

# The Guardian

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## 2021.11.07 - Opinion

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Names in the news  
Television

## The Station Eleven gang: has the pandemic given us a thirst for culture that's out of our comfort zone?

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)





Himesh Patel and Matilda Lawler in Station Eleven: comfort television?  
Photograph: Ian Watson/HBO Max

Sat 6 Nov 2021 13.00 EDT

Around the early days of the pandemic, I joined the many readers who devoured *Station Eleven*, [Emily St John Mandel's novel](#), which begins with a quick-spreading global virus that ends up wiping out the bulk of humanity. It was a hit when it was first published in 2014, but it experienced a boost in sales, much to the surprise of its author. “I don’t know who in their right mind would want to read *Station Eleven* during a pandemic,” she said.

Now it has been turned into a television series, starring Himesh Patel and Mackenzie Davies, among many others. The [trailer](#), released last week, begins with a scene in which Patel’s character stocks up on food and water in an already deserted supermarket. “Is this because of that thing?” asks a stunned checkout worker in a Santa hat.

I wondered whether, at this stage of the pandemic – [hard months ahead](#) in the UK, according to Jonathan Van-Tam, our own Santa hat looking perilously askew – the thought of watching a drama about a virus that brings about the apocalypse still held any appeal.

After the initial flurry of Zoom-based dramas and phone-shot one-offs that appeared at the very start of lockdown, there have been a couple of attempts to directly reckon with the pandemic on British television. Dennis Kelly's *Together* followed Sharon Horgan and James McAvoy through the horrifying thick of it; Jodie Comer and Stephen Graham took on the care home disaster in Jack Thorne's devastating *Help*. I found that deciding to watch them required a degree of steeling oneself beforehand. It felt unfamiliar, to have to work up to watching a drama and, ultimately, both were upsetting and infuriating, as they intended to be. They asked for endurance and rewarded it. Maybe reward isn't quite right. But they asked for more from the audience and they got it.

In New York, the Metropolitan Opera is currently staging Wagner's *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, which is almost six hours long. "There is always an appeal for huge events," its general manager, Peter Gelb, told the [New York Times](#). It is certainly bold of him to put on its longest opera during a pandemic while many theatres are considering shorter plays with no intervals, to get bums back on seats. Whether the risk will pay off remains to be seen. But I wonder if we will emerge from this, when we eventually do, with a different kind of resilience and an appetite for art and culture that asks more of us. *Station Eleven* is a brilliant story and has the potential to be an outstanding series, if we have the strength to look.

## **Lady Gaga: suffering for art has gone too far**



Lady Gaga: living in character. Photograph: Christopher Polk/REX/Shutterstock

Lady Gaga, who plays Patrizia Reggiani in the Ridley Scott-directed, eagerly awaited, knitwear-advocacy fashion biopic *House of Gucci*, gave a fantastically freewheeling [interview](#) to British *Vogue* about her role.

“I lived as [Reggiani] for a year and a half,” she said, “and I spoke with an accent for nine months of that.” (Oh to have overheard her ordering a cup of tea at the local cafe.) She said that towards the end of the shoot she had “some psychological difficulty” as a result; she went for a walk, she explained, and thought she was on a movie set.

I have met actors who go full method, to the extent that they will only speak in their character’s accent and, often, it is hard to keep a straight face when witnessing it. I have never before encountered a woman who does it; it always struck me as self-indulgent and commitment-free to check out of real life for such an extended period of time.

Despite the thespy, airy-fairy comedy factor, though, it speaks to a bleak fantasy of performance or art requiring suffering to seem real and surely not even a fabulous film should require that.

## Steve Buscemi was a Halloween treat for all his fellow kids



Steve Buscemi: setting a high bar. Photograph: NBC

Mariah Carey marked the end of Halloween as only she could, releasing [a video](#) of herself with a candy-cane-striped baseball bat, pulverising a pumpkin as the bells of All I Want for Christmas begin to chime.

There is a brief window in which a Halloween postmortem is acceptable. Evaluating celebrity Halloween costumes is on a par with watching the most prestigious red-carpet events. It's better than a gown or a tux because it's a window into that person's psyche or at least into the psyche of the assistant they paid to create the look for them.

This year has been a self-referential one. The most intriguing trend was well-known people dressing as themselves. I like it. It is, at least, eco-friendly, preferring recycling over panic-purchasing a flimsy plastic skull mask. Cast your minds back to 2011, when [Sophia Grace and Rosie](#), two tiny children from Essex, became world famous after a shaky clip of them performing Nicki Minaj's Super Bass in tutus went viral and got them on *The Ellen Show*. Now, 10 years later, at 15 and 18, they've gone (mildly) viral again, for dressing as themselves in their viral days.

But king of the costumes was [Steve Buscemi](#), who not only dressed as himself, but as a meme of himself. His line, “How do you do, fellow kids?”, from *30 Rock*, is an internet classic and he reportedly recreated the look for his neighbours in Brooklyn, complete with backwards baseball cap and “Music Band” T-shirt. It sets a high bar for next year.

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

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**Opinion**[Boris Johnson](#)

## The Observer view on No 10's handling of the Owen Paterson affair

[Observer editorial](#)



Boris Johnson: ‘A man utterly lacking in integrity, with no regard for standards in public life.’ Photograph: Christopher Furlong/AFP/Getty Images

Sun 7 Nov 2021 01.00 EST

Former prime ministers tend to avoid engaging in personal criticism of their successors, particularly if they served as leader of the same party. [Sir John Major’s verdict](#) on Boris Johnson’s handling of the Owen Paterson affair – “shameful and wrong” and “politically corrupt” – is an extraordinary and devastating intervention that shows how low the prime minister’s reputation has sunk with senior members of his party. Major has even gone so far as to say that he would face a dilemma were he to have to consider voting for Johnson at the next general election.

Johnson's handling of the standard committee's findings and recommendations on Paterson has been disgraceful. The Commons committee, comprised not just of cross-party MPs but members of the public, upheld findings by the parliamentary commissioner for standards that Paterson had egregiously breached the rules on several occasions, by lobbying ministers as a paid consultant for two private companies. It was a clear example of an MP using his elected office for financial gain to the benefit of private interests. Had the government not intervened, the Commons would have almost certainly voted to impose a 30-day suspension on Paterson, as recommended by the committee.

Instead, the government interfered in what should have been a free vote to insist Conservative MPs vote to overturn the committee's recommendations and support an amendment to reform the standards system, reportedly threatening that if they failed to back the government, they would lose funding for their constituencies. When it was clear the reaction this engendered even among the sympathetic press was far worse than the government expected, it U-turned.

This unedifying episode merely confirms what we already knew of Johnson: that he is a man utterly lacking in integrity, with no regard for standards in public life. Johnson has already been investigated by Kathryn Stone, the parliamentary standards commissioner, more than any other MP in the last three years and has previously faced sanctions for breaching parliamentary rules around registering his financial interests. The Electoral Commission is investigating the redecoration costs of his Downing Street flat based on the fact there are "reasonable grounds" to think many offences may have been committed; once this concludes, Johnson could face his fourth investigation by Stone into the same matter. It was therefore a gross conflict of interest for the business secretary, Kwasi Kwarteng, to launch an attack on Stone in the wake of her thorough and impartial investigation into Paterson's conduct and gives the impression of a government looking to neuter an independent system for monitoring parliamentary standards at the convenience of the prime minister.

This is not just about corruption in the processes of government. It goes to the heart of what this government is about

Johnson faces other questions over his personal integrity, including over the value of a [free luxury holiday](#) he accepted as a gift in recent weeks in Spain. His attitude infects standards right across government. When an investigation found [Priti Patel](#) had broken the ministerial code by bullying civil servants, it was not she who resigned, but the independent adviser on ministerial standards. The National Audit Office found last year that those with personal ministerial contacts were far more likely to win lucrative, pandemic-related contracts for [personal protective equipment](#).

This is not just about corruption in the processes of government. It goes to the very heart of what this government is about. Johnson was elected on a platform of getting Brexit done, after having led a referendum campaign that made deliberately misleading claims to voters: that leaving the EU would result in an extra £350m a week for the NHS (a claim the UK Statistics Authority later ruled was a clear [misuse of official statistics](#)) and a vote to remain in the EU was a vote to share a border with Iraq and Syria. These are the false promises of populism: abjectly disrespecting voters by pretending that there are easy solutions to big challenges facing the country. It takes a certain kind of charlatan, driven chiefly by the desire for power, not the national interest, to embrace this kind of politics as Johnson has done. Since becoming prime minister, he has expelled from his party his colleagues who disagree with him on Brexit, unlawfully shut down parliament to try to force through his Brexit deal [against parliamentary opposition](#), lied about the consequences of the [Northern Ireland protocol](#) and has repeatedly threatened to [break international agreements](#) to get his way. A disregard for the rules and a lack of probity is not some byproduct of Boris Johnson's tenure in No 10: it is the defining aspect of his character, his career and his politics.

This means that tightening up the rules can only achieve so much. The UK has a more lax approach to lobbying than many other parliamentary democracies; there is no question that tougher rules should be introduced, including a comprehensive register of all political lobbying and an agency to regulate the revolving door between ministerial and government office and lucrative private sector contracts. Parliamentarians should consider introducing a cap on their additional earnings and an advance approval system for any additional income they earn. But the problem goes much wider: a culture of impunity within this government and the erosion of an unwritten honour code, which new rules cannot by themselves wholly fix.

The damage goes beyond the ratings of a particular party or leader. Just as the expenses scandal did 12 years ago, the sleazy cronyism of this government will further erode public trust in our democratic institutions and the overall legitimacy of our political system. [Boris Johnson](#) serves at the pleasure of Conservative MPs: they have the power vested in them to topple him. They should be examining their consciences as to whether his rotten and corrupt leadership is really the best their party can offer Britain.

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[Opinion](#)[Domestic violence](#)

## The Observer view on tackling violence against women

[Observer editorial](#)



Protesters in Parliament Square in March 2021 hold up signs calling for attitudes around violence against women to change. Photograph: SOPA Images/LightRocket/Getty Images

Sun 7 Nov 2021 01.30 EST

A [Call to Action](#) was published in January 2020 demanding a domestic abuse perpetrator strategy for England and Wales. Police and crime commissioners, academics and organisations including Respect, SafeLives and Women's Aid, all added their signatures.

The report pointed out that, shockingly, while there were at least 400,000 serious perpetrators, fewer than 1% received specialist intervention to challenge and change their behaviour. So why is there so little provision? As the *Observer* reports today in the latest article in our End Femicide

campaign, the [epidemic of male violence](#) against women and girls (VAWG) makes up 40% of police business, yet prevention – stopping perpetrators before they inflict psychological, physical, sexual, economic and digital damage (utilising social media) – is given a low priority. Convictions for domestic abuse offences have [dropped 35%](#) in five years; a woman is killed by a man every three days, according to the Femicide Census, whose data has helped to inform our campaign, a terrible statistic unchanged for 10 years.

Zoe Billingham, former lead inspector on the police's response to domestic abuse at Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, says that if this was organised crime, police would be using all the covert tactics at their disposal to arrest offenders.

According to the Crime Survey for England and Wales in the year ending March 2020, there were an estimated 1.6 million female victims of domestic abuse, aged 16 to 59. Men are victims too, but women are far more likely to become victims of sexual and psychological violence. Data on [police recorded crime](#) based on information from 36 forces in the year to March 2021 shows that 82% of sexual grooming offences are against women and girls and 80% of victims of stalking, voyeurism and exposure are female. This month, the government will publish its first statutory domestic abuse strategy. Influenced by the Call to Action, it also addresses perpetrators. That is welcome – if the strategy is comprehensive, well funded, properly evaluated and monitored and does not drain resources from victims.

Prevention begins in early childhood to counter the toxic culture that breeds misogyny and male sexual entitlement. Sex and relationship education is compulsory in schools, but what works best to engender respect and empathy is far from understood. A teenage boy who is concerned about his behaviour will find few resources if he seeks help.

Perpetrators are hugely diverse, but missed opportunities for intervention include childhood trauma, mental ill health, a history of criminal behaviour and substance misuse. The abhorrent actions of police officer Wayne Couzens, killer of Sarah Everard, have triggered several investigations into our institutions, including the police and army, which reveal the appalling scale of abuse of women and a shameful lack of action by those in authority.

BBC research revealed that UK police forces received more than 800 allegations of domestic abuse against officers and staff in the last five years, yet only 5% were prosecuted. What does that say about our culture and a shameful lack of accountability?

Femicide and abuse won't end until misogyny is recognised for what it is and eliminated. Two steps would make a difference. First, VAWG must be included in the new Serious Violence Duty, part of the [police, crime, sentencing and courts bill](#), which requires public bodies such as police, health, housing and education to work together to end violence. Second, VAWG needs to be included in the strategic policing requirement that dictates the top priorities for all 43 police forces in England and Wales, along with counter-terrorism, serious organised crime and child sexual exploitation.

As Billingham says: "If this opportunity is squandered now, we all lose."

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**Observer comment cartoon**

**Boris Johnson**

## **Boris Johnson as the sleazy old Duke of Pork – cartoon**

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## NotebookStudent housing

# A student hall from hell hath no windows to distract from study and sleep

[Rowan Moore](#)





An artist's impression of the Munger Hall monstrosity. Photograph: Courtesy UC Santa Barbara

Sat 6 Nov 2021 11.00 EDT

Sometimes, an idea seems so transparently and hyperbolically awful that you wonder if there is some secret brilliance to it. Such is the one for Munger Hall, the plan to build a dormitory at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where 94% of the 4,500 students will live in [rooms without windows](#). Glowing screens that mimic sunlight are promised instead.

Some contrarian minds have tried to justify it, not least Charlie Munger, the 97-year-old billionaire who is the building's donor and designer. He has compared the rooms to the berths inside cruise ships, a view that seems to ignore the difference between a short holiday, where your windowless cabin might be compensated for by the tropical paradises you visit, and an academic year.

The university has tried to make a virtue of the fact that students won't have to go to the trouble of opening windows as they will get all the oxygen they need from a ventilation system. One urban planner justified the project as a response to the shortage of residences caused by [nimbies](#).

The problem with this argument – let's address housing need by making dwellings ever more miserably confined – is that it knows no bottom. Perhaps in the future students can be cryogenically frozen at night, then efficiently stacked using the storage and retrieval systems of an Amazon distribution centre, before being defrosted in time for their morning slurp of laboratory-made food substitute. But we don't have to go that far to see what a shrivelled vision of humanity it is that gives no value to sunlight or to the rhythms of night and day and where this approach is willingly accepted by a university seemingly because it comes with a large dollop of cash. On reflection, Munger Hall is as terrible as it looks.

## An exhibition too far



Do I really need to take a 3,000-mile round-trip to visit the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art in Moscow? Photograph: Sergei Fadeichev/TASS

An “international PR firm” sends me “a special invitation to Moscow”. It wants me to see “a mesh-framed eco-pavilion filled with plastic water bottles”, installed at the Garage Museum of Contemporary Art. The pavilion, designed by a Moscow-based practice called [Lipman Architects](#), is about “inviting conversation around topics such as material recycling and the environmental impact of temporary architecture”. But the climate emergency is surely past the point where “inviting conversations” will do

much good. You will also have spotted the conceptual flaw in organising 3,000-mile, carbon-intensive round trips for journalists to witness this worthy work.

## Ghastly gentrification



Marsha de Cordova, MP for Battersea, said of the street names at Plantation Wharf: ‘They’re quite sickening.’ Photograph: Tommy London/Alamy Stock Photo

Plantation Wharf is a residential development in Battersea, south-west London, which includes addresses including Cotton Row and Molasses Row. Now, 26 years after it was built, the local MP, Marsha de Cordova, has called for the [names to be changed](#). “They’re quite sickening and in many respects almost glorify what was an abhorrent enslavement of Africans,” she says. When it comes to cloth ears, it is hard to beat the marketing blurb for Plantation Wharf that local councillor [Aydin Dikerdem](#) found on the website of estate agent Eden Harper. Alongside breathy tales of local celebrities, it tells of “a harmless chap of anomalous habits” who lived on a dilapidated barge. One night, “with plans afoot for gentrification, a mystery blaze destroyed the eyesore vessel and the eccentric inhabitant was never heard of or seen ever again”.

What a piquant tale this is, what a value-enhancing piece of local colour: a man made homeless and possibly burned to death in the interests of real estate. Perhaps the development's "expansive glazed sections", as Eden Harper calls them, offer good views of the scene of the crime.

Rowan Moore is the Observer's architecture critic

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Opinion[Ghislaine Maxwell](#)

## Satire really has left the building when we're asked to be kind to Ghislaine Maxwell

[Catherine Bennett](#)





Jeffrey Epstein and Ghislaine Maxwell at a Wall Street event in 2005.  
Photograph: Patrick McMullan/Getty Images

Sun 7 Nov 2021 02.00 EST

In the long run-up to Ghislaine Maxwell’s now imminent [trial](#) on charges of procuring teenage girls for her late friend, Jeffrey Epstein, her lawyer has repeatedly objected to the accused’s living conditions.

Last week, Bobbi C Sternheim [returned](#), again, to similarities between the Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn and conditions invented by Thomas Harris for his imaginary psychopath. “The surveillance,” she wrote, in another bid for bail, “rivals scenes of Dr Hannibal Lecter’s incarceration as portrayed in the movie, *Silence of the Lambs*, despite the absence of the cage and the plastic face guard.”

No offence to Maxwell’s lawyer, but you wonder if Lecter’s made-up ordeal is the ideally telling comparator and not only because in Harris’s book we meet the affected cannibal lounging cell-side with “the Italian edition of *Vogue*”. Further equipped with a fabulous fictional brain, Lecter is able, regardless of glossies, to “amuse himself for years at a time”. The idea of some connection between Lecter and Maxwell could be, even for the

purposes of outrage-generation, unhelpful to a campaign portraying her as a lovable innocent whose martyrdom has lessons for us all.

“Kindness is spreading sunshine in other people’s lives regardless of the weather,” her family, tweeting @RealGhislaine, volunteer. More prosaically: “Have a great family recipe that reminds you of Fall? Why not share that recipe with a friend or neighbor and spread some good? #SAK.” (SAK stands for Simple Acts of Kindness.) Also: “Expressing gratitude regularly is an easy way to bring kindness into play on a daily basis. Have you expressed gratitude to someone today?” And: “Be a friend. Be Thankful. Be Positive. Be Supportive. A #SAK comes in many forms.” Very true. Though this does seem to be the first time the invocation of kindness, a theme that has become a little threadbare since its emergence in the 1990s, has been urged by campaigners advancing, as Maxwell’s siblings are now doing, the interests of an alleged madam for whom Epstein was “[a thoughtful, kind, generous loving man](#)”.

Scattered between bits of legal argument and pointed references to miscarriages of justice, the many maxims of RealGhislaine might still, I suppose, be inspiring for anyone who knows little about Maxwell’s family and less about the sex offender. But given the rarity, [as stressed earlier by her defence](#), of people unfamiliar with that association, and unaware of or unmoved by the photograph of Maxwell beaming as Prince Andrew rests his paw on a teenager’s bare midriff, the kindness homilies might be better saved for after her trial. Even a guilty verdict might not preclude a future narrative that combines the spiritual insights of *De Profundis* and twee sententiousness of *The Water Babies* with the wellbeing offer of Gwyneth Paltrow’s Goop. In fact, everything, if she’s cleared, points to a future Maxwell lifestyle site. Kindness, says @RealGhislaine, “eases anxiety, is good for your heart and reduces stress”. Something to bear in mind if you’re ever unexpectedly tracked down to an obscure New Hampshire address by federal agents. Offer them a favourite fall recipe?

@RealGhislaine’s campaigns cheapen the very quality they supposedly promote

But there's still the question, with the Maxwell siblings reinvented as kindness missionaries, of what their involvement could do to a movement shortly to be celebrated in [World Kindness Day](#). After all, David Cameron's simple act of pocket-lining was enough to close down further consideration of the "big society" in which people better than himself were to run libraries for nothing. Outside the kindness cult, its extinction courtesy of the Maxwells might seem a conclusion yet more desirable than its rival appropriation by Simple, the Unilever-owned cosmetic business. Before watching *Succession* the other night, I was urged in a commercial that might have been scripted by team Ghislaine to select and perform a "Simple act of kindness", thus virtuously internalising its brand.

Not unusually for these campaigns, the kindness bar is set low – so very low that you might find you've been inadvertently kind for years, banking enough credit after all the smiling, litter disposal, cooking meals, paying compliments or bringing others a "hot beverage" that you could probably live the rest of your life very kindly without further exertion. By, in this way, reducing acts of kindness to virtually the minimum of civic or neighbourly behaviour, Simple's and [@RealGhislaine](#)'s campaigns cheapen the very quality they supposedly promote. If smiling is a noteworthy act of simple kindness, what does a more complicated one, such as volunteering in a charity shop, make you? Little Nell? Over at [@RealGhislaine](#) we discover it probably does: "Hold the door open for a stranger and wish them a kind day!" But well before Simple and [@RealGhislaine](#) adopted, unhappily for at least one of them, this identically unchallenging approach, kindness was in difficulties and not just because of the perceived success of "[a kinder politics](#)". The popularity of #BeKind as a Twitter synonym for "shut the fuck up", sometimes from individuals underlining this kindly message with, for instance, a raised baseball bat, confirms its meaning has become, at best, infinitely adaptable.

Returning to its old-fashioned sense, anyone who can persuade the authors of [@RealGhislaine](#) to cease lecturing people who have never personally hung out with a sex offender would, however, be entitled to claim this as a bona fide kindness, with appropriately spectacular health benefits. Edifying as it is to see Maxwells identifying the family name with kindness, rather than with their father's unforgivable theft from UK pensioners, this philosophy has so far been, judging by their public interventions, only

modestly translated into action. If the Maxwells aspire, as on @RealGhislaine, to make “kindness the norm”, the project should embrace Epstein’s underage victims, as Maxwell’s attorney did not want them called in the trial. Unkindly, she also wanted these victims named: also overruled. “A hint of a smile, a dash of warmth, a few kind words – the perfect recipe for a simple act of kindness,” we were recently advised on Ms Maxwell’s behalf. Her trial promises to be a moral education.

