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STRUGGLING TO SAVE?

What You Need to Know About Lifetime ISAs as a University Student

Sienna Wilson
Contributor

Not a clue what to do with your savings? Overwhelmed by rising house prices and scared you will never be able to own a place? A Lifetime ISA could be perfect for you.

House prices in Wales have been rising at their fastest rate for more than six months. UK house prices hit record highs in January of 2025. Whether you are looking to continue your stay in Cathays or relocate elsewhere following graduation—the once-assured promise of owning your own home is slipping away for young people.

A Lifetime ISA is a government-backed savings account offering a 25% bonus to help you afford your first home. The government will add £1 to every £4 you save into your LISA, so with a max limit of £4,000 per tax year, you could get back a top-up of £1,000 per year. Regardless of your current views on the UK government, free money is not something to turn down, is it?

LISAs are available in two types: stocks and shares ISAs, where you are invested in the stock market, or cash ISAs, where you earn interest on your savings. You can open a LISA account online at any time, up until you are 40 years old. The catch? You can only withdraw the money to purchase your first home or for

retirement—anything else will cost you a pretty hefty fine. But, if you use it for a house deposit, you can keep saving and receiving the government top-up until you hit 50.

I spoke to Moneybox personal finance expert, Brian Brynes, who told me, “It’s free money from the government, which you don’t typically get elsewhere. It’s incredibly helpful when you’re saving up for your deposit, but also all the other incidentals that come with purchasing a house, like stamp duty, solicitor’s fees, all that sort of fun stuff.” “It can be very easy to look at headlines, look at house prices and think, I’m not going to get onto the property ladder. It’s just not possible for first-time buyers any more. All our

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To read the full story, turn to page 5.

Ergyd Drom Unwaith yn Rhagor i'r Celfyddydau yng Nghymru

Elen Morlais Williams
Golygydd Taf-od

Ar ôl degawd o doriadau cyllid ar y sector diwylliant, mae cyhoeddiad diweddar Prifysgol Caerdydd wedi dod fel ergyd arall i'r celfyddydau yng Nghymru. Cyhoeddodd Prifysgol Caerdydd eu bod yn ystyried terfynu pynciau fel cerddoriaeth oherwydd problemau ariannol, sy'n awgrymu bod y celfyddydau...

Er mwyn darllen y stori gyfan, trowch i dudalen 8.

Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy – The Last Diary Entry?

Emily Jo Cottle
Head of Review

Our favourite bumbling British icon returns to our screens in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, the fourth film based on Helen Fielding's four-part book series. Renée Zelleweger and creators have stayed true to the eccentric magnetism of Bridget Jones in the supposed final film. She juggles grief, single motherhood, new relationships, and worklife with her infectious laughter and familiar smile...

To read the full story, turn to page 17.

Male Birth Control is Just Out of Reach

Rachel Bedding
Contributor

Sixty years—that's how long it's taken for methods of male hormonal birth control to even begin development. However, as of 2025, researchers suggest that effective forms of male birth control could be available for public use within ten years, maybe as soon as five...

To read the full story, turn to page 19.



THE TEAM



Ari Plant



Neve Powell



Heather Layton



Bridgid Chanen



Pavitra Padinjaroot



SPOTLIGHT



Dot, Dash: Students' Scabies Survival Guide

Ari Plant
Head of Spotlight

S*arcoptes scabiei* or the itch mite. If you have ever been exposed to even the idea of this mite, you may be already feeling a phantom itch on your skin. It is a parasitic infestation and it will hurt.

Just over a year ago, there was a scabies outbreak in Cardiff. There were many images of belongings in the iconic green recycling bags—following the NHS guidance is to bag up your belongings which you can't wash so you can kill the mites that are living in them. Just four months ago, there was another outbreak across the UK, scabies cases in England are 72% higher for the time of year than the average over the past five years. So, it is not surprising that the mites are here to stay. Here, we are hopeful to provide you a survival guide that will help if such a horrible outbreak befalls you.

It can take two to five weeks after the initial exposure for the symptoms to arrive. So, you can't exactly blame the person you sat next to in a lecture the day before but if you spent the night at a friend's house after a trip to a nightclub a month ago, it may be your friend has passed them to you.

The simple symptoms of scabies are a severe itch that gets worse at night, bumps around your fingers, arms, legs, and belt area, bumps on places you don't want

bumps, and an itchy lines - which is where the mites have burrowed into your skin. The mites lay eggs in your skin, leaving lines with a dot at one end. The rash that they leave is common between your fingers. Shockingly, the rash that scabies gives you usually doesn't affect your head and neck.

The NHS recommends that you wash all bedding and clothing in the house at 60°C or higher, and if possible in a hot dryer, on the first day of treatment, and put clothing that cannot be washed in a sealed bag for at least three days until the mites die. The NHS doesn't recommend having sex or close physical contact until you have completed the full course of treatment or sharing bedding, clothing, or towels with someone with scabies.

To treat scabies, you will be given topical medication to treat all your skin from the neck down. You'll have to apply it at night when the mites are most active! You will then have to sleep in it (upsetting) and wash it off in the morning. The topical treatments may cause burning, swelling, numbness, or irritation to your skin. You can take additional medicine to relieve some of the bothersome symptoms: such as antihistamines to help itching, steroid creams to relieve swelling and itching, and prescribed antibiotics to kill any infections that may come.

Scabies is a stigmatised rash to have. It has a reputation for being something that you get when you're dirty or unclean. The mites burrow, you can't wash them off. However, a high reason for not reporting them and their stigma is that the symptoms of scabies can appear on your

groin and buttocks—two areas where shame is all too well-known. However, an infection does not go away unless correctly diagnosed and treated.

Catch the mites, report the mites, burn the mites. Catch, report, burn—and then you will feel a thousand times better.



March the 15th— A Survival Guide!

Heather Layton
Spotlight Editor

On Saturday the 15th of March, Wales will face England in a Six Nations match, and Cardiff's Principality Stadium will host this much-anticipated match. Whether you're heading to watch the game in person, at the pub, or just happen to be in town on the day, you will certainly experience a lively atmosphere, some culture clashes, and see Cardiff on parade. If you're a rugby fan, the following tips may help you make the most of the day, as it's not one you'd want to miss!

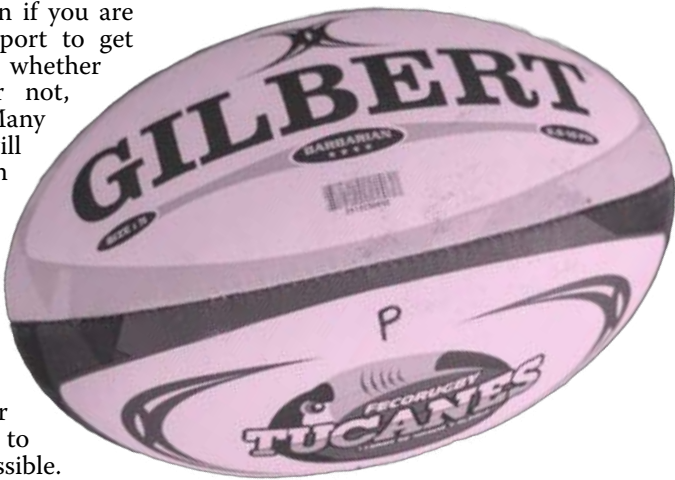
Find the Right Venue for you

Depending on how committed you are to the game, if you're planning on going to the pub to watch it, it may be worth checking out venues that have a designated "fanzone". These are sometimes ticketed but will ensure that you will be able to hear and watch the game live, as some venues will show the game but won't include audio or will cordon off a specific area for rugby fans on the day. A notably popular spot to watch the rugby is Walkabout, which is a stone's throw from the stadium (so you almost feel like you're heading to watch it in person!) and has a lively and large fanzone.

It will be busy. Expect disruption if you are planning on using public transport to get to the city centre on the day, whether you're watching the rugby or not, there will be disruption. Many roads in the city centre will be closed to vehicles, and train services will be limited and extremely busy. The best advice for travel on the day is to arrive early when travelling, so you're guaranteed not to miss out on anything. If you're walking through town, it will also be very hectic, so if you don't like large crowds or loud noises, it is advisable to avoid the main roads, if possible.

Rep your team

One of the best parts about a game day is how committed the fans are to dressing up to represent their team. Whichever side you're supporting, make sure you wear your shirt, and don't be afraid to wear facepaint or other fancy dress. If you haven't got anything to wear on the day, do not despair! There are dozens of affordable merch stands dotted across the centre where you can get your face painted, buy match day scarves, and even buy eye-catching leek or sheep hats.



Last but not least—have fun!

Whatever the outcome of the match, make sure that you have as much fun as you can on the day and soak up the atmosphere in the city centre. Remember to always be respectful to other fans (whether they're on your side or not) and that the Six Nations rugby is an annual event, so your team has the chance to win or lose again next year! Even if you don't support either side, it is still a great day out and one of the perks of being a student in Cardiff.

SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

International Society Spotlight

Pavitra Padinjaroot
Spotlight Editor

Moving to Cardiff as an international student was thrilling, yet beneath the excitement lay the challenge of finding a sense of belonging. While the city offered endless opportunities, there were moments when I longed for the familiar—the comfort of tradition, the warmth of community, and the echoes of home. Cultural societies became more than just student groups; they became spaces of connection, identity, and support. While they are often known for grand celebrations—Diwali nights, Eid gatherings, Qawwali performances—their true impact lies in the everyday moments of shared culture and belonging.

PakSoc

I have always been drawn to Pakistani culture, captivated by the soul-stirring rhythms of Qawwali and the rich traditions that bring people together. When I attended a Qawwali night hosted by the Pakistani Society, the energy was electric—clapping in rhythm, voices rising in unison, and an atmosphere that felt almost spiritual. It was more than a performance; it was a celebration of shared heritage. Beyond these musical nights, PakSoc's social event "Khushamdeed" (meaning "Welcome") was another highlight. Designed to help new students settle in, the event was a vibrant mix of traditional games, steaming plates of biryani, and an abundance of Pakistani sweets. The warmth and hospitality re-

minded me why food and community go hand in hand—it wasn't just about eating; it was about feeling at home.

Cardiff Hindu Society

While my curiosity led me to explore new cultural spaces, the Cardiff Hindu Society gave me a sense of home. Growing up in India, temple bells and festive gatherings were a constant. Here in Cardiff, attending bhajan nights, pujas, and Diwali celebrations rekindled that familiar warmth. Beyond rituals, it was the simple moments of connection—singing aarti together, sharing stories of home, and keeping traditions alive in a

foreign land—that truly mattered.

Find Your Community

There's something for everyone! Cultural societies aren't just about celebrations; they're about belonging. Whether you're looking to reconnect with your roots or explore a new culture, Cardiff has countless societies waiting to welcome you—from the Pakistani and Hindu societies to Afro-Caribbean, Malaysian, and many more. They offer festivals, mentorship, networking, and friendships that last beyond university. If you're an international student—or just someone curious to experience different cultures—join a society, step into their world, and find your place in Cardiff.

Cardiff University Rowing Club

Lucy Bilington
Contributor

Cardiff University Rowing Club is one of the largest clubs in the University with over 140 members split into five competitive squads; Senior Men and Women, Novice Men and Women, and Coxswains.

One of the biggest misconceptions around rowing is you need prior experience to join, we accept complete beginners and have an amazing group of coaches who can teach you everything you need to know. Our Novice squads have had some really successful results with the Women's squad qualifying for the A final and placing sixth at BUCS Regatta out of thirty-two crews two years in a row. Joining as a novice is an amazing way to meet new people and try out a different sport.

The race season starts with University of Bristol Head Race at the end of November, where all our rowers' hard work pays off for their very first race. Racing as a novice is exciting and competitive, especially the highlight of our racing season, Welsh Varsity.

The Senior Squads are aimed for rowers with prior experience, either as a junior, or from our novice programme. The race calendar is

full of high-level competitions such as Head of the River and Henley Qualifiers alongside fun regattas which are the perfect way to celebrate a successful season in the summer.

Our senior women's squad are the current course record holders for the Challenge Academic Pennant at Women's Eights Head of the River, not to mention they are unbeaten at Varsity! This year, they are aiming for a Henley Campaign to cap off a year full of hard work. Each year CURC holds a training camp to prepare our crews for BUCS Regatta. This year we're heading across the Channel to Ghent in Belgium! Catch us at our yearly fundraiser where we row the distance to Belgium in SU end of March!

As much as we like to train hard, we also know how to have a good time with weekly socials at Y Plas alongside our post-race socials after every race. If you're interested trying rowing out, we run give-it-a-gos at the start of each academic year to give you a taste of life on the water.

We look forward to seeing you down at the bay!

Cardiff's Book Club

Khalid Osman
Contributor

At first, I thought it was strange that the most common question I got asked at the freshers' fair was "Do I have to read a lot to join Book Club?" Despite the name of the society, I would always confidently answer "No". That made me think: why do I go to Book Club if I haven't read anything recently? For me, Cardiff University Book Club is about sharing in a cosy vibe. About knowing there's a place for me every Tuesday evening. Sometimes it's about the free biscuits. It's always about the people.

We'll post a topic on our socials before every meeting. Some weeks, there'll be a topic that really resonates with you - mine is usually "controversial opinions" (is that a controversial opinion?). Then, if you're up for sharing, you'll get a turn as we go round the group—but stick around long enough, and you'll realise the best part is learning something new about your peers every single meeting.

Books that they love, or hate, or some bizarre mix of the two that made them cry, brings you a little closer to them. There are books that people recall from their childhood, or short, ten-minute reads, but anything is valid—anything goes. It's a no-commitment, no-pressure, all-fun society. There's not even an obligation to go every week, but trust me, you'll want to. Of course, the weekly meetings aren't all we get up to. Look out on our Instagram @cardiffunibookclub to see upcoming collaborations.

If you're interested in sharing the reading experience, join one of our reading groups! These are based on genre, and are headed by our committee members. Each reading group meets regularly over the course of a semester to discuss and theorise about their current read. Yes, my theories are nearly always

wrong. No, I won't stop making them.

And hey, if you've made it this far, pop along next Tuesday—you can talk about this article as your new favourite read! Welcome to Book Club!





Dilichi Dieobi



Tom Nicholson

Former Vice-Chancellor Under Scrutiny for Lavish Spending Amid Financial Woes

Ali Jan Khawaja

Contributor

Cardiff University's ex-vice-chancellor, Colin Riordan, has come under fire for his extravagant spending on overseas trips, totalling more than £26,000 in just five months during 2023. This revelation comes at a time when the university is facing significant financial challenges, including a projected deficit and potential job cuts. Riordan's travels included visits to Germany, India, South Africa, and various parts of Asia.

The university defended these expenses, stating that the vice-chancellor's role necessitates engaging with international partners, businesses, and donors to benefit staff, students, and research. However, this spending spree occurred against a backdrop of financial warnings from Riordan himself. In February 2023, he cautioned that Cardiff University would "continually lose money" under current funding arrangements. Despite this gloomy forecast, his own expenditure on

international travel continued unabated. The controversy extends beyond travel expenses. Riordan's salary saw a 4.2% increase from £289,000 in 2021/22 to £301,000 in 2022/23, a £12,000 pay rise that has raised eyebrows given the university's financial predicament.

This lavish spending has drawn criticism from various quarters. Jo Grady, general secretary of the University and College Union, expressed outrage, calling for increased public investment and job protection instead of "eye-watering sums" being spent on high-end expenses. The financial situation at Cardiff University appears dire. The institution is facing a £30 million deficit, which could potentially rise to £65 million. In response, the university has announced plans to cut four-hundred jobs and axe numerous courses.

These developments are part of a broader trend in UK higher education. Many universities are grappling with financial challenges, with an estimated 40% of institutions expected to be in deficit this year. The Welsh Government's decision to raise tuition fees to £9,535 per year from September 2025 is seen as an

attempt to address these financial pressures. Cardiff University has defended its remuneration practices, stating that salaries for senior staff are set by an independent Remuneration Committee. They also emphasised that all international travel is approved in accordance with the university's financial regulations. As the debate over the university finances continues, this case highlights the tension between maintaining global academic partnerships and responsible financial management. It also raises questions about the priorities of university leadership during times of financial strain.

The coming months will be crucial for Cardiff University as it navigates these challenges. The institution must balance its global ambitions with financial sustainability, all while maintaining its commitment to students and staff. The scrutiny of high-level spending practices is likely to continue as universities across the UK grapple with similar financial pressures.

Vice-Chancellor Wendy Larner Hosts Town Hall to Address Academic Futures Leak

James Roberts

Opinion Editor

On Wednesday the 12th of February, Cardiff University Students' Union hosted a town hall in which the vice-chancellor Wendy Larner gave a presentation followed by a question-and-answer session with students. Held in response to the release—or more accurately, leak—of Academic Futures, the meeting was aimed at resolving student anxieties in response to the drastic cuts outlined in the said policy document. The atmosphere was one of tension and dissatisfaction from the get-go. Prof Larner entered the room to a hush, as if a disturbance had wafted through the doors, and rose to the desk in the speaking well of the Sir Stanley Lewis lecture theatre without any clapping. After making a joke about being from New Zealand and not Australia, which received an equally stoic response, she began a presentation outlining the executive board's motives for enacting academic futures.

I need not outline the specifics of the proposals—they have been repeated and reproduced enough already—but Prof Larner did make some comments and arguments which have not been so prominent in discourse over the changes. For example, Larner characterised the campus as "having no heart" and argued that the campus is "too sprawling". This, she said, was to be resolved by the cuts proposed in academic futures. She also outlined how money saved through the proposed actions would be used to improve student halls, which she described as "needing attention"—perhaps there is common ground! Larner was also keen to contextualise the changes within a situation of financial difficulty caused

of visas by Westminster and the growth of competent academia in the Far East. This, Larner argued, was to be resolved by new ways of learning, including an increased emphasis on interdisciplinary learning and a diversification of income streams. These proposals are to form the basis of the university's "mission 2035".

Larner presented the changes in Academic Futures as being in keeping with, rather than deviating from, the history of Cardiff University. Characterising the proposals as "progressive", Larner drew parallels in her presentation between Academic Futures and the history of The University of South Wales and Monmouthshire (predecessor of Cardiff University)—the latter having had an undeniably progressive agenda. By contrast, Professor Lloyd Llewellyn Jones, at a protest outside the Science building on the same day, spoke of Academic Futures as a disruption to the history of the university, emphasising the central place his subject, Ancient History, had held since the founding of Cardiff's predecessor institution.

After speaking over her time—more than the 25–30 minutes initially allotted to her—Larner then began a question-and-answer session, with a mixture of pre-proposed questions, introduced by SU president Madison Hutchinson, and questions from the audience asked and answered in groups of three. With the majority of the audience seemingly being made up of students who are most likely to be affected by the changes, the questions mostly focused on the impact of Academic

Futures, and Larner gave competent—although not especially surprising—answers. When asked about her own salary, it appeared momentarily that the easy rhetoric of her answers was about to give way.

