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Campaign for an English Parliament

Think of England Number 127: November 2022



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Number 127 November 2022

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RECOMMENDED READING: English heroic legends by Kathleen Herbert published by Anglo-Saxon books. ISBN 1-898281-25-4



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: This is my last editorial as editor of your newsletter. The last seven years have been interesting and I have learnt a lot but it is now time to hand the reins over to someone with new ideas.



The CEP AGM is on 29th November. Contact me for details of the Skype meeting if you wish to attend. It is important for the future of the CEP that you do.

Matthew Sinclair is right about the overfunding of Scotland. CEP representatives met him when he was head of the Taxpayers' Alliance.

At last Tom Harris punctures the devolution lie used against an English Parliament. It was never about bringing governance closer to the people. So-called devolution in England is sucking up local councils.

The Times talks glowingly about its report on British education failing to acknowledge that the UK government only controls education in England. Similarly its correspondents talk about 'our environment' and 'this country' clearly desperate not to acknowledge they are talking about England.

Paul Johnson talks about a new funding formula for England but fails to mention the iniquitous Block Grant and Barnett formula that ensures that the rest of the UK has the means to fund their services much better. The UK government figures for 2020-2021 per head: England: £13,166 Scotland: £14,842 Wales: £14,222 N Ireland: £15,357 Well it's goodbye from me and I wish all the very best to readers and to the following editor.

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England and the rest of the UK:

Freeze Scots grants, Truss chief said

Poppy Koronka, Saturday October 08 2022, 12.01am, The Times

Matthew Sinclair, the economist, was director and economics adviser at Deloitte bank. He suggested that freezing annual grants to the devolved nations could save Westminster £1.4 billion. He made the suggestions in a book written after the 2008 financial crash. In his 2010 book *How to Cut Public Spending (and Still Win an Election)*, he wrote: "Freezing the current grants to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland for one year offers a substantial saving, and also means that no services are necessarily subject to cuts. Instead budgets received will have to be handled more carefully, with any unnecessary spending eradicated. Considering the differing levels of spending autonomy enjoyed by the devolved assemblies, a general freeze will allow each nation to make its own decision over what is a priority and what is not." In 2012, Sinclair commented that the Barnett formula, which is used to calculate devolved budgets, "means higher spending in Scotland at the expense of taxpayers in the rest of the country".

The Scottish government did not respond to a request for comment.



Pitiful Mark Drakeford embodies the devolution lie

Daily Telegraph: Tom Harris 19 October 2022 • 6:21pm

It should come as little surprise to this cynical nation that advance hype for anything too often raises expectations to unrealistic levels, leading to disillusionment. So it proved in the case of devolution, the great constitutional experiment of the New Labour years. Among the long list of questionable arguments for devolution, one of the most shameless was that decisions made by devolved assemblies would, simply by virtue of being located closer to the voting public, produce better outcomes. This was easy to sell, harder to manifest. In fact, rarely has an argument so confidently stated proved so awfully wrong. Far from efficient governance, it has produced decades of terrible outcomes in all the main policy areas for which the devolved bodies are responsible: health, education, local government and transport.

There is, however, a critical exception, because devolution has worked for one small section of the population: unimpressive politicians who, away from the glare of Westminster, are able to exert enormous power with little accountability. When their policies are questioned, we see a spectacle of frothing, self-righteous disdain. Mark Drakeford, the First Minister of Wales, was so outraged by a question from Andrew RT Davies, the Welsh Tory leader, that he sought to portray anyone criticising his devolved government as beyond the pale. "It is shocking, absolutely shocking to me that you [Mr Davies] think you can turn up here this afternoon, with the mess your party has made to the budgets of this country, to the reputation of this country around the world... and claim some kind of moral high ground," he snapped. Even to raise the issue of the appalling state of Wales's ambulance service (as Mr Davies had done) is in itself unacceptable.

The same pattern has been observed at Holyrood since the SNP took office in 2007. Criticism of the embarrassingly poor outcomes presided over by Nicola Sturgeon's government, from the extraordinary number of drug-related deaths to slipping educational standards, are dismissed as Unionist propaganda by people who don't have Scotland's best interests at heart – the old "You're talking Scotland down" defence of the indefensible. It's intentionally outrageous; the nationalists know there is little their critics can do.