Catherine Bennett is an Observer columnist

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**Observer letters****Politics**

## Letters: progressive alliances can work, and here's how



To form a successful alliance, the Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, must accept that an overall Labour majority at the next election ‘is mathematically implausible’. Photograph: Andrew Matthews/PA

Sun 7 Nov 2021 01.00 EST

Nick Cohen makes a persuasive case for unity candidates to overcome Tory electoral hegemony, at least in England, but an alliance needs to be based on a firmer foundation than simply a desire to get the Tories out (“[Mock progressive alliances all you like, but they've never been more essential](#)”, Comment). There are at least three prerequisites: an acceptance, principally by the Labour leadership, that an overall Labour majority at the next election is mathematically implausible; agreement with the Lib Dems and Greens on a minimum common programme that will be sufficiently attractive to the core voters of each party to convince them to set differences aside; and

cooperation between the activists of the local parties in constituencies where the numbers suggest two of them should withdraw.

Almost certainly, a fairer voting system would have to be an outcome of any such unity government, preferably combining the constituency link with a proportional top-up, as in the Scottish and Welsh parliaments, and backed by a constitutional convention to ensure popular support. Such a radical change cannot be achieved by a last-minute stitch up or the usual exhortations to vote tactically.

**Dr Anthony Isaacs**  
London NW3

Can I add a modest example from local government to Nick Cohen's thoughtful article in favour of progressive alliances? Swale borough council is led by a "rainbow alliance" of five groups – Labour, Liberal Democrats, Greens and two independent groups. Since 2019, we have successfully followed an agreed progressive agenda that focuses on tackling local inequality, providing more affordable homes, climate change and engaging more seriously with the community and voluntary sector.

Electoral success did not come from explicit pacts, but each party went into the 2019 elections with a well-informed awareness of others' target seats. Within our coalition, the need for tolerance is a strength and our only concerns come from party tribalism outside our council groups.

**Roger Truelove**, leader of Swale borough council  
Sittingbourne, Kent

## **Rigg remembered**



The memorial plaque to Dame Diana Rigg.

It was wonderful to see the lovely article about the late, great Dame Diana Rigg (“[Ma didn't suffer fools: she exploded them at 50 paces](#)”, The New Review). But, with her clever line – “no one ever sat on my ma” – Rachael Stirling somewhat inadvertently misled people as to the availability of memorial plaques at the Actors’ Church in Covent Garden.

It is actually space for benches in the garden that we have run out of. Great stars of the profession are still awarded memorial plaques – and a very beautiful one has been installed in memory of Rigg.

We also have a memorial book and can now dedicate our brand new pews – comfy at last! – to members of the profession. In this way, we hope we will be able to continue to remember the stars of our profession for many decades to come.

**The Rev Simon Grigg, rector**  
St Paul’s Church  
London WC2

**We need a local paper**

As a long-term resident of Harlow, I think a big barrier to cohesion in this sprawling town (“[Revealed: the towns at risk from far-right extremism](#)”, News) is the absence of a proper local newspaper, the sort of newspaper that includes obituaries, club news and civil announcements.

The online offering of local news lacks the opportunity of lucky finds. So if a resident in one part of the town has no knowledge of the happenings in another, apathy, it seems, is all too easy.

**Elaine McCarthy**

Harlow, Essex

## Bring back joy to the office

Torsten Bell is right to point out the value of control and respect in our careers (“[A good job is about much more than pay. Workers also value respect](#)”, Comment). But it’s not necessarily the job itself that is the deciding factor. It’s the ways in which roles are controlled that has disillusioned people.

Human resources management has squeezed out the joy that used to be found in the workplace. Its practices shackle employees to an assembly line of appraisals, targets and endless data collection to prove their worth to the organisation.

Perhaps employers could attract more high-calibre employees by eliminating the stultifying performance culture. Returning control and respect to employees could improve their quality of life; for the employer, it could improve retention, thus cutting employment costs, and raise productivity through the enhanced motivation of a happy staff.

**Yvonne Williams**

Ryde, Isle of Wight

## Too many flying visits

How horrifying, at the beginning of Cop26, to read in Séamas O'Reilly's column that his young son has already made a dozen journeys by plane

(“[Flight might be a fantasy, but to my three-year-old, a bus beats a plane any day](#)”, The New Review).

I know it can be difficult when families are separated, but there is a ferry between England and Northern Ireland. And if that doesn’t suit, perhaps a sacrifice or two could be made by reducing the number of visits to family abroad; we do have phones and Zoom. Perhaps Séamas could begin to teach his son the link between transport and climate change. After all, it is his little boy’s future that is at stake.

**Laraine Thompson**  
Tamworth, Staffordshire

## Nature knows best

In your article on tree planting (“[How can we grow new forests if we don’t have enough trees to plant?](#)”, News), I was surprised to see no mention of the obvious solution... rewilding.

If land is left to its own devices, it will pass through successional stages and eventually become forest all by itself. It’s cheap, efficient and ecologically coherent, more so than planting millions of young trees that need care and management. Tree planting makes us feel good, but nature has been planting her own forests for millennia. She just needs the space to do so.

**Miranda Davies**, Wychwood Forest Trust, Kidlington, Oxfordshire

## My miaow for Margaret

If there is such a thing as reincarnation, then I would like to return as a future cat of a reincarnated Margaret Atwood, just so long as Margaret Atwood is reincarnated as Margaret Atwood, of course, and providing, of course, that Margaret Atwood doesn’t disapprove of me being her cat (“[Cats, a love story](#)”, The New Review).

**Stefan Badham**  
Portsmouth

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## For the recordUK news

# For the record

Sun 7 Nov 2021 01.00 EST

An article about UK-France relations misrepresented an excerpt from a letter sent by the French prime minister, Jean Castex, to the European commission president, Ursula von der Leyen. We reported that Castex told her the UK must be shown that it causes more damage to leave the EU than to remain. He was referring to what the EU should make clear “to European public opinion”, not specifically the UK ([France and UK told: end dispute or you’ll wreck Cop26 summit](#), 31 October, page 1).

An interview with the actor Nicholas Braun misnamed Mark Mylod, a director on the TV show *Succession*, as “Mike Mylod” (“[How is it that I have ended up here?](#)”, 31 October, Magazine, page 8).

We misnamed Robert Aske, the leader of the 1536 Pilgrimage of Grace revolt, as Richard Aske and said that he was “hung, drawn and quartered”. According to the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, he was hung in chains ([Hilary Mantel tells a great tale – but our ruined abbeys tell another, says English Heritage expert](#), 24 October, page 7).

A recipe for apple and sultana pastries omitted to specify the kind of pastry to be used – it is puff (“[Nigel’s midweek treat](#)”, 24 October, Magazine, page 36).

Other recently amended articles include:

[Revealed: the towns at risk from far-right extremism](#)

[10 of Britain’s best castle holidays](#)

*Write to the Readers’ Editor, the Observer, York Way, London N1 9GU,  
email [observer.readers@observer.co.uk](mailto:observer.readers@observer.co.uk), tel 020 3353 4736*

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**OpinionBrexit**

## The Tories' big idea for staying in power? Endless conflict with the EU

[Nick Cohen](#)



‘Boris Johnson’s career has taught him that conflict brings personal profit.’  
Photograph: Steve Reigate/AP

Sat 6 Nov 2021 15.00 EDT

In his dying words, Shakespeare’s Henry IV tells his son, the future Henry V, that he must divert the attention of the barons before they threaten his rule. “Therefore, my Harry, be it thy course to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels.”

Like Plantagenet warlords, Conservative leaders need foreign quarrels lest the voters realise they have presided over the stagnation of British life. Real wages in 2024 will be just 2.4% higher than 2008, compared with a 36% rise in the 16 years [before the financial crisis](#). We are a sluggish, depressed and declining country, where hard work brings few rewards and most people cannot get on, however strenuously they try. If the UK were a person, it would be a punch-drunk boxer, staggering round the ring.

Henry V just invaded France to keep his subjects from turning on him. [Boris Johnson](#) needs a perpetual war with the entire EU.

On Ireland and fishing, we can see the battle lines, but there are many more to come. The truth that supporters of Britain remaining in the EU never properly communicated was that [Brexit](#) can never end. The EU has a population of 445 million people and the UK has 68 million. In any economic fight, there can only be one winner. Disputes the dilettantes of the Johnson administration may not even have foreseen over financial services, data sharing and carbon pricing are on their way.

Former Irish prime minister [John Bruton](#) therefore only got it half right when he said the other day: “I think there is a big incentive for the Conservative party to maintain conflict with the European Union.”

Obviously, Johnson needs to bellow and growl. Opposition to the EU bound the conservative right, middle-class nationalists and working-class voters together in the 2016 Brexit referendum and 2019 general election. His career has taught him that conflict brings personal profit. The [stories he made up](#) about Brussels for the *Telegraph* in the 1990s turned him from a [disgraced](#)

[junior reporter](#) into a Fleet Street star and finally into a prime minister. He presides over a wider right filled with men and women who have spent their lives hating the EU. They will not stop now just because we have left. To keep party members who are not so much Eurosceptic as Euroneurotic on side, to stop the right of the party destroying him as it destroyed the premierships of his predecessors, and to prevent a resurgence of Farageism, Johnson needs foreign quarrels to ensure his survival.

When the battles are over subjects as inconsequential as Channel Island shellfish, few need care. [Emmanuel Macron](#) and Johnson can pose as tough guys to please their voters and sensible people can say the snobs are diverting the mob with scallops and circuses.

The UK's debilitation is not only the fault of the fanaticism of its leaders but a consequence of Brexit itself.

When Johnson starts a fight over the jurisdiction of the European court of justice in Northern Ireland, however, he risks inciting sectarian violence, which returned last week, and the EU responding by [suspending the Brexit trade deal](#) and delivering yet another haymaker to our economy.

It is hard to decide on the worst feature of Johnson. Rational people can reach different conclusions in good faith. But his willingness to endanger the peace in Ireland strikes me as the most repellent. Louise Haigh, Labour's [Northern Ireland](#) spokesperson, describes it as a cynically political act designed to please his supporters in England without a care for the consequences in Belfast. Nothing better illustrates the collapse of the Conservative party from a great political movement into a toadying personality cult than the failure of his colleagues to stop him.

However tempting it is to deplore Johnson, the UK's debilitation is not only the fault of the fanaticism of its leaders but a consequence of Brexit itself. We could have a new prime minister tomorrow and our decline would continue.

For example, after 2016, the EU's indulgent attitude towards the City puzzled observers. Financial services are Britain's last world-leading

industry. EU countries clearly wanted a slice of the market and had an interest in stopping an intermittently hostile foreign state trading the continent's wealth. Yet the EU was happy to allow City firms to carry on as before as long as they sent a token number of workers to the continent. Now, the European Central Bank is demanding large-scale transfers of capital and jobs. A City executive told the *Financial Times* his firm thought the ECB could not mean it when it told his bank to move hundreds more people to the EU. "Turns out they did mean that and they're pretty good at enforcing it."

Finance is just the beginning. Researchers at the Centre for European Reform have a list of [future fights](#). For the moment, the EU allows UK firms to store their European customers' data. But neither the European parliament nor civil rights campaigners are happy about the privacy risks and are likely to demand change. Meanwhile, the EU could introduce a carbon border with the UK and tell British exporters to prove their goods have not damaged the environment or pay a tariff. Arguments over gene-editing technologies, food safety standards and state aid to industry all threaten to turn toxic.

Johnson's political imperative is to keep the right on side by inciting conflict. The UK's economic imperative is to make whatever concessions are needed to stop the loss of European markets. That we would have to make concessions is indisputable because the EU is larger and stronger than we are. When the arcane arguments about trade deals and technical standards have finished, that is all you need to remember.

In 1969, [Pierre Trudeau](#), then the Canadian prime minister, told an American audience: "Living next to you is like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered the beast, one is affected by every twitch and grunt." The same applies to living next to the EU. It can hurt us without meaning to or noticing our pain.

Mass delusion produced Brexit; a denial by millions of the UK's true standing in the world. The right convinced the country that Britain was the elephant and the EU was the mouse. One day, we will pay for the mistake when it rolls over us.

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

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# Headlines

- [Cop26 US rejoins coalition to achieve 1.5C goal at UN climate talks](#)
- [Live Biden pledges to slash global methane emissions](#)
- [Cop26 World leaders agree deal to end deforestation](#)
- ['Unprecedented' Goldsmith hails deal to save world's forests](#)

## [Climate crisis](#)

# US rejoins coalition to achieve 1.5C goal at UN climate talks

05:18

Why the world is getting hotter and how you can help – video explainer

*[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent*

Tue 2 Nov 2021 04.34 EDT

The US has rejoined the High Ambition Coalition at the UN climate talks, the group of developed and developing countries that [ensured the 1.5C goal was a key plank of the Paris agreement](#).

The decision by the world's biggest economy and second biggest emitter, after China, to return to the High Ambition Coalition group of countries marks a significant boost to attempts to focus the [Cop26 summit](#) on limiting temperature rises to 1.5C, the tougher of the two goals of the Paris agreement.

The coalition, which numbered scores of countries at the 2015 Paris talks, will on Tuesday [call on governments](#) to step up their efforts on greenhouse gas emissions and phasing out coal, consistent with a 1.5C limit, and urge rich nations to double the amount of climate finance they make available for poor countries to adapt to the impacts of the climate crisis. They also want to bring an end to subsidies for fossil fuels.

A senior US official said: “The High Ambition Coalition was instrumental in Paris in making sure that high ambition was written into the [Paris agreement](#) and will be instrumental in Glasgow in making sure it’s delivered.”

Tina Stege, the climate envoy for the Marshall Islands, said: “The High Ambition Coalition has set the bar for what needs to happen at this Cop: getting on track to limiting temperature rise to 1.5C with enhanced [nationally determined contributions] and with real, actual actions, like phasing out coal; a sea-change on adaptation, with at least a doubling of current levels of adaptation financing; and making sure that we all have the resources we need to face this crisis, including the loss and damage we’re already experiencing today.

“These heads of state have given their marching orders for ambition.”

Science Weekly

## Science Weekly - Cop26: the world leaders arrive

00:00:00

00:11:42

One negotiator said fears that the 1.5C target was in danger of slipping out of reach had prompted the group’s resurgence. “We are extremely concerned about 1.5C,” they said. “That’s why we are calling for a way to keep 1.5C as a viable option.”

The High Ambition Coalition was formed in the run-up to Paris by the chief negotiator for the Marshall Islands, Tony de Brum. Though the tiny Pacific island state, made up of 29 atolls, has a population of only 60,000, the charismatic De Brum had a major influence at climate Cops.

The goal of holding temperature rises to 1.5C rather than 2C is much harder to achieve, as it requires emissions cuts of at least 45% by 2030, compared with 2010 levels. But [science shows it is much safer](#) – beyond 1.5C, many of the impacts of climate breakdown, such as melting ice sheets, become irreversible, and many small islands would face inundation from rising sea levels and storm surges.

De Brum spent months taking soundings from developed and developing countries, and in the [closing days](#), when it appeared that the 1.5C could be in danger, the coalition was announced.

John Kerry, the US climate envoy, [said earlier this year](#) that the Paris goal of “pursuing efforts” to 1.5C was “based on hard work by the High Ambition Coalition and the small island developing states. They felt it that it was imperative – and thank heavens they did. Science has now caught up to that fact, the IPCC [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change] and IEA [International Energy Agency] and others have been pretty clear, that this is what we need to try to achieve.”

De Brum [died in 2017](#). Stege is his niece.

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**Cop26**

# **Cop26: Boris Johnson says ‘the eyes of the world are on our negotiators’ as world leaders leave climate conference – as it happened**

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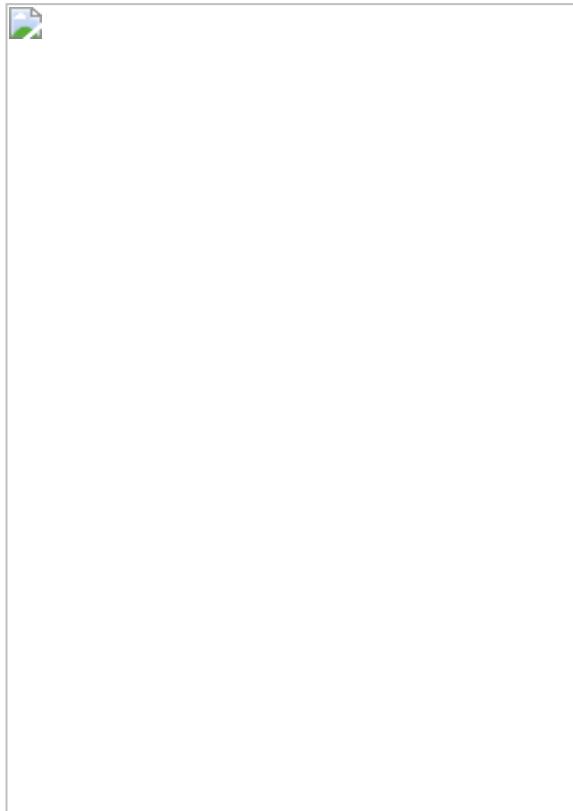
## The age of extinctionCop26

# Cop26: world leaders agree deal to end deforestation

02:33

2050: what happens if we ignore the climate crisis – video explainer

The age of extinction is supported by



## About this content

[Patrick Greenfield](#), [Jonathan Watts](#), [Phoebe Weston](#) and [Fiona Harvey](#)

Mon 1 Nov 2021 18.30 EDT

World leaders have agreed a deal that aims to halt and reverse global deforestation over the next decade as part of a multibillion-dollar package to tackle human-caused greenhouse gas emissions.

Xi Jinping, [Jair Bolsonaro](#) and Joe Biden are among the leaders who will commit to the declaration at Cop26 in Glasgow on Tuesday to protect vast areas, ranging from the eastern Siberian taiga to the Congo basin, home to the world's second largest rainforest.

Land-clearing by humans accounts for almost a quarter of greenhouse gas emissions, largely deriving from the destruction of the world's forests for agricultural products such as palm oil, soy and beef.

By signing the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forest and Land Use, presidents and prime ministers from major producers and consumers of deforestation-linked products will commit to protect forest ecosystems.

Boris Johnson will unveil the agreement at an event attended by the US president, Joe Biden, the Prince of Wales and the Indonesian president, Joko Widodo. He is expected to say: "These great teeming ecosystems – these cathedrals of nature – are the lungs of our planet. Forests support communities, livelihoods and food supply, and absorb the carbon we pump into the atmosphere. They are essential to our very survival."

The commitment on nature and forests comes as more than 120 world leaders came together in Glasgow to thrash out fresh commitments on cutting greenhouse gas emissions, amid concerns that key countries have failed to step up.

On a day devoted to [speeches by presidents and prime ministers](#) that underlined the scale of the challenges ahead, Johnson said future generations

“will judge us with bitterness” if the conference fails. Other key moments included:

[India pledged to reach net zero emissions](#) by 2070. Although it is the first time the world’s third biggest polluter has set this target, and experts said it was a realistic commitment, it is 20 years behind the 2050 date set agreed by other developed countries.

President Biden warned that greater urgency was needed at the talks: “Right now, we are falling short. There’s no time to hang back, sit on the fence or argue amongst ourselves.”

António Guterres, the UN secretary general, said the world was being driven to the brink by an addiction to fossil fuels. “We are fast approaching tipping points that will trigger escalating feedback loops of global heating,” he warned.

In a recorded message, [the Queen called on leaders](#) to “rise above the politics of the moment, and achieve true statesmanship”. She added: “Of course, the benefits of such actions will not be there to enjoy for all of us here today: we none of us will live forever. But we are doing this not for ourselves but for our children and our children’s children, and those who will follow in their footsteps.”

Following his own speech, Johnson provoked some ridicule by admitting [he would fly home](#) rather than take the train.

Shortly before, he had told a roundtable of leaders of developing nations: “When it comes to tackling climate change, words without action, without deeds are absolutely pointless.”

The commitments on deforestation are an early win for the UK, which as host nation bears responsibility for forging a consensus among the nearly 200 countries present, amid concerns that an overall commitment on cutting greenhouse gas emissions by the 45% scientists say is needed this decade [will fall short](#).

The political declaration, which is voluntary and not part of the Paris process, is one of a range of side deals that the UK presidency is pushing for at the climate summit in Glasgow alongside others on methane, cars and coal.

The package includes £5.3bn of new private finance and £8.75bn of public funding for restoring degraded land, supporting indigenous communities, protecting forests and mitigating wildfire damage.

A pledge from CEOs to eliminate activities linked to deforestation, and £1.5bn funding from the UK government for forests, are also part of the deal. £350m of that will go to Indonesia and £200m to the Congo basin, with a new £1.1bn fund for the west African rainforest.

While the forestry agreement has been cautiously welcomed by ecologists and forest governance experts, they point to previous deals to save forests that have so far failed to stop their destruction, including in 2014. But this time, the EU, China and the US alongside major forested countries like Brazil, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Papua New Guinea will all sign the commitment.

Many details need to be clarified, particularly how the money is spent, according to Carlos Rittl, who works on Brazil for the Rainforest Foundation Norway. “Big cheques won’t save the forests if the money doesn’t go into the right hands,” he said, emphasising that it should go to indigenous groups and others who are committed to protecting the forest.

In a separate announcement, at least £1.25bn of funding will be given directly to indigenous peoples and local communities by governments and philanthropists for their role in protecting forests.

But the promised funds still fall far short of what some believe is needed. “We are undervalued and our rights are still not respected,” said Mina Setra, an indigenous rights activist from Borneo. “A statement is not enough. We need evidence, not only words.”

