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17 Marwrth 2025

17 March 2025

Rhifyn 1207

Issue 1207

DAY TRIPS YOU CAN TAKE WITHOUT LEAVING CARDIFF



To read the full story, turn to page 3.

Diwrnod Rhyngwladol y Menywod: Llwyddiannau Menywod Cymru

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-od

Ddechrau'r mis, cynhaliwyd Diwrnod Rhyngwladol y Menywod. Caiff ei gynnal yn flynyddol ar yr 8fed o Fawrth ac mae'n gyfle i ymfalchïo mewn llwyddiannau menywod ledled y byd, yn ogystal ag ysbrydoli menywod i wthïo'u hunain mewn amrywiol feysydd. Thema'r diwrnod eleni oedd 'Cyflymu Gweithredu'. Er mwyn dathlu, hoffwn adlewyrchu ar rai o lwyddiannau menywod Cymru yn ystod...

Er mwyn darllen y stori gyfan, trowch i dudalen 9.

Memorial Garden Planted for Cardiff Primary School Teacher

Alyssa Jeanes
Contributor

Thousands of pounds have been raised to build a remembrance garden in honour of Cardiff-based primary school teacher, Emily Rose Browning, who passed away unexpectedly in December of last year. The 24-year-old, a recent graduate from Cardiff University, had moved to Pontcanna with her long-term boyfriend in order to pursue...

To read the full story, turn to page 5.

UK Remains Cautiously Optimistic on US Trade Deal

Nye Jones
Contributor

US President Donald Trump has claimed that a new UK-US trade deal could happen "very quickly" as a result of a warm meeting between himself and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer. The deal—if it happens—could see the UK exempt from possible tariffs threatened by the Trump administration. The president had previously stated that "tariff" was the "most beautiful word in the dictionary". The two leaders shared a warm embrace...

To read the full story, turn to page 15.

Gair Rhydd 2024/25**Coordinator**
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Daniel Raybould**News**
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Lily Zeeuw**Spotlight**
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Neve Powell
Heather Layton
Bridgid Chanen
Pavitra Padinjaroot**Write to the Editor**
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A Note from the Editor-in-Chief

Nodyn gan y Prif Olygydd

Annabelle Lee

Welcome to Issue 1207 of Gair Rhydd.

It truly has been a while since I have written my editor's note, so a lot of things have transpired.

First things first, we have been shortlisted for three awards at the national Student Publication Association! This is an incredible achievement as we have not been shortlisted for this many awards since 2019. We are up for Best Newspaper Design, Best Sport Section, and our head of Sport, Aimee Szulcowski, is up for Best Sport Reporter. The Gair Rhydd team are excited to travel down to Exeter for the conference and award ceremony so hopefully we are able to come back winners, or at least highly commended! A massive congratulations to our Sport editorial team for this achievement.

It might not be fashionable to admit, but I am proud of myself. When I started at Gair Rhydd, there was little focus on the visual elements of the newspaper. Due to tight deadlines,

Gair Rhydd was simply not living up to its potential. Since becoming editor-in-chief, I knew I wanted to reinvent the visuality of the newspaper. I do not have a design team. A large majority of the newspapers design elements are done entirely by me and to be recognised for that on a national level is an achievement in itself. Even if we do not win, to be acknowledged as one of the best designed student publications in the UK is something I am incredibly proud of.

In other news, our team has significantly expanded. Our Taf-Od editorial team now has nine incredible Welsh-language editors, all committed to high quality Welsh articles. Our Science team has three editors, and our Spotlight section is bigger than it ever has been before!

I hope that you enjoy the last digital issue this academic year. We truly have some interesting and informative pieces for you. Happy reading!

Croeso i Rifyn 1207 o Gair Rhydd.

Mae ychydig o amser wedi bod ers i mi ysgrifennu nodyn y golygydd, felly mae llawer o bethau wedi digwydd.

I ddechrau, rydym wedi cyrraedd y rhestr fer ar gyfer tri o wobrau'r Gymdeithas Cyhoeddad Myfyrwyr Cenedlaethol! Mae hwn yn gyflawniad anhygoel gan nad ydym wedi cyrraedd y rhestr fer am gymaint â hyn o wobrau ers 2019. Rydym ar y rhestr fer ar gyfer dyluniad papur newydd gorau, adran chwaraeon orau, ac mae pennaeth ein hadran chwaraeon, Aimee Szulcowski, ar restr fer y gohebydd chwaraeon gorau. Mae tim Gair Rhydd yn gyffrous i deithio lawr i Gaerwysg ar gyfer y gynhadledd a'r seremoni wobrwyo felly gobeithio y gallwn ni ddychwelyd yn enillwyr, neu oleiaf wedi ein cymeradwyo! Llongyfarchiadau mawr i'n tim golygyddol chwaraeon am y cyflawniad hwn.

Efallai nad yw'n ffasiynol i'w gyfaddef, ond rwy'n falch o fy hun. Pan ddechreuais i yn Gair Rhydd, prin oedd y ffocws ar elfennau gweledol y papur newydd. Oherwydd terfynau amser tynn, doedd Gair Rhydd yn syml ddim yn cyrraedd ei botensial. Nid oes gen i dim dylunio. Mae'r mwyaf-rif o elfennau dylunio'r papur newydd yn cael eu gwneud yn llwyr gen i ac mae cael cydnabyddiaeth am hynny ar lefel cenedlaethol yn gyflawniad ynddo'i hun. Hyd yn oed os nad ydym ni'n ennill, mae cael ein cydnabod fel

un o'r papurau newydd myfyrwyr â'r dyluniad gorau yn y DU yn rhywbeth rwy'n hynod falch ohono.

Mewn newyddion arall, mae ein tim wedi tyfu'n sylweddol. Bellach, mae gan ein tim Taf-Od naw golygydd iaith Gymraeg anhygoel, i gyd yn ymrwymedig i erthyglau Cymraeg o safon uchel. Mae gan ein tim Gwyddoniaeth dri golygydd, ac mae ein hadran Spotlight yn fwy nag iddi fod erioed o'r blaen!

Rwy'n gobeithio y gwnewch chi fwynhau'r rhifyn digidol olaf ar gyfer y flwyddyn academaidd hon. Mae gennym ni nau diddorol ac addysgiadol i chi. Darllen hapus!



THE TEAM



Ari Plant



Neve Powell



Heather Layton



Bridgid Chanen



Pavitra Padinjaroot



SPOTLIGHT



Day Trips You Can Take Without Leaving Cardiff

Pavitra Padinjaroot
Spotlight Editor

As we're getting into the season of warmer days and blooming flowers, Cardiff starts to feel like a whole new city. With the sunshine finally making an appearance, it's the perfect time to step out of the library and explore the city's hidden gems. Whether you're looking for a peaceful spot to relax or somewhere to hang out with friends, these hidden gems are ideal for a fun and chilled day out in the city.

Roath Lake: Picnic Bliss

Roath Park Lake is always a good idea when the weather is nice. I love grabbing a few friends and heading there for a chill day by the water. You can rent a pedal-boat and take a leisurely spin around the lake, or simply find a patch of grass to lay out a picnic blanket and enjoy the sunshine. In spring, the flowers are

in full bloom, and everything feels just a little more magical. Don't forget to walk across the wooden bridge to the small island in the middle of the lake—it's like a little hidden sanctuary!

Llandaff Cathedral: Tranquil and Historic

If you need a quiet escape from the usual hustle, Llandaff Cathedral is a perfect place to unwind. It's a short bus ride from the city centre, but it feels like a world away. The cathedral is stunning, and the grounds are peaceful, especially in spring when the flowers start to bloom. I love going here when I need a break from studying—it's a calming spot to reflect, recharge, or even just sit in silence and appreciate the history of it all.

The Secret Garden at St John's Church

One of Cardiff's best-kept secrets is the garden behind St. John's Church. It's so easy to walk past without even noticing, but once you step into this hidden space, it feels like a little oasis. There's something about the peaceful greenery and the secluded benches that make it a perfect spot to take a breather, read a book, or even just watch the world go by. It's definitely one of my favourite places to escape for a quiet moment.

Bute Park: Skate, Picnic, and Table Tennis

Bute Park is a classic, but it always feels fresh, especially in the spring. The park is huge, with plenty of room to walk, jog, or even try out the table tennis tables by the river.



It's a great place to hang out with friends or just spend some time in nature. With all the flowers and trees starting to bloom, the park feels vibrant and alive this time of year. For me, it's the perfect mix of fun and relaxation.

As the days get longer and the weather warms up, Cardiff is the perfect place to enjoy the simple joys of spring. Whether you're after a quiet spot to recharge or a fun place to hang out with friends, these hidden gems offer the perfect escape from the usual student grind. So, take advantage of the season, grab your mates, and go explore—you might just discover your new favourite spot in Cardiff!

Surviving the Rivalry! A Varsity Survival Guide

Neve Powell
Spotlight Editor

With Varsity coming up, here are our top tips on how to survive the day, whether you managed to acquire a rugby ticket or not, because there's always something on during varsity!

Check the Location

There are events taking place all over Cardiff! Whether they are in the Students' Union for dance or the International Pool for water polo! Sophia Gardens will always be packed with anything from hockey, football, or basketball! Make sure you're checking the schedule for all locations and routes to get there safely as Cardiff will be crawling with students both red and green!

Embracing Team Cardiff

There will be a lot of Cardiff Varsity stands which include anything from face tattoos to more exclusive varsity apparel! These will be available all day so you can keep up your Cardiff spirit when supporting each other through the games so there's no need to rush.



There will be pubs open and serving pints and also water but don't forget your actual ID, unless you're taking up the Taf offers and enjoying some food and drink in the Team Cardiff Hub! As much as places around campus and the events will be open, we encourage everyone to make sure they stay properly hydrated throughout the day in case Wales is miraculously warm to see Team Cardiff succeed another year.

Rugby Rushes

If you made it through the multiple-thousand-person queue

for varsity tickets, you may have a rugby ticket! The Cardiff Arms Park will get really busy an hour before kick-off and probably even before, so in order to get to your seats or section in time, we recommend arriving with some time to spare to queue through the gates! A lot of the pubs close to the grounds get busier and busier throughout the day so have a few backup pubs! Both the women's and men's games will be held back-to-back so there or be square.

Can you make it to YOLO?!

That is the question. If you make it through the day without crumbling under the tensions between Cardiff and Swansea, varsity YOLO will be ready for you! After a long day though, regardless of how many pints you've managed to neck in nervous anticipation of a win or in Cardiff support, stay respectful for all the volunteers and staff that don't get to go to varsity and are forced to serve us all day! From morning to night, the Students' Union will be available for all student needs!

In true Cardiff spirit: dwi'n caru tîm Caerdydd!

SOCIETY SPOTLIGHT

What's Occurrin' CUTV

Sean Killen
Contributor

At CUTV's news section, *What's Occurrin'*, we have been at the forefront of delivering timely and impactful content that resonates with the university community. From covering major events to launching fresh segments, our team has focused on delivering timely and relevant content that keeps the students, staff, and teachers informed. A recent highlight was covering a breaking news story on the 19th of February when a van drove into Palestine protesters in Cardiff. Our footage quickly gained traction, with over 3.2 million views across Instagram and TikTok, and was picked up by major international outlets, including *The New York Post*, *Wales Online*, and *Reuters*.

This ability to respond swiftly to fast-moving events emphasises one of the core strengths of

our reporting: a structured yet adaptable approach. We balance planned stories with the ability to pivot quickly when breaking news arises. Each week, rather than relying on formal weekly planning meetings, we adopt a more agile model where coverage is determined in real time based on emerging news. This flexibility enables us to quickly mobilise our team to respond to breaking stories and ensure timely coverage on Instagram, TikTok, and Youtube.

What truly sets *What's Occurrin'* apart is our commitment to offering students, many of whom have no prior journalism experience, the chance to participate in news production. We provide hands-on training in all areas of broadcasting, including camera work, editing, reporting, and presenting. Whether someone wants to try camera operating, learn video editing, or step in front of the camera as a presenter, we provide

training, mentorship, and opportunities to build confidence and gain valuable media experience.

Reflecting on my time as CUTV's News Director, I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to lead such a dynamic and dedicated team. From guiding members through the production process to seeing them respond to real-time challenges, the evolution of our team has been truly fulfilling. I am proud of all we have accomplished this year and excited to see *What's Occurrin'* continue to evolve, knowing that the adaptability and growth fostered will help the team thrive in the future.



Finding Home in Cardiff: A Survival Guide for International Students

Pavitra Padinjaroot
Spotlight Editor

Food That Feels Like Home

One of the quickest ways to feel at home in a new city is through food. Cardiff's diverse food scene offers plenty of options for international students looking for familiar flavours. Whether it's a comforting curry at Chai Street, fresh pastries from Brød, or a bubbling bowl of ramen at a tucked-away Japanese eatery, there's something for everyone. If you prefer cooking, Cardiff Market and local international grocery stores—stocking everything from Asian spices to Middle Eastern staples—make it easier to recreate home-cooked meals. There's a quiet kind of comfort in chopping vegetables the way you were taught back home or stirring a pot of something familiar on a cold evening. And sometimes, comfort isn't about the meal itself—it's about the ritual. A cup of spiced tea at Waterloo Tea or sharing a plate of baklava with friends in a cosy café can feel like a small but meaningful connection to home.

Finding Comfort in Books and Spaces

For many international students, books offer both an escape and a connection to their roots. Cardiff's independent bookstores, like Troutmark Books, hold unexpected treasures—an old copy of a novel from home, a poetry collection in a familiar language, or even just a quiet corner to browse and

breathe. Larger bookstores such as Waterstones and Blackwell's have sections dedicated to world literature, making it easier to find works by authors from home. Cardiff Central Library also provides bilingual books and international newspapers, helping students stay in touch with news, culture, and stories from their countries. Beyond books, finding familiar spaces—whether it's a cultural society, a place of worship, or a favourite café—can make a huge difference. Sometimes, just hearing your language spoken by someone in passing or meeting others who understand what it's like to be far from home can turn a city from unfamiliar to welcoming.

Building a Home Away from Home

Settling into a new country takes time, but small routines can make all the difference. It's about finding those little anchors—cooking a meal that reminds you of home, visiting a bookshop where you find a familiar author, or surrounding yourself with people who share your experience. Cardiff, with its mix of cultures, warm community spaces, and hidden comforts, has the potential to be more than just a place to study. Over time, the unfamiliar streets start feeling familiar, the once-strange weather becomes a part of daily life, and the city begins to hold its own kind of belonging. Home isn't always a single place—it's something you create, one small comfort at a time.

Best Places in Cardiff to Visit

Owen Russell
Contributor

When living in Cardiff for university you want to make sure you can experience as much of the city as possible. There is so much to do in this great city it can almost seem daunting to know where to look or where to go within the confines of a student budget. I have compiled a list of some of my favourite spots you can visit within the city, all within a close distance from the university.

National Museum Cardiff

Located minutes away from the university, The National Museum, which also houses the National Museum of Art, is one of the most important resources available to anyone in Cardiff. It is free to enter, although donations are encouraged, and some art exhibitions require payment to enter. The space features natural history exhibits conveyed in a compelling and in-depth manner. The art gallery rivals some of the world's best, featuring a permanent array of paintings and photographs from throughout history, including works by Monet and van Gogh. The gallery also features multiple temporary exhibitions year-round, making it worth returning to and a place that you can spend hours exploring.

The Arcades

Locating around the city centre, Cardiff hosts seven arcades from the Victorian and Edwardian eras. Inside these arcades you can find a whole range of shops and eateries, including: vintage stores, bakeries, cozy cafés, restaurants, clothing outlets, art shops, and many more. It is worth walking through them as you make your way around the centre for the beautiful architecture and truly makes them a unique

addition to a city with an already rich and storied history.

Cardiff Bay

And finally, the perfect combination of indoor and outdoor spaces: Cardiff Bay. You can make your way here through multiple forms of transport: it's around an hour's walk from the university, or you can take a quick train from Cathays or any other station in Cardiff. You can also take a water taxi from Bute Park, with the service also offering returns. The largest waterfront development in Europe, the bay offers a range of shops and restaurants, with cinemas, entertainment complexes, a theatre and more. It is a place worth revisiting and revisiting throughout your time in Cardiff. I would recommend the scenic walk from the waterfront to the Cardiff Bay Barrage. Here you can look out across the Bristol Channel with dramatic views of the nearby Penarth that make it a perfect place for reflection and admiration.

I hope this list has given you a small taste of what Cardiff has to offer, a city with many of its greatest attributes and landmarks being totally free to explore and appreciate.



THE TEAM



NEWS



Dilichi Dieobi



Tom Nicholson



Anna Crowley

Cardiff University Faces Backlash as Plans to cut Jobs are Revealed

Anna Crowley
News Editor

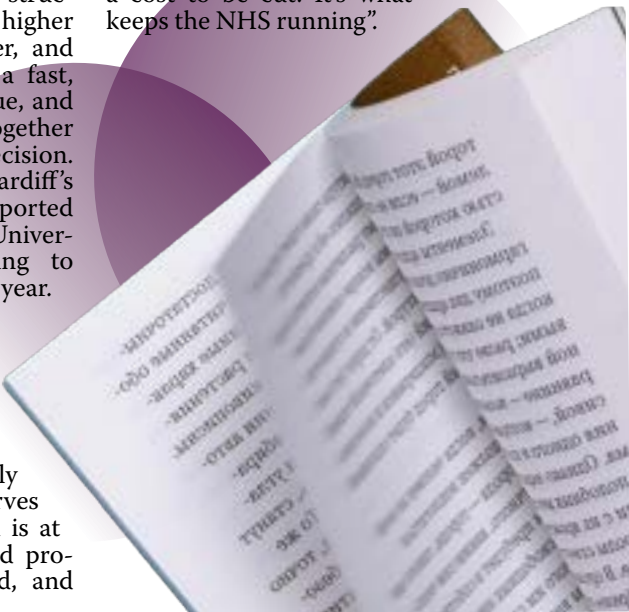
As the only Russell Group university in Wales, Cardiff University is an up-standing institution with much to prove, yet it's currently producing lower revenue than running costs. Due to these low margins, the university is proposing cutting almost 400 jobs and four schools, including nursing and modern languages. Protesters met at the Senedd to save jobs, arguing that instead of allowing Cardiff University to put hundreds of people under pressure to find a new place of work and possibly causing a knock-on effect in other organisations to cut costs, the Welsh Government needs to step up and provide financial or managerial support.

Vikki Howells, current MS and Minister for Higher Education in Wales addressed the Senedd on the topic recently to reassure people that the government was providing the support it could for Cardiff, but steadfastly reminding us that it is an au-

tonomous business, and most of its funding comes from outside of the government. She did promise to call for a review of the structural changes that are needed in the higher education industry from Westminster, and while this review is needed, it isn't a fast, hands-on approach to the current issue, and the Welsh government seems altogether blindsided by Cardiff University's decision. Many protesters argue that Cardiff's choice is jarring considering the reported £506 million in reserves that the University currently has, which (according to BBC reports) increased by 50% in a year.

While business professors at risk of being made redundant argue simply sitting on these assets wastes their potential, Cardiff has made clear that this money is not spendable cash. Worryingly, it doesn't currently seem as though they will spend reserves to support the nursing school, which is at risk. Second-year nursing student and protester Katherine is deeply concerned, and

reminded the University in her speech that "nursing is not a profession to be ignored or a cost to be cut. It's what keeps the NHS running".



Cardiff Knife Attack: Man Hospitalised and Suspect Charged

Tom Nicholson
News Editor

A serious knife attack in the Cathays area of Cardiff has left one man hospitalised with severe injuries, prompting a major police response and multiple arrests. The incident occurred late on Tuesday, February 25, near the popular student bar Gassy's on Salisbury Road. Police Investigation and Arrests South Wales Police responded to reports of a violent altercation at approximately 11:30pm. Officers arrived at the scene and cordoned off the area stretching from Gassy's to Sami Barbers, where forensic teams conducted investigations through the night and into the following morning.

