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Campaign for an **E**nglish **P**arliament

Think of England Number 101: March 2020



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Number 101 March 2020

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Campaign for an English Parliament Aims, Principles and Policies.

We campaign for an English Parliament, meaning a parliament for the people of England, for whom England is their chosen or inherited home and who are legally entitled to vote.

We campaign for an English Parliament with powers at least as great as those of Scotland's, i.e. a Parliament and Executive (Government) that can make Acts (primary legislation) on the same domestic issues (e.g. health, welfare & education) that are devolved to the Scottish Parliament.

The CEP works with academics, business groups, trades unions, think tanks and the media to create the conditions whereby UK MPs see that there is no alternative to the re-establishment of the English Parliament.

The CEP is a pressure group. It is not a political party. It does not contest elections.

The CEP is not and will not be affiliated to or formally linked with any political party

Editorial: Age UK comments on the crisis of social care in England. What it doesn't tell is that within its organisation is Age Wales, Age Scotland and Age Northern Ireland but no Age England. Why so and how are its funds allocated?



Scotland and Wales abolished hospital car park fees 10 years ago, were they hit with huge VAT bills?

The North/South divide as the only economic division in England is a myth. One wonders if it has been talked up to cause distrust and disharmony within England. Will the 'Greater South West' attract anything like the funds and political interest given to the Northern Powerhouse?

Business rates are retained by the rUK but in England they go to central government for distribution throughout the UK. Will the Land Value Tax be available locally or sucked into the UK treasury?

Why did the hypocritical antics of the SNP only appear in the Scottish edition of the Times? We are not allowed to influence funding of their NHS why do they think they should influence ours? We know why it is because they want to ensure they get as much as they can from the UK government and English taxpayers in the Barnett bung. Andrew Holdenby fails to make the connection that we need a first minister for England or even just a minister devoted to English matters in his article on Johnson's reported grab for control of the English Health Service. Moreover what does that say about the much vaunted 'devolution' for England?

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Campaigning for England: English identity can matter more than money

January 8 2020, The Times: James Kirkup, director of the Social Market Foundation:

For all that laudable focus on productivity gaps, no clever initiatives devised in the Treasury will be enough to solve what is as much a political and cultural problem as an economic one. The conventional wisdom is that 2016's Brexit vote and the 2019 election result were largely delivered by disaffected Labour voters in "left-behind" places whose wealth has fallen farther and farther behind that of the capital.

Here's something that matters to a lot of people in the "left-behind" places that Westminster wants to help yet is barely mentioned in politics: England. About a third of the 55 million people in England define themselves as either "English not British" or "more English than British", yet the nation that matters to them is

scarcely discussed by their leaders who mainly talk of "Britain" and "the UK". If you want to address the political disaffection felt in parts of England you must reflect on how a sizeable number of people live in — and value — a country that their leaders do not even talk about.

Partly that reticence is about sensitivity to Scottish nationalism and the Union. Partly it's because Englishness is seen as retrograde and even racist, whereas Britishness can be inclusive, multicultural and even cool. Yet as John Denham, the former Labour minister now charting Englishness rightly notes, reality is more complicated: "There are plenty of liberal English people and socially conservative British."

People who value their Englishness are more likely than others to have voted Leave, more likely to identify strongly with their region or town and more likely to live in the poor and poorly connected places that gave the Tories their majority last month. Levelling up with investment in the north won't resolve the cultural disconnect in the provinces

As well as offering those people new bypasses, bridges and high-tech industries, the prime minister could usefully start a debate about England, the English and the way politics works for them. That might mean more devolution — working closely with English city mayors should be a priority for Boris Johnson — but this should be about more than policy responses. It's about people's ideas of themselves, nebulous concepts that need a cultural and intellectual response, not a bureaucratic one.

Englishness is a slippery concept. It is blurred by overlaid Britishness: when John Major spoke of old maids cycling to Holy Communion in the morning mist as the essence of Britain, he was misquoting Orwell, who wrote those words about England.

For several million people, many living in seats that decide elections, "England" is important. Some in politics find that inconvenient but those people are not going away and recent history suggests that politicians ignoring their concerns leads to turmoil and rupture.

Despite the shocks of recent years, politics has done a pretty bad job of acknowledging the obvious truth that there is more to life than money. Identity, place and nation matter too. Answering the questions posed by England and the English is just as important, and difficult, as solving our productivity problems.

Current English Affairs:

Health and Welfare.

Doctors to be given £20,000 for taking over local surgeries

Friday February 07 2020, The Times: Chris Smyth, Whitehall Editor:

Efforts to hire more have been hampered by younger doctors' reluctance to become full-time owners of surgeries but, in an effort to tie them in for the long term, all new GP partners will be eligible for £20,000 bonuses plus help with training. Under a deal struck yesterday between NHS England and the British Medical Association, £1.5 billion of a £4.5 billion pot allocated for primary care will be allocated to encourage GPs to stay in the NHS.