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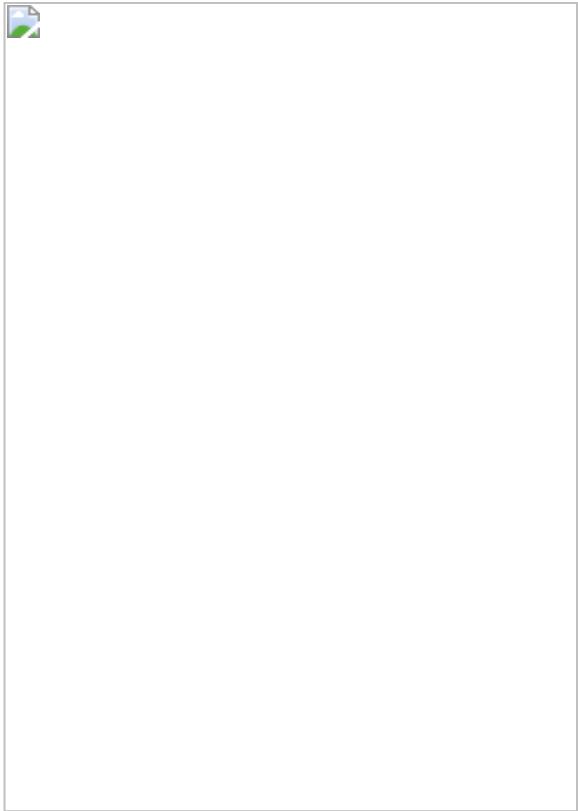
## The age of extinctionCop26

# Zac Goldsmith hails ‘unprecedented’ deal at Cop26 to save world’s forests



The deal to save the world’s forests will be backed by nearly £14bn in public and private funding. Photograph: Reuters

The age of extinction is supported by



## About this content

*Fiona Harvey and Patrick Greenfield in Glasgow*

Tue 2 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

Saving the world's forests will be one of the cornerstone achievements of the Cop26 climate summit, the UK environment minister [Zac Goldsmith](#) has said, with some of the biggest forested nations and consumers of forestry products signing up to an "unprecedented" conservation deal.

On Tuesday, more than 100 world leaders will commit to halting and reversing deforestation and land degradation by 2030, backed by nearly

£14bn in public and private funding. Major producers and consumers of deforestation-linked commodities including Indonesia, China, Brazil and the US have put their name to the deal, which aims to curtail the second largest source of greenhouse gas emissions.

Lord Goldsmith told the Guardian: “This is a genuinely unprecedented package. People will be able to justify having hope [that the world’s forests can be saved]. This puts us on a road to recovery and renewal.”

He said it had “not been easy” to persuade many of the countries involved to join, as the deal requires not just a commitment to halt deforestation – which has never been achieved before, despite numerous failed attempts – and provide forested countries with funds to replace the money they would have made from exploiting forested land, but also to reforming aspects of commodity markets so that buyers cannot get away with importing commodities produced from deforested land.

“The different parts of the package are mutually reinforcing,” said Goldsmith. “We are sending a very serious signal to the markets, we have a good pledge from buyers. The market has been blind to the value of the environment … The [current economic] incentives to deforest are 40 times bigger than the incentives to keep healthy forests, so changing that is difficult.”

The line-up of countries includes China and Brazil, as well as smaller developing countries, and some big buyers of forestry products which will clean up their supply chains.

“There are some surprising countries in there, and this is a pretty bullish pledge,” said the Conservative peer, though he declined to name any countries. “We have managed to persuade some of the trickier customers to come on board.”

Goldsmith, son of the late billionaire financier Sir James Goldsmith, has long been a notable environmentalist, a former owner of the Ecologist magazine and a campaigner and philanthropist for conservation projects. His political career as an MP, which included a campaign running against

Labour's Sadiq Khan to be London mayor that was marred by accusations of Islamophobia, was ended by defeat in the 2019 election. Soon afterwards he was put in the Lords, controversially, by Boris Johnson. He was charged by Johnson, an old friend and fellow old Etonian, with what he said was a personal passion for protecting nature and combating the loss of species and habitats.

"Putting nature at the heart [of the Cop] has been my obsession. It's mad that nature has always been more or less forgotten [in climate negotiations]," said Goldsmith.



Lord Goldsmith said it had not been easy to persuade many of the countries involved to commit to the deal. Photograph: Paul Ellis/PA

The difficulty of achieving the broader deal hoped for at [Cop26](#), of drastic cuts in greenhouse gas emissions in line with scientific advice, was apparent on the first day of the summit, when more than 120 world leaders gathered in Glasgow. António Guterres, the UN secretary general, delivered a gloomy forecast of the prospects. "Recent climate action announcements might give the impression that we are on track to turn things around," he said. "This is an illusion."

In this context, having a side deal on forestry in the bag is a major boost for the UK as hosts. However, some countries and analysts told the Guardian the agreement, while important, was flawed and lacking in some key respects, with too little cash being dedicated to helping poor countries preserve their forests, and too little emphasis on reducing demand for the commodities – such as soy, palm oil and beef – that drive deforestation in the first place.

John Sauven, executive director of Greenpeace, said: “Everyone wants to see zero deforestation, not least the indigenous peoples whose homes and livelihoods are under threat. But without tackling the drivers of destruction it’s like whistling in the wind to think cash alone will work. Cattle and soya for animal feed are wiping out the Amazon and savannahs of Brazil. The industrial meat industry, like its counterpart in the fossil fuel sector, needs to come to an end.”

He added: “Every climate scientist is saying we need to eat less meat. We won’t save the forests until politicians stop ignoring that message.”

Indigenous leaders, who have been shown to be the best guardians of the natural world by several studies, have also said they were not consulted on the declaration, adding that many leaders making the commitment had a history of breaking promises on protecting indigenous rights.

Goldsmith said the deal would benefit forest dwellers. “Indigenous people have always been seen as second tier [at Cops], they have never been given this support before,” he said. “I think for them this support will be a turning point at this Cop.”

He added: “When you put it all together, it’s a robust package, trying to get as many major countries together as possible to commit to ending deforestation. But it’s worth nothing unless they back this up with policies. It will be our job to make this real.”

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## 2021.11.02 - Spotlight

- [Second act sensations! Meet the people who reached peak fitness – after turning 50](#)
- [Gemma Whelan ‘Sex in Game of Thrones could be a frenzied mess’](#)
- [The long read How two BBC journalists risked their jobs to reveal the truth about Jimmy Savile](#)
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## **Second act sensations! Meet the people who reached peak fitness – after turning 50**



Rich Jones on his morning run in York. Two years ago, aged 54, he was seriously overweight. Now he is fit and more confident. 'It has changed how I think about myself.' Photograph: Gary Calton/The Guardian



### Emma Beddington

Tue 2 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

‘I do sometimes feel like a cliche,’ says [Rich Jones](#). We’re in the cafe at his gym and he is in workout gear. It’s true, something about the language and the before and after pictures from his physical transformation – severely overweight to lean and chiselled – would appear familiar from thousands of adverts and magazine spreads, if it wasn’t for one thing; Jones got into the best shape of his adult life after he passed 50. “On 9 August 2019, I walked in here. I was 54 and 127kg [20st].”

He worked out at least six days a week, for 90 minutes or more at a time. “I immersed myself in everything, I did gym, I did classes, Pilates, I even did barre,” he says. Within eight or 10 weeks, he was able to stop taking painkillers for a shoulder injury. He now cycles and runs on top of his gym sessions. “It’s just a habit – I brush my teeth every day, I go for a run every day.”

This new, dramatic fitness coupled with a weight loss programme (Jones lost 43kg (6st 11lb) in eight months) has been transformative in ways that don’t show in pictures. “I enjoy the feeling of being able to walk upstairs and not getting out of breath, of being fit and strong,” he says. The effect on his self-

image was equally dramatic: “It changed how I think about myself. I didn’t realise how you feel about the world, how you interact with people, is so tied to your body image.” Now on the dating scene after a separation, he is bursting with new-found confidence.

What combination of factors leads anyone to go all out at the gym, become a marathon runner or walk miles a day after the age of 50? Motivation is complex, and people differ, but the fact that mortality is nibbling at your heels, midlife restlessness has set in and with it the desire for reinvention, alongside a shift from active parenting or full-time work, may all contribute. Sometimes, a low-level unease gradually crystallises into a sense of urgency. “I had this sense that if I didn’t do something soon, it would be too late,” says Jones. Timing, he thinks, is key. Having retired early from his job as a chief information officer for a police force, the time was right. “I didn’t need to work, so I was my project – *I was my work, really.*”

Not every super-fit person over 50 has a clear “push”. Mags Cook wasn’t particularly looking to lose weight or get fit. “I was always quite a busy person – I didn’t sit around too much,” she says. A retired teacher, Cook, 69, only started running properly at 59 when a friend encouraged her to try [parkrun](#), the national weekly free fun run. “My husband died in 2006 and it was a good thing to know I’d be doing it every Saturday.” She enjoyed it, and her son-in-law suggested she join a running club. “I thought it was the most hilarious idea, because I was coming up to 60 and didn’t think of myself as a runner. But it was the best thing I’ve done – it was amazing.”



Mags Cook running with her daughter in the York marathon. Photograph: Courtesy of Mags Cook

Cook runs three or four times a week, and says: “Please don’t be too impressed, I don’t go fast or anything.” She is being modest – she has completed two marathons and a triathlon, for which she took swimming lessons to learn front crawl, and rode a bike for the first time since childhood. “I thought: ‘Might as well have a go,’” she says. The triathlon meant open-water swimming. “I cannot tell you how terrified I was ... but, actually, after the swim I was completely elated that I’d done something I didn’t think could do.”

While getting fit was not the end in itself for Cook, she can feel the difference now. “When I started running, I couldn’t do more than 50 metres without collapsing, but you discover you don’t have to run fast all the time – you can just keep going.”

For Shashi Hussain, 53, staying sane rather than getting fit motivated her to start a walking regime in the first Covid-19 lockdown. “I’m quite sociable and being locked in my house, not being able to meet my friends and family, I found it really tough, so I decided to turn it into some sort of positive.” She began to walk daily, using the time to call friends and family to catch up.

Gradually she went up from 5,000 steps to 10,000, “then 12,000, then 15,000; now I do anything between 20,000 and 30,000 steps a day”.



Shashi Hussain has transformed her fitness by walking three times a day since the first lockdown. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

It's a significant time commitment: Hussain is an NHS manager, and splits her daily step count into a walk before work, one at lunchtime and more steps after work. She walks the streets and parks around her home in Essex, often combining exercise with errands, exploring new areas or taking photographs. “I've turned it into a bit of a learning exercise; I've learned so much about plants and flowers.” She has also lost weight, gone through two pairs of trainers and transformed her fitness. “My husband has always walked really fast. Before, I'd almost have to run to catch up with him, but he sees a difference in my breathing, my walking – I'm not out of breath.”

For both women, the mental benefits have been crucial during the pandemic. Cook's running club set members running tasks during lockdown: “They kept us going, it was brilliant. It really made lockdown so different.”

“For my mental wellbeing, it's been the best thing ever,” says Hussain, who has surprised herself with her unwavering commitment. It's almost a compulsion: if her step count is lower at weekends, she sometimes goes

back out when her husband is asleep. “It has become part of my life.” For Cook: “It has made me braver, I think.”

While Cook, Jones and Hussain may be in the best shape of their lives, the same is not true of everyone in their age group: 42% of over-55s are inactive, compared with 29% of UK adults, [according to Sport England research](#). Perhaps that is not surprising, when the fitness industry often appears to be tailored to the young.

[Chris Zaremba](#) is very aware of that. Another convert to super-fitness after 50, he is a personal trainer who specialises in the over-50s. He coined the term “gymtimidation” to describe how many older people feel about fitness clubs. “A new gym opens in your town and, guess what, they are playing loud music, there are loads of mirrors and industrial grungy design – it’s not welcoming for anybody over 40, which is really stupid.”

Jones agrees: “You think they’re judging you.” He tried and disliked other gyms (“just a room with kit and pumping music”) before finding a small, supportive one.

At 50, Zaremba himself was “allergic to exercise” and very overweight; his first experiences in the gym were typically off-putting. “Everyone there was already several times fitter than I was,” he says. But he conquered his misgivings in spectacular style: he has run marathons and a triathlon, and in 2014 won the world championships in both fitness and muscle modelling (similar to bodybuilding). His recent book, *Fat to Fit at Fifty*, describes his journey and provides training tips.

Getting fit after 50 is an optimistic act; a positive statement of intent for the second half of your life. “I hear time and time again: ‘It’s too late for me to start,’” says Zaremba. “I say, no, it’s not. I did not exercise at all when I was 50 and by the time I was 55, I was one of the healthiest 55-year-olds on the planet.” Most of his clients have gentler aspirations. “It’s about maintaining independent living for longer; being mobile, living a happy, independent life.”

Is there a risk that extraordinary stories such as Zaremba’s might discourage rather than inspire? “Headlines like: ‘Anyone can run a marathon’ are not

fair because it's not actually true," says Dr Lucy Pollock, a consultant in geriatric medicine and author of *The Book About Getting Older (For People Who Don't Want to Talk About It)*.

But getting fit after 50 need not mean becoming a ropey-calved cycling obsessive in Lycra or signing up for the [Marathon des Sables](#). "I think depictions of older people getting fitter fall into two camps," says Kate Dale of Sport England; its [Active Ageing](#) campaign funds projects that target inactivity in older people. "It's either chair aerobics stuff or you've got marathon runners, like the [Skipping Sikh](#). He's amazing, but you don't have to go to one of those extremes, you can find what's right for you."

This is vital because, as Pollock's book highlights, research shows that activity can improve longevity and, crucially, quality of life for older people, including the group she describes as the "super old". One of the best parts of her job, Pollock says, is seeing someone very fragile, with poor mobility, regain strength and the ability to move independently. "It's amazing how quickly small amounts of exercise make a difference. There are lots of people who are never going to be able to do a squat again – that doesn't mean they can't do anything."

Brian Nathan can't do a full plié (pretty close to a squat, but much more elegant), but at 82, he goes down on one leg at a time at his [Silver Swans](#) class, a Royal Academy of Dance initiative for over-55 ballet beginners and returners. Nathan started three years ago. "I thought: 'I've got to exercise', but I loathe exercise and hate ploughing up and down a swimming pool, so what is there in the dancing world?" He finds it "impossibly difficult", but says: "What is marvellous about the teachers of Silver Swans is that they understand we are old and don't make us relentlessly go on and on."



Brian Nathan at the Royal Academy of Dance, where he does two classes. He also plays tennis and cricket. Photograph: Courtesy of Brian Nathan

An accomplished ballroom dancer in his youth (“I discovered girls love dancing so it was simple: become a decent dancer”), Nathan also played cricket and rugby. But with six children and a successful tool-and-equipment hire business, “it petered out”. Now, though, his weekly regime puts mine to shame. “On Monday, I do old gits cricket and old gits tennis – it’s brilliant. Tuesday, I have a rest, Wednesday, I do Move to the Musicals (another Royal Academy dance class), Thursdays I rest again and Fridays I do ballet.” Nathan says he has improved. “I’m motivated to try and get better because I love trying to be graceful to music – and totally failing; I still want to try every week. We were walking this morning, and walking as a ballet dancer walks is hard. I can remember trying to do it three years ago and I couldn’t; I thought good God, I’m better at it. I can see the point, you know.”

There are as many ways to get moving, and what works will depend on individual circumstances and health, resources, time and inclination. “It’s about forgiving yourself to some degree,” says Pollock. “Accepting your limits and working within them.” For those who are ready to take on a challenge, Zaremba recommends trying to incorporate some resistance work as well as an activity that raises the heart rate (he is another parkrun fan). It’s important, he says, to try and fight sarcopenia, the process of losing skeletal

muscle mass as we age (Pollock also recommends light weights, perhaps using a tin of beans).

Flexibility, mobility and coordination work can also be improved hugely in later life and have day-to-day benefits, in staying agile and preventing falls. This can be quite modest: Zaremba recommends doorframe stretches as a good simple starter. However gentle your exercise regime, advises Pollock, give yourself credit as you improve. “Notice that you’re better at it this week than last week. Give yourself a pat on the back and notice how far you have come in a very short time.”

As an additional bonus, the fitness efforts of people over 50 seem to have a powerful trickle-down effect on friends and family. Cook has converted several friends to running and runs with her daughter; Hussain has inspired her friends. “A lot of people have started doing it with me, which is brilliant.” Even her mother, who is 76, now walks 10,000 to 15,000 steps a day. “She says I’ve really helped her because otherwise, she’d have nothing to do.”

“I wouldn’t call myself a role model in any way,” says Jones, “But both my boys in their early 20s now take better care of themselves. I think there has been a kind of shared awakening.”

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## Gemma Whelan: ‘Sex in Game of Thrones could be a frenzied mess’



‘All the squishy-squishy, huggy-huggy stuff has stopped’ ... Whelan.  
Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian



[Mark Lawson](#)

Tue 2 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

Deadlines meant I saw ITV's twisty police corruption drama *The Tower* as a rough cut, featuring on-screen notes about final editing perfections, computer-generated backgrounds, extra lines of dialogue – and the instruction: “Hide pregnancy bump.”

This related to the increasing evidence of Freddie, now four weeks old, and sleeping between feeds in a pub garden near the London home of his mother, Gemma Whelan, who is amused to hear of this prenatal technology. “Wow!” she says. “How are they going to do that? Paint it out? Or cut in a waistline from earlier?”

Despite high-level acting credits – including Yara Greyjoy in [Game of Thrones](#) and Kate in BBC Two’s *Upstart Crow* – the 40-year-old says she is never recognised in the street: “People sometimes say, ‘Do I know you from the bus stop?’ or, ‘Were we at school?’ That’s it really.”

Whelan enjoys her ability to transform into her characters, whether with Yara’s breastplate, war paint and mousy scowl – “it would be almost insulting to be recognised from Game of Thrones” – or, in BBC One’s *The Moorside*, as Karen Matthews, the Yorkshire woman jailed for faking the

abduction of her daughter, so physically transformed that it fooled Whelan's mum. "She said: 'Strange they used so much original footage of her!', and I said: 'That's all me, Mum. There is no original footage.'"



A horseride to remember ... with Alfie Allen in Game of Thrones.  
Photograph: Helen Sloan/Home Box Office

Whelan is taking minimal maternity leave partly because she is self-employed but also because, like most actors, she endured a year during lockdown of not doing very much. A West End version of *Upstart Crow* was shut down three weeks into the run, after which she spent "a year doing audiobooks and voiceovers". She then filmed next year's second series of BBC One's *Gentleman Jack* – playing Marian, the sister of Anne Lister – before *The Tower*.

The main shoot lasted through the second trimester. With actors who are visibly pregnant when their characters are not, the convention has been to shoot them mainly from the neck up. "Yeah. It's a great way of getting loads of closeups!" laughs Whelan who, during the final season of *Game of Thrones*, was carrying Frances, now four. "But there also were a lot of wide shots in *The Tower*. I think you'd only notice if you knew I was pregnant and, if you do notice, women have babies, who cares? It was refreshing to be able to not worry about it."

I like that DS Collins is very front-footed and doesn't mind pissing people off

Whelan's domestic juggling starkly contrasts with DS Sarah Collins in The Tower, who has no visible private life. "She's very moral, very black and white. There's very little nuance in her judgment." Viewers may be reminded of Adrian Dunbar's Supt Ted Hastings in Line of Duty, and Whelan admits the similarity: "Absolutely. They swore an oath to keep the law and so they do. She doesn't care about being a people-pleaser, which I think a lot of women are written as – and, actually, a lot of women are – but I like that she's very front-footed and doesn't mind pissing people off."

Adapted by 24 screenwriter Patrick Harbinson, from a series of novels by former Met detective Kate London, The Tower goes out at a time when, after the [murder by a serving police officer of Sarah Everard](#), the reputation of the force is as low as it's ever been. But, like Line of Duty, The Tower shows good and bad policing. "Yes. Exactly," says Whelan. "Most of the cops are trying to do their best, but some aren't; there are wrong 'uns."

As with all current TV productions, The Tower had a Covid-safe set, with testing mandatory and jabs encouraged – a difficult decision for Whelan at a time when medical evidence on safety during pregnancy was sketchy. Stressing that she is not telling others what to do but sharing her own thought processes in a dilemma that many face, she says: "I'm double-vaxxed, and had both while I was pregnant. I spoke to the midwife and doctors at length, and read all the stories about the huge number of American pregnant women who had been jabbed without incident. And I knew if I got Covid in the third trimester it could be very serious. It's not an easy decision but I felt comfortable to make it and we're both fine."



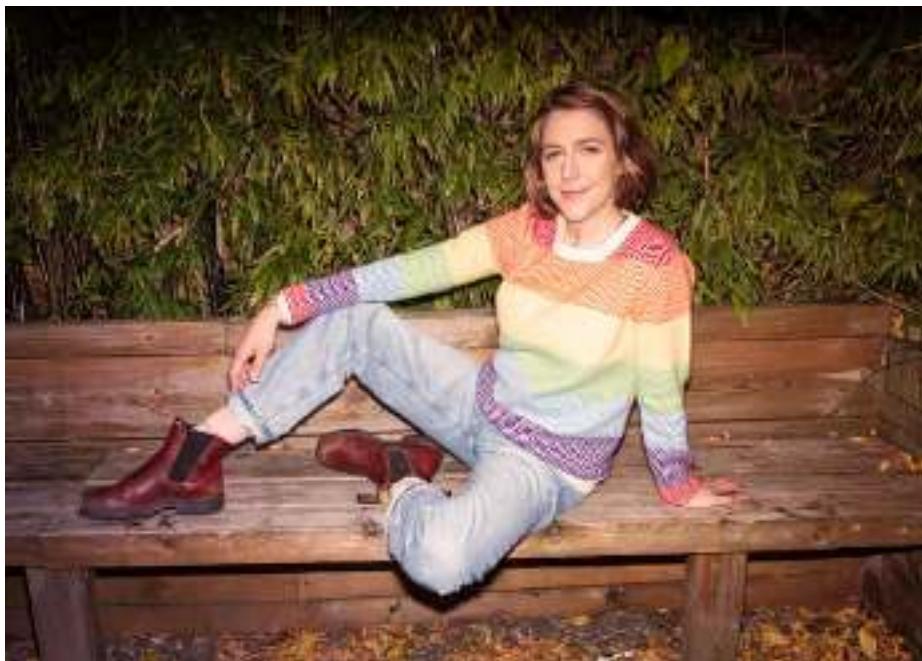
Moral and uncompromising ... as DS Sarah Collins in *The Tower*.  
Photograph: Stuart Wood/ITV

Another question of film-set safety has arisen since the revelations about Harvey Weinstein and other showbiz predators. Whelan says that she has never experienced any threats or assaults, but the mood of shoots has noticeably changed. “There’s a very different choice of language now. If anyone makes an innuendo, everyone shuts down. I think, five or 10 years ago, if there was a double entendre, everyone would jump on the bandwagon and see how many laughs they could raise. I remember when an actor would have a microphone fitted, and sometimes you have to root around the waist. And, in the past, there’d be all this, ‘and while you’re down there, hur, hur!’ But now you don’t have to play along with things like that.”