A police helicopter was also reported as authorities worked to contain the situation. Following initial inquiries, three men were arrested in connection with the attack. However,

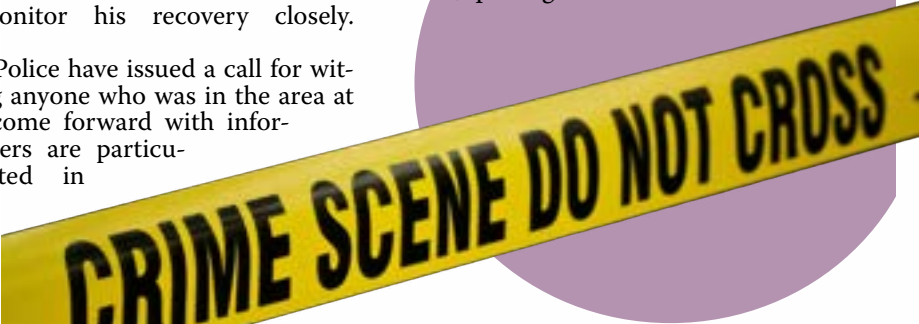
two of the suspects have since been released on bail, while a 19-year-old man, Abdul Ali, has been formally charged. Ali faces charges of Section 18 wounding with intent and possession of an offensive weapon in a public place.

The victim, a 33-year-old man, was rushed to hospital with serious injuries. While the full extent of his wounds has not been disclosed, authorities have confirmed that his condition is stable. Medical staff continue to monitor his recovery closely.

South Wales Police have issued a call for witnesses, urging anyone who was in the area at the time to come forward with information. Officers are particularly interested in speaking to those who may have seen or heard an-

anything suspicious around Salisbury Road during the time of the attack.

Residents and students in the area have expressed concern over the incident, highlighting ongoing worries about safety in the bustling district. Many have noted the high student population in Cathays and called for increased security measures. Anyone with information is encouraged to contact South Wales Police at 101, quoting reference *2500062136.



Memorial Garden Planted for Cardiff-Based Primary School Teacher

Alyssa Jeanes
Contributor

Thousands of pounds have been raised to build a remembrance garden in honour of Cardiff-based primary school teacher, Emily Rose Browning, who passed away unexpectedly in December of last year.

The 24-year-old, a recent graduate from Cardiff University, had moved to Pontcanna with her long-term boyfriend in order to pursue a career in teaching. Tragically, Browning's life ended in December when she was found dead by her boyfriend, after suffering from a cardiac arrest in her sleep.

Her boyfriend, Jack Weston, speaking to Wales Online, acknowledged how she "had what her dad calls the Ems effect, which was just that lasting impression on everyone she met, always putting a smile on people's faces". Her radiant presence shone through her passion for teaching, the outdoors, and innate desire to inspire young minds. Hence the significance of the memorial garden, as it will create an inclusive space for children to learn and come together.

According to Mr Weston, the initial plan was to set a fundraising goal of £5,000, however, after the overwhelming generosity of family and friends, this skyrocketed to almost £20,000 in just under two weeks. A fruit and

vegetable patch, learning areas, and sensory facilities for inclusivity are all now part of the garden plans thanks to the additional funding.

Paula Shipton-Jones, headteacher of Gladstone Primary where Browning worked, shared her vision for the beautiful tribute garden, stating: "Together, we aim to create a space that embodies the warmth and compassion Emily shared with us every day and continue Emily's dream of helping children grow from young seeds into blossoming roses."



NEWS FROM AROUND THE UK

**EDINBURGH**

Scottish university students caught using AI to cheat over 1,000 times in the past year.

SHEFFIELD

Sheffield students' hitchhike raises over £23,000 for a local youth housing charity.

BIRMINGHAM

University of Birmingham professor accuses colleague of sexual assault and grooming.

BRISTOL

Bristol University team win in tight quarter-final of University Challenge.

LONDON

University College London student found guilty of drugging and raping ten women.

Cardiff Council Approves Annual Budget for 2025–2026

Daniel Raybould
Deputy Editor

On the 6th of March, Cardiff Council debated and approved the local authority's budget plan for 2025–26. Several factors, including inflation and expected pay increases for public sector employees have meant that the cost of delivering services is set to be over £67.2 million more in the next financial year than this year. Unexpected extra funding from the Welsh government has helped reduce this budget gap to £27.7 million.

The plans will see council tax increase by almost 5%, which the local authority has stated is nevertheless the lowest of any council in Wales. At least sixty jobs at the council are expected to be lost through voluntary redundancy and non-replacement of vacancies, which is expected to save up around £800,000.

The programme includes £136.1 million to develop Cardiff Cross Rail, £41.4 million

for motorway infrastructure, and £207.2 million on economic development, particularly for the new Indoor Arena and the International Sports Village. The council has also committed to increased funding for schools, services for children, and social care, as well as funding for reducing inner-city waste and fly-tipping, improving parks, and supporting community events.

Alternative budget plans were put forward by the council's Liberal Democrat and Conservative groups, which were ultimately voted down. Their alternative budget outlined a significant change in transport strategy compared to the leading Labour councillors' approach. Instead of current climate-friendly policies aimed at incentivising active travel, the alternative budget proposed diverting money away from cycle lanes and scrapping plans to get rid of free parking at district-centre car parks owned by the council.

The Conservatives said that under their plan, council tax would only be raised by 2.47%. Other promises included using the

money diverted from cycle lanes toward bus infrastructure and fixing pavements and potholes. Other ideas included the reintroduction of community skips, reducing spending on consultancy, and providing more grant money to sport clubs. The Liberal Democrats additionally proposed increased funding for youth services, street cleaning, parking enforcement, school budgets, and a reconsideration of the council's plans to move to a brand new headquarters.

The local authority aims to reduce CO2 emissions, air pollution, and congestion by developing bicycle lanes, encouraging people to travel through the city by bike and thereby reducing the number of vehicles on the

road. These plans were heavily criticised by the Conservatives, who argued that cycle lanes are instead contributing to congestion and are adversely affecting bus services. Whether or not Cardiff Council will ever do a U-turn on its current transport policies will come down to whether Labour will be able to hold onto the control of the council it has had since 2012. The next council elections are expected to be held in 2027.





Diwrnod y Llyfr i Oedolion!

Gwenno Davies
Golygydd Taf-Od

Ar ddechrau'r mis hwn, gwnaeth miloedd o blant ar hyd a lled Cymru wisgo fel eu hoff gymeriad ffuglennol, er mwyn dathlu Diwrnod y Llyfr. Rwy'n siŵr fod gan bob un ohonoch chi atgofion melyn iawn o ddathlu'r diwrnod cyffrous hwn pan oeddech chi'n iau, ond faint ohonoch chi sy'n parhau i ddarllen hyd heddiw?

Gall y weithred o ddarllen leihau straen, gwella cwsg, a lleihau'r risg o ddatblygu demensia. Felly, dyma gynnig rhai argymhellion darllen i'ch cadw chi'n brysur dros yr wythnosau nesaf. Mwynhewch!

Sut i Ddofi Corryn Mari George

'Sut i Ddofi Corryn' gan Mari George yw enillydd cystadleuaeth Llyfr y Flwyddyn 2024.

Yn y nofel, cyflwynna Mari George stori menyw o'r enw Muriel, wrth iddi deithio o Gymru i Guatemala. Mae hi'n chwilio am gynhwysyn a allai wella ei gwr, Ken, sy'n marw o

ganser. Er hyn, yn ystod ei thaith lythrennol, aiff Muriel hefyd ar daith bersonol, taith sy'n gorfodi iddi wynebu rhai o'i hofnau mwyaf...

"Mae'r nofel brydferth, gynnill hon yn un sydd am aros yng nghilfachau y cof" – Leusa Llewelyn, Cyfarwyddwr Artistig Llenyddiaeth Cymru.

Oedolyn (ish)

Hunangofiant creadigol Melanie Owen yw Oedolyn (ish!), sydd wedi'i gyflwyno ar ffurf casgliad o wersi mai hi wedi'u dysgu cyn troi'n dri deg. Yn yr hunangofiant ysgafn hwn, cawn ddysgu am sut mae'r gomeddiwraig wedi cyrraedd lle mae hi heddiw, yn ogystal â'r hyn sydd ganddi i weithio arno er mwyn sicrhau datblygiad a hapusrwydd pellach.

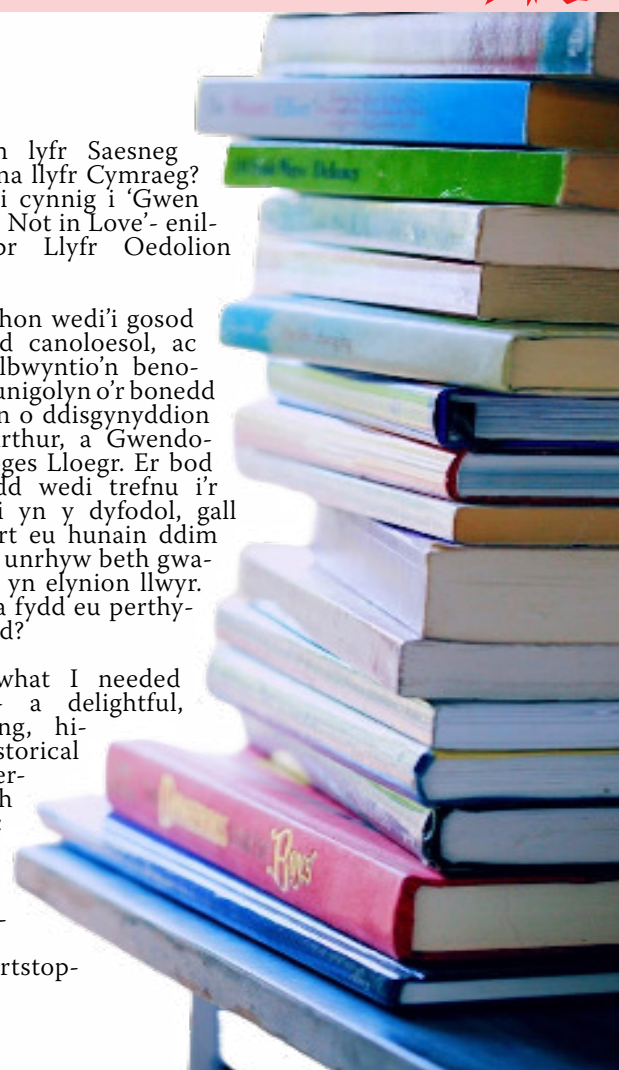
"Mi fyddwn i, yn bendant, yn argymhell y llyfr hwn i unrhyw un sy'n mwynhau chwerthin (a phwy sydd ddim yn mwynhau chwerthin???)" – Ant Evans.

Gwen & Art are not in Love

Chwilio am lyfr Saesneg yn hytrach na llyfr Cymraeg? Beth am roi cynnig i 'Gwen and Art Are Not in Love' - enillydd Gwobr Llyfr Oedolion Ifanc 2024?

Mae'r stori hon wedi'i gosod yn y cyfnod canoloesol, ac mae'n canolbwyntio'n benodol ar ddau unigolyn o'r bonedd – Arthur, un o ddisgynyddion y Brenin Arthur, a Gwendoline, tywysoges Lloegr. Er bod eu teuluoedd wedi trefnu i'r ddau briodi yn y dyfodol, gall Gwen ac Art eu hunain ddim meddwl am unrhyw beth gwaeth – maent yn elynion llwyr. Ond tybed a fydd eu perthynas yn newid?

"Exactly what I needed right now - a delightful, heartwarming, hilarious historical romp, overflowing with queer panic and terrible jokes. I loved it." – Alice Oseman, awdur 'Heartstopper'.



Amser Dysgu Iaith?

Fflur James
Golygydd Taf-Od

Ers tro bellach, mae'r pwnc hwn wedi hawlio'r penawdau yma yng Nghymru, am nad oes digon o bobl ifanc yn astudio ieithoedd tramor yn ein hysgolion ni. Mae'n fwy amserol nag erioed bellach ein bod ni'n parhau i hybu ieithoedd yma yng Nghymru yng ngolau cynigion Prifysgol Caerdydd i gau Ysgol Ieithoedd Modern y brifysgol.

Gan fod cyn lleied o ddisgynyddion yn g

Nghymru yn dewis astudio iaith dramor ar lefel TGAU a Lefel A, mae wedi dod yn destun pryder i nifer fawr o bobl, yn enwedig wedi nifer o gwynion ynghylch rhwystrau Brexit. Bu gostyngiad o 29% yng ngheisiadau arholiadau Ieithoedd Tramor mewn 5 mlynedd yn unig.

Yn 2020, nodwyd cwmp ym hanner, yn y disgyblion sy'n astudio Almaeneg a Ffrangeg yn y Deyrnas Unedig, sy'n peri gofid i nifer. Felly pam nad oes mwy o bobl am ddysgu iaith dramor felly?

Wel mae llawer o bethau yn chwarae rôl am wn i, yn y lleihad hwn. Gyda Saesneg yn dod yn iaith fwyfwy poblogaidd, mae'r meddylfryd fod 'pawb yn gallu siarad Saesneg' yn dominyddu braidd. Mae nifer fawr o'r farn, os ydyn nhw'n medru siarad Saesneg, mi fyddan nhw'n iawn felly. Ond y gwir yw, nid yw 70% o boblogaeth y byd yn siarad Saesneg! Felly, mae dysgu iaith dramor fwy pwysig nag y buodd hi erioed, er mwyn i ni barhau i allu cyfrannu ar blatfform

rhwyngwladol Ewrop, fel gwlad sydd â'i hiaith ei hun wrth gwrs. Gyda'r galw am fwy o siaradwyr ieithoedd yn cynyddu ers Brexit, pam nad oes mwy yn ei astudio?

Mae 'na feddylfryd hefyd, nad oes angen iaith dramor os nad ydych chi am adael y wlad hon, ond y gwir yw, mae 'na gymaint o fusnesau a chyflogwyr sy'n awchu am staff sy'n medru ieithoedd. Mae medru iaith arall yn gwneud unrhyw gais am swydd gymaint yn fwy deniadol i rywun sy'n cyflogi.

Does dim hyd yn oed rhaid dweud, gymaint o fuddion i'r ymennydd sydd wrth ddysgu iaith newydd. Mae'r manteisio yn ddirifedi.

Rydyn ni ar ei hôl hi yma'n y wlad hon. Mae gwledydd y cyfandir megis yr Iseldiroedd, Gwlad Belg a'r Eidal, yn siarad dwy, tair, pedair iaith yn ddi-feddwyl. Felly pam nad ydyn ni'n gallu gwneud hynny chwaith? Gadewch i ni fod yr un mor gystadleuol yn rhwyngwladol a dangos bod Cymru yr un mor werthfawr i gymuned ryngwladol Ewrop.

Ieithoedd yw un o'r pethau mwyaf gwerthfawr y gallwch chi ei gael, ac mae'n fwy nag iaith, mae'n arf. Rydych chi'n dod yn rhan o ddiwylliant newydd, yn dod i adnabod pobol newydd ac yn ehangu'ch gorwelion cymaint yn fwy. Nid yw iaith costio dim, ond mae'r rhai y byddwch chi'n

siarad â nhw yn yr iaith honno, yn gwerthfawrogi'r ymdrech yn fawr - a dyna le y gwelwch chi harddwch iaith ar ei orau.

Mae yna gymaint o fuddion wrth ddysgu iaith dramor, ac i siaradwyr Cymraeg, mae dysgu iaith arall gymaint yn haws, am ein bod ni'n medru o leiaf dwy iaith yn barod. Mae hi fil gwaith yn haws dysgu iaith arall, os ydych chi'n ddwyieithog, yn ôl pob sôn. Mae ieithoedd yn cynyddu'ch siawns am swyddi, yn cynnig tâl mwy gan amlaf, ac yn eich galluogi i deithio'r byd!

Felly, cymerwch funud i feddwl, cyn bodloni at droi at y Saesneg pan fyddwch chi ar wyliau dramor, beth am fynd ati, a chrafu'r gwe pry cop oddi-ar eich ieithoedd y dysgoch yn yr ysgol, neu beth am ddysgu iaith gwbl newydd? Pam lai, dysgwch un gair bob dydd!

Mae ieithoedd tramor wedi dod yn fwy pwysig nag erioed i ni fel Cymry, os ydyn ni am barhau i sefyll ar lwyfan rhwyngwladol, ac mae'n rhaid i ni fel gwlad sylweddoli hynny ar fyrder, os ydyn ni am achub ein statws yn economaidd ac yn gymdeithasol. Felly da chi, mynnwch eiriadur, neu ap ar eich ffôn. Bydd iaith arall yn eich galluogi i weld y byd hwn drwy sbectol newydd, glân.

Hannah Williams

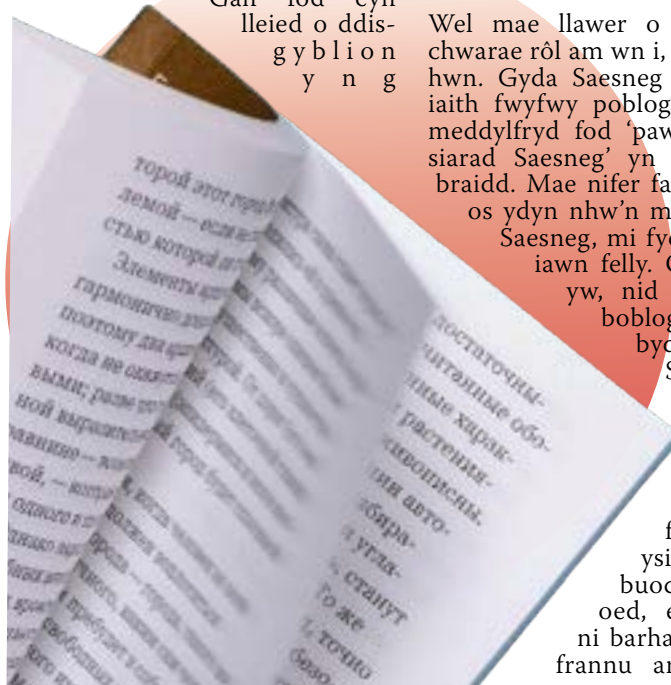
Charlie Thomas

Ffion Wyn Jones

Hanna Morgans

Elen Williams

Gwenno Davies



A ddylai Dydd Gŵyl Dewi fod yn Wyl Gyhoeddus?

Lili Ray
Golygydd Taf-Od

Mae hon yn ddadl flynyddol - ai dyma'r amser i wneud Dydd Gŵyl Dewi yn wyl y banc? Er bod gorymdeithiau, perfformiadau a dathliadau ledled Cymru ar Fawrth 1af, nid yw'r diwrnod yn cael ei gyd-bod yn swyddogol fel gŵyl y banc. O gymharu â gwledydd eraill yn y Deyrnas Unedig, mae'n ymddangos ein bod ni ar ein colled.

Yn yr Alban, mae Dydd San



Andreas eisoes yn wyl banc, ac mae gan Ogledd Iwerddon ddwy wyl ychwanegol - Dydd San Padrig a Brwydr y Boyne. Yn Iwerddon, mae Dydd San Padrig yn ddiwrnod o ddathlu, sydd hefyd yn codi proffil y wlad yn rhynwladol. Onid yw Cymru yn haeddu'r un gydnabyddiaeth?

