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Campaign for an English Parliament

Think of England Number 111: January 2021



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Number 111 January 2021

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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: January is the gateway to the year and we wish all our readers a happy and prosperous and better New Year. Joanna George claims that there is public support for city regions but on what evidence? The CEP



does not support imposed city regions, or any other kind, without a national English administration to "balance individual interests and the ambitions of all the regions".

Farmers are to be rewarded for supporting wildlife, improving animal welfare, reducing air and water pollution and planting trees but not, apparently, for producing food. It is about time there was a fair trade system for our farmers so that they are not having to burn fleeces and sell milk for less than the cost of production.

So-called Smart Motorways introduced into England to save money are becoming death traps. Not only are there insufficient refuges but, apart from the danger to other road users of a stationary vehicle in an open lane, there must be provision for passengers to get off the motorway when a safe refuge cannot be reached. Elderly people such as the case highlighted here cannot be expected to climb embankments or other obstacles at the side of the motorways.

The Commons select Committee on education exceeds its remit in its report by referring to 'the nations'. It is only responsible for one-the English nation.

We look forward to the report from the Health & Social Care Committee's recommendations being put into practice especially the repeated suggestion of free personal care. Don't hold your breath.

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Campaigning for England:

To save the Union, English aspirations need a voice

December 04 2020, The Times: Joanna George, a freelance journalist and member of the steering committee of the cross-party Constitution Reform Group:

George Orwell described England as “a family with the wrong members in control”. His observation was made almost eighty years ago, yet it rings true today as England’s regions grapple with resurgent coronavirus cases and a new three-tier system imposed by the government that is dividing the country physically and economically.

It was announced last month that Boris Johnson is to launch a “union task force” to boost the social and cultural case for the UK after recent polls suggested a growing majority for Scottish independence. But what about England’s aspirations as a nation and its position within the Union?

The recent public support for English city-region metro mayors and their understanding of and dedication to English regional needs has given them and English politics a much-welcomed spotlight in the national media — something that has been strangely lacking in comparison to the devolved nations in recent years. Despite the government’s vocal support for the “levelling up” and English devolution agenda, it is puzzling why they have decided to delay their white paper on English devolution and local recovery.

If Mr Johnson is serious about levelling up the country and reducing regional economic inequality, now is the perfect opportunity. English devolution would be more impactful if the current piecemeal approach were replaced with a more fully formed vision of English devolution and a whole-hearted commitment to seeing it realised. That is why it is so vital for a union task force to confront the elephant in the room, which is England. For far too long England’s large population size has meant that the issue of English governance and place within the Union must be tiptoed around instead of directly confronted. The irony is that if any of us were to find ourselves in a room with an elephant, the last thing we would all do is ignore it and risk enraging and upsetting it. Delaying the conversation about English identity, English interests and England’s constitutional future in a post-Brexit Union could potentially cause the English elephant to lash out and create serious political and constitutional havoc in the future.

Mr Johnson, the self-appointed “minister for the union”, should also be mindful about his centralising reflex to English devolution. His handling of the coronavirus crisis in Greater Manchester last month was approved by only 23 per cent of local residents, (*source? Ed.*) with other areas across England likely to have felt the same. The prime minister’s rejection of MPs’ demands for more localised tier systems in England have left him isolated within his own party and with the people of England. Failure to recognise or tune into English concerns is a far cry from the Conservative Party manifesto last year, which promised to allow every part of England “to shape its own destiny”. That is why the work of the Constitution Reform Group and our new Act of Union Bill is so refreshing; it provides two practical and detailed options for England’s future within a new UK constitutional settlement.

Enabling the “right” members within England’s large family of regions to take control where appropriate is a step in the right direction for English devolution. A union task force should carefully consider and balance the individual interests and ambitions of all nations within the UK if it is to survive and thrive in the challenging years ahead. But as prime minister, Boris Johnson must encourage and shape England’s aspirations as a nation if it is to be at ease with itself and within the Union.

Latest news on the Act of Union Bill [HL] 2017-19

The first reading took place in October 2018. This stage is a formality that signals the start of the Bill’s journey through the Lords. The 2017-2019 session of Parliament was prorogued and this Bill will make no further progress.