In the past, it was common for actors, saying hello or goodbye to colleagues, to exchange embraces of a level some married couples never reach. But first #MeToo and then Covid-19 have ended that. “All the squishy-squishy, huggy-huggy stuff has stopped. But I don’t miss it. You have to be a bit more genuine now if you’re saying hello. You can’t hide behind a big hug. And there’s no question mark over it: Do we double kiss? Do we hug? Clasp hands? No, we just say hello to each other.”

Although DS Collins's workaholism prevents her having sex in *The Tower*, an intimacy director is credited for couples who do. Presumably, when Whelan was playing the energetically bisexual Yara in *Game of Thrones*, actors were just left to get on with it?

"Almost literally. They used to just say, 'When we shout action, go for it!', and it could be a sort of frenzied mess. But between the actors there was always an instinct to check in with each other. There was a scene in a brothel with a woman and she was so exposed that we talked together about where the camera would be and what she was happy with. A director might say, 'Bit of boob biting, then slap her bum and go!', but I'd always talk it through with the other actor."



Whelan ... 'My mum says I've always been astonishingly stubborn. But it seems to come out more in the acting.' Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

In the 2012 second season (her first) of *Game of Thrones*, Yara and Theon (Alfie Allen) had one of TV's most talked-about sex-scenes (retrospectively revealed to be incestuous) sharing a horse-ride including a reach-round move that would bring immediate disqualification in dressage. "Alfie was very much, 'Is this OK? How are we going to make this work?' With intimacy directors, it's choreography – you move there, I move there, and

permission and consent is given before you start. It is a step in the right direction.”

With Yara, Shakespeare’s Kate, and now DS Collins, Whelan has repeatedly played spectacularly strong women. “That seems to be what casting directors see in me.” Possibly because there is something sharp and sardonic about her? “Maybe. I think I may give off a ‘don’t fuck with me’ vibe. There’s definitely a defiance.” And has that always been there? “My mum says I’ve always been astonishingly wilful and stubborn. But it seems to come out more in the acting. In real life, I’m quite apologetic, ‘I’m so sorry to take up your time, thank you so much for getting me a tea,’ and so on. But, in my work, I feel that’s where I belong and have a right to be there.”

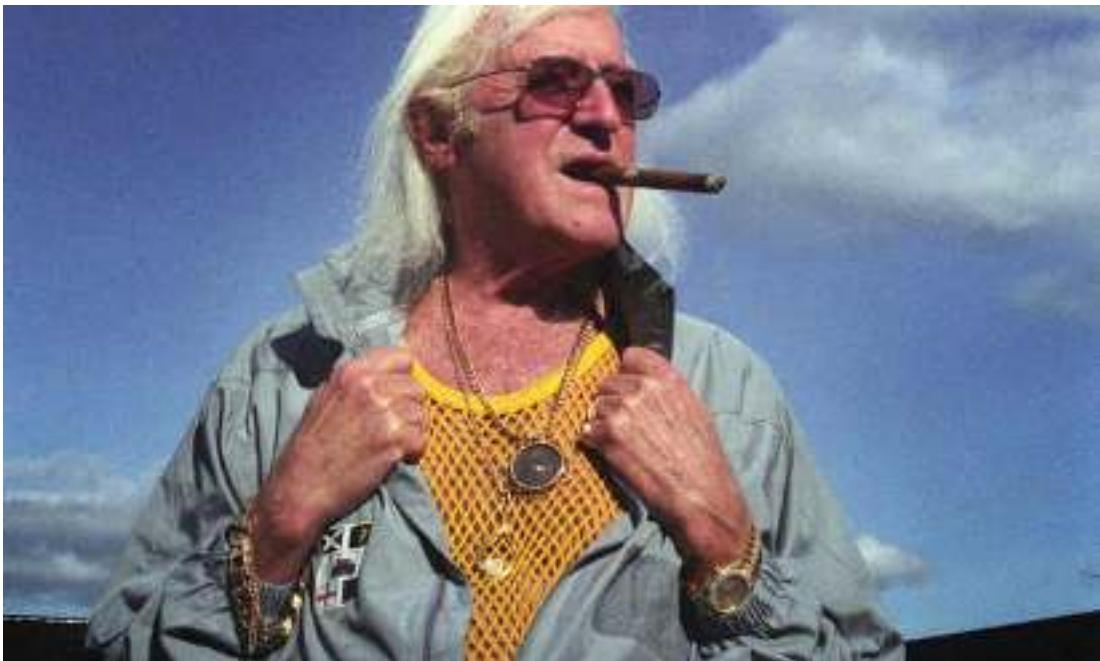
She may have inherited performing genes from parents who met in an amateur dramatics production of Eugene O’Neill’s *Desire Under the Elms* in Birmingham. Living there and in Leeds and London has given her access to a useful range of regional accents, but she would like to test her American: “I’d love to do something in America. I went up for a film there with Frances McDormand, but didn’t get it. It’s my next ambition.”

She is about to film a small role in another ITV police drama, *DI Ray*, starring Parminder Nagra, and hopes that the *Upstart Crow* play will return to the West End next year. Combining this workload with family life is possible because her husband, Gerry Howell, a standup comic retraining as a therapist, shares childcare, but also because productions are more baby-friendly.

“I haven’t seen a creche on set. But, even with my first baby, breastfeeding was never an issue. People would say, ‘Just go when you have to go.’ But I think you have to meet them halfway. I don’t think, after they’ve set up an elaborate shot, you can say, ‘Right I’m off!’”

- *The Tower* is on ITV on 8, 9 and 10 November at 9pm.

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Jimmy Savile in 2007. Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

[The long read](#)

## How two BBC journalists risked their jobs to reveal the truth about Jimmy Savile

Jimmy Savile in 2007. Photograph: Gary Calton/The Observer

by [Poppy Sebag-Montefiore](#)

Tue 2 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

On Saturday 29 October 2011, the day the entertainer [Jimmy Savile](#) died aged 84, a couple of comments were posted on the Duncroft School page of the networking site Friends Reunited. Duncroft was designated as an “approved school” by the Home Office, and offered residential care for “intelligent but emotionally disturbed girls”. “He died today, RIP no RIH yes rot in hell,” read one message. “Perhaps some closure for the childhoods that were ruined by this animal.” Over the next few days a handful more

messages appeared: “You child molester – you were no better than all the other pervs who have been banged up … only your celebrity status saved you.” Someone else wrote how she would never recover from what “JS” did to her.

Across the news bulletins and weekend front pages, Savile was being given a sendoff fitting for someone who had achieved national treasure status. As [BBC](#) Radio 1 DJ, and co-presenter of the BBC’s flagship music programme Top of the Pops, Savile became a personality in the pop music scene in the 60s and 70s; his oddness and mannerisms enhanced his celebrity. As the host of the long-running Saturday evening TV show Jim’ll Fix It, he played godfather, granting the wishes to children who wrote in. On the Monday after his death, during the news editors’ 9.15 morning meeting at BBC headquarters in west London, those present were asked to take coverage of Savile’s funeral seriously. The concern was that the news editors might sneer at Savile; they were reminded that, to much of the audience, Savile was a northern hero. He had started out working in the mines, going on to earn a knighthood and befriend royalty through his television shows and charity work.

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Meanwhile, George Entwistle, the BBC’s head of television, was trying to work out how BBC light entertainment would mark the death of one of its biggest stars. Entwistle was informed that there was no obituary ready to run on Savile – unusual for someone who had made such a contribution to British public life. The decision had been made by successive controllers, a colleague told him by email. Savile had a “dark side”, which meant it was “impossible to make an honest film to be shown so close to death”, his colleague said.

Entwistle emailed his team: the best way forward was to avoid making anything new about Savile. Someone suggested making a Fix It Christmas special hosted by a new BBC star. All agreed. Problem solved. It’d be “a real Christmas treat”, said the BBC1 controller in an email.

Rumours about Savile being a sexual predator and a paedophile had persisted for decades. In his trademark brightly coloured shell suits, scant shorts and string vests, Savile had performed his perversions almost as much as he'd hidden them. His manner almost dared people to challenge him. Because of the UK's punitive libel laws, no one ever had. On the Monday morning after Savile's death, in the Newsnight office at BBC Television Centre, social affairs correspondent Liz MacKean and producer Meirion Jones began to investigate Savile's history.

Jones had a personal connection to the story: his aunt ran the Duncroft School. Over three years in the early 1970s, when he was in his mid-teens, Jones visited Duncroft on weekends with his parents and his sister. They would often see Savile's white Rolls-Royce parked outside. His parents were concerned about Savile taking the girls off site. Jones met Savile there a few times, always finding it curious how he seemed to speak in catchphrases that created what Jones described as "a screen between him and people around him".

In 1988, Jones became a journalist at the BBC. It soon became one of the stories he wanted to get a purchase on. Once social media arrived, he would search sites for references to Savile and Duncroft. In 2010, he found a memoir published online by a former Duncroft pupil, detailing abuse by a celebrity "JS". Jones had spoken to MacKean at different times about pursuing the story, but they were at a disadvantage legally. Savile was part of the establishment, a leading charity fundraiser, and some of the Duncroft girls were offenders. Some had been abused from a young age, and had run away from care homes. No one would believe them against him. "Any witness would be destroyed in court so we'd never get it past the lawyers," Jones told me. "It's exactly why he targeted places like that."

MacKean, then 46, from Hampshire, had two children and worked at Newsnight part-time. As a journalist she was drawn to people on the margins – people who'd been wronged and couldn't get justice. "She was a lucky person, highly attuned to the unlucky and the unfair," MacKean's friend Amelia Bullmore wrote to me.

Within a few weeks of Savile's death, MacKean had collected on-the-record testimony from 10 women who had been at Duncroft. Seven had been

abused and three had witnessed abuse by Savile. It had been difficult to convince them to go public. Some told her they worried they would be seen as complicit; they were sure they wouldn't be believed. Some feared a backlash, that people would claim they were out for something: compensation, notoriety. MacKean, a BBC journalist of 20 years' standing, assured the women that they'd have the weight of Newsnight behind them, and the support of the BBC. But a few days before the transmission date, the Newsnight editor, Peter Rippon, told MacKean and Jones that the piece couldn't be broadcast.

He said they needed to focus on some kind of institutional failure. What about the police investigation that had been halted? MacKean told Rippon that the women's stories corroborated one another – they didn't need any other elements. It all stacked up. And on top of this, they *had* found institutional failure by the BBC. Some of the abuse had taken place on BBC premises, in dressing rooms in Television Centre, the very building in which they were standing.

MacKean couldn't know the extent to which she'd have to take on the BBC in order to make sure that the former Duncroft pupils were taken seriously. Nor could she know that she and Jones would be risking their careers. But in refusing to drop the story, they helped to change the culture about the way past sexual abuse is talked about, and survivors listened to, in the UK.

The BBC is now making a mini-series about Savile. One of the few details it has announced is that [Steve Coogan will play Savile](#). Some viewers are uneasy about the BBC putting Savile back in the limelight, and have expressed concern about how people still living with the impact of his abuse will feel about it. But the BBC feels the time is right for a reckoning, and says the drama "will examine the impact his appalling crimes had on [Savile's] victims and the powerlessness many felt when they tried to raise the alarm".

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Savile's funeral was broadcast live on BBC News on 9 November 2011. The pavements around Leeds Cathedral were thick with mourners as his gold coffin was [borne past](#). MacKean told the documentary maker Olly Lambert in 2014 that she watched this and thought: "The difference between that and

the sort of things that people now felt able to start telling us – a gulf like that – that's a story.”

Working with Jones and MacKean, BBC trainee Hannah Livingston tracked down about 60 former Duncroft pupils. Most immediately assumed the call would be about Savile. Those willing to talk were passed on to MacKean. Over long calls, MacKean began to understand how Savile masterminded the abuse. He would offer the girls cigarettes and trips to Television Centre in his Rolls-Royce. In return, they'd have to give him oral sex in a layby.

Among the Newsnight editorial team there were some squeamish discussions about the Savile story. Jeremy Paxman, Newsnight's lead presenter for 25 years, whose rigorous, curmudgeonly questioning style defined the programme, told me: “I think there were an awful lot of people who felt that it was at the tabloidy end of things.” One member of the team wanted nothing to do with it on grounds of “taste”. Some thought it was too close to Savile’s death, and sensationalist. “That was one of the arguments deployed at the time,” one former senior Newsnight journalist told me. “Newsnight was meant to be serious, high-minded journalism about politics, economics, foreign affairs and culture, and this isn’t what it should be doing.” Rippon was initially enthusiastic about MacKean and Jones pursuing the Savile story, but, as MacKean told Jones in an email after a meeting she had with Rippon and a member of his editorial team, they were “[of] course concerned about the credibility of the women”.



Jimmy Savile in 1981. Photograph: PA

MacKean told Lambert in 2014, during a long interview that he recorded but never broadcast: “The women we spoke to were middle-aged. The fact that they’d been in a school like Duncroft showed that their lives were on a difficult course. Perhaps they weren’t the most appealing interviewees for television. There is, within the mainstream establishment, a dislike of those sorts of people, an official indifference, or they just find them difficult to deal with. I think that’s why the BBC then found it so hard to admit that we were investigating Jimmy Savile, because there was a real embarrassment at admitting that the BBC, like all these other official institutions, had just shrugged its shoulders and turned away from people rather than listened.” The BBC said in a statement: “Savile’s actions were profoundly wrong and we are sorry for the pain caused to his survivors … Today’s BBC is a very different place, where complaints about any form of harassment are considered with the utmost seriousness.”

When MacKean arrived at Newsnight in 2000 after being a presenter on BBC Breakfast News, Jones had been producing investigations for the programme for five years. He noticed that she would get stories from people who didn’t usually talk to journalists. “You could absolutely 100% trust her, and the women [from Duncroft] knew they could trust her too,” he said. “And she was totally unafraid.”

While MacKean was working on Savile, I was working as a freelancer, producing another investigation with her at Newsnight. When I first met her in the office that summer, she looked at my hands, saw they were covered in scratches and asked me if I had a kitten at home. Nobody asked questions like that on first meetings at Newsnight: not personal, not domestic, not about kittens. Newsnight was a tough environment, but MacKean was disarmingly herself. She drew people out. Over the next year I would watch MacKean fight for the Savile story, see how her work went unrecognised, how she was ignored and sidelined at the BBC, and how profoundly that affected her.

“She’d always struck me as a very ordinary journalist,” a former senior news executive told me. “She wasn’t ambitious or sharp-elbowed. She didn’t fill the screen.” I put it to him that MacKean’s talents for listening to sources were one of the qualities that made her extraordinary. He considered this for a moment and said: “Listening wasn’t a quality we gave much credit to back then. It should have been.”

In 2010, Jones and MacKean won the Daniel Pearl award for investigative journalism for [their report](#) on Trafigura’s toxic waste dumping in Ivory Coast, co-authored [with the Guardian](#). Paxman told me: “Meirion’s like a dog with a bone. I always took it as read that if Meirion said something was true, it was true. Even though there might be very expensive lawyers for the other side, I always believed him. And he worked with Liz. They were not what you’d call ‘clubbable’. I admired Liz very much. She was a difficult woman, but the best journalists very often are difficult.” Because Jones and MacKean had been given freedom to get on with their work in the past, when their editor questioned whether they had done enough on the Savile story, it was a shock.

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On Monday 14 November 2011, cameraman Simon Monk picked up MacKean, Jones and Livingston from a train station in the south of England and drove them to the home of the only one of Savile’s victims they had spoken to who had agreed to record an interview on camera. Monk didn’t know what the story was that he had been booked for. “I’ve often thought about that interview,” he told me. “It stayed with me, you know, just little moments of it. I realised – I’m listening to something that happened to this

lady, that I was privy to something that had maybe never been shared before.”

In the car on the way back, the team were quiet at first. Slowly they prompted one another’s responses. They had all believed her. “It was subdued,” Monk said, “and I’m thinking: we’re at the beginning of something. The lid is being prised open on this. I’ve worked there for a long time and seen how people have been dealt with, especially women in the Beeb.” Monk turned on the car radio, and by coincidence the BBC Christmas schedule was being announced – including the Savile tributes. “They’ll have to cancel those now,” someone said.

The team were working to corroborate as many fine details as possible from their collection of quotes by the former Duncroft pupils. Rippon asked Jones and MacKean to confirm claims that the police had investigated Savile. On 25 November, Jones received confirmation that Surrey police had investigated Savile in 2007, and that a file had been passed to the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS). Rippon gave the story a transmission date of 7 December. He wrote it on the Newsnight whiteboard, which meant it was certain to be going on air.

Jones sent a draft version of MacKean’s script to the BBC Impact team, which makes sure important stories are headlined on news bulletins across the network. The Impact department expected a lot of interest, and asked if MacKean could be available for live interviews across all BBC outlets on the day of transmission. Two minutes later, Rippon sent an email to his line manager: “The women are credible and have no motive for speaking to us other than they want the truth to be known … We also think that Sky are chasing the story too so we don’t want to sit on it.”

Rippon received a reply from his manager Stephen Mitchell, the deputy head of news, saying he’d call later. At the 2012 inquiry into the BBC’s conduct over the Newsnight investigation, both said they could not remember whether any subsequent conversation took place. Nick Pollard, chair of the inquiry, wrote in his review: “The inability of both … Mr Rippon and Mr Mitchell to provide any recollection of whether they did or did not speak and, if so, what was said, was frustrating.” (When I approached Stephen Mitchell for comment about this, he said: “I would refer you to the two

inquiries carried out into these events and the published outcomes of these, as I recall the reports were clear on how the item was handled.”)

But the next day, Rippon had pulled back. He emailed MacKean and Jones asking them to confirm if it was true that the CPS had dropped the case because of Savile’s old age, as some of the Duncroft women had been told. “That makes it a much better story,” he wrote to Jones and MacKean. “Our sources so far are just the women.”



A copy of the Pollard review, published in 2012. Photograph: Reuters

Pollard quoted Rippon’s testimony in his review: “The extent to which we had to rely on the testimony from [the on camera interviewee] was stark. She was the only victim in vision we had and would be the face of our allegations and I remained concerned about how well her testimony would stand up to the scrutiny it would get.”

MacKean, however, was enraged by that phrase “just the women”. She walked into Rippon’s glass-walled office, leaving the door open. “Liz would have been grandstanding,” Jones recalled, “making sure the whole office could hear. He’d have been looking at his toes. Liz, with big arm gestures, was saying: ‘How dare you talk about “just the women”?’ ... I don’t remember whether I’d ever seen her bawling out the editor before.”

MacKean asked Rippon to watch their interview with Savile's victim, but he refused. Pollard wrote in his review: "Mr Rippon told me: 'I don't think seeing the interview ... seeing something with an eye ... gives you any more help in making a judgment about whether something is true or not ... I think the kind of concerns that I had, that I was weighing, would not have been swayed by having sat down and watched the interview.' I think this is a strange thing for a television news journalist and editor to say. Common sense and experience would surely suggest the opposite."

Rippon wiped the Savile story from the Newsnight whiteboard and told Jones and MacKean to stop work on it until they heard back from the CPS. They didn't stop. For them, the police investigation was superfluous. They had the story: Savile had been a paedophile and numerous institutions had facilitated his crimes. Jones hired a white Rolls-Royce and filmed it the next day pulling up outside Duncroft.

MacKean and Jones were beginning to realise that Savile's abuse had taken place on a bigger scale than they'd thought. "By then, we'd also heard rumours about Broadmoor, and quite serious allegations about Stoke Mandeville [hospital]," MacKean told Lambert. "Meirion thought there could be 100 victims ... I said, I don't know, but certainly dozens. And of course we'd both wildly underestimated it, as it turned out. But there was certainly enough there to think, right, a lot of institutions have questions to answer: clearly the BBC, certainly the NHS, and also the Home Office."

For the next few days, the atmosphere in the Newsnight office was tense. MacKean and Jones quietly continued working on the story as they waited to hear back from the CPS. On 9 December that email came. The CPS said they had dropped the investigation into Savile because of lack of evidence.

"I knew that was the kill," Jones said.

"This statement [from the CPS about lack of evidence] specifically denied the allegation that the investigation was dropped because of his age," Rippon later wrote in the Editors' [blog](#) on the BBC website. "I felt it was significant the guidance was included and we had not established any institutional failure and I judged it weakened the story from a Newsnight perspective. I took the decision not to publish."

The Pollard review recorded that Rippon told them that “the decision to drop the Savile story was his, and his alone”. Pollard found that there was no inappropriate pressure or interference from BBC senior management with the editorial decision not to broadcast the Savile Newsnight programme. MacKean had to ring the women she’d convinced to trust her and tell them the story wasn’t going on air.

“It was crushing and disappointing, but I didn’t accept it,” MacKean told Lambert. “Now she was on a mission to get this story out and to get the truth told, she really was,” MacKean’s wife, Donna Rowlands, told me. There were still a few weeks before Christmas, and MacKean wanted her sources’ voices to be heard before the tributes could air. She leaked the cancellation of her Newsnight investigation to the press. Reporter Miles Goslett got hold of the story and pitched it to seven Fleet Street editors. All turned it down, also on grounds of taste, and because getting into a tussle with the BBC so close to Christmas would cause problems. Even with Savile dead, the story was too much for the British press at that time of year.

On Boxing Day evening, after the regional news and before the family film Madagascar: Escape 2 Africa, 5 million people tuned in to BBC One to watch the actor Shane Richie present the Jim’ll Fix It Christmas special.

In the new year, MacKean and Jones, with more than four decades of service to the BBC between them, gave all their research on Savile to the BBC’s rival, the commercial channel ITV. “Now, obviously that doesn’t make us feel very good as BBC journalists,” MacKean told Lambert. “But given that by then, we really had the feeling that the BBC didn’t want to run this story, the only chance for us to get it out was going to be through someone else.”

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On Wednesday 3 October 2012, ITV ran a documentary in their Exposure strand titled [The Other Side of Jimmy Savile](#). Five women, two from Duncroft, spoke about how Savile had sexually assaulted them as underage girls. Not long into the 49-minute programme, the NSPCC helplines began to light up and didn’t stop ringing. And so began a gradual national outpouring of people, mainly women, talking about their own experiences of past sexual abuse, by high-profile figures, or people in their communities, workplaces or families, which many had kept silent about for decades.