Mae dadleuon cryfion dros weithredu ar y newid hwn. Byddai'n gyfle i gryfhau hunaniaeth genedlaethol Cymru, gan gynnig diwrnod penodol i ddathlu ein diwylliant a'n hanes. O safbwynt economaidd, gallai gwneud Dydd Gŵyl Dewi yn wyl banc ddenu mwy o dwristiaeth a chynnig hwb i fusnesau lleol. Fel y dywedodd Darren Millar AS, byddai gŵyl cyhoeddus yn cynnig "hwb i dwristiaeth, ac yn rhoi cy-

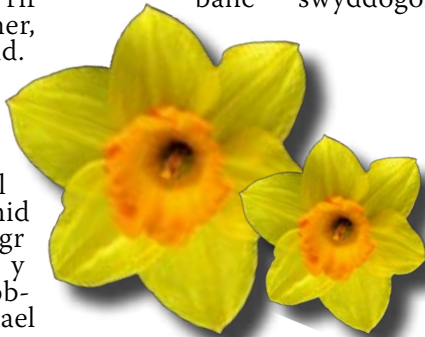
fle i adlewyrchu ar arwyddocâd ac ystyr Cymreictod".

Mae cefnogaeth i'r syniad yn tyfu. Yn ôl arolygon barn, mae mwyafrif o bobl Cymru o blaid y newid. Yn wir, mae'r syniad wedi ymddangos ym maniffestos Plaid Cymru, y Ceidwadwyr Cymreig a'r Democratiaid Rhyddfrydol ers etholiadau'r Cynulliad yn 2011. Yn fwy diweddar, mae arweinydd y Ceidwadwyr Cymreig wedi ysgrifennu llythyr at y Prif Weinidog, Syr Keir Starmer, yn galw am weithrediad.

Serch hynny, nid yw pob plaid yn ystyried hyn yn flaenoriaeth. Gellid cwestiynu pa mor angenrheidiol yw'r newid - wedi'r cyfan, nid yw Dydd San Sior yn Lloegr yn wyl banc ychwaith. Fel y dywedodd Liz Saville-Roberts, nid yw peidio a chael

gŵyl banc yn "ein hatal rhag dod at ein gilydd i ddathlu".

Fodd bynnag, mae newid eisoes yn digwydd ar lefel lleol, gyda rhai awdurdodau a busnesau yng Nghymru yn cynnig diwrnod i ffwrdd ar Ddydd Gŵyl Dewi i'w staff. Os yw'r gefnogaeth wleidyddol a chymdeithasol yn parhau i dyfu, ai dim ond mater o amser yw hi cyn i Ddydd Gŵyl Dewi ddod yn wyl y banc swyddogol?



Cynnydd i Brisiau Tocynnau Trên yng Nghymru

Ifan Meredith
Golygydd Taf-Od

Mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi cynyddu prisiau tocynnau trên i deithwyr yng Nghymru gan 4.6%. Golyga hyn fod tocynnau trên, ar gyfartaledd, 4.6% yn ddrytach ers 2 Mawrth 2025, pan gyflwynwyd y newid hwn.

Er bod y cynnydd cyffredinol o 4.6% yn cyd-fynd â chynnydd Llywodraeth DU i drafnidiaeth yn Lloegr, mae trafnidiaeth wedi ei ddatganoli i Lywodraeth Cymru sy'n golygu eu bod wedi gallu cyflwyno cynnydd gwahanol i gynhyrchion gwahanol.

Mae tocynnau unffordd unrhyw adeg o'r dydd (anytime day single) wedi cynyddu 3% tra bod prisiau tocynnau tymor 7 diwrnod wedi cynyddu 3.5% gyda thocynnau dwyffordd unrhyw adeg o'r dydd (anytime day return) a thocynnau dwyffordd ar adegau tawel (off-peak) wedi cynyddu 6%.

Mewn datganiad, mae Llywodraeth Cymru wedi esbonio fod yn rhaid cyflwyno'r cynnydd i sicrhau fod Trafnidiaeth Cymru yn gallu derbyn "digon o refeniw i dalu eu costau cynyddol a lleihau cymorthdal [gan y Llywodraeth]."

Serch hynny, nid yw pawb yn gefnogol o'r newidiadau, yn enwedig myfyrwyr.

"rhwystredig iawn"

Mae Rhodri Jones yn dod o Ogledd Cymru ac yn astudio Meddygaeth ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd, dywedodd ei fod yn "rhwystredig iawn gweld bod cynnydd mewn prisiau tocynnau trên."

"Efo'r prisiau'r cynyddu, buasech yn disgwyl gwasanaeth o'r radd flaenaf; ond nid dyma'r achos efo'r daith fyny i'r gogledd... mae'n debyg mai aros yng Nghaerdydd fydda i am weddill y tymor a mynd amser llawer hirach na hoffwn i heb weld fy ngheulu adref" meddai wrth Gair Rhydd.

"dibynnu llawer ar y trên"

Mae Megan Williams yn astudio Troseddeg a Chymdeithaseg ym Mhrifysgol Caerdydd ac wrth siarad â Gair Rhydd, esboniodd ei bod yn ddibynol ar wasanaethau trenau i deithio adref.

"wrth i'r prisiau gynyddu bydd hyn yn neud hi'n anodach symud o gwm-pas y ddau le heb dorri i mewn i wariant hanfodol eraill fel bwyd a

deunyddiau astudio" meddai.

Yn ôl Megan, credai y bydd yn golygu y bydd rhai yn penderfynu peidio mynychu'r campws mor aml gan arwain at "effaith negyddol ar ddigwyddiadau academiaidd sy'n allweddol i'w profiad dysgu."

Y teimlad yn gyffredinol ymysg myfyrwyr yw byddai'r codiad mewn prisiau tocynnau yn arwain at fwy o straen ariannol ar gyllideb myfyrwyr mewn cyfnod lle mae ffioedd dysgu yn codi a chaledi ariannol yn gyffredin

ymysg myfyrwyr. Ar y llaw arall, mae Llywodraeth Cymru yn mynu bod angen codi'r costau i sicrhau parhad i wasanaethau trên Trafnidiaeth Cymru.



Y TÎM



Ifan Meredith



Lili Ray



Fflur James

Diwrnod Rhyngwladol y Menywod: Llwyddiannau Menywod Cymru

Hannah Williams
Pennaeth Taf-Od

Dechrau'r mis, cynhaliwyd Diwrnod Rhyngwladol y Menywod. Caiff ei gynnal yn flynyddol ar yr 8fed o Fawrth ac mae'n gyfle i ymfalchio mewn llwyddiannau menywod ledled y byd, yn ogystal ag ysbrydoli menywod i wthio'u hunain mewn amrywiol feysydd. Thema'r diwrnod eleni oedd 'Cyflymu Gweithredu'. Er mwyn dathlu, hoffwn adlewyrchu ar rai o lwyddiannau menywod Cymru yn ystod y flwyddyn ddiwethaf mewn meysydd yr oedd menywod unwaith yn cael eu hymyleiddio neu eu heithrio'n llwyr ohonynt.

Prif Weinidog Benywaidd Cyntaf Cymru

Ym maes gwleidyddiaeth, daeth Eluned Morgan yn Brif Weinidog benywaidd cyntaf ar Gymru yn Awst 2024. Wrth dderbyn ei rôl newydd, dywedodd Eluned Morgan, "Mae'n anrhydedd mwyaf fy mywyd i sefyll o'ch blaenau chi fel y fenyw gyntaf i ddod yn Brif Weinidog Cymru. Fel Prif Weinidog, dw i'n addo hyrwyddo lleisiau a phrofiadau sy'n rhy aml wedi cael eu gwthio i'r cyrion a'u tawelu".

Yn y gorffennol roedd gwleidyddiaeth yn faes oedd yn eithrio menywod yn llwyr. Yn wir, nid oedd gan fenywod yr hawl i bleidleisio tan 1918, a ni wnaethant dderbyn hawliau cydradd â dynion o ran pleidleisio tan 1928. Rhaid cydnabod y datblygiad sylweddol mewn gwelededd a chyfraniad menywod yng ngwleidyddiaeth ers y dyddiau cynnar hynny, a waeth beth yw eich barn wleidyddol, mae'r ffaith fod gennym fenyw yn Brif Weinidog ar Gymru am y tro cyntaf yn garreg milltir enfawr yn y maes dylanwadol hwn.

Tîm y menywod yn cyrraedd yr Ewros

Ym myd chwaraeon, bydd tîm pêl droed menywod Cymru yn cystadlu yn yr Ewros am y tro cyntaf eleni. Mewn datganiad ysgrifenedig, dywedodd Jack Sargeant, Gweinidog Diwylliant, Sgiliau a Phartneriaeth Gymdeithasol Llywodraeth Cymru, "Bydd hon yn foment hanesyddol wrth i'n menywod gymryd rhan yn eu trnaint mawr cyntaf, un o 16 o dimau gorau Ewrop". Ychwanegodd fod hwn "yn gyfle cadarnhaol iawn i dynnu sylw at y momentwm hwn o amgylch y gêm i ferched a menywod yng Nghymru, ac yn gatalydd i annog rhagor o bobl i gymryd rhan mewn chwaraeon".

Yn ddiweddar hefyd, mae cynnydd wedi bod mewn cyfranogiad, dilynwyd ac ariannu i gêm y menywod, yn sgîl y strategaeth "Ein Cymru: Amdani Hi". Cynllun chwe blynedd ydyw a lansiwyd gan Gymdeithas Bêl Droed

Cymru yn 2021, sy'n anelu at drawsnewid tirwedd y gêm fenywaidd yng Nghymru. Yn sicr mae'r twf sylweddol hwn a llwyddiant ysgubol tîm y menywod yn ysbrydoliaeth, gan brofi ein bod yn torri tir newydd yn y maes.

#CyflymuGweithredu

Mae'r llwyddiannau hyn yn dystiolaeth gadarn o'r cynnydd mewn gwelededd menywod mewn gwahanol feysydd. Mae diwrnod rhyngwladol y menywod yn gyfle euraidd i ni adlewyrchu a dathlu'r llwyddiannau hyn, ond y mae hefyd yn gyfle i ni ystyried sut gallwn ni barhau i ddatblygu cyfleoedd i fenywod wrth symud ymlaen ac anelu tuag at gydraddoldeb llwyr.

Felly i fenywod ym mhob man, cymerwch y llwyddiannau hyn fel ysbrydoliaeth i chi er mwyn #CyflymuGweithredu.

Cymru'n Herio'r Byd Ar Ddydd Gwyl Dewi

Hanna Morgans
Golygydd Taf-Od

Am yr ail flwyddyn yn olynol mae Guinness World Records wedi ymuno gydag S4C ar Ddydd Gŵyl Dewi am ddiwrnod o dorri recordiau byd a dathlu talent Cymru.

Cafodd 7 record eu torri yn amrywio o addurno cacennau i ddaliad trapîs yn hongian ben i waered.

Dyma hanes y diwrnod;

Amser byrraf i dîm o ddwy lusgo trêen stêm 20 metr ar reilffordd gul

Llwyddodd y cwpl priod Sam Taylor a Sue Taylor Franklin, sydd hefyd yn cael eu hadnabod fel cwplw lesbi-aidd cryfaf Prydain, i dorri'r record unwaith eto ar eu hail ymgais, gan gwblhau'r her mewn 40.53 eiliad.

Yn 2021, enillodd Sam deitl y drydedd ddynes gryfaf yn y byd.

Maen nhw hefyd yn dal y record byd am dynnu awyren Airbus A320 sy'n pwyso 48 tonn.

Yr amser byrraf i deipio Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwllllynt-

siliogogoch gydag un bys

Ellen Baker sy'n dal y record yma a deipiodd enw'r pentref yn Ynys Môn mewn 15.33 eiliad.

Mae'r ardal hefyd yn dal record am y gair hiraf mewn croesair, ac yn dal yr ail safle am enw lle hiraf yn y byd gyda 58 llythyren.

Nifer mwyaf o flodau ar ffrog

Yn cipio'r record byd hon yw'r eicon drag a gyrhaeddodd rownd gynderfynol RuPaul's Drag Race UK – Marmalade. O serennu ar y gystadleuaeth wnaeth hi syfrdanu'r beirni-aidd gyda'i chreadigrwydd o ddylunio a chreu gwisgoedd.

I dorri'r record yma, creuodd ffrog wedi'i had-durno gyda 1,862 cennin Pedr.

Nid dyma'r tro cyntaf iddi greu gwisg yn gysylltiedig â Chymru, ar ei run-way cyntaf ar RuPaul's Drag Race UK, seiliodd wisg drawiadol ar y Fari Lwyd.

Nifer mwyaf o gacennau i'w had-durno gydag ei-

sin mewn 3 munud yn unigol

Seren deledu arall o Gymru a dorrodd recordbydywcystadleuydd Great British Bake Off – Michelle Evans-Fecchi.

Er mwyn torri'r record roedd yn rhaid iddi addurno 53 cacen, a llwyddodd i gwblhau 66.

Nid dyma ei record gyntaf chwaith. Mae hefyd wedi bod yn rhan o greu'r pice ar y maen fwyaf, a bwysodd 28kg a dros 6 troedfedd mewn diamedr, ar y cyd gydag aelodau o Ferched y Wawr, popty tan y Castell a Teifi Forage yng Nghaerfyrddin. Cymerodd 8 munud i goginio bob ochr.

Nifer mwyaf o symudiadau troelli gan dîm cyfnewid mewn awr

Cyflawnodd y record byd hon gan aelodau o Arts Care Gofal Celf, sefydliad celfyddydol elusennol yng Nghymru sy'n cefnogi pobl ag anableddau ac awtistiaeth.

Cymerodd 46 o bobl yn gyfangwbl ran yn y ras gyfnewid.

Y lleiafswm angenrheidiol i gael record oedd 250 o droelliadau, llwyddon nhw i chwa-

lu hyn gan droelli 921 o weithiau.

Nifer mwyaf o ddaliadau ffêr i sefyll ar drapîs siglo mewn un munud

Eric McGill sy'n dal y record yma ble mae'r trapîs yn siglo'n ôl ac ymlaen tra ei bod yn sefyll ar y bar.

Yn wreiddiol yn dod o Ganada, mae ei gartref nawr yng Nghymru.

Cwblhaodd 11 o ddaliadau gyda 10 eiliad i sbario.

Daliad trapîs yn hongian o droed i droed am yr amser hiraf (tîm o ddau)

Efeilliaid Grace a Clemetine Tonkin Wells o Sir Benfro dorrodd y record hon. Roedd un ohonynt yn hongiad wyneb i waered, yn dal y trapîs gyda'i thraed yn unig, tra bod ei chwaer yn sefyll ar wadnau ei thraed gan gydbwyso heb afael yn rhaffau'r trapîs.

I dorri'r record roedd rhaid iddynt wneud hyn am 60 eiliad, a llwyddon nhw chwalu hyn gan ei wneud am 5 munud.

Fydden i'n awgrymu i chi adolygu'r rhain yn fanwl gan fod rhai cwestiynau cwis bob dydd yn seiliedig ar y campau trawiadol yma!



THE TEAM



OPINION



Ella Lane



Aneurin Davies



James Roberts



Emily Clegg



Adrian Miesik



Miriam Southall

Forced Fun? No Thanks! The Assignment Crisis We Didn't Ask for

Ella Lane
Head of Opinion

Two words will always inspire fear within me: Group project. I have chills even writing this. As an MA student who has been in the game for four years now, every time I am asked to complete an assignment seemingly designed to confuse and terrify me, I have no idea where to begin. From blog posts to group posters, I'm sure many of you have fallen victim to the "fun" assessments which are increasingly cropping up and gradually displacing the essay format.

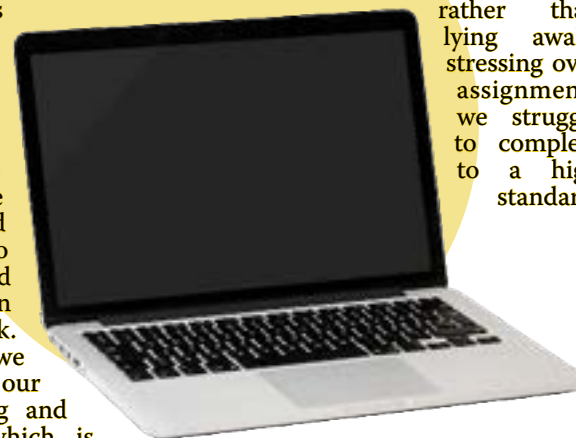
Often shoehorned into the curriculum as midterms, with little to no guidance given on how to complete them successfully,

whenever I am faced with recording a video essay or working with people on a project who have no interest in speaking to me, I question the motivations behind these types of assessments. Everybody I know finds them extremely stressful, resulting in lower grades (surprise, surprise), which I know our lecturers do not want to see. I understand that they are designed to force us to work outside of our comfort zones, but I struggle to see the benefit when all it seems to cause is unnecessary stress. Maybe this is because I find comfort in the classic research, write, edit method that the essay allows for, but I don't see how recording a podcast should count for seventy per cent of my grade. I don't want to record it, and I'm sure that whoever is marking it doesn't want to see me stutter-

ing and struggling to articulate myself as well as I typically can. If lecturers want to encourage us to step outside of our comfort zones and collaborate, I propose that they begin implementing a peer review system, which has all the benefits and none of the stress associated with these projects.

This is where students are paired up and given space to evaluate and comment on each other's work. Through this, we could exercise our critical thinking and social skills, which is

what I believe they are attempting to encourage through these unconventional means of assessment. This would be invaluable to our professional growth while also allowing us to get the sleep we all need, rather than lying awake stressing over assignments we struggle to complete to a high standard.



Why Don't Men Study English Literature?

James Roberts
Opinion Editor

I begin by describing a typical situation which I have encountered many times throughout the course of my module. I am sitting in a seminar and the set text for that week is being discussed, in particular, its presentation of men. I am sat, feeling like a zoo animal or even an in-

truder, while the entirely female seminar group discusses men. The conversation is negative—men this, men that—lived masculinity is decidedly absent from the discussion, and thus the academic analysis feels removed from the object of its attention. Given how the scenario I have just described is quite common, it is not surprising that so few men choose to study literature at university. Besides discussions of the economic utility of the degree, the cultural factors that cause the absence of men from the discipline have interested me for a long time.

It could be argued that the almost nine to one split I have observed on my course has its roots at the beginning of education. Girls generally have a higher reading age than boys throughout primary school, and seem to develop a higher social intelligence necessary to create a relationship with fictional characters. Recalling my own interests between 4 and 11, while this led to some reading, the books I read were almost always nonfiction. Factual and concise—the history and engineering books I loved, allowed for easy discernment and the acquisition of facts at a rapid pace. I, like many, if not most boys, had no time for the

monotonous narratives of novels with the gradual revelation of emotion. Through such initial preferences, the seeds of separation from literature are often sown at a young age, making it a challenging thing to overcome.

Secondary school, in my experience, far from trying to rectify this problem, perpetuates it. There are of course deep and intransigent biological and psychological reasons for the continued separation of men from fiction. The process of puberty makes boys energetic and frustrated, and hardly cultivates a mindset open to serious literature. There are, however, cultural reasons for the aforementioned separation, which seem to me to have developed in the last few years. In my experience, the GCSE English curriculum, the methods of teaching, and the set texts cater far more to girls than boys. I still remember the monotony of studying "Poppies" by Jane Weir, a poem that even now I find dreary, poorly composed, and dull. There were some aspects of the curriculum I might have enjoyed—for example, the poems of Wilfred Owen—but having only female teachers meant everything was mediated through a feminine perspective. Not only were there no role models for me or any of the other boys who might have engaged our imaginations, but I am still convinced that some of my teachers did not like boys, or at least did not understand them. Had the Greek epics or the poetry of the Anglo-Saxons been taught, I think far more boys would have taken an interest. Alas, my English schooling prioritised femininity and set up a game in which most boys will always find themselves in a defective second class. It is hardly surprising

that of my 400-person (mixed-gender) year group, I know of only one other boy who went on to get an A-level in English.

It was therefore not surprising when I came to university to find very few other men on the English Literature side of my degree. By contrast, History seems to have achieved a near fifty-fifty split of men and women. Inside and out of university, my male friends, while not usually disliking literature, generally feel that reading fiction is just not for them. I suspect this is a legacy of British state schooling, as I outlined above. I also think that because when I was in school, reading (from an approved list of books) was compulsory, this may have nurtured contempt for books among some people.