Summary of the Act of Union Bill [HL] 2017-19

A Bill to provide a renewed constitutional form for the peoples of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, to continue to join together to form the United Kingdom, to affirm that the peoples of those nations and parts have chosen, subject to and in accordance with the provisions of this Act, to continue to pool their sovereignty for specified purposes, and to protect social and economic rights for citizens and makes provision for the establishment of a directly elected English Parliament

Current English Affairs: Roads and Transport, Tourism, Health and Welfare, Education, Police and Courts, Environment, Agriculture

Payoffs for farmers to attract new blood

Ben Webster, Environment Editor; Tuesday December 01 2020, 12.01am, The Times

Ministers hope that farmers new to the industry will bring a fresh perspective that could help sustainabil-

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ity. Entrepreneurs with new ideas for more productive and sustainable farming will be helped to join the industry under changes to agricultural policy in England, the government has promised. Land will be made available for new farmers by offering existing ones a lump sum “exit payment” made up of the subsidies they would have received up to 2027.

The exit scheme and “additional support” for new farmers will be available from 2022, two elements of a fundamental change in public funding for farming that will be phased in over the next seven years.

The EU system of paying farmers based on how much land they own will be replaced by an environmental land management scheme in which they are rewarded for supporting wildlife, improving animal welfare, reducing air and water pollution and planting trees.

The National Farmers’ Union said: “Bringing through the next generation of farmers is absolutely crucial and it’s great to see the government investing in the future of farming by helping new entrants into the industry. We now need to ensure that these funds will be available for those first-generation farmers who don’t come from a farming background, as well as children of farmers who are starting their own businesses. “For any new entrant it’s really important that they are able to develop their skills so they can progress through the industry, and the promise of mentoring business packages is a really positive move.”



Half of bridges on England’s busiest roads in ‘poor condition’

George Greenwood, Graeme Paton: Thursday December 03 2020, 12.01am, The Times

Nearly half the bridges on England’s busiest roads have key sections in a poor or very poor condition, prompting concerns about traffic chaos while vital repairs are carried out.

An investigation by The Times found that 4,000 of about 9,000 bridges and large culverts on motorways or A-roads showed evidence of defects or damage that may significantly affect their capacity. Figures obtained under the Freedom of Information (FOI) Act from Highways England, the government-owned company that maintains motorways and major A-roads, show that 858 structures had at least one load-bearing or otherwise crucial section in “very poor condition” as of April 2019. Fourteen bridges and culverts were given the worst possible score of zero, the data shows. Highways England attempted to keep the data secret and released it only after an 18-month freedom of information battle.

Motorway bridges have also been affected in recent years. In all, there were 141 bridges with very poor parts on the M6. A further 90 were given the lowest rating on the M1, 51 on the M62 and 50 on the M5. According to official guidance, sections deemed to be in a very poor condition are at risk of failure, with weight restrictions and other measures possibly being imposed to limit further damage. In the case of bridges, this could mean limiting traffic to a single lane and banning heavy vehicles.

A separate disclosure by Transport for London (TfL) shows that about 200 out of 500 bridges and other structures that it maintains in the capital – 40 per cent – also had key sections in poor or very poor condition. The development comes amid criticism of the condition of Hammersmith Bridge in west London, which has been closed because of concerns over its structural integrity, with years of disagreement between the local council, TfL and the Department for Transport on who should foot the bill for repairs. The bridge was closed to cars in April last year after engineers discovered microfractures — a consequence of decades of unchecked corrosion. It could take six years to repair, leading to a ban on river traffic below the bridge, which means the Oxford-Cambridge boat race could be moved off the Thames for just the second time in its history. The closure of Hammersmith Bridge to cars has caused massive disruption in southwest London and beyond, and repairs are likely to take years.

Separate figures from Highways England last month showed that there were 95 structures that were the subject of “interim measures” to keep them safe. This includes a combination of weight or lane restrictions. Highways England insisted that a rating of “poor” or “very poor” did not mean a structure was unsafe, pointing out that the overall condition of structures had improved over the past five years. It also said that £1.5 billion had been earmarked for maintenance up until 2025, a £200 million increase on the previous five-period period.

Under Highways England guidelines, structures must undergo a general inspection every two years, and a more detailed principal inspection typically every six years, to identify any defects in reinforced concrete, steelwork and other construction materials. However, the figures released under FOI show the company had exceeded this two-year target for 2,000 bridges and other structures, of which 400 had key sections in poor or very poor condition.

Some of these had not had an inspection completed since 2014, according to the database.

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Historic suspension bridge ‘could collapse without warning’

Charlotte Wace, Northern Correspondent: December 08 2020, The Times
Whorlton Bridge in Co Durham is a scheduled monument and has wrought iron chains supporting a planked roadway.

According to council officials, it is the country’s “oldest road suspension bridge with the deck totally supported by its original chains”, but “some parts of the structure are not even capable of supporting the weight of the bridge itself”. They added: “This problem is not in a few isolated areas, but across the whole structure, and if the bridge were to fail, it could do so catastrophically.

