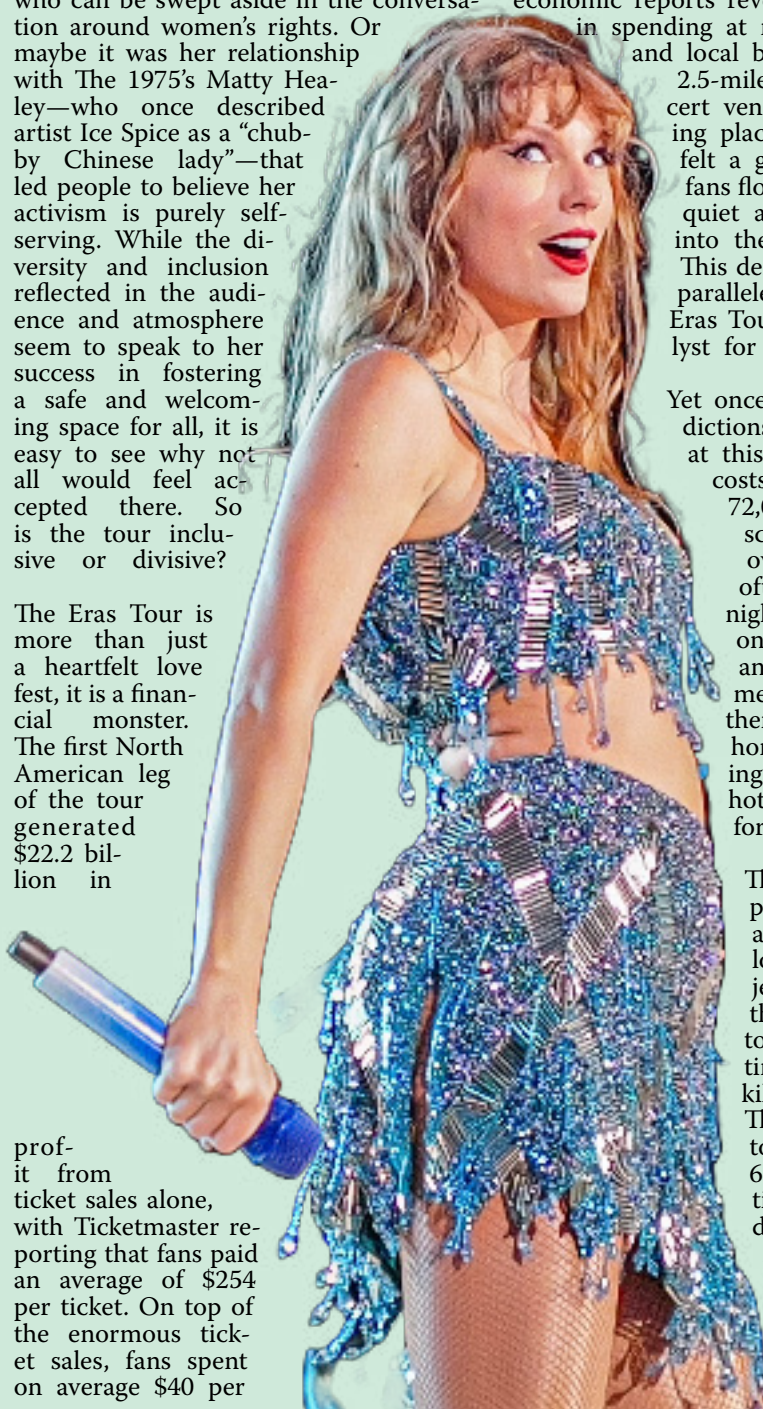
While Swift contributed generously to the cities she visited, including to over 1400 food banks in the UK, critics argue that an artist with her influence should be leading the charge in sustainable touring practices. Could she have done more? The Eras Tour broke many records in economic and social spheres but could a little more positive influence from the star have set a new standard for her peers and inspired fans to adopt eco-friendly habits? Once again, the tour can be convincingly argued from both sides of the same story.