I was discussing literature a few days ago with a friend. I pulled out copies of Chaucer, *Beowulf*, and some of my Arthurian texts. I explained how they were written and how they fitted into the development of our language. He told me afterwards that it was the first time he had been interested in English Literature. Perhaps this is evidence of the need for a new approach to engaging men in our discipline. There is no shortage of masculine themes in the corpus of English, but so long as they remain suppressed, so too will men avoid literature in favour of other interests. There will be people on my course who won't care about gender balance—fair enough. But how can a subject which seeks to analyse the methods of discourse which shape human life truly achieve its aims, if it almost excludes half of our species?



Should the Government Subsidise Train Tickets?

T.R. Cunick
Contributor

Trains, the most ubiquitous of all public transport methods, and thanks to the Industrial Revolution an integral part of the building of the modern world. Why then in later years has this form of transport and this key network become, for the UK at least, an embarrassment? I write this from the position of someone who relies on the train network to get to university and someone who needs to modify their travel times and expectations to be sure to arrive anywhere remotely on time.

This feels like a universal experience, the UK's train system is flawed, with franchises such as Avanti West Coast being noted as having "unacceptable performance", according to the BBC. It would seem that successive governments' underfunding of the network and indeed the concept of rail travel is to blame. We see no investment in new infrastructure compared to that in most other countries, and our current system seems to be breaking at the seams,

with any hint of weather change disrupting the operation of whole networks. All this against continually rising ticket prices—which seems like the greatest injustice of all.

Of course there are plans and developments: the new Cardiff stations are a good example of forward thinking, and the reinstating of older and more provincial rail lines closed during the Beeching cuts of the 1960s seems like a good way to reconnect the city centres to their outlying districts.

If the government insists on making trains an integral part of future transport in the UK under their net zero plans, they will need to address the costs of tickets as a priority, ideally looking at some form of subsidisation. This gives an incentive to use rail travel as a viable means of commuting and journeying and thereby reinstating it as the UK's principal network. An increase in use forces better infrastructure and investment. London's Stansted and Heathrow airports have now both been promised additional runways as the government sees value and potential revenue sources in aviation. So why not do the same for rail travel?

Other countries are way ahead of the UK in this—mainly through investment in high-speed rail networks which point to a future of easier and more logical connections across the country. The HS2 plan is the first installment of this response, but seems to have been blighted by revisions, delays and overspending.

In order to be seen as competitors in global rail travel, net zero funding needs to be invested in similar projects across the UK. Many other European countries offer subsidised rail travel without excessive regulations and infrastructure costs getting in the way. According to the European Data Journalism Network, countries that have done this, like Germany and Spain, have seen increased usage and satisfaction with their services. China is also acting similarly to the tune of 128 billion dollars in 2015. Why then is the UK unable to match this?

Surely the idea of a fixed-rate ticket or

something similar—perhaps within geographical regions with specific operators—would be of more benefit for day-to-day travel than the current young person's

railcard. The idea of subsidising rail tickets in the UK should be considered, as it would be an important part in moulding the future of British transportation and would, not unlike the NHS, help re-find its status within British society.



Cardiff's Coffee Shop Boom: Is It a Rejection of the Pub?

Ari Plant
Head of Spotlight

The endless need for coffee shops to sprout in Cardiff feels like a social symptom of the cost-of-living crisis partnered with a generation who are, even when they should be spending their teens and twenties finding themselves, being overworked simply to survive.

I've experienced this very thing for myself when, confronted with work schedules that don't line up at all, three people who would have much preferred to be in the pub had to settle for a 10am meeting at a coffee shop. Someone's shift started at noon, someone else's started at five. The possibility for a pint was dire, so we opted for colas and coffees. It is a symptom of a generation that fears

budgeting as much as older generations feared God. The idea of a night out now brings feelings of checking bank apps and working out drinks for pence (highest alcohol percentage for least amount of money) instead of frivolity, a good time, and maybe the distant idea of a hangover in the morning. When previous generations could have a good time with no worries, unconcerned that the money they just spent on pints would have been better spent on electricity bills, Wi-Fi, or pesto pasta bought in the reduced section.

The coffee shop trip is just a further symptom of this, as coffee shops are cheaper than pints yet provide the same sort of vibe. It is like the meat substitute of pubs. It feels the same and may even look the same but it'll never taste quite the same. There is always an argument to be made for why people should choose the coffee

shop over the pub. There are health benefits and there is the lack of hangovers and late-night messages to your ex. However, with the continuing cost-of-living crisis, it is not a choice that is made for you. It is something that is forced on you by lack of funds and simply the way you've been overworked. Is it really a choice if you are being forced into it?

I think that, if there happens to be a loving god, and the bottom 99% of the population suddenly gains wealth again, pubs will be back on the upswing.



How Has American Culture Changed British Culture?

James Burns
Contributor

The recent rise in political tension between the US and Europe suggests the potential of a rift in the West, as the US puts distance between America and Europe. Donald Trump's early returning months in office have shown the world that as chaotic and rash his rhetoric may be, he is undoubtedly a strong leader of an even stronger nation. His frank rudeness and arrogance when addressing European countries, particularly Ukraine, and their subsequent cautious responses have revealed that Europe has fallen behind. In many ways, even in reluctance, it feels inclined to bend to the superpower's every need. However, for the ordinary citizen of the EU and the UK, the United States' economic and military power is not what dominates our every life. Instead, America's greatest control over us is culture. The US has ingrained itself into the hearts, minds, and souls of the people in every facet of life. What we eat and drink, what we watch, what we wear, and how we speak has all been Americanised. Since the Cold War, Americanisation has acted as a method of soft power over the rest of the world and

has become increasingly prevalent with the rise of the internet. Since Britain relinquished control of America, the pendulum has swung ever increasingly in the opposite direction. Founding Father John Adams, in a letter to Thomas Jefferson, wrote: "Britain will never be our friend, till we are her Master." His statement in many ways laid the foundations of the future.

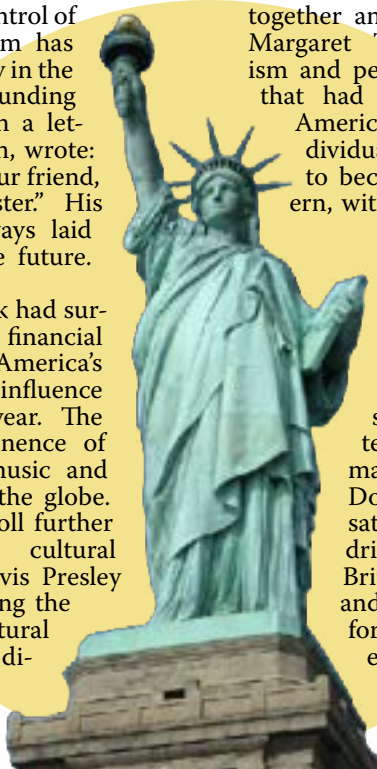
By the 1920s, New York had surpassed London as the financial capital of the world. America's financial and cultural influence only grew year by year. The 1950s saw the prominence of American-produced music and its popularity around the globe. The rise of rock and roll further cemented America's cultural rise, with stars like Elvis Presley and Buddy Holly leading the way. The '60s saw a cultural conquest in the other direction: the British Invasion, with bands like The Beatles and

The Rolling Stones proving that British and American culture could be welded together and exist as one. In the 1980s, Margaret Thatcher centred individualism and personal responsibility in a way that had not been done before. The American ideology of expression, individualism, and capitalism began to become not American but Western, with America as their poster boy.

The nature of American culture is not only to be unconfined by its borders, but to be the culture of the globe. In Britain, not a day passes without reference to or consumption of American brands, technology, or entertainment. In many ways the emergence of McDonald's epitomises Americanisation. Consider the McDonald's drive-thru versus the traditional British chippy. You can drive up and buy at least as notorious food for the same price or cheaper. It is efficiency in which people place value, and franchises bring recognisability, trust, and consistency that is difficult

to compete against. This model transcends the fast-food chain and exists in all forms of globalisation. Hollywood has beaten down the same narratives for over one hundred years now, and with each blockbuster or hit TV show, the US, with its ideologies and language, becomes more ingrained in our existence and infiltrates our culture.

Social media has only exacerbated this homogenisation of British and American culture, as two distinct cultures become closer together than apart. We use American tech companies and software, from Apple to Microsoft and Facebook to YouTube. These services define how we live our lives. When using Tinder, for example, you may meet a fellow British girl, but you are paying an American for the privilege. People, governments, and companies follow successful systems—even culturally—because culture has great power. It has the ability to shift ideology and create great economic success. Once upon a time, Britain imposed its language and politics onto the world, and now America is in the process of doing the same, even if in a far more subtle, unofficial way. However, how far does this acceptance of American values and thought, conceal our own important British ones?



Was Sabrina Carpenter's BRITs Backlash Deserved?

Emily Clegg
Opinion Editor

Sabrina Carpenter's performance at the 2025 BRIT Awards has ignited a firestorm of debate, with some viewers calling it too risqué for pre-watershed television and others applauding her boldly raunchy performance. Sabrina opened the ceremony with a provocative rendition of her songs "Espresso" and "Bed Chem", dressed in red lingerie while dancers dressed as the King's Guard performed alongside her. Her set featured a heart-shaped bed and some rather suggestive choreography, airing around 8:20 PM—leading to over eight-hundred complaints filed with Ofcom.

Critics were quick to label the performance "soft porn" and "cheap and tacky",

arguing that such overtly explicit content was inappropriate for early evening television. Some viewers expressed discomfort watching the show with their families, especially their teenage sons, questioning why pop performances increasingly seem to rely on sexual imagery. This backlash highlights a broader discussion about the sexualisation of pop culture and the music industry and its effect on younger audiences.

However, many fans defended Carpenter, viewing the performance as playful and empowering. Pop music has a long history of pushing boundaries, from Madonna's

controversial "Like a Virgin" performance at the VMAs to Miley Cyrus' headline-grabbing antics in the 2010s. Female pop artists have consistently used their platforms to challenge societal norms and provoke discussion, and Carpenter's act follows in that tradition. Amid the uproar, Carpenter responded in jest, posting on Instagram: "Brits, I now know what watershed is!" I argue it's important to recognise that the BRIT Awards has always been a stage for headline-grabbing moments. From Jarvis Cocker's infamous stage invasion during Michael Jackson's performance in 1996 to Geri Halliwell's iconic Union Jack dress in 1997, the ceremony has a long history

of unpredictability, and I think it's always interesting to add to that list. Carpenter's performance fits within this legacy, reinforcing the BRITs' somewhat lost reputation as a must-watch award show.

While some may have found Carpenter's act too provocative for pre-watershed television, it serves as a reminder of pop music's wider role in pushing cultural boundaries. Whether seen as an empowering spectacle or an inappropriate display, her performance undeniably made an impact—something I think pop starts should always be able to create. If a bit of dancing and flirtation on stage causes such a stir, perhaps it's time for audiences to reassess their expectations of modern pop performances. I, for one, welcome a pearl-clutching pop star that can get the country talking. After all, what's pop music without a little scandal to keep things interesting?



The Grammy Awards 2025 Recap

Adrian Miesik
Opinion Editor

The highly anticipated and popular award show, the Grammys happened last month. This award season managed to keep everyone guessing and it most certainly did not disappoint. There were winners who no one saw coming, and some who were expected due to their incredible performance throughout 2024.

Kendrick Lamar won not only Record of the Year but also Song of the Year with "Not Like Us", which I did not expect. I predicted that one of the holy trinity of 2024 (Charli XCX, Chappell Roan, and Sabrina Carpenter) would have won one of these awards. I had only heard people talk about their respective albums and hit songs, such as "Brat", "Espresso", and "Hot To Go!", but congratulations to Kendrick Lamar on this incredible win, especially with such a deserving song for these awards.

Album of the Year came with a big shock, as Beyoncé won it with her album *Cowboy Carter* making her the second black woman since Lauryn Hill in 1999 to win this award. To me, this was shocking. I fully expected that, once again, one of the holy trinity would win it. Additionally, a win from Taylor wouldn't have been surprising, given her historic streak of winning Album of the Year—but alas, no! Beyoncé surprised us with a well-deserved win, es-

pecially after being snubbed after not winning this award for her album *Renaissance*. Beyoncé did not stop there; she also won Country Album of the Year, which, judging by her reaction at the awards, she did not expect. But this win made history as she was the first black woman to win in this category, which is an astounding accomplishment. So all in all, Beyoncé had quite a successful Grammy run this year.

The trio of Charli, Sabrina, and Chappell, have dominated the 2024 charts with their hit albums. Each of the girls did not disappoint whatsoever, as they all came out of this award season with a Grammy (or three) to their name for their incredible performances throughout 2024. Beginning with Charli XCX, she turned it out this award season by bringing home three Grammys with "Von Dutch", winning Best Dance Pop Recording, and her album *Brat* winning Best Dance/Electronic Album and Best Recording Package. These wins are beyond fantastic, especially for an artist who first debuted in 2008 on Myspace, and later signed onto a recording label in 2010. Throughout her career, Charli has performed hits that have brought her to the limelight briefly. Hopefully, these wins mean that Charli will maintain her current mainstream popularity for a good while, which will enable her to create more good music, giving her the push needed to release more. Sabrina Carpenter won two awards, Best Pop Vocal Album and Best

Pop Solo Performance, which like Charli, are huge for her career. She first debuted in 2014 with her first EP, and saw a rise in popularity with the release of her previous album *Emails I Can't Send*. She is now seeing massive success, evidenced by her awards for her album *Short n' Sweet*. This shows that Sabrina is creating music that perfectly aligns with what her fans want from her, and hopefully, she will continue delivering similar pop songs to those her album brought into the spotlight. Finally, Chappell Roan, (your favourite artist's favourite artist), came out of this award show with one Grammy to her name, that being Best New Artist. This is, frankly, amazing for her! Even though she should have come out with at least one more, this award is nothing short of good for her and her music career. This shows Chappell that she should continue in a similar direction with her music and career while maintaining her current popularity, as she

has so much more to showcase in the future.

"Die with a Smile" by Lady Gaga ft. Bruno Mars won "Best Pop Duo/Group Performance" which is, in my opinion, deserved. Once released, the song was doing decently well, but it gradually gained more and more attention, until it became the record-breaking mega-hit that it is today. This award came just in time to create hype surrounding Gaga's anticipated album. This award did have a good contender in the form of "Guess" by Charli XCX ft. Billie Eilish. This song was also a big hit, being more popular than its original version.

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



Style Over Substance: Did Anora Deserve Its Oscar Sweep?

Carolina Peret
Contributor

Art imitates life—doesn't it? There was an odd sense of irony in Demi Moore's loss to Mikey Madison. The young ingenue beats out the experienced actress who was sure to win for her performance. *Anora* was an exceptional film. It was detailed, moving, entertaining and, overall, a wonderful piece of cinema. With that being said, was it deserving of the sweep it had across the Oscars? In my opinion, no. Although I do give credit where credit is due, *Anora* was overpraised at the Academy Awards. The film as a whole lacked nuance in comparison to its fellow nominees in certain categories. *Anora* was not as strong when compared to its competitors in each category—most obviously, Best Actress. Mikey Madison delivered her performance beautifully; it

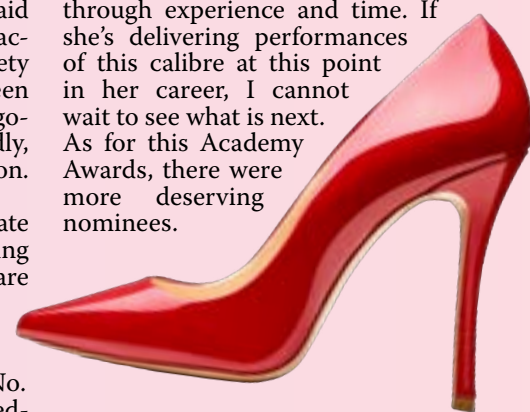
was detailed and well researched and her character was captivating. However, Demi Moore was clearly the stronger choice for this category. Her performance in *The Substance* was deeper, more layered, and far more demanding in its emotional arc than Mikey Maddison's. As well as that, since Moore's character was not rooted in a conventional world or narrative, the challenge of navigating, creating, and performing her character was far greater than channeling one based on a real community or person.

Although Demi was the realistic winner of the Oscar, I personally would have wanted Fernanda Torres to win for her performance in *I'm Still Here*. It was unlike anything I've seen in years. The complexity of her performance was astounding. She portrayed grief in such a deep way. One might think that when one's husband disappears, the initial emotion is sadness and panic. Torres, however, portraying Eunice Paiva, wife

of Rubens Paiva—a man who was made to disappear by the Brazilian military dictatorship regime—took a different approach. Rather than inconsolable pain, Torres portrayed the strength and perseverance of a mother and wife faced with an impossible situation. Her acting transcended language barriers—her expression and subtlety said it all. That's the beauty of a seasoned actress: the experience, nuance, and subtlety of performance. There have only ever been two other actresses to win in this category for a foreign-language film. So, sadly, it was unrealistic for her to have won.

The internet has now entered the debate stage. Some are defending *Anora*, claiming it was the most deserving, and some are saying it was overpraised. All I will say is that despite the criticism, *Anora* was an Oscar-worthy film. Was it the most deserving compared to its competition? No. Mikey Madison is a beautiful and incred-

ibly talented actress, completely deserving of the Academy's recognition; however, her time is yet to come. To reiterate what many people have been saying: Mikey is an Oscar-worthy actress, but this has come far too early. She needs more experience. Acting is a talent, but it also strengthens through experience and time. If she's delivering performances of this calibre at this point in her career, I cannot wait to see what is next. As for this Academy Awards, there were more deserving nominees.



The Oscars: Best Dressed and Worst Dressed

Charlotte Hardie-Watts
Contributor

The Oscars are regarded as one of the most prestigious nights in Hollywood. This award season was nothing short of controversial, it celebrated talented actors and filmmakers, and often left people disappointed. The choice of winners was not the only thing that could make or break the night, as many celebrities' fashion sense for the evening was either deemed beautiful or boring.

A star's wardrobe is an essential tool to promote their nominated films. Showcasing subtle elements from their movies through the A-listers' choice of clothing is very popular, especially for an award show of such grandeur. Ariana Grande has utilised that technique in her glamorous red-carpet looks. For the Oscars, Ariana wore a sparkly tulle Schiaparelli gown. The look had a rigid bodice that went outwards enough for her to rest her phone on it. To honour her movie *Wicked*, Ariana wore another Schiaparelli gown during her performance with Cynthia Erivo. The red dress was a nod to Dorothy with a ruby shoe or

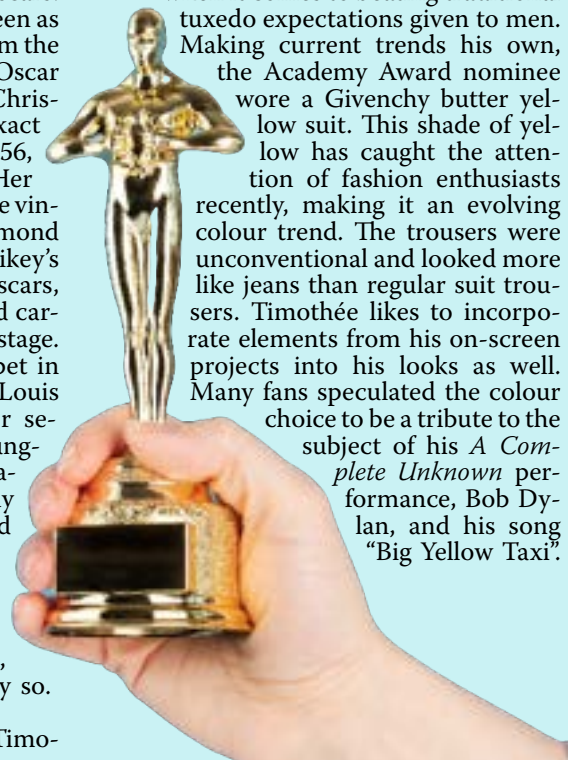
"slipper," in the back. The popstar has endlessly aligned her personal style with her character Galinda's this year, making her positively stand out. 2023 Oscar-winning actress Michelle Yeoh ventured onto the carpet in a strapless Balenciaga ensemble. Coming to support her fellow nominated *Wicked* actors, her Matisse blue dress was a showstopper. The cascading train proved her classic kind of elegance.