However, after characterising discussion of vice-chancellor salaries as a "trope", she returned to her previous ease. It was in this tone that she assured the room of her commitment to Welsh culture and allayed concerns that the university's endeavours in Kazakhstan (of all places!) would not divert funds away from students in Wales. As soon as the allotted time was up, Professor Larner made a brisk exit through a proximate door, as the SU president spoke to those in the room, presumably to keep the assembly inside and avoid Larner being heckled or confronted on her way out. Then the meeting ended without any tangible sense of resolution to the issues which had caused it to be hosted in the first place.



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Sienna Wilson
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and shares ISAs, where you are invested in the stock market, or cash ISAs, where you earn interest on your savings. You can open a LISA account online at any time, up until you are 40 years old. The catch? You can only withdraw the money to purchase your first home or for retirement—anything else will cost you a pretty hefty fine. But, if you use it for a house deposit, you can keep saving and receiving the government top-up until you hit 50.

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“Having that government bonus at the end of the financial year was worthwhile for me because it gave me that extra boost when it’s more difficult to

afford to put a lot by.” So, what is stopping you? Whether you are eyeing up a cozy flat in Cardiff Bay or want to settle somewhere new, a Lifetime ISA could be your best shot at making it happen. Imagine all of those 4-for-10 VKs or T&A kebabs that could have been invested! The future you will thank you for it.



Van Drives Into Pro-Palestinian Protesters Blocking Road Outside Cardiff University

Tom Nicholson
News Editor

On Wednesday the 19th of February, tensions flared outside Cardiff University’s main building as a van drives into a group of pro-Palestinian protesters who had gathered to block Park Place in a demonstration.

The protesters, waving Palestinian flags, had positioned themselves in the road as part of a demonstration organised by Cardiff Students for Palestine, aiming to disrupt the “Postgrad Live!” event taking place inside the university’s Centre for Student Life. Footage circulating on social media cap-

tures the moment the van moved into the crowd. One protester was knocked to the ground, prompting others to place their hands on the vehicle in an attempt to stop it. Several bystanders rushed to check on those involved, with some recording the incident. In a statement, Cardiff Students for Palestine accused the driver of acting aggressively, stating: “Whilst we were exercising our right to peacefully protest, a van... drove into a number of protesters.

The individuals in the van also yelled obscenities at those protesting.” The footage has sparked debate online, with some social media users criticising the protesters for blocking the road, while others condemned the driver’s actions.

One commenter wrote “Roads are for cars, not people”, while another defended the demonstrators, calling the van’s actions “reckless and dangerous”. South Wales Police confirmed that no injuries were reported and no formal complaints have been filed. The company associated with the van has been contacted for comment but has yet to respond.



100,000th Tree Planted in Cardiff’s New “Urban Forest”

Rowan Stranger
Contributor

After four years since the project was launched, Cardiff’s urban forest has reached 100,000 trees planted throughout the city. The Coed Caerdydd programme was first established by Cardiff city council in 2021 as part of its strategy for achieving net zero carbon use and promoting greener and healthier city. The event was marked by the first tree planting in Greenway Park in Rumney.

The urban forest has primarily been funded by Cardiff City Council and the Welsh government with additional resources provided by Woodland Trust and Trees for Cities. This has allowed over thirty native species planted in over three-hundred different sites throughout the city including parks, streets, and schools. With the work of over 7,000 Coed Caerdydd community volunteers, they are aiming to reach 110,000 trees

planted by the end of this planting season and secure 25% tree canopy coverage in the city by the end of the ten-year project. The cabinet member for Culture, Parks and Events, Cllr Jennifer Burke has praised Cardiff’s urban forest with having made the city “a greener more

pleasant place to live” with positive environmental impacts that “make a significant contribution towards our vision for a carbon-neutral Cardiff”. The increase in green spaces has been crucial to climate regulation, with trees removing 10.5% of emissions from transport, including 7,900 tonnes of carbon. This is equivalent to the emissions of 14,000 cars in a year. A report by Forest Research found that Cardiff’s trees intercept a total of 256 tonnes of rainfall each year, contributing to the efforts to mitigate the effects of flooding and storm damage. The

Coed Caerdydd programme has also been beneficial in protecting the city’s

natural species and habitats and encouraging healthy lifestyles by investing in parks and green spaces.

Despite its achievements, there is still a long way to go and a lot of work to be done for Cardiff City Council to reach its goals of establishing a carbon-neutral city by 2030. Cllr Jennifer Burke has urged people to give their time to making their city greener having said: “I’d encourage as many people as possible to get involved and join us at a community tree planting session”.

Tree planting season runs from November to March and free tree-planting events

are being held in green spaces all over Cardiff in the next month.



NEWS FROM AROUND THE UK

**EDINBURGH**

Edinburgh University warns staff “nothing is off the table” amid funding crisis.

SHEFFIELD

Man arrested after “armed standoff” at Sheffield city centre apartment building.

BIRMINGHAM

Over 1,000 students evacuated after fire breaks out at Birmingham University Guild.

CARDIFF

Petition to save Cardiff University nursing programme gets over 18,000 signatures.

LONDON

Imperial College London votes for 100% plant-based catering at its Students’ Union.

Young People Warned About Getting Into Cardiff University in Future

Emily Stevens
Contributor

UK undergraduates are about to face lower acceptance rates when applying for Cardiff University as the institution focuses on candidates with higher grades. WalesOnline reported that a document titled “Academic futures consultation document – proposals for re-shaping the academic activity of Cardiff University” had been sent to staff, detailing upcoming changes, including the decision to limit the number of students who were allowed in based on academic success, and therefore refining the UK undergraduate pool to high achieving candidates.

However, this is not the only proposal to have caused controversy, as the university has proposed to cut over forty jobs while cutting courses and merging schools together. Prioritising budgets, the plan focuses on decreasing the amount

of home undergraduates and increasing the school’s demand in the market by increasing its exclusivity through tariff. This comes after a significant drop in both the World University Rankings, falling to #186, and the National Rankings, falling to 46 in the Guardian 2025 University Guide. The University is in a £65-million deficit between fundraising and spending and the former vice-chancellor, Colin Riordan spent over £26,000 in five months on overseas trips. Students have been angered and motivated by the cuts made to academic posts and the cutting of courses.

Taking to *Change.org* to organise petitions, “Save Cardiff School of Music” has accumulated over 24,500 signatures and “Save MLANG at Cardiff University” has garnered over 11,000 signatures. Music students have also taken to busking outside of the School of Music, protesting the university’s decision to cut their courses and showing off the talents that will be removed from Cardiff’s candidate pool.

Protests outside the Senned also occurred on the 4th of February with hundreds rallying together, demanding a higher budget for Cardiff University as the Welsh draft budget debate was happening inside. This all comes amongst the consistent rise in tuition fees, which in the 2022/2023 academic year were as low as £9,000. They have risen to £9,250 in 2024 and are projected to increase to £9,535 a year in 2025.

This projection means that Cardiff University’s fees will match England’s, unlike in 2022, where they were £250 lower. So, with Nursing, Modern Foreign Languages and Music being cut, unrest in the university, and increasing tuition fees, it seems that lowering acceptance rates are not the only worries that Cardiff University’s prospective UK undergraduates will face.





Hannah Williams



Charlie Thomas



Ffion Wyn Jones



Elen Williams



Hanna Morgans

Cymdeithas yr Iaith yn galw am 'Addysg Gymraeg i Bawb.'

Gwenno Davies
Golygydd Taf-od

Ar ddydd Sadwrn, y 15eg o Chwefror, ymgasglodd nifer o bobl ym mae Caerdydd i gefnogi rali Cymdeithas yr Iaith, 'Sefyllgyda'r 80%: Addysg Gymraeg i Bawb.' Bwriad y rali oedd galw ar y Senedd i gryfhau Bil y Gymraeg ac Addysg, yn y gobaith i gyrraedd miliwn o siaradwyr erbyn 2050.

Dadl Cymdeithas yr Iaith yw bod y bil, sy'n cael ei drafod yn y Senedd ar hyn o bryd, yn "llawer rhy wan." Hoffai'r Gymdeithas weld pob ysgol yng Nghymru yn troi'n ysgolion cyfrwng Cymraeg, ac maent yn beirniadu "diffyg egni a diffyg

cyfeiriad" y Llywodraeth am iddyn nhw beidio blaenoriaethu hyn.

"Mae Aelodau'r Senedd yn hoff o ddweud bod y Gymraeg yn perthyn i bawb, ond mae eu gweithredoedd yn awgrymu'r gwrthwyneb," meddai Toni Schiavone, Cadeirydd Grŵp Addysg Cymdeithas yr Iaith.

"Mae'r system addysg yn amddifadu 80% o'n plant o'r hawl i allu defnyddio'r Gymraeg," ychwanegodd.

Mewn arolwg barn ddiweddar gan YouGov, mynegodd 59% o bobl y dylai ysgolion anelu i addysgu pob disgybl i fod yn siaradwyr Cymraeg rhugl. Yn ogystal, mewn arolwg arall, mynegodd 72% o'r Cymry ei bod o leiaf

braid yn bwysig i blant Cymru ddysgu'r Gymraeg mewn ysgolion.

Wrth siarad o flaen y dorf yn y rali, dywedodd Mabli Siriol o Gymdeithas yr Iaith, "Cyfle unwaith mewn cenhedlaeth yw'r bil yma. Rhaid inni felly beidio â cholli'r cyfle, a cholli cenhedlaeth arall o blant i system sy'n eu gadael nhw lawr."

Er hyn, pryder Ceri Evans, Llywydd UCAC, yw nad oes digon o athrawon cyfrwng Cymraeg ar gael i ddysgu plant. Pwysleisiodd bod angen i Lywodraeth Cymru "ffeindio'r arian o rywle - heb yr arian 'na does dim digon o athrawon cyfrwng Cymraeg i allu cynnig y pynciau trwy gyfrwng y Gymraeg."

"Os dy' nhw ddim yma wedyn

ma'r gobaith o gael y miliwn o siaradwyr byth yn mynd i gael ei wireddu," meddai.

Ymysg y siaradwyr eraill roedd y bardd a'r llenor Hammad Rind, Kiera Marshall o Blaid Cymru, Owain Siôn o Undeb Myfyrwyr Prifysgol Caerdydd, a Dr Catrin Edwards o'r Mudiad Meithrin.

Ers y rali, mae Cymdeithas yr Iaith wedi postio lluniau ar Instagram a Facebook gan ddiolch i'r rheini fu'n cefnogi'r achos. Nid yw'r Senedd wedi ymateb eto, ond mae Cymdeithas yr Iaith wedi datgan eu bod wedi gadael neges i Mark Drakeford, a bod ganddynt gynlluniau i barhau i ymgyrchu dros gryfhau'r bil hwn.

Dafydd Elis-Thomas: Ei gyfraniad i wleidyddiaeth Cymru

Lili Ray
Golygydd Taf-od

Bu farw'r Arglwydd Dafydd Elis-Thomas, un o ffigurau mwyaf blaenllaw gwleidyddiaeth Cymru, yn 78 oed. Yn angerddol dros ei weledigaethau, roedd yn wleidydd egwyddorol nad oedd yn ofni herio safbwyntiau.

Yn 1974, yn ddim ond 27 oed, cafodd ei ethol yn Aelod Seneddol dros Blaid Cymru. Daeth yn arweinydd y blaid yn 1984, gan ddal y swydd hyd at 1991. Yn ystod y cyfnod hwn, chwaraeodd ran allweddol yn ail-lunio safbwyntiau'r blaid tuag at Ewrop ac yn ei hadfywiad wedi methiant y refferendwm datganoli yn 1979.

Wrth dalu teyrnged iddo, dywedodd arweinydd Plaid Cymru, Rhun ap Iorwerth: "Rydym yn cofio Dafydd fel un a dorrodd dir newydd, fel yr Aelod Seneddol ieuengaf yn San Steffan... ac aeth ymlaen i arwain Plaid Cymru gydag angerdd ac afaith."

Yn 1992, cafodd ei enwebu yn Aelod o Dŷ'r Arglwyddi fel y Barwn Elis-Thomas o Nant Conwy - penderfyniad a gododd densiynau o fewn Plaid Cymru. Serch hynny, parhaodd i fod yn gynrychiolydd brwd dros Gymru a'i phobl.

Daeth yn Llywydd cyntaf i'r Cynulliad Cenedlaethol Cymru yn 1999, gan osod

sylfeini cadarn ar gyfer y sefydliad newydd. Dywedodd Darren Millar ei fod yn hollol allweddol i Senedd Cymru, Llywodraeth Cymru a Datganoli yn y cyfnod hwn: "Roedd yn gonglfaen i'r syniadaeth, ac yn bensaer llawer o'r systemau sydd gennym heddiw."

Dywedodd Llywydd presennol y Senedd, Elin Jones: "Ef oedd craig sylfaen ein Senedd."

Er iddo gamu o'r rôl fel Llywydd yn 2011, parhaodd i fod yn ddylanwadol ym myd gwleidyddiaeth Cymru. Yn ystod teyrngedau yn y Senedd yr wythnos hon, disgrifiodd y Prif Weinidog, Eluned Morgan, ef fel "cawr gwleidyddol, gydag ochr ddrygionus" a oedd yn "feistr ar adeiladu pontydd gwleidyddol."

Yn wir, roedd ei allu i adeiladu pontydd yn un o'i gryfderau mwyaf - er y bu iddo losgi rhai pan adawodd Plaid Cymru yn 2016. Parhaodd i wasanaethu fel aelod annibynnol, gan weithio'n agos gyda Llywodraeth Lafur Cymru. Yn 2017, fe'i benodwyd yn Ddirprwy Weinidog, swydd a ddaliodd tan iddo ymddeol o'r Senedd yn 2021.

Roedd Dafydd Elis-Thomas yn wleidydd a fentrodd yn groes i ddisgwyliadau, yn dadlau dros ei egwyddorion a'n ffigur allweddol yn natblygiad gwleidyddol Cymru. Ni ellir tanseilio ei gyfraniad i wleidyddiaeth, bydd ei golled i'w deimlo'n sylweddol.

"Ni ddaw neb yn llywydd, i'r bwlch" - Rhys Iorwerth

Dyn o Japan a ddysgodd Gymraeg yng Nghymru yn dysgu'r iaith yn Tokyo

Ifan Meredith
Golygydd Taf-od

Tocar ôl y Nadolig, bues i'n lwcus i sgwrsio â Takeshi Koike sydd yn dysgu Cymraeg i bobl yn Japan ar ôl iddo ddysgu'r iaith pan oedd yn astudio yng Nghymru yn 1992.

Yn 1992, daeth Takeshi i Gymru a Phrifysgol Llanbed lle ddysgodd yr iaith Gymraeg gan fod ganddo ddiddordeb mewn cerddoriaeth.

Wrth siarad â Gair Rhydd, soniodd ei fod yn dysgu'r Gymraeg i fyfyrwyr ifanc fel rhan o fodiwl 'Cymru : ei diwylliant a'i hiath' ers iddo ddychwelyd i Japan.

"Nes i sylweddoli bod llawer o bobl o Gymru yn byw yn Japan"

Ar ôl dychwelyd i Japan, sylweddolodd bod nifer o Gymry yn byw yn Japan a daeth yn ymwybodol o Gymdeithas Dewi Sant yn Tokyo. "Cwrddais â dyn o Abertawe a dechreuon ni ddysgu Cymraeg i bobl mewn caffis, ysgolion, unrhyw le yn Tokyo!" dywedodd wrth Gair Rhydd.

"iaith ddiddorol"

Bu'n dysgu Cymraeg i drigolion Tokyo oedd â diddordeb yng Nghymru a bellach mae'n dysgu dros 25 o fyfyrwyr ar ei fodiwl ym Mhrifysgol Tokyo.

Wrth sôn am ei brofiadau yn dysgu Cymraeg i drigolion Japan, soniodd am stori un myfyriwr a ddaeth i Brydain i ddysgu Saesneg ac yna ymweld â Chymru gan sylweddoli pa mor fyw yw'r iaith yng Nghymru.

Mewn e-bost at Takeshi, dywedodd y myfyriwr "nawr dwi'n gweld yr iaith Gymraeg yn fyw, dwi'n deall pam [fod Takeshi mor awyddus i ddysgu Cymraeg]". "Wrth ddarllen yr e-bost, teimlais yn falch" meddai Takeshi Koike wrth Gair Rhydd.

"allwedd diwylliant Cymru yw'r iaith"

Dywedodd fod "rhaid ymweld â Chymru i ddeall rhinwedd y diwylliant" a bod siarad Cymraeg wrth ymweld â Chymru yn "cyfoethogi'r daith".

Mae Takeshi yn gweithio ar gynnwys ar-lein wrth wneud clipiau fideo i ddysgu sut i ynganu llythrennau'r wyddor Gymraeg ac yn gobeithio gwneud mwy o glipiau i helpu pobl ar draws y byd i ddysgu Cymraeg!



Ergyd drom unwaith yn rhagor i'r celfyddydau yng Nghymru

Elen Morlais Williams
Golygydd Taf-od

Ar ôl degawd o doriau cyllid ar y sector diwylliant, mae cyhoeddiad diweddar Prifysgol Caerdydd wedi dod fel ergyd arall i'r celfyddydau yng Nghymru. Cyhoeddodd Prifysgol Caerdydd eu bod yn ystyried terfynu pynciau fel cerddoriaeth oherwydd problemau ariannol, sy'n awgrymu bod y celfyddydau yng Nghymru, unwaith yn rhagor, yn cael eu tanbrisio.

Mae adroddiad diweddar gan un o bwyllgorau'r Senedd wedi cyflwyno rhybudd clir am effeithiau hirdymor toriadau ariannol parhaus ar y sectorau diwylliant yng Nghymru. Yn ôl yr adroddiad hwnnw, a lansiwyd ar y 9fed o Ionawr, mae Cymru ar ei hôl hi yn sylweddol y tu ôl i genhedloedd eraill Ewrop o ran gwariant

cyhoeddus ar wasanaethau diwylliannol. Dywedodd Delyth Jewell AS, Cadeirydd y Pwyllgor: "Heb newidiadau sylweddol, mae Cymru mewn perygl o gael ei gadael ar ôl o ran llwyddiant ym meysydd diwylliant"

Yn ôl Miranda Ballin o elusen Plant y Cymoedd: "Mae gostyngiad yn y cyllid ar gyfer y celfyddydau yn effeithio ar ein hartistiaid lleol, ein cymuned lawrydd a'r bobl sy'n cymryd rhan yn y gweithgareddau. Ategodd Nia Wyn Evans o theatr gymunedol Arad Goch a Lisa Davies, Prif Weithredwr Tanio bod costau cynyddol a llai o gyllid yn ei gwneud hi'n anoddach dod â theatr i blant a phobl ifanc. Pwysleisiodd y tair bod toriadau cyllidebol yn cyfyngu ar y gallu i gyrraedd cymunedau difreintiedig, ac yn torri cyfleoedd llawrydd i artistiaid. Mae'r celfyddydau yng

Nghymru yn wynebu heriau sylweddol, felly, mae'r adroddiad yn galw ar Llywodraeth Cymru i ariannu'r sector hwn er mwyn sicrhau dyfodol y celfyddydau yng Nghymru.