In another paradox, part of Taylor Swift's appeal to a number of fans was her decision to re-record her early albums so that she held the rights, in a move that many saw as taking a stand against the worst exploitations of capitalism. Can the artist still play the victim so convincingly as she sits at the centre of one of the greatest money-making arts projects in history?

As the dust settles (both literally and figuratively) from what is set to be 152 shows by the end of 2024, The Eras Tour has set benchmarks for future global tours. From seismic shifts in social dynamics, to the pressing questions of sustainability, Swift's tour encapsulated the modern challenges and opportunities faced by touring artists today. It has without question been the dominant cultural event of 2024, defining the year not only for those fortunate enough to be part of it, but for many who never imagined that they would be drawn to the blonde country singer from Pennsylvania. It has shown that music has the power to unite, inspire and move us.

As for those contradictions, perhaps that's part of the secret. In a world where categorisation is everywhere and labels are proudly and often divisively worn, The Eras Tour has perhaps shown us the power of being human, with all the inconsistency, contradiction and frustration that comes with it. Taylor Swift didn't just take to the stage, she shook the world.

Taylor Swift The Eras Tour 1989 Era Set
Paulo Villanueva (via Wikimedia Commons)
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THE TEAM



SPORT



Aimee Szulczewski



Grace D'Souza



Lily Zeeuw

Grace D'Souza
Sport Editor & Photographer

Cardiff University has the most amazing sports teams and over the last two years I have had the pleasure to get to know the most incredibly talented players. With the support of CUTV I am happy to announce that there will be a documentary released in February called *More Than Just a Game!*, focusing on the amazing Cardiff University Ladies' Football team!

A very big thank you to the teams photographed on the right: Planmere Rovers, CULF and CUFC. Wishing you all the best for the season ahead. Big up, Cardiff!



Some Tips for Staying Active During Exam Season and the Colder Winter Months Ahead

Arianwen Thomas
Contributor

As the evenings begin to draw darker and temperatures drop, it can be easy to let physical activity take a backseat during the winter exam season. Finding the time and motivation to exercise can present a great challenge. However, maintaining an active lifestyle during this time is crucial not only for physical health but also for mental well-being and academic performance.

A study conducted by University College London found that students who exercise for at least thirty minutes, three times a week are more likely to experience lower levels of stress and anxiety, leading to improved focus, memory, and overall academic achievement, compared to inactive students. With this in mind, here are three effective and enjoyable ways that can help you stay active and boost your productivity during this demanding period:

1) Parkrun

As a self-proclaimed parkrun fanatic, having taken part in almost one hundred events, I could not rec-

ommend this activity enough! If you are unfamiliar with the concept, parkrun is a free, weekly, community-led, 5km running event that takes place every Saturday morning at 9am in various places across the UK and abroad. The Cardiff Parkrun takes place in the magnificent Bute Park, which offers a lovely scenic running route. Despite the heavy running connotation, parkrun is an event for all abilities! Whether you choose to walk, jog, or run, you will be supported by a wonderful group of volunteers and fellow Parkrunners, cheering you on every step of the way. So, set your alarm, wrap up warm, and go give it a go! It truly is one of the most perfect ways to kickstart your Saturday on the right foot.

2) At-Home Workouts

If the 9am parkrun wake-up call does not sound the least bit appealing, at-home workouts might be a better suit for you. Fortunately, the health and fitness industry's explosion on social media in recent years, coupled with the viral at-home workout trend during the COVID-19 pandemic, has resulted in an endless variety of free at-home workout videos readily available at your fingertips. From the comfort of your own home, you can complete your thirty minutes of physical activity a day, hassle free, with the possibility of incorporating a variety of different

exercises to make it more interesting. What's not to love?