This brings us to the most disingenuous argument adopted by the champions of devolution in the run-up to the election of the Labour government in 1997: that devolved politics would enhance local accountability. Where is the accountability in the devolution settlement today? Both Holyrood and the Senedd have been granted significantly more powers – and cash – than was ever envisaged in the 1980s and 90s.

The two devolved bodies now control almost every essential service for the people who elect them, but this framework has not led to major improvements in transparency. They have all the power but none of the responsibility that comes with it.

England's voice:

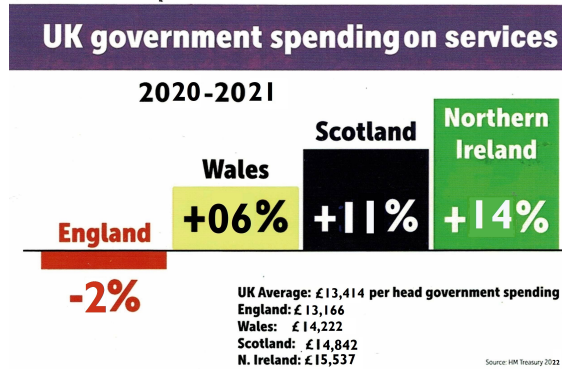
The poor are failed most by our inability to reform local services

Paul Johnson, Monday October 24 2022, 12.01am, The Times

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One of the longer-term failures of government have meant that important aspects of public policy are becoming increasingly incoherent. The long-term consequences in terms of equity, living standards, wellbeing and economic success are likely to be serious. Failure to deal with this incoherence has actively undermined any ambitions towards “levelling up”. Yet this failure, and the lack of urgency in trying to address it, has received absurdly little attention. I am speaking of the way in which we allocate funding across England to local services including the police, social care, public health, local government and schools. The amount that we spend on the first four of those has become increasingly random and unrelated to any measure of need. One result is that, in general, spending in areas with greater need has fallen further and faster than spending in more affluent areas.



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

The two-week target to see a GP is a national outrage

Daily Telegraph: Stephen Pollard

There must be a long German word for vaunted ambition which is, in reality, embarrassing in the paucity of its vision. Whatever that word is, Thérèse Coffey is at risk of suffering from it, when she made her debut in the Commons as Health Secretary (*for England.Ed.*), announcing herself as the patients’ champion with the publication of a “Plan for Patients”. And what was the centrepiece of this sparkling transformation of healthcare? A guarantee that anyone who contacts their GP will be given an appointment within two weeks. The Royal College of GPs (RCGP) accused Coffey of burdening already overstretched GP surgeries with new targets

On so many key measures, the NHS is a disaster. The average time it takes for an ambulance to reach a Category 1 emergency is nine minutes and six seconds, against a target of seven minutes. More than six million people are now on the official NHS waiting list in England.

The usual response is to blame the pandemic but the situation was dire long before that. Not since 2015 has the NHS met its target to start treatment for urgent cases (not just for cancer) within two months.

Ageing roofs at 34 hospitals could collapse

Harry Taylor: The Times

Thirty-four hospital buildings in England have concrete roofs in such a poor state of repair they could collapse at any moment, according to a government minister.

Surveys carried out by the NHS found that buildings at 16 health trusts across England contained reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC). The material was widely used in the construction of hospitals and schools between the 1960s and 1990s but it has a lifespan of about 30 years. Last month the engineering company Mott MacDonald was hired by the Treasury and the Department of Health and Social Care to carry out a review into hospitals at risk.

They include West Suffolk hospital in Bury St Edmunds, Frimley Park in Surrey and Airedale in Yorkshire and Lancashire. Some hospitals have to use metal supports to prop up roofs, including the Queen Elizabeth in King’s Lynn, Norfolk. Patients had to be moved out of its critical care unit in March last year because it was deemed unsafe.

Almost half of ambulance delays happening at just 15 NHS trusts

Daily Telegraph: Laura Donnelly, health editor and Ben Butcher 3 October 2022 • 8:30pm

In August Steve Barclay, the then health secretary, summoned the heads of six NHS trusts with the largest number of hours lost to handover delays. Three were from the South West region, which has repeatedly had long queues outside hospitals in Cornwall and Plymouth, while hospitals in Birmingham, Worcestershire and Leicester were among those told to make urgent improvements. It followed warnings that delays are harming around 40,000 patients per month, according to the Association of Ambulance Chief Ex-

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ecutives. Handover delays caused ambulance crews to lose almost 333,000 hours in the 12 months to July 2022 - 18 times more than the 17,600 hours lost during the same period in 2019 to 2020. Health chiefs say many of the problems are fuelled by a crisis in social care, which has left hospitals struggling to discharge patients, for want of care at home.