Mewn ymateb i'r heriau mae Cymru yn ei hwynebu, mae'r actor Cymreig Michael Sheen wedi cyhoeddi lansiad theatr genedlaethol newydd yng Nghymru sef 'The Welsh National Theatre' gyda'r nod o ddangos dramâu sy'n tynnu sylw at straeon o Gymru. Daw'r fenter hon yn sgil diddymu National Theatre Wales, a gaeodd ym mis Rhagfyr llynedd ar ôl colli cyllid o 1.6 miliwn o bunnoedd gan Gyngor y Celfyddydau. Ond yn ôl Heledd Fychan, AS Plaid Cymru, dyletswydd Llywodraeth Cymru yw cynnal sefydliadau diwylliannol sy'n "arddangos creadigrwydd, talent a hunaniaeth

Cymru". Dywedodd: "Ni ddylai Michael Sheen orfod gwneud gwaith Llywodraeth Lafur Cymru ar ariannu Theatr Genedlaethol cyfrwng-Saesneg newydd i Gymru". Cred Heledd Fychan bod anallu'r Prif Weinidog a'r Gweinidog Diwylliant i gydnabod difrifoldeb y sefyllfa yn bryderus.

Er hyn, mae mentrau fel cwmni theatr newydd Michael Sheen yn cynnig llygedyn o obaith, ond mae'r sefyllfa yn pwysleisio'r angen am strategaeth gan y llywodraeth i gefnogi a hyrwyddo'r celfyddydau yng Nghymru. Heb ymdrechion o'r fath, mae pryder y gallai dyfodol y celfyddydau yng Nghymru fod mewn perygl, gan arwain at ddirywiad yn allbwn creadigol y genedl a cholli hunaniaeth gwlad y gân.

Tarddiad ein Traddodiad: Y Mabinogi

Charlie Thomas
Golygydd Taf-Od

Croeso nôl i Tarddiad ein Traddodiad, gyda'r rhifyn hwn yn edrych ar ffynhonnell nifer o'r straeon rydym wedi'u trafod eisoes. Yma yng Nghymru, mae nifer fawr o'r chwedlau rydym yn gyfarwydd gyda nhw yn dod o ddarn pwysig iawn o lenyddiaeth, sef y Mabinogi. Felly beth yw'r Mabinogi? O ble mae'n dod, a beth yw ei bwysigrwydd? Mae gymaint o straeon enwog yn dod o'r Mabinogi - dwi'n siŵr eich bod chi wedi clywed o leiaf un ohonyn nhw!

Cyfes o straeon yw'r Mabinogi, wedi'u gosod mewn pedair cainc, a'r straeon i gyd yn gysylltiedig ac yn trafod pob math o bynciau, o wleidyddiaeth, i ramant. Mae'r straeon i gyd yn dal pwysigrwydd i ni fel cenedl. Gan fod rhai o'r enwau enwocaf o fewn ein chwedlau a mytholeg fel Bendigeidfran a Blodeuwedd yn dod yn wreiddiol o'r Mabinogi, mae'n amlwg fod y llenyddiaeth yn bwysig a'n ddylanwadol ar ein hunaniaeth.

Creda rhai bod y straeon sy'n creu'r Mabinogi yn dod yn wreiddiol o'r 12fed i'r 14eg ganrif, gydag ansicrwydd ynghylch pwy eu hysgrifennodd! Mae'r chwedlau wedi'u nodi yn Llyfr Gwyn Rhydderch a Llyfr Coch Hergest, ond credir bod gan y straeon darddiad llawer hyn na hyn. Mae haneswyr yn dweud bod y straeon wedi'u pasio lawr trwy'r cenedlaethau wrth i feirdd Celtaidd cynnar er rhannu nhw er mwyn defnyddio llety dros nos wrth deithio. Gwnaeth y beirdd deithio ar draws Prydain a thu hwnt yn gwneud hyn, ac felly cafodd y straeon eu newid wrth i'r beirdd eu hailadrodd. Oherwydd hyn, mae hi bron yn amhosib gwybod yn union o le ddaeth y straeon yn wreiddiol!

Gwelwyd Mabinogion gan Charlotte Guest, yn cael ei gyhoeddi am y tro cyntaf rhwng 1838 a 1849, wrth i'r pedair cainc gael eu gosod gyda'i gilydd ar ôl i'r llenyddiaeth oroesi am ganrifoedd trwy lyfrgelloedd teuluoedd, gyda dim ond dau o'r darnau llenyddol gwreiddiol wedi goroesi hyd heddiw!

Oherwydd ei bwysigrwydd i'n cenedl, a'r ardrawiad mae'r gwaith wedi cael ar y byd llenyddol - wrth ysbrydoli gwaith fel The Silmarillion gan J.R.R. Tolkien, a'r gân 'Rhiannon' gan Fleetwood Mac - mae'n amlwg fod y Mabinogi yn rhan enfawr o'n hunaniaeth. Gydag amrywiaeth o straeon, o'r fytholeg Geltaidd, i'r chwedlau am Arthur a'i farchogion, mae'n amhosib diystyru'r dylanwad mae'r llenyddiaeth wedi cael ar ein gwlad, a hefyd yn fydd eang!



Ymateb Cyntaf i Raglen Y Llais

Betsan Cain
Cyfrannwr

O'r diwedd mae'r caeiriau coch byd enwog wedi cyrraedd ein sgriniau teledu yng Nghymru, sef rhaglen Y Llais sydd yn cael ei hadnabod fel The Voice, gyda'r 75ain fersiwn wedi cael ei gynhyrchu gan Boom Cymru a'i ddarlledu ar S4C a hynny drwy'r Gymraeg! Heb os, credaf fod hyn yn rhoi diwydiant darlledu a cherddoriaeth Gymraeg mewn goleuni bydeang gan dorri tir newydd ym myd cyfryngau Cymru.

Roedd y bennod gyntaf yn llwyddiant ysgubol, gydag wyth pennod o'n blaenau i'n diddanu'n llwyr gyda lleisiau hynod unigryw o bob cwr o Gymru. Nid ar chwarae bach mae mynd ati i greu rhaglen mor heriol sydd eisoes gydag enfawrdd, felly

roedd yn rhaid dod o hyd i hyfforddwy'r profiadol a oedd yn gallu darparu'r profiad llawn ar gyfer y cystadleuwyr. Sicrhawyd y nod hwn gyda'r bas Bryn Terfel, sydd wedi canu ar lwyfannau mwyaf eiconig y byd opera dros y 30 mlynedd diwethaf gan ennill 'Grammys', 'Classical Brit Awards' a gwobr 'Gramophone', sydd wir yn rhoi safon i'r gyfres. Un o'r rhai eraill yn eu plith yw'r canwr pop Yws Gwynedd sydd yn berchen ar label recordiau Cosh a ddisgrifiodd y profiad fel "sioc enfawr" i glywed

tadleuydd ar raglen Saesneg The Voice a'r gyfansoddwraig Bronwen Lewis.

Yn sicr, nid yw hi'n hawdd iawn cynhyrchu a darlledu rhaglen hollol newydd ar gyfer cynulleidfya S4C, ond mae cyflwynydd Y Llais sydd hefyd yn DJ ar BBC Radio 1, Sian Eleri, yn gweld yr angen ar gyfer y math hwn o gyfres yng Nghymru. Dywedodd: "Ry'n ni'n falch iawn i fedru dod â fformat sydd mor llwyddiannus yn fyd eang i Gymru. Wrth i ni anelu i ddenu cynulleidfya amrywiol, bydd Y Llais yn dipyn o sioe fydd yn apelio yn eang."

Credaf fod Sian Eleri yn allweddol i'r Llais gan ei bod yn apelio tuag at do hollol newydd gan ddenu cynulleidfya a chystadleuwyr sy'n cael eu croesawu i gerddoriaeth Gymraeg am y tro cyntaf erioed. Er hyn, roedd y defnydd o'r Saesneg ar y rhaglen yn sicr yn bwnc llosg ar y cyfryngau gan i rai beio'r rhaglen am beidio ei gwneud hi'n rhaglen hollol Gymreig, gyda'r hyffordwraig Aleighcia Scott yn

ddysgwraig a hefyd gan i rai cystadleuwyr beidio siarad Gymraeg. Ond bydd rhai yn canmol y rhaglen gan ddweud ei bod yn gynhwysol i bawb. Dywedodd un person: "Rwy'n deall bydd rhai yn sôn am gormod o Saesneg, ond dwi'n credu odd e'n wych ac yn hynod o groesawgar i unrhywun sydd yn dysgu/ moen dysgu a gweld bod hi'n bosib. Mae fy mhartner yn dysgu a roedd y rhaglen wedi rhoi hyder iddi wrth weld y wahanol lefelau o'r iaith mewn un rhaglen ac dwi'n credu dyna sut mae denu a hybu pobl i'r Gymraeg."

Heb os mae'r rhaglen yma wedi lledaenu cynulleidfya S4C gan roi Cymru ar y map. Edrychaf ymlaen tuag at y bennod nesaf, cofiwch allwch wyluo ar S4C, BBC Iplayer a S4C Clic.



"talent anhygoel". Hefyd cawn y seren 'reggae' Aleighcia Scott ac yn olaf y cyn-gys-

Dydd Miwsig Cymru 2025

Ela Rhys
Cyfrannwr

Y 7fed o Chwefror, 2025 – yn sicr, dyma ddyddiad allweddol a ddylai'n sicr fod wedi'i nodi'n eich dyddiadur wrth i ni fel Cymry fynd ati i ddathlu 'Dydd Miwsig Cymru'. Cyfle penigamp i ni fel trigolion gwlad y gân ymfalchïo nid yn unig yn ein Cymreictod ond yn ein cerddoriaeth Gymraeg gan sicrhau fod llwyfan yn cael ei gynnig i artistiaid Cymreig newydd. Waeth beth yw eich hoff gyfrwng cerddorol, boed yn opera, indi, pop neu roc – mae 'Dydd Miwsig Cymru' yn gyfle i ddathlu cerddoriaeth Gymraeg sydd at ddant pob un ac yn fwy o reswm nac erioed i ddangos ein gwerthfawrogiad tuag at artistiaid sy'n cyfrannu i'r sin gerddoriaeth wych yma yng Nghymru.

Mewn sgwrs ddiweddar ar-lein, dyma

oedd gan Elin Fflur, y gantores a'r gyflwynwraig o Ynys Môn i'w ddweud wrthyf am bwysigrwydd y diwrnod. "Mae cael diwrnod wedi ei benodi i gerddoriaeth Gymraeg yn bwysig tu hwnt. Mae gyno ni gerddoriaeth arbennig yma. Mae angen diwrnod fel ma i dynnu sylw a chodi ymwybyddiaeth o'r hyn 'da ni'n greu yn y Gymraeg a hefyd i ddathlu yr hyn 'da ni'n greu ymysg ein gilydd. Dydd Miwsig Cymru Hapus i bawb!"

Sut allai fynd ati i ddathlu?

Di-ddiwedd oedd y cyfleoedd oedd ar gael i ddathlu'r diwrnod arbennig hwn. Pa ffordd well o wneud hynny 'na mewn steil wrth ymuno â'r cynulleidfaoedd mewn un o'r gigs a oedd yn cael eu cynnal ledled Cymru? Ond, ble oedd y gigs hyn yn cael eu cynnal? Yn ffodus iawn, bu i wefan awni.cymru gael ei sefydlu ym

mis Ionawr sy'n cynnwys map rhwyngweithiol o bob gig nid yn unig yng Nghymru ond gan artistiaid Cymraeg tu hwnt i'r ffin a hynny gydol y flwyddyn. Fodd bynnag, dyma flas ar y wefan o'r gigs a gafodd eu cynnal ar Dydd Miwsig Cymru eleni:

Gwilym Bowen Rhys Trio + Cadog; Neuadd Goffa, Trefdraeth.

Bwca + Lafant + Chwaer + O.P Edwards; Bar Seler, Aberteifi.

Meinir Gwilym; Saith Seren, Wrecsam

Rhys Meirion; Y Llew Coch, Llansannan.

Alffa, Mali Hâf a Tesni Hughes; Rascal's Bangor.

Hue Aye Rebals; Tafarn yr Iorwerth, Bryngwran.

Am wybodaeth bellach, ymwelwch â <https://awni.cymru/>

Ymweld â gig ddim yn mynd a'ch bryd? Digon o gyfleoedd eraill oedd ar gael i ymgolli yn y dathliadau drwy wrando ar eich hoff gerddoriaeth Gymraeg ar sawl platfform. Beth am ddechrau wrth wrando ar 'Rhestr Chwarae Goreuon Cymru' ar Spotify neu 'Traciau Dydd Miwsig Cymru' gan BBC Radio Cymru?

Er mai un diwrnod o ddathlu yw Dydd Miwsig Cymru nid yw hynny'n ein rhwystro fel Cymry rhag ymfalchïo gydol yr amser ym modolaeth a llwyddiant cerddoriaeth Gymraeg. Mae angen i gerddoriaeth Gymraeg gael ei chydabod ac i Gymru, gwlad y gân' gael ei rhoi ar y map.

Dydd Miwsig Cymru Hapus!

Busnes Myfyriwr wedi buddio Dysgwyr Cymraeg ar draws y Byd

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-od

Mae busnes a sefydlwyd gan un o fyfyrwyr Pri-fysgol Caerdydd, GM Notebooks, yn cynorthwyo dysgwyr Cymraeg yng Nghymru a thu hwnt, gan gynnwys dysgwyr mor bell ag America.

Un o fentrau'r busnes yw ei sesiynau rhithiol 'Cymraeg a Phaned', sydd yn ôl perchennog y busnes – Gwilym Morgan, 19, o Gaerdydd – yn rhoi cyfle "i ddysgwyr ledled y byd i ddod ar y cyfarfod i siarad Cymraeg efo pobl arall" a hynny am ddim. Dechreuodd gynnal y sesiynau dros alwadau fideo ar y we ym mis Tachwedd y llynedd, a bellach y mae wedi cynnal 3 ohonynt, gyda rhwng 10 a 15 o unigolion yn ymuno. O'r rheini, mae'r mwyafrif wedi'u lleoli yng Nghymru, ond mae 5 person wedi ymuno y tu hwnt i'r wlad – tri o America, un o Ganada ac un o'r Eidal. Dywedodd Gwilym ei fod yn "hyfryd i'w cael nhw" gan ei fod yn dangos nad yw'r Gymraeg wedi'i chyfyngu i Gymru yn unig.

"Ail don y busnes"

Mae Gwilym bellach yn ei flwyddyn gyntaf yn astudio Cymraeg a Ffrangeg ym Mhri-fysgol Caerdydd. Sefydlodd y busnes GM Notebooks yn wreiddiol yn 2021, yn gwerthu llyfrau nodiadau ar y we er mwyn ennill ychydig

o arian poced. Wedi iddo ennill Medal y Dysgwyr yn Eisteddfod yr Urdd yn 2023, dywedodd ei fod wedi dechrau meddwl "sut dwi'n gallu defnyddio'r profiad hwn a'm profiad fy hun i ddysgu eraill?". Yn y pen draw, penderfynodd ailsefydlu'r busnes gan greu adnoddau i gynorthwyo pobl eraill sy'n dysgu'r Gymraeg. Dyma yn ei eiriau ef, oedd "ail don y busnes", ac ychwanegodd, "ers hynny ry'n ni jyst wedi tyfu a chreu mwy a mwy o adnoddau."

Dechreuodd drwy werthu llyfr nodiadau i ddysgwyr Cymraeg i gadw cofnod o'r hyn roeddent yn dysgu mewn gwersi. Bellach, y mae wedi cyflwyno llawer mwy o adnoddau i'w gasgliad megis posteri, mygiau, cardiau fflach, a'i gynnyrch mwyaf poblogaidd sef y mat gramadeg. Dywedodd Gwilym, "Mae wedi gwerthu allan dwywaith yn yr Haf", ac maent bellach yn ei gyflwyno am drydydd tro.

"dim byd fel hwn o'r blaen ar gyfer y Gymraeg"

Mae GM Notebooks wedi derbyn ad-borth cadarnhaol iawn wrth gwsmeriaid am ei gynnyrch. Yng ngeiriau Gwilym, "mae lot yn dweud bod dim byd fel hwn o'r blaen ar gyfer y Gymraeg". Ychwanegodd, "mae lot o nhw'n dweud bod e'n neis cael rhywbeth lliwgar a mwy modern."

GM Notebooks

oedd y cyntaf hefyd i gyhoeddi dyddiadur gofidiau yn y Gymraeg. Creodd Gwilym fersiwn Saesneg o'r dyddiadur i'w chwaer, ac yna ei gyfieithu gan nad oedd "wedi gweld dim byd fel hyn yn y Gymraeg". Mynegodd ddi-dordeb mewn creu mwy o adnoddau iechyd meddwl cyfrwng Cymraeg yn y dyfodol, ond mai ei brif ffocws ar hyn o bryd yw datblygu adnoddau i ddysgwyr.

Technoleg fel Arf Dyfu Busnes

Mae Gwilym hefyd yn manteisio ar y cyfle i dyfu ei fusnes drwy dechnoleg. Mae gan GM Notebooks bresenoldeb blaenllaw ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol, ac yn ddiweddar, maent wedi profi twf sylweddol mewn dilyniant. Tua 300 o ddilynwyr oedd gan y busnes ar Instagram ar ddechrau haf 2024, ond ers hynny dywedodd Gwilym ei fod wedi ennill cannoedd o ddilynwyr, a bellach mae dros fil o bobl yn dilyn y cyfrif.

Mae Gwilym yn aml yn defnyddio'i blatfform ar y cyfryngau cymdeithasol i uwchlwytho fideos byr sy'n dysgu geirfa amserol i'w gynulleidfau. Yn ddiweddar, postiodd fideo am eirfa sy'n gysylltiedig â Dydd Sant Ffolant fel 'cariad' a 'ffrind'.

Ond menter ddiweddaraf y busnes yw ei sesiynau rhithiol 'Cymraeg a Phaned'.