A shortage of GPs is one of the most pressing problems facing the NHS (*England*), with numbers falling even as the government has repeatedly promised more. Recently Boris Johnson pledged to boost numbers by 6,000.

Thousands more pharmacists, physiotherapists and dieticians will be recruited as the NHS (*England*) plans to boost an "army" of support staff to 26,000.

Care home residents have been promised weekly visits from surgery staff as part of government efforts to boost local care and keep elderly people out of hospital.

Care help denied to 700,000 elderly in system 'under siege'

Friday February 07 2020, The Times: Greg Hurst, Social Affairs Editor



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In about three quarters of cases frail and elderly people were told that they did not meet local thresholds to qualify for support, which many local authorities have restricted as they struggle with reduced budgets. Others were left waiting for councils to assess their needs.

Meanwhile the number of hours of informal care by spouses or other family members or friends increased from an estimated 6.4 billion hours in 2005 to 7.9 billion hours in 2016, the ONS said. Figures also show that families are increasingly being forced to subsidise care home costs.

Len Hales, 84, from Cradley Heath in the West Midlands, was refused support for caring for his wife Jean, 83, who has one kidney, requires twice weekly dialysis, has a heart problem and another health condition, as their local authority decided he was able to cope without help. Mr Hales, a former financial adviser, had to wait for seven years until the council decided his wife qualified when she was taken to hospital and doctors refused to discharge her unless a care plan was in place that gave the couple help at home. A carer now visits twice a day to get Mrs Hales up and ready for bed.



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Pensions SOS: even the rich won't have enough for care fees

Sunday February 16 2020, The Sunday Times: Katherine Denham

Rishi Sunak, the new chancellor, is under pressure to tackle the gulf between income and costs for the elderly. Money analysis reveals that sSavers who hit the £1.055m lifetime cap on money in a pension will not have enough income to pay for the cost of one year's social care. And experts are warning that higher earners will also fall short of the cash required — because people who move up the career ladder and suddenly have plenty of money to save will be limited to putting £10,000 a year into a pension.

High demand is pushing up the price of care, and annuity rates are at record lows, yet the pensions system is failing to keep up with the changes. In order for a local council to foot the bill for your care, your total assets (*in England*) have to be worth less than £23,250.

A report last week from Care [England](#) said that councils were short-changing private care homes by paying them £10,000 less a year per resident than state-run homes. The concern is that people who pay for their own care are subsidising state-funded residents through higher fees.

According to Age UK, 1.4 million people do not receive the care they need. “Far too many older people are struggling without the care they need, or watching with horror as their hard-earned money disappears into sky high care bills,” said Caroline Abrahams, charity director at Age UK. “We need a national, government-backed scheme that we all contribute to throughout our lives, and that means decent care will be there for us if we need it in old age.”

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Hospitals face free parking VAT shock

Sunday February 23 2020, The Sunday Times: David Byers, Assistant Money Editor

Cash-strapped NHS hospitals may be landed with “massive” unexpected tax bills after Boris Johnson’s pledge to provide patients with free parking, accountants have warned.

From April 1, all 206 hospital trusts in England will be required to start rolling out charge-free parking provision to people with “greatest need”, such as the disabled, frequent outpatients and NHS staff on night shifts. Hospitals would then be expected to extend free parking more widely in subsequent years. Parking charges have become a lucrative source of income for hospitals in recent years. Trusts made £254m from parking fees in 2018-19 — up 10% on the previous year. However, Sunday Times Money can reveal that, in addition to the blow of losing the ability to make money from parking, trusts are likely to face a tax bombshell because of the impact of a little-known HM Revenue & Customs rule.

Hospitals across the country have been claiming back VAT from the taxman on any refurbishment or maintenance works they have undertaken on car parks, under HMRC’s “capital goods” scheme. Under the scheme, VAT remains claimable as long as a hospital keeps its car park as a commercial enterprise for the following decade. To qualify it must continue to take payments from the public.

But if during that 10-year period the car park stops being a commercial enterprise — if it is made free to park there, for example — the hospital will be hit with a bill for VAT.

Scott Harwood, a tax director at accountancy firm RSM, said those bills could turn out to be “massive”. Harwood gives the example of an NHS trust that spent £5m upgrading its parking facilities in 2018, with £1m of VAT relief claimed. If charge-free parking is offered from this year, the trust would have to repay HMRC more than £800,000.

Charging for parking at NHS hospitals in Scotland and Wales was abolished in 2008.

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## **Poor areas lose a decade to deprivation**

Tuesday February 25 2020, 12.01am, The Times: Katie Gibbons

England has “lost a decade” to health inequalities in the country’s most deprived areas, with life expectancy stalling for the first time in more than 100 years, a damning report finds today.