NHS logging baby deaths as stillbirths ‘to avoid scrutiny’

Daily *Telegraph* Investigations team 16 October 2022 • 9:00pm

NHS hospitals have claimed that babies born alive were stillborn, a *Telegraph* Investigation has found, prompting accusations they were trying to avoid scrutiny. The babies identified by *The Telegraph* should have been recorded as neonatal deaths, but staff claimed they were stillbirths – babies that never had any signs of life outside the mother’s body, even for a single moment.



Six children who died before they left hospital were wrongly described as stillborn. Several of the children lived for minutes and one lived for five days.

Coroners are not able to carry out inquests into stillbirths, leaving some families unable to get answers until the error was corrected. In one case, an obstetrician told a coroner in Stockport that he had been pressured by an NHS manager to say a baby he had delivered had definitely been stillborn, in order to be “loyal” to the trust. His comments are likely to raise fears that some NHS trusts in England have used the stillbirth label to avoid having coroners examine any errors that may have been made by staff.

Although coroners are legally allowed to hold a narrow, preliminary investigation into whether the baby was born alive or not, they must halt the case if they find the child is stillborn – meaning they cannot examine what went wrong. Families of babies wrongly labelled stillborn also face financial implications, because they are not automatically eligible for statutory “bereavement awards” worth more than £15,000. The revelations raise questions over transparency at some NHS trusts, and come ahead of what is expected to be a “harrowing” report into failings in the maternity unit in East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, stretching back more than 10 years.

A further scandal exposes the need for urgent reforms

The Times Leading Articles, Wednesday October 19 2022, 9.00pm, The Times

Deplorable care at the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust led to the deaths of 45 babies, an inquiry has found

The catalogue of failures exposed by the medical expert Dr Bill Kirkup is catastrophic and inexcusable. His inquiry identified 97 cases where poor care led to the deaths or injuries or disabilities being inflicted upon mothers and children between 2009 and 2020. In addition to the 45 babies who died at two of the trust’s hospitals 12 were brain damaged. Twenty-three mothers died or suffered injuries as a direct result of poor care. These tragedies were met with neither care nor compassion from those in positions of power”. Some women were even blamed for the deaths of their own children.

For such a culture to have taken root in one NHS trust alone would demand radical change to eradicate it. Yet there is a disturbing familiarity to this week’s revelations. The inexcusable behaviour uncovered in East Kent, be it “gross failures of teamworking” or the bullying of patients by staff, has been identified and condemned before. Now, for the second time in a year, the NHS must consider a report into neonatal deaths that recommends sweeping and overdue reforms.

More than half of maternity units now judged unsafe

Eleanor Hayward, Health Correspondent: Friday October 21 2022, 12.01am, The Times

NHS maternity services are getting worse and the majority of units no longer provide safe care, the health watchdog warned yesterday.

An annual report by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), which regulates hospitals, expressed “deep concerns” over the deterioration of care for mothers and babies in England. For the first time since records began, more than half of the 139 maternity units run by the NHS are now classed as “inadequate” or “requires improvement” regarding safety. The CQC “state of care” report linked poor maternity services to chronic staff shortages, with the NHS currently short of 2,000 midwives. Last year saw the largest

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annual decrease in midwife numbers since records began. The report added: "Services are finding it very difficult to recruit. "We are seeing high turnover of senior midwives, leading to inconsistent leadership and difficulty in embedding a good culture."



Jeremy Hunt set to postpone cap on social care costs

Chris Smyth , Whitehall Editor Tuesday October 18 2022, The Times

The cap on the sum people pay for care in old age is set to be put back by a year or more in the first of a series of "eye-watering" cuts the new chancellor is considering to balance the books. Councils have asked to put back the social care reforms because they are not ready to administer them, making it easier to argue for the delay. This would save £1 billion yearly, rising to £3 billion if the postponement was longer. A new delay will prompt an outcry from social care campaigners, who fear it will be the prelude to dropping the reforms completely despite repeated promises from Truss and Johnson.