Neges Gwilym i unrhyw un sy'n dysgu'r Gymraeg neu sy'n awyddus i'w dysgu yw i "fynd amdani". Ei gyngor yw gwneud popeth y gallwch yn y Gymraeg megis "mynd i drafod yn y Gymraeg ble bynnag wyt ti, trochi dy hun yn y Gymraeg, ceisio darllen yn y Gymraeg (a) gwrando ar Radio Cymru".

Barn y Bobl: 'Pa mor bwysig yw cynnal Eisteddfodau Lleol?'

Erin Davies
Cyfrannwr

Ar noson o falchder a diwylliant, rhwng muriau Ysgol Glantaf, cododd adlais o farddoniaeth, canu ac actio wrth i gystadleuwyr gymryd i'r llwyfan yn Eisteddfod leol Caerdydd ar y 7fed o Chwefror. Roedd yr awyrgylch yn llawn brwdfrydedd, tystiolaeth fyw bod yr Eisteddfodau lleol dal i chwarae rhan flaenllaw ym mywydau pobl Cymru. Ond mewn cyfnod lle mae blaenoriaethau'n newid a'r byd yn symud yn gyflym, mae'n deg gofyn, a yw Eisteddfodau lleol mor hanfodol ag y cred rhai?

Mae'n anodd gwadu pwysigrwydd cynnal Eisteddfodau lleol, maent yn rhan annatod o'n treftadaeth ddiwylliannol, ac yn gweithredu fel pont rhwng ein gorffennol a'n dyfodol. Maent yn cynnig llwyfan i bobl o bob oed i arddangos eu doniau, boed hynny trwy chwarae offeryn, dawnio, canu, barddoni neu actio. Nid yn unig yw hyn yn helpu datblygu sgiliau unigol, ond hefyd helpu meithrin balchder yn ein hunaniaeth genedlaethol a'n hiaith. Mewn byd lle mae dylanwad diwylliannau eraill yn gryf, mae'n bwysig parhau i gofio am rhai ni ein hun. Mae cynnal digwyddiadau fel Eisteddfodau lleol yn cryfhau'r sylfeini sy'n cadw ein traddodiadau'n fyw.

Mae Eisteddfodau lleol yn cryfhau cymunedau drwy ddod â phobl ynghyd,

meithrin perthnasoedd a chreu ymdeimlad o berthyn. Mewn cyfnod lle mae unigrywdd yn bryder cynyddol, mae'r cyfleoedd i gystadlu a rhannu profiadau ag eraill yn werthfawr. Maent hefyd yn ysbrydoli pobl ifanc i ddatblygu sgiliau megis siarad cyhoeddus, gwaith tim a hyder, rhinweddau hanfodol sy'n eu paratoi ar gyfer y dyfodol. I lawer o berfformwyr Cymreig, dyma'r cam cyntaf idynt feistrolï eu crefft. Mae'n gyfle gwyb felly fel cefnogaeth i dalentau newydd y dyfodol.

Yn naturiol, mae rhai yn dadlau bod yr amser, yr ymdrech a'r arian yn well eu gwario ar wasanaethau hanfodol. Er, mae'n bwysig cofio nad yw'r ddadl hon yn cydnabod gwerth cudd Eisteddfodau lleol, megis ei chyfraniad i'r economi trwy ddenu ymwelwyr a chynyddu'r gwariant yn y gymuned.

Gyda llwyddiant Eisteddfod Caerdydd dal ar ein meddwl, mae'n amser da i fyfyrïo pam bod Eisteddfodau lleol mor werthfawr. Os ydym am sicrhau bod ein treftadaeth yn parhau i ffynnu a bod ein cymunedau'n gryf, yna mae angen i ni barhau i'w cefnogi. Nid yw'n fater rhwng cefnogi traddodiad neu fuddsoddi mewn anghenion cyfoes. Mae'n fater o gydnabod bod y ddau yn gysylltiedig, a'u heffaith cadarnhaol ar ddyfodol ein cymdeithas.

THE TEAM



Ella Lane



Aneurin Davies



James Roberts



Emily Clegg



Adrian Miesik



Miriam Southall



OPINION



Respect Isn't A Flirting Strategy

Ella Lane
Head of Opinion

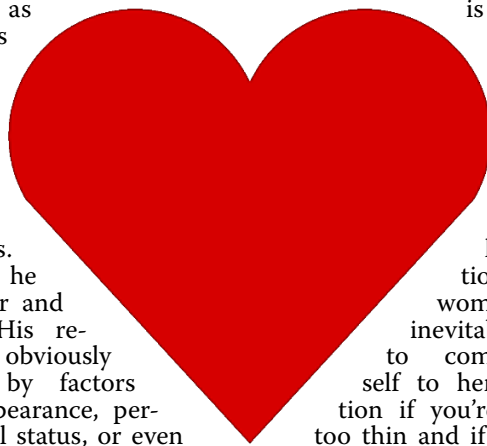
Misogyny can be seen everywhere in society in a multitude of different ways. From “mansplaining” to catcalling, it is safe to assume that most women living in the 21st century have experienced the horrors of chauvinist behaviour. As well as these unfortunately common types of misogyny, I have noticed another type which seems to be going largely unnoticed.

Let me set the scene: it's a Friday night and you're going out with the girls. Following pres and copious amounts of alcohol, you head to Misfits. Once you're in, a man is standing in your way, blocking your path to the dancefloor. You tap him on the shoulder and politely ask him to move out of the

way, and in response he glances over his shoulder and stares right through you, like you're not even there. Seeing this, your female friend intervenes, and as soon as he sets eyes on her, he's ready to listen, even going as far to create a path for you to pass. Why does he listen to her and not you? His reaction is obviously influenced by factors such as appearance, perceived social status, or even unconscious biases about who “deserves” attention. This type of selective acknowledgment is rooted in misogyny, and dem-

onstrates ingrained biases about which women are worth listening to. He finds her attractive, and, therefore, she deserves his respect, whether he is trying to get lucky or not. It's not your friend's fault, but interactions like these create needless competition between women, and you inevitably begin to compare yourself to her. You question if you're too fat or too thin and if you're wearing too much makeup or not enough. Is your outfit the defining factor? Or is it your height?

Situations like this example happen everywhere and it is becoming increasingly hard for me to ignore. To the men reading this article and thinking to themselves that the only reason I am writing this is because I'm unattractive and bitter about the lack of male attention I receive, this could not be further from the truth. The reason I am writing this is because this behaviour is disgusting to both experience and witness, and I feel it should be exposed for what it is: thinly veiled misogyny. So, next time you're out with the boys and you notice that you or your mates are treating a girl disrespectfully or differently to the women around her because she does not fit your definition of the current beauty standard, seriously consider the harmful nature of the behaviour you are perpetuating.



Why Cowboy Carter Deseved the Grammy

Dilichi Dieobi
Head of News

These past few weeks all of my social media timelines have been filled with discourse on the 67th annual Grammy awards, especially regarding Beyoncé's huge win in the Album of the Year category for her eighth studio album *Cowboy Carter*. However, it has not been all that celebratory. Many people believe that *Cowboy Carter* was not deserving of this award, and instead Billie Eilish's album *Hit Me Hard and Soft* should have taken home the prestigious Grammy. I disagree with this popular belief, though—and let me tell you why.

2003: the three members of girl-band/trio Destiny's Child announce that they are going to release solo albums. Beyoncé's skyrockets to popularity, selling over 300,000 units in the first week of its release (more than both of her ex-band members' units combined) and it is immediately clear that she is going to be a star in the music industry. Her first solo studio album is called *Dangerously In Love*, with humongous hits including the title track “Dangerously In Love” and “Crazy In Love” featuring Jay-Z. Fast forward to 2025 and she has released eight studio albums, been on several unbelievable world tours, and has been nominated and has won a huge variety of awards and accolades, including a Peabody award for her album *Lemonade*. Despite winning multiple Grammys, throughout her career, Beyoncé has never won Album of the Year. Somehow, *Lemonade* won a Peabody Award—the mu-

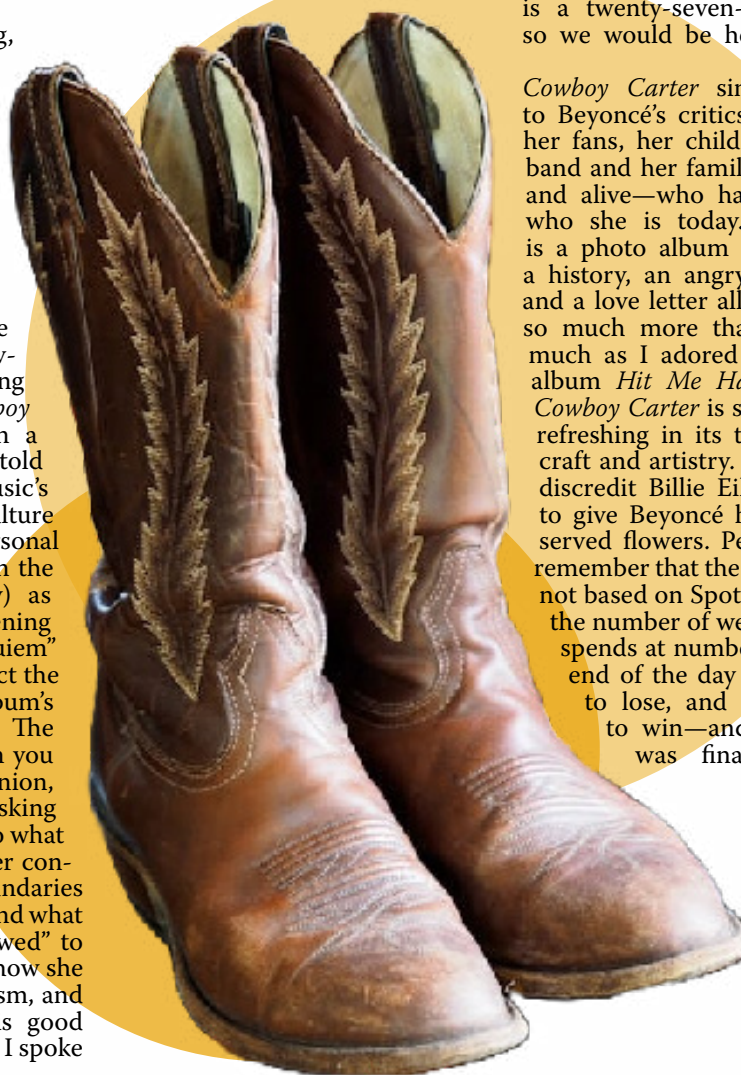
sic industry's equivalent of a Pulitzer Prize—but not Album of the Year? Year after year, Beyoncé releases albums with number one hits made for everyone that are not just money-grabbing singles, but have incredible depth and artistry, so why is there shock and outrage when she finally gets what she deserves?

Statistically speaking, *Cowboy Carter* has not done as well as Beyoncé's other albums. It is definitely not as streamed as the first album in her concept trilogy, *Renaissance* (which also did not win any major awards at the 2023 Grammys), but I would argue that is extremely deserving, if not more deserving of this recognition. *Cowboy Carter* takes listeners on a journey where they are told stories about country music's deep history in Black culture as well as Beyoncé's personal experiences growing up in the south (Texas specifically) as a Black woman. The opening track “American Requiem” prepares listeners to expect the unexpected with this album's themes and explorations. The lyrics “looka here [...] can you stand me?” are, in my opinion, Beyoncé emphatically asking us to pay close attention to what she is about to do, and her constant pushing of genre boundaries in terms of music genres and what she is expected and “allowed” to create. She tells us about how she constantly receives criticism, and how nothing she does is good enough: “They used to say I spoke

too country / Then the rejection came, said I wasn't country 'nough”. Despite this though, she is firm and confident in herself; she gets to define her music, it is her hard work and no one else's: “If that ain't country, tell me, what is? / Plant my bare feet on solid ground for years / They don't, don't know

how hard I had to fight for this / When I sing my song.” In just the opening track, listeners are gripped by Beyoncé's demanding and overpowering tone. Personally, I always get chills when I listen to this song—it is impossible not to with her vocal fry and outstanding vocals. I could write an analysis like this for every song, but it is a twenty-seven-track album, so we would be here a while...

Cowboy Carter sings not only to Beyoncé's critics, but also to her fans, her children, her husband and her family—both dead and alive—who have made her who she is today. This album is a photo album of memories, a history, an angry diary entry, and a love letter all at once. It is so much more than music. As much as I adored Billie Eilish's album *Hit Me Hard and Soft*, *Cowboy Carter* is so much more refreshing in its themes, form, craft and artistry. This is not to discredit Billie Eilish, but only to give Beyoncé her much deserved flowers. People need to remember that the Grammys are not based on Spotify streams or the number of weeks an album spends at number one. At the end of the day someone has to lose, and someone has to win—and this year it was finally Beyoncé.



The Influence of AI in The Brutalist

Miriam Southall
Opinion Editor

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is swiftly integrating into the norms and functions of everyday society. Whether being used to generate images, voice or text, there is no denying that this generation is living through truly historical times. A technological revolution that will be sure to shape decades, even centuries to come!

The debate surrounding AI's role in the creative world has intensified, particularly after its use in the Golden Globe-winning film *The Brutalist*, starring Adrian Brody. After winning "Best Motion Picture – Drama", editor David Jancso revealed in a January 2025 interview with *RedShark News* that AI was used to refine the Hungarian pronunciation of the actors. The software, developed by Ukrainian company Respeecher, creates a database of a person's language and accent, allowing actors to perform lines while altering their voice to fit another language. Jancso,

a Hungarian speaker, argued that the AI merely helped actors with difficult sounds, stating in the interview that the language is a Uralic language, including elements of Finnish and Estonian, making it linguistically complex to learn. He continued his argument by drawing attention to the fact that many of its sounds are even more demanding to Anglo-Saxon speakers in particular, and it wouldn't matter how talented an actor was. Additionally, he emphasised that both Brody and co-star Felicity Jones were aware of its use and defended the use of the software, noting that it streamlined the production process for a film with a modest budget of \$10 million. This innovative approach sparked discussions about the balance between AI assistance and creative integrity in filmmaking.

While there has been a lot of pushback on the film's use of AI, interestingly, it is not the first film to utilise AI tools in its production. The Ukrainian company is also credited with restoring Darth Vader's voice for the *Obi-Wan Kenobi* series, recreating the voice of French singer Édith

Piaf to "narrate" her own biopic, and to enhance Karla Sofía Gascón's singing voice in the film musical *Emilia Pérez*. However, just because other production companies have used AI, this does not justify its use. For me, it highlights the growing dangers of more and more production companies resorting to potential AI shortcuts.

While there has been a significant focus on the speech enhancement element in *The Brutalist*, there is another aspect in which AI was employed. Here things seem to be less clear regarding the extent of the AI's involvement. It has come to light that the architectural drawings and finished buildings featured in the Venice Biennale sequence were created by AI. Jancso confirmed this but did not provide a clear answer regarding which AI tool was used or whether the drawings were completely AI-generated. One has to wonder, therefore: to what extent was AI used in this award-winning film and should it even have been given these prestigious awards if AI was integral in production?

Clearly, the film industry is engaged in a significant debate over the use of AI technology in the making of films. Even the Academy of Motion Picture Arts, who awards the Oscars, have recognised how tense and complex the matter is and are considering putting forward a new rule that all films and nominees must disclose any use of AI. Supporters, like Jancso, claim it improves accuracy and saves time and money, even going so far as to say in his interview with *RedShark News* that "it is controversial in the industry to talk about AI, but it shouldn't be". However, many, including myself, are concerned that relying on AI poses risks. History shows that technology can be misused, and there are fears that companies might use AI for sets, music, and even to replace background actors. This undoubtedly would diminish the humanity and originality of films and talented and creative workers would miss out on jobs. Although it is now too late to prevent AI being used in films, we can, however, bring the stigma of its use to the fore and thus hopefully limit future filmmakers' reliance on it.

Big Tech Firms Remove DEI Targets

Angelie Marwaha
Contributor

It's been a tumultuous few weeks in the USA, with Donald Trump's inauguration taking place and his monumental re-taking of office. What cemented in his transition to power was a flourish of controversial and contentious executive orders being implemented throughout the country. One such example: the removal of federal diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) policies.

Many of these DEI initiatives were implemented in 2020, following the wake of George Floyd's death and a nationwide commitment to mitigating the effects of institutionalised racism throughout America. However, since Trump's return to the White House, a plethora of big tech firms have followed precedent, regressed, and removed these policies.

Firms such as Meta and Amazon have led the field in this regard, dropping initiatives and policies that improve the representation and advocacy of marginalised groups and people throughout society. While these big tech firms state they are maintaining a commitment to looking for diverse staff, they will henceforth be putting an end to the current procedure of making selections from a pool of multifaceted and diverse candidates.

Following Trump's election, Amazon's Jeff Bezos wasted no time in implementing change. Stating they are rolling back on "outdated initiatives" Bezos swiftly eradicated DEI policies as early as December 2024, notifying employees by memo about this change in company policy. Amazon and Meta are not federal companies, and therefore are not subject to presidential policies or orders, like federal organisations are. So while undoubtedly

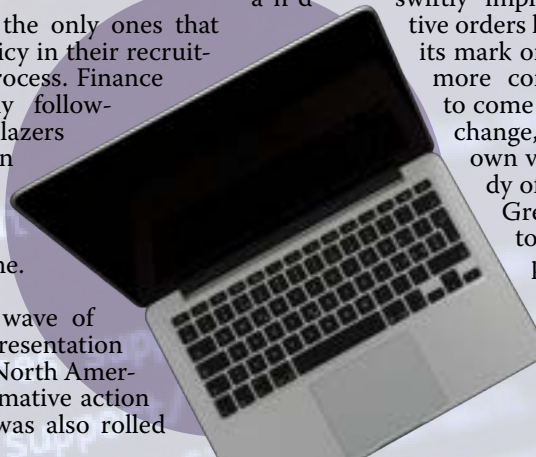
feeling pressure from the White House, the inner circle of American tech and government, including Bezos and Mark Zuckerberg, are seemingly more than happy to drop any form of representative protection for minority groups and people.

But tech firms aren't the only ones that are removing such policy in their recruitment and operating process. Finance companies are swiftly following suit, with trailblazers Deloitte and Goldman Sachs bowing to executive pressure and equally dropping DEI initiatives one by one.

This move follows a wave of anti-diversity and representation measures throughout North America. In June 2023, affirmative action for college decisions was also rolled

back and in ruling on *Students for Fair Admissions v. Harvard*, Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas stated affirmative action was unconstitutional and signified a turn away from judicial protection measures. Donald Trump's ready ascension to power and

swiftly implemented executive orders has already made its mark on America. With more contentious policy to come and recruitment change, we are seeing his own version and parody of "Make America Great Again" come to life in all aspects, from college admissions to recruitment and more.



Is Good TV Back?

