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Campaign for an English Parliament

Think of England Number 98: December 2019



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Number 98 December 2019

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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: Very best wishes to all our readers for Christmas and the New Year. It seems from the photograph printed by the Times with regard to legal aid that lawyers don't understand that



it is not a UK issue as legal aid is devolved. The Times also does not seem to know that agriculture and rural affairs are also devolved.

I am now signed up to the Times online and make comments on articles where appropriate to our cause. The following was in response to the article **"NHS spends least on least on patient health."**

"Responsibility for the NHS is now divided among the nations as it is a devolved issue. The UK government is responsible for the NHS in England as there is no equivalent to the devolved administrations. Which NHS is this article about?" the answer from someone called Bernadette Bowles was: "In international comparisons, the figures for all 4 versions are totalled to compare with other countries". However this does not relate to the Office for National Statistics data.

Reading the Times online is cheaper than buying the paper copy and you can comment on the articles.

Hugo Rifkind seems to have twigged that endless talking about Scotland irritates the rest of the UK.

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Campaigning for England: Chairman's report for the annual general meeting of the campaign for an English parliament 2019

Despite knowing full well that English nationalism is on the rise, and that the English wish for the same recognition as the Scots and the Welsh. The British government stubbornly refuse to acknowledge this. So deep does the cancer of anti-English sentiment run in the British state.

However, at this moment in time the Westminster system is in deep trouble.

I believe we have to ask ourselves, is an English parliament still the best thing for our people, or is independence the better option? Do we really want to stay in the union? A union who's other members care very little or nothing for us and whose politicians think of us as nothing more than a cash cow, and only show any interest in us when they want our votes and our money. I would say that a majority of the public understand the concept of independence better than that of an English parliament in a federal system, in which a British government would still be top dog as the federal arbiter.

Because of Brexit and the disarray of British political parties, and because of the mistrust of the English people for the media and our uncertain political and economic future we might see a period of political chaos in this country. If we do then we must be prepared for the Scottish National Party to try to take advantage of this situation and the weakness of the main parties and demand another referendum for independence.

This is why I have posed the question of whether we want an English parliament in a federal system, or outright independence. Without knowing what our objective is we can't frame our strategy for the coming year. Do we support the SNP if they call for independence? knowing that England will get independence by default. Or do we campaign to keep the union together? and hope that the British reward us with an English parliament in the future. If we choose independence then that is a fundamental shift in our campaign. Let's hope that the rise in a new nationalism helps us gain an English parliament, whether federal or independent.

Whatever happens we must keep on fighting for what we believe to be right for England and our people.
Steven Davis, Chairman



Current English Affairs:

Welsh football chiefs cry foul over FAI talks

November 3 2019, The Sunday Times: Paul Rowan

Football Association of Ireland (FAI) honorary secretary Michael Cody suggested members of the other associations, which included Wales and Scotland, had been insulting towards the English FA. "It was ill-mannered. It was clear that **England** and ourselves were the only ones making any attempt to be professional about it," Cody told his colleagues.

According to the FAI minutes, Conway then added that in the lead-up to the meeting, a member of the Welsh delegation told him he did not trust the English and "he had gotten similar messages from the Northern Ireland and Scottish delegations"

It's shire unfairness that our cities get so much attention

November 5 2019, The Times: Simon Edwards, director of the County Councils Network

Is there such thing as too much media coverage during an election period? According to NHS leaders this week, there can be – as they warned against all the political parties trying to outdo each other on health service pledges.

Yet for those of us who work closely with local councils are casting envious glances towards the health service's ability to generate huge amounts of election interest. With the NHS pulling at the heart strings and Brexit creating the key dividing line, the plight of local government – and specifically the issues faced by our shire counties – are unlikely to get the hearing they deserve. While eminently predictable, this is nonetheless misguided.

We say that ensuring the 2,600 county councillors have a positive doorstep message on how the incoming government can help deal with the everyday challenges that local government faces will have an important bearing on the election outcome and their subsequent success in office.

The towns, coastal and rural communities that make up our shire counties are the heartlands of **England**. Not only do they cover almost half its population, they also contain 15 of the 25 most marginal constituencies. For decades now successive governments of all colours have prioritised the needs and demands of

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councils in the cities and large towns. This urban-centric mentality has led to funding disparities for public services and an imbalance of powers between city and rural areas. It is why ahead of this election our politicians from the County Councils Network (CCN) have demanded that their political parties prioritise the challenges and opportunities of their areas.

