

Bank predicts 8% fall in house prices

HOUSE prices have been predicted to fall by one of UK's top mortgage lenders. The Halifax bank said they expected a fall of eight per cent but noted the average house price increased by 23 per cent between March 2020 and last August.

The bank's homes director Andrew Asaam said: "Such a fall would place the average property



INTEREST Rates will hit sales

BY VICKY SHAW

price back at roughly the level it was in April 2021, reversing only some of the gains made during the pandemic.

Surging living costs, including interest rates are contributing to the slow-down.

Nationwide Building Society said it expects house prices to drop by five per cent this year.



EQUALITY Alicia Herbert

PM's envoy weathers Scots role

BY JACKIE GRABT

ONE of Rishi Sunak's special envoys who has worked in the world's trouble hotspots has said she was more worried about being posted to Scotland than anywhere else – because of the rain.

Special envoy for gender equality Alicia Herbert has worked in war-torn Sudan and taken on terrorist group Boko Haram in Nigeria.

Herbert moved to Glasgow in 2016 and heads the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office's joint HQ in East Kilbride.

The mum of two, 55, joked: "My family worry and have often accused me of having a death wish but perhaps the move I thought hardest about was Scotland because everyone kept telling me it rains all the time.

"I now say it was the best decision because we love living in Glasgow and it's so exciting to work alongside 800 staff, helping to shape the UK's foreign policy as a force for good in the world."



SETS SYMBOL Ralf Little as Perry "the Poison Arrow" Peter in the new mockumentary



DOUBLE TOPS Director Simon Sprackling with legends Andy Fordham and Bobby George

WHEN director Simon Sprackling first started filming his sports comedy about the world of darts he never imagined it would be 20 years before he finished.

A rival sports film bombing at the box office, one of his lead actors becoming the star of a hugely popular detective show and becoming so ill he needed a life-saving liver transplant were just some of the hurdles Simon had to overcome during the two decades long period.

He hopes viewers of his new mockumentary, *Poison Arrows* – which stars Kingsman's Geoff Ball, The Victim's James Harkness, and darts legends including Barry Hearn, James Wade and Bobby George – will decide it was worth the wait.

Simon, who mastered his filmmaking craft working at the Edinburgh-based community arts centre founded by gangster-turned-sculptor Jimmy Boyle, said: "When we first started making this film I thought we would have it turned around in a year – but that's not how it worked out.

"I started filming when darts was in its heyday and my original storyline was about the rise, fall and rise again of a young darts superhero.

"Ralf Little was the superhero – Perry 'the Poison Arrow' Peters – and

the protégé of team captain Rocky Goldfingers, played by Geoff Ball.

"I managed to persuade the British Darts Organisation to let us come and film at the 2003 World Dart Championships at the Lakeside Country Club.

"In between games in the actual competition we were allowed to jump on stage with the actors to film what we wanted to film, in front of a real darts audience.

"We had real darts professionals and officials giving us their time to help and take part.

"We came away with some amazing material and I thought that was job done – we had the hard part in the bag.

"But I couldn't have been more wrong."

A lack of funding for the rest of the movie led to it being shelved.

Cult filmmaker Simon said: "Just as I was running around trying to get money to make the rest of the film, a comedy sports film about lawn bowling came out.

"Mel Smith directed it and it had big names like Vince Vaughn and lots of other top Americans in it, as well as Johnny Vegas and Paul Kane.

"Unfortunately that film was perceived to have died a death.

"As I was walking into meetings

saying to people, 'I've got this great idea for a crazy darts movie', everyone was telling me 'No. We've just seen what happened to Blackball!'

"In the end we couldn't do it."

Fifteen years later Simon, bumped into Geoff Ball again.

He said: "Geoff asked if I still had any of the darts footage we filmed.

"I dug it all out and looked at it again, and thought: 'There's got to be something we can do here.'

"Geoff and I got back together and contacted Ralf Little, but he was tied up with other things including filming *Death in Paradise*.

"We wanted to carry on and use the material we had – but it was 15 years later, everyone involved looked older and we couldn't have Ralf – so what could we do?"