National Highways will not face a corporate manslaughter charge

Daily Telegraph: Phoebe Southworth

A mother of five, Mrs Begum, was outside the vehicle on the inside lane of the motorway when she was hit by her car, which was propelled into her by a lorry near Woodall services in September 2018. Despite being stranded for 16 minutes and 21 seconds before the collision, Highways England, which has since re-branded as National Highways, failed to spot the breakdown so that the lane could be closed to traffic. Richard Chapman, who drove past Mrs Begum and her husband's stranded vehicle before the collision, told the inquest that he had only a few seconds to register the breakdown and move into a lane to the right. If a car travelling beside had not moved into lane three, he would not have been able to avoid Mrs Begum and her husband. His wife told him they should alert someone about the breakdown. Mr Chapman said he told her that the smart motorway technology should register the incident and officials would react. Expressing his concerns about smart motorways, Mr Chapman said: "You've got to make that assumption that somebody, somewhere, is using those cameras effectively."

In February, South Yorkshire Police confirmed that National Highways will not face a corporate manslaughter charge over Mrs Begum's death.

Smart motorways are designed to maintain flow of traffic and were introduced in England in 2002. The design in which there is no hard shoulder came into use in 2014.

Drivers became 'sitting ducks' after smart motorway outage

Ben Clatworthy, Transport Correspondent: Friday October 28 2022, 12.01am, The Times

The outage affected 280 miles of all-lane running (ALR) smart motorways in England, which do not have hard shoulders. It meant the systems were disabled on large sections of the M1 in the north, the M3, M4, M5, M6, M56 and M62.

The lifesaving technology failed for seven hours in a near-national outage and prevented National Highways (formerly Highways England) control-room staff from being able to activate signs to warn drivers of stranded vehicles. Motorists were left unaware of the failure and those who broke down faced becoming "sitting ducks" on nearly three quarters of ALR smart motorways. It is understood that it was caused when the Dynac system suffered glitches. It controls the digital signs on overhead gantries that are used to display red Xs, closing lanes. They also display variable speed limits.

When working effectively, the technology is capable of detecting stopped vehicles within 20 seconds. In January, the government announced that it would pause the rollout of all future smart motorways for at least two years amid concerns about their safety. Grant Shapps, who was transport secretary at the time, said that no smart motorways, on which the hard shoulder is used as a permanent live traffic lane, would be built until five full years of safety data had been collected on stretches introduced before 2020. Rishi Sunak pledged to ban new smart motorways during his summer leadership campaign, branding the controversial roads "unsafe". He said: "We need to listen to drivers, be on their side and stop with the pursuit of policies that go against common sense."

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Industrial wasteland becomes a wildlife haven in Lancashire

Rhys Blakely , Science Correspondent Monday October 03 2022, 12.01am, The Times

An area covering more than 1,800 acres (7,400,000 sq m) of wetland, meadow and woodland around Wigan and Leigh will join England's network of 225 National Nature Reserves (NNRs), sites considered to be among the country's wildlife "crown jewels".

NNRs are supposed to ensure that some of the most important habitats for vulnerable species are protected, and to provide "outdoor laboratories" for conservation research. The hope is that they also provide opportunities for the public, schools and specialist interest groups to experience wildlife first-hand and to learn more about conservation. NNR sites cover nearly 100,000 hectares in total. "These nature hotspots are key to efforts to restore nature across England, and will play a key role in the nation's nature recovery network in line with the government's key target to halt the decline in wildlife populations by 2030," the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs said. Despite having the highest level of protection, about half of England's NNRs are assessed as being in "unfavourable" condition. The latest designation comes amid concern from conservation groups that the government is planning to scrap wildlife protections rooted in EU law that still apply in the UK, including the Habitats Directive.

Growth plan must respect Britain's protected landscapes

Julian Gover Wednesday October 05 2022, 9.00pm, The Times

Horror is not too strong a word to describe the prospect of England's national parks and areas of outstanding natural beauty falling prey to investment zones, thinly thought-through wheezes to get things built in what government describes menacingly as "undeveloped and under-developed areas".