Aneurin Davies
Opinion Editor

Since the start of the streaming era, the hunt for good TV has been on. As Netflix gained traction and began pumping out show after show in every possible genre, it's been harder and harder to find good TV. Sure, you could concede that Netflix started their streaming career with a resounding bang with the forever tainted *House of Cards* (just don't ask anyone about the last series) and Disney+ nailed it the first time with season 1 of *The Mandalorian*. But, with so many TV shows now being produced, has good TV disappeared, or are there diamonds to be found in the streaming rough? Pre streaming, shows like *The Sopranos*, *The Wire*, and *Game of Thrones* were heralded as some of the best of all time. Though many claim that nowadays no show could ever compare to these, it simply isn't true. *Severance*, first released in 2022, has just had its second season released this year. Heralded as some of the best science fiction to ever grace our TV screens, I'd have to agree.

From its dystopian themes to its terrifying mystery (what the hell is Cold Harbour?), it truly grips you from the first episode. The performances, aesthetics, cinematography, and score all combine to create an intricate spiral of confusion and wonder. I would hon-

estly have to say that *Severance* may be the best show I've watched this decade.

We were also graced last year by the release of *The Penguin*. A mob flick spin-off of *The Batman* (2022) which sees Colin Farrell's titular character aiming to climb Gotham's crimeladder in the aftermath of the film's events. *The Penguin's* performances are absolutely immense, with Farrell donning an insane amount of prosthetics every episode and Cristine Milioti stealing every scene that she's in—*The Penguin* is

an example of modern mob flicks done right. Just don't ask me about the scene where Farrell pulls up TikTok, I don't want to talk about it. *Arcane* is Netflix's lightning in a bottle. Never would I have guessed that an animated show based on *League of Legends* would leave me want-

ing so much more of it. When season 1 released in 2021, I refused to watch it for a year, purely out of spite for how much I detested the source material. But, once I was forced to watch it by the many claiming it was literally perfect, I understood immediately. I've honestly never seen such a vast combination of colours, styles, or aesthetics mixing to create perfection in every scene. With incredible voice performances by Ella Purnell, Hailee Steinfeld, and so many more, it's hard to even try to compare it to any other show—you just can't.

Honestly, good TV never left us. Sure, streaming services give us some absolute garbage, time after time, but the shows that stick really stick. There are creators out there giving their blood, sweat, and tears to us in the form of the best shows you could ever hope to watch. You just really need to know where to look.



The LA Wildfires: More Than a Hollywood Tragedy

James Burns
Contributor

As America once again entered a new year with excitement, uncertainty and a re-run of presidential politics on the horizon, Americans from Florida to Philly, and Vegas to Vermont celebrated in wonder as fireworks graced the first skies of 2025. Yet, in the days and weeks that followed, the skies were ablaze in much more sinister circumstances, as America's cultural capital Los Angeles faced the fiercest fires in American history. The fires have claimed the lives of twenty-nine people, forced over 200,000 people to evacuate, and destroyed more

than 18,000 homes and structures. According to JP Morgan, the economic losses induced by the fires could reach \$50 billion. These damning statistics have been widely reported in America and across the world, but as all consumers of news are aware, the framing and narrative of a story define how statistics are viewed.

The media's coverage of the fires has left me and potentially many others scratching our heads. Reports often centred around celebrities, and the evacuation and destruction of some of Tinseltown's most notable stars. The story of the fires has in many ways been defined by the statements and stories of Hollywood's elite. As the fires raged on and grew, so did the destruction and the number of stars sharing their experience of having to evacuate or even lose their entire homes. From Mel Gibson to Paris Hilton, an increasing number of celebrities began to announce the loss of their homes to the vicious flames. The media ran with the glitz and glamour provided by celebrity intrigue, choosing to generate news interest with spectacle and shocking images.

Is this combination a messy distraction? Does it take away from realities of the less well-off members of society? Or does it highlight how wealth protects no one from natural disasters?

I believe it is potentially a combination of them all. On the one hand, the aware-

ness and eyes bought by celebrity create great opportunity for aid, donations, and hopefully change—which is undoubtedly a good thing, right? However, in the case of the LA fires, celebrities have dominated the headlines, as well as much of the coverage, and thereby concealing the vulnerable and more financially and socially affected citizens in the area. This masking is potentially not as malevolent as it first seems, instead, it is an unfortunate consequence of a news economy that favours profits and viewership over balanced reporting. But the impact is the same: the stories of the poor who have been financially crippled, and the unimageable tales of loss for each of the families of the twenty-nine fatalities have largely been overshadowed.

This obsession with celebrities extends and most definitely thrives within social media too. Celebrities have been able to speak candidly about their experiences of loss and displacement, receiving the sympathies of many followers. Others, though, groan at the consistent return to celebrities' losses, proclaiming that they are significantly less affected than other members of society. As a baseline statement, they have a point: major Hollywood stars have the resources to move away or rebuild their homes. What they cannot rebuild are the memories lost with the house. The years of ups and downs and good and bad memories experienced in the place they call home are, in a physical sense, reduced to ash.

However, the issue of framing remains the same: the focus determines the narrative and, therefore, the reaction of the public. Some may reject the sentiments of the coverage entirely, and not even consider the people “like them” that the fires have affected simply because they have not been told about it enough, as the coverage painted the disaster as one that affects only the ultra-wealthy—when the reality is different. It is difficult, and arguably problematic to decide which stories to tell and which to avoid, because ultimately intrigue and profits drive the capitalist news system we live in. It is the same reason the fires as whole received more coverage than hurricanes in rural Tennessee and North Carolina a year before. Or the same reason the war in Ukraine receives more Western coverage than the civil war in Sudan. Eurocentrism and preconceived notions on African corruption contribute to a simple ideology that “it is us before them”—both in terms of race and in terms of what affects the upper echelons of society the most. What sells the most, is often what will be seen the most.

Like many conundrums encountered in life, the solution is balance. A completely balanced coverage where every story in every corner of the Earth is reported on is pie in the sky, but as followers of the news and journalists, this is exactly what we should strive for—to find the emotion and heart of every story in the fairest possible manner.



The UK Consulting Industry: All it's Cracked Up to Be?

Thomas Mahoney
Contributor

We need to talk more about London. More specifically, we need to talk about the business consulting industry that resides there, and the role it plays within the UK's business ecosystem. In 2023, the business consulting sector alone contributed over £20bn to the UK economy, a value which has doubled within five years. According to The Global City, over 1.4mn UK employees work in this sector, with over 500,000 in management consultancy alone.

On a surface level, this is fantastic. Most countries that aspire for economic success need to specialise and create jobs en masse in certain industries in order

to attract foreign direct investment and provide people with opportunities. Consulting firms also offer graduates without overtly technical degrees access to well-paid jobs. All the better when the industry in question is resistant to geopolitical developments—consulting will always be desired by high-end firms and ticks many boxes for the UK government. However, the outlook becomes more multi-faceted once we delve deeper into what these companies actually do.

Business consulting could be defined as when a business or individual advises a client company on strategies for “improvement” or “optimisation”, in areas like workforce management, procurement, or marketing. And as already mentioned, the UK (particularly London) is a global heavyweight in this domain. On the other

hand, something immediately stands out. Consulting doesn't really produce anything. Its principal objective is to maximise client shareholder profits, which may not often translate into the client delivering better services in its own field, or increased wages for its employees.

The importance of this is palpable when we look at the status quo in the UK today. The NHS is on its knees. Public transport is often unreliable, while infrastructure projects trundle along, consistently years behind schedule. There are fundamental labour shortages in industries such as education and engineering. It is somewhat disheartening to see the growth of industries like consulting, which do nothing to address any of the aforementioned shortcomings we are witnessing. And even in rarer cases when business con-

sultants are commissioned in the public sector, their recommendations may not always translate to improved service, as already mentioned. Would it not be better for the UK's brightest minds to be employed within these sectors instead of sporadically advising them from afar? Changing employment patterns in a 70-million-people-strong country doesn't happen overnight, and the most astute workers will understandably gravitate to the most lucrative jobs. In light of this, the UK government ought to understand this flux of labour and consider how it can best nurture our health, education, or engineering sectors (be it through higher wages, subsidised degree programmes, or more widely available apprenticeships), to attract graduates back into these fields. If it doesn't, our public sector has little chance of escaping the rut in which it finds itself.

The Resurgence of Nihilism

Ari Plant
Head of Spotlight

Nothing ever happens” as a nihilistic statement is from a place of privilege. It is easier to say “nothing ever happens” as you are sat in your studio apartment in a fairly nice city or from a relatively small town in the middle of the Western world but these phrases aren't said everywhere. They aren't said in warzones, they aren't said in places where rockets are flying overhead, they aren't being said in places where statues are being ripped from pedestals by tractors and cables. It is a place of privilege to feel like “nothing ever happens” as you are able to ignore what happens in the rest of the world. If you feel like “nothing ever happens”,

maybe it's the politics that surround you that violently reinforce the status quo. Maybe it's how the status quo is reinforced by capitalism and neoliberalism. Maybe it's how those systems work to keep things feeling just fine enough that no one, at least in the privileged position of being a person in Britain, will ever feel the need to do anything. Maybe “nothing ever happens” because you aren't doing anything. If you want something to happen, maybe you should make something happen instead of waiting for times to change for you.

A lot of evidence for “nothing ever happens” is failed plots in history like close calls during the cold war or failed assassinations. However, if you think for more than two seconds, you'll remember that there are assassinations that do happen and bombs that do go off. If nothing

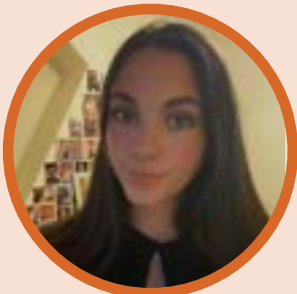
ever happens, you could probably still meet a Russian tsar. “Nothing ever happens” is only a phrase that makes sense if you don't think about it and just say it.

“Nothing ever happens”, as a majority of things that are said online by people who don't know very well, originally started on 4chan as early as July 2014. The first reference to this phrase is posted alongside a meme of a man wearing a Nazi SS officer cap, complete with imperial eagle and totenkopf. The phrase's origins do not have a good foundation. These origins should be noted and not brushed off. It is a foolish person who builds his belief system on the sayings of Nazis because they fall away, and great the fall of them will be. This form of right-wing nihilism based in Western societal privilege makes you mentally lethargic and morally laissez-faire. If you want

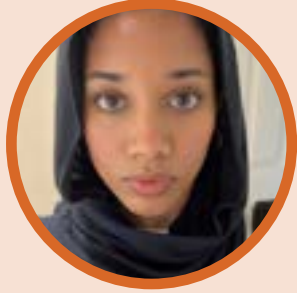
the world to better place, get out of the mental-bed rot moment and throw away the phrase “nothing ever happens”.



THE TEAM



Lauren Tutchell



Laila Dawelbeit



Adam Dunstan



Luke Tonkinson



Thomas Wilson



POLITICS



Concerns about Kemi Badenoch Arise as she Passes 100 Days as Tory Leader

Laila Dawelbeit
Politics Editor

As she passes the one-hundred-day mark since becoming leader of the Conservative Party, Tory frontbenchers have said that Kemi Badenoch has until May 2026 to improve the Conservatives' position in the polls or face pressure to step down. The former business secretary inherited a demoralised and divided party in November 2024—down to 121 MPs—after suffering an overwhelming election defeat in July last year. According to shadow ministers, the first true test of Badenoch's leadership will be the party's performance in local and devolved elections next year. "If we do really badly in the Scottish and Welsh elections, then she will be at serious risk," said one frontbencher.

With Badenoch showing few signs of turning things around for the better, there is not yet open panic—even for a party that has a habit of removing underperforming leaders. Indeed, it is less likely, after forcing Theresa May, Boris Johnson, and Liz Truss from the helm in the past six years, that another—as the Financial Times put it—regicide will occur. "We would look ridiculous

to do it again," said one Tory figure. However, there are definitely concerns, with some focusing on the party machine, her inner circle, and even Badenoch herself. A common complaint is that she views media duties as a chore, often sending shadow cabinet members in her place. She "absolutely hates doing media" and "does not see it as an integral part of her job," according to one former advisor. "We could get away with that in government but in opposition you have to turn up to the opening of an envelope." Some senior Conservatives accuse Badenoch of neglecting other basics of her job, particularly fundraising dinners and constituency events. "She thinks she can do the job differently, but the fact is, 90% of it is graft," said one Tory MP. "She wants to be an architect, but being leader of the opposition is more like being a bricklayer." Amid discontent with her current leadership, she has also been urged to overhaul her approach to Prime Minister's Questions and to bring in more experienced advisers who are seasoned in the difficult task of landing political blows.

Others focus on strategy, such as whether the Tory leader will be able to come up with policies that are strong enough to fend off the threat from the

right. The Conservatives have slid down in poll ratings since she took charge, going from 26% (ahead of Nigel Farage's Reform UK) to a meagre 22% (third place after Labour and Reform). Badenoch has deliberately avoided specific policy positions, both during the leadership contest and in her first one-hundred days as leader, claiming the party was focusing on its "principles" instead. Yet, so far, she has not shied away from criticising the policies of previous Tory governments. In an interview with BBC Radio 4's Today programme, she said that her party had "let people down" in the area of migration, which rose to a record high of 906,000 during the Conservatives' time in government. In the last few weeks, Badenoch unveiled her first major policy, a crackdown on immigrants' right to remain in the UK, which was seen by many as a response to Reform UK topping the polls for the first time.

Many Conservative MPs are worried about the rise of the right-wing party, which takes a hard line on immigration. When asked if it was a response to the rising popularity of Reform, she said that her party "needed to rebuild trust with the public" and that it was natural for

the public to look to "the protest party". The Tory leader said that it now made sense for the Conservatives to set out an alternative approach to immigration because the government has just brought forward a new immigration bill. In what will be an amendment to the bill, Kemi Badenoch announced that immigrants on work visas who claim benefits or social housing, or have a criminal record, will be barred from settling indefinitely in the UK, with the period before immigrants can make an indefinite leave to remain application—which paves the way for British citizenship—being extended from five to ten years. "Our country is not a dormitory, it's our home," she said. "The right to citizenship and permanent residency should only go to those who have demonstrated a real commitment to the UK."

Whether this will be enough to dampen the appeal of Reform for Conservative voters dissatisfied with the current state of the party remains to be seen. "Renewal is a long-term project, and there will be bumps in the road with very difficult local elections in May, but Kemi has a mandate to renew our party from top to bottom to start to win back the trust of the British people after our historic defeat," the Conservative Party has said.

Trump: The Vanguard of the Evangelical Right

Thomas Wilson
Politics Editor

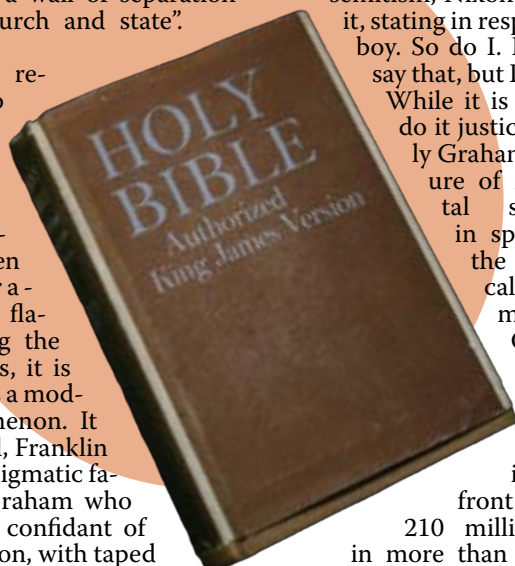
With the world watching on at the scenes unfolding in the Capitol Rotunda, there was an inescapable sense that this was an inauguration unlike any other, in particular the theme of evangelicalism which ran throughout the inauguration. Not only was this potent brand of religious sentiment evident in his inaugural speech, it was laid bare throughout the swearing-in ceremony. Notably, there was the prayer given by evangelist Franklin Graham: "Mr President, the last four years, there are times I'm sure you thought it was pretty dark, but look what God has done." Needless to say, he painted Donald Trump's re-election as an act of divine intervention. Not wishing to be outdone by his evangelising counterpart, the preacher Lorenzo Sewell rose to give a belaboured sermon, which called for letting "freedom ring from every hill and every molehill in Mississippi, from every state, every city, every village", and continued the claim that the election of Trump was divine intervention, further cement the portrayal of Trump as a modern quasi-prophet figure. No matter one's opinion on what

the relationship between religion and government ought to be, it is open to ponderance what Founding Father Thomas Jefferson would make of it all, given his 1804 remark: "In matters of religion, I have considered that its free exercise is placed by the constitution independent of the powers of the general government." He also argued for "a wall of separation between church and state".

While the relationship between evangelical Christians and Republicanism has been demonstrably more flagrant during the Trump years, it is by no means a modern phenomenon. It was, after all, Franklin Graham's enigmatic father Billy Graham who was a close confidant of Richard Nixon, with taped conversations, released in 2002, providing an insight into the nature of the relationship between the figurehead of evangelicalism and the Machiavellian occupant of the White House.

When it comes to their attitudes towards Jews, the two were closely aligned, with Graham stating to Nixon that the Jewish "stranglehold" of the media "has got to be broken or this country's going down the drain." "You believe that?", Nixon replied, prompting a proud "Yes, sir," from Graham. Rather than question his antisemitism, Nixon revelled in it, stating in response: "Oh, boy. So do I. I can't ever say that, but I believe it." While it is difficult to do it justice here, Billy Graham was a figure of monumental significance in spearheading the evangelical movement, with Graham, over the course of his life, preaching in front of over 210 million people in more than 185 countries and territories. Graham's brand of evangelicalism has stretched far and wide, from the rise of Hillsong Church in Australia, to Bethel Church in the United States—examples of so-called "megachurches".

While their teachings and geographical locations may differ, 21st-century evangelical "megachurches" have been instrumental in their backing and support of Donald Trump. This is evident in the actions of Kris Vallotton, senior associate leader of Bethel Church, who prophesied that Donald Trump would win re-election in 2020; as well those of Bill Johnson, senior leader, who claimed his support for Trump was predicated on the fact that he believes socialism is "contrary to Jesus and His teachings" and on his opposition to abortion and gay marriage. When it comes to Hillsong Church's relationship with the President, its senior pastor, Brian Houston, was invited to the White House to pray for Trump in 2019, with Houston calling it an "honour". Given that, according to the Public Religion Research Institute, 81% of evangelicals in America backed Trump at the 2024 election, it would appear the support for Trump will remain unwavering for the foreseeable future. Only time will tell just how Trump will seek to maintain this bedrock of support, and what further actions he will pursue to appease the socially conservative desires of the evangelical voter bloc.



Liz Kendall Faces Backlash for Claiming Some Benefits Claimants Are “Taking the Mickey”

Lily Portch
Contributor

Work and Pensions Secretary Liz Kendall has faced criticism after claiming that some benefits claimants are “taking the mickey” following a Department for Work and Pensions survey. The survey found that 44% of mental health and disability claimants believed they could work in the future if their health improved and they had the right support.