Funding, of course, needs to be a central part of the election dialogue. With all political parties now signalling an end to austerity, we need to see local government feature in spending pledges, including a commitment to publish proposals for social care reform as soon as possible. At the same time, it is crucial that those county areas receive a fair share of funding. CCN has shown that if shire counties were funded at the national average, they would be receiving an additional £3.2 billion a year.

Huge rise in fly-tipping blamed on council fees

November 8 2019, The Times: Greg Hurst, Social Affairs Editor
Councils that have raised their fees for collecting furniture and other bulk waste have been accused of fuelling a resurgence in fly-tipping as incidents last year rose above one million.

Traders who charge a fee for collecting household rubbish but then dump it at roadsides were also blamed. Local authorities demanded tougher fines for fly-tippers who are prosecuted.

There were almost 1.1 million fly-tipping incidents in **England** last year, according to the Department for Food, the Environment and Rural Affairs. Nearly two thirds of cases last year involved the dumping of household rubbish, typically on road verges and pavements. The most common volume was a small van load followed by an amount that can fit into a car boot.



Educating the excluded

The Times, November 9 2019: Rachel Sylvester reports

The number of children removed from mainstream education is growing. More than 40 pupils in **England** are permanently excluded every school day and many more students are unofficially thrown out through what is known as “off-rolling”.

Anne Longfield, the children’s commissioner, has estimated that almost 60,000 children are supposedly being “home-schooled” but have effectively been lost by the system after being removed from the registers of mainstream schools. They are, she warns, “vulnerable to exploitation by gangs” and some pupil referral units have become a recruiting ground for criminals

Care home fees: do you have to sell your home?

November 8 2019, The Times: Kate Palmer

143,000 elderly people face care costs of £100,000 or more, according to Independent Age. The care home fees system is a lottery

Who has to pay for care? If you have more than £23,500 in property, savings and investments, you are likely to have to pay the full cost of care in **England** and Northern Ireland. Only those with less than £14,250 will not have to pay anything. This threshold hasn’t changed since 2010. Anything you pay, however, shouldn’t take your income below the personal expenses allowance of £24.90 a week in **England** and £26.33 a week in Northern Ireland.

In Scotland the asset cap is £28,000 and anyone with more than £17,500 is expected to pay at least something towards their care home fees. Everyone is allowed to keep at least £27.75 a week from their income.

In Wales only those with £50,000 or more have to pay their fees and everyone is guaranteed to be able to keep a weekly income of £29.50.

Council tax cannot keep pace with rising cost of social care

November 11 2019, The Times: Kate Devlin, Chief Political Correspondent

Local authorities will need billions of pounds of extra funding over the next five years to meet rising social care costs even if they put up council tax, the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has warned.

Councils and central government fund care for older people, including in nursing homes, for those who are judged not to be able to afford it themselves. They also fund support services for other adults and children. The sector serves a growing elderly population and an increasing number of disabled adults.

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Costs are also being pushed up by rising wages and other overheads.

The extra money would be needed just to keep the level of service provided at present, the IFS said.

The IFS warns that with councils now largely dependent on only two sources of income, council tax and business rates, “a growing gap is likely to open up between their income and what they need to meet the rising costs of service provision, especially for adult social care”.

If council tax continues to rise in line with inflation councils will need an extra £4 billion a year from the government within five years. This figure would rise to £18 billion a year by the mid 2030s. Even with council tax rising by 4 per cent a year — double the rate of inflation — councils may need an additional £1.6 billion a year in real-terms funding by 2024–25. Councils have been given an extra £1.3 billion next year and those with social care responsibilities can increase council tax by up to 4 per cent.

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GPs want to remove ‘old-fashioned’ home visits from their NHS contract

November 12 2019, The Times: Kaya Burgess

Doctors will debate a motion this month that calls for GPs’ obligation to carry out home visits to be dropped from their contract. The motion, to be put forward at a conference of the local medical committees in **England** by the committee representing GPs in Kent, calls for the removal of “the anachronism of home visits from core contract work”.

Instead, the body wants a separate contract to be drawn up that would allow paramedics and other healthcare professionals to carry out home visits. If it is approved at the meeting on November 22, it would go to the GPs committee of the British Medical Association (BMA), which would negotiate the change with **NHS England**.