3) Workout with a Friend

If self-motivation is your biggest struggle, finding a friend to work out with can make all the difference. Having a workout partner can help you stay consistent with your exercise routine as it provides someone to hold you accountable during days when you might otherwise skip a workout. Knowing that someone is counting on you to show up can provide the extra push you need to stick to your goals. Additionally, whether you attend a fitness class, or simply go for a walk, the social aspect of exercising with a friend can help make physical activity feel less like a chore. Instead, the experience can become quite enjoyable and something you look forward to.

By integrating just one of these simple, fun ways to stay active into your routine, you can ensure that you're taking care of both your body and mind during exam season, helping you perform at your best. Physical activity truly is the key to productivity.





Welsh Rugby at a Historic Low

Lily Zeeuw
Sports Editor

Ahead of the Six Nations in January, Welsh rugby is at an all-time low. Losing their last twelve international games, the worst record in Welsh rugby history after beating the record of ten consecutive losses under Steve Hansen in 2003. Fans aptly call the current period the “dark days”.

On Saturday the 23rd of November, Wales played their last game of the year at the Principality Stadium against South Africa. This game resulted in a loss at home for the Welsh side, with a score of 12–45, continuing a dire run for the National Team. South Africa was dominant throughout the entire match, creating a lead of 0–26. It took until the end of the first half for Wales to get their first points on the board, when a try from Rio Dyer brought the score to 5–26 at the end of the half. However, South Africa’s experienced squad continued their dominance over a fairly young Welsh team in the second half. This makes it a year since the team has won a test.

Fans of the National Team are calling out for change, with questions over the current head coach Warren Gatland’s position arising. The former New Zealand International was head coach at Wales from 2007 to 2019 and made a return to the national team in 2022. In his first period as head coach, he led Wales to three Grand Slam titles, four Six Nations titles, and

the semi-final of the rugby world cup. However, his second tenure has been contrasting in terms of success; after finishing sixth place in the Six Nations this year, he offered his resignation but this request was denied by the Welsh Rugby Union. Gatland, who received an honorary fellowship from Cardiff University in 2022, is facing mounting pressure, with many fans holding him accountable for the team’s recent failures. It is becoming an increasing possibility that his 150th game in charge of Wales against South Africa, may be his last.

Ahead of the new year, what is next for the Welsh national team? They could show faith and stick by Gatland, but this seems unrealistic, and it is highly tipped that Wales will start the new year with a new coach. Some names are already being thrown in the hat for the job, including Glasgow Warriors’ head coach Franco Smith and Scotland defence coach Steve Tandy.

Whoever is in the job in the new year, whether Gatland or a new head coach, there is no doubt that Wales will hope for a quick turnaround to avoid finishing last in the Six Nations twice in a row. With their first game against France at the Stade De France on the 31st of January, the opening game for the Six Nations, perhaps a new look on the Welsh side is what is needed for tournament success and to turn around Wales’ fortunes.

The United Rugby Championship Shows Pure Rugby Done Right

Luke James
Contributor

It’ll last two years” was stated by Northern Hemisphere (mainly English) pundits. Now in its fourth season, the United Rugby Championship is continuing to prove why it is such an excellent league. Round 6 saw brutal battles, unlikely comebacks, and former champions falling, each match filled with drama and delight. Local heroes Cardiff bounced back from 19–0 at half-time to come up victorious 21–19, after Ulster scrum-half Nathan Doak’s long-distance attempt fell short five metres of the sticks. Springboks-laden Sharks trounced Munster 41–24 in Durban, showing their intentions, now having defeated two previous champions (Glasgow having been beaten the week before). Leinster became the only undefeated side, beating the Lions 24–6 in a hard fought tussle at the Aviva Stadium in Dublin.

Cardiff, having only won 50% of their matches, and suffering a heavy defeat to Glasgow Warriors, proved that they can fight with the best by not only taking on Ulster and winning, but by taking control of the match after the 30th minute. The Blue and Blacks provided a masterclass in defence, refusing to allow Ulster to get over the gainline and continually pushed them back, as well as fought well in the air, even when the kicking precision was weak from both sides.