The bridge was shut to traffic last year after a problem was identified with a hanger, or vertical support, but was still deemed safe enough for pedestrians and cyclists. However, they can no longer use it.

The bridge was created for horse and carts travelling out of the Durham coalfields. Permission for construction was granted in 1829 by parliament but was set back after floods washed the initial structure away. Building began again the following year and the bridge officially opened in 1831.

Officials at Durham county council said that any repair work needed to be planned along with Historic England and the Environment Agency. It means that the bridge is unlikely to reopen before March 2022. Dehenna Davidson, the first Conservative MP for Bishop Auckland — which covers Whorlton — since the seat was created in 1885, said it was “ridiculous” that no progress had been made on repairs since the bridge was first closed to traffic. With the bridge now shut entirely she said some residents of Whorlton and the nearby villages Wycliffe and Thorpe had been “blocked off from family”.



Whorlton Bridge
<https://www.bridgesonthetyne.co.uk/whorlton.html>

English teenagers slide down the global rankings for science

Nicola Woolcock, Education Editor: Wednesday December 09 2020, 12.01am, The Times

A series of breakthroughs may have put science in the spotlight this year, but English teenagers have fallen down the global rankings in the subject.

While younger children have done better than in 2015, older pupils have done far worse, according to a study that is published every four years.

The Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study is based on tests taken by children aged 10-14 in more than 60 countries. In England 10,000 pupils at 370 schools had their performance measured. Both age groups were above the average in both subjects, but not leading the pack.

English Year 5 pupils improved significantly in maths and rose from 10th place to 8th, just behind Northern Ireland. In science they managed to rise from 15th to 12th place.

However, the science results “significantly declined” for pupils in Year 9, according to researchers from University College London. Pupils in Year 9 did slightly worse in maths than in 2015, declining from 11th to 13th in the rankings, but in science they fell from 8th to 14th place.

Academics said that they could not explain the drop but head teachers said that the lack of specialist science teachers could be to blame.

Geoff Barton, general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said that England and Northern Ireland had performed particularly well in primary maths. “There is concern over the dip in secondary science scores in England, although it remains in the top 15 nations. We would welcome further investigation into why this has happened.”

Salaries had not kept pace with inflation, while schools had been placed “under intolerable pressure” because of inadequate funding from the government, which had been “asking ever more of them”,

Nick Gibb, the schools minister, said: “This country’s (*can he not say England? Ed.*) continuing strong performance in maths, including the significant improvement among Year 5 pupils, is testament to the hard work of teachers and a reflection of the reforms we have put in place to raise standards.”

But more needed to be done to “improve the quality of science teaching and [increase] the number of young people studying science subjects”, Mr Gibb added.

Doubts over ‘botched’ population data used to justify housebuilding

Neil Johnston, Midlands Correspondent: Friday December 04 2020, 12.01am, The Times

The Office for National Statistics is being investigated over claims that “implausible” population forecasts have threatened ancient woodland that once formed the Forest of Arden.

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Population projections produced by the ONS are being reviewed by the UK Statistics Authority after Andy Street, the Conservative mayor of the West Midlands, claimed that forecasts were being used to justify building 11,000 homes on the green belt around Coventry and next to woods in Warwickshire. The ONS said Coventry's population would rise by 32 per cent, twice as much as Birmingham's, between 2011 and 2031. As a result Coventry city council planned for more than 40,000 new homes, including on swathes of green belt land, which can only be developed in exceptional circumstances.

An analysis by the Keep Our Green Belt Green campaign said the city's "vital signs" did not reflect that level of population growth. The research, which four professors have reviewed, found that jobs had increased by 18 per cent in recent years, only half the rise seen in some nearby towns.

Births in Coventry fell by 5 per cent between 2009 and 2017, while in Stratford-upon-Avon, Wolverhampton and Bromsgrove they were up more than 5 per cent. Car registrations rose at a third of the pace of Birmingham, while A&E attendances grew by 10 per cent, compared with 40 per cent in Wolverhampton and 30 per cent in nearby Worcestershire.

Mr Street complained this year to Sir Ian Diamond, the national statistician, that with "two years of actual evidence" now in, the ONS had to take responsibility for its projections.

"The overall numbers projected for Coventry appear implausible and may be leading to poor long-term planning decisions," Mr Street wrote. The result could be "a catastrophic loss of precious green spaces".