Chanel has always been a hit or miss designer on the red carpet. Lily-Rose Depp came to represent her film *Nosferatu* for its incredible costume design. She wore a black lace halter dress, inspired by a 1995 runway look. She expressed in her *Vogue* interview that she wanted to channel classic Old Hollywood and did so to perfection. The dress was simple at a glance but hid meticulous embroidery and detailing. However, another infamous Chanel ambassador did not give the same impression with her ceremony look. *The Substance's* Margaret Qualley attended the Oscars wearing a black backless number from Chanel's 2005 Spring/Summer collection. While the dress was not exactly bad, there is a certain boredom felt by viewers from celebrities who

play it safe. The gown was a classic piece, but more can be expected for the Oscars. Customised attire can definitely be seen as a way to make someone stand out from the crowd. Mikey Madison won her first Oscar for her performance in *Anora* in a Christian Dior gown. The dress is an exact replica of the Bal à Paris look from 1956, demonstrating her timeless allure. Her ensemble wasn't complete without the vintage Tiffany & Co platinum and diamond jewel she wore around her neck. Mikey's taste was impeccable during the Oscars, from the moment she walked the red carpet to her speech on the winner's stage. Emma Stone walked this year's carpet in another custom gown, this time by Louis Vuitton. The dress featured a silver sequins covering its entirety and a plunging neckline. This dress made spectators feel nothing, which is probably worse than daring to be different and failing miserably. The ensemble could have been elevated with better hair or accessories, but lacked the effort to do so. If one thing is clear, after her many Academy Award wins, Emma is unbothered—and rightfully so.

Throughout the years as an actor, Timo-

thée Chalamet has shown his abilities when it comes to beating traditional tuxedo expectations given to men. Making current trends his own, the Academy Award nominee wore a Givenchy butter yellow suit. This shade of yellow has caught the attention of fashion enthusiasts recently, making it an evolving colour trend. The trousers were unconventional and looked more like jeans than regular suit trousers. Timothée likes to incorporate elements from his on-screen projects into his looks as well. Many fans speculated the colour choice to be a tribute to the subject of his *A Complete Unknown* performance, Bob Dylan, and his song "Big Yellow Taxi".



Kieran Culkin: From Forgotten Brother to Star

Miriam Southall
Opinion Editor

This year's awards season has certainly captured many mesmerising moments, the magic and hope of cinema shining across TVs worldwide and offering a fragment of escapism from these dark and tumultuous times. It was Sean Baker's film *Anora* that swept the board at the Oscars, having the highest number of wins: taking the awards for Best Screenplay, Best Editing, Best Director, Best Actress, and, finally, Best Motion Picture. With this superb takeover, many have viewed *Anora* as a picturesque Cinderella fairytale. A small independent film run by indie artists, becoming the stars of the ballroom. However, there is, no doubt, another star whose road to success is a Cinderella story in itself. His name: Kieran Culkin. An actor who has transformed his career, from being known as "the *Home Alone* kid's brother" to being thrown into the spotlight, collecting what seems to be an endless mass of awards and nominations. Once the forgotten brother, now an Academy Award winner. This is his story.

During the 1990s, the name Macaulay Culkin had rapidly developed into a well-known household name. Macaulay featured in the iconic blockbuster hit *Home Alone*, catapulting him into Hollywood fame at the age of 10. While this gave the Culkin family attention and success, challenges came hand in hand. Kieran, Macaulay's younger brother, was a child actor himself, who also appeared in *Home Alone* in a minor role. Sadly, however, Macaulay's extreme success more than overshadowed the young Kieran's talent. For many years Kieran was recognised among the media and public as little more than "Macaulay's brother". No one cared or even paid attention to his own acting abilities, the sole focus being on the life of his older brother. Unfortunately, this is the disappointing reflection of how the media and even the film industry can have the wrong priorities. Instead of seeking out truly talented actors, the interest can be on how much attention and drama an actor can attract to help in promotion and give

"reality TV-like" gossip for magazines.

However, the tide began to change for "Macaulay's brother" when in 2002 he bagged what could be viewed as a breakthrough role, in the film *Igby Goes Down*. The performance resulted in Kieran earning a Golden Globe nomination, thereby cementing him in the media as a capable actor. Though he was gaining notability, Kieran's career still had a way to go before capturing the validation he truly deserves. The shadow of *Home Alone* still loomed over his career.

After taking a break from acting due to personal reasons, Kieran returned to cinema years later when the journey of his career continued to develop. His role playing Wallace Wells in *Scott Pilgrim vs. the World* gave a significant boost to his notability, with his portrayal of the character being loved by audiences and critics alike. While this role did not earn him any nominations or even showcase many of his technical skills, it gained him recognition among teen audiences, raising his popularity among younger people—even making him somewhat of a 2000s "heartthrob".

Kieran's story has already seen a journey of highs and lows, a tale of an actor fighting for his rightful place on the screen among the greats. However, the pinnacle of his career was yet to come. The prime turning point for Kieran would finally arrive in 2018—and no, it wasn't a blockbuster film featured in cinemas worldwide. In fact, it was an HBO series that today is widely viewed as one of the greatest series ever written: *Succession*. Kieran starred as one of the series' leading characters, playing the role of Roman Roy from 2018 to 2023. Starring as a character in an ongoing series can often be quite detrimental to an actor's career, especially a rising star. This is due to audience associations and consequent typecasting into a narrow range

of roles. However, I would argue that a hit series was exactly what Kieran needed to boost his career to new heights. Rather than being in a hit film every now and then with people often forgetting him, Kieran's appearance became a constant on screen, becoming more recognisable to audiences with each episode. The series quickly became a triumph, along with Kieran's reputation. Obviously, with this new rise of stardom, along came the awards. His performance as Roman Roy earned him a multitude of Golden Globe and Emmy nominations, with him taking home the Primetime Emmy Award for Outstanding Lead Actor in a Drama Series in 2024. Finally, he was a successful actor in his own right. Not "Macaulay's brother" any longer. "Oh, he has a famous brother." He was, at last, Kieran Culkin, the talented and established actor.

If you did not tune into the 97th Oscar Awards on ITV, then you may be thinking: What more can Kieran do? He's surely peaked, reaching the pinnacle of his career. Well, I'm here to inform you otherwise. It was the magnificently talented Jesse Eisenberg who saw the even greater potential Kieran Culkin held as an actor, describing him as having an "essence". Eisenberg cast Kieran in his 2024 comedy-drama *A Real Pain*. In this masterclass of a film,

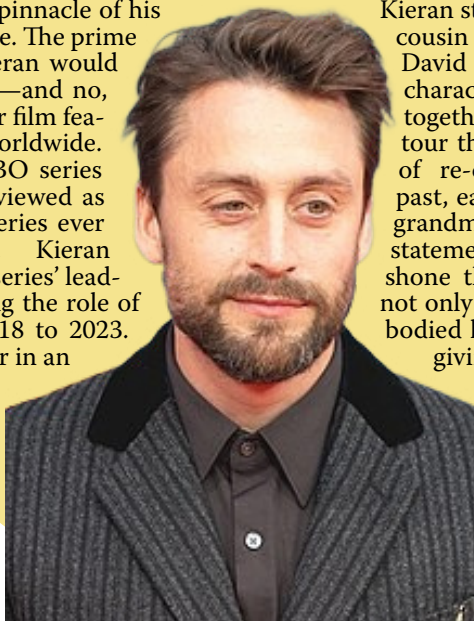
Kieran stars as Benji Kaplan, the cousin of Eisenberg's character David Kaplan. In the film, the characters reunite to travel together on a Jewish heritage tour through Poland as a way of re-connecting with their past, each other, and their late grandmother. It is an understatement to say Kieran Culkin shone through the screen. He not only acted as Benji, but embodied his very soul and being, giving a heart-warming, frustrating, and deeply moving performance. In the role, he truly captured the realities of a person suffering from depression. I have never seen such a raw and authentic

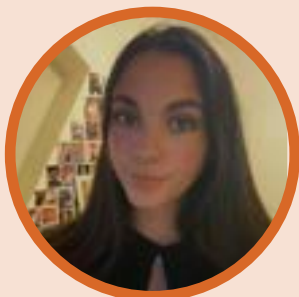
portrayal of this condition before and I am evidently not alone in my views. Kieran received many accolades and successful nominations for his performance, winning a number of prestigious awards, including The Golden Globe Award for Best Supporting Actor in a Motion Picture 2025, the BAFTA Award for Best Supporting Actor 2025, and the SAG Award for Outstanding Performance by a Male Actor in a Supporting role. Which is to say, he won all eight awards he was nominated for.

Finally, we reach the crown jewel—the award every actor dreams of and works for—to become an Academy Award winner, take home an Oscar, and become a part of history. On the 3rd of March 2025, Kieran Culkin's name was announced as the 97th Academy Award winner for Best Supporting Actor in *A Real Pain*. He had done it—though, even with extreme success, he remained humble, making the majority of his speech about his love for his wife and children. Kieran had even tried to get out of filming *A Real Pain*, as he didn't want to be away from his children.

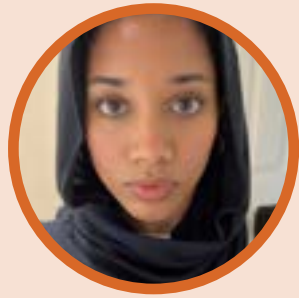
The name Kieran Culkin should be an inspiration to us all. He has proved that you can overcome stereotypical associations and reach the highest possible success while still having the right priorities. Throughout his career, Kieran has worked hard to get his talent recognised while remembering to put his family first—and look how he has been rewarded. His life and career have truly seen a miraculous journey, from the overlooked "Macaulay's brother" to a celebrated actor and Academy Award winner. His acting in *Succession* drove me to hysterical laughter, while his performance in *A Real Pain* brought me to tears. I cannot wait to see where Kieran goes from here. If writers, producers, and directors have any sense, they will snap him up—and I will be the first in the cinema to enjoy the film.

ARealPainBFILFF131024 / Ralph_PH (via Wikimedia commons) / CC BY 2.0 / background removed





Lauren Tutchell



Laila Dawelbeit



Adam Dunstan



Luke Tonkinson



Thomas Wilson

Starmer Welcomes EU Defence Spending Boost

Laila Dawelbeit
Politics Editor

Prime Minister Keir Starmer has welcomed the EU decision to increase defence spending that was announced on the 6th of March at an emergency summit in Brussels. In a move to boost the continent's military forces, the package includes loans and weakened deficit rules.

With an increase in Russian aggression in Ukraine, including recent missile and drone attacks on Ukrainian infrastructure, there has been a sense of urgency among European leaders. French President Emmanuel Macron warned that "the only imperial power that I see today in Europe is Russia", calling Vladimir Putin "an imperialist who seeks to rewrite history" after the Russian president appeared to compare himself to Napoleon Bonaparte.

This also comes as the UK and EU attempt to rally support for Ukraine after President Donald Trump stopped US military aid and intelligence sharing to Ukraine. Since the beginning of his second term in the White House, Trump has shifted American foreign policy towards a more isolationist "America first" approach, with Trump suggesting,

since his campaign trail, that the US will not defend NATO allies who do not meet defence spending commitments.

Since then, NATO members, especially the UK and France, have been concerned about the reliability of their traditional security ally, and there have been many calls from European leaders to step up. The UK and France have said they are willing to provide peacekeeping troops to Ukraine, urging other European countries to do the same.

However, Keir Starmer has also said that in order to be effective, their presence in Ukraine must be backed by US security guarantees. So far, Donald Trump has avoided committing to such support, instead claiming that the presence of American workers in Ukraine as part of a potential minerals deal would be sufficient as a deterrent against Russia. Russia has rejected the move outright, saying it would amount to "direct, official, and unveiled involvement of NATO members in the war against Russia".

Starmer has also been trying to persuade European countries to join a "coalition of the willing" to deter Russia in the event of a peace deal in Ukraine. According to UK officials, around twenty

countries are interested in joining the coalition, though not all would necessarily offer to send troops and would provide other forms of support instead.

At the emergency summit in Brussels, EU leaders backed an €800 billion plan which encompasses several elements, including a €150 billion loan scheme secured against unused funds in the EU budget aimed at providing immediate resources for defence enhancements. There will also be a boost for the defence industry and an improvement of military capabilities, as well as investments in research and development of defence solutions and cybersecurity infrastructure.

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen, who presented the €800 billion plan, called it "a watershed moment for Europe" and also for Ukraine. She told reporters that if Trump wanted "peace through strength", this would only be possible with the EU and its member states "because preconditions have to be met". Citing EU economic and military aid, and support for the continuity of Ukraine's energy system, she said there were "many examples that show how important the support of Europe is to come to a positive end".

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who was initially scheduled to join the summit by video link but arrived in person, said: "We are thankful that we are not alone." Zelenskyy has said on social media that he plans to visit Saudi Arabia to meet Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman ahead of further US-Ukraine talks. "After that, my team will stay in Saudi Arabia to work with our American partners", he wrote. "Ukraine is most interested in peace. As we told POTUS (President of the United States), Ukraine is working and will continue to work constructively for a swift and reliable peace."

In a call with von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa, alongside the leaders of Canada, Turkey, Norway, and Iceland, Starmer was briefed on the plans. Afterwards, Downing Street said the prime minister "applauded the progress", calling the move "historic" and "another sign of Europe stepping up". According to a No. 10 spokesperson, Starmer also noted plans for the coalition of the willing and stated that an upcoming meeting in Paris would be an "important moment to drive forward planning".

Can the Government Turn the Tide on Channel Migrant Boat Crossings?

Raibeart Archibald
Contributor

It is no secret that migrant boat crossings have been on the rise. Already this year, around 3,700 people have arrived on small boats in Kent. According to the Office for the Fight against Illicit Trafficking of Migrants, seventy-eight people died while attempting to reach England aboard small boats last year—the highest number since the first recorded crossing in 2018. Six people have already died this year.

These shocking numbers stand in stark contrast to Starmer's promise to "smash the gangs" at the heart of small boat crossings. This year, with almost 4,000 crossings, the figure is already 17% ahead of the same point last year. Recently, a spokesperson from the Home Office reiterated the government's pledge to dismantle the business models that make these crossings possible.

But the tactics of these gangs are varied and are proving more difficult to tackle than anticipated. Gangs have turned to marketing their services on social media,

which is proving a headache for the government. As long as these adverts reach people willing to pay to cross the Channel, the flow of migrants is set to continue.

The schema of the gangs is intelligent. Gangs will offer discounts to families and even offer rewards to those willing to make promotional content on their behalf after a successful crossing, creating a survivorship bias. With this considered, what has this government done to turn the tide on migrant boat crossings?

The government passed the Border Security Asylum and Immigration Bill, which Home Secretary Yvette Cooper has stated will make it easier to take early action against "those facilitating the boats". Tangibly, the bill has empowered border authorities to seize the phones of migrants who have crossed the Channel. Additionally, in an attempt to tackle gangs at a far earlier stage in their preparations, individuals convicted of acts in preparation of smuggling, such as buying boat parts, can now face up to fourteen years in prison.

While the government will have

to be careful not to breach the human rights of migrants by taking away their phones, these powers may provide a credible way of identifying organisers of human trafficking and collecting evidence of their criminal activities. It could, however, be naive of the government to expect that these gangs would leave unencrypted evidence of their conversations—or even any trace at all.

This renewed focus on migrant crossings takes place within the backdrop of the inquiry into the deadliest Channel crossing in history, where a boat carrying a suspected thirty-three people capsized in November 2021, killing a confirmed twenty-six individuals. The inquiry explores the failures in the rescue operation, which resulted in people being left in the water for twelve hours.

Tragedies like these raise the question of what can be done. Migrant crossings have been a political football for a considerable number of years, and prior to the Labour government, successive Conservative administrations have all attempted to "solve the problem", with proposals ranging from third-party pro-

cessing in Rwanda to an intensification of border security.

Migration is likely to remain a key issue for the electorate, with the Conservatives and Reform offering increasingly extreme approaches to the perceived problem. Recently, leader of the Conservative Party, Kemi Badenoch, has suggested that the Human Rights Act should not apply to asylum seekers. This approach refuses to deal with the issue of gangs and is a cry back to the gimmick-stricken days of the Rwanda plan.

Therefore, perhaps the only viable method for turning the tide on migrant boat crossings is to offer safe and accessible routes. Since it is highly unlikely that migration will ever cease or that the UK will ever stop being an attractive destination for migrants, the government should consider providing accessible routes with appropriate processing to undercut the gangs at their own game.

If migrants were offered safer routes, the UK could pre-emptively protect migrants to avoid what all will agree are tragedies in the Channel.



UK Remains Cautiously Optimistic on US Trade Deal

Nye Jones
Contributor

US President Donald Trump has claimed that a new UK-US trade deal could happen “very quickly” as a result of a warm meeting between himself and UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer.

The deal—if it happens—could see the UK exempt from possible tariffs threatened by the Trump administration. The president had previously stated that “tariff” was the “most beautiful word in the dictionary”. The two leaders shared a warm embrace which the prime minister hopes can translate to favourable diplomatic relations concerning the two countries after a turbulent week. Despite the affection, the lack of any concrete agreement from President Trump was notable.

Before President Trump’s very public bullying of Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy swept everything else from the newsfeed, he had spoken admirably of Keir Starmer after their meeting in the White House. “We like each other” asserted the president, “He loves his country and I love my country and we have two countries which have gotten along for the longest time”. The president went so far as to compliment the prime minister’s “beautiful accent” as the cordiality between the two men showed no signs of letting up.

When asked about Starmer’s attempt at negotiating a positive trade deal for the UK and an exemption from tariffs, the president maintained that “he tried [...] he was working hard I’ll tell you that” and that the prime minister was a “tough negotiator” who “earned whatever the hell they pay him over there”.

Amongst the issues of negotiating a US commitment to NATO and the protection of the sovereignty of Ukraine, Starmer’s task of securing a UK-US trade deal and a subsequent exemption from the imposition of tariffs was seen as a top priority. President Trump had previously stated a blanket 25% tariff on all US imported steel and aluminium would be a top priority whilst on the campaign trail last year and such a move could hit

the UK steel industry.

Within the joint press conference Starmer referred to a UK-US economic deal which would see both countries begin to work on the potential of new artificial intelligence technology. He proposed that “instead of over-regulating these technologies, we’re seizing the opportunities they offer”. He continued: “Artificial Intelligence could cure cancer. That could be a moon shot for our age, and that’s how we’ll keep delivering for our people”.

Despite the positive direction which the meeting took, there was no sign of a sincere binding agreement from President Trump and the lack of such agreement cannot instill confidence in any diplomatic agreement for the two countries. If President Trump has guaranteed anything since his second inauguration on the 20th of January, it is that one cannot really rely on him for anything. The president has now twice delayed the tariffs he imposed on neighbouring Mexico and Canada following the subsequent market turmoil it created. Additionally, his hostile affront towards President Zelenskyy—a man who he has carried a personal grudge with since his 2019 impeachment—cannot be ignored when considering the UK’s steadfast support for Zelenskyy since the invasion in 2022.

Within the last week, Trump has illegally revoked congressionally-approved military funds for Ukraine, as well as rescinding US intelligence sharing. To what extent can the UK be confident of any trade deal actually happening considering the two countries’ opposing views on the defining diplomatic issue of our time?