In 1995 home visits accounted for 9 per cent of all GP appointments. This had fallen to 4 per cent by 2008 and the latest estimates, for September, show that they now account for only 0.9 per cent of appointments. Andy Parkin, a locum GP who put forward



the motion, told the healthcare news website *Pulse Today*: “The main thing is the workload and demand on time in general practice. It’s not to remove the ability to do home visits if GPs want to. If there are truly housebound patients or palliative care patients, I think GPs should still be able to do that. “The key thing is to remove the expectation that home visits are a part of general practice. They are the most time-consuming part of the job.”

He said that GPs also now covered wider areas and added: “In Kent, there is a home-visiting service run by paramedics and nurses. Urgent visit requests are passed over to them but they have a limited capacity.” GPs are frustrated by their increasing workloads but debate remains over whether eliminating home visits would substantially reduce this, since they account for such a small proportion of appointments now. A home visit takes substantially more time than an appointment in a surgery, however.

The local medical committees in **England** considered a motion to scrap the obligation to carry out home visits three years ago but it was rejected. The obligation remains in the new five-year GP contract that was agreed between NHS England and the BMA and which came into force in April.

The Royal College of GPs expressed sympathy with the motion but appeared not to back it fully.

Helen Stokes-Lampard, its chairwoman, said: “Home visits can be very time-consuming and take the GP away from the surgery when they could be seeing other patients, and where there are far better facilities to properly assess patients. “But for some of our more complex and vulnerable patients, home visits are an invaluable, and often the only, means of seeing their GP.

“We are very supportive of proposals to train other members of the GP team, such as physician associates and advanced paramedics, to carry out home visits as appropriate, but they are not a substitute for GPs and it is vital that patients who need the skills of a GP are able to access them.”

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Councils raking in profits of £930m from car parking charges

November 16 2019, The Times: Jonathan Paige

English councils made a combined profit of £930 million last year from parking charges, according to new figures. Money from parking charges rose by 7 per cent compared with the previous financial year.

Steve Gooding, director of the RAC Foundation, said: “It would be no surprise at all if English councils soon breached the one billion-pound mark for the amount [of profit] they make annually from parking, which is quite a windfall from a service that is intended to be all about managing traffic. “Not every authority makes big money, some even run at loss, but where authorities are making money drivers might reasonably hope that some finds its way specifically into tackling road repairs, not just on transport more generally.”

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An analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) this week found that council parking charges had risen by 88 per cent over the past decade. During the same period, spending on potholes and road repairs had gone down by 53 per cent, the study said.

The IFS said that local authorities had “cut back spending on services which are more discretionary or where there was more scope to raise income from fees and charges”. Tom Harris of the IFS, an independent tax and public policy research agency, said: “It is clear that councils have adapted to a decade of cuts by focusing their spending on their most needy residents and meeting their statutory duties.

“This has meant big cuts to a whole raft of other services and it may be difficult to squeeze much more money from these if councils find their budgets under further pressure.”

Hugh Bladon, of the Association of British Drivers, said: “Shocking amounts of money have been taken from motorists. Things are at the point where it is almost a crime to drive a car these days. The neglect of the roads is bad enough for people who use four wheels. For those on two wheels, cyclists and motorcyclists, it is seriously dangerous.”



~~~~~ **‘Toxic’ culture of failure that left 42 babies dead at Shrewsbury and Telford NHS trust**

November 20 2019, The Times: Kaya Burgess

Babies and mothers died or were left disabled after catastrophic failings in what is believed to be the NHS’s worst maternity scandal. An independent review has found there was a “toxic” culture at the maternity unit at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust dating back more than 40 years. This led to at least 45 avoidable deaths, including 42 babies and three mothers, 51 cases of brain damage or cerebral palsy in infants and 47 further incidents of substandard care, a leaked interim report of the findings said. Investigators expect to examine hundreds more potential cases.

The leaked report, seen by *The Independent*, found that there were 22 stillbirths, three deaths during pregnancy and 17 deaths of newborns at the trust. The review’s initial scope was to review 23 cases, but that has increased to more than 270, dating from 1979. The report said the review was “one of the largest the NHS has ever conducted into infant and maternal morbidity and mortality in a single service”.

Investigators found that bereaved families were treated with “a distinct lack of kindness and respect”, that dead babies were referred to as “it” and that one family was not told their child’s body had been brought back after a post-mortem examination. This meant that the body was left to decompose and the family could not say a final goodbye.

The investigation found that babies were left brain damaged when staff failed to realise labour was going wrong and that some died because of a failure to monitor heartbeats properly. Parents were often told that tragedies were one-offs when they were part of a wider pattern. The review found “repeated errors that are often similar case to case” and said the unit’s culture had been “toxic to improvement effort”.

The independent review is being carried out by Donna Ockenden, a midwife, who submitted an interim report to NHS Improvement, the authority responsible for improving patient care, in February. She said: “The document referred to . . . appears to be an internal status update . . . This was produced at the request of NHS Improvement and not meant for publication.”

She said families wanted “one single, comprehensive independent report covering all known cases” and said: “My independent review team and I are working hard to achieve this.”

Ms Davies lost her newborn daughter Kate on her first day at the trust’s unit in Ludlow in 2009. She should have been listed as a high-risk pregnancy but was instead put on a low-risk unit. Her fight for an inquest ultimately led to the review and the death of her daughter Kate was found to have been avoidable.

Ms Davies said that she plans to push for charges of corporate manslaughter to be brought against the trust. “Lessons are not being learnt,” she said. “Everything within that [leaked report] happened to us. She told *The Independent* that her daughter had been “condemned to death” by the trust’s failures and said: “How has this been tolerated for so long? It is horrific.”

The biggest maternity scandal in the NHS previously was at [Morecambe Bay](#), where 11 babies and a mother died at Cumbria’s Furness General Hospital between 2004 and 2013.