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### **Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust blamed after hundreds of baby deaths**

Kat Lay, Health Editor | Charlie Parker: December 11 2020, The Times  
The deaths of hundreds of babies at an NHS trust must result in an immediate shake-up of maternity services across England, a report into the scandal has said. The inquiry includes 1,862 cases at Shrewsbury and Telford Hospitals NHS Trust. Some 13 mothers also died between 2000 and 2019 at the trust, where babies' skulls were fractured and their bones broken during "traumatic births".



Donna Ockenden, the former midwife leading the review, said there was a need for "immediate and essential actions" in maternity services across England "so that the experiences women and families have described to us are not replicated elsewhere". More than 80 families have brought claims against the trust since 2006/07, with almost £50 million paid out in compensation for 52 settled to the end of last year.

The report found a high turnover of senior management had led to a tendency to see problems as "historical". The initial report follows a clinical review of 250 cases, with a full report to follow next year. Multiple midwives have been referred to their regulator, including one who was struck off.

The report also revealed that two former chief executives of the NHS trust have been advising hospitals and working in the health sector despite apparent failings during their tenures.

Simon Wright, 54, was appointed chief executive of the trust from 2015 until he resigned last year after regulators criticised his leadership. During his posting, the trust was rated inadequate and put into special measures over failures in A&E and maternity care. Soon after his departure Mr Wright set up a company that specialises in coaching executive healthcare leaders. On LinkedIn, he highlights training on "turnaround and crisis management, locking-in wins and establishing a new normative behaviours". On his profile Mr Wright lists himself as a "transformation consultant" for the Virginia Mason Institute, a hospital group that has a five-year contract with NHS England to improve safety and leadership at five NHS trusts, including Shrewsbury and Telford.

Another head of the trust was Neil Taylor, 57, who was head of the Royal Shrewsbury Hospital for four years before it merged with the Princess Royal Hospital in Telford in 2003 to form the Shrewsbury and Telford Hospital NHS Trust. When applying for the £112,000-a-year position as chief executive of the trust, he lied about having a first-class degree from Nottingham University. He had only "one or two A-levels". He was caught out during a salary review in 2004 after creating a homemade diploma for a BA in business administration and economics. He pleaded guilty to one charge of obtaining a pecuniary advantage by deception and one of attempting to commit the same offence. He was given a 12-month suspended prison sentence by Shrewsbury crown court in 2005. Mr Taylor now runs a consultancy business used by private healthcare companies. One of them, MDT Health Consulting, advises Servelec, a digital healthcare provider that supplies NHS trusts.

#### **Catalogue of failings with tragic results**

**A lack of kindness and compassion from some staff:** The review found inappropriate language had

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been used “causing distress” and women being “blamed for their loss further compounded their grief”. Families raising concerns “were dismissed or not listened to at all”. Bereavement care was in several cases “either inadequate or non-existent”.

**High-risk women gave birth in the wrong place:** Families were not told how long it would take to transfer them from a standalone midwifery unit to a hospital in case of complication. The decision on where to give birth was not reviewed when women changed from low to higher risk categories. One baby died in 2016 after a delayed transfer to the labour ward, being “delivered in a very poor condition having suffered a brain injury”.

**Staff competence was not up to scratch:** The review found midwives had failed to recognise cases that were a “deviation from the norm” and escalate them to senior staff appropriately. Some women with high-risk pregnancies remained, inappropriately, under midwife-led care or were seen only by obstetricians in training. Midwives failed to bring in obstetricians when mothers’ conditions deteriorated, and junior obstetricians failed to bring in consultants.

**Inappropriate use of Oxytocin led to babies getting stuck:** The drug is commonly used to increase the frequency, strength and length of uterine contractions. It should not be used or should be stopped “in the presence of excessive uterine contractions or foetal heart-rate concerns”. The review team found “many examples” of it being used “injudiciously”.

**Problems with fetal heart-rate monitoring:** There were “significant problems” in the use of heart-rate monitoring both in midwife-led units and on the labour ward, the review found. In 2015 a baby was born with brain injuries caused by a lack of oxygen, and died several months later. Heart-rate abnormalities were not picked up and staff later failed to realise they were recording the mother’s heart, rather than the foetal heart.

A desire to keep caesarean section rates low Keeping caesarean section rates low — the trust was consistently between 8 and 12 per cent below the average for England — “was perceived as the essence of good maternity care in the unit”. The review said that in some cases “earlier recourse to a caesarean delivery would have avoided death and injury”. Women suffered traumatic births, with “evidence of repeated attempts at vaginal delivery with forceps, sometimes using excessive force; all with traumatic consequences”.

### Regions to carry scars of pandemic

Philip Aldrick: Tuesday December 15 2020, 12.01am, The Times

In 2023, the economies of Yorkshire and the Humber, the North East, the West Midlands and the South West will all be smaller than they were in 2019. Any recovery will be mainly in the cities, with towns set to lag behind.