The weekend before the *Exposure* documentary aired, the tabloids had splashed on the Savile allegations. “Sensation as TV legend Jimmy Savile is accused of underage sexual assaults” was the front page of the *People*. The broadsheets joined in, too, but their focus was specifically on *Newsnight*’s dropped investigation: “[BBC ditched Newsnight investigation into Jimmy Savile](#),” was the *Times*’s headline. “[BBC denies cover-up over claims Savile targeted underage girls](#)” was the *Independent*’s.

To tell the Savile story, the BBC had been looking for a case of contemporary institutional failure. By not running it, they had created one. MacKean and Jones were now greeted by cameras and a press mob every time they entered Television Centre. The BBC press office was doing all it could to deflect the story. It put out statements saying that *Newsnight* had been investigating Surrey police’s Savile investigation, not Savile himself. On 2 October, Peter Rippon published the blog explaining his decision. “*Newsnight* is not normally interested in celebrity exposé,” he wrote. MacKean was horrified that the former Duncroft pupils, who’d trusted her with painful stories, were being ignored once again by the BBC. And now her and Jones’s work was being publicly undermined. In November, Chris Patten, then chair of the BBC Trust, and George Entwistle, since promoted to director general, were called before a House of Commons select committee to explain what had happened.

Journalists were calling MacKean and Jones, wanting to know their side of the story. Jones ignored the calls at first. MacKean didn’t. MacKean told Lambert: “I remember I had a two-week period of journalists ringing up around the clock, knocking on my door at home, and there was absolutely no one at the BBC I could talk to or get any sort of advice from because we were seen as the enemy within. I remember driving home on Sunday and the phone going, and it was someone from one of the national newspapers to say that a senior member of BBC management had told him that the investigation had been run by a work experience person, and I almost drove off the road.”

The BBC told me that after this year’s [investigation](#) into Martin Bashir’s 1995 *Panorama* interview with Diana, Princess of Wales, [which identified](#) profound failures in the application and oversight of editorial values, the BBC Board had commissioned [the Serota review](#) “to look at how to further

strengthen BBC processes and practices". The remit of the Serota review was to establish whether the BBC had learned from the mistakes of the past, and to consider whether current practice addressed the challenges that had arisen since 1995. It considered the BBC's oversight of, and accountability for, editorial decision-making processes; the mechanisms in place for staff and others to raise concerns about editorial issues; the effectiveness of the BBC's whistleblowing procedures; and the culture within the BBC that supported compliance with the BBC's editorial values and standards. The Serota review was [published in late October](#), and one of its key findings was that many BBC employees "are apprehensive that speaking up could impact negatively on their career".

Back in 2012, MacKean and Jones wrote to Rippon, Mitchell and Entwistle trying to correct what they felt were inaccuracies in the BBC's statements. But the same BBC lines kept appearing in the press. "We were feeling huge pressure from the machine basically saying: go along with what we're saying," Jones said. "We were under a lot of scrutiny. There was incredible stress on both of us. And then we decided to do something which meant we'd incur the wrath of management, which was to make the [programme for] Panorama."



George Entwistle, then director general of the BBC, after attending a Commons culture committee in October 2012. Photograph: Carl

Court/AFP/Getty Images

MacKean and Jones had convinced Tom Giles, the editor of Panorama, the BBC's investigative current affairs programme, to make a programme about what had happened to Newsnight's Savile investigation. They handed over to Panorama all their emails and paperwork. MacKean and Jones were told by Panorama that a senior manager had said that if they gave interviews to Panorama, they'd lose their jobs.

"We stopped worrying about her BBC career," Rowlands, MacKean's wife, told me. "And I'm not just saying that. That was going to fall the way it fell. OK, it fell more disappointingly than we'd hoped. But the important thing was that the women were heard – that was her number one. And then number two, that the truth was told about what the BBC had done, and the cover-up."

The BBC press office was split. Part of it promoted the Panorama programme that MacKean and Jones were speaking on, while the other put out the BBC's corporate reaction to the programme. "It was a baroque arrangement," one former senior BBC manager said.

"It felt weird, like we'd gone beyond the looking-glass," one former senior Newsnight journalist remembered, "and we didn't quite know what the rules were. It was very tooth and claw. You could see there were desperate people among management."

The weekend before the Panorama investigation was broadcast, Jones received a call from a journalist with a "tipoff" that someone from the BBC press office had told him that the reason Newsnight hadn't run the Savile investigation was because Jones was trying to conceal the fact that his aunt had been complicit in Savile's abuse. Jones received official permission to deny it from senior news editor Peter Horrocks, who had come over from the World Service to take on editorial oversight of the Panorama film to avoid a conflict of interest, as senior BBC news managers were the subjects of its investigation. On 21 October, the Mail on Sunday ran the story, and noted that the "BBC civil war intensified," as the BBC press office and a BBC journalist gave out information that entirely opposed each other.

“It’s just massive pressure,” Jones told me, “when it feels like all your bosses, the whole press office, were fighting a war against you. I would have collapsed over it if I had been on my own – and they would have got away with their pack of lies. But it felt like Liz and I were covering each other’s backs. And there was never a feeling that Liz would crack. She was rock solid on this.”

On Monday 22 October, the Panorama film, Jimmy Savile: What the BBC Knew, was broadcast on BBC One at 10.35pm. On the programme, MacKean said the BBC had been “misleading” the public. Viewers watched as the BBC seemed to be criticising itself. Meanwhile, MacKean amplified her criticisms of what she saw as the BBC’s deafness to the victims of past sexual abuse. She said: “[The] women collectively deserved to be heard, and weren’t heard, and that was a failure. We’d convinced them to talk to us, we’d believed them, and we let them down.”

Rippon stepped down as the Newsnight editor a few hours before the Panorama film went out. (Pollard would later write in his review that Rippon was already “becoming something of a ‘fall guy’”.) The BBC put out a statement saying that the BBC Newsnight investigation had *not* started out by looking at Surrey police. It was a small admission, but on that point the record had been corrected.

“We were both pretty smashed up after all that,” Jones told me. He remained on a short-term contract with Panorama while MacKean returned to Newsnight alone. “Overnight my relationship with the BBC changed,” MacKean told Lambert. “All of a sudden I was persona non grata, and people who knew me wouldn’t talk to me. I’d sort of sit down and all the usual chit-chat of an office seemed to just fall away.”

MacKean felt that for many in management, and colleagues who were fearful of management, she was now tainted. “It became a world where people were disappearing – you didn’t know if all your bosses were going to be sacked,” a former senior Newsnight journalist told me. He talked about the awkwardness of bumping into MacKean and Jones at the time: “You didn’t know what to say. You didn’t know what they wanted, or how far they wanted to take this.”

MacKean was hurt. “She wasn’t a rebel. So to suddenly be so outside the tent was quite hard,” Rowlands explained. ‘She was so determined that all the truth would come out and all the people who’d lied would be held accountable. But it suddenly put her in a position that wasn’t comfortable for her. Because really, I mean, it sounds corny, but she was a team player. You know she’d always liked the collegiate nature of the BBC.” Her former colleague Jackie Long told me: “It was the one period in the time I knew her that she sounded at all fragile. That inner confidence was rocked.”

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Dee Coles was abused by Savile in his campervan when she was 14, while on holiday with her mother in Jersey. When she saw that the Exposure documentary was coming out, she noticed scepticism in some of the papers, and worried that the women coming forward wouldn’t be believed. She wrote to the independent news production company, ITN, and in early October 2012 [spoke about](#) her own abuse by Savile on ITV news.

She felt MacKean and Jones’s intervention on Panorama was crucial for building victims’ confidence if they were going to come forward. “Nobody else was fighting that particular corner.” Coles said she saw interviews with people who had been at the BBC when Savile was alive saying they hadn’t seen anything, or there was nothing they could have done. “And so it became massive that someone with a journalistic background who had nothing to gain and everything to lose said [that Savile abused children]. It underpinned the whole thing going forward, because otherwise it would just be a bunch of women saying ‘me too’ before it was hash-tagged. It was so courageous.”

“A lot of how the BBC behaved was as other institutions behaved,” MacKean told Lambert, “whether the courts, the police and NHS hospitals, even within families, people making the complaints are sidelined. They’re disbelieved. And in that way, the BBC behaved exactly as other institutions did.”

A mental shift was now taking place. In a rushed attempt to catch up, Newsnight tried to do a film about another sexual abuse case involving a wealthy industrialist, based on victim testimony. But after the accuser said

he got the wrong person, the BBC issued an apology. On 11 November 2012, Entwistle, the BBC director general, [resigned](#).

The Pollard review was commissioned by the BBC to look into “the management by the BBC of a Newsnight investigation relating to allegations of sexual abuse of children by Jimmy Savile”. Pollard, a journalist at Sky, took the chair on 16 October 2012 and collected testimony from all the BBC players involved. On 18 December 2012, he released [his findings](#).

MacKean and Jones turned up at the door to Pollard’s press conference in Broadcasting House. A press officer stopped them from entering. “We were shocked,” Jones said. “But we couldn’t do anything about it.” MacKean and Jones stood together at a television set in another part of the building and watched the press conference, live on the news, together. Pollard told the room: “The Newsnight investigators had got the story right. They had found clear and compelling evidence that Jimmy Savile was a paedophile. The decision by their editor to drop the original investigation was clearly flawed, though I believe it was done in good faith.”

After being barred from Pollard’s press conference, MacKean and Jones decided to address the members of the media who were waiting on the forecourt outside Broadcasting House. A BBC press officer told them that their statements needed to be approved first by the acting head of BBC News. MacKean turned and said: “I think you’ll find they won’t.” She and Jones walked out through the revolving doors to the microphones and stood in front of the flashing cameras. MacKean said: “I think the decision to drop our story was a breach of our duty to the women who trusted us to reveal that Jimmy Savile was a paedophile … Our editor didn’t watch the interview with our main witness. Nick Pollard did, and found her credible and compelling, as did we … I welcome the recommendation that the BBC should trust its journalists.”



Liz MacKean and Meirion Jones making their statement outside BBC Broadcasting House in London on 19 December 2012 after the release of the Pollard report. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

MacKean and Jones were both invited to individual meetings with the then-acting (and now current) director general of the BBC, Tim Davie. Jones said: “We were both half-expecting that he might say: ‘We’ve got new hands on the tiller, it’s all going to change. Congratulations for going after that really important story. And – I’m sorry.’ But we got the opposite of that. It was new face, same suit.”

In a statement, the BBC said: “In response to Pollard’s findings, BBC management dealt with the issues appropriately at the time setting out a number of actions including the replacement of the senior editorial team at Newsnight; the introduction of regular reports from the Director-General to the BBC Management board about the highest risk programmes and investigations across the BBC.”

Newsnight moved into Broadcasting House in central London in mid-October 2012. The old Television Centre in White City had been sold, and would later be rebuilt into a complex of high-end apartments and restaurants. MacKean was asked to stay behind, sitting in Paxman’s old chair, ready to present the programme should the satellite link fail in the new studio.

MacKean called it the “Miss Havisham” role – she’d done it before when presenters were on location. But as she sat there alone in the empty studio, an understudy, it was her story that made the headlines. The Metropolitan police had launched [Operation Yewtree](#) on 9 October to investigate Savile and other establishment figures, and 450 people would come forward to give testimony about being abused by Savile. The NSPCC said that in November and December 2012 it intervened to protect 800 more children than in a similar period in previous years. And since its establishment in 2013, the child sexual abuse review panel has sent 78% of cases referred to them to be reopened by the police or CPS because of flaws in the original investigations.

MacKean and Jones had reframed the Savile story. It could no longer be dismissed as a celebrity sex exposé. Now the victims were at the centre. From that moment on, when women spoke out about past sexual abuse, the media, the police and the courts were prepared to listen.

“I think the scandal really did change things,” a senior journalist told me. “In our world, the idea that you wouldn’t run a story where you interviewed victims is now very unusual. Certainly if you have lots and lots of adult women saying something like that – you would run that story now. Weinstein was done partly by the New Yorker and the New York Times – the most heavyweight outlets in the world now do that kind of story.”

MacKean left the BBC in 2013. She went on to make award-winning documentaries for Channel 4’s Dispatches, but she missed the daily grind of the news and her world at the BBC. In 2017, she and her friend and former Newsnight Northern Ireland producer Michael Hughes were watching the BBC’s general election coverage together. “Liz was sad about it,” Hughes said. She wished she was mucking in, reporting the results with her colleagues on election night. “She always had her head held high, but I think she was sad that the Beeb hadn’t fought harder to keep her.” In August 2017, at the age of 52, MacKean [had a stroke and died](#).

I had seen how MacKean’s sense of justice, courage and incisiveness had set off a chain of events that helped to bring justice, and reduce isolation, shame and repression for countless women across the UK and beyond. When I miss

Liz's friendship, I look online for an account of what she helped to achieve through her work on Savile, but I can never find one. So here it is.

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## Smartphones

# Pixel 6 review: the cut-price Google flagship phone



The Pixel 6 offers excellent value for those looking for a top-flight phone for less. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

*[Samuel Gibbs](#) Consumer technology editor*

Tue 2 Nov 2021 03.00 EDT

The Pixel 6 is Google's affordable flagship phone for 2021 and proves to be a leader in the field with a top-class camera and a new advanced chip at its heart – while undercutting most of the competition on price.

The phone costs £599 (\$599/A\$999), which is £250 less than the [Pixel 6 Pro](#), while still offering 90% of what you get with Google's top model.

It has a 6.4in 90Hz OLED screen that is flat, not curved at the sides. The display is slightly less sharp, slower and smaller than that on the 6 Pro, but is

still very good with excellent brightness and viewing angles.



The Pixel 6 (right) is slightly shorter but otherwise similar in dimensions to the Pixel 6 Pro (left). Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The sides are painted black aluminium, the back is glass, and there is a large camera bar design similar to the 6 Pro. Despite the reduced screen size the Pixel 6 is not a small phone and is only 1.1mm narrower and 3g lighter than its bigger sibling. Those with smaller hands will struggle to hold it in one hand without [an attachment](#).

## Specifications

- **Screen:** 6.4in 90Hz FHD+ OLED (411ppi)
- **Processor:** Google Tensor
- **RAM:** 8GB of RAM
- **Storage:** 128 or 256GB
- **Operating system:** [Android](#) 12

- **Camera:** 50MP + 12MP ultrawide, 8MP selfie
- **Connectivity:** 5G, eSIM, wifi 6E, NFC, Bluetooth 5.2 and GNSS
- **Water resistance:** IP68 (1.5m for 30 minutes)
- **Dimensions:** 158.6 x 74.8 x 8.9mm
- **Weight:** 207g

## Tensor chip



The Pixel 6 takes just under two hours to fully charge, hitting 50% in 33 minutes using a 30W USB-C adaptor (not included). Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Along with the [Pixel](#) 6 Pro, the Pixel 6 is the first phone to feature Google's custom Tensor processor. It matches rivals from Qualcomm and Samsung on speed, but is better optimised for Google's various AI systems.

Battery life is good but not great, lasting about 34 hours between charges, putting on par with [rivals from Samsung](#) and but some way behind [46-hour iPhone 13](#). That was with the screen on for about five hours in various

messaging, note-taking and utility apps, the browser and taking about 20 photos, spending about two hours on 5G and the rest on wifi.

## Sustainability



The two-tone back looks fairly dull in the ‘stormy black’ variant, but is striking in the bolder colour options. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

Google does not provide an expected lifespan for the battery. Those in similar devices typically maintain at least 80% of their original capacity after 500 full charge cycles. The Pixel 6 is generally repairable [by Google](#) and third-party repair shops. Screen repairs cost £129, back glass repairs cost £139 and battery replacements cost £89 out of warranty.

The Pixel 6 contains 100% recycled aluminium in its frame, accounting for about 14% of the phone by weight. The company publishes [environmental impact reports](#) for some of its products. Google will [recycle all Pixel devices](#) free of charge.

## Android 12



Super fast simultaneous voice and finger typing is one of the new Pixel-only additions to Android 12 enabled by the Tensor chip. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The Pixel 6 ships with Google's [latest Android 12](#), which includes a load of customisation options and refinements. For more, [see the Pixel 6 Pro review](#).

Google will provide at least three years of major Android updates and monthly security fixes. It will then provide an additional two years of updates with the “frequency and categories of updates depending on the hardware capabilities and needs”. Samsung supports its top phones for four years, while [Fairphone is aiming for six years](#) and Apple supports its iPhone for up to seven years.

## Camera

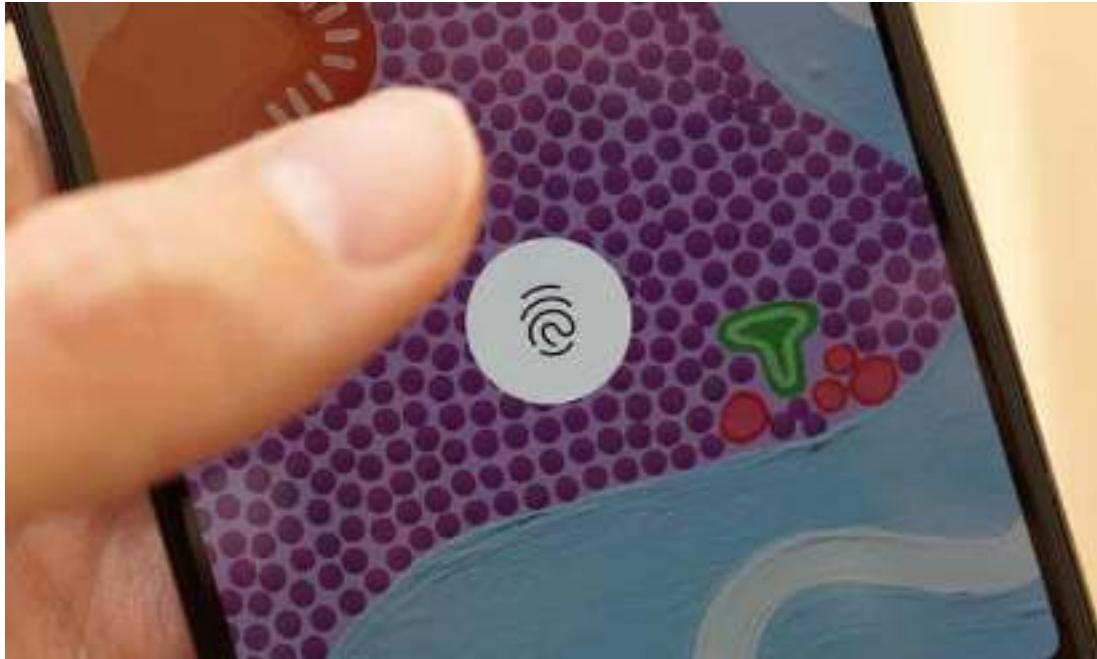


The camera app is excellent, with simple but useful photography aids, though it lacks a dedicated macro photography mode. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

The Pixel 6 has the same 50-megapixel main and 12MP ultrawide camera as the [6 Pro and produces very similar results](#). That makes it one of the very best cameras you can get on a smartphone, particularly at under £600. It lacks an optical zoom camera, and while Google's up to 7x digital zoom is one of the best, it is no substitute for optical magnification.

The 8MP selfie camera is good, producing detailed shots with lots of drama, but occasionally the images were a bit soft, particularly in lower light levels.

## Observations



The fingerprint scanner is less reliable than the 6 Pro and while not terrible, it is not as good as that used by [Samsung](#) or [OnePlus](#). Registering my thumbprint twice helped. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

- Call quality and 5G reception was good, as was Bluetooth performance to several sets of headphones.
- The bottom corners were noticeably hard, digging in more than other devices in my palm when holding it one-handed.
- The volume and power buttons work well but are a little loose, allowing them to rattle a bit.

## Price

The Google Pixel 6 costs [£599 \(\\$599/A\\$999\)](#) with 128GB of storage.

For comparison, the [Pixel 6 Pro](#) costs [£849](#), [Pixel 4a](#) costs [£349](#), the [OnePlus 9](#) costs [£629](#), the [Samsung Galaxy S21+](#) costs [£949](#), the [Xiaomi 11T Pro](#) costs [£599](#), the [iPhone 13](#) costs [£779](#) and the [Fairphone 4](#) costs [£499](#).

## Verdict

Where the [Pixel 6 Pro](#) is about competing on an equal footing with the top smartphones on the market, the Pixel 6 offers all of what makes Google phones great while significantly undercutting the competition on price.

You get snappy performance, decent battery life, Google's top new chip and a slick experience packed with all the software bells and whistles you can't get anywhere else. Google's local AI-powered voice and keyboard typing is quite something, and you will get at least five years of security updates from release. Plus the phone has the main and ultrawide lenses of Google's next-generation class-leading camera system.

The lack of an optical zoom and slightly picky fingerprint scanner can be forgiven for the price. Costing just £599, the Pixel 6 is priced more in line with Chinese challenger brands than the top Samsung and Apple devices with which it competes favourably.

That makes the Pixel 6 is a real bargain for a top-flight phone. You have to spend considerably more to get a better Android phone than this.

**Pros:** class-leading camera, great screen, excellent performance, good battery life, recycled aluminium, five years of security updates, Android 12, impressive local AI features, very competitively priced.

**Cons:** fairly slow charging, no optical zoom, fingerprint scanner can be picky, no face unlock option, only three years of Android version updates despite five years of security support.



Unlike most rivals, the Pixel 6 does not rock around when placed flat on a table because of the horizontal camera bar. Photograph: Samuel Gibbs/The Guardian

## Other reviews

- [\*\*Pixel 6 Pro review: the very best Google phone\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Pixel 4a review: the best phone Google has made in years\*\*](#)
- [\*\*OnePlus 9 review: a good, well-priced top-spec smartphone\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Galaxy S21+ review: the big-screen Samsung phone for slightly less\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Apple iPhone 13 review: cheaper, longer lasting and better camera\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Fairphone 4 review: ethical repairable phone gets big upgrade\*\*](#)

This article was amended on 2 November 2021 to clarify that the Pixel 6 also has wifi 6E connectivity.