On Sunday, the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities issued rules for its light-touch investment zones intended to "drive growth and unlock housing". Far from exempting national parks or AONBs, the green belt or sites of special scientific interest, it asks applicants to note simply "whether the proposed development would be on land" that includes them. The thrust of this government is that rules of all sorts get in the way of pouring concrete. We are not wrong to be scared.

If the problem is confusion, it should be straightforward for the minister, Simon Clarke and the Defra secretary, Ranil Jayawardena, to clear it up. They should make it clear they will respect landscape, heritage and environmental protections set out in law.



Political pressure on water companies to tackle sewage spills, which can harm wildlife, is intensifying.

Adam Vaughan, Environment Editor | Rachel Salvidge, Monday October 10 2022, The Times

Each year the regulator inspects the self-monitoring that water companies undertake for discharges into rivers from the 6,327 wastewater treatment works across England and Wales to ensure the data withstands scrutiny. Between 2015 and 2019 there was an average of 475 inspections a year. However, statistics released under freedom of information rules show inspections more than halved in 2020, to 223, before increasing last year to 334. The lack of oversight coincided with a period of water pollution incidents in English rivers that led the Environment Agency to threaten water bosses with jail sentences.

Inspections have recovered this year. There have been 434 already, suggesting that figures will return to pre-pandemic levels by the end of the year.

Philip Dunne, Tory chairman of the environmental audit committee, which published a damning report on the state of England's rivers in January, said: "It is clear reliance on self-monitoring has been part of the problem of sewage discharges in recent years. It is therefore more important than ever that audits and inspections carried out by the Environment Agency are robust."

90% of schools will run out of cash next year, National Association of Head Teachers says

John Reynolds, Monday October 24 2022, 12.01am, The Times

Early data from a survey by the association also showed that 50 per cent of head teachers said their

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school would be in the red this academic year. Paul Whiteman said “There are no easy fixes left. Schools are cut to the bone. This will mean cutting teaching hours, teaching assistants and teachers.” Education funding is set to be 3 per cent less in real terms in 2024-25 than in 2010. He added that insufficient pay had sent schools into “a vicious spiral” of staff resignations. There have been reports that some schools are considering three or four-day weeks to save money, while bigger class sizes and delays to building projects are also being considered.

There’s a deafening silence on education from both parties. We’ll all pay the price

James Kirkup, director of the Social Market Foundation, October 30 2022, *The Sunday Times*

As a country we do not give enough resources or attention to education. Twenty years ago, Britain (!Ed.) devoted the same share of national wealth to education as to healthcare.

Today total health spending is roughly double the education budget. It’s a sign that we’ve decided that other things are more important, or at least more pressing. Unchanged, that decision puts Britain (! Ed.) on a course for economic decline and social division.

If you want a case study in how we are focused on the wrong topics, consider a Department for Education (DfE) bulletin called “Key stage 4 performance 2022”. The data shows that the gap between the GCSE results of children from low-income homes and their classmates from more comfortable backgrounds is at its highest level since 2011-12. Doing badly at school means poor children are more likely than not to become poor adults, regardless of talent and effort. So the data should trigger anger and attention. Yet those statistics passed with barely a murmur of comment at Westminster, because they came out as another prime minister was resigning.

Rishi Sunak understands that economic imperative, but such good intentions matter little without more money. Money is needed to recruit and retain teachers, with maths and science staff in especially short supply. It is needed to keep schools functioning during the winter: Among head teachers, the talk is of financial deficits, meaning staff cuts and reduced teaching hours. It is needed to get school budgets to where they were a decade ago. Nuffield Foundation research shows that by 2024–25, spending per pupil will be 3 per cent lower than in 2010. And those figures were drawn up before the austerity 2.0 programme that the chancellor will announce next month.

There’s a strong argument that education funding should be raised significantly. Unless the country and its leaders start to notice and act, prosperity and fairness will elude us. And young people who feel that the country doesn’t treat them as important will be — sadly — correct.



Governing England: Committees

UK Parliament : Business: Committees: Education Committee

21 October 2022: The Education Committee published a response from the Secretary of State for Education, Rt Hon Kit Malthouse MP, to its letter regarding the Government’s special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) review. The Committee’s initial correspondence raised concerns, based on their predecessor committee’s report, about the lack of resources in the SEND system and funding being targeted at more costly, late-stage interventions. The Committee’s letter also urged the Government to heighten accountability for schools and councils falling short on SEND requirements and to increase support for families navigating the SEND system.