Trump is a deeply transactional political figure and the warmth which he expressed towards Keir Starmer was not without the prime minister laying his diplomatic cards on the table. The prime minister produced a letter of invitation from King Charles III for an unprecedented second state visit for President Trump, which given the president’s actions in the last week, is growing increasingly regrettable.

It remains to be seen what else the UK has to offer Trump to guarantee immunity from his tariffs if the UK-US trade deal remains in its phantasmic state.

Degrading, Violent and Misogynistic Online Pornography to Be Banned?

Sienna Wilson
Contributor

A review commissioned by the previous Conservative government and peer Baroness Gabby Bertin has urged ministers to give regulator Ofcom power to police porn sites deemed to contain “harmful” material.

The report includes proposals to criminalise the possession or publication of pornography showing women being choked during sexual intercourse. However, these thirty-two recommendations on governmental control of legal online pornography have sparked debate about how far the state should regulate adult content.

Baroness Bertin argues that online pornography contributes to some of the “gravest issues in our society, from domestic violence to toxic masculinity to the mental health crisis among young people”.

Speaking to the BBC, she stated: “You just have to go on the homepages of some of these mainstream sites, and you will see all that degrading content—particularly violent towards women—and it’s all there for everyone to see.”

Studies conducted in the UK indicate that 22% of children aged 14–18 have viewed pornography multiple times, with one in five claiming to have a “porn habit”. Alarming, some children reported first viewing explicit material as young as 3 years old, with an average exposure of 12.

Additionally, a study from the Children’s Commissioner for England has identified links between children’s exposure to pornography and subsequent harmful sexual behaviour or abuse. The report finds reference to specific acts of sexual violence commonly found in pornography in 50% of the cases examined within the documents, such as strangulation and slapping.

The review highlights cases, such as a 14-year-old boy asking a teacher how to choke girls during sex, as evidence that pornography is normalising violence and creating “a confusing world for our sons”. According to Baroness Bertin, the lack of regulation allows harmful content to thrive unchecked, contradicting broader societal efforts to combat misogyny.

“These depictions of non-fatal choking of women during sex have normalised such behaviour in the real world”, the review suggests, “with violent and degrading ma-

terial rife on mainstream platforms amid a ‘total absence of government scrutiny’”.

However, does banning certain types of pornography infringe on personal freedoms and overreach into private sexual expression? Some experts suggest that efforts should focus on better sex education—promoting discussions of consent and addressing issues of masculinity—as opposed to an outright ban on specific content. Others suggest that rather than criminalising content, technology-based solutions, such as identification checks and AI-driven content moderation, could offer a more balanced approach.

“They are, quite rightly, encouraged and taught to reject sexist attitudes, while a subterranean online world of pornography is simultaneously showing them that anything goes”, Baroness Bertin writes.

Downing Street has suggested it would “act swiftly” to address gaps in the law but has not explicitly committed to a ban. Measures to increase regulation of pornography, including to prevent children from accessing explicit content, are already part of the Online Safety Act, which became law in October 2023.

While Baroness Bertin urges further action, policymakers must weigh the risks of censorship against the potential benefits of reducing exposure to violent and degrading content. Finding a balance between regulation, education, and digital safeguards will be key in ensuring both protection from harm and the preservation of personal freedoms.



Can Labour's Wes Streeting Fix the NHS? A Data-Backed Analysis

Ali Jan Khawaja
Contributor

The NHS is under immense strain—from record-breaking waiting lists to chronic staff shortages—and Wes Streeting, Labour's Shadow Health Secretary, has vowed bold reforms to “fix” it. With 7.7 million patients in England awaiting hospital treatment (an all-time high reached in late 2023) and public satisfaction with the health service plunging to its lowest level since records began, expectations are high. Can cutting NHS bureaucracy, tweaking budgets, and leveraging the private sector really cure the NHS's ills?

Workforce Cuts and Staffing Issues

Streeting has signaled a shake-up of NHS management, planning to cut around 2,000 managerial jobs at NHS England—roughly 15% of central office roles—to redirect funds to frontline care. This is expected to free up about £325 million for hiring doctors and nurses. However, the NHS is already facing a workforce crisis, with over 100,700 unfilled posts, including 8,000 doctors and 31,000 nursing vacancies. England has only 2.9 doctors per 1,000 people, far below the OECD European average of 3.7.

Labour's proposals include training 7,500 more doctors and 10,000 more nurses per year by expanding medical school places and apprentice-

ships, funded by abolishing the non-dom tax status. These measures could help over time, but with doctor training taking years, they will not provide immediate relief to struggling hospitals. Cutting 2,000 admin roles may offer some savings, but given the scale of NHS vacancies, its impact could be limited.

NHS Budget and Spending

The Department of Health and Social Care budget for England in 2024/25 is about £192 billion, a mere £1.1 billion real-terms increase. Labour's approach emphasises financial discipline over major spending increases. However, analysts project a £38 billion funding gap by 2030. The Health Foundation has warned that sustained 4% annual real-terms growth is necessary to tackle backlogs and improve services, a level neither Labour nor the Conservatives have pledged.

While the NHS remains efficient relative to spending, years of underfunding have left little flexibility for improvements.

Waiting Times and Healthcare Access

With 7.5 million people on NHS waiting lists and A&E delays worsening, Streeting has set an ambitious goal: eliminate waits over eighteen weeks within five years. Labour plans to deliver

40,000 extra appointments per week by extending GP and hospital clinic hours and doubling the amount of diagnostic equipment. Additionally, they propose utilising private hospitals to clear NHS backlogs.

Past NHS initiatives have shown that outsourcing routine surgeries to private clinics can help reduce wait times. However, concerns remain about workforce shortages—as NHS consultants often work in both sectors, diverting patients to private providers risks depleting NHS staff availability. Reducing backlogs requires a long-term increase in treatment capacity rather than short-term fixes.

Privatisation and Public Sentiment

Streeting's openness to using private hospitals has raised concerns about creeping privatisation. However, polls show that public dissatisfaction with the NHS is rooted in long waits and staff shortages, not a rejection of the NHS model. The 2023 British Social Attitudes survey found that 52% of the public were dissatisfied, but a majority still support the NHS being free at the point of use and tax-funded.

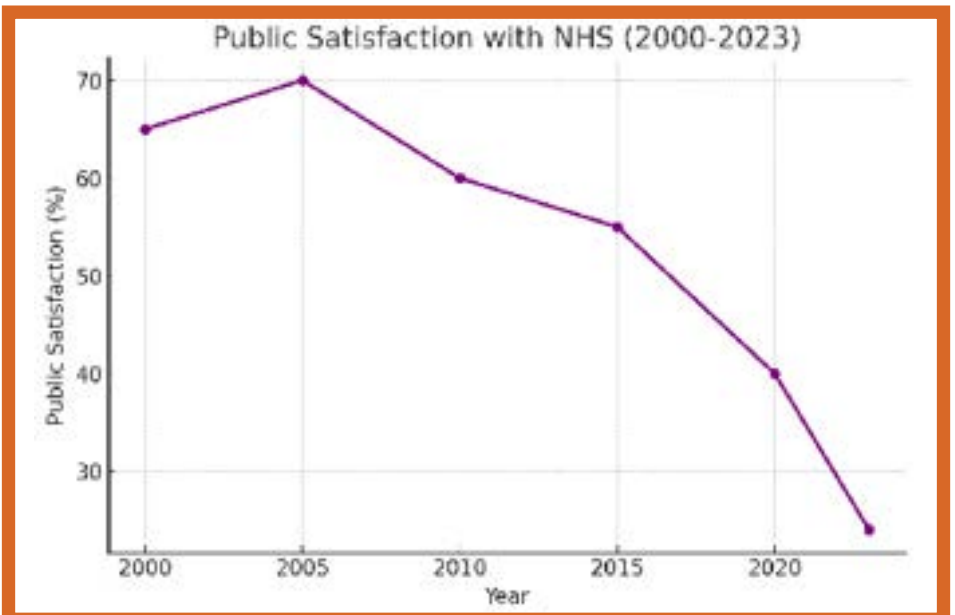
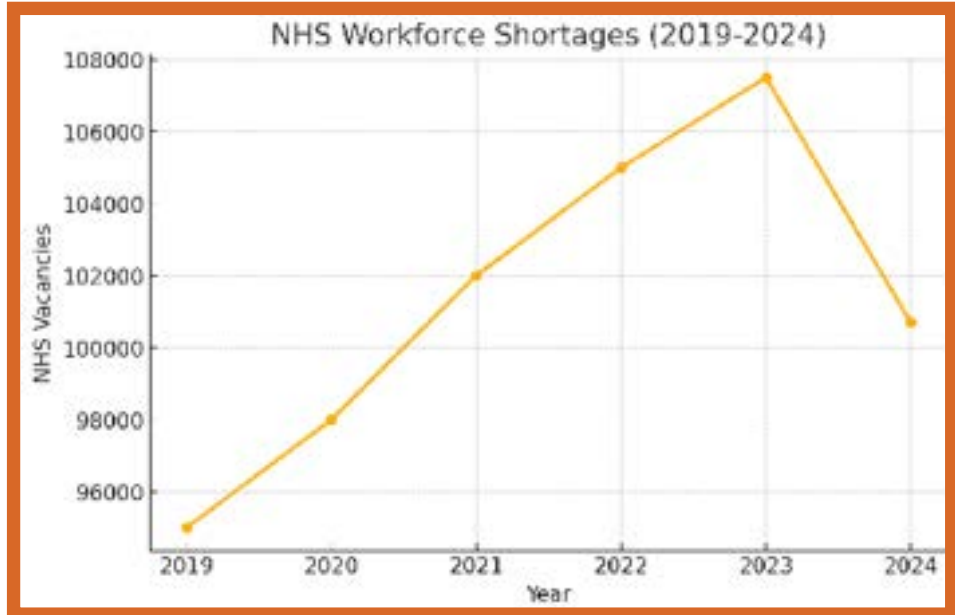
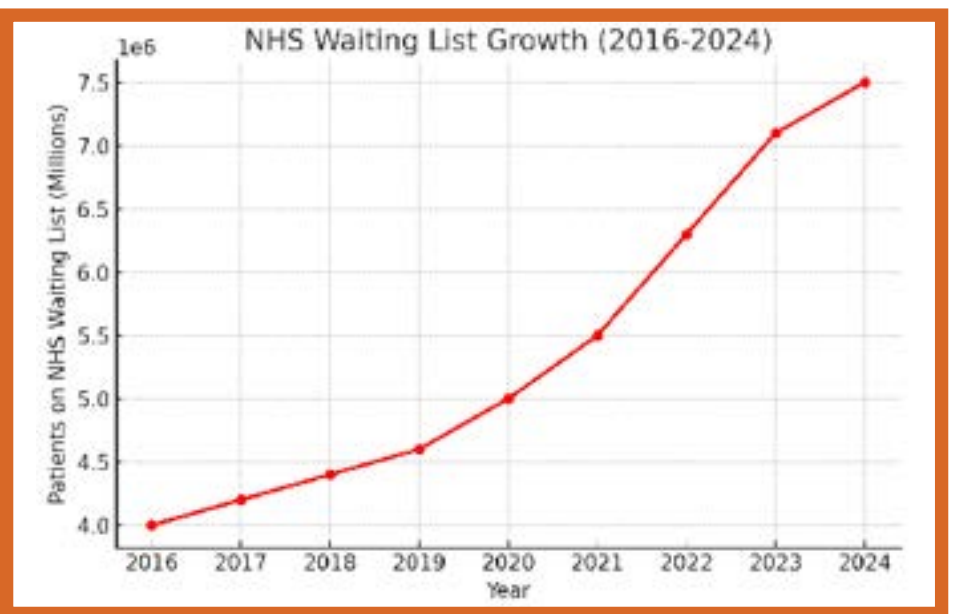
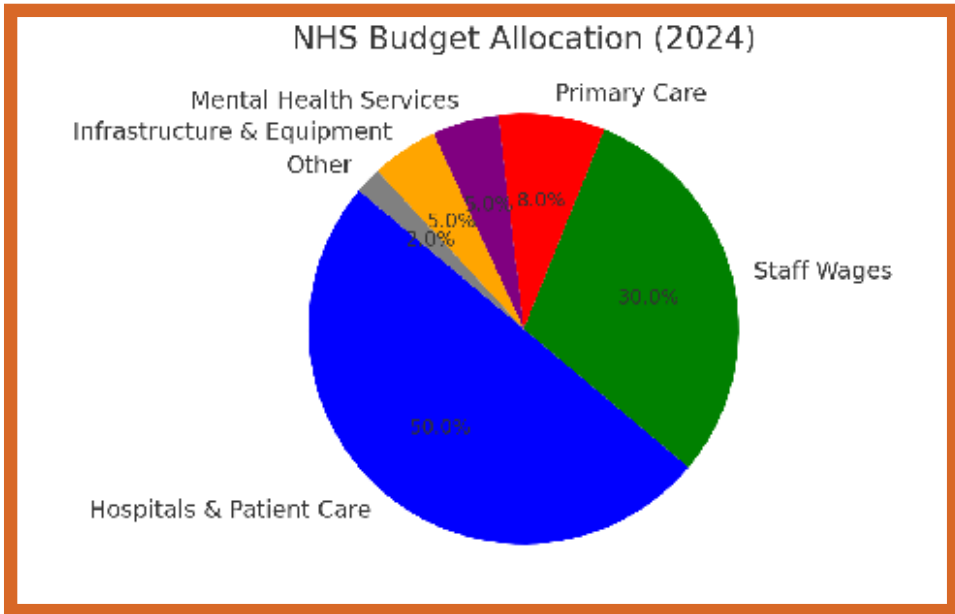
Historically, outsourcing NHS treatments has had mixed results. While it helped reduce wait times in the 2000s, it also led to concerns about long-term impacts on public-sector capacity. If Labour's approach is perceived as expanding private-sector reliance, it could face public and

political pushback.

A Promising Plan, but is It Enough?

Streeting's proposals address key NHS issues: staff shortages, waiting lists, and financial inefficiencies. His plan to train more doctors, expand appointment capacity, and use private clinics could yield short-term improvements. However, the underlying funding gap and workforce shortages remain significant barriers.

Without sustained investment and long-term workforce expansion, Streeting's approach may only provide incremental relief rather than a full-scale NHS recovery. Fixing the NHS requires more than efficiency savings—it demands significant resources and a strategic commitment to long-term capacity building. The coming years will test whether these reforms can reverse declining NHS performance or if deeper structural changes will be necessary.



Will the Welsh Government Bail Out Cardiff University?

Owen Russell
Contributor

Since the news about potential budget cuts to Cardiff University was announced in late January, the entire community has been left in a state of relative uncertainty.

The proposed cuts include the loss of 400 jobs within the university and the closure of courses including Nursing, Music, Ancient History, Religion, and Modern Languages. There is also the potential for departments to be merged which would lead to the creation of multiple new schools within the university.

Although these plans remain only proposals, the official statement from Vice-Chancellor Wendy Larner suggests that some form of change will be made. Professor Larner said that “we know here at Cardiff University that it is no longer an option for us to continue as we are”. The university is experiencing an unignorable budget situation, and this has been reinforced by statements made by the Universities Wales group, who represent all Welsh universities. Paul Boyle, the chair of the group, remarked on BBC Politics Wales that he had “never seen a financial situation like this in the decades that I’ve worked in the sector”. The responses from university staff and students have been ones of outrage and fear. Calls have been made for the Welsh government to offer financial support to prevent these cuts from having to be made. In February a rally was organised by the University and College Union (UCU), with protesters forming outside the Senedd.

The response from the government seemed initially to be a clear refusal to give aid. Minister for Higher Education Vicky How-

ells stated that there “wouldn’t be any additional Welsh government funding available, unless we were looking to cut back from other areas such as the NHS, education, or public services that we all rely on”.

Despite this, Howell later announced 19 million pounds in funding to be given to universities across Wales. The funding is intended to help universities “meet capital costs associated with estate maintenance and digital projects to reduce operating costs”. Although seemingly positive, the aims of this aid do not appear to focus on providing stability to the staff or courses proposed to be cut.

Additionally, Howells has suggested that Welsh universities consider using their financial reserves to avoid job losses. She stated that “it’s something each university should be considering, and other universities have done that in the past to minimise job losses”.

Despite the 19 million pounds in funding, Howells’ comments suggest that the university will not be financially secured by government support. The university has previously argued that financial reserves “are not the same as money that can be freely spent”. This leaves the fate of the staff and courses proposed to be cut from Cardiff University in the same situation, with both the government and the university apparently unable to support their future.

The university has released no statements on the cuts since the initial proposal on the 28th of January, present-

ing matters as being far from resolved.

However, Howells’ contradictory comments over the government’s ability to provide financial support, despite being able to later on, implies more aid may be available. It remains to be seen if the government is willing to protect those at risk from being removed from the university.

Can the Welsh government afford to cut nursing when the country is already facing a shortage of nurses? To axe music in the capital city of “the land of song”? The university has stated that the final plans for approval of these proposals are “expected to be considered by University Council in June”.



The Battle for Free Speech Across the World

Thomas Wilson
Politics Editor

Free speech is the bedrock of a free society—if we define a “free” society as one in which the people themselves are free to think, criticise, and debate with others of opposing views without the fear of facing ramifications for the positions and opinions they espouse. The issues around the nature of free speech is dominating political discourse, highlighted recently by the Oval Office interaction between JD Vance and Keir Starmer, in which Vance claimed to “know there have been infringements on free speech” in Britain; mirroring his criticism of the British Government at the Munich Security Conference, where he accused the government of implementing “renegade” free speech laws.

While Starmer retorted “we’ve had free speech for a very long time, it will last a long time, and we are very proud of that”, the implication that free speech is under threat in Britain is an emotive one. When assessed in a bipartisan fashion, it is evident that freedom of speech is facing challenges, and what is meant by the term “free speech” is being subjected to heightened levels of scrutiny. Take, for instance, recent events unfolding in universities. One noteworthy example is the “From Conflict to Connection: Israelis & Iranians in Dialogue” event at King’s

College London on the 27th of February. The event involved Faezeh Alavi, a PhD researcher of St Andrews University, and Miles Isaacs, president of the King’s Geopolitics Forum. After twenty-five minutes, pro-Palestinian activists began disrupting the lecture, with Alavi eventually being forced to leave the venue against a backdrop of chants of “free Palestine”.

The targeting of the lecture was predicated on the fact that Alavi is an outspoken critic of the barbarous Khamenei dictatorship in Iran, and was sharing a platform with an Israeli for the purpose of discussing peace. The fact that even an event such as this cannot proceed without being disrupted and abandoned is indicative of the problem facing universities. In the face of such regular occurrences, one may hope that the government’s Higher Education Act, which would require universities to establish a code of practice and policies to protect freedom of speech, may serve as a bulwark to such troublesome scenes reoccurring.

Away from universities, the nature of free speech is being continuously tested and probed, and the debate around what can be justified under free speech looks set to continue in perpetuity, particularly on the thorny topic of religion. This debate over the limitations and parameters of free speech is epitomised by the case of Martin Frost, who pled guilty last month to a public order offence after he streamed

himself burning a copy of the Quran in Manchester. While it would not be bold to categorise the individual and the action as both reprehensible, it does raise questions over what exactly can be justified as an admissible act of freedom of expression, particularly as England and Wales abolished blasphemy laws in 2008. The legal disputes around the burning of holy books is not unique to Britain, as is highlighted by the case of Salwan Momika, who was murdered in January. Momika, an anti-Islam activist born in Iraq, staged a variety of protests in Sweden, and in 2023 sought permission to burn the Quran in front of Turkish and Iraqi embassies.

While permission was initially rejected, the Supreme Administrative Court of Sweden overturned the decision, citing Momika’s “constitutionally protected freedoms of assembly”. The discrepancies in judicial attitudes of Sweden and Britain serve to highlight the moldability of free speech, and what can and cannot be an acceptable form of public protest. The overriding point is this: without a clear

and codified set of parameters relating to freedom of speech, the more troublesome it proves to “defend” or be “attacked”—for without a clear definition, it is impossible to defend or consciously attack it. The time has come for our policymakers and politicians to make clear in law how fundamentalist Britain is to be when it comes to free speech.