~~~~~ **Manchester, the city that sold out to Abu Dhabi**

The Sunday Times, November 24 2019: David Collins

On a drizzly Friday in August, Manchester’s political elite gathered to watch actors commemorate the

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200th anniversary of the Peterloo massacre. Sir Richard Leese, leader of the Labour-controlled council, was among the audience as praise was heaped on the radicalism of the 18 Peterloo protesters who died for parliamentary reform.

The actors shouted lines of modern-day protest about gay rights and homelessness. Days before, however, council officials had contacted the event organisers about references to the city having been “bought” by the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The performance went ahead without the lines: “Our housing, our streets, our silence on human rights — you can’t keep selling if you’re already selling out.”

The officials’ intervention revealed the city leadership’s sensitivity about the Gulf state. Peggy Manning, who helped to write the script, said it was “concerning” that Manchester’s municipal leaders were choosing “to self-censor or avoid commenting on human rights abuses taking place in the UAE due to business partnerships”.

Manchester’s economy and political establishment have been the subject of a quiet takeover by Abu Dhabi, part of the UAE. For the first time, The Sunday Times can reveal the scale of the council’s business dealings with the oil-rich emirate and Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed al Nahyan, the billionaire owner of Manchester City football club. With echoes of Qatar’s multibillion-pound investments in London, Mansour’s private equity fund has amassed an estimated £330m-plus property portfolio in Manchester, which is set to grow still further. The investments are in addition to the football club, valued at £2bn, and land around its Etihad stadium, where a £300m arena is proposed.

The property portfolio alone yields up to £10m a year in rent. This has been made possible by the council leasing publicly owned land to Mansour’s fund for the construction of flats, mostly near the stadium in the east of the city. The developer, Manchester Life, is a unique partnership between the council and Abu Dhabi. However, The Sunday Times has established that the council receives none of the rental income generated by Manchester Life’s portfolio.

Council leader Sir Richard Leese praises investment from Abu Dhabi “The council does not receive rental income but stands to get money back through longer-term profit sharing arrangements,” it confirmed. This is one of several arrangements that have led to accusations of sweetheart deals. Private developers are furious that land provided to Abu Dhabi by the council was not offered on the open market via a tendering process.

As George Osborne’s public sector belt-tightening began in 2010, Manchester increasingly looked abroad for investment. The money came rolling in. In 2014, the Abu Dhabi United Group (ADUG) and the council set up Manchester Life, a developer half-owned by the public and half by Mansour’s private equity group. The council would provide public land for regeneration and Abu Dhabi would provide the finance. The developments have been controversial, not least because they fail to meet the council’s own policy objectives. Its website states that 20% should be a “starting point” for the affordable housing in schemes, subject to financial viability. Affordable means rents can be no more than 80% of the local market rate. None of Manchester Life’s homes are affordable, and the developer does not pay any subsidies for local amenities, known as section 106 payments. The council said none of the schemes would have been “financially viable” had Manchester Life been obliged to meet standard requirements on affordable housing or financial contributions, and that the tax, business rates and employment generated by the developments exceeded these contributions.

Manchester Life was launched with a promise “to rebalance the relationship between landlord and tenant to one of equals”. Just a year after the opening of a rental apartment block in Smiths Yard, residents received section 21 eviction notices. These allow landlords to evict tenants without giving a reason, even if the rent has been paid on time and the property kept in good condition.