The Government’s response addresses these concerns, referring to a number of pledges made by the previous Secretary of State. However, Committee’s Chair, Robert Halfon, has now urged the Government not to renege on these promises, in light of suggestions from the new Chancellor that areas of government spending may need to be cut.

21 October 2022: The Education Committee continues its inquiry into careers education, information, advice and guidance by questioning experts on the performance of the National Careers Service (NCS) and the Careers and Enterprise Company (CEC).

Purpose of the session: The inquiry promises a root and branch review of the current system, with a

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focus on the quality of service provided to children and young people, including those from disadvantaged or left-behind groups.

MPs on the cross-party Committee will question witnesses on whether merging the two organisations could produce better outcomes, or whether their work should be more aligned, as per proposals in the Skills for Jobs White Paper. There will be questions on the level of funding the NCS receives, why it reaches so few young adults, and how effectively the CEC delivered on measures in the Government's Careers Strategy between 2017-2020.

Witnesses will also be asked whether the funding given to both bodies would be better spent by giving it directly to schools and colleges.

Health and social care committee (Membership includes a member of the SNP)

20 October 2022: MPs accuse the government and NHS leaders of failing to heed the importance of continuity of care, hastening the decline of a uniquely important relationship between a GP and their patients, in the midst of an acute and growing shortage of GPs.

The wide-ranging report on the future of general practice urges Ministers and NHS England to acknowledge a crisis in general practice and set out what steps they are taking to protect patient safety. MPs warn that seeing your GP should not be like phoning a call centre and note that care based on a doctor-patient relationship is essential for patient safety and experience. The report sets out steps to reverse the decline in the continuity of care, making it an explicit national priority with a new measure requiring GP practices to report on continuity of care by 2024. However, this will be more difficult to achieve unless the workforce crisis is also addressed. The Committee finds it "unacceptable" that one of the defining standards of general practice has been allowed to erode. MPs also urge NHS England to champion the 'personal list' model and re-implement it in the GP contract from 2030.



Justice Committee (Membership includes a member of the SNP)

21 October 2022: In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the number of defendants placed on custodial remand whilst awaiting trial. At the end of December 2021, the remand population was 12,780, the second highest quarterly figure since 2011. In March 2021, a third of remand prisoners had been held beyond the legal limit ahead of trial. Placing prisoners on remand also increases the pressure on the wider prison system, leading to overcrowding and declining conditions in the prison estate.

The Committee will question the Chief Inspector of Prisons on the current use of remand and the impact on the wider prison system. The Committee will then question the ministers responsible for prisons and courts in the Ministry of Justice on their plans to address the growing use of remand. It will also look at what more can be done to support those on remand, while in prison and on release.

Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee (Membership includes a member of the SNP)

31 October 2022: System of government in England in need of serious overhaul, say MPs. The Committee calls on Government and Opposition to set up a Parliament sponsored cross party commission to decide long-term solution.

The UK Government wields too much power in England, with a Whitehall culture "unwilling to let go of powers", and an instinct to "control the purse strings". This causes people in England to lose out on the benefits of having policies adapted to local areas and needs.

The report describes the current governance system, which includes local government and metro mayors, as a "patchwork" and "opaque", leaving citizens wondering about which democratic representative or institution is accountable for decisions that affect their lives and livelihoods. The system has created "geographical inequality" and led to a feeling amongst people in England that they can't influence political or social change, which represents a "warning sign for health of democracy".

The Government's plans for devolution deals in its Levelling Up White Paper are not sufficient to address the significant and pressing concerns identified by the Committee and the White Paper itself. Previous at-

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tempts to reform the governance arrangements for England have been “piecemeal and uncoordinated” and MPs say a new approach is needed.

During the inquiry, MPs heard ideas for reform ranging from setting up an English Parliament to extending the current mayoral system. There is no clear consensus from the evidence on the best approach, but MPs identify “overwhelming support” for reform. The Committee has taken the step of recommending to both the Government and the Opposition that this problem is taken out of party-political debate by calling for the establishment of a cross-party commission to develop a sustainable, long-term solution.