"We came up with the story of Ralf's character being dead, Geoff's character having been in jail for 15 years for killing him, and a Louis Theroux style documentary maker making a fly-on-the-wall film about his release from prison and whether or not he did kill Poison Arrow.

"We're delighted with the end result."

The new script perfectly allowed

the original Lakeside footage to be used as part of story of what happened to both Ralf and Geoff's characters 15 years before.

Simon said: "It was great being able to revisit what we filmed in 2003 but I needed people who were there at the time to talk about it, as if it was real.

"I went back to amazing darts players like John O'Shea, three times world champion 'Wolfie' Adams, 10-times ladies world champion Trina Gulliver and they were all happy to be filmed.

"I even went back to the legend that is Barry Hearn and said, 'I don't know if you remember but 20 years ago we sat and had a cup of tea and I told you about this daft idea I had for a film.'

"Now I've finished it, would you let me come and film you?"

"He said yes and was terrific.

"We put up a video screen with what we

wanted him to say, and he did it so well. He was really funny."

Poison Arrows is set for digital download from today to coincide with the closing stages of the World Darts Championship.

Simon, a huge darts supporter whose sporting hero was the late Scottish darts legend Jocky Wilson, admits there were times he feared his labour of love with the film might not pay off.

He said: "Along the way my liver failed

and I ended up having a liver transplant in 2019. I'd contracted hepatitis C years ago and it had clearly been eating away at my liver for years before I knew that I had it.

"I wasn't on the transplant list for long.

"Over a period of two weeks I got several calls to say a potential liver was available.

"On five occasions it was decided the liver wasn't right for me – on one occasion I was offered two potential livers on the same night.

"The sixth liver I turned up for was the one I got.

"There is a fantastic picture of me sitting in hospital, editing the film while I was there recovering.

"My transplant became part of the film's journey."

Simon, who has made other films including *Funny Man* and *The Reeds*, owes a lot to the film-

PATIENT Simon editing from his hospital bed

AFTER 20 YEARS SPOOF DARTS DOC FINALLY OCHE TO GO



MOCK STAR Geoff Ball as Rocky in the new spoof documentary

FLIGHTS OF FANCY

Filmmaker targets New Year hit with homage to the arrows starring legends of the game on the world stage

Barry Hearn is terrific, he was really funny

SIMON SPRACKLING ON HELP HE GOT FOR MOVIE

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Simon, who has made other films including *Funny Man* and *The Reeds*, owes a lot to the film-

making experience he gained at Jimmy Boyle's Gateway Exchange. Convicted murderer Boyle set up the community centre following his release from jail after becoming a sculptor and novelist.

Simon said: "There are a lot of people who don't like Jimmy because of his background.

"But he went on to make a real contribution and gave a chance to a whole load of people who were kind of falling through the cracks.

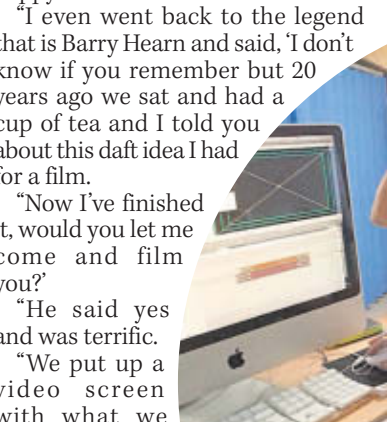
"I'm so glad that I got to know him and got the opportunity to work at the Gateway Exchange.

"I was there during the real-life *Transpotting* era.

"I was doing documentaries down in Pilton where in the GP surgeries they were trying to get everybody off heroin and giving them other things instead.

"I had a brilliant, mad experience in Edinburgh.

"And I also met the girl who I married there, so I've got a lot to be thankful for from my time there."



PATIENT Simon editing from his hospital bed

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PREGNANT Holly Hagan

Holly's baby joy

REALITY star Holly Hagan has announced she is expecting her first child.

The 30-year-old *Geordie Shore* star revealed she and husband Jacob Blyth were to become parents on Instagram.

She wrote: "Happy new year... here's to our next chapter."

1 dead in shooting

One person was killed and nine more hurt in a New Year's Eve shooting in Mobile, Alabama, US police have said. There have not been any arrests yet.