Women living in deprived areas across the country are dying earlier than they did ten years ago, according to expert analysis. People in areas in the northeast have experienced the most significant decline.

Pressure is mounting on the government to address the disparities urgently in next month’s budget and make good the prime minister’s pledge to “level up” spending on health, schools, local government services, social care and support for poor families.

Sir Michael Marmot, author of the study, said: “England has lost a decade . . . If health has stopped improving, then society has stopped improving.”

Matt Hancock, the health secretary, said: “Every single one of us, no matter who we are, where we live, or our social circumstances, deserves to lead a long and healthy life. The ultimate goal of the NHS is to increase healthy life expectancy, and this government is determined to narrow the gap by levelling up access to healthcare across England.”



## The Environment.

### **Building on the flood plain? Just make the ground floor a garage**

Tuesday February 25 2020, 12.01am, The Times: Ben Webster, Environment Editor | Neil Johnston

Thousands of homes must be built on flood plains but the ground floor should be a garage, the chief executive of the Environment Agency has said.

Sir James Bevan will call today for the UK to prepare for a “weather bomb” from climate change. “We cannot ban all development in the flood plain; it is where most of our towns and cities are,” he will say. But properties needed to be flood resilient, “for example with garages on the ground floor and the people higher up”. Defences were not possible for all communities, so there needed to be “a second, parallel, track” emphasising resilience — so that “when it does happen [flooding] poses much less risk to people, does much less damage, and life can get back to normal much quicker”.



About 20,000 homes have been built since 2009 in areas of England at risk and where there are no flood defences, according to the Bright Blue think tank. The councils hit hardest by this winter’s floods are planning 11,410 new homes in flood-prone areas, according to analysis by Greenpeace.



## Transport.

### **Bus cuts turn rural areas into ‘transport deserts**

Monday February 10 2020, The Times: Harry Shukman, Countryside Correspondent | Will Humphries

A study by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) found that 56 per cent of small towns in the southwest and northeast of England were “transport deserts” or on the verge of becoming one, with residents unable to get around without driving.

Buses are the most popular form of public transport and account for more journeys than all other types combined. However, almost £400 million of local and national government funding has been cut, causing hundreds of services to be reduced in frequency or scrapped, and leading to fare increases of 63 per cent in real terms.

It takes 54 per cent longer for people in small towns to get to their doctor’s surgery by public transport than residents of large towns, the report said.

Ilminster in Somerset, which has about 6,000 residents, was named by the CPRE as one of the worst towns in the southwest for public transport. On weekdays only two buses leave Ilminster for the county town of Taunton before 9am and after that there is about a 90-minute gap between buses until the final return service departs at 6.10pm. There is no bus service to Taunton at the weekend and no bus at all to Yeovil, 15 miles away. “It costs £7.10 for a return to Taunton but it doesn’t cost that in fuel for a car,” Alnwick in Northumberland was named by the report as one of the worst towns in the northeast for public transport. Residents have long complained about poor services — the railway station shut down in 1968 and the nearest alternative is in Alnmouth, more than four miles away.

Jane Gerrard, 49, a waitress in Alnwick, population 8,000, said: “It is very hard to get around without a car. The long wait between buses is terrible. There are no good buses at night and we can’t go out in Newcastle and get home late. It’s three changes to get to the nearest main hospital at Cramlington.”

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Grant Shapps, the transport secretary, announced a £500 million fund last week to resurrect railway lines axed during the Beeching cuts of the 1960s. Crispin Truman, CPRE's chief executive, called for a dedicated rural transport fund. He said: "It is clear that, outside of England's major cities, communities are being left high and dry in ever-widening 'transport deserts'. This is having dramatic effect on rural communities. Young people are compelled to move away and older people are left isolated and lonely."



### £5bn fund to transform towns in boost for cycling and bus travel

February 11 2020, The Times: Graeme Paton, Transport Correspondent | Francis Elliott, Political Editor  
Bus use has suffered a sharp decline, accounting for just 4 per cent of all journeys last year compared to 42 per cent in the early 1950s, according to figures from the Department for Transport.

The drop coincides with a sharp rise in bus fares and a reduction in subsidies for the bus industry. In all, total government funding for buses stood at £2 billion last year, down from £2.9 billion a decade ago. The £1 billion-a-year upgrade for every region outside London will lead to cheaper fares as well as more frequent and greener services, the prime minister will say today. It will also be announced today that councils will receive a share of the funds to improve local transport connections. More than 250 miles of new segregated cycle lanes will be built across England under government plans to reduce car dependency in towns and cities.

However, the bulk of the £5 billion funding over five years announced today is expected to be spent on buses. The government said that cash would be spent on measures including higher frequency services, including those at evenings and weekends. It also wants more "turn up and go" routes, similar to those in London, where passengers do not have to rely on infrequent timetables.