City economies in six non-London regions are expected to grow between 2019 and 2023 but only three town economies will be larger. Only London and the South East will see employment above 2019 levels by 2023.

Rohan Malik, managing partner at EY (*Ernst & Young? Ed.*)UK and Ireland, said:

“The economy faces a lopsided recovery which risks setting back the levelling-up agenda unless concerted action is taken. “Manufacturing, arts and leisure, and hospitality — vital parts of the economies in towns, the Midlands and the North — have been most affected during the pandemic or are likely to take longer to recover.”

London, the South East and the North West have borne the least economic pain this year, shrinking 10.4 per cent, 11.4 per cent and 11.8 per cent, respectively. Other regions have contracted by more than 12 per cent.



### Fixation with north hurting London, says Shaftesbury boss Brian Bickell

Louisa Clarence-Smith, Property Correspondent: Wednesday December 16 2020, 12.01am, The Times

The boss of one of the biggest property owners in the West End has accused the government of being “obsessed with the north” as shops and restaurants close in London. Brian Bickell, 66, chief executive of Shaftesbury, said ministers were failing to do enough to support businesses in London as the company posted an annual loss of almost £700 million. He is confident that workers will return to central London and tourist numbers will start to recover in 2022. “It’s a question of when, not if,” he said.

Shaftesbury, owner of a 16-acre estate in the city that includes Chinatown and Carnaby Street, collected only 53 per cent of the rent it was owed in the six months to the end of September.

Footfall in central London has fallen more sharply than in the regions as Covid-19 restrictions keep office

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workers and tourists away. In the second week of December, it was down 51.7 per cent on the year, according to Springboard, which measures retail activity. That compared with a fall of 47.5 per cent in regional cities and 24.1 per cent in towns.

Mike Prew, an analyst at Jefferies, the investment bank, agreed because of the evidence of post-lockdown consumer behaviour and a surge in footfall in recent weeks. However, he said that there is unlikely to be a full return of international tourists within the next two to three years, he added. A rise in online shopping and home working during the pandemic could pose a risk to demand for shops, restaurants, offices and flats in the West End of London.

It is unclear how many retailers and hospitality businesses will be able to stay open next year. The government's grant scheme, which offers up to £3,000 per month for hospitality businesses forced to shut covers just over half of the average monthly rent bill in London, according to Altus Group, the advisory firm.

### Death of Nargis Begum on smart motorway may lead to charges

Graeme Paton, Transport Correspondent: December 22 2020, 12.01am, The Times  
A coroner investigating the death of Nargis Begum, a grandmother from Sheffield, said in a pre-inquest review in Doncaster that she would decide whether to refer Highways England to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). The state-owned company, which operates motorways and A-roads in England, may have a case to answer for corporate manslaughter or gross negligence manslaughter, she said.

Ms Begum (62) was a passenger in a car that broke down on the M1 in South Yorkshire, a stretch of smart motorway with no hard shoulder, in September 2018. It took more than 22 minutes after the car broke down for warning notices to be switched on alerting other drivers to the danger ahead.

Controversy has grown around the system in which the hard shoulder is removed to create an extra driving lane. The measure, which has been expanded across England, is intended to improve traffic flow on motorways. Refuge areas allowing cars to pull off in an emergency are up to 1.5 miles (2.4km) apart. Variable speed limits are used to keep traffic flowing and lanes are closed with a red X on overhead gantries if a vehicle breaks down or an accident is detected on the road ahead.

Motoring groups have criticised the reforms, arguing that they present a danger to motorists who break down between lay-bys. Particular concerns have been raised over the length of time taken to switch on the red X signs.

The government has said it will install radar "stopped vehicle detection", within three years to ensure that broken down cars are automatically identified.

Nicola Mundy, the coroner, noted the time taken to switch on warning notices and said she was considering whether to adjourn the inquest to make a referral to the CPS about potential homicide and that she wanted to give lawyers for Highways England time to prepare a response before a hearing in February. The CPS has decided against prosecuting the driver of the car that crashed into the Nissan, the hearing was told. The case was adjourned until February 11 for another pre-inquest review.

Edmund King, president of the AA, which wants the gap between lay-bys to be halved, said: "This tragic case and too many others are exactly why we have campaigned for doubling the number of emergency refuge areas."



### English politics:

#### Commons select Committees

18 December 2020: The Education Committee's report A Plan for an Adult Skills and Lifelong Learning Revolution sets out the role an ambitious and long-term strategy should play in helping the nation meet the major employment challenges stemming from the Fourth Industrial Revolution, an ageing population and the impact of the covid-19 pandemic.