Legislation for England: Government Bills

Next stage: Report stage

Levelling-up and Regeneration Bill: Government Bill: Originated in the House of Commons: Last updated: 31 October 2022 at 23:14

Long title: A Bill to make provision for the setting of levelling-up missions and reporting on progress in delivering them; about local democracy; about town and country planning; about Community Infrastructure Levy; about the imposition of Infrastructure Levy; about environmental outcome reports for certain consents and plans; about regeneration; about the compulsory purchase of land; about information and records relating to land, the environment or heritage; for the provision for pavement licences to be permanent; about governance of the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors; about vagrancy and begging; and for connected purposes.

Next stage: Committee stage

Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill: Government Bill: Originated in the House of Commons: Last updated: 31 October 2022 at 20:30

Long title: A Bill to make provision in relation to freedom of speech and academic freedom in higher education institutions and in students’ unions; and for connected purposes.

UK Statutory Instruments (Regulations to UK laws)

The Exotic Animal Disease (Amendment) (England) Order 2022 No. 1108

The Central Rating List and Telecommunications Apparatus (England) (Amendment) Regulations 2022 No. 1083

The School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions (England) (No. 2) Order 2022 No. 1043

The School Teachers’ Pay and Conditions (England) Order 2022 No. 1041

England's heroine: Mercedes Gleitz

Jack Blackburn The Times

In the annals of English sport, the name of Mercedes Gleitze, who died in 1981, aged 80, has often been forgotten. Even the most well-researched quiz team would struggle to name her as the first English woman to swim the English Channel. Finally, her accomplishments are being properly marked. In January this year, in her native Brighton, she was honoured with a blue plaque

Yet fading from history was in part her own decision. “She did amazing things, but she did not want to talk about them,” said her grandson. Her children had no idea about her successes until they found an archive after her death, detailing her appearances in newspapers and endorsements from brands such as Rolex.

While day-to-day she was a typist, in 1923 Gleitze set an endurance record for swimming in the River Thames of 10 hours and 45 minutes. On October 7, 1927, she successfully swam the Channel on her eighth attempt, completing it in 15 hours and 15 minutes. Six months later she became the first person to swim the Strait of Gibraltar.

She retired in 1933, having extended the record for non-stop swimming to 47 hours. Not for her the wet-suit lined with goose fat of today’s athletes. She only wore a normal swimsuit in the water and said she was kept going by Lipton tea.



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Living in 1920s London, she witnessed extreme poverty and set out to use her prize money to help the homeless. She was one of the first sportswomen to create her own charity, founding the Mercedes Gleitze Home for Destitute Men and Women in Leicester.

England's history: Sinking of the White Ship

After years of war between England and France, in 1120 the king of England, Henry I, finally negotiated a settlement with the French king Louis VI. Satisfied with this outcome, Henry and his royal entourage sailed home from the Norman port of Barfleur on November 25, 1120.

It was a cold day, but the wind was favourable and the sea calm when the royal party gathered to cross the Channel. Henry left on one ship, while his son William Adelin and daughter Marie FitzRoy, Countess of Perche followed on another, *The White Ship*.

The *White Ship* was captained by Thomas FitzStephen (*Thomas filz Estienne*), whose father Stephen FitzAirard (*Estienne filz Airard*) had been captain of the ship *Mora* for William the Conqueror during the Norman conquest of England in 1066. According to chronicler Orderic Vitalis, the crew asked William Adelin for wine and he supplied it to them in great abundance. By the time the ship was ready to leave there were about 300 people on board, although some, including the future king Stephen of Blois, had disembarked due to the excessive binge drinking, possibly including the captain, before the ship sailed.

The captain was ordered by the revellers to overtake the king's ship, which had already sailed. The *White Ship* was fast, of the best construction and had recently been fitted with new materials, which made the captain and crew confident they could reach England first. But when it set off in the dark, its port side struck a submerged rock and the ship quickly capsized.

"The night was bitterly cold and frosty," the chronicler Orderic Vitalis recorded. All the passengers and crew fought desperately to survive in the icy sea. Although their cries for help could be heard on shore, the moon was less than a quarter full and the night so dark that no one on land could see what was happening. William managed to get into a small rowing boat but when he heard the screams of his half-sister Marie he insisted on turning back. However, survivors in the sea tried to scramble onboard, the boat overturned and William drowned; his body was never found.