THE TEAM



REVIEW



Emily Jo Cottle



Gemma Willmott



Lowri Jones



Angela Griffith



Sam Wainwright



‘Housemates’: ★★★★★ A Heartfelt Revolution of Music and Social Change

Gemma Willmott
Review Editor

The restaging of *Housemates* at the Sherman Theatre is a powerful, inspiring and insightful true story that tells the story of the Ely Hospital—a former psychiatric hospital in Ely, Cardiff. We follow Jim: a slightly naive, well-meaning student activist, who discovers the extent to which the Ely residents are restricted and mistreated within the care of the hospital. Jim meets Alan, a long-term resident with Down’s Syndrome, and the play follows as the two of them begin a campaign to allow for shared housing, in which students and residents can live together, and develop a new style of social care.

For me, the stand-out element of the play was the relationship between Jim and Alan. Peter Mooney and Gareth John complement each other astoundingly in these roles, with their dynamic playing as funny, sweet,

and sincere throughout. John’s outstanding delivery and comedic timings make simple punch lines into huge laughs for the crowd. Mooney carefully navigates the subjects of social care and disability, retaining a likeable and engaging (albeit naive) protagonist throughout. Mooney and John’s on-stage dynamic brought both laughter and tears for the audience, and for me they were truly the stand-out element of the play.

The staging of the play was thoughtful, using the Sherman Theatre to its full potential.

Visually, my favourite moment was the montage in which it is revealed the wider impacts of Jim and Alan’s campaign, as characters throw papers one by one, signifying the closure of psychiatric facilities nationwide. This moment is certainly not the most emotionally charged of the show, but, nonetheless, brought a lump to my throat. The staging, delivery and music created such a powerful moment on stage that

the audience could not help but break into rapturous applause.

I would be remiss to not mention the use of 70s rock music that punctuated the play. The band, onstage as the audience entered, began with a pre-show concert. The vocals of Emily Ivana Hawkins blew me away, as she belted out Blondie while playing guitar. Undoubtedly music plays a vital role within the play, as it ends with an infectious joyous number played by Alan and the Housemates. The use of music throughout the production is poignant, as it becomes a symbol for rebellion and freedom for Alan and the residents of Ely Hospital. It is difficult to classify *Housemates* with regards to music—the rock punctuates the show, and becomes a symbol for rebellion, but I would not put it in the traditional “musical” category.

Any musical sceptics should not be deterred—each musical moment is well calculated and feels completely justified. *Housemates* ran from the 22nd of February to the 8th of March at the Sherman, but if you missed it, it is touring at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre (27–29 March) and the Torch Theatre (2–4 April).

I cannot recommend seeing it highly enough.

‘Big Boys’: The Third (and Final) Season

Tom Jackson
Contributor

The third season of Jack Rooke’s *Big Boys* has finally aired on Channel 4, providing a spectacular capstone to the British sitcom. Starring Dylan Llewellyn, who can be easily recognised from his role as Jack in *Derry Girls*, the show is semi-autobiographical in nature, based largely on Rooke’s time at university. The series explores his sexuality and the process of transitioning to adulthood at school, filled with hilarious anecdotes of the awkwardness of first going to gay clubs, the struggles of making friends during freshers’ week and putting up with dodgy student accommodation.

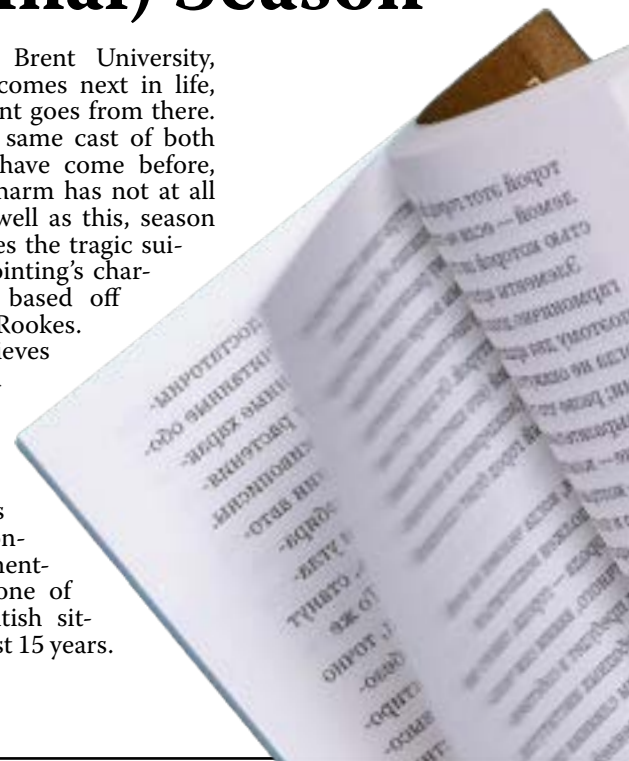
However, the series also tackles much deeper themes, deal-

ing with mental health and loss. Specifically, the challenging death of Rooke’s father who passed away, just ten days after being diagnosed with cancer, the summer of the writer’s GCSEs.

Rooke draws from his earlier works: *Cheer the F*** Up*, *Happy Hour*, and *Good Grief*, the latter of which previously aired on BBC Radio 4. This obvious experience of writing about death, sometimes comedically, sometimes with the highest gravitas makes it a rare gem among television of today. Some of the most touching and heartbreaking moments of the show come from this examination of grief itself and the way in which the Rooke family attempts to deal with death, ultimately uniting as a community.

The final season is an exceptional portrayal of Jack’s final year of

education at Brent University, and of what comes next in life, where a student goes from there. Featuring the same cast of both seasons that have come before, the wit and charm has not at all been lost. As well as this, season 3 finally tackles the tragic suicide of Jon Pointing’s character Danny, based off a friend of Rooke’s. *Big Boys* achieves the awkward task of spinning both the plates of being effortlessly hilarious and uncommonly tragic, cementing itself as one of the finest British sitcoms of the last 15 years.



UPCOMING MUST-SEES

Disney's Snow White – 21st of March

The Alto Knights – 21st of March

Death of a Unicorn – 4th of April



Amandaland – A Genuinely Good Spin-Off Show?



Emily Jo Cottle
Head of Review

There is always an understandable apprehension when a popular TV programme gains a spin-off show, but it is safe to say that with BBC's *Amandaland*, we can rest easy. *Taking Motherland's* most insufferable character and focusing on her life as a single mother with teenagers encompasses both the humour of its predecessor and its warm-hearted relatability.

The series begins, with Amanda (Lucy Punch) having just moved from Chiswick to South Harlesden which she affectionately calls 'SoHa'—presumably to save face from having to downsize and take her children out of private school after her divorce. In the final series of *Motherland* the audience started to get a feel for the vulnerability of Amanda that she perpetually disguises behind her perfect blow-out and glossy exterior. This series showcases Amanda's trademark competitive desperation that causes viewers to bear the awkwardness with gritted teeth while also feeling sorry for her. A good example of this is when Amanda needs a real income as her new interior design business "Senuous" isn't taking off. She goes to an interview to work at a kitchen showroom and she refers to her boss as her co-lab partner. A joke that runs throughout the series is Amanda trying to hide the fact that she works in retail. The lengths she will go to are cringe-worthy

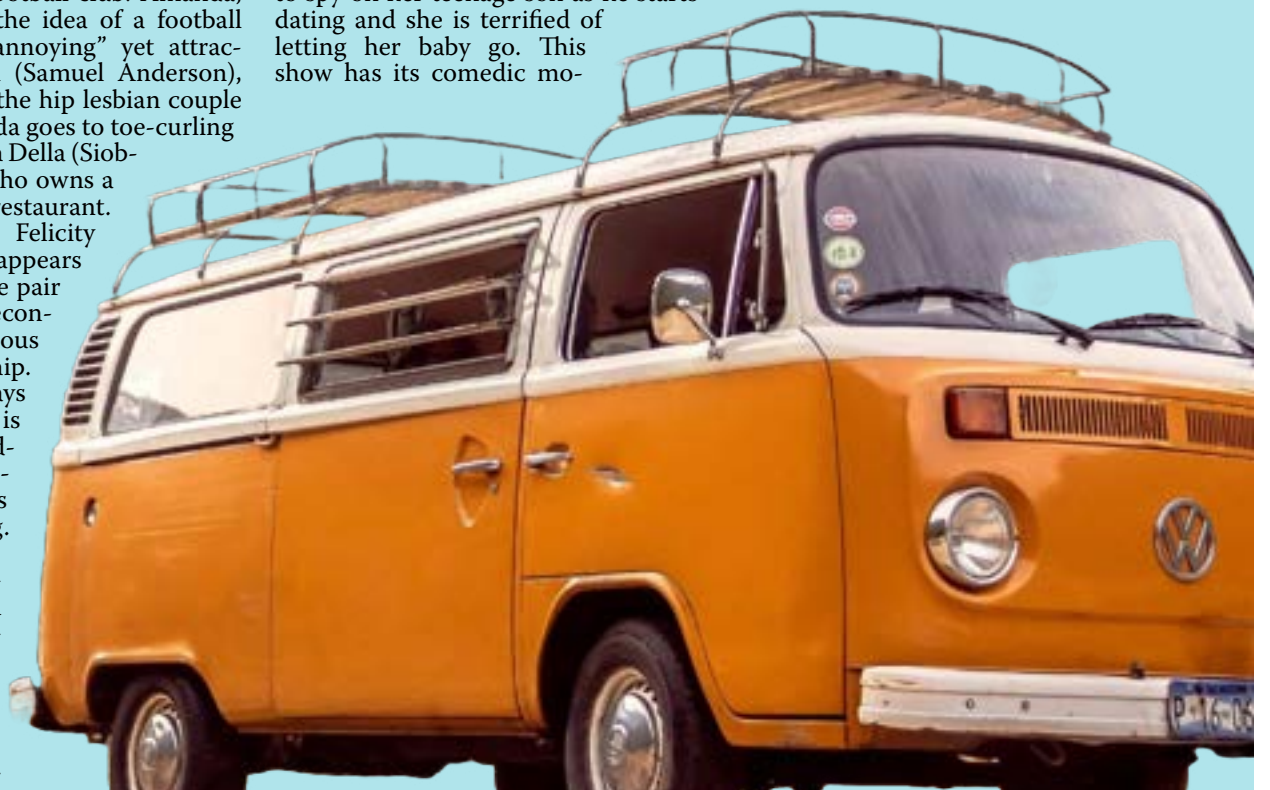
but ultimately encourage our sympathies.

Sadly, for *Motherland* fans there are no cameos of Julia, Kevin, or Liz, but Anne (Phillippa Dunne) is back and better than ever. Anne seems to have had a real make-over in this series; she is more fashion-forward and has an established group of parent pals at the football club. Amanda, originally loathing the idea of a football club run by her "annoying" yet attractive neighbour Mal (Samuel Anderson), joins to get in with the hip lesbian couple Della and Fi. Amanda goes to toe-curling lengths to get in with Della (Siobhan McSweeney), who owns a posh new swanky restaurant. Amanda's mother Felicity (Joanna Lumley) appears in this series and the pair seemed to have reconciled their previous fractured relationship. Felicity often stays with Amanda and is a very active grandparent while Amanda works and tries her hand at dating.

Amandaland certainly does not fall short of the humour of *Motherland* and Anne is probably the biggest comedic player in this series.

Anne's infectious excitability at having her bestie back is accompanied with the stress of having a teenager. Anne's funniest moment is when she sets up a maths camp to help the kids with their homework but ends up tearing her hair out at their inability to understand algebra. Also hilarious are the lengths to which she will go to spy on her teenage son as he starts dating and she is terrified of letting her baby go. This show has its comedic mo-

ments while also encompassing the real and uncomfortable parts of life. This show incorporates everything we loved about *Motherland*: the chaotic display of motherhood, friendship, and relationships but with a fresh new setting, new characters and a new outlook on our overbearing yet loveable Amanda.



THE TEAM



SCIENCE



Hannah Prince



Dan Gorst



Ruaidhri Gillen Lynch

ADHD: How Does Medication Help?

Olivia King
Contributor

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) has been defined by the World Health Organization as “a persistent pattern of inattention or hyperactivity/impulsivity that has a negative impact on daily functioning”. ADHD relates to issues in passing information from neurone to neurone in the brain, which affects attention, motivation, restlessness, and impulsivity.

The National Institute of Health and Care Excellence say that it affects around 5% of children in the UK and 3–4% of UK adults. However, it should be noted that these figures don't include those on waiting lists and in the process of being diagnosed. UCL research highlighted how diagnoses and prescriptions have increased significantly from 2000 to 2018. In absolute terms this increase was seen significantly in boys aged 10–16, with 1.4% in 2000 having a diagnosis rising to 3.5% in 2018. However, relatively, the largest increase in diagnoses was in men between the ages of 18–29 (0.01% to 0.56%). This increase in diagnoses and prescriptions could be due to the increased awareness of the neurodevelopmental disorder and new research emerging.

Yet the figures highlight the significantly lower number of women and girls being diagnosed, which links to inequality in data sets when ADHD criteria was made. Despite society having increased awareness surrounding ADHD, issues still remain, as ADHD has a lifetime impact. Those with the disorder have an increased risk of loss of life and are overrepresented in justice systems as both perpetrators and victims. The disorder can't be cured; however, there are ways to manage symptoms to improve daily functioning.

A mixture of modifications at work, peer support, talking therapies, and prescribed medication have proved to be beneficial. Medication may not be the right choice for everyone, yet it is seen as successful for eight out of ten people. ADHD medication works by helping aid the passing of messages along neurones in neurotransmission. Essentially, medication helps neurones “talk” to each other more efficiently.

Depending on the type of medication, this can mean speeding up or slowing down neurotransmission. Prescribers may fine-tune prescriptions, as these are dependent on the person; however, with the right medication for that person, this should

result in more focus and ease in processing and learning. Just like many other medications, ADHD medication has lots of potential side effects, with the most common being decreased appetite and trouble sleeping. Consultation with doctors is recommended throughout this process to make sure you are seeking the right care.



DEI Cuts to Adversely Affect Women and Minorities

Sienna Wilson
Contributor

More hours after taking the oath of office on the 20th of January and entering his second presidency, Donald Trump signed executive orders dismantling diversity initiatives and restructuring federal funding policies. Among his controversial directives, changes to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programmes and funding for scientific research have sparked widespread concern.

Trump claims: “We have ended the tyranny of so-called diversity, equity, and inclusion policies all across the entire federal government and, indeed, the private sector and our military, and our country will be woke no longer.” Federally-funded agencies and certain additional corporations receiving public funds have started to remove mentions of keywords related to DEI from their official materials and websites—screening for words such as “diversity”, “inclusion”, “women”, and “race”. The National Science Foundation (NSF), a key institution supporting scientific research, is now reviewing grant applications with stricter scrutiny. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) have also announced cuts to payments covering overhead costs for research institutions that receive DEI grants. These cuts could disproportionately impact researchers from underrepresented backgrounds who depend on these funding streams.

Beyond targeting DEI initiatives, Trump is also implementing changes to how the NIH allocates research funding. The

agency is capping how much large public funders of biomedical research pay for indirect costs at 15%, costs which cover essentials for medical research. This cut extends beyond the NIH to the NSF, which has historically weighed grant applications based on both their intellectual merit and their role in broadening the participation of underrepresented groups in science. Staff at the NSF are expecting layoffs of 25 to 50% over the next two months, and Trump's proposed new budget is set to cut funding by billions of dollars for their medical research. These cuts pose a threat to an extraordinary number of scientists, particularly women and ethnic minorities who already face barriers in securing funding. Julia Barnes, an anthropologist based in Tennessee who receives funding from the NSF, told the Council of Foreign Regulations: “The United States is not a stable place to be a scientist. Scientists funded by the NSF aren't paid a lot, but we care a lot about the research we do.”

While Trump's policies do not directly impact funding for medical research or DEI initiatives in the UK, they are already influencing corporate practices worldwide. As US companies scale back their DEI initiatives, their UK counterparts are doing the same. Deloitte, a notable audit and finance consultancy firm, have quietly removed their “core message” of delivering DEI across their company from their website. Google, Meta, and Amazon have all shifted away from the emphasis on a culture of inclusivity. A uni-student favourite, McDonald's, has also scrapped its inclusion practices, four years after launching a push for



more diversity in its ranks. Contrastingly, JP Morgan has stuck to its guns, maintaining the bank's commitment to working with black, Hispanic, and LGBTQ+ communities. This raises numerous important questions: Is DEI already so integrated into a company's framework, allowing these initiatives to become redundant? Will they continue to uphold diversity and inclusion without explicit policies in place? Or, was DEI largely performative—implemented to meet quotas and now quietly being abandoned in response to political pressure? Andrea Abrams, Executive Director of the progressive advocacy group Defending American Values Coalition, has voiced concern about the broader implications of DEI changes.

In a recent statement, she claimed: “President Trump's speech confirmed what we

already knew: He is intent on attacking all pathways to the American Dream that give all people the freedom to thrive in our nation and instead hoard opportunity for the privileged few. His baseless attacks on DEI are attacks on the promise of America, the promise that everyone should be able to build the life of their dreams without barriers standing in their way.”

As these policy shifts take effect, the scientific community, in the US and abroad, must navigate an uncertain landscape. The dismantling of DEI initiatives and cuts to funding does not just affect women and ethnic minorities—it threatens innovation, discovery and scientific progress itself.

Apple Cider Vinegar and Green Juices: Why Is Holistic Medicine so Appealing?

Hannah Prince
Head of Science

Like many others, I watched the new drama on Netflix titled *Apple Cider Vinegar*, a dramatisation of a real-life event in which a woman called Belle Gibson scammed millions of her Instagram followers into thinking that she managed to cure her (fake) brain cancer using holistic and natural methods. Belle Gibson is one of many influencers who advocate for holistic medicine and natural ways to cure various illnesses, and it got me thinking: Is holistic medicine actually a viable replacement for science-backed Western medicine, and why does it attract so many people? Before science as we know it was even around, people used naturally grown products to look after themselves.

Many cultures around the world still use it, particularly in Asian countries. Herbal medicine uses plants or plant extracts to treat illnesses and promote health, with each aspect of a plant from the roots to the leaves and flowers having different medicinal uses. Holistic medicine is a form of healing that focuses on every part of your life, from your diet to your spirit and mind, aiming to find a perfect balance, which in turn will heal you from your ailment.

This is one of the main reasons that some people are so attracted to it—because it has been used in many cultures for so many years. It has been around for longer than scientific Western medicine and, therefore, it must work—right?

To say it doesn't work would be inaccurate. Scientists will all agree that focusing on the food you put into your body and how you treat your body is vitally important in improving your health. Eating foods rich in certain vitamins and minerals will help to boost your immune system or strengthen your

organs and bones, reducing your chance of getting common infections and preventable illnesses. Reducing the amount of stress in your environment can help to minimise heart problems, and doing exercise helps support your heart health and various other organs in your body. So holistic methods of looking after yourself definitely have a place in medicine.

However, in the case of Belle Gibson, she claimed that she had been healed from a serious, non-preventable brain cancer using natural and holistic methods, and this is where many of the problems lie. With illnesses such as cancer, there is no evidence that natural methods of treatment are able to cure it. Cancer occurs when gene mutations in our cells interfere with the normal structure of our cells, causing them to grow out of control and not die in the usual life cycle of the cell. The only treatments that have been found by scientists to cure or reduce the spread of cancer cells are surgery, radiotherapy, or chemotherapy. Only 1 in 100,000 cancer patients have been thought to have got rid of cancer without any kind of therapy, meaning that it is incredibly rare for anyone to not need one of the three treatments listed above. Using holistic and natural treatments alongside Western medicine treatments for cancer can be beneficial, as improving your lifestyle will always benefit your body; however, scientists do not recommend abstaining from Western medicine practices to fight an illness such as cancer.