Government data reveals that the number of young people aged 16 to 34 who are unemployed due to mental health conditions, disability, or long-term illness has risen to 270,000—an increase of 26% compared to last year. Speaking to ITV, Kendall stated, “I have no doubt, as there always have been, there are people who shouldn’t be on those benefits who are taking the mickey—we have to end that”. She went on to say that while there is “genuinely a problem with many young people, particularly the COVID generation”, the government “can’t have a situation where doing a day’s work is in itself seen as stressful”. Her remarks have drawn backlash from disability rights advocates, who argue that such rhetoric undermines those who genuinely need support.

Shelley Hopkinson, head of policy and influencing at poverty charity Turn2Us, stressed that the government should focus on helping those who rely on benefits rather than targeting “the few who exploit it”. Evan John, policy advisor at disability charity Sense,

warned that comments like Kendall’s have a “real and damaging impact on disabled people”, noting that over half of those with complex disabilities report feeling less safe due to statements made by senior politicians. Kendall’s comments come as the Labour government signals its intent to maintain Conservative plans to cut disability benefits and reduce welfare spending.

Last year, sickness-related benefits alone cost the government £65 billion—a 25% increase from pre-pandemic levels—with projections suggesting this figure could reach £100 billion before the next general election. Ministers have voiced concerns over the rising number of benefit claimants and the financial strain on taxpayers. Prime Minister Keir Starmer has proposed that those on long-term sickness benefits should be supported to return to work “where they can”, with businesses encouraged to offer employment schemes. However, critics argue that stricter benefit rules are not the solution. Tom Pollard, head of social policy at the New Economics Foundation, asserted that if the government truly aims to reduce welfare spending and help more people into employment, it must focus on “building trusting relationships with people to overcome the barriers they face when getting a new job”, rather than imposing harsher regulations. As the debate continues, the government faces mounting pressure to balance welfare reform with adequate support for those who need it most.

Women’s Health ‘Not Funded Enough in Wales’

Rowan Stranger
Contributor

The Senedd’s health committee has said that the budget proposed by the Welsh government will not be sufficient to fund its plan for improving women’s health services. In a draft budget in December, Finance Minister Mark Drakeford pledged to spend £12bn on the health department with £3mn going towards setting out the first women’s health plan for Wales. While women typically live longer than men, they consistently wait longer for pain relief, live fewer years free of disability and are significantly more likely to have their symptoms dismissed by their doctors. The women’s health plan launched on the 9th of December is an attempt to close this “gender health gap”. “I want this plan to be the start of better care for women—I want women’s voices to be heard and their experiences to be recognised”, said First Minister Eluned Morgan.

Of the £3mn being put towards this plan £750,000 will be spent on research of women’s health conditions. The plan focuses on eight key areas: menstrual health; endometriosis and adenomyosis; contraception; preconception health; pelvic health; menopause; violence against women; and ageing. By 2026, the Welsh Labour government has pledged to set up specialist women’s health hubs in every part of Wales focused on the diagnosis of menstrual conditions. This will be accompanied by further training and education by incorporating these conditions as well as further information about contraception and abortion into the curriculum. The Minister for Mental Health and Well-Being, Sarah Murphy, announced her support for the plan, predicting that it will “empower women to be heard when accessing health-care”. However, concerns have been raised by several groups and individuals within the Senedd over whether the £3mn budget will be sufficient in carrying out these proposals. The 2025–2026 budget has benefitted from in-

creased funding from Westminster. Ex-First Minister Mark Drakeford has said this would provide a “real opportunity” to “reinvigorate public services”. In December, the Finance Minister proposed a £26bn budget, almost half of which would go towards the health department. However, a recent health report concluded that the £3mn would not stretch far enough to cover the costs of the government’s women’s health plan. “At just a small fraction of the overall health budget, this funding falls short of what is needed to meaningfully address the health needs of women across Wales”, the report found. Concerns were also raised about the lack of investment in social care and mental health services. Drakeford’s budget has also received criticism from the Senedd’s finance committee on the basis that the investment in public services is not substantial enough to mitigate the effects of the cost-of-living crisis.

A separate report was published accusing the Labour government of being “more focused on firefighting issues... at the expense of longer term, strategic budgeting”. Despite the controversy caused in the Senedd, the budget passed its first vote on the 4th of February, providing the government with confidence that it will pass the final vote in March. The Welsh government has also not ruled out revisions to the plan stating that “we will carefully consider the finance committee’s report ahead of our proposed final budget, which will be laid later in February”.



Fireworks Bill: Balancing Celebration and Community Welfare

Ali Jan Khawaja
Contributor

A proposed law to ban the public sale of fireworks louder than 90 decibels—equivalent to a lawnmower—has ignited passionate discussions across the UK, challenging the status quo of celebration norms. The Fireworks Bill, introduced by Luton North MP Sarah Owen, faced its first parliamentary hurdle on the 17th of January, but was cut short due to time constraints, with a second reading now scheduled for the 25th of April.

At the heart of this legislation is a push to restrict the loudest “commercial-grade” fireworks to licensed professionals. Currently, fireworks sold to the public can reach up to 120 decibels—as loud as a rock concert—a level that has long been a source of distress for vulnerable groups, pets, and wildlife. The bill argues that this noise level is not only disruptive but potentially harmful. The proposed 90-decibel cap has garnered cross-party support, with Labour’s Andrew Pakes and Conservative MP Simon Hoare among its backers. They see the bill as a potential solution to curb antisocial behavior and address the year-round misuse of fireworks. Owen, citing constituents in Luton North, painted a vivid picture of

the problem: “Fireworks are being used almost as a weapon”, she told the Commons, describing how the unpredictable explosions disrupt sleep for children, exacerbate PTSD in veterans, and terrify non-verbal autistic individuals who cannot anticipate the noise. The bill’s supporters are not alone in their concerns. Over 1 million people have signed a petition demanding stricter regulations, while organisations such as the RSPCA and Combat Stress have thrown their weight behind the 90-decibel limit. “This isn’t about stopping celebrations”, Owen emphasised, “but ensuring explosives meant for displays don’t end up in the wrong hands”. However, the proposed legislation has its critics. The British Fireworks Association warns that stricter rules could fuel black-market sales and undermine

cultural events like Diwali or New Year’s Eve. Owen countered these concerns by pointing to Edinburgh’s existing ban on public fireworks sales, implemented after riots in 2023, as an example of successful local action. The debate reflects a growing scrutiny of fireworks’ societal impact.

Current laws allow adults to purchase powerful, loud fireworks throughout the year, a situation that MP Andrew Pakes described as a “perverse loophole” that enables misuse. These fireworks, classified as Category F3, are intended for outdoor use in large open spaces but are often set off in residential areas. “We can have more light, less bang. Fireworks should inspire awe, not anxiety”.

Pakes argued, encapsulating the bill’s ethos. This statement highlights the desire to maintain the visual spectacle of fireworks while

reducing their disruptive noise levels. Proposed amendments to existing regulations include limiting sales to licensed shops and raising the purchase age to 21.

While the bill’s delay leaves current rules unchanged for now, its supporters argue that momentum is building for national change. In various UK cities, community groups have begun advocating for designated quiet zones during fireworks seasons, aiming to provide safe spaces for those most affected by loud explosions. These grassroots efforts reflect a growing awareness of the need to balance traditional celebrations with community welfare. As the debate continues, the bill’s supporters remain hopeful. One parent of an autistic child, in a letter to Owen, summed up the sentiment driving the legislation: “Quiet nights shouldn’t be a luxury”.

With the next parliamentary reading set for 2025, the coming months are likely to see continued discussions on how best to balance the joy of celebrations with the need for community peace. As this issue develops, it serves as a reminder of the complex interplay between tradition, celebration, and social responsibility—a debate that resonates deeply within communities across the UK.



WHAT IS... THE U.S PRESIDENCY

Luke Tonkinson
Politics Editor

The Presidency of the United States was established on the 4th of March, 1789, when the US Constitution came into effect. There have been forty-seven presidencies, although only 45 people—all men—have held the office. Grover Cleveland and Donald Trump were both elected to non-consecutive terms, and as such are counted twice. Being president of the United States is one of the most important jobs in the world, but the role and powers of the president are often misunderstood.

With President Trump having taken office one month ago, this is a good time to explore the US presidency. Presidents are elected every four years and can only serve two terms. They lead the executive branch of the US government, meaning they oversee the implementation of laws that are passed by Congress. Under the terms of the Constitution, a president's domestic powers are rather limited. While they can pass executive orders, these can only relate to a limited number of issues and generally only tinker with existing policy. For broader reforms, Congress must act. This is why presidents often struggle to make sweeping changes. Even when the president's party has majorities in both chambers of Congress, constructing a coalition can be difficult, especially in the Senate, where sixty votes are often necessary to push through legislation. In his first term, President Trump famously struggled to pass infrastructure funding, while President Biden failed to enact broad student loan forgiveness. While presidents often promise a lot of policy changes when running for election, they do not possess a magic wand to change the law. Much of President Trump's proposed agenda will require congressional action, and it is still unclear if he has the necessary support for his most controversial policies. Presidents are not powerless, however. They have the power to veto legislation passed by Congress (although Congress can override a veto if supermajorities in both chambers vote to do so), and can pardon people who have committed crimes, except in cases of impeachment. Presidents are most powerful on matters of international relations. Presidents represent the US abroad and have the power to sign international agreements. President Obama, for example, signed the Iran nuclear deal, which President Trump subsequently left during his first term. Presidents are also empowered to sign treaties, although they must be ratified by the Senate to take effect. One area where presidents have almost unchecked power is on tariffs, which are essentially a tax on imports. Trump promised to use these liberally in negotiations with foreign powers, and recently coerced Mexico and Canada into increasing their security on the US borders by announcing direct tariffs against them.

These concessions have delayed the tariffs, now scheduled to be instituted on the 12th of March. Perhaps the most significant power the US president has is their role as Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the United States. In this role, the US president commands the largest military in the world. The Constitution limits this power. Only Congress has the power to declare war and authorise the use of force. However, after 9/11 Congress granted the president longstanding authority to use the military to combat terrorist forces across the world. This authorisation is still in effect. A common theme when looking at the powers the president possesses is the checks and balances built into the US system. Executive actions are inherently limited and can be struck down by the courts, and Congress can override vetoes. President Trump has promised huge changes on issues like immigration, education, and the environment. However, the presidency of the United States is not a dictatorship; Trump will need a good relationship with Congress to achieve much of his agenda.

Judge Blocks Trump's Bid to end Birthright Citizenship

Nye Jones
Contributor

The number of federal judges blocking President Trump's executive order to end birthright citizenship in the US has risen to three, as judges in Maryland, Washington, and New Hampshire all make moves to prevent the GOP's election pledge.

The United States is one of around thirty countries worldwide where the principle of jus soli or "right of the soil" citizenship is applied. This has been the case since the 14th Amendment was ratified in 1868 during the post-Civil War reconstruction era of the United States. The Constitution states that "All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States". Conservatives in the US have long argued that this amendment is a magnet for illegal migration and "birth tourism", describing people deliberately travelling to the US in order to have their child on US soil.

Representatives from the Trump administration also argue that the amendment excludes those born in the US to undocumented illegal migrants and are adamant that

the president's order is an integral part of his plan to address the country's "broken" immigration system.

On the 5th of February, the following statement was made by Maryland District Judge Deborah Boardman: "Today, virtually every baby born on US soil is a US citizen upon birth, [...] That is the law and tradition of our country." Her comments came two weeks after the US District Court Judge in Seattle, John Coughenour, called the 47th president's executive order "blatantly unconstitutional" and imposed a two-week hold on all proceedings. The states of Washington, Illinois, Oregon, and Arizona also asked for the order to be paused while their federal judges consider states legal challenges to the "mind-boggling" order.

The pause on the president's executive order will carry on until the proper legal process plays out—a task which could take the legal system several months, or even years. Constitutionally speaking, in order to carry out a direct change to the US Constitution, the president must enact a "constitutional amendment" rather than an executive or legislative order. Executive orders can in some cases be carried out without

the approval of Congress, and new legislation only needs a majority in Congress—something which Trump has—to pass into law. Crucially, however, a constitutional amendment (which this is) can only be ratified by a congressional supermajority in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. A supermajority would require two-thirds of both houses voting in favour of altering the 14th Amendment. Delegates from both the Republican and Democratic party must vote in favour of Trump. It remains to be seen in what possible way President Trump would seek to bypass such a strict constitutional requirement.



UK Economy Faces Stagflation as Bank of England Cuts Rates Amid Low Growth and Rising Inflation

Ali Jan Khawaja
Contributor

In a recent development that underscores the UK's economic challenges, the Bank of England has cut interest rates to 4.5%, reflecting growing concerns about the country's economic stagnation and inflationary pressures. This decision comes amid a gloomy economic outlook characterised by low growth and rising prices, a combination that economists often refer to as "stagflation".

The Bank's decision to cut rates was more dramatic than many expected, with serious consideration given to an even larger half-percentage point reduction. This move highlights the severity of the UK's economic slowdown, which is now forecast to extend into the early part of this year. While a technical recession is expected to be narrowly avoided, the prospect of zero growth coupled with high and rising inflation paints a troubling picture for the UK economy. One of the key drivers of inflationary pressure is the anticipated rise in energy prices, particularly gas. The Bank predicts that inflation will "rise quite sharply" into the autumn—potentially reaching close to 4%. This increase is attributed to the need to replenish depleted gas storage facilities following a cold winter, which is likely to push up energy costs

for consumers and businesses alike. The economic forecast for the year ahead is far from optimistic. The Bank has halved its growth projection for the year to just 0.75%, a significant downgrade from its November forecast.

Additionally, unemployment is expected to rise over the next two years, potentially reaching just below 5%. These economic headwinds present a significant challenge for the chancellor of the exchequer. The economy has been essentially flat since March, and there is a risk of little to no growth further into this year. The Bank's business contacts have reported that the recent Budget has acted as a deterrent to investment, with particular concerns raised about changes to business asset relief, inheritance tax, and National Insurance. Adding to the domestic economic woes are global uncertainties, particularly surrounding US trade policies under President Trump. The

Bank has emphasised caution in its approach to future rate cuts, given the unpredictable nature of international trade dynamics and potential market reactions. In its assessment of the long-term health of the UK economy, the Bank concluded that a combination of factors including sickness, the pandemic, and Brexit have all negatively impacted the country's productivity. This suggests that the challenges facing the UK economy may be more structural and long-lasting than previously thought.

As the UK navigates these turbulent economic waters, it is clear that policymakers, businesses, and individuals alike will need to adapt to a changing economic reality. The coming months will be critical in determining whether the Bank's actions can help steer the economy towards more stable ground, or if further interventions will be necessary to address the twin challenges of stagnation and inflation.





Emily Jo Cottle



Gemma Willmott



Lowri Jones



Angela Griffith



Sam Wainwright



The Grammys Review: Pop is Back and Bigger Than Ever



Ellie Evans
Contributor

In the wake of the recent tragedy of the Los Angeles—doused only days before the ceremony—the 67th Annual Grammy Awards had to adapt the “biggest night in music” to shine a light during a time of formidable darkness in America. Inviting the impacted firefighters to the stage, Los Angeles County Fire Chief Anthony Marone offered a beacon of hope: “We will recover and rebuild together because we are LA strong.” The ceremony’s remembrance for the fires and those affected by them shaped these Grammys into a more politically and socially considerable ceremony than ever seen before. However, they refused to allow the tragedy to define the night.

The most talked-about moment of the night remains Beyoncé’s “Album of the Year” win for her eighth studio album *Cowboy Carter*, which broke her free from her five-time nominated curse of being snubbed of the headline award. During her acceptance speech, she admitted this was long awaited as “it’s been many, many years”. Her stunned reaction to being announced quickly went viral across social media. This defining moment in Grammy history began the shift in the Recording Academy’s recognition of artists, reflected in the celebration of rising stars, particularly in the pop genre.

Pop undeniably stole the spotlight, with the so-called “Pop Girls”—Sabrina Carpenter, Chappell Roan, and Charli XCX—delivering some of the night’s biggest wins and memorable performances. Roan took to the stage for her perfor-

mance of “Pink Pony Club”. It was a glittery pink stage with dancers, including Roan, all dressed as clowns—once again breaking boundaries with her originality and courage to reconstruct how a pop star should look. Moments after, the “Pink Pony Club” singer was awarded “Best New Artist”, where she advocated for labels to supply artists a “liveable wage and healthcare”. Since the ceremony, Charli XCX has applauded Roan for the speech via an Instagram story where she donated \$25,000 to support artists’ access to healthcare, encouraging labels to do the same. The Pop Girls are combining their forces to work together—could this be the beginning of reconstructing the new era of music?

Meanwhile, “Best Pop Vocal Album” winner, Sabrina Carpenter, brought back Hollywood glamour with her attention-grabbing red-carpet dress inspired by the character Louisa May Foster in the 1964 film *What a Way to Go!* The singer’s rendition of “Espresso” and “Please Please Please” left “quite an impression” on the ceremony, truly impressive for a first-time nominee. Pop is finally getting the admiration it deserves with the resurgence of pop stars like Roan and Carpenter both dedicated to the artistry of bringing their visions to life and demanding attention for pop music.

The 2025 Grammys reminded audiences that music is not only alive and thriving—with fresh talent,

exciting performances, a united community, and the resurgence of pop taking centre stage. The 67th ceremony proved that the future of music is upon us, and it is ready to take over.

Grammy / Colby Sharp (via Flickr) / CC BY 2.0 / background removed



Maria – An Operatic Masterpiece

Isabelle Liddle
Contributor

Maria, following the release of *Jackie* (2016) and *Spencer* (2021), is the latest biopic directed by Pablo Larrain that depicts the life of an influential woman in the public eye during the 20th century. Angelina Jolie portrays Maria Callas, a renowned opera singer, as she looks back on her life, during her final days alive.

Maria is accompanied by dogs and her close, moving relationship with her butler, Ferruccio, and her housemaid, Bruna, who struggles with Callas’ worsen-

ing condition. Her other main companion is the personified figure of Callas’ abuse of Mandrax, a sedative that was later discontinued, in the form of a filmmaker of the same name who follows the star around Paris in her last week alive. The effect of this technique is profound, as Callas reminisces on the events of her life and reflects on the sense of her former glory to somebody is—in reality—a drug-induced hallucination, not a doting documentary journalist.

The loss of Maria Callas’ voice by the end of her life is presented as a major source of this pain,

and her hallucinations appear to centre around this intense grief at the loss of the woman she used to be, which is compounded by her real and scathing media portrayal. The audience feels the tragedy of this conundrum through Callas’ loving friendship with Ferruccio and Bruna, as she cannot see through the pain of her experience that she has so much more to offer than her career.