The Committee calls for an end to the model of education funding overwhelmingly focused on learning before the age of 25 and a move towards a system and culture of lifelong learning that encourages education at any age. The report identifies four key pillars to revolutionise the adult education system.

**A community learning centre in every town:** There has been a 32% decline in participation in community learning between 2008-9 and 2018-19. The report finds that the Department for Education (DfE) does not fully grasp the value and purpose of community learning and calls for an ambitious plan for a



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community learning centre in every town. These do not need to be new buildings or organisations: existing organisations and assets, such as colleges, church halls and libraries, could be used.

**Individual Learning accounts (ILAs):** The failures of the ILA scheme in 2000–01 have meant that ILAs remain political kryptonite for English policymaking, but provided lessons are learnt, introducing ILAs could kickstart participation. ILAs must have a truly lifelong emphasis, with adults receiving top-up investments throughout their working lives to revitalise training and upskilling.

**Nurse part-time Higher Education back to health:** Part-time student numbers collapsed by 53% between 2008–09 and 2017–18. The DfE must instate fee grants for part-time learners from the most disadvantaged backgrounds who study courses that meet the skills needs of the nations (*sic. Ed. See editorial*), as well as extend the maintenance support loan to part-time distance learners.

**A skills tax credit to revitalise employer-led training:** Employer-led training has declined by a half since the end of the 1990s, with 39% of employers admitting to training none of their staff over the last year. The Government must introduce tax credits for employers who invest in training for their low-skilled workers.

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Health

Social care: funding and workforce

The case for making a sustained investment in social care has never been stronger—the toll the pandemic has taken on this sector means that social care is no longer a hidden problem, but one that the country as a whole understands. We urge the Government to now address this crisis as a matter of urgency.



Current funding problems in social care: It is clear from the evidence we have heard that funding shortfalls are having a serious negative impact on the lives of those who use the social care system, as well as impacting the pay levels of the workforce and threatening the sustainability of the care market. An immediate funding increase is needed to avoid the risk of market collapse caused by providers withdrawing from offering services to council-funded clients and focusing exclusively on the self-pay market.

Alongside such a long term funding settlement we strongly believe the government should publish a 10 year plan for the social care sector as it has done for the NHS. The two systems are increasingly linked and it makes no sense to put in place long term plans for one without the other.

The social care workforce: Improving the level of recognition afforded to social care workers must be a key focus for the Government to safeguard the future of the social care workforce.

We welcome the Government's commitment to bringing forward a long-term solution to low pay in social care. It is essential that this solution provides a sustainable basis for continued rises in pay above and beyond increases to the National Minimum Wage and in line with increases given to NHS staff.

Parity could be achieved by linking social care pay to equivalent bands of the NHS Agenda for Change contract and introducing meaningful pay progression.

As well as addressing issues of pay within the social care sector, we recommend that the Government bring forward proposals to support the improvement of employment conditions in the sector, including reducing the over-reliance on zero hours contracts and improving the provision of sick pay.

The Secretary of State has committed to increasing the alignment between the training of NHS and social care staff and his stated ambition being to make it easier for a registered nurse, for example, to move between the NHS and social care is an important one. Establishing a clear career path with substantial training opportunities, more effectively aligned with the NHS is vital for all entrants to the social care workforce.

The current system is unfair, confusing, demeaning, and frightening for the most vulnerable people in our society, and their families. It is therefore essential that the Government tackle the problems in the care sector as a priority. The success of the reforms in Japan has demonstrated that it is possible for a Government to grasp the nettle and take decisions on social care which, though they may be initially difficult, lead to positive and lasting change which is widely accepted by society.

The Lords Economic Affairs Committee's report makes a persuasive case for the introduction of free personal care (*as they have in Scotland. Ed.*). This would cost around £5bn per year, which is only a small fraction of what is currently spent on NHS care.

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### STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS

No. 1634 The Representation of the People (Variation of Limits of Candidates' Election Expenses) (England) Order 2020

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The Designation of Schools Having a Religious Character (England) (No. 2) Order 2020

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, International Travel) (England) (Amendment) (No. 29) Regulations 2020

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) (All Tiers) (England) (Amendment) (No. 2) Regulations 2020

The Health Protection (Coronavirus, Testing Requirements and Standards) (England) Regulations 2020

The Business Tenancies (Protection from Forfeiture: Relevant Period) (Coronavirus) (England) (No. 3) Regulations 2020

The Official Controls (Plant Health and Genetically Modified Organisms) (England) (Amendment) (No. 5) Regulations 2020

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**England's heroes/heroines:** Sir Henry Bessemer FRS (19 January 1813 – 15 March 1898) was an English inventor, whose steel-making process would become the most important technique for making steel for almost one hundred years from 1856 to 1950. He also played a significant role in establishing the town of Sheffield as a major industrial centre.