Manchester Life said it had never refused to renew a tenancy agreement. However, the notices were followed by letters offering tenants new leases if they agreed to a rent hike of 5% for 12 months, or 3% for two to three years.

The council leader said: “There seems to be an assumption in some quarters, perhaps rooted in a Little Englander mentality, that foreign investment is somehow inherently bad while British-based investment is inherently good.



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**Legal aid cuts leaving defendants to face justice on their own**  
November 25 2019, The Times: Jonathan Ames

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Lawyers say cuts to legal aid have curtailed justice for defendants. The number of defendants appearing in crown courts without lawyers has risen sharply over the past nine years.

Lawyers have seized on the government statistics — which show that in 2018 7.7 per cent of defendants were unrepresented at their first hearing, compared with 4.9 per cent in 2010 — as evidence that cuts to legal aid have curtailed justice for those accused of crimes.



Figures released by the Ministry of Justice also showed that the courts devoted considerably more time to hearing the cases of unrepresented defendants, potentially bolstering claims arguments that cuts to state funding for representation could be a false economy. Last year 10 per cent of defendants who were represented in the crown court by lawyers had their cases completed in one hearing, while 16 per cent needed six or more hearings. In contrast, of those defendants without lawyers, 6 per cent had their cases resolved with one hearing, while 22 per cent needed six or more hearings.

Caroline Goodwin, QC, the chairwoman of the Criminal Bar Association, highlighted the figures at the Bar Council's annual conference on Saturday. She claimed that defendants without lawyers contributed to rising costs in the criminal justice system because their cases took longer. "Litigants in person," she said, referring to unrepresented people in court, created "a time delay because their cases take longer".

The figures were analysed in a report published earlier this month by the Institute for Government, the independent think tank. Its analysis pointed out that the number of defendants who remained unrepresented throughout their crown court hearings remained very low, although that number, too, was rising. In 2010, the figure was 0.6 per cent. Last year it had risen to 1 per cent.

Legal aid is generally granted to criminal defendants. However, it is means-tested and lawyers and justice campaigners have complained that the thresholds have not been upgraded since 2013. Currently, defendants in the crown court are eligible to have legal costs paid if their "disposable" income — the amount left after paying allowed living costs — is below £37,500. However, they are still required to make a contribution to the funding of their defence.



### **It's healthcare and housing that rural voters care about, not foxhunting**

November 25 2019, The Times: Tim Bonner, chief executive of the Countryside Alliance

Political parties have fallen into the same trap as they did in 2017. Using Twitter to make policies has always been a risky business, but it now appears to be normal practice.

Before the 2017 general election, we worked with the research firm ORB International and polled rural voters asking them to identify three issues that would affect their vote. Foxhunting was not a priority.

We ran the polling again in July this year and again fox hunting was not a priority. The issues that really matter in rural areas are access to hospitals and healthcare, local transport and affordable housing. Only 1 in 20 mentioned hunting as a priority. However, political parties have been duped again by animal rights activists on Twitter. Labour re-announced their foxhunting policy for the third time and the Conservative manifesto yesterday promised "no changes to the Hunting Act".

In the autumn the government announced the microchipping of cats as post-Brexit agricultural legislation remained in limbo. The concern is not only that British (*sic! ED.*) agriculture takes second place behind microchipping cats in the order of government priorities, but also that political parties have now mistaken animal rights issues for environmental issues, to the detriment of rural communities and tackling genuine environmental and rural challenges.

The truth is that for those that live and work in the countryside there are so many other issues they want political parties to address. These are not insignificant. Access to healthcare and hospitals, local transport links (to get to hospital), and affordable housing are the serious issues.

We must ask ourselves why, then, do animal rights activists wish to distract the political debate away from these really important problems and make political parties focus on something that only 1 in 20 consider to be an electoral issue? The truth is that their obsession with hunting is to prevent political discourse from addressing the issues that matter and seek instead to disrupt how people in the countryside choose to live their lives. Why else would political parties not address the real issues in the countryside?