Overall, my initial impression of the film was the attention spent on beautifully cinematic shots and raising of important themes with crea-

tive subtlety. Issues with biopics, or biographical films, as a genre remains an understandably contentious topic amid criticisms of filmmakers glamourising the struggles of real people for shock value. Larrain portrays the complexities of Maria Callas’ life and struggles in a manner which felt, naturally, dramatised for cinema and cannot, therefore, be indicative of any historical truth or the real Maria Callas’ personal experience. Yet, the general focus on her passion for opera centres the person and her passions alongside questions of media scrutiny, self-destruction for art, and loss in a powerful manner.



Madness, Yet There is Method: Grand Theft Hamlet

Ari Plant
Head of Spotlight

Grand Theft Hamlet is a film that, when I bought a ticket, I felt like I had been cheated. The minute I clicked purchase, I thought to myself that I have spent countless hours watching recorded gameplay of games after games online for free for years and now I'll be spending five pounds for a cinema ticket, a bus ticket for £4.70, and some change on a drink and some snacks. I felt that sort of feeling you get when you realize the pres is much better than the club night and you should have all stayed in someone's kitchen, having a good time there. Luckily, this feeling didn't stay.

The movie is not a simple adaption of the Shakespearian play into *Grand Theft Auto* but a virtual documentary about the COVID-19 lockdowns in 2020 and the effects it had on people's mental health. When you couldn't speak to even a few people, people had a moment of deterioration and this film

captures it perfectly. My memories of lockdown are so vague but this film brought back the oddly helpless feeling of having nothing to do that I thought something may never capture.

Taking on the first-person perspective of the online character of one of the partners of the actors, you are shown through the initial thoughts, planning stage, auditions, and the actual production of the play. You are following two out-of-work actors as they both struggle with the actual concept of a pandemic lockdown, the lack of funding that exists in the arts during a global catastrophe, and the social struggles of lockdown as they existed in 2020. Both men seem like outsiders in the beginning to the world of *Grand Theft Auto* which helps the film set in this feeling of both being an outsider as an actor and the feeling of struggling

against the world, both online and offline. It only takes them a few seconds of trying to talk to someone in a black Sedan before they are gunned down. This is the world in which they decide to set their stage and produce their play. The actual production of the play happens at the end and it's brief. As an audience member, you have already sat through a film that explains *Hamlet* in great detail, so you wouldn't need to see the whole production put on to get the effect; brevity is the soul of wit. The movie works in these moments where it is simply that portrayal of the lockdowns as told through these online avatars.

There are sections that feel scripted as a dispute occurs in *GTA* despite both people

being in the same house. The movie, at times, shows too much, but it is a part of its tapestry, so I feel that it can be forgiven. I can only imagine, for the filmmakers, how hard it is to try and capture the feeling of what was going on and a few less-than-true bits hardly take away from the experience.

The film stands as a testament to arts and how resilient they can be despite the lack of funding they get from the government. It stands as a testament to how resilient people can be despite the horrors of disease. It is a film that, despite the countless of videos of people playing *Grand Theft Auto Online*, exists throughout the internet, I can glad I went all the way to Chapter Arts to see it.



BRIDGET JONES MAD ABOUT THE BOY

The Last Diary Entry?

Emily Jo Cottle
Head of Review

Our favourite bumbling British icon returns to our screens in *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*, the fourth film based on Helen Fielding's four-part book series. Renée Zellweger and creators have stayed true to the eccentric magnetism of Bridget Jones in the supposed final film. She juggles grief, single motherhood, new relationships, and worklife with her infectious laughter and familiar smile.

The film begins in a markedly different tone to its three predecessors as it follows Bridget's life four years after Mark Darcy's death as we find out he was killed in Sudan on a humanitarian mission. The film begins with Bridget lost without her level-headed husband as she takes her children to school in her trademark penguin pyjamas and burns pasta before running out the door to Darcy's anniversary meal. The film offers perhaps one of the most realistic depictions of grief in cinema. Four years after losing Darcy, Bridget is not bedbound in endless floods of tears but Zellweger's performance offers a lethargic and chaotic show of life that must go on. Bridget's gaggle of friends are back and still offering her a collected mess of advice from Shazza, Jude, and Tom's unanimous "get laid" to Miranda's plea for her to get back to work. Bridget's best ad-

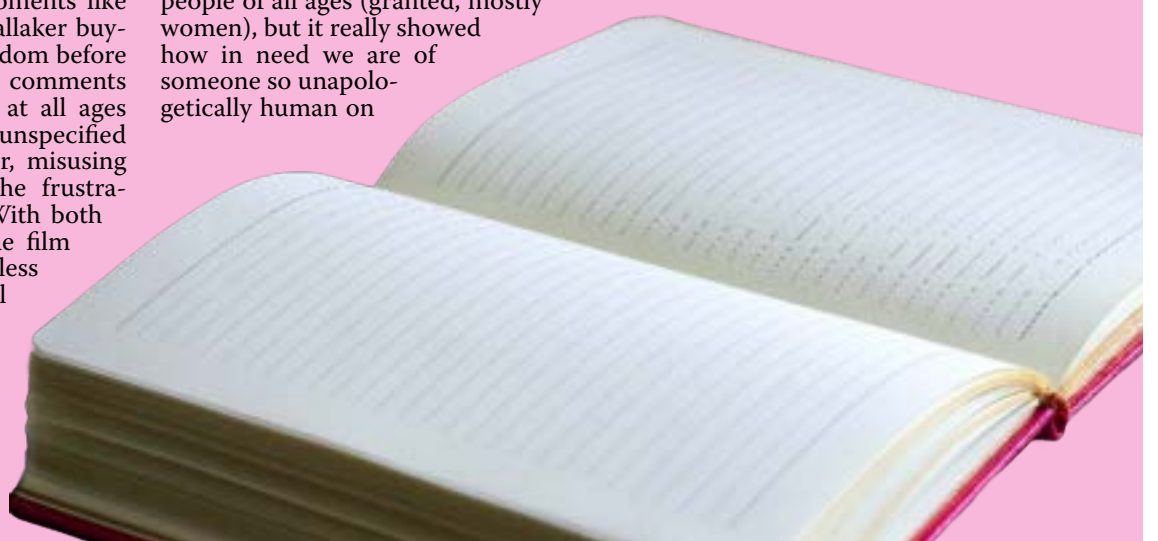
vice, though, comes from her father, who tells her "you've got to live", causing her to reopen that dusty diary and get living.

It wouldn't really be a *Bridget Jones* film without receiving a healthy dose of male-induced embarrassing interactions. The film introduces Jones' potential love interests in a nod to the awkward fireman pole moment in the first film when Bridget gets stuck in a tree attempting to retrieve her two children. Here she is found by her son's strong-willed science teacher Mr Wallaker (Chiwetel Ejiofor) and rescued by attractive tree, Adonis Roxster (Leo Woodall). Bridget inevitably finds herself in ground-swallowing moments like when she is caught by Mr Wallaker buying every possible style of condom before a date with Roxster! The film comments on the complexity of dating at all ages with Bridget and Roxster's unspecified age gap. Bridget is on Tinder, misusing Emojis and understanding the frustration of miscommunication. With both Mr Wallaker and Roxster, the film sees an abundance of shirtless scenes reinstating the playful tone of the first three movies. Despite some necessary alterations to language deemed appropriate twenty years ago, Bridget is still the same potty-mouthed, wine-glugging, and immensely human character from the first film.

For keen-eyed viewers or die-hard fans, there are several nods to the classic first film. Bridget's "absolutely enormous panties", her sheer shirt for seducing Daniel Cleaver, and—my personal favourite—Bridget's son wearing an identical reindeer jumper to Darcy in the final scene. Speaking of Daniel Cleaver, Hugh Grant makes a few appearances and we actually see a meaningful friendship between the pair. Daniel even babysits her children when he is not out with terribly young, poetry-reading models, of course!

When going to see this film, I was shocked by how packed the cinema was, full of people of all ages (granted, mostly women), but it really showed how in need we are of someone so unapologetically human on

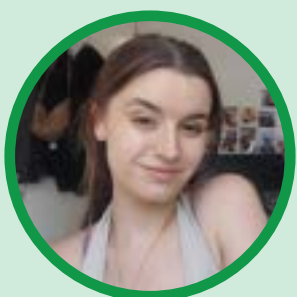
screen. In the unattainable world of social media, Bridget Jones represents the unfiltered, fumbling and messy ways of a woman trying to hold everything together. As an audience we relate to a frazzled Englishwoman who puts on a tatty scarf and a smile to distract from the chaos of her life. Bridget is all of us. She represents our awkwardness, our inadequacies, and our desire for someone special in our lives. I encourage you to go see *Bridget Jones: Mad About the Boy*—you will laugh, you will cry, you will definitely swoon and come out of the cinema with a greater love for our Bridget, who is perfect just the way she is.



THE TEAM



SCIENCE



Hannah Prince



Dan Gorst



Ruaidhri Gillen Lynch

The Impacts of the British Winter on our Body

Hannah Prince
Head of Science

The winters here in the UK are long, cold, and dark, stretching from November till the end of February. We all know the feeling of leaving the house on a dark morning to walk to university or go to work and then heading home at the end of the day in the dark once again. But this long, dark winter can have more of a significant impact on our minds and our bodies than we might think.

Sunlight and being outdoors does wonders for our mental and physical health, the reason for this lying with one of the thirteen vitamins known as Vitamin D. Vitamin D is essential for our bodies to produce serotonin, a neurotransmitter that works to carry messages from the nerve cells in our brain to the rest of our bodies. Serotonin has a key role in our body's functions, aiding mood, sleep, digestion, nausea, the healing of wounds, the health of our bones, and sexual desire. A lack of serotonin can cause numerous issues; however, the most common effects are mental health issues such as de-

pression and anxiety. 90% of the serotonin in our bodies is found in the cells that line the intestines, from which it gets released into our blood stream; the remaining 10% of serotonin in our bodies is found in the brain.

Serotonin is created in our bodies from an amino acid called tryptophan, which is one of the eight essential amino acids that must be consumed through food as our bodies cannot create it. Sunlight is the best source for enabling vitamin D synthesis, as when our skin is exposed to sunlight, ultraviolet B rays hit cholesterol in our skin providing the necessary energy for vitamin D synthesis to occur. While vitamin D can be found in foods such as salmon, eggs, cheese, nuts, oats, and seeds, you would have to eat a lot of them in order for your body to produce enough serotonin from the vitamin D.

With the lack of sun during the British winter, it is highly common for British people to experience a deficiency in vitamin D and therefore a decreased production of serotonin.

Additionally, the dark, wet, and cold weather results in a reduction of motivation to do exercise. There is an established link between exercise and mental and physical health benefits. Exercise releases endorphins, which are neurotransmitters that are released by the pituitary gland and the hypothalamus in the brain. Endorphins, similar to serotonin, help to reduce pain, decrease stress, improve mood, and enhance general wellbeing. With both the decrease in sunlight and the reduction in exercise during the cold British winters, there is no wonder that our mental and physical health deteriorates, leading to a significant increase in "seasonal depression" or the "winter blues".



FUN FACTS!

There are eight times as many atoms in a teaspoon of water as there are teaspoons of water in the Atlantic.



Octopuses have three hearts, nine brains, blue blood and the ability to regrow their arms if they lose one.

Could Quantum Internet be our Future?

Dan Gorst
Science Editor

It wasn't that long ago when the internet was seen as nothing more than a science fiction idea. The ability to connect with people across the other side of the world in a matter of seconds seemed ludicrous, yet in the thirty years since its genesis, the internet has become an integral part of day-to-day life that we often take for granted. Now, researchers at Oxford University have made huge developments in quantum computing, a term that sounds just as science fiction to most people as the internet did back in the 90s. Are we on the brink of a quantum internet, or is this just another crazy idea from physicists that will never be more than a research interest?

Unlike traditional computing which uses "bits" to store information—the ones and zeros you might have seen if you ever learnt about binary at school—quantum computing uses quantum bits, "qubits", that can be both a one and zero at the same time. This is all possible due to a concept in quantum mechanics known as superposition that is only seen on a very small scale. This might allow for the

development of quantum computers, which would be many, many times more powerful than even the best supercomputers currently in the world.

Earlier this month, leading researchers at Oxford University demonstrated the first quantum teleportation of logic—the essential components of—over a distance of six feet. If this technology were to be successfully scaled up, it could lead to the development of a system of quantum computers that could behave effectively as one big computer, without the limitations of traditional computing. If successful, we could see in the not-so-distant future, a quantum internet, but what would this mean for the average person?

The sheer potential of quantum computing and a so-called quantum internet cannot be overstated. Though the traditional internet has brought society closer than ever before, it can suffer from security issues and is limited by supercomputers not being able to take advantage of concepts such as superposition and quantum entanglement that only quantum objects such as qubits can. From making use of these concepts, we could end

up with a quantum internet that is ultra-secure and able to solve problems in hours that supercomputers would take years to solve. Even some of the world's most complex challenges such as climate change and weather predictions might be solvable.

For now, however, there are difficulties with the scalability of quantum computing and further breakthroughs will be required until we are able to achieve a fully realised interconnected quantum internet. Nonetheless, it feels like we are on the precipice of something massive. Just as how the internet sounded like a science fiction idea to people in the '90s, quantum computing and the quantum internet sounds similar to people now. Yet, if physicists at world-leading universities and companies are able to continue with the rate of breakthroughs of recent years, it might not be too long until you are able to search the quantum internet for your favourite Netflix show.

Anglerfish Swims Towards the Light

Hannah Prince
Head of Science

Across social media in the last week, there has been footage and compilations of a female anglerfish who, in her last few days alive, swam from the depths of the ocean to the surface just off the coast of California. The rhetoric on social media surrounding this 9cm anglerfish, belonging to the species *Melanocetus johnsonii* (with the first part meaning "black sea monster"), is that she wanted to see the sun and feel its warmth before she passed away. However, is there another reason she decided to make the journey to the surface of the ocean?

Anglerfish live in the most inhospitable habitat on our planet—the lightless depths of the sea. They primarily live at the bottom of the Atlantic and Antarctic oceans, although some live in more shallow, and tropical environments. Anglerfish can range in size, with some reaching up to four feet in length, so *Melanocetus*, being only 9cm, is really quite tiny. Anglerfish are very recognisable for a piece of their dorsal spine that protrudes over their mouth; although, it is only the female angler fish that has this feature. At

the tip of the dorsal spine, there is a round piece of flesh lit by bioluminescence that is used to attract their prey.

Once their prey has been lured towards them by the luminosity, the large mouths of these fish can swallow a creature that is up to twice their own size.

This sighting of the anglerfish at the ocean's surface is incredibly rare, having only been witnessed a few times previously, and has baffled biologists. Usually, these fish will be sedentary animals, only moving to ambush their prey, and yet this female actively swam to the surface of the ocean. One theory as to why she rose is that she consumed a fish that had a "swim bladder" or "gas gland". This could mean that the gas then expanded inside her, lifting her to the ocean's surface. The second theory is that she got caught in a warm water column, created from volcanic activity in the area. This, again, would cause her to be lifted to the surface against her will. Biologists and scientists can't know for sure if either of these theories are correct; however, this sighting has helped to give them a better understanding of anglerfish and their biology.

Epigenetics and Empire: How Colonial Starvation Fuels South Asian Health

Samira Abbey
Contributor

South Asians make up 25% of the world's population yet account for over 50% of global cardiovascular disease deaths (WHO) and are six times more likely to develop type 2 diabetes than Europeans. Despite these alarming numbers, the true causes of these disparities are often overlooked. Doctors frequently attribute them to diet and lifestyle, advising South Asians to eat less ghee, rice, and sugar, reinforcing the idea that individual choices are to blame. But if food were the sole factor, why do these disparities persist across generations, even among those who adopt Western diets?

The answer lies not just in personal habits but in history itself. For over a century, thirty-one famines under colonial rule deprived millions of food, forcing survivors into biological survival mode. But famine did more than kill—it left genetic scars, altering how the body processes food, stores fat, and regulates insulin. These trauma-induced changes passed down through generations, are explained by epigenetics—the study of how environmental stress modifies gene expression. The exact biological adaptations that once helped famine survivors endure starvation now increase the risk of diabetes, obesity, and

heart disease in their descendants today. The British Raj presided over thirty-one famines over the course of 120 years, an astonishing failure that underscores how British economic policies worsened, rather than alleviated, starvation. The most infamous, the Bengal Famine of 1943, killed up to 3 million people—not due to a lack of food, but because grain exports were prioritised over local relief efforts. Unlike pre-colonial rulers, who enacted famine relief measures, such as food distribution and tax reductions, the British government adopted a laissez-faire approach, treating famine as a natural and beneficial event. Malthusian ideology—the belief that population growth will inevitably outpace food supply—provided a convenient excuse for inaction. But the damage did not end when the famine was over. Starvation rewired the biology of its survivors, permanently altering their genetic expression. The stress of famine triggered epigenetic changes that increased fat storage and insulin resistance—traits that, while once adaptive in periods of extreme deprivation, have now contributed to higher rates of diabetes, obesity, and cardiovascular disease among South Asians today.

For decades, scientists believed that genetic inheritance was fixed—that we are born with unchangeable DNA. However, emerging research in epigenetics has proven otherwise. DNA methylation, a process where environmental factors

modify how genes function, plays a crucial role in how bodies respond to stress, including famine, malnutrition, and trauma. During starvation, the body shifts into survival mode—storing fat more efficiently, slowing metabolism, and increasing insulin resistance. But when these changes occur in sperm or egg cells, they become heritable, affecting future generations. This means that the biological imprint of British-imposed famines is still present in South Asians today, making them more prone to diabetes, heart disease, and obesity.

Several landmark studies reinforce this link: (1) the Overkalix Study (Sweden) found that grandchildren of men who experienced famine had higher rates of cardiovascular disease than those whose ancestors had stable food supplies; (2) Brown University research found that famine exposure doubles the risk of diabetes and obesity in subsequent generations; and (3) the Gambian Study demonstrated that nutritional deprivation during conception altered DNA methylation patterns in offspring, impacting their long-term health. Transgenerational PTSD, a concept first observed in Holocaust survivors' descendants, demonstrates how trauma can influence stress responses, anxiety levels, and even behaviours such as food hoarding. Similar patterns have

been noted in Rwandan genocide survivors' offspring, reinforcing the idea that trauma is not just psychological—it can be biologically embedded. The South Asian experience with famine follows the same pattern. The starvation endured under British rule left a genetic imprint, influencing not only disease prevalence but also how future generations respond to stress, hunger, and survival. The impact of British rule on South Asian health is not just a relic of the past—it is an ongoing crisis. The famines orchestrated under colonial rule did not just starve millions; they left a biological imprint that still manifests in disease susceptibility today. Yet, despite overwhelming evidence, Western medicine overlooks this historical and genetic reality. Most medical research is based on white populations, failing to account for the unique metabolic and cardiovascular risks faced by South Asians.