Bessemer had been trying to reduce the cost of steel-making for military ordnance, and developed his system for blowing air through molten pig iron to remove the impurities. This made steel easier, quicker and cheaper to manufacture, and revolutionized structural engineering. One of the most significant inventors of the Second Industrial Revolution, Bessemer also made over 100 other inventions in the fields of iron, steel and glass. Unlike most inventors, he managed to bring his own projects to fruition and profited financially from their success.

Bessemer's father, Anthony, was born in London into a Huguenot family, but moved to Paris when he was 21 years old. He was an inventor who, while engaged by the Paris Mint, made a machine for making medallions that could produce steel dies from a larger model. He became a member of the French Academy of Science, for his improvements to the optical microscope when he was 26. He was forced to leave Paris by the French Revolution, and returned to Britain. There he invented a process for making gold chains, which was successful, and enabled him to buy a small estate in the village of Charlton, near Hitchin in Hertfordshire, where Henry was born. The invention from which Bessemer made his first fortune was a series of six steam-powered machines for making bronze powder, used in the manufacture of gold paint. He examined the bronze powder made in Nuremberg which was the only place where it was made at the time. He then copied and improved the product and made it capable of being made on a simple production line. It was an early example of reverse engineering where a product is analysed, and then reconstituted. He eventually reduced the price of the Nuremberg powder to about 1/40th of the London retail price. The profits from sale of the paint allowed him to pursue his other inventions.

Bessemer patented a method for making a continuous ribbon of plate glass in 1848, but it was not commercially successful. He gained experience in designing furnaces, which was to be of great use for his new steel-making process.

**Bessemer process:** Henry Bessemer worked on the problem of manufacturing cheap steel for ordnance production from 1850 to 1855 when he patented his method.

Many industries were constrained by the lack of steel, being reliant on cast iron and wrought iron alone. Examples include railway structures such as bridges and tracks, where the treacherous nature of cast iron was keenly felt by many engineers and designers. There had been many accidents when cast iron beams collapsed suddenly, such as the Dee Bridge disaster of May 1847, the Wootton bridge collapse and the Bull bridge accident of 1860. The problem recurred at the Tay Bridge disaster of 1879, and failures continued until all cast iron under-bridges were replaced by steel structures.

The process involved using oxygen in air blown through molten pig iron to burn off the impurities and thus create steel. At the time of its invention it was of enormous industrial importance because it lowered the cost of production steel, leading to steel being widely substituted for cast iron and wrought iron. Bessemer licensed the patent for his process to five ironmasters, but from the outset, the companies had great difficulty producing good quality steel because the quantity of carbon to create steel was difficult to control. Robert Forester Mushet, in the Forest of Dean, had shown that the quantity of carbon could be controlled by removing almost all of it from the iron and then adding an exact amount of carbon and manganese. This improved the quality of the finished product and increased its malleability.



*Drawing of Bessemer by Leslie Ward in Vanity Fair, 6 November 1880*

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When Bessemer tried to induce makers to take up his improved system, he met with general rebuffs and was eventually driven to undertake the exploitation of the process himself. He erected steelworks in Sheffield and began to manufacture steel. At first the output was insignificant, but gradually the magnitude of the operations was enlarged until the competition became effective, and steel traders generally became aware that the firm of Henry Bessemer & Co. was underselling them to the extent of UK£10-£15 a ton. This argument to the pocket quickly had its effect, and licences were applied for in such numbers that, in royalties for the use of his process, Bessemer received a sum in all considerably exceeding a million pounds sterling.



Bessemer converter, Kelham Island Museum, Sheffield, England (2010)

Bessemer was a prolific inventor and held at least 129 patents, spanning from 1838 to 1883. These included military ordnance, movable dies for embossed postage stamps, a screw extruder to extract sugar from sugar cane, and others in the fields of iron, steel and glass.

Bessemer also obtained a patent in 1857 for the casting of metal between contrarotating rollers – a forerunner of today's continuous casting processes and remarkably, Bessemer's original idea has been implemented in the direct continuous casting of steel strip.

Bessemer died in March 1898 at Denmark Hill. He is buried in West Norwood cemetery, London SE27.

