

Magnificent man in his floating machine goes up, up and away over the Channel to France

A DARING adventurer crossed the English Channel yesterday strapped in a chair beneath several dozen helium-filled balloons.

Jonathan Trappe set off from a field in Kent, hoping to become the first cluster balloonist to cross the Channel. Mr Trappe, 36, from the US, set off shortly after 5am from a gliding club, taking an hour to reach the coast, and



The trip recalled the film *Up*

spent about an hour and three-quarters over the Channel before reaching Dunkirk.

As he soared high over the French countryside, he cut away balloons to descend, heading towards the Belgian border.

His feat was reminiscent of the hero of the hit animated film *Up*, in which a pensioner attaches hundreds of coloured balloons to his house.



Jonathan Trappe used a cluster of helium balloons to carry him over the Straits of Dover to France

Picture: Nick Obank/Barcroft Media

Childcare costs set to rocket after nurseries hit by rates rises of 300%

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PARENTS face rising fees for childcare because increases in business rates are leaving privately run nurseries strapped for cash, industry leaders claim.

Privately run nurseries, on which the majority of Scottish parents depend for childcare, have seen rates rise by as much as 300 per cent after the recent revaluation of property.

The National Day Nurseries Association (NDNA) Scotland says the situation is worse north

of the Border because there is no transitional period as in England.

This means rises applied immediately from last month, landing private nurseries with extra costs of thousands of pounds, unlike in England where any significant rise can be

spread across the year. Nursery owners say charges to parents will have to rise to avoid closure.

Purnima Tanuku, chief executive of NDNA Scotland, described the rises as "significant" and warned it was a huge issue for nurseries and parents.

She said: "Following a change in the way these are calculated, we have been hearing from members whose rates have risen by thousands and thousands of pounds.

"Some are seeing 300 per cent increases, which is a massive cost pressure for nurseries as many are small businesses.

"The problem has been compounded by the fact that, in Scotland, there is no transitional period, so any rise has applied from this April."

She warned there had been no time for nurseries to plan and adjust to the rises.

Ms Tanuku added: "This potentially also has a huge impact upon parents, as if they are to remain open, nurseries will have little choice but to review fees."

Daily rates for nursery care vary in the private sector but are around £40-60, and many charge a joining fee, for example £75.

Business rates are re-evaluated every five years and, north of the Border, the Scottish Government is responsible.

Nursery owners from Fife are expected to protest about the rates rises outside the Scottish Parliament on Thursday.

They hope Fife Labour MSP Marilyn Livingstone will raise the issue at First Minister's question time next week.

A Scottish Government

CASE STUDY

JEANETTE Littwin owns two private nurseries in Kirkcaldy, Fife, under the Daisy Chain brand.

She told *The Scotsman* her rates had gone up 30 per cent in April. As a result, she was forced to find £8,000 more this year for just one of her nurseries - at a time when parents themselves were struggling to pay fees.

She said: "We cannot change that much the fees we charge parents. It feels as though they are targeting private nurseries, because other businesses have seen their rates go down."

spokesman claimed that the average business would save £1,300 under the revaluation and a transition scheme would cost the public purse £77m next year.

He said: "In England, the transitional relief scheme has reduced the average saving to only £770 - almost half the £1,300 saving in Scotland.

"In Scotland, a traditional transitional relief scheme would have resulted in an estimated transfer of funds from a large part of the private sector, amounting to almost £77m in 2010-11 alone.

"In the current economic climate, such outcomes would have been impossible to justify."

"Our clear focus is on delivering economic recovery and ensuring Scotland's return to economic growth is sustained."

Murder of top loyalist sparks fears of gang feud

ANGUS HOWARTH

THE murder of a senior loyalist in a packed Belfast shopping street sparked fears last night of another bloody internal feud between rival gangs.

Bobby Moffat, understood to be a member of the Red Hand Commando (RHC) terrorist group, was gunned down in the Shankill Road in front of dozens of bystanders, including young children, in a lunchtime attack yesterday.

The 44-year-old was shot a number of times in the face by two masked gunmen in an assassination that has been blamed on renegade elements within the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) - a mainstream paramilitary group with historic ties to the RHCs.

Police described the murder as "a cold-blooded, ruthless killing".

"It is a chilling reminder of a violent past that everyone in the community hoped we had left behind," said a spokesman for the Police Service of Northern Ireland.

"Police are following a number of definite lines of inquiry and will work with determination and professionalism to catch the killers."

The Shankill Road, a broad thoroughfare linking the city centre with the north-west of Belfast, was the scene of much bloodshed during the Troubles.

Since the ceasefires of the 1990s, the street has also witnessed a number of killings linked to turf wars between the various loyalist paramilitary groups.

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