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## 2021.11.02 - Coronavirus

- [Live China tells families to ‘stock up’ amid Covid outbreak, Japan’s cases dramatically decline](#)
- [Facebook Users not protected from Covid misinformation, says monitor](#)
- [England One in four 35- to 54-year-olds not isolating properly](#)
- [Shanghai Disneyland Lockdown and 34,000 tests after single Covid case](#)

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[Coronavirus](#)

## **Coronavirus live: UK sees highest daily death toll since February; Greek cases set new record high**

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**Facebook**

# Facebook failing to protect users from Covid misinformation, says monitor



Robert F Kennedy Jr was banned from Instagram over his vaccine stance in February but his Facebook page remains online. Photograph: Action Press/Rex/Shutterstock

*Dan Milmo Global technology editor*

Mon 1 Nov 2021 20.01 EDT

Misinformation and sceptical views about Covid-19 and vaccines has been allowed to spread on more than a dozen Facebook and [Instagram](#) accounts, pages and groups that together have gained 370,000 followers over the past year, according to a report.

The misinformation and promotion of vaccine hesitancy includes posts in Facebook groups claiming that children are being “murdered by the experimental jab they’re being pressured to take”, and an Instagram account promoting a documentary by [Andrew Wakefield](#), one of the key figures in promoting discredited links between [MMR](#) inoculation and autism.

The 20 accounts, pages and groups have been tracked by [NewsGuard](#), an organisation that monitors online misinformation. Since September last year NewsGuard has submitted regular reports to the World Health Organization, at the WHO's request, flagging social media sites and other digital platforms that are spreading falsehoods about Covid-19.

In research published on Tuesday, NewsGuard said 20 of the sites that it had monitored over that period had gained a total of 372,670 followers. A full report containing the research has been sent to the WHO.

The NewsGuard research points to prominent sources of vaccine scepticism such as the Facebook pages of [Robert F Kennedy Jr](#), a prominent anti-vaxxer, and [Joseph Mercola](#), an alternative medicine doctor, as well as smaller sources such as the France Soir account on Instagram.

Kennedy was [banned from Instagram](#) over his vaccine stance in February but his Facebook page and Mercola's Instagram account have gained more than 140,000 followers since February, according to NewsGuard. Mercola has said he has "every right to inform the public by sharing my medical research".

Facebook came under pressure to ban Kennedy, the nephew of President John F Kennedy, in March when he released a documentary, Medical Racism, which has been accused of seeking to promote vaccine hesitancy among black Americans. Kennedy has said the film "empowers all Americans to demand the safest vaccines".

Facebook and Instagram are both owned by Meta, the company that until a [rebranding last week](#) was known as Facebook.

Alex Cardier, the UK managing director for NewsGuard, said Facebook and Instagram were failing to protect their users from Covid-19 and vaccine misinformation despite having been warned "repeatedly".

He said: "The company's engagement-at-all-costs mantra means that viral and divisive sources of misinformation continue to flourish, despite warnings from NewsGuard and the clear danger posed to users. Facebook

gave itself a new name but their promotion of misinformation remains the same.”

A [Meta](#) spokesperson said the company was encouraging users of its platforms to get vaccinated and it was taking action against misinformation. “During the pandemic we have removed more than 20m pieces of harmful misinformation and we’ve taken down content identified in this report which violates our rules. In total we’ve now banned more than 3,000 accounts, pages and groups for repeatedly breaking our rules. We’re also labelling all posts about the vaccines with accurate information and worked with independent factcheckers to mark 190m posts as false.”

In an effort to reassure users on the efficacy of vaccines, several of the Facebook pages highlighted by NewsGuard contained Facebook labels directing users to a WHO page on vaccines or the company’s own Covid-19 information centre page.

Meta announced last week that was stepping up efforts to promote vaccination efforts for children on its apps.

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## Coronavirus

# One in four 35- to 54-year-olds in England not complying with Covid self-isolation



Those in their mid-30s to mid-50s are now the least able, or least likely, to abide by the full requirements of self-isolation after a positive result.  
Photograph: Stephen Frost/Alamy

*[Ian Sample](#) Science editor*

*[@iansample](#)*

Mon 1 Nov 2021 10.37 EDT

One in four people in their mid-30s to mid-50s are no longer following the full rules around self-isolation after a positive Covid test, according to a survey that suggests compliance with the requirements has slipped since the summer.

The latest figures from the Office for National Statistics, based on a [survey of 881 people](#) in England in late September and early October, show that only 75% of respondents aged 35 to 54 complied with the full rules around self-isolation for the 10 days after testing positive for coronavirus.

The number is down substantially from the 86% compliance reported by the ONS in July, and suggests that those in their mid-30s to mid-50s are now the least able, or least likely, of any age group to abide by the full requirements of self-isolation after a positive result.

Hints of lower compliance were also seen in older people, with adherence to self-isolation falling marginally in those aged 55 and over from 81% in the summer to 78% in recent weeks, according to the ONS survey.

Evidence for an opposing trend was seen in younger people, with 82% of 18- to 34-year-olds reporting full compliance with self-isolation rules in the latest survey, up from 75% in the summer.

The findings came as [further ONS data](#) gathered between January and September 2021 showed that unvaccinated people were 32 times more likely to die from Covid than fully vaccinated individuals.

The latest round of the ONS self-isolation survey collected responses from adults in [England](#) between 27 September and 2 October. The ONS said the statistics were “experimental” and based on a small number of respondents who reported their own behaviour, so should be treated with caution.

Overall, the ONS estimates that 78% of individuals who have a positive Covid test follow the full requirements for self-isolation, a similar rate to the 79% seen in the previous round of the survey in July. However, the ONS said the compliance rate was “significantly lower” than levels seen earlier in the year, such as 84% in April and 86% in May.

About one-third (34%) of those who tested positive for Covid reported that isolating had a negative effect on their mental health, down from 42% in July.

“Today’s results highlight the majority of those testing positive for Covid-19 adhere to self-isolation requirements, though there has been a decrease since April and May earlier this year,” said Tim Gibbs, head of the ONS public services analysis team.

“As we continue into the winter months, it is important we monitor general adherence to self-isolation requirements, which wouldn’t be possible without our respondents,” he added.

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## [China](#)

# China locks down Shanghai Disneyland and tests 34,000 visitors after single Covid case



Fireworks boomed as the visitors at Shanghai Disneyland in China waited for their Covid-19 test results, surrounded by healthcare workers dressed from head to toe in the white protective suits. Photograph: AP

*[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei*

*[@heldavidson](#)*

Tue 2 Nov 2021 00.36 EDT

As fireworks lit up the sky over Shanghai Disney Resort on Sunday, chatter began to spread through the crowds. Qian, a young Chinese woman who'd decided to spend her Halloween at the theme park, saw a Weibo alert from Disney saying the park had closed and rides had stopped. No more guests could enter Disneyland – those already inside, all 34,000 of them, would have to be tested and isolate.

The news filtered through the throngs of parkgoers but, as Qian described, caused no panic, despite the [worsening outbreak](#) of Delta across 16 Chinese provinces.

“The tourists around me started discussing this matter, but they all finished watching the first fireworks in peace,” she [posted](#) on Weibo.

As they moved towards the exit, the crowd learned no one could leave until all were tested. They were ushered along outdoor trestle tables staffed by PPE-wearing healthworkers for testing, as the second evening fireworks show blasted in the background. The gates were closed and the rail lines shut down.

“I never thought that the longest queue in Disneyland would be for a nucleic acid test,” another visitor wryly noted on social media.



A child holds Mickey Mouse balloons as visitors receive Covid-19 tests at the Shanghai Disney Resort Photograph: AP

Late in the night more than 200 buses took people home for two days of self-isolation and further testing. Another 100,000 people who visited the park on the weekend will also be tested.

The surreal scenes were prompted by the discovery of one case, a Saturday visitor Shanghai who was later found to be positive. Reports were conflicted on whether she had even gone to Disneyland. Disney's [initial alert](#) had only attributed the closure to a need to "cooperate with the pandemic investigation in other provinces and cities".

Regardless, the park and Disneytown – its retail hub – shut until Wednesday.

On Monday, [China](#) reported another 54 cases in a stubborn outbreak of Delta which, while dwarfed by numbers around the world, is threatening China's commitment to remaining free from Covid.

So far about 500 people have been diagnosed across at least 16 provinces, initially centred around Inner Mongolia but now mostly in Heilongjiang. Throughout the pandemic authorities have responded swiftly and strongly to outbreaks, with sudden lockdowns, transport restrictions and mass testing drives. But the high transmissibility of the Delta variant has seen a rise in more creative attempts to curb its spread.

Communities are largely complying – in Heilongjiang an official bragged of the 35,000 people who rushed to the testing stations, queueing under umbrellas. [But tolerance is beginning to wane](#), especially when it involves so few cases.

In Jiangxi authorities turned all traffic lights red to halt movement after a single case was identified – its first in almost two years. The move was reversed after public outcry. In Beijing some residents complained of glitchy health apps recording their location in the wrong place, and leaving them stranded. On Monday Beijing's health commission asked people to [avoid leaving or returning if possible](#).

In Ruili, a small town on the border between China's Yunnan and Myanmar, repeated lockdowns and waves of outbreaks have driven people away. Local media reported that one baby in the city who had been tested 74 times since September.

In late October, someone who claimed to be a Ruili student posted on Weibo that he and his family were unable to return home. Local officials told Chinese media that since 2020 the number of residents had reduced from half a million to 200,000. “Impacted by the epidemic for a long time, many people found life hard to cope with,” one said. The mayor has made an extraordinary plea for help from Beijing.

China, Hong Kong and Taiwan are among the last global jurisdictions still clinging to elimination strategies for the virus. For all three it involves the continuation of strict border closures and quarantine systems.

Some have begun to question the sustainability of the strategy, as the rest of the world begins reopening and accepting life with the virus, mitigated by high rates of vaccination and less intrusive health measures. Others note that the strategy has worked – all three places are largely Covid free, having seen few of the world’s five million recorded deaths.

In Shanghai, Qian praised the response at Disneyland.

“One can really believe in Shanghai for ever. The response speed and the measures to deal with the epidemic are really fast and reasonable,” she said. “This Halloween will be unforgettable, a happy, beautiful, and wonderful journey with no dangers. I hope the epidemic gets better soon and everyone is safe and sound.”

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## We need radical policies to reach net zero. Here's a fairer way to do them

[Polly Toynbee](#)



‘Boris Johnson pretends climate answers can be conjured up ‘without so much as a hair shirt in sight’.’ Johnson at the SECC, Glasgow, on the second day of the Cop26 summit. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Tue 2 Nov 2021 03.00 EDT

Are we doomed, or is there still a chance to save civilisation? It’s easy to veer between despair and slender hope, when the UN says emissions that need to fall by half this decade are only on course for a cut of [about 7.5%](#). How helpless we feel when big emitters [refuse to attend](#) Cop26. What an unconvincing “[one minute to midnight](#)” call to action from Boris Johnson, who is cutting foreign aid and the cost of domestic flights while mulling a [new coalmine](#) and a Shetland oilfield. The absurd Brexit fishing spat makes a mockery of exhorting other world leaders to lift their sights to the horizons of the climate crisis.

The scale of what’s needed is politically unfathomable. Yet Johnson pretends answers can be conjured up “without so much as a hair shirt in sight”. In thundering, prophetic form, [a recent article](#) from George Monbiot set him right: the world’s richest 1% emit 35 times what each individual should use to ensure global heating does not exceed a 1.5C rise. The super-rich use their fortunes to shape the political agenda, diverting our attention from the true climate culprits with the “micro consumerist bollocks” of ditching coffee cups and plastic bags. “We will endure only if we cease to consent,” Monbiot writes – and he’s right.

But as ever the political problem is how to get the world’s people to rebel. In Britain, voters increasingly [care about the climate](#); it has risen to a close fourth place behind the leading concerns of Brexit, Covid and the economy. Concern is strongest in London and the south of England (33% compared with 24% nationally), social grade AB (34%), and the 25-34 and 35-44 age groups (31% and 35% respectively). When cowardly politicians fail to lead, the question is how to use every imaginable instrument to engage everyone all the time.

Greta Thunberg is a remarkably wise campaigner, who understands the politics of persuasion. Yes, it’s necessary that some people get annoyed with school strikes and road blocks, [she told Andrew Marr](#) on Sunday, but with

this important message: “There is no final tipping point where everything is lost. If we miss 1.5C then we go for 1.6C then 1.7C. It is never too late to do as much as we can.” That’s a vital thought to ward off despairing nihilism.

Here’s one action that will be necessary: carbon taxes. Writing in the Financial Times, the economist Tim Harford [recently suggested](#) that every product needs a carbon price attached, sending a signal not just to the buyer, but right down every supply chain to use less energy in growing, manufacturing and transporting a product to attract less tax.

That will be necessary. But any climate-abating tax brings on green crocodile tears for poor people, often from the same Tory MPs who just voted to remove the £20 universal credit uplift. The claim that carbon taxes would disproportionately affect the poorest people was what killed off the [fuel price escalator](#) – a yearly tax increase devised by the Tories in 1993 to discourage driving – after owner-driver hauliers blockaded oil refineries in 2000. When the climate demands that fuel taxes rise, politicians make them fall.

There are subtler ways to impose carbon taxes. In 2006, the former Labour environment secretary David Miliband [put forward a radical scheme](#) for tradable personal carbon allowances (PCAs). Everyone would have a carbon allowance to spend on heating, petrol or flying, issued by a central carbon bank. The national allowance would shrink each year to cut personal carbon emissions. The well-off use the most carbon – they have big houses, drive SUVs and fly frequently – while half the population [never flies](#), and many live in flats or small homes. Some 17m households [have no car](#). Carbon credits would be tradable, so those using least could profit by selling some of their allowance, while heavy users would have to buy their spare credits via the carbon bank.

This policy could be a potential win-win-win: it would fix an annual reduction in carbon emissions and redistribute cash from the extravagant to the carbon thrifty in this most unequal country. Above all it would engage everyone to think hard about their carbon consumption, giving them an incentive to save or profit.

Miliband's speech advocating the scheme labelled it "a thought experiment", as it was way out ahead of timid government policy. But four official feasibility studies were commissioned. Some suggested the measure was too technically difficult, but that was before the first iPhone, let alone the supermarket smart cards that count each purchase. Some warned of the bravery this untried system would require. Others said it was a clunky, bureaucratic way to impose carbon taxes – but that misses the key point of engaging every citizen: VAT is invisible to most shoppers. Prof Paul Ekins of University College London's Institute for Sustainable Resources was consulted on an official Defra report in 2008 which found the idea [feasible and relatively fair](#), but decided it was too radical for the government, who dismissed it as "an interesting concept ... ahead of its time". Ekins and other researchers now think [its time has come](#).

By the time feasibility reports emerged, Miliband had moved to the Foreign Office, but he remains convinced PCAs could make a key contribution, though like any single action, "this is no silver bullet," he told me: the heaviest lifting must be done by governments and industry more than individual consumers. "It's a nudge – but with teeth and carrots."

Of all the colossal transformations needed, the hardest will be changing public attitudes. PCAs could kickstart public demand for the big capital collective programmes that would be necessary to conserve allowances, such as [district heating schemes](#), rather than every flat or terraced house buying an expensive heat pump.

"People are desperate to do something, but too often they get trivial advice, such as pre-rinsing dishes before putting them in the dishwasher. A personal carbon allowance system would tell them what they could do to make a real difference," Prof Ekins says.

At the heart of behaviour change is an "I will if you will" certainty that demands tough government action. By adding in the true price to the planet, PCAs challenge the notion that economic growth in a developed country is the only goal. Do I think this government of the rich for the rich would do it? No chance. But I think it could be popular. There would be more winners than losers. And PCAs would be a fairer way to lower emissions in a

transition that will inevitably require hair shirts for some – despite Johnson's magical thinking.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
  - This article was amended on 4 November 2021 to clarify that Prof Paul Ekins was consulted on the 2008 Defra report on carbon taxes, but was not a co-author as an earlier version said.
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## OpinionSudan

# Sudan's coup has shattered the hopes of its 2019 revolution

[Nesrine Malik](#)



Anti-coup protesters in Omdurman, Sudan, 30 October, 2021. Photograph: AFP/Getty Images

Tue 2 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

Last week in Sudan, two years disappeared in a flash. Two years of working to bring Sudan in from the cold after almost three decades of isolation. Two years of trying to establish a civilian government. Two years of mourning those who had died in Sudan's revolution to oust Omar al-Bashir. And two years of tentative hope that perhaps these deaths had not been in vain. In the end, all that mattered was that it was two years during which the military grew tired of partnering with civilians in a transitional power-sharing agreement. Last week, the army seized power in [a coup](#) that erased

everything the Sudanese people had gained since Bashir's military government was toppled in 2019.

That revolution had reignited hope for democratic rule, not only in Sudan, but across the Arab world. In hindsight, its short-lived nature seems inevitable. Sudan's uprising may have removed Bashir, but behind him sat a military and security state with deep roots and complex economic interests. When it became clear that the Sudanese people were not going to tolerate another military figurehead as a replacement for Bashir, an agreement with civilian parties resulted in a transitional power-sharing arrangement that should have paved the way for elections.

One could argue that it was naive to expect the military and its associated allies to merely hand over power and withdraw to the barracks. But it also seemed unfathomable that they would make such a brash, regressive move as they have. The country's newfound stability is still in its infancy. The military now faces international condemnation and diplomatic crises. The coup has severed attempts to re-integrate Sudan into the international community. Debt relief has been suspended, leaving the economy on its knees. The US cancelled 700 million dollars worth of aid only 24 hours after the coup.

Yet these calculations do not concern militaries who are bent on extraction in a country that does not need to thrive for its overlords to prosper. An alliance between a large army of mercenaries, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF, the formalised and uniformed version of the Janjaweed that terrorised the Darfur region), the army, and remnants of business interests from the Bashir regime now has the country in a tight grip. They will run Sudan as the host body for a partnership of parasites.

Without facing the checks of transparency or accountability, Sudan's new ruling club will be able to divide the country's infrastructure, seizing raw materials such as gold, and selling them to regional allies. They will have the firepower to suppress rebellions in the country's marginalised regions. By doing dirty, lucrative deals with Gulf allies, they will be able to alienate whomever they please in the west. RSF forces have already sold Sudanese soldiers – some of them children – to the UAE and Saudi Arabia to provide

support for their wars in Yemen. Flogging Sudan's resources and people to the highest bidder is too lucrative a business to give up for a few hundred million dollars of western aid.

In that sense, Sudan's revolution, like all revolutions, was not only against one regime, but many. It took aim at the corrupt legacies and arrangements that were manifested in a single dictator – Bashir – who was vested with power by his large network of enablers. At every stage of the uprising since 2018, the Sudanese people have discovered another despot behind the despot. Behind Bashir stood a phalanx of generals who had come to power when many of the protesters on the streets had not even been born. Behind the generals was the mercenary army, and behind the mercenaries towered the allies of the counterrevolution, Sudan's allies in the Middle East and north Africa: Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Egypt, which wanted to ensure democratic civilian rule never became a reality on their doorstep. Condemnation from the US and censure by the UN merely bounces off the iron realpolitik that sustains Sudan's coup.

In a way, it is a miracle that the Sudanese revolution succeeded at all, that it lasted a whole two years before the army moved once again. It is a testament to the number and indefatigability of the protesters, who kept spilling on to the streets in 2019. They not only removed Bashir, but dictated the shape of the transitional government that followed him. Millions of Sudanese people stared down the barrel of what seemed like certain failure, and persevered. Last week they did so again, taking to the streets in their millions to reject the coup and demand the return of the civilian government, and the release of many of its members, [including the prime minister, Abdalla Hamdok](#), who are in detention or house arrest.

The Sudanese waited 30 years for a revolution, only for three to come at once. Last week, protesters were shot and beaten once again, and the dead and wounded fell on the streets of Sudan's cities. Once again, an anxious standoff is taking place between Sudan's people and an army and alliance of security forces that has only two choices: bend to the will of the Sudanese, or massacre them. The soldiers and military men think there might be a third option – to bide their time and hope that the protests run out of steam as the new military government settles in. That seems unlikely.

But even if the coup prevails, it will be an uneasy win, enfeebled by constant policing and suppression of dissent. Civic resistance to the coup might appear frail when compared to the might of the generals and their backers, but the military is up against a people who are determined never again to be ruled by force. Their determination seems as limitless as the army's appetite for power.

- Nesrine Malik is a Guardian columnist
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## OpinionCop26

# We are in Glasgow to demand justice for those most affected by the climate crisis

Bernard Ewekia, Jakapita Kandanga, Edwin Namakanga, Maria Reyes and Farzana Faruk Jhumu



‘We have sailed into Glasgow to let the presidents, prime ministers and CEOs know that our voices will no longer remain unheard.’ The Greenpeace ship Rainbow Warrior on the River Clyde, 1 November 2021. Photograph: Andrew Milligan/PA

Tue 2 Nov 2021 05.40 EDT

How can you hold climate talks without including the most affected people? You can’t. How can you make decisions on the best way to adapt to climate impacts without talking to those forced to adapt? You can’t. And how can you deliver climate justice by continuing to ignore those that are suffering the most? You can’t.

As the [Cop26 climate summit](#) gets under way, and the so-called leaders of the world take centre stage to deliver yet more empty promises, we – five youth climate activists from five of the most affected areas across Africa, Asia, Central America and the South Pacific – have arrived despite attempts to shut us out.

We have sailed into Glasgow onboard the [Rainbow Warrior](#) to let these presidents, prime ministers, policymakers and CEOs know that our voices will no longer remain unheard. They cannot and should not have these talks without us and we're demanding a seat at the table to make sure they finally act.

The climate crisis is a global crisis that requires global action. But it does not affect everyone in the same way. It's a crisis of inequalities. We are all in the same storm, but we are not all in the same boat.

Today there are [five times more](#) extreme weather events – devastating storms, floods, droughts, water scarcity and heatwaves – than 50 years ago, and they disproportionately affect those of us living in the most vulnerable areas, especially in the global south. Last year, climate disasters [displaced more people](#) from our communities than war and violent conflict, again mostly from the global south.

Yet we are not the ones that have caused this crisis.

Since 1965, one-third of global emissions, driven by the relentless exploitation of fossil fuels, have been caused [by just 20 companies](#). Rich nations are responsible for [92% of global emissions](#), with the US and countries in Europe causing almost two-thirds of those. We're just the ones forced to live with, or sadly in many cases die because of, its impacts. Yet our voices continue to be sidelined.

In our home countries of Namibia, Bangladesh, Uganda, Mexico and Tuvalu in the South Pacific, we face many different challenges. But they are all exacerbated by the same injustices such as gender violence, forced migration and racial injustices, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. These are all symptoms of the same rotten system.