Henry was inconsolable and the disaster threw the succession into turmoil. Henry had only two legitimate offspring that could succeed him: William and Matilda. With William dead, Henry pronounced Matilda his heir. Although Henry had forced his barons to swear an oath to support Matilda as his heir on several occasions, a woman had never ruled in England in her own right. Upon Henry's death in 1135, the English barons were reluctant to accept Matilda as queen and Henry's nephew Stephen of Blois claimed the throne as he was the next male in the line of succession, and with the support of nobles he was crowned three weeks later.

Matilda was also unpopular because she was married to Geoffrey V, Count of Anjou, the founder of the Plantagenet dynasty, a traditional enemy of England's Norman nobles. Matilda and her husband launched a long and devastating war, from 1135 to 1153 called "the Anarchy", against Stephen and his allies for control of the English throne. The Anarchy dragged on with devastating effect, especially in southern England. Contemporary historian William of Malmesbury wrote: No ship that ever sailed brought England such disaster, none was so well known the wide world over.



Henry I and the sinking *White Ship*.

English culture: Tar Barrel Rolling: Ottery St. Mary is internationally renowned for its Flaming Tar Barrels carried through the streets, an old custom said to have originated in the 17th century, and which is held on or around November 5th each year. Each of Ottery's central public houses sponsors a single barrel. In the weeks prior to the day of the event the barrels are soaked with tar. The barrels are lit outside each of the pubs in turn and once the flames begin to pour out, they are hoisted up onto local people's backs and



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shoulders.

The festivities begin in the early evening with children's, youths' and women's events, culminating in the men's event when a total of 17 barrels are lit outside each of the four public houses in the town. The barrels, increasing in size up to 30 kg, are carried through the town centre, often packed with onlookers, in an exhilarating and risky spectacle. Only those born in the town, or who have lived there for most of their lives, may carry a barrel. Generations of the same family have been known to compete across the years and it is thought that the event may have originated as a means of warding off evil spirits, similar to other fire festivals, around the time of all Hallows eve.

English produce: Edible mushrooms are the fleshy and edible fruit bodies of several species of macrofungi (fungi which bear fruiting structures that are large enough to be seen with the naked eye). They can appear either below ground or above ground where they may be picked by hand. Edibility may be defined by criteria that include absence of poisonous effects on humans and desirable taste and aroma. Easily cultivated and common wild mushrooms are often available in markets. Those that are more difficult to obtain (such as the prized truffle, matsutake and morel) may be collected on a smaller scale by private gatherers. Consumption of mushrooms, dates back to ancient times. Edible mushroom species have been found in association with 13,000-year-old archaeological sites in Chile. Ötzi, the mummy of a man who lived between 3400 and 3100 BC in Europe, was found with two types of mushroom. The Chinese value mushrooms for their supposed medicinal properties as well as for food. Ancient Romans and Greeks, particularly the upper classes, used mushrooms for culinary purposes. Food tasters were employed by Roman emperors to ensure that mushrooms were safe to eat.



A fraction of the many fungi consumed by humans are cultivated but commercial cultivation is important ecologically, as there have been concerns of the depletion of larger fungi such as chanterelles in Europe, possibly because the group has grown popular, yet remains a challenge to cultivate.

Some species are difficult to cultivate; others (particularly mycorrhizal species) have not yet been successfully cultivated at all, but are harvested from the wild and can be found in markets when in the season.

Many species are sold dried as well. Mushrooms are grown throughout England and their cultivation has a long history, with over twenty species commercially cultivated.

Recipe: Cheesy autumn mushrooms

<https://www.bbcgoodfood.com/recipes/cheesy-autumn-mushrooms>

By Emma Lewis

Serves 4: Preparation and cooking time: **Cook:** 10 mins, 5 mins work

Ingredients

100g blue cheese , crumbled	4 thyme sprigs
25g walnuts , toasted and roughly chopped	rocket leaves, to serve
knob butter , cut into small pieces	4 large field mushrooms

Method

Heat oven to 200C/fan 180C/gas 6. Arrange the mushrooms on a baking tray. Scatter over the cheese, walnuts, thyme sprigs and butter. Pop in the oven and cook for 10 mins until the cheese is melted and the mushrooms are softened. Arrange some rocket leaves on plates and place the mushrooms on top.



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