To move forward, we must fund research into South Asian genetics and integrate epigenetics into medical guidelines. Rather than blaming individuals for their health struggles, public health institutions must recognise that the consequences of colonialism are still unfolding in our bodies. Ignoring this biological legacy is not just a failure of medicine—it is a continuation of historical injustice in a new form.

Male Birth Control is Just Out of Reach

Rachel Bedding
Contributor

Sixty years—that's how long it's taken for methods of male hormonal birth control to even begin development. However, as of 2025, researchers suggest that effective forms of male birth control could be available for public use within ten years, maybe as soon as five.

Current hormonal treatments to prevent pregnancies only exist for women, with an estimated 7% chance of failure. Practical methods like condoms can have a failure rate upwards of 13%, and at a time as politically contested through the introduction of the Roe v. Wade act in the US, and encroaching policies onto the UK political scene, reliable methods of preventing pregnancies are becoming increasingly vital. A recent study across the US suggests that 49% of men would use a hormonal contraceptive within the first year of availability; however, progress into male contraceptives have mainly been halted by fears of the effects not being reversible.

A new hormonal gel, called NES/T is being developed by the Population Council and the National Institute of Health (NIH), and is in the fourth stage of the trial. The gel is made up of two main components—Nesterone, a progestin that prevents the testes from making sperm, and testosterone, which

is used to maintain levels of the male hormone to a healthy standard for men. NES/T is rubbed on the shoulders and torso every day, and reduces the sperm count to low enough that it will prevent pregnancy during intercourse. One positive of NES/T is already clear; the reduced sperm count can take weeks to recover, so missing a day of treatment may have a much lesser effect than hormonal birth control for women. This means that if the man was to

have sex after forgetting to take the contraceptive treatment, they would still have a reduced chance of impregnating the woman, as their sperm count would still be lowered.

The hope for the treatment was that it would be at least as effective as female birth control, however, Mitchell Creinin, professor of obstetrics, and gynaecology at UC Davis, suggests that the treatment is working even better than expected.

Like all medications, however, there are downsides to the treatment. Side-effects include dry or oily skin, hair growth, and loss, mood swings, and increased or decreased libido, although participants of the trial say these effects were short-lived. Other forms of male birth control are being tested, such as sAC inhibitors or retinoic acid, but it appears that NES/T is the most likely to be available to the public in the next decade.

President Trump Bans Paper Straws in the US

Gwendoline Lyon
Contributor

Over the last decade, the use of single-use plastic straws has been a constant topic of debate. Although this issue has been pushed to the background of environmental concerns amidst records of high global carbon emissions, President Donald Trump's recent and controversial call to go "back to plastic" has ignited a re-examination of this topic.

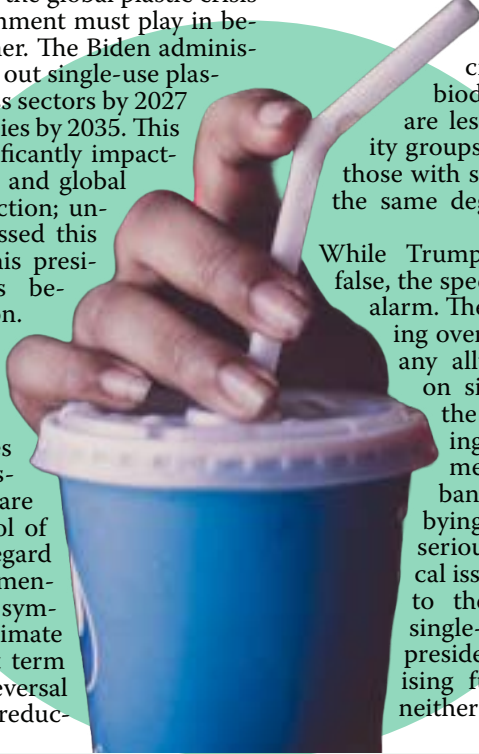
Following China, the USA is one of the world's largest producers and consumers of plastic. According to Statista, North America produces 18% of the world's plastic. According to a report by National Academics, the USA produces over 42 million metric tonnes of plastic waste a year. Recycling infrastructure in the USA cannot handle this, managing to recycle a meagre 5–9% of plastics a year. President Biden recognised both the global plastic crisis and the role his government must play in being the largest consumer. The Biden administration aimed to phase out single-use plastics for various business sectors by 2027 and from federal agencies by 2035. This alone could have significantly impacted actualised progress and global signalling of greater action; unfortunately, Biden pressed this matter too late into his presidency, mere months before the 2024 election.

Trump has a terrible environmental policy reputation, further solidified by his attitudes towards single-use plastics. Plastic straws are now as much a symbol of Trump's greater disregard for conscious environmental policy, as they are a symbol of pollution for climate activists. Trump's first term saw the immediate reversal of the Obama-backed reduc-

tion of plastic bottles in National Parks. It is not a surprise that Trump has already denounced the "irrational campaign against plastic straws". Trump is now encouraging not just a return of plastic straws but also is pushing a ban on paper ones with an executive order aiming to "eliminate the procurement of paper straws...", citing them to be "nonfunctional, use chemicals that may carry risks to human health, are more expensive to produce than plastic straws, and often force users to use multiple straws".

Although the environmentalist urge is to disregard what Trump says, is there some truth to his claims? Paper straws' primary and most obvious benefit is their shorter life cycle—taking just 2–3 weeks to degrade, while plastics take two-hundred years. However, paper straws require double the energy to produce and emit twice as much carbon dioxide. Additionally, research may show paper straws contain harmful chemicals like PFAs, which raise health concerns and might increase the time they take to biodegrade. Furthermore, they are less durable and some disability groups argue that they do not help those with strength or mobility issues to the same degree that plastic straws do.

While Trump's claims are not entirely false, the speed of his ban is still cause for alarm. There is no suggestion of reducing overall plastic consumption, nor any allusion to stricter regulation on significant polluters, such as the fishing industry. Considering Trump's previous environmental policy positions, this ban may be more a result of lobbying by plastic producers than a serious engagement with ecological issues. There is no clear answer to the complicated question of single-use plastics, but Trump's presidency is not signalling a promising future for the environment, neither within the US nor globally.





Aimee Szulczewski



Grace D'Souza



Lily Zeeuw

Merthyr Town Reject £6 Million Offer to Join Cymru Premier

Leon Snow
Contributor

Merthyr Town FC have rejected a £6mn offer from The Football Association of Wales (FAW) to join the Welsh first division in 2026, in a major blow to the expansion plans of the Cymru Premier. Members of the fan-owned club voted overwhelmingly (96%) to remain in the English set-up. The Martyrs are currently top of the Southern League Premier South, eight points clear of second place AFC Totton. Merthyr are currently the only Welsh non-league team competing in England, while Welsh

counterparts Cardiff, Swansea, Wrexham, and Newport all compete in the professional EFL. They do, however, continue to compete in the Welsh League Cup, having been knocked out by Cardiff U21s in the round of sixteen earlier this season. To the fans of Merthyr Town, Welsh domestic football remains an unattractive prospect. The club also refused to join the FAW proposed "League of Wales" in 1992. This is in spite of the opportunities to compete in European football offered by the Cymru Premier. Reigning Welsh champions The New Saints recently enjoyed their maiden campaign in a European group stage,

bowing out of the UEFA Conference League in December 2024. Paul Michael, manager of Merthyr Town, described his club's aspirations. "Merthyr might not have been at the top echelons of this pyramid for a long period of time but it's the hope that one day they could be". Evidently, a club with high ambition sees Wales' domestic league as a potential constraint on their growth and success, and it is no secret that the ceiling of English football is significantly higher. Average attendances at Cymru Premier fixtures was 305 during the 2022–23 season—the lowest in Europe. By comparison, the EFL Championship (England's

second division) attracted average attendances north of 23,000. For now, Welsh football continues to lag far behind the English leagues in almost every metric. Moving up the English divisions, the prospect of higher attendances and revenue is more attractive than the £6mn offer from the FAW, and an ambitious club such as Merthyr has emphatically confirmed this. Having lost two of their first four league games, Merthyr are now unbeaten in the League since August. The title is theirs to lose. Promotion is the expectation and the owners of Merthyr Town FC are excited to continue their journey up the English pyramid.

Cardiff University's Caving and Canyoning Club's Charity Fundraiser

Thomas Jackson
Contributor

When you mention caving to a regular person, the first thing that will almost always come to their mind is crawling through narrow, tight spaces. It's the natural put-off to the sport and Ogof Y Daren Cilau, located on Llangattock, is no stranger to it. It is one of the longest cave systems in the UK, spanning an impressive 27km (16.8 miles) and containing incredible formations

that cannot be found anywhere else in the country. It is the caver's dream. However, there is just one problem... It's guarded by a 517-metre long entrance series consisting of crawling, squeezing, thrutching, wriggling and splashing in confined passages. This lengthy and arduous start acts as a barrier, preserving the beautiful formations and passages which lie beyond it in the depths of the cave.

Now to the real reason for this article, South Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team (SMWCRT) is a volunteer rescue organisation that assists cavers in need when they are stuck, lost, injured, or hypothermic. They're funded

entirely by public donations to pay for the necessary kit and training to maintain the service. Members of the Caving and Canyoning society have personally experienced the support of rescue teams, and many more experienced club members have become part of the Cave Rescue Team.

This year to help raise money to support SMWCRT, the Cardiff University Caving and Canyoning Club will be completing a tag-team marathon inside the entrance series. To finish the marathon distance of 42.195km, members of the club would have to complete the entrance series, which is 0.517km long, eighty-two

times! It takes the average person two hours to do the full round-trip, so it will be a long day for the group of twenty cavers attempting this challenge. While doing this, the team will also be removing any rubbish and camping equipment that has been left behind by previous cavers, to help keep the cave in good condition. The club is undertaking this challenge on Saturday the 15th of March and all donations go to South Mid Wales Cave Rescue Team. They have currently raised £433 and their overall goal is to reach £1000.

We wish them the best of luck with this immense challenge!



South Wales is Officially Blue

Grace D'Souza
Sport Editor

On the 2nd of February, Cardiff City Women faced Swansea City Women at the Cardiff International Sports Stadium. The Bluebirds played with passion and beat their bitter rivals 1–0. Cardiff City needed the vital three points to widen the gap between the second-place team in the Adran Premier. With the end of the season fast approaching, it makes us question whether Cardiff can maintain their title charge.

Swansea City looked like the better team in the opening ten minutes. It was clear that they had practised attacking in training, as in the seventh minute the captain, number 12 John-Davis, went for goal. The Bluebirds defence was very strong and forced Swansea City to play the ball back to their goalkeeper. In the seventeenth minute, Swansea had a free kick in a dangerous position. Despite a heroic effort, the Bluebirds keeper,

Cerys Chamberlain, made a terrific save. Cardiff City looked very uncomfortable on the ball and Swansea's attack was consistent throughout the first half. It was clear there was a lack of communication on the pitch between the Cardiff players as they struggled to keep possession. Swansea's number 10, Chivers, had great footwork which caused a lot of pressure and panic for the Bluebirds' backline. Despite the poor passes from Cardiff's midfielder, Kerry Walklett, the Bluebirds defender Shannon Evans made some clinical tackles that kept the Bluebirds in the game in the first forty-five minutes. Towards the end of the first half, the Bluebirds had some great chances, particularly from Molly

Kehoe and Lily Billingham, who both had shots on target. Billingham had a lot of pace as she ran up the wing, which rattled the Swansea number 10 Chivers as they bashed heads just before half-time. Swansea definitely looked like the stronger team. At half-time the score was 0–0.

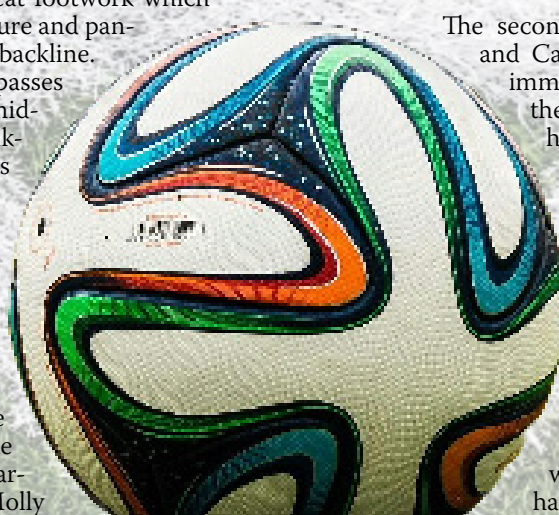
The second half kicked off and Cardiff City had an immediate impact on the ball. Molly Kehoe looked really good making crucial interceptions in order to kick the ball up the pitch to her teammates. The Bluebirds looked really threatening and their attack paid off when Lily Billingham opened the

scoring in the fifty-fifth minute. The Bluebirds looked like a completely different side compared to the first half.

Cerys Chamberlain made some fantastic saves as Swansea pressed up the pitch for an equaliser, but every shot fired at her was saved. In the last ten minutes, Swansea's Chivers got very aggressive towards the linesman as she expressed that the Bluebirds number 15 Molly Kehoe was in an offside position. Cardiff's goal scorer Lily Billingham came off in the eighty-seventh minute as Eliza Collier stepped on the pitch for the final moments. Swansea looked completely drained.

The match ended 1–0. Hopefully, the Cardiff City celebrations will continue when they play their last home match of the season on the 23rd of February. UP THE BLUEBIRDS!

A very special thanks to George Jones, who helped pitch-side this week and contributed to this article.



Six Nations 2025: An Opinion on Rugby's Big Return

Luke James
Contributor

And so it returns—and it did with a bang. Three great games that taught us how each side wants to play. France continued Wales' losing streak, harking back to the 2023 Rugby World Cup pool stages; Ireland exhausted and threw everything to beat England; and misfiring Scotland and Italy went head to head in a fight whose scoreline could have been much closer.

New laws and continued trials also plague the competition, with the controversial and failure-riddled twenty-minute red card continuing on from the Autumn Nations Series. It must be noted that the twenty-minute red card is not being used in any professional Northern Hemisphere league or in the Rugby Europe Championship. Furthermore, "enhanced protection" for scrum-halves has been introduced, meaning that if they pick up the ball from the ruck but stand still, they cannot be tackled under the current interpretation.

Complaints about even more rule changes aside, this Six Nations looks to be another banger. Ireland are slowly being caught by their rivals, France have Dupont back, England and Scotland have a lot to prove, and Italy are no longer underdogs. So, where do we start? How about with the most important part—the predictions.

I could list predicted top try scorers (Louis Bielle-Biarrey) and top point scorers (Marcus Smith); however, I'd like to look at the other side of the tournament. What does each side want to achieve?

Ireland are looking to make it a triple, three Six Nations wins in a row. With Andy Farrell on Lions duty, Simon Easterby, the defence coach, has been promoted to the top job. A shaky start against England on the opening weekend will not have pleased the interim head, but there were signs of promise, especially from ever-incredible Jamieson Gibson-Park. On the other hand, Ireland were not well set in the scrum, with Andrew Porter once again being

schooled by his opposition and pinged by the ref for engaging with the wrong angle.

Ireland's ill discipline was apparent and had them a try disallowed after Maro Itoje was held back in a ruck by an Irish hand. Where Ireland were totally dominant in most matches last Six Nations, it has been eroded, and they are clinging to their best strategies as the other sides have found weaknesses in their system.

England has a lot to prove. Steve Borthwick's men have been touted as a team that have been "building" since the former England lock took over the side in 2022. However, what are they building to? We have finally seen younger players like Caden Murley and Fin Baxter be selected, as well as Fin Smith and Marcus Smith being given free reign in the fly-half role,

Will England look to be a more dynamic attacking side? Probably so. With double World Cup winner Felix Jones having left his post as defence coach in 2024, England's defensive shape has evolved further, and often is highly successful. Ireland may have sliced them open at the start of the tournament, but that should not discourage the ability of this English squad.

France has to win this Six Nations. Dare I say that they are the in-form Northern Hemisphere side? Brushing past Wales in the first match of the tournament was one statement, but what is even more interesting is how France are utilising their wings, with Bielle-Biarrey taking a "Cheslin Kolbe" approach, often appearing in the centre-field to great success. France knows that they can beat all of its competition, and quite frankly should. They finished the autumn unbeaten and look to continue their streak throughout the tournament. With Romain Ntamack back from injury, and Antoine Dupont tearing through defence like a cruise missile blasting through a barn door, they are certainly a force to be reckoned with.

The Scotland team is somewhat an interesting side. With captain Sione Tuipulotu ruled

out with injury, Scotland's backline has had to evolve and did so pretty well against Italy. Finn Russell managed to make rare mistakes, such as being intercepted by Nacho Brex for a wonderful score, but the likes of Tom Jordan and Darcey Graham both look good. Up front, Pierre Schoeman and Rory Darge are bulldozing across the gainline, and Scotland's set piece looks tidy. However, Gregor Townshend's men just don't seem to have that winning edge, something I hope they find soon enough, or else they may only win two fixtures this tournament.

Italy is always a fun side to watch, but now they are serious as well. No longer that plucky side that would try so valiantly but ultimately fail, we expect the highest from them—and the highest is what they are starting to provide. A young squad with varying experience is unpredictable at times, but the likes of Tomos Melloncello and Ange Cappeluzzo, as well as stalwart Sebastian Negri have evolved this Italy side under Gonzalo Quesada (who might just have the best name in rugby) for the better. They had their best ever Six Nations last year and might well improve on it this year. Can they finally defeat England? Could they even beat Ireland?

land or France? It is impossible to tell, but I look forward to watching every minute of them playing.

Wales. The year 2008 comes to mind when I reflect on this Welsh squad. Why? Warren Gatland. The same strategies and tactics that may have worked a decade and a half ago seem to be utilised now, to a complete absence of success. There is no way to sugarcoat this. Unless Wales change coach, I cannot see them winning another match in 2025 or after. The talent exists, but it is either not selected (such as the case of Max Llewellyn) or is put in the wrong position (such as Ben Thomas playing 10 when he is a natural 12). Wales have encouraging moments, but they do not come from the coaching box, often it comes from a single player. I truly hope and pray that the WRU fires Gatland and drafts someone like Michael Cheika or Franco Smith, because Wales has a huge potential, but until there is this change, the same mistakes will continue to be made.

And there we have it. Bring on the Six Nations! International Rugby is back in 2025, and it starts with one of its golden children. Will my predictions be wrong? Probably. But I don't care, I just want to watch the greatest sport be played by some of the greatest players. Hopefully Wales improves, maybe Italy can cause an upset. Let's wait and see what brilliance is to come.



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