We have friends who have dropped out of school because droughts have forced their families into poverty and famine. Others are forced to literally [sell their children](#) in order to meet their basic needs. Many people have lost land, homes and crops to floods and rising sea levels. More are being forced to flee their homes and communities. And even just accessing safe drinking water is a daily struggle for many.

Thousands of people are dying right now because of the climate crisis: the world leaders at this summit have blood on their hands.

While corporate greed and a failure to act from governments in the global north are driving climate change, the disparities between rich and impoverished, between those who are causing this crisis and those who are not, don't end there. The inequalities also run deep within our countries.

Corruption and neocolonialism are rife. Communities are displaced by industry as politicians sell off our land to oil companies, promising prosperity and jobs for local people who have been forced deeper into poverty by the climate crisis. Our communities are being misled. Those jobs never come, but the pollution, environmental destruction – along with emotional and cultural destruction – and more severe climate impacts always do.

For over a decade, rich nations have failed to deliver the international climate finance that they have promised. This is not aid, nor just the help they're obliged to provide. This is a debt that they owe us for the environmental death and destruction that they have caused – and it must be paid in full. What little of this debt that actually is repaid rarely reaches those who need it. But no one questions our governments. No one checks up on how this money is being spent.

Policies put in place to protect our local environments are meaningless while corrupt politicians remain in charge. But speaking out in our countries can result in grave consequences. We are literally putting our lives on the line – so it is imperative that our voices are heard.

The leaders gathering in Glasgow have failed to act on the science. They have failed for decades to tackle the climate crisis. And they have failed to

listen to people from the most affected areas who are now suffering from the consequences of their failure to act. Enough is enough.

We are here to let them know that we will continue to fight for climate justice until they stop failing us. They must not deny us the platform to freely defend our present and futures. They must not ignore our demands. And they must not continue to put profit over people and the planet. The system must be uprooted before it is too late.

- This article was written by five Fridays for Future MAPA (Most Affected People and Areas) youth climate activists: Bernard Ewekia, 25, from Tuvalu; Jakapita Kandanga, 24, from Namibia; Edwin Namakanga, 27, from Uganda; Maria Reyes, 19, from Mexico; and Farzana Faruk Jhumu, 22, from Bangladesh

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[Pets](#)

# What did I learn from my lovely pet rabbit? The truth about mortality

[Zoe Williams](#)



Rabbits were the pets people most regretted acquiring in lockdown.  
Photograph: Julie Hobbs/Getty Images/EyeEm

Tue 2 Nov 2021 03.00 EDT

There was a fair amount of [pet regret when the lockdowns ended](#); helplines were inundated. They rarely reported what the questions were, but you can guess: “How much love will ever be enough for this dog?”; “How can I tell if my cat’s being sarcastic?” In fact, the most regretted pet was a rabbit. People get them for children, but it’s a terrible fit, because there is nothing rabbits find more annoying than children. They also hate being picked up, stroked, handled in any way, regarded or addressed by name. “Let your rabbit come to you,” all the literature says, leaving experience to teach you how that sentence ends … “which it never will.”

Yet over time, inevitably, you fall in love with the rabbit. I can’t explain it. It’s something in the way they move. Every hop is like a Disney movie. It’s like falling in love with a dancer from [Strictly](#). They don’t even know you exist, but every little thing they do is lovely, so what are you gonna do? No point fighting it.

One other thing the manuals don’t mention so often – rabbits die. They die constantly. They die of nothing. They die because they ate their own fur and it tangled their intestines. They die because a cat gave them a mean look. That is why they breed so fast, because they are not going to make even the most rudimentary effort to survive.

My last but one rabbit to die – Peachy – went so fast from hopping to expiry that by the time I got him to the night vet, she said: “What do you want, an autopsy?” Mr Z and I went straight to the pub with our empty pet basket and had a pint in silence, me crying, as if we were doing insanely attention-seeking mime (which you might say is all mime). Fruity died on Thursday, I think because a cat looked at him funny.

You are meant to have small pets to teach children how to cope with death. In fact, all any of us have learned is to fear death, fear it mightily, like the devil. If you want to have something die and not care, I suggest buying a locust.

# Zoe Williams is a Guardian columnist

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## [Nigeria](#)

# **Six dead and 100 feared missing after tower block collapses in Lagos**

01:07

'Many people are inside': Building collapses in Nigeria, trapping workers – video

*Staff and agencies in Lagos*

Tue 2 Nov 2021 01.22 EDT

At least six people have died after a luxury residential high-rise under construction in Nigeria's commercial capital, Lagos, collapsed, trapping construction workers under a pile of concrete rubble, the state emergency services chief said.

The official, Olufemi Oke-Osanyintolu, said a search and rescue effort had been launched for survivors late on Monday.

Witnesses said up to 100 people were missing and at least three survivors were pulled out on Monday night as rescue workers raced against the clock to dig up victims at the site in the affluent neighbourhood of Ikoyi, where many blocks of flats are under construction.

Workers said that as many as 100 people were at work when the building came crashing down.

Wisdom John, 28, a bricklayer, said he escaped with just a few cuts because he had been on the ground floor when the building collapsed into a pile of concrete, its floors sandwiching together.

"There [were] more than 50 working today and the manager too," he said, sitting in an ambulance getting treated. "We just ran out."

Rescue workers used excavators to dig through rubble using generator-powered floodlights. The retrieved body was put in a waiting van while at least three people who were rescued were taken to nearby ambulances.

Lagos state police commissioner Hakeem Olusegun Odumosu said it was still too early to determine the cause of the collapse.

Femi Oke-Osanyintolu, general manager of the Lagos state emergency management agency, said that many workers were trapped under the rubble.

Building collapses are frequent in Nigeria, Africa's most populous country, where regulations are poorly enforced and construction materials often substandard.

There were heaps of rubble and twisted metal where the building once stood, as several workers looked on. One man wailed, saying his relative was among those trapped.

The Lagos state government said the building had 22 floors and authorities were assessing whether there had been any damage to nearby buildings.

The collapsed building was part of three towers being built by private developer Fourscore Homes. In a brochure for potential clients, the company promises to offer "a stress-free lifestyle, complete with a hotel flair". The cheapest unit was selling for \$1.2m.

Calls to the numbers listed for Fourscore Homes and the main building contractor did not ring through.

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[Turkey](#)

## ‘Nothing left to burn’: wildfires and floods could turn the tide on Turkey’s climate policy



A vest hanging from a burnt tree branch in an area outside the city of Marmaris in Turkey. Photograph: John Beck/The Guardian



*Bethan McKernan in Marmaris*

Tue 2 Nov 2021 01.00 EDT

Everything in Muhammet Şahin's garden is dead: the plants, his chickens, the bees. This summer's unusually ferocious wildfires in south and west Turkey swept down on to his restaurant in the village of Osmaniye from two directions. As the flames rushed down the hillside, he and his wife had to evacuate, leaving their home and livelihood behind.

The couple have managed to pay for a new roof and fixed glass windows that shattered in fires over two devastating weeks in August, when the blazes reached a heat intensity four times higher than Turkey's previous record. But for Şahin and many of his neighbours there is still a lot of repair work to do, and serious questions remain.

"I should have extinguished it myself but the electricity was out, the water was out. That's why we had to leave," the 50-year-old said. "If it happens again I will stay. The state was useless. It's as if they wanted it to burn."

Marmaris is a popular tourism destination because of its natural beauty. But above the sparkling turquoise waters of the Mediterranean, much of what used to be dense green pine forest is now nothing more than eerie skeletons, charred and bare. Ash stirred up by the wind catches in the throat; the sound

of chainsaws removing burned trees deemed too unsightly to remain near roads and resorts echoes through the dead forest.

“We didn’t understand how fast it would spread,” said Fatma Aydin, a 60-year-old who sells butter, cheese and yoghurt from her goats at a local market. She and her husband are waiting on his pension to come in next month to finish the work that needs doing on their property. “We have been devastated financially but next year I hope it won’t happen again because there is nothing left to burn.”

Much has been said and written about democratic backsliding and the erasure of rule of law in Turkey during two decades of Justice and Development party (AKP) rule. But just as destructive, and much harder to fix, is the party’s addiction to concrete: the AKP has relied on large, job-heavy infrastructure projects as the [engine of Turkey’s economy](#).

Concerns about environmental damage have long been ignored. But this summer, a culmination of population growth, industrialisation, urban sprawl and the climate crisis has finally made it impossible for Ankara to ignore the consequences of pursuing economic growth at the cost of everything else. Last month President [Recep Tayyip Erdoğan](#) finally ratified the Paris climate agreement, ahead of this week’s Cop26 environmental summit in Glasgow.



An area ravaged by fire in Marmaris. Photograph: John Beck/The Guardian

[Erdogan](#) faced significant blowback over state mismanagement and unpreparedness after admitting the country had no serviceable firefighting planes. According to Dr Cihan Erdönmez, a lecturer at Istanbul university's forestry department, lessons have been learned across government after the summer fires disaster: a new fleet of planes will be established and the forestry ministry is increasing staffing levels.

"However, it should not be forgotten that fires will always occur in this geography and the climate crisis will increase the number and impact of fires. Therefore, the real solution should be sought not in extinguishing fires, but in preventing fires," he said.

And while the summer blazes were the biggest in living memory, they are far from the country's only pressing environmental problem. Also this August, the northern Black Sea region experienced the worst flooding on record, in which 81 people died.

The [biggest drought in a decade](#) has left major cities with severely depleted water reserves and decimated this year's wheat, barley and lentil crops; huge dam projects that have drowned traditional life in the majority Kurdish south-east have contributed to the drought problem rather than solved it.



A woman takes a picture of the 12,000-years ancient city of Hasankeyf, on the banks of the Tigris, that has been swallowed by a controversial dam project. Photograph: Bülent Kılıç/AFP/Getty Images

Large natural lakes [have dried up](#), killing fish and birds, and rising temperatures in Istanbul's Sea of Marmara left marine life suffocating under layers of "[sea snot](#)" released by out-of-control growth of phytoplankton.

Europe's plastic waste, sent to Turkey for recycling, has ended up [illegally dumped, burned or thrown in the ocean](#), while the land has been scarred and polluted by the booming gold, mineral and lignite – low-quality coal – mining industries.

"Turkish governments dating back to the 1970s have made national energy security and independence a primary goal as Turkey doesn't have its own gas and black coal resources," said Deniz Gümüşel, an environmental engineer and climate policy expert, who is camped out at a mining protest site not far from Marmaris.

"There is no alternative in strategy other than relying on lignite for another 25 years, which exacerbates all of the problems. The fires and floods were interpreted as part of corruption issues and poor urbanisation policies in the country. [When it comes to climate change] there is still a lot that environmentalists must do to help society connect the dots," she said.

In a speech at the UN last month, Erdogan made a surprise announcement that the country would finally ratify the Paris agreement on limiting global heating.

Despite being the globe's 16th biggest carbon emitter and a member of the G20, Turkey has dragged its feet on implementing the 2015 international treaty over disagreements on whether it qualified for financial and technical support from wealthier nations.

The only other countries yet to join are Iran, Iraq, Libya, Yemen and Eritrea. It emerged that the Turkish parliament took the final legal step earlier this month after Ankara was [offered financial guarantees from several European countries and two development banks](#).

Details on the deal have not yet been published, but environmentalists believe Turkey has probably been extended a large credit line, as was the case with a similar initiative managed by the World Bank for a climate crisis strategy and action plan in 2009. Much of the \$2.4bn (£1.7bn) was used to build hydropower plants in the Black Sea region, which have destroyed river systems and were blamed for exacerbating this year's flooding.



Muhammet Şahin, 50, points to areas of fire damage outside his cafe and restaurant in the village of Osmaniye. Photograph: John Beck/The Guardian

A small green movement has existed in Turkey for many years, and the 2013 Gezi park protest movement was sparked by plans to redevelop one of Istanbul's green spaces. But even after a summer of destruction, environmental issues remain low on the political agenda. Turkey's small Green Left party was joined by a new Green party in 2020.

"We had no rain since March, so of course the fires were related to climate change," said Mehmet Halil, a resident of Ormaniyé who helped organise efforts to house displaced people during the fires. "Marmaris relies on tourists, they come and go, they don't have to care ... But this is our land. We will protect it."

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## Global development

# ‘We will be homeless’: Lahore farmers accuse ‘mafia’ of land grab for new city



An impression of the futuristic Ravi Riverfront City project in Lahore, Pakistan. Photograph: Courtesy of Meinhardt group

Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Shah Meer Baloch](#) in Lahore

Tue 2 Nov 2021 03.00 EDT

It has been called Pakistan's answer to Dubai, a brand new multitrillion-rupee development of towering skyscrapers, futuristic domes and floating walkways.

But [Ravi Riverfront](#) City, described as the “world’s largest riverfront modern city” also faces accusations of rampant land grabs by prime minister Imran Khan’s government, which has championed the project. Hundreds of thousands of farmers who could never afford to live in the modern urban utopia are now at risk of eviction.

As well as the human cost of the development, being built on a 40,000-hectare (100,000-acre) site adjacent to Pakistan’s megacity of Lahore, many fear it will wreak environmental devastation to the Ravi river, currently undergoing ecological restoration, and surrounding forests.



Residents protest against the project fearing it will lead to displacement and unemployment for many. Photograph: Mashal Baloch/The Guardian

According to the government, the new city will be an alternative to London and Dubai for Pakistani and foreign tourists, create millions of jobs and alleviate pressure on land in Lahore. Khan has been supportive of the project, describing it as “essential” for Pakistan’s development. The government says \$8bn (£5.8bn) in foreign money has now gone into the project with the biggest investors coming from China.

However last month, a Lahore high court judge found “gross irregularities” in the Ravi riverfront project and said it would benefit land developers.

To oversee the implementation of the city, the Ravi Urban Development Authority (Ruda) was established last year. But in a move that opponents described as “draconian and unprecedented”, the government bestowed complete legal immunity to Ruda so that no lawsuit or legal challenge could be filed against the project or anyone working on it.

The government has also applied Section 4, which means it can legally acquire any land for public purposes, even though Ravi Riverfront will be a commercial enterprise.

In recent months, thousands of farmers and residents on the land where the city is to be sited have gathered to voice their opposition. The Punjab state government responded by pressing charges against 90 of the protesting farmers.

Of the 41,000 hectares (102,271 acres) the government will acquire on behalf of the private developers, 85% is agricultural land occupied by almost a million farmers, labourers and business owners. Many claim that the government is refusing to pay market value for farms, instead declaring their land almost worthless.

“The government is snatching our land for urban development and displacing us from farms we have occupied for centuries,” says Chaudhary Mahmood Ahmed, 65, a fourth-generation farmer whose land lies within the 46km-long stretch of the river where the new city will be built.



Farmers work in a field where the proposed new city will be built. They fear their land being seized for inadequate compensation. Photograph: Mashal Baloch/The Guardian

Ahmed says 50 people depended on his farm for their livelihoods and compared the actions of Imran Khan’s government to those of the [East India company](#), the British trading company that notoriously colonised parts of

India in the 18th and 19th centuries. “They are snatching land from poor people,” he says. “It is unacceptable to us.”

Muhammad Munir is among those who have been growing potatoes and livestock feed for decades. He says the area’s farmers are essential to supply the [13 million people of Lahore](#) with fruit and vegetables, as well as 70% of the city’s milk.

Munir says: “The government has been declaring our fertile lands as barren so that they can snatch them from us for pennies. We would die and kill for our lands. This is a life and death situation for us.”

Many speak bitterly of land being snatched away to benefit Pakistan’s elite.

“The government is taking the roof from over our head. They are offering so little as compensation,” says Bushra Bibi, 65, who lives with her five children in a one-room flat on designated Ravi Riverfront land. “We cannot rebuild a house with this tiny amount we will be given. We will become homeless.”

While the project was first conceived by a previous government in 2013, it was declared impractical and dropped. An initial feasibility study found it would be almost impossible to supply enough water to the development without \$3bn in new infrastructure. But with Pakistan’s economy nose-diving and the government keen for projects to boost recovery, the Ravi Riverfront project was picked up again by Khan’s administration two years ago and given the green light.

Mian Mustafa Rasheed, head of the Ravi Urban Development Victims Committee, says it is a plan solely for “industrialists and the land mafia who have close ties to Khan’s government”, and alleges that the authorities “have been threatening people individually to stop them protesting against the project”.



Protesters compare the actions of the government over the Ravi Riverfront project to the notorious East India Company. Photograph: Mashal Baloch/The Guardian

The government and Ruda did not respond to multiple requests for comment. However, [speaking to Pakistan newspaper Dawn](#), Ruda chief executive officer Imran Amin said that “we have started implementing the compensation package prepared specially for the landowners and affectees of the country’s first and biggest urban project”.

The true environmental impact of the project is still not known as no assessment has been carried out. WWF-Pakistan has already submitted a challenge to the project, stating that the plans to “concretise the natural floodplain of the river” was in “clear violation” of the recommendations of the [Ravi River Commission](#), a body with a legal mandate from the high court to restore the natural ecology of the river.

“Lahore is already famous for its pollution but if they build this Ravi Riverfront development next to it, pollution will just double,” says Rafay Alam, a lawyer and environmental activist. “It is just so absurd.”

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## [Australian foreign policy](#)

# Morrison accused of worsening rift with French government after leak of Macron text



Text messages from Emmanuel Macron to Scott Morrison were leaked after the French president accused Morrison of lying to him about the submarine contract. Photograph: Thomas Samson/AFP/Getty Images

*[Daniel Hurst](#) Foreign affairs and defence correspondent  
[@danielhurstbne](#)*

Tue 2 Nov 2021 03.37 EDT

Scott Morrison has been accused of putting his personal political interests ahead of healing Australia's diplomatic rift with France, after the leaking of a text message from [Emmanuel Macron](#) to the prime minister.

The release of a text received two days before the [Aukus](#) announcement – when the French president asked Morrison whether to expect good or bad

news on the submarine project – was “highly unconventional behaviour between state leaders”, a leading foreign affairs analyst said.

The Morrison government also pushed back at the US government on Tuesday, with the defence minister, Peter Dutton, saying Australia’s key security ally was “kept informed of our every move” in a “no-surprises strategy” in the lead up to the deal between the two countries and the UK.

The Australian newspaper [on Tuesday reported details](#) of a 15-page confidential agreed communications timeline that the article said undermined claims by the US president, Joe Biden, that he did not know Australia had not informed France earlier about the cancellation of the French submarine contract.

The extraordinary rift between Australia and France flows from Macron’s [accusation that Morrison lied to him](#) over plans with the US and the UK to acquire nuclear-propelled submarines. Morrison [rejected the claim](#) and said he was “not going to cop sledging of Australia”.

Sydney’s [Daily Telegraph](#) and the [Australian Financial Review](#) reported Macron had texted Morrison two days before the Aukus announcement in mid-September to say: “Should I expect good or bad news for our joint submarines ambitions?”

01:53

How the story unfolded: Scott Morrison and Emmanuel Macron's submarine stoush – video

The leaked message – shared to reinforce Australia’s position that [France](#) wasn’t blindsided about the cancellation of the A\$90bn submarine deal – also appeared to confirm Macron did not know which way Australia would go shortly before Aukus was unveiled.

It was also reported Macron told Morrison in June, “I don’t like losing,” after the Australian prime minister raised concern in Paris about whether the 12 planned conventionally powered submarines were still suitable for Australia’s strategic needs.

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Labor's foreign affairs spokesperson, Penny Wong, said Morrison was "willing to trash alliances and partnerships for personal political interests, instead of simply admitting this could have been handled better".

"Mr Morrison needs to explain how selective text messages between him and the French president, and the contents of a confidential 15-page document negotiated in secret between President Biden's National Security Council and Australian and British officials ended up in Australian newspapers," Wong said.

"Mr Morrison needs to rule out that this backgounding came from him, his office or his government. His furious attempts at damage control will only make world leaders trust him less."

Morrison's office on Tuesday declined to respond to Wong's comments, pointing to the prime minister's comments a day earlier.

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Photograph: Tim Roberts/Stone RF

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Morrison was asked in Glasgow on Monday: “Why did you decide to leak that text message?”

The prime minister did not directly contest the claim, but said he didn’t intend to “indulge your editorial on that”.

Morrison told reporters Macron “was concerned that this would be a phone call that would result in the decision of Australia not to proceed with the contract”.

Morrison said the French defence system “flew into action” the day after his dinner with Macron at the Élysée Palace in June to seek to address issues with the project – including sending a French admiral to Australia “to try and save the contract”.

The French embassy in Canberra did not comment on the release of the text message, although the ambassador, Jean-Pierre Thébault, is due to address the National Press Club on Wednesday.

Comment has also been sought from the US embassy and the White House.

Earlier, a senior White House official declined to clarify who Biden was referring to when he told Macron in Rome last week: “I was under the impression that France had been informed long before that the deal was not going through. I, honest to God, did not know you had not been.”

Biden’s national security adviser, Jake Sullivan – when asked on Monday about Morrison’s handling of the matter – replied: “We should look forward and not backward.”

Hervé Lemahieu, the research director at the Sydney-based Lowy Institute, said Australia had every right to decide to rescind the French contract and to enter into Aukus, but the communication with France “could have been handled with a bit more deft and diplomacy”.

Lemahieu said the alleged release of the texts was “highly unconventional behaviour between state leaders” and reflected “how personalised the squabble has become”.

“I think the key variable here is that both president Macron and prime minister Morrison are two men who face elections in 2022, and they both see the fracas as a blow to their prestige and their personal standing and they are primarily speaking to a domestic audience here, rather than to each other.”

Lemahieu said he had been monitoring French news stories in recent days “and this is a bigger story in Australia than it is in France”.

He said the handling of the communications with France was “as much an American mismanagement as an Australian one” – as the US is a formal treaty ally of France.

Lemahieu said Biden had “basically decided that it was worth pushing Australia under the bus in order to salvage” the US relationship with France.

The former Liberal prime minister Malcolm Turnbull – who announced the partnership with France to acquire submarines in 2016 – said Morrison “should apologise” to Macron “because he did very elaborately and duplicitously deceive France”.

The former Labor prime minister Kevin Rudd said the situation had become an “extraordinary mess” where “we now have got heads of government, effectively, leaking against each other, in order to establish what transpired in these informal text messages between heads of government”.