### **Scots bid to stop England setting quota post-Brexit**

November 26 2019, The Times: Ewing Grahame

Scottish football's governing bodies have joined forces with their Northern Irish and Welsh counterparts and **England's** Premier League to combat government plans that would give the FA the power to limit

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the number of foreign players that Scotland's top clubs could sign post-Brexit.  
(*England sets quotas? Surely the FA is a British institution. Ed.*)



### From north to south we're all Scottish now

November 25 2019, The Times: Hugo Rifkind

Sturgeon's success in winning fans in **England** as well as Scotland can only be good news for the Union in the long run. This weekend, on the way home from Scotland where I had been writing a series of articles about the election in Scotland, I found myself watching the BBC *Question Time* leaders special, in which the last ten minutes of Jeremy Corbyn's interview was dominated by questions about Scotland.

"Anybody got a question not about Scotland?" pleaded Fiona Bruce, before turning to a man wearing a T-shirt covered in the flag of Scotland. Corbyn was followed, for another half hour, by the first minister of Scotland, whose answers, not that surprisingly, were also somewhat heavy on the subject of Scotland. Whereupon attention shifted to the leader of the Liberal Democrats, who viewers may have noticed was from Scotland. Last night Nicola Sturgeon, the first minister, was again on screens across the UK, being interviewed by Andrew Neil (never mind where he's from) as part of the BBC's interview series with party leaders. And at the risk of enraging readers from, well, Scotland, I could understand if all this was starting to grate a bit. Scotland! Scotland! What do you care? Maybe you're in Bognor Regis.

### NHS spends least on patient health

November 28 2019, The Times: Rhys Blakely, Science Correspondent

Britain's austerity policies have caused the NHS to fall behind other developed countries, a study in the *BMJ* said. The NHS is lagging behind the healthcare systems of other developed countries in spending, staff numbers and avoidable deaths, a study has found.

A comparison with the healthcare systems of nine other wealthy countries suggested that austerity policies and lower numbers of staff from the EU because of Brexit had taken a toll. It showed, however, that patients were about as satisfied with their healthcare as citizens in other countries, with waiting times that compared favourably.

The study in the *BMJ* looked at healthcare in Britain, Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland and the US. It said: "The NHS showed pockets of good performance but spending, patient safety and population health were below average to average at best." Britain spent the least on health, £3,000 per person (*£2,168 in England. Ed.*), compared with an average of £4,400, and had the highest number of deaths that might have been prevented with prompt treatment.

It had the lowest number of nurses per capita and was the only country (*British State. Ed.*) where the figure fell between 2010 and 2017, the most recent year in the study.

"Relative to other countries, the NHS has lower amounts of labour, which have been decreasing at a faster rate, particularly after 2015, when large decreases in the annual inflow of EU-trained healthcare professionals have been seen," the report said.

Survival rates for breast and colon cancer were the lowest and second lowest for rectal and cervical cancer. The chances of dying a month after having a stroke or heart attack in the UK were well above the average. Average life expectancy, however, was only just below the average of 81.7 years, at 81.3 years. The UK had the lowest percentage of doctors dissatisfied with the time they could spend with patients and of doctors along with Canada and Netherlands who were dissatisfied with their income.

In Britain, 65 per cent of patients reported seeing the doctor or nurse the next day when they last needed care, in line with the average of 67 per cent. Forty-four per cent of UK adults thought the healthcare system worked well, compared with an average of 45 per cent. The UK figure had declined by 19 percentage points since 2010.

It said that the UK appeared to have higher rates of informal care "with high proportions of the workforce out of work or in part-time employment because they are providing care".

A separate report from the Health Foundation charity said that the NHS was relying on less qualified staff to plug gaps because of a nursing shortage. There are almost 44,000 nursing vacancies across the NHS, equivalent to about 12 per cent of the nursing workforce. This could more than double in a decade, the report warned.

### Bristol council buys fleet of diesel vans despite dirty car ban

November 29 2019, 12:01am, The Times: Graeme Paton

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Bristol city council has acquired 64 diesel vehicles, mainly vans, for use around the city despite proposing to ban all private diesel cars, irrespective of age, from the city centre in an attempt to cut pollution. The ban will include the cleanest Euro 6 models registered in the past few years and will apply to diesels in a central zone between 7am and 3pm. Private vehicles will be blocked completely while commercial vehicles such as vans will face a charge. A wider clean air zone will also be imposed, and van and taxi drivers will pay £9 a day to enter.

Despite being under a legal obligation to reduce air pollution in the city by lowering NO<sub>2</sub> levels to within legal limits as quickly as possible, the council, led by a directly elected mayor, Marvin Rees, has spent taxpayers' money on a fleet of diesel vans.