So why are so many people becoming attracted to it? There is a growing scepticism surrounding the medical industry, particularly in recent years where the medical industry has become increasingly capitalistic, profiting off ill people who require medicine. According to a recent survey conducted in the US, only 34% of respondents had confidence in the medical field, compared to 75% of respondents in the 1960s. Many medical companies pursue profits at the expense of their patients, and this decreases people's trust in the industry.

Additionally, holistic medicine is more accessible to people, as it is less expensive and it is easy to create medicinal products on your own with the wealth of information available on the internet for people to access.

Holistic medicine also offers remedies for a wide range of illnesses, since the key principle of holistic medicine is to focus less on the ailment itself and more on the overall well-being of the body. This, in the day of age where health and fitness influencers are all the rage, is incredibly attractive for some people.

In the digital world, where there are ever-changing trends and an enormous number of influencers attempting to sell you products or lifestyles, it is very easy to see why so many people are attracted to holistic methods. Influencers sell you the benefits but miss out any negatives, dusting over important information and persuading their audience to not conduct any of their own research. Holistic and natural medicinal practices are not something to ignore and can have many benefits to our lives; however, it is important to recognise that they should not always be used in place of Western medicine methods, but alongside it.

Beating the Midterm Flu: Tips and Tricks From a Third-Year Student

Surviving the midterm flu can be tough, especially when you are tired and burnt out from your various assignments and deadlines. However, these simple tips and tricks can help you power through and keep your immune system fighting.

Boosting your immune system

Instead of eating ready meals and pesto pasta (even though it is the best meal to exist), try to meal prep simple and nutritional meals at the beginning of the week, with lots of vegetables, protein and carbohydrates to save you time, money, and keep your immune system strong.

Bring water with you to the library to keep your body hydrated.

Don't pull an all-nighter studying for your exams and midterms. Instead, make sure you get into bed early so you get a good eight hours of sleep.

Use Herbal Remedies

If you catch a cold, use herbal remedies such as ginger, honey and garlic, alongside cold and flu medication, to help alleviate your sore throat and blocked nose. A nice cup of honey and ginger tea works miracles when you are feeling under the weather.



Keeping Curiosity in Science Alive for Younger Generations

Daniel Gorst
Science Editor

As a child, I was always curious about how the world around me worked, constantly pondering science questions: How can my body work if my atoms are 99% empty space? What would happen if I fell into a black hole? How do we know so little about brains when we all have one in our heads? Twenty years later, my fascination with science and my questioning mind has only grown as I become acutely aware of how little I actually know about the world and the science that governs all of our lives. However, in the last few months, through outreach activities I have been doing, I have been questioning something else: Where does this curiosity with science within children disappear to and why?

Teenagers seem increasingly uninterested in science, much preferring to burn paper in a Bunsen burner than carry out an experiment. Are there fundamental issues with how science is taught in schools that put kids off as they progress through their education? Or are there deeper issues in the science sector that make a career in science seem unattractive? As I am part of various initiatives to get children interested in chemistry, I have been taking part in outreach activities ranging from showing children the various colours in pens via a technique called chromatography, to fuelling a mini car using only hydrogen sourced from water. The shared reaction among the children has been fascination, curiosity, and interest.

However, fast forward a few years, and this wonder seems to vanish. Engaging a science class in a secondary school becomes a formidable feat, and most teenagers seem to no longer have any interest in atoms, the periodic table, or the structure of the brain. There are undoubtedly issues with the way science is taught to students,

with academic curriculums becoming outdated and lacking relevance to young people. There is also an over-reliance in GCSE and A-level sciences in memorising facts for exams, rather than actually developing a true interest in the subject. Rather than simply preparing students to pass another class test, we should be instilling an interest and curiosity in the sciences, making young people look at problems in the world as solvable and the science workplace as an environment where they will be appreciated and can be themselves without discrimination. Extensive research by the British Science Association over the course of five years on what 14-to-18-year-olds thought about science and its role in their lives highlighted some interesting considerations. The research showed that young people's connection to science became more polarised as they grew older, opting to either become strongly connected or completely uninterested.

The association suggested that part of the reason behind this, are the challenging problems that young people are faced with as they learn, such as mitigating climate change, with 45% of young people becoming increasingly worried about it as they learn more about science. Does this explain the polarisation, with those facing these problems, thinking they can help solve them by becoming connected with science, and those fearful of them, instead preferring to avoid the issues and allow others to solve them, becoming disinterested in science?

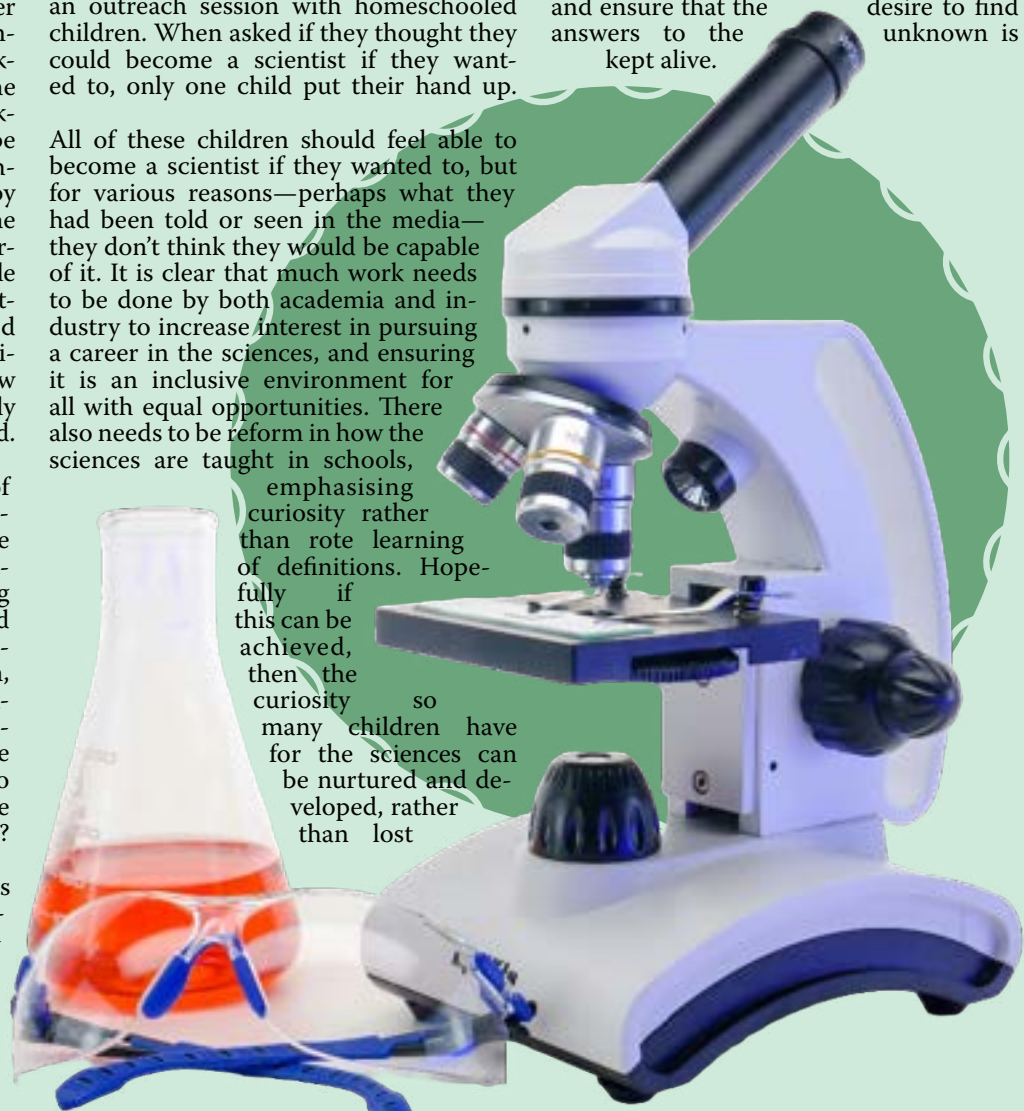
One of the most disheartening statistics was that only 12% of young people believed that scientists genuinely represented their views and values, and only 8% believed that scientists look like them, a clear and worrying sign that the sciences lack representation. This is exemplified by the lack of women in the sciences, as well as the lack of people

from minority ethnic backgrounds, with only 9% of chemistry professors in the UK being women, and less than 1% of chemistry professors in the UK identifying as black or mixed race. Another factor was demonstrated to me clearly in an outreach session with homeschooled children. When asked if they thought they could become a scientist if they wanted to, only one child put their hand up.

All of these children should feel able to become a scientist if they wanted to, but for various reasons—perhaps what they had been told or seen in the media—they don't think they would be capable of it. It is clear that much work needs to be done by both academia and industry to increase interest in pursuing a career in the sciences, and ensuring it is an inclusive environment for all with equal opportunities. There also needs to be reform in how the sciences are taught in schools,

emphasising curiosity rather than rote learning of definitions. Hopefully if this can be achieved, then the curiosity so many children have for the sciences can be nurtured and developed, rather than lost.

as they age. The future generations of scientists will have to solve some of the most complex problems that the world has ever faced. It is up to us to make sure that the brightest young minds are able to fully achieve what they are capable of and ensure that the answers to the unknown is kept alive.



Electric Vehicles and Heat Pumps in the UK by 2040

Ruaidhri Gillen Lynch
Science Editor

The Climate Change Committee's (CCC) "carbon budget" strategy proposes that by 2040, 80% of the vehicles on British roads must be electric, and half of the households should get rid of gas boilers in exchange for heat pumps. If accepted by the government, these recommendations become legally binding. However, the goals could be seen as too high, with only 2.8% of cars currently on the roads being electric and just 0.6% of homes being heated by heat pumps.

Domestic home energy use represents 14% of total UK emissions, while transport represented 26% in 2021. By switching to heat pumps and EVs, the UK can slash its emissions rates by targeting some of the biggest sectors, which would make our climb to the lofty net zero mark more attainable by 2050. However, the degree to which suggestions are realistic or even possible is debated. Presently, electric vehicles (EVs) cost about the same as petrol and diesel cars—and with further technological advancements on the horizon, those costs could decrease further. Heat pumps are still expensive; however, the CCC highlights that this has not prevented other countries from adopting them enthusiastically, like Ireland and Norway. In Norway, subsidies, cheap hydropower electricity, and a strong policy

against fossil fuel heating have aided this uptake of heat pumps. Meanwhile, the UK is stuck in a more mixed set of energy sources while simultaneously having some of the world's most expensive electricity thanks to marginal price costing and a less robust fiscal incentive. Whether the UK will follow in Norway and Ireland's footsteps depends on the force with which the government can successfully drive the transition. While heat pumps are more efficient than gas boilers, cutting heating bills by an estimated 27%, affordability poses a significant hurdle. Initial installation costs can exceed £10,000, so economically speaking, widespread adoption seems unlikely without decisive intervention from the government.

Switching to EVs brings additional infrastructure challenges. For one simple example, the UK would have to increase power generation by 25% to match the increasing demand. In practice, this would mean large ramp-ups in investment in renewables and an enormous expansion of the already incredibly outdated electrical grid. All of this while electrical storage capacity in the UK is also miles from ready for this increase. Hinkley Point C, a symbol of the UK's effectiveness in large infrastructure projects, has had a large series of postponements for completion and activation. At the same time, BP, the leading UK supplier of EV charging points, has recently walked away from its climate commitments. This highlights is-



ues for the government in reaching these goals. When this process relies so heavily on cooperation from the private sector, the government will be required to implement substantial incentives for the process to be economically viable for the private sector.

The other issue is public acceptance. Surveys tell us many UK drivers still cite range fear and lack of charging points as crucial reasons for hesitating to switch to EVs. Even with improving battery technology and potential cost reductions, with future

LFP batteries on the way, slow recharge times and a patchy distribution system remain primary considerations, whether justifiably or not, in the consumer's mind and, therefore, stand as a social wall to be addressed. If the government chooses to accept these recommendations, it will have to bring great economic incentives to the market, great messaging to the populace and great deals to the private sector, on whom they will deeply rely for much of the progress needed to meet these goals.

THE TEAM



SPORT



Aimee Szulczewski



Grace D'Souza



Lily Zeeuw

Bluebirds Soar Into Welsh Cup Semifinals with Dominant 4–0 Win

Grace D'Souza
Sport Editor

On Sunday the 16th of February, Cardiff City took on Barry Town in the Quarter Finals of the Bute Energy Welsh Cup at the Cardiff International Sports Stadium. The Bluebirds had taken on Barry Town twice in the Genero Adran Premier Season beating them 3–0 at home and 3–1 away. Cardiff City currently hold the title and are also looking to win the league. After being knocked out of the Adran Trophy 1–0 by The New Saints in December it was clear that Cardiff City had to beat Barry Town.

The attendance at the stadium was very low but the diehard Cardiff City fans were singing away at the top of their lungs. Due to this fixture being a cup match there were no ball girls, so I became a part-time ball girl while writing my match report and taking photos. It is never a dull day when covering the mighty Bluebirds!

The Cardiff City defence was very strong despite numerous counter

attacks in the first five minutes. In the 8th minute Cardiff City had a corner which was taken well by Price, but the Bluebirds couldn't find the back of the net. A poor ball by Barry Town gave the Bluebirds a chance to counter and in the 13th minute Fiona Barry put Cardiff City ahead with a super strike. Barry Town were desperate for an equaliser and made some very aggressive tackles on the Bluebirds. In the 25th minute, Cardiff had a free kick, which found the head of the Bluebirds' Number 6 Megan Bowen, and went just over the crossbar. She played a fantastic first half despite the linesman making a poor decision and giving Barry Town a throw, nearly leading to an equaliser in the 41st minute just before half-time.

At half-time the score was 1–0.

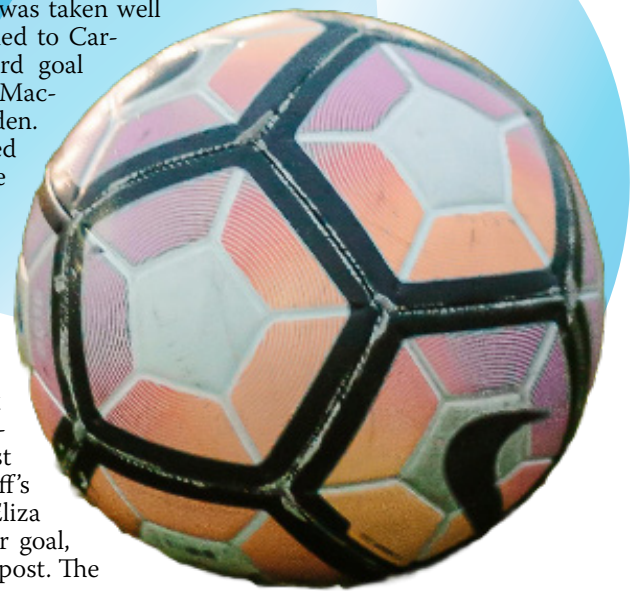
The Bluebirds kicked off the second half and Number 14 Shannon Evans took a great shot, but Barry Town's goalkeeper made a phenomenal save. It would have been an excellent goal to give the 2–0 lead. In the 55th minute Mackenzie Olden went for goal but once again

Barry Town's goalkeeper made a great save. Cardiff City were knocking on the door and in the 64th minute Molly Kehoe scored the second goal for the Bluebirds assisted by Mackenzie Olden.

Barry Town were getting very frustrated with their Number 8 Danielle Brown getting yellow-carded after a dangerous tackle on Molly Kehoe in the 68th minute. The free kick was taken well by Price and led to Cardiff City's third goal scored by Mackenzie Olden. Barry looked very tired; the passes they made were poor and incomplete. Cardiff City were not finished yet their attack was powerful. In the 81st minute Cardiff's Number 39 Eliza Collie goes for goal, but it hits the post. The

ball went out for a corner taken by Price which found Laura Curnock and gave Cardiff a 4–0 victory. The full-time score was 4–0!

The semifinal draw will take place on Wednesday where Cardiff City will potentially play The New Saints, Wrexham, or Pontypridd on Sunday 16th of March.



Wales vs. England: Can the Underdogs Break the Streak?

Luke James
Contributor

On Super Saturday, the most important match in Wales' Six Nations campaign goes ahead. A resurgent side, under temporary head coach Matt Sherratt of Cardiff Rugby, Wales will battle an England side full of confidence and power. Having beaten Italy emphatically, alongside taking dogged wins over the Scots and French, Steve Borthwick's side are, to the naked eye at least, clear favourites. But what should a realistic expectation look like for this weekend?

Firstly, let's look at the breakdown. England's main breakdown threats are Maro Itoje, Ben Earl, and Tom Curry. All three are highly effective jackals, as well as superb at securing their own ball. Alongside them, the likes of Will Stuart and Ellis Genge are so important to clearing potential steals, and their workrate is incredible. All this culminates in a quick ball, so that the first receiver can start the dynamic backline running. Marcus Smith and Fin Smith are both perfect at this. Both have their own take on how they execute this play, but it ends with very, very similar results—beautiful tries.

Take, for example, the Tommy Freeman score against Italy. A well-worked, intelligent play from a rapid backline, as well as handy kicking from Elliot Daly. Furthermore, England's scrum is one of the most solid in the Northern Hemisphere, a proper threat if not well matched. Both Fin Smith and Marcus Smith are accurate off the tee, and both their styles of play can beat some of the best.



When England have Fin Smith marshalling them, they play very similar to Northampton Saints, a lot of high kicking (with quite a bit from scum half Alex Mitchell), and dynamic interplay. When under Marcus Smith, England look a lot more like Harlequins, with more of a running style, less kicking and far more quick ball from set pieces (like the scrum) to gain meterage.

But how does this compare to Wales? The boys in red are certainly the underdogs. This will be their third (and final) match under Matt Sherratt, who was brought in to replace the failing and outdated style of play Warren Gatland forced his side to use.

Wales look far more motivated now than they did at the start of this campaign. Although they are still yet to break their six-match losing streak, there is always a

chance. Signs of improvement were immediate in the Ireland fixture, taking the current champions all the way to the end, and against Scotland, although suffering a messy first half, they were on fire in the second. Blair Murray for me was the standout player, and a potential British and Irish Lions shout if he continues his form.

Wales' scrum is solid, if not occasionally misguided, and their breakdown work isn't too shabby. Kicking accuracy both on and off the tee is what will make the mark. If Gareth Anscombe kicks too far or too narrow like he did in the first half against Scotland, it will give England too much of an attacking platform. Wales need to be resilient, smart, and keep their cool if they want a chance to win. Their attack in fractured and broken play has similarities to both France and Italy, a bit of flair and flamboyance that we haven't seen in

a while. Wales also need to keep their discipline in check and not commit silly mistakes. Any kind of card could be fatal.

So, who will take the victory, and what will it mean for the final standings? Well firstly, England have to win (and Scotland have to beat France) in order to have a chance of winning the title, and a four-try bonus point would be highly preferable. If Wales managed to win or score at least a four-try bonus point and a losing bonus point (provided Italy claim no points when they face Ireland), they would jump to fifth in the standings, avoiding the wooden spoon.

Now here's where I make the big call, who do I believe will win? The key part of that phrase is "will". To me, it would be incredibly poetic for Wales to break their losing run by beating England at home, and I could for sure see it happen. But will it? England, although having piled on the tries against Italy, were not totally comfortable at points, especially in broken play. However, is this enough to say Wales will win because they can capitalise on the broken play? No. My most "realistic" prediction is that England will win 35–24, but as a neutral I'd love to see some drama. It's so sad to see the Six Nations end once more, but this match sure will prove why we love it so much.

Wales vs. England is being played in Principality Stadium, in Cardiff on Saturday, with its kickoff at 16:45. The match will be shown on BBC 1 and BBC iPlayer.