In a controversial move, the government also hinted at an increase in the number of bus lanes where private cars can be fined £60 for driving at set times. It said that "new priority schemes will make routes more efficient, so that buses avoid congested routes and can speed passengers through traffic".

### Economics

#### Levelling up is not just about the north

Sunday February 16 2020, The Sunday Times: Peter Evans

Building a business outside a recognised hub can be tough. Last week, The Sunday Times published the inaugural KPMG Best Places for Business supplement, listing the top 20 cities and towns in Britain for fast-growing companies. Among the locations were international powerhouses such as London and Edinburgh, along with rapidly evolving hotspots such as Leeds and Manchester.

But what of the places that did not make the list? Before his shock resignation as chancellor last week, Sajid Javid repeatedly promised to "level up" the economy by boosting the regions. If his successor, Rishi Sunak, is to pursue a similar agenda, the towns and cities that have been left behind will require the most attention. Places such as Barnstaple — not to mention Gloucester, Plymouth and Portsmouth — struggle with poor infrastructure, lack of investment in their centres and low retention of skilled workers to boost growing companies.

While projects such as the Northern Powerhouse have started to deliver results for the big conurbations in the north of England, there is a growing fear that a tier of towns in other parts of the country will be left behind as the Tories try to satisfy the voters who handed Boris Johnson victory in December's general election.

"It poses a risk for places in the south that don't do well," said Paul Swinney, a director of the think tank Centre for Cities. "There is a question about whether they get overlooked."

Focusing on certain parts of the country also risks undermining those places that have performed strongly, Swinney added, because cities require constant investment to keep functioning. "The challenge for their economies is not about getting growth going, it's about dealing with the cost of success." For instance attracting workers — both graduates and experienced professionals — with the skills to take companies to the next stage of growth. London, Edinburgh and Manchester can be cripplingly expensive, but firms open offices in these places because they offer access to the best talent.

Experts say a thriving city centre is a significant factor in attracting companies and workers. Councils play a big part: cities such as Sunderland and Coventry have moved much of their local government workforce into buildings in the centre, improving footfall for retailers and custom for pubs and restaurants.

Companies based outside the economic hubs are finding innovative ways to attract staff. Applegate em-

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employs 35 people, including nine apprentices, all of whom are working towards a degree-level qualification in management. The apprentices are offered up to £10,000 towards a house deposit if they can match the funding. This year there were 284 applicants for three places. Such perks help persuade young workers to stay in the area and support those unable to afford university.



Middlesbrough, which has struggled for decades to find a replacement for its steel industry, is attempting to reinvent itself as a digital hub. Its mayor, former hedge fund boss Andy Preston, has proposed a £250m tech campus he said would create thousands of jobs. The first £30m of funding has been pledged by the Tees Valley Combined Authority and Middlesbrough Council. Middlesbrough is, at least nominally, part of the Northern Powerhouse. The success of the programme is debatable, but it has put the cities of the north high up Whitehall's agenda. However, business owners in the south say they have suffered from being lumped in as part of a prosperous bloc dominated by London. In reality, the coastal towns of Devon and Dorset and the former mining communities of Cornwall are among the most deprived in Britain, yet many politicians still talk of a north-south divide as if there were a neat distinction between the two.

The Great South West is an attempt to build a southern answer to the Northern Powerhouse. The initiative claims £45bn of economic growth could be generated for Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset through a focus on sustainability and the "marine economy". MPs have requested £2m in the budget to start the programme — and had been hopeful of receiving it before Javid's resignation.

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Education

The number of permanent exclusions has reached its highest point in nearly a decade

Sunday February 16 2020, The Sunday Times: Sharon Hendry

More than 40 children a day are now being banned from state schools in England. Last month, a government watchdog found that children excluded from school faced a heightened risk of exploitation by "county lines" gangs, who recruit youngsters to transport and sell drugs to rural areas and are responsible for fuelling high levels of knife crime. A report by Anne Longfield, the children's commissioner, last year estimated that 27,000 children in England identified as a gang member.

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### Taxing England

#### **Inflation-busting council tax increase for most properties**

Friday February 21 2020, The Times: Steven Swinford, Deputy Political Editor

Council tax will rise by an above-inflation average of £70 for nine in ten large local authorities in April.

The increase of 4 per cent, more than double the 1.8 per cent rate of inflation, will be made by 116 local authorities out of the 133 that have responsibility for social care, a survey by the County Councils Network (CCN) found.

The average bill for a band D property will rise by £70. Bills for band D properties will cross the £2,000 threshold in Wealden and Lewes in East Sussex, Hartlepool, Newark and Sherwood in Nottinghamshire, Dorset, Nottingham and Rutland. Despite the increases, councils said that they face a £19.1 billion funding gap by 2025 and would be under pressure to cut services such as meals on wheels, youth centres and Sure Start education centres.

Children's services and education are said to be the areas under greatest pressure for local authorities along with parks and leisure, roads, libraries, and waste collection.

There is also a significant regional disparity. An analysis by The Times found that homeowners in the north pay up to 30 times more in council tax than those in the south relative to the value of their property. The analysis found that 80 per cent of the most expensive band D council tax rates are in the north or Midlands, while 84 per cent of the cheapest are in London and the southeast. There are no northern towns or cities in the cheapest 25 areas and only two in the Midlands.

Mr Williams said: "County residents shoulder an unfair burden compared to those who live in the cities and the capital, paying rates at double what some inner London councils are able to charge, due to more generous funding for the capital.

"The government's fair funding review could help correct these funding imbalances and we are committed to working with ministers to ensure that the review is implemented next year.

During the election, the Conservative Party committed to providing an extra £1 billion a year in funding for social care, as well as a commitment to seek cross-party consensus for long-term reform.

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### **Rishi Sunak budget: Tories ‘to save high street’ with land tax to replace business rate**

February 22 2020, The Times: Steven Swinford, Deputy Political Editor, Oliver Wright, Policy Editor

The Conservatives will consider radical plans to scrap business rates and replace them with a land value tax in a bid to save struggling high streets.

In his first budget Rishi Sunak, the chancellor, will announce a “fundamental” review of the business rates system amid concerns that it is penalising high street retailers. The current system of business rates is based on shop rental values and is calculated every five years. The levy is paid by tenants, rather than landowners. It is viewed as outdated because companies that need a presence in town centres pay higher rates than online and out-of-town rivals.

The review will examine proposals for a tax on the land rather than buildings based on its “permitted planning” use, meaning that farmland would face a lower levy than developed areas. The tax would be levied on landlords, delivering a potential tax cut for hundreds of thousands of small businesses which rent premises.

The tax brings in about £30 billion a year, making it the sixth biggest contributor to Treasury coffers, and is viewed by the government as easy to collect and hard to avoid. Rates have become an increasingly important source of funding for local authorities.



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### **English politics: Speak no Evil: SNP protest over block on health votes**

Wednesday February 05 2020, 12.01am, The Times: Elizabeth Arnold

SNP MPs led a Commons protest after they were prevented from voting on NHS funding proposals which they argued concerned people in Scotland.

In one of the voting lobbies they held up signs which said “Speak no Evil”, “See no Evil” and “Hear no Evil” — a reference to the English votes for English laws (Evel) procedure, which was in effect as amendments to the NHS Funding Bill were considered.

Only MPs representing English constituencies could take part as health is a devolved matter. Liz Saville Roberts, Plaid Cymru’s Westminster leader, was among those pictured with the SNP MPs, with their action delaying the announcement of the vote result.

Dame Eleanor Laing, the deputy speaker, said members did not have a right to vote on such matters if their constituencies were not in England, adding that “the number I have announced to the house and upon which I will rely from the chair is the number of members who have a right to vote on this matter”.

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### **It’s a bad idea to run the NHS from Downing Street**

February 11 2020, The Times: Andrew Haldenby co-founder of HW, a public services consultancy

The present arrangements do not allow No 10 Downing Street to “impose its will”. Instead, proposed legislation will make the 250 hospitals, 8,000 GP surgeries and 1.3 million staff that make up the English NHS look to Mr Johnson for their direction.

Any prime minister would be forgiven for this line of thinking. Opinion polls rank the NHS as the first or second most important issue in the minds of voters. Meanwhile the opposition lays every local problem at the government’s door. In these circumstances, taking a firmer grip no doubt feels like a natural step.

The central grip can lead to paralysis, however energetic No 10’s staff may be. The sheer scale of the NHS simply defies the management of any central body. And Downing Street is not simply interested in health: there are a myriad competing demands and distractions for a prime minister.

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### **Clean air for all: Ban on most polluting household fires**

Friday February 21 2020, 12.01am, The Times: Ben Webster, Environment Editor

Wood-burning stoves and coal fires are the single largest source of fine particles, which are the most dangerous form of air pollution because their microscopic size allows them to penetrate deep into the lungs and enter the bloodstream.

The sale of bags of coal and wet wood for domestic fires will be banned in **England** from February next year under plans to remove a huge source of air pollution. Coal merchants will be banned from delivering loose coal to homes from February 2023. From February next year, sales of wet wood will be permitted only in loads of at least two cubic metres for drying at home. Emissions from wet wood, which has a moisture content higher than 20 per cent, are at least twice as high as from kiln-dried or seasoned wood. George Eustice, the environment secretary said people needed to switch to cleaner fuels, such as wood

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that had been kiln-dried to below 20 per cent moisture; wood left for at least two years to air dry; and coal-based fuel with low smoke and sulphur emissions. New rules on manufactured solid fuels will require producers to prove they have a very low sulphur content and emit only very little smoke. The coal industry says that it will increase the fuel bills for tens of thousands of homes that rely on coal because alternative “smokeless” fuels are up to twice as expensive.

### House of Lords expenses spiral out of control

Sunday February 23 2020, The Sunday Times: Tom Calver, Rosamund Urwin  
Peers paid themselves almost one-third more last year just as the size of the House of Lords is set to swell to its largest in two decades.

Analysis by The Sunday Times found that the cost of peers’ expenses and daily attendance allowance rose by 29% in the year to last March to £23m.

- The average tax-free payment was £30,827, higher than the median salary of a UK worker, while 31 lords claimed more in expenses than the standard take-home pay of an MP
  - Peers are to receive an above average pay rise of 3.1%, taking their daily payment for attending to £323
- More than 110 peers did not make any spoken or written contribution to the House during the period, but claimed a total of more than £1m.

Peers are paid a daily rate of £313 tax-free for signing in and certifying that they are carrying out parliamentary work, and can receive travel expenses for themselves and family members. This is despite the prime minister previously saying that the House of Lords — which at the time had just over 800 peers — was so large that it was “out of control”, and its numbers should be cut in half.

Even its own members believe the Lords is too large. In 2017, members agreed to endorse a report from the Lord Speaker’s committee which recommended capping the size of the House to a maximum of 600 members. “This job could be done by about half of the current number of peers,” said Baroness D’Souza, 75, formerly the Lord Speaker, who added that “550 to 600 at the most could not only do it, but man all the committees, while remaining a full-time house with a part-time membership — which means members bring expertise from their work back into the House”.

Johnson is now exploring plans to scrap the House of Lords and replace it with an upper chamber that gives a voice to “the nations and regions”. He is also considering moving the chamber to York.

### Silent lords: the peers who don’t speak but claim their allowance

They are the silent — but costly — peers. About one in seven members of the Lords made no spoken or written contributions to the House in the year to March 2019. 98 silent members did not sit on any committees.

Some of the high claimers attribute their expenses to commuting from Scotland, a journey for which they are allowed to fly business class.

### Come on, PM. The House of Lords must go

Sunday February 23 2020, The Sunday Times: Mick Hume

On March 19, 1649, amid the turmoil of the English Civil War and the execution of Charles I, the House of Commons passed an act of parliament. “[We find] by too long experience that the House of Lords is useless and dangerous to the people of England,” it declared. With that, the Lords was abolished.

As we approach the 371st anniversary of that historic act of abolition, the House of Lords still sits in Westminster, an overblown, unelected danger to British democracy, more suited to a medieval monarchy than a modern democracy.

We are told that the age of austerity is ending. But in the Lords it never began. Peers are paid a tax-free daily rate simply for turning up. No need to speak or even sit in the chamber. There are stories of peers leaving a taxi with its meter running outside the House while they nip inside, sign the book and then dash off to lunch at their club.

That’s bad enough. But what about those diligent lords who do speak and vote? What sort of democracy is it where unelected peers, however worthy, hold power over the people?

In their election manifesto the Conservatives promised to establish a constitution, democracy and rights commission within a year to look closely at everything from the royal prerogative to the courts, including “the role of the House of Lords”. The latest revelations confirm that such an investigation cannot come soon enough.

Yet Boris Johnson’s government is still supporting “the chumocracy”. It has stacked the upper chamber with pals, such as the former Conservative MPs Nicky Morgan and Zac Goldsmith. The latest round of



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peerages is expected to bring the number to 834, the most since Tony Blair axed almost all hereditary peers in 2000.

That makes the Lords the second biggest parliamentary assembly in the world, behind only the National People's Congress in Communist China — and the Lords is about as democratic as that body. Today's peers may not be the God-ordained aristocrats of old, but this collection of former, failed and sometimes fraudulent politicians still owes its power to patronage and privilege handed down from on high.

The history of British democracy records a long struggle between the Lords, the Commons and the people. In the 19th century the Lords' attempts to block reform acts expanding the right to vote sparked the worst riots in British history.

The power struggle between Commons and Lords over the 1909 "people's budget" caused the gravest constitutional crisis of the 20th century.

In the 21st century the Lords tried to defy the historic democratic vote for Brexit, with one baroness boasting that they were best placed to do so having "no constituents to fear".

One striking difference these days is that the Lords' staunchest supporters tend to be found not among traditional Tories, but in the ranks of Labour and the left. The upper chamber is the one place where the opposition has a majority over the Conservatives. The Liberal Democrats may have a mere 11 elected MPs, but why worry when there are 94 appointed Lib Dem peers swanning about in the Lords?

Jeremy Corbyn's Labour, the self-styled people's party, has often looked more like the peers' party, cheering every attempt by the Lords to stop Conservative governments delivering election promises. In the heat of the parliamentary battle for Brexit, the *New Statesman*, the Labour Party's house bible, dubbed the House of Lords "the left's new best friend".

*Mick Hume is the author of Revolting! How the Establishment Are Undermining Democracy*



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### England's heroes/heroines: Mathew Flinders

Captain **Matthew Flinders** (16 March 1774 – 19 July 1814) was an English navigator and cartographer after whom the Flinders mountain range and Flinders River in Australia are named. He led the second circumnavigation of New Holland that he would subsequently call "Australia or Terra Australis" and identified it as a continent. Abel Tasman had circumnavigated it more widely in 1642-43 and had charted its north coast in 1644.

Flinders made three voyages to the southern ocean between 1791 and 1810. In the second voyage, George Bass and Flinders confirmed that Van Diemen's Land (now Tasmania) was an island. In the third voyage, Flinders circumnavigated the mainland of what was to be called Australia, accompanied by Aboriginal man Bungaree.

Heading back to England in 1803, Flinders' vessel needed urgent repairs at Isle de France (Mauritius). Although Britain and France were at war, Flinders thought the scientific nature of his work would ensure safe passage, but a suspicious governor kept him under arrest for more than six years. In captivity, he recorded details of his voyages for future publication, and put forward his rationale for naming the new continent 'Australia', as an umbrella term for New Holland and New South Wales – a suggestion taken up later by Governor Macquarie.

Flinders' health had suffered, however, and although he reached home in 1810, he did not live to see the success of his widely praised book and atlas, *A Voyage to Terra Australis*. The location of his grave was lost by the mid-19th century but archaeologists excavating a former burial ground near London's Euston railway station for the High Speed 2 (HS2) project, announced in January 2019 that his remains had been identified.



Portrait by Antoine Toussaint de Chazal, painted in Mauritius in 1806-1807

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### England's history: The Union of the Crowns

The Union of the Crowns was the accession of James VI of Scotland to the thrones of England and Ireland as James I, and the consequential unification for some purposes (such as overseas diplomacy) of the three realms under a single monarch on 24 March 1603. The Union of the Crowns followed the death of James's cousin, Elizabeth I of England, the last monarch of the Welsh Tudor dynasty. The Union was a personal or dynastic union, with the Crown of Scotland remaining both distinct and separate—despite James's best efforts to create a new "imperial" throne of "Great Britain". England and Scotland continued as autonomous states sharing a monarch with Ireland (with

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an interregnum in the 1650s during the republican unitary state of the Commonwealth and the Protectorate), until the Acts of Union of 1707 during the reign of the last Scottish Stuart monarch, Anne.

In August 1503, James IV of Scotland married Margaret, eldest daughter of Henry VII of England. The marriage was the outcome of the Treaty of Perpetual Peace, concluded the previous year. The marriage brought Scotland's Stuarts into England's Tudor line of succession. The peace did not last in "perpetuity"; it was disturbed in 1513 when Henry VIII of England declared war on France. In response France invoked the terms of the Auld Alliance, her ancient bond with Scotland. James IV duly invaded Northern England leading to the Battle of Flodden.

In the decades that followed, England's relations with Scotland were turbulent. Margaret's line was excluded from the English succession, though, during the reign of Elizabeth I concerns were once again raised. In the last decade of her reign it was clear to all that James VI of Scotland, great-grandson of James IV and Margaret, was the only generally acceptable heir. In his first speech to his southern assembly on 19 March 1604 James gave a clear statement of the royal manifesto: What God hath conjoined let no man separate. I am the husband and the whole isle is my lawful wife; I am the head and it is my body. James's ambitions were greeted with very little enthusiasm, as one by one MPs rushed to defend the ancient name and realm of England. For James, whose experience of parliaments was limited to the stage-managed and semi-feudal Scottish variety, the self-assurance — and obduracy — of the English version, which had long experience of upsetting monarchs, was an obvious shock. He decided to side-step the whole issue by unilaterally assuming the title of King of Great Britain by a *Proclamation concerning the Kings Majesties Stile* on 20 October 1604. This only deepened the offence.



*The Tudor rose dimidiated with the Scottish thistle, James used this device as a royal heraldic badge*

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### **English culture: Tichborne Dole;** 25th March;Tichborne, Hampshire;

The **Tichborne Dole** is a traditional English festival of charity which is held in the village of Tichborne, Hampshire, during the Feast of the Annunciation. The festival is centered on the handing out of donations of flour, which have been blessed by the local parish priest, from the front of Tichborne House.

The festival dates back to the 12th century (circa 1150) and was started by Lady Mabella Tichborne who, on her death bed, instructed that a donation of farm produce be made to the poor each year. At present, the terms of the Dole stipulate that adults from the parishes of Tichborne and Cheriton are entitled to claim 1 gallon of flour, and children half a gallon each.



*The Tichborne Dole (1671) by Gillis van Tilborch*

According to local tradition, Lady Tichborne's husband, Sir Roger Tichborne, did not approve of her charity and agreed to her bequest on the condition that the Dole consisted only of produce from land that she was able to encircle under her own power while carrying a burning torch in her hand. While Lady Tichborne, who was in poor health, is said to have successfully crawled around a 23-acre field before the torch went out. The land which she is said to have encircled is known locally as *the Crawls*.

The story of the Dole holds that Lady Tichborne placed a curse on it to ensure that her request would never be abandoned. According to the curse, if the Dole were to stop, the Tichborne family would bear seven sons, and, in the next generation, seven daughters, leading to the family's name being lost and the house falling into ruins.

The Dole continued from the time of Lady Tichborne's death until 1796, when disturbances during the handing out of the Dole lead to local officials ordering it to cease. The Baronet at that time, Sir Henry Tichborne, 8th Bart. was the eldest of seven sons. He had seven daughters but no sons. However his brother Edward did have a son, Henry, born in 1829 but he died in 1836 aged six years old. At this point, fearing that the curse had come to fruition, the Dole was resumed. Edward became the 9th baronet but had no sons. Another of the seven brothers, James, became the 10th baronet. He had two sons, Roger, who was born in 1829 (before the Dole was resumed) and Alfred, born in 1839 (after the resumption of the Dole). Roger was shipwrecked and lost at sea (1854) and Alfred eventually became the 11th baronet on his father's death in 1862. Sir Alfred died in 1866 leaving his wife pregnant with a son, Sir Henry Doughty-Tichborne, 12th Bart.

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### Promotion: English Leek growers

The leek is a vegetable, a cultivar of *Allium ampeloprasum* the broadleaf wild leek. The genus *Allium* also contains onion, garlic, shallot, scallion, chive, and Chinese onion. The name 'leek' developed from the Old English word leac, from which the modern English name of garlic also derives.

Rather than forming a tight bulb like the onion, the leek produces a long cylinder of bundled leaf sheaths that are generally blanched by pushing soil around them (trenching). Once established in the garden, leeks are hardy; many varieties can be left in the ground during the winter to be harvested as needed.

Nearly 5,000 acres of leeks are currently commercially grown in total, producing more than 50,000 tonnes of the vegetable in the 2014/15 season. The British (English) Leek Growers' Association farms to the highest standards. All its members comply with the Red Tractor Farm Assurance Scheme as an operational minimum. There are currently 10 commercial leek growers in England.

Leek Growers' Association Members



**Bomber County Produce:** Willow Farm, Dogdyke, New York, Lincoln, LN4 4UY

**Emmett UK Ltd:** Fosdyke, Spalding, Lincs PE12 6LQ

**GS Haines & Son:** Parkers Farm, Langrick Road, Coningsby, Lincolnshire, LN4 4RU

**Nightlayer Leek Co Ltd:** Iretons Way, Dean Drove, Chatteris, Cambs, PE16 6UZ

**T H Clements & Son Ltd:** West End, Boston, Lincolnshire, PE22 0EJ

**M Dungait & Sons:** Hebron West Farm Morpeth, Northumberland, NE61 3LA

**Farringtons Ltd:** Anchorage Estate, Guide Road, Hesketh Bank, Preston, Lancashire PR4 6XS

**Greenshoots:** Hollyhouse Farm, Horseway, Chatteris, Cambs, PE16 6XQ

**Staples Vegetables Ltd:** Marsh Farm, Sea Lane, Wrangle, Boston, Lincolnshire, LN4 4RU

**Allpress Farms Ltd:** Hollyhouse Farm, Horseway, Chatteris, Cambs PE16 6XQ

### Recipe: Cheesy baked leeks with ham

SERVES 4: HANDS-ON TIME 15 MIN, OVEN TIME 30 MIN

Our super-easy leek bake, made with ham and a good grating of cheese, makes a wonderful main meal served with crusty bread.

#### Ingredients

3 leeks (around 500g)

30g butter

250ml milk

1 tsp chopped fresh thyme leaves, plus a little extra to serve

180g packet of sliced, cooked ham

30g plain flour

1 tbsp wholegrain mustard

75g grated cheddar

100g brie, sliced



**Method:** Heat the oven to 200°C / 180° fan/gas 6. Cut the leeks into 8cm lengths, then wrap each in a piece of ham, cutting to fit and using up all the offcuts. Arrange in the base of a 1.5 litre ovenproof dish. Meanwhile, melt the butter in a pan, then stir in the flour and cook over a medium heat for 2-3 minutes. Gradually whisk in the wine and milk. Bring to the boil, then simmer for 3 minutes. Stir in the wholegrain mustard, thyme leaves and cheddar until melted, then pour over the leeks. Top with the brie, then bake for 30 minutes until bubbling. Scatter with more thyme and serve with crusty bread

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(Sucking England dry)

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