Times letters 29/11/19 EDUCATIONAL CHOICE

Sir, Rosemary Bennett sums up well the options facing the electorate on education ("Choice in education is return to 1970s or stick to the status quo", Nov 27). But is "more of the same" the right course? The increased number of youngsters with good academic qualifications and going to university must be balanced against the great minority who leave school without marketable qualifications and skills. **England** has nine million adults with inadequate literacy and numeracy, one of the highest levels in the developed world. This underachievement blights the lives of so many and is the major cause of our skills crisis, which holds back the economy and public services. It's time to question whether the system we have had for thirty years is serving the best interests of the whole nation. Chris Pratt, Author, *Building a Learning Nation*, Leeds, W Yorks

**English politics:** Nothing to report as Parliament is prorogued

**England's heroes/heroines: John Milton born 9 December 1608**

He was an English poet and intellectual, who served as a civil servant for the Commonwealth of England under its Council of State and later under Oliver Cromwell. His works included the epic poem *Paradise Lost* (1667), written in blank verse. *Paradise Regained* and *Samson Agonistes*. He wrote at a time of religious flux and political upheaval, and is best known for his Writing in English, Latin, Greek, and Italian, he achieved international renown within his lifetime, and his celebrated *Areopagitica* (1644), written in condemnation of pre-publication censorship, is among history's most influential and impassioned defences of freedom of speech and freedom of the press. His desire for freedom extended into his style: he introduced new words (coined from Latin) to the English language, and was the first modern writer to employ non-rhymed verse outside of the theatre or translations.



Portrait of Milton, circa 1629

**England's history:** 1 Dec. 1135 England's King Henry I died.

He had fallen ill seven days earlier according to the chronicler Henry of Huntingdon, after he ate too many ("a surfeit of") lampreys against his physician's advice – He was 66, and had ruled for 35 years

He was also known as Henry Beauclerc and was King of England from 1100 to his death in 1135. He was the fourth son of William the Conqueror and was educated in Latin and the liberal arts. On William's death in 1087, Henry's elder brothers Robert

Curthose and William Rufus inherited Normandy and England, respectively, but Henry was left landless. He purchased the County of Cotentin in western Normandy from Robert, but his brothers deposed him in 1091. He gradually rebuilt his power base in the Cotentin and allied himself with William against Robert.

Present at the place where his brother William died in a hunting accident in 1100, Henry seized the English throne, promising at his coronation to correct many of William's less popular policies. He married Matilda of Scotland, daughter of St. Margaret of Wessex and niece of Edgar Aetheling, the rightful successor to the English throne. They had two surviving children, William Adelin and Empress Matilda. Robert, who invaded in 1101, disputed Henry's control of England; this military campaign ended in a negotiated settlement that confirmed Henry as king. The peace was short-lived, and Henry invaded the Duchy of Normandy in 1105 and 1106, finally defeating Robert at the Battle of Tinchebray. Henry kept Robert im-



Henry's royal seal, showing the King on horseback (l) and seated on his throne

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prisoned for the rest of his life. Henry's control of Normandy was challenged by Louis VI of France, Baldwin VII of Flanders and Fulk V of Anjou, who promoted the rival claims of Robert's son, William Clito, and supported a major rebellion in the Duchy between 1116 and 1119. Following Henry's victory at the Battle of Brémule, a favourable peace settlement was agreed with Louis in 1120.

Considered by contemporaries to be a harsh but effective ruler, Henry skilfully manipulated the barons in England and Normandy. In England, he drew on the existing Anglo-Saxon system of justice, local government and taxation, but also strengthened it with additional institutions, including the royal exchequer and itinerant justices. Normandy was also governed through a growing system of justices and an exchequer. Many of the officials who ran Henry's system were "new men" of obscure backgrounds rather than from families of high status, who rose through the ranks as administrators. Henry's son William drowned in the White Ship disaster of 1120, throwing the royal succession into doubt. Henry took a second wife, Adeliza of Louvain, in the hope of having another son, but their marriage was childless. In response to this, he declared his daughter Matilda his heir and married her to Geoffrey of Anjou. The relationship between Henry and the couple became strained, and fighting broke out along the border with Anjou. Henry died on 1 December 1135 after a week of illness. Despite his plans for Matilda, the King was succeeded by his nephew, Stephen of Blois, resulting in a period of civil war known as the Anarchy.