Furthermore, the Hollywood Bets Sharks announced their true abilities, and desire to recover from last year’s yo-yoing form, looking for consistency. Makazole Mapimpi in particular has rejuvenated himself into even greater form as he looks to se-

cure his spot not only in the club but also the national side. Munster were no match for the Sharks, with lacklustre attack and ineffective defence, able to be sliced up and torn apart by the scintillating backline. Leinster vs the Lions a couple of years ago would have only had one predicted result, but the Lions showed their potential in the first 40 before dropping off in the tail end. The Irish province of Leinster still remains a dominant force in European rugby, but the young Lions side displayed elements of excellence and could be a challenger for the title of the URC or the Challenge Cup this season. The reason these three have been highlighted is that they all display elements of what makes the URC so incredible. Excellent backline play, strong scrummaging, and interesting tricks at the ruck is at the core of what allows rugby to thrive at its best, and these three matches had it all.

The URC itself is a celebration of such diverse teams and playstyles, embracing its cross-continental nature and developing rivalries with teams who previously had no connection. The Stormers vs Munster five years ago would have been a great hypothetical pub question, now it is a true rivalry, each match an absolute delight. The same goes with the Bulls and Glasgow Warriors. The three aforementioned matches were not the only ones played, but to me they truly highlighted the pure essence of the URC and its excellence. A league above and beyond what has been seen before in rugby, a shining light of what is to come, with stars emerging almost daily it seems sometimes. We can only be glad that it is here to stay, because it truly is what rugby is all about.

Levelling Up: The Rise of E-Sports in Wales

George Clark
Contributor

In recent years, Wales has seen a surge in the popularity of esports, a global phenomenon that has redefined competitive gaming and captured the attention of millions. Once dismissed as a niche hobby, e-sports has become a powerhouse industry, and Wales is positioning itself as an important player on the map.

E-sports, the organised, multiplayer video game competitions, have gained immense global traction, with events like the League of Legends World Championship and The International (Dota 2) offering multi-million-dollar prize pools and attracting millions of viewers worldwide. In Wales, this trend has not only been embraced by gamers but also by businesses, educational institutions, and local governments keen to support the growing industry. The rise of e-sports in Wales is partly fuelled by the region’s growing tech sector. Welsh cities like Cardiff, Swansea, and Wrexham are quickly becoming hubs for tech innovation, providing an ideal environment for e-sports to thrive. Cardiff has seen an uptick in e-sports-related events, including competitions, workshops, and conferences. The Cardiff University E-Sports Society, for example, boasts hundreds of active members, providing a platform for students to compete and network with professionals.

The establishment of dedicated e-sports arenas and training facilities in Wales is also playing a crucial role. These spaces offer aspiring profes-

sional gamers the resources they need to hone their skills, while simultaneously attracting major tournaments and events to the region. The creation of venues like the Ffwl E-Sports Arena in Cardiff has helped cement the country as a key player in the UK’s e-sports landscape.

Moreover, the Welsh government has recognised the potential economic impact of e-sports. By investing in digital infrastructure and supporting initiatives to develop a talent pipeline, they are helping position Wales as a leader in the growing e-sports ecosystem. This includes offering grants for e-sports-related businesses and promoting the sector as a viable career path for young people. The rise of e-sports in Wales is also being bolstered by a passionate fanbase. Local tournaments and community events, like Wales E-Sports, bring together players of all ages and skill levels to celebrate gaming culture. With the backing of dedicated communities, businesses, and government support, Wales is on track to become a prominent force in the world of competitive gaming, offering opportunities for both gamers and fans alike.

As the e-sports industry continues to expand, Wales is poised to embrace this digital revolution, establishing itself as a major destination for gaming enthusiasts and professionals from around the world.