“Mr Morrison is now digging an even bigger hole for himself, not just in relation to the French, by effectively himself accusing the French president of lying, but also (in) extraordinary background briefing about the failure in Mr Morrison’s view of American officials to properly apprise the United States president of the nature of the cancellation of the French deal,” Rudd told the ABC.

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## Tesla

# Tesla opens Superchargers to other electric cars for first time



The pilot program will open up 10 Tesla charging stations to other electric cars in the Netherlands. Photograph: Sean Gallup/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Mon 1 Nov 2021 20.30 EDT

Tesla is opening its charging network to other electric cars for the first time with a pilot programme in the [Netherlands](#), as the world's most valuable carmaker looks to bring electric vehicles into the mainstream.

The programme will be tested at 10 locations in the Netherlands, the company said on Monday, adding that Dutch non-Tesla electric vehicle drivers can access the [Tesla](#) stations, or Superchargers, through the Tesla app.

Tesla drivers can continue to use these stations and the company will closely monitor each site for congestion.

Tesla operates more than 25,000 Superchargers worldwide, while other carmakers have formed alliances or invested in startups for networks as they rush new electric vehicles to market.

The Superchargers are open to cars with the Combined Charging System (CCS) favoured by BMW, Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler, Ford and the Volkswagen group, which includes Audi and Porsche.

Tesla uses the CCS standard in [Europe](#), allowing a wide range of cars to charge in stations without an adapter that uses a similar connector.

Charging prices for non-Tesla drivers would include extra costs to support a broad range of vehicles and site adjustments to accommodate these vehicles, Tesla said. “This move directly supports our mission to accelerate the world’s transition to sustainable energy.”

Tesla, which crossed \$1tn in market capitalisation for the first time last week, has [defied supply chain issues and global chip shortages](#) to mark a record quarter for car deliveries as demand ramps up and its investments in new factories pay off.

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# Headlines

- [Tory sleaze row MPs' standards commissioner should consider quitting, suggests Kwarteng](#)
- [Live UK politics: Commons vote to protect Paterson 'very damaging' for parliament, says standards watchdog](#)
- [Owen Paterson Johnson accused of corruption as he tears up scrutiny](#)
- [Analysis Is worry over future inquiries driving PM to change watchdog?](#)

## House of Commons

# Government accused of attempt to undermine standards regulator



Kwarteng insisted the vote to create a committee to review the standards process was not ‘about the rights and wrongs of what Owen Paterson said or did’. Photograph: David Cliff/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Alexandra Topping](#) and [Aubrey Allegretti](#)*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 08.36 EDT

The government has been accused of an “orchestrated and deliberate attempt” to undermine parliament’s independent regulator, Kathryn Stone, after [Kwasi Kwarteng](#) said she should consider quitting.

Dave Penman, the general secretary of the FDA union, which represents senior civil servants, said of the business secretary’s remarks: “Make no mistake, this is not some accidental misspoken comment.

“This is part of an orchestrated and deliberate attempt to not only undermine the independent authority of a regulator but to influence decision-making and set a marker down for the future.”

Sent out to defend the government’s approach to Owen Paterson’s case, just hours before his colleague Jacob Rees-Mogg announced a [humiliating U-turn](#), Kwarteng said he “doesn’t feel shame at all” after Wednesday’s move by the government to protect Paterson from a 30-day suspension.

He also suggested [the standards commissioner, Kathryn Stone](#), who led the nearly two-year investigation into Paterson’s lobbying, should consider resigning. Kwarteng said: “I think it’s difficult to see what the future of the commissioner is, given the fact that we’re reviewing the process and we’re overturning and trying to reform this whole process. But it’s up to the commissioner to decide her position.”

Penman said: “After months of anonymous, vicious briefing against Kathryn Stone, we now have the unedifying spectacle of a government minister publicly trying to force her to resign.”

Paterson was found to have committed an [“egregious” breach](#) of lobbying rules for repeated contact with ministers and officials while being paid more than £100,000 on top of his taxpayer-funded salary. But Boris Johnson whipped Tory MPs to support the creation of a new committee chaired by a Conservative backbencher to review the entire standards process, which opposition parties have already [vowed to boycott](#).

Those who voted for the amendment included 22 Tories who were either already under investigation or had been ruled against by the standards commissioner.

Kwarteng said it was “the express will of parliament”, although the vote was narrowly won by a majority of just 18, with dozens of Tory MPs choosing to abstain – one parliamentary private secretary who did so, Angela Richardson, lost her job.

“I don’t feel shame at all,” Kwarteng told Sky News on Thursday. “It was an independent process, an independent vote at parliament. And I’m really interested in seeing the system reformed and made more just and fair by allowing people a right of appeal.”

He insisted the vote, taken on the day that Paterson’s suspension was due to be confirmed, was not “about the rights and wrongs of what [Owen Paterson](#) said or did or how he was paid”.

Instead, Kwarteng said, it was “about getting a system of fairness back into almost what might be a kind of employment tribunal” and that the right to appeal was something Paterson should have had.

Kwarteng also called Paterson a “victim” of an unfair process, telling LBC: “If you look at what Owen went through, he was a victim, if you like, of a process or he was involved in a process, where he didn’t have a right of appeal.”

Tory whips had rung round MPs on Tuesday night and asked if they would support the Leadsom amendment, and the chief whip, Mark Spencer, is said to have phoned Johnson that same evening to convince him it was the right course of action, with the prime minister agreeing.

However, discontent is at fever pitch among some [Conservatives](#). One who voted for the amendment said: “I really regret it.” Others lambasted the “politically insane” decision and Paterson and the government’s refusal to back an amendment that would have still sanctioned him, but reduced the suspension to below 10 days, meaning he would have escaped a recall petition.

Labour said the call by Kwarteng for Stone to consider quitting was just the latest example of ministers trying to avoid public scrutiny. Thangam Debbonaire, the shadow leader of the Commons, said: “Having already ripped up the rules policing MPs’ behaviour to protect one of their own, it is appalling that this corrupt government is now trying to bully the standards commissioner out of her job.

“Johnson must immediately distance himself from these latest attempts to poison British politics. And all decent people of all political beliefs must stand against these naked attempts by Tory MPs to avoid scrutiny of their behaviour.”

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# **Owen Paterson resigns as MP for North Shropshire after sleaze row – as it happened**

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## Lobbying

# Johnson accused of corruption as he tears up system to fight Westminster sleaze



The prime minister, Boris Johnson, in parliament on Wednesday.  
Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

*[Heather Stewart](#), [Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Rowena Mason](#)*

Wed 3 Nov 2021 17.18 EDT

Boris Johnson tore up the independent system for combating sleaze in parliament on Wednesday as he threw the government's weight behind protecting a Conservative MP who was found to have repeatedly breached lobbying rules.

The Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, accused the prime minister of corruption after Johnson whipped his MPs to halt Owen Paterson's

parliamentary suspension and demand a review of the entire standards process to allow for appeals.

Scores of Tory MPs declined to back the prime minister, however, with several saying they had been deluged by angry messages from constituents.

One Tory, Angela Richardson, MP for Guildford since 2019 and an aide to Michael Gove, confirmed she had departed from her role as a parliamentary aide after her decision to abstain. She tweeted: “I abstained … aware that my job was at risk, but it was a matter of principle for me.”

It comes as Johnson is himself facing what would be a fourth inquiry by [Kathryn Stone – the parliamentary standards commissioner](#) who recommended Paterson be suspended for 30 days for breaking lobbying rules – into the funding of his Downing Street flat refurbishment.

On a day of extraordinary drama in Westminster MPs voted by 250 to 232 to support a government-backed amendment to set aside the ruling against Paterson and overhaul the independent disciplinary system on Wednesday, which the prime minister claimed was a matter of “natural justice”.

The government’s majority was reduced from 79 to just 18, however, underlining the unhappiness of many Conservatives. The vote result was met with cries of “shame” from opposition MPs.

02:19

Owen Paterson brought 'house into disrepute': committee chair on charges against Tory MP – video

After the vote, Paterson, who previously suggested the investigation into his conduct contributed to the death of his wife, Rose, said: “After two years of hell I now have the opportunity to clear my name.” He had previously protested his innocence to the commissioner.

Stone said via her spokesperson that she intended to remain in post until the end of her term in December 2022.

In his most strongly-worded criticism of the prime minister to date, Starmer said protecting Paterson, and failing to throw out the Conservative MP Rob Roberts who was found to have harassed an aide, was corrupt.

“I am sick of people skirting around calling this out for what it is: corruption. Paterson was receiving money from a private company to ask questions on its behalf. Roberts was found to have made repeated and unwanted sexual advances toward a young staffer. Both of them should be gone – neither are fit to serve as MPs,” Starmer [wrote in the Guardian](#).

Following revelations in a 2019 Guardian investigation, Stone launched an investigation and found that Paterson repeatedly approached ministers and officials on behalf of two companies that were paying him more than £100,000.

Stone is expected to make a decision shortly about whether to investigate the funding of the refurbishment of Johnson’s Downing Street flat, which was initially paid for by a Tory donor.

Writing to the Labour MP Margaret Hodge this year, Stone said: “I will await the outcome of the Electoral Commission’s inquiry before making any decision.” It is understood the commission has now completed its investigation and shown a first draft of its findings to Conservative campaign headquarters.

Stone previously found against Johnson over his use of a holiday villa on the Caribbean island of Mustique funded by the Carphone Warehouse founder David Ross – though that ruling was subsequently overturned by the parliamentary commission for standards.

Opposition parties accused the Tories of seeking to undermine Stone, and urged her to investigate the funding of Johnson’s costly redecoration project.

The Liberal Democrat chief whip, Wendy Chamberlain, said: “This looks like a clear attempt to weaken independent scrutiny ahead of investigations into other damaging Tory sleaze scandals, from dodgy Covid contracts to the refurbishment of Boris Johnson’s flat. The Conservatives are trying to make

parliament's watchdog toothless so it can no longer properly hold them to account.”

The deputy Labour leader, Angela Rayner, said: “If the prime minister has nothing to hide then he should be pleased to be investigated by the parliamentary commissioner instead of abolishing and overriding this independent regulator and replacing it with a committee with a Tory majority that will just do the prime minister’s bidding for him.”

Johnson’s spokesperson insisted his stance reflected “longstanding concerns” about the lack of a right to appeal in the current system – though the chair of the parliamentary committee on standards, Chris Bryant, told MPs that Paterson had been given ample opportunity to make his case.

Bryant was heard in silence as he told MPs: “It is by definition wrong to change the process at the very last moment.” Warning Paterson that “his name will become a byword for bad behaviour”, he said the former minister had “repeatedly, over a sustained period, lobbied officials and ministers on behalf of paying clients … that is expressly forbidden, it is a corrupt practice”.



Andrea Leadsom, seen in the House of Commons on Wednesday, tabled the call for a new standards committee. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica

Taylor/PA

The controversial amendment, tabled by the former cabinet minister [Andrea Leadsom](#), called for the creation of a new committee chaired by the Tory MP John Whittingdale, with five Conservative and four opposition MPs. The intention is to review Paterson's case and recommend reforms to the parliamentary standards system.

Labour and the Scottish National party said they would boycott the new body. A minister said the whips' "cunning plan ... didn't survive its encounter with reality" and that Paterson's fate should have been separated out from wider reform of the standards system.

A second Tory MP hit out at "very poor party management" and claimed "certain people bullied some into submission on behalf of an old friend". A third called the ploy "politically insane", adding: "The fact that even if the process was perfect [Paterson's] mates would claim it was broken to try to get him off is disgusting."

One told the Guardian their inbox had been in "meltdown" and added: "I know the usual suspects – the messages I'm getting aren't from them."

Thirteen Conservative MPs voted against the government, including the former chief whip Mark Harper, and the backbencher Nigel Mills, who told the BBC: "The committee the government have chosen is completely unacceptable. There's been no consultation, it was done at the last minute, it's in the government's control. That's not a way of having a confident, impartial, standards process that anyone can have confidence in."

At least a dozen frontbenchers abstained. One cabinet minister was said to be "spitting feathers" that she had to support the amendment while other colleagues were given permission to skip the tight vote.

Whittingdale told the Guardian he was considering how the committee would be able to operate and admitted it might "prove challenging". But he said he would press ahead with forming it as the Commons had "passed a motion that clearly needs to be acted on".

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## Lobbying

# Is worry over future inquiries driving PM to change watchdog?



Satirist Kaya Mar with his depiction of Boris Johnson last April after sleaze allegations over the financing of the prime minister's No 11 flat.  
Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

*[Rowena Mason](#) Deputy political editor and [Harry Davies](#)*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

Three times [Boris Johnson](#) has been investigated by the Commons' standards watchdog, which is more than any other UK MP in the last three years.

And now the prime minister is facing a fourth possible inquiry by [Kathryn Stone, the parliamentary standards commissioner](#), this time over the funding of his [Downing Street flat refurbishment](#).

With a decision on a fresh investigation due within a matter of weeks, some are raising eyebrows about the timing of Johnson's move to undermine and overhaul the whole standards system. Others are saying that the system is ripe for reform but it needs to be stricter or to outlaw lobbying by MPs altogether.

Ostensibly, the Tory plan which emerged this week to [introduce a new body](#) for MPs to challenge decisions by the standards committee is to save Owen Paterson's bacon. The veteran backbencher was facing 30 days suspension from parliament for lobbying government bodies on behalf of firms which paid him more than £100,000 – as [revealed by the Guardian](#) two years ago.

No 10 argues that the plan is simply about trying to create a fair system which allows an MP the right of appeal.

But one Tory MP believed the motivation for a shake-up was worry in Downing Street about further standards investigations coming down the track – particularly potential inquiries into lobbying over the [award of Covid contracts](#), and into the prime minister's loans from a Tory donor for the redecoration of his flat at No 11 Downing Street.

For years there have been warnings that the government has been going in the wrong direction when it comes to tackling inappropriate lobbying and transparency standards, all issues associated with the whiff of corruption and “Tory sleaze”.

As recently as Monday a report by the committee on standards in public life, led by the former spy chief Jonathan Evans, [argued](#) that sweeping changes to the system were needed, particularly when it came to oversight of ministers' behaviour and lobbying by those formerly in power.

The report did not make any recommendations on the standards system for MPs, which is widely seen as imperfect but relatively effective, even though some would like to see the rules tightened further to ban parliamentarians' second jobs altogether.

Paid advocacy by MPs has been banned in some form or other since 1695, according to Chris Bryant, chair of the standards committee. The ban on

direct lobbying was formalised after the [cash for questions scandals](#) of the 1990s. The standards commissioner and the standards committee of MPs and independent members, have repeatedly enforced those rules when breaches, such as in the case of Paterson, have been brought to their attention.

But even with the prohibition in place, MPs can legitimately have second jobs advising companies on politics and policy. As an example of the revolving door, [Sajid Javid](#), now the health secretary, was paid £150,000 a year by the investment bank JP Morgan shortly after leaving office as chancellor of the exchequer.

The list of Tories, in particular, with second jobs in areas of their policy expertise is long, with many former ministers now working in the sectors they used to govern. Some advise hotel chains, investment companies, property developers; one link is with a gambling firm.

The fine print also [allows some wriggle room](#). MPs can engage in lobbying if it is “six months after the reward or consideration was received”. They are not allowed to speak in the Commons, make approaches to ministers, vote, or initiate parliamentary proceedings, in return for direct payment in cash or kind.

However, they are allowed to participate in parliamentary proceedings and conversations with ministers that would financially benefit their client as long as they did not start the interaction, the interest is declared and is not for the sole benefit of their client.

Former ministers and public officials can also engage in lobbying just two years after leaving office, under the rules of the Advisory Committee on Business Appointments (Acoba). In practice, some are suspected of doing so under the radar before then, since the watchdog for enforcing lobbying prohibitions has no power to sanction them.

The [Greensill scandal](#), in which the former prime minister David Cameron pestered senior ministers for favours on behalf of his new employer, the supply chain financier Greensill Capital, shows the extent to which intensive

lobbying is still permitted. An official parliamentary inquiry found Cameron showed a “significant lack of judgment” but did not breach lobbying rules.

While scandals about lobbying and financial interests of politicians are nothing new, a number of experts, academics – and some MPs themselves – believe standards are being further eroded under the present government. Bryant warned that the public “will think we are the parliament that sanctioned cash for questions”.

Robert Barrington, professor at the Centre for the Study of Corruption, at the University of Sussex and a former government adviser, said on Wednesday that the Paterson case only “illustrates the crisis of standards that is currently undermining democracy in the UK”.

He concluded: “[It is] hard to avoid the conclusion that there is an effort to change the rules when it suits, with arguments based solely on party or tribal loyalty and not any basis of principles or standards. Perhaps that is the luxury of an 80-seat majority.”

Daniel Bruce, chief executive of Transparency International, also said the “direction of travel” had to change in light of recent cases where the prime minister and government had overridden decisions by standards bodies.

Bruce said: “Coming into this year we have a vacuum of oversight on the ministerial code after the Priti Patel [bullying] case when the independent adviser resigned. We’ve had the commission on the appointments to the upper house overruled by the prime minister when the commissioner took a view that a Conservative donor should not get a peerage. We’ve got this woefully inadequate picture of lobbying of the government. We’ve got a decade of decline in FoI [freedom of information] requests being granted in full. Those are four very concerning areas.

“And yet what do we have this week? We now have government-backed attempts to dismantle a system of oversight set up in the height of 1990s sleaze and further strengthened after the MPs expenses saga of 2009 ... The very obvious timing of this proposed review to suspend a suspension suggests this is very partisan.”

Bruce said Transparency International had monitored suspected breaches of parliamentary conduct rules and the ministerial code, finding 30 breaches that were not investigated or where no action was taken in 2020.

“The number of cases where questionable behaviour goes un-investigated has intensified in the last few years under this current administration,” he said. “That is the concern, and I await with keen interest the government’s full response to the committee on standards report because as far as I am concerned there is no turning away from that.”

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## Television

# John Lewis Christmas advert 2021: this alien girl is here to ravage our planet



Unexpected guest ... John Lewis Christmas advert 2021. Photograph: John Lewis and Partners/PA



[Stuart Heritage](#)

[@stuheritage](#)

Thu 4 Nov 2021 05.13 EDT

There are plenty of theories why the John Lewis Christmas ad no longer hits as hard as it once did. You could look at the fortunes of John Lewis itself, which has spent the last couple of years locked in a nightmare of plunging revenues and store closures. You could look at how aggressively every other retailer has attempted to rip off the tear-jerky John Lewis Christmas ad formula, to the extent that sitting through an ITV commercial break in November or December is now exactly the same as suffering through the first 10 minutes of Up on a neverending loop in an abandoned corn silo full of crying children.

But judging by this year's offering, you might also suggest that John Lewis has run out of ideas. Because this year's ad is such a straight-down-the-line John Lewis Christmas advert that you can only imagine it was assembled by tombola.

Sweet children? Check. Bittersweet ending? Check. Maudlin cover version of a song you once liked? Check, in this case a version of Together in Electric Dreams that sounds like it was performed by someone who has

tumbled down a well and just realised nobody is coming to rescue her. Such a total lack of John Lewis products that, if you showed the advert to someone who didn't know what John Lewis was, they would be forced to assume it was some sort of spaceship repair company? Check. It is, plain and simple, a Christmas ad by numbers.

02:07

### Watch the 2021 John Lewis Christmas advert – video

The story it tells, however, is a dark warning about the fragility of life itself. It begins with a boy watching a spaceship burst through the clouds as it plummets to Earth. Now, anyone with half a brain would know exactly what this is. It's Peter Parker seeing the Titan craft at the start of *Avengers: Infinity War*. It's the opening scene of *A Quiet Place 2*. What the boy is watching is nothing less than a clear and present threat to the future of humanity. This is an invasion.

Now, if you or I saw a spaceship plummeting to Earth, we would ultimately have two choices. We would either retreat to a basement and hope the authorities have the right level of firepower to neutralise the alien threat, or we would grab a shotgun, race to the crash site and blow a giant hole in the invader's head before it could colonise the planet for its own foul means. This is just logic. Don't question it.

Not this boy, though. This boy, this gawpy threat to global safety, actually decides to visit the alien so he can teach her about Christmas. He shows her a light-up jumper. He feeds her mince pies. He teaches her how to hurl projectiles at unwitting strangers, which seems especially shortsighted.

After a few days of this, the alien decides it's time to return to her home planet. She kisses the boy on the cheek. Then she flies away, back to her laboratory so that she can weaponise the human DNA she extracted from him into a synthetic alien virus expressly designed to wage war on humanity as we know it. That's right, the John Lewis Christmas ad is a Coronavirus origin story. Don't argue with me. It is. It makes perfect sense.

Oh, sure, you might read the advert differently. You might think it's a reminder to help strangers wherever you find them, or a message about the importance of sharing tradition. You might, if you're feeling especially brokenhearted, see the alien's departure as a reminder that happiness is only fleeting and everything is destined to end.

But that's not what it's about. No, the John Lewis Christmas advert this year is definitely about an alien crashing in the woods in December 2019 and lulling a boy into a false sense of security so she can extract his DNA, turn it into Covid then spread it around the world upon her return the following month. The moral of the story is that you should definitely kill all aliens with guns as soon as you see them. Merry Christmas everyone.

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[The Sopranos](#)

## Sopranos star Michael Imperioli: ‘I thought they were going to fire me’



Lost in the woods ... Imperioli with Tony Sirico (Paulie 'Walnuts' Gualtieri) in the Pine Barrens episode of The Sopranos. Photograph: Barry Wetcher/Bridgeman Images

[Rob Walker](#)

Thu 4 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

There's a scene in [Goodfellas](#) in which gangster Tommy DeVito, played by Joe Pesci, shoots dead a young bartender called Spider who had unwisely told him to "go fuck yourself". Pesci won an Oscar for the film – and while Spider the bartender was a small role for the then little-known [Michael Imperioli](#), it was to be his big break.

"I wanted that job at all costs," Imperioli says. "It was [Martin Scorsese](#) – he'd made some of my favourite movies. I was all in."

During the shoot for the scene, Imperioli had to detonate tiny devices attached to his chest that spewed blood, then hurl himself backwards. But it didn't go as planned and he smashed into a tray of drinks, badly cutting two of his fingers. He was rushed to hospital where doctors thought he really had been shot.

"I'm