### England's history: Fog helped the English to get revenge at Boulogne

Paul Simons, The Times

January can often be plagued by fog, but 680 years ago a shroud of fog helped the English to deliver a crushing blow to the French navy at the start of the Hundred Years' War.

The French had a fearsome naval force and launched devastating raids on English ports along the south coast, most notably a brutal attack on Southampton in October 1338, when the French invasion force was concealed by fog and achieved total surprise before setting the city ablaze and inflicting huge casualties on the civilian population.

The English were hellbent on retaliation and some time around January 14, 1340 a fleet of small ships sailed for Boulogne. In a stunning parallel to the French attack in fog on Southampton, the English ships were concealed in a shroud of fog and they too achieved complete surprise, easily overcoming the poor defences and torching the French fleet in the harbour — 18 galley ships, as well as 24 merchant ships and much of the harbour district, including a warehouse storing all the oars, sails and weapons used for the galleys.

It took several hours for the French in the upper town to rally their forces and counterattack, and after fierce fighting the English were driven back, but by then the damage had been done.

The galleys were the foremost vessels of the French navy. They were highly manoeuvrable, making them a threat to shipping on the high seas and able to sail into shallow harbours along the south coast of England where they could wreak havoc.

The devastation at Boulogne was a huge setback for the French, leaving them with only four remaining galleys in other ports, and as a result they lost command of the Channel and North Sea for the first time since the outbreak of war.

With a greatly reduced threat to their ports, the English were free to launch more raids on the French that year, including the ports of Dieppe and Le Tréport.



A depiction of one of the sea battles in 1340, during the Hundred Years' War

**English culture:** Andrew's Dole is an English custom dating from 1605. In that year, the Mayor of Bideford (Devon, England), Andrew Dole, established a trust to provide for loaves of bread to be distributed to poor, elderly, persons who applied at the Mayor's Parlour. The custom continues to this day and takes place on New Year's Day. He also left some land to trustees and the income is distributed to 10 deserving people, for each trustee. Again this is distributed on New Year's Day.

While the custom no longer takes place in this form, the charity still continues to provide relief to local residents in the form of financial grants.



Bideford

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### Promotion: Pheasant

Hatched in spring, pheasant chicks are generally raised in enclosed pens that allow them plenty of room to roam and forage but which protect them from predators. They are released in summer to mature ready for the shooting season, which starts on October 1.

A brace (usually one cock and one hen) should provide a hearty meal for four. Fresh birds continue to be available until the season ends on January 31, so pheasant is the perfect dish for the festive season



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### Recipe: Pheasant breasts braised in cider

[https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/pheasantbreastsbrais\\_1003](https://www.bbc.co.uk/food/recipes/pheasantbreastsbrais_1003)

Caramelised onions, bacon and cider combine in the perfect recipe for roast pheasant.

By Bella Radford

Preparation time: less than 30 mins

Cooking time: 1 to 2 hours

Serves 4

#### Ingredients

|                                                                              |                      |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|
| 4 pheasant breasts (young hen breasts if possible as they won't be so tough) | 5 shallots           |
| 4 large rashers, lightly smoked bacon                                        | 1 tsp caster sugar   |
| 100ml/7tbsp full fat crème fraîche                                           | 30g/1 oz plain flour |
| 500ml/17fl oz dry cider                                                      | knob of butter       |



#### Method

Preheat the oven to 200C/400F/Gas 6.

Butter the pheasant breasts and then wrap in the bacon. Place in an ovenproof dish (so that they aren't too cramped together) and then pop in the oven for 25 minutes.

After 25 minutes reduce the oven temperature to 170C/325F/Gas 3, pour 250ml/8 fl oz of the cider over the pheasant breasts, cover with a lid or tin foil, and return to the oven for another 60 minutes.

Towards the ending of the cooking time for the pheasants, pour the remaining cider into a saucepan and cook until the volume of liquid has reduced by about half.

Thinly slice the shallots and cook very slowly in a little butter until soft. Then add the caster sugar and continue to cook until lightly caramelised. Remove from the heat until ready to finish the sauce.

Check the pheasant breasts during the cooking time to ensure that they do not dry out and add more cider if necessary.

To finish the sauce, add the flour to the shallots, place the pan back on a gentle heat and mix together.

You may need to add a little more butter at this stage if the shallots are very dry, but they shouldn't be.

Now add the cider reduction and the crème fraîche and cook together over a low heat until the sauce starts to thicken.

Once ready to serve, slice each breast into about five slices and place on the plate still in the shape of the whole breast. Pour the sauce over the meat and serve.

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### OUR PRECIOUS UNION! Theresa May June 2017

(Sucking England dry)

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