Early 14th-century depiction of Henry mourning the death of his son

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### English culture: Mistletoe

In the Christian era, mistletoe in the Western world became associated with Christmas as a decoration under which lovers are expected to kiss, as well as with protection from witches and demons. Mistletoe continued to be associated with fertility and vitality through the Middle Ages, and by the 18th century it had also become incorporated into Christmas celebrations around the world. The custom of kissing under the mistletoe is referred to as popular among servants in late 18th century England: the serving class of Victorian England is credited with perpetuating the tradition. The tradition dictated that a man was allowed to kiss any woman standing underneath mistletoe, and that bad luck would befall any woman who refused the kiss. One variation on the tradition stated that with each kiss a berry was to be plucked from the mistletoe, and when all the berries removed the kissing to stop.



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**Promotion:** The domestic turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) is a large fowl, one of the two species in the genus *Meleagris* and the same as the wild turkey. Although turkey domestication was thought to have occurred in central Mesoamerica at least 2,000 years ago, recent research suggests a possible second domestication event in the Southwestern United States between 200 BC and AD 500. However, all of the main domestic turkey varieties today descend from the turkey raised in central Mexico that was subsequently imported into Europe by the Spanish in the 16th century.

Domestic turkey is a popular form of poultry, and it is raised throughout temperate parts of the world, partially because industrialized farming has made it very cheap for the amount of meat it produces. The great majority of domestic turkeys are bred to have white feathers because their pin feathers are less visible when the carcass is dressed, although brown or bronze-feathered varieties are also raised. The English language name for this species results from an early misidentification of the bird with an unrelated species which was imported to Europe through the country of Turkey. The Latin species name *gallopāvō* means "chicken peacock".

The 16th-century English navigator William Strickland is generally credited with introducing the turkey into England. His family coat of arms — showing a turkey cock as the family crest — is among the earliest known European depictions of a turkey. English farmer Thomas Tusser notes the turkey being among farmer's fare at Christmas in 1573. The domestic turkey was sent from England to Jamestown, Virginia in 1608. A document written in 1584 lists supplies to be furnished to future colonies in the New World; "turkies, male and female".

Prior to the late 19th century, turkey was something of a luxury in the UK, with goose or beef a more common Christmas dinner among the working classes. In Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* (1843), Bob Cratchit had a goose be-



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fore Scrooge bought him a turkey.

Turkey production in the UK was centered in East Anglia, using two breeds, the Norfolk Black and the Norfolk Bronze (also known as Cambridge Bronze). These would be driven as flocks, after shoeing, down to markets in London from the 17th century onwards. Turkeys are now bred throughout England but particularly in Norfolk.

Intensive farming of turkeys from the late 1940s dramatically cut the price, making it more affordable. With the availability of refrigeration, whole turkeys could be shipped frozen to distant markets. Later advances in disease control increased production even more. Advances in shipping, changing consumer preferences and the proliferation of commercial poultry plants has made fresh turkey inexpensive as well as readily available.

### Recipe: Creamy turkey bake perfect for busy weekdays.

Serves: 1

Preparation time: 15 mins

Cooking time: 45 mins

#### Ingredients:

300g tub of full fat crème fraise

2 cloves garlic, peeled and crushed

1 tbsp chopped fresh sage (or 1 tsp dried)

600g fresh British Turkey breast, diced

250g mushrooms, sliced

3 tbsp milk

1 tsp Dijon mustard

Salt & pepper to taste

1 head of broccoli, cut into thumb sized florets

Boiled new potatoes or crusty bread to serve



#### Method:

Pre-heat the oven to 180 C / 160 fan / gas mark 4.

In a large bowl, combine the crème fraise, milk, garlic, mustard and sage. Season well to taste with salt and pepper and mix until smooth.

Add the diced turkey, small broccoli florets and mushrooms to the sauce and mix together really well so everything is coated with the sauce.

Pour into a large oven dish and bake for around 45 minutes until the turkey is cooked through and the broccoli is tender. If the sauce splits a little, give it a mix when it comes out of the oven, and it will come together again.

Garnish with a few crispy-fried sage leaves (if desired), and serve with new potatoes or crusty bread.

<http://www.britishturkey.co.uk/recipes/one-step-creamy-turkey-bake.html>

### No Comment!: Which? says fraud increased in every region of England and Wales over the past year".

Reported in the Times 22/6/19

London had the most, with 48,479 reports in 2018-19, up 11 per cent in a year. The figures for the past two years suggest 10.4 frauds for every 1,000 people. There was a 16 per cent rise in the East Midlands, where there were 21,942 reports last year compared with 18,958 the year before (8.6 frauds for every 1,000 people over two years) and a 15 per cent increase in the North East and Yorkshire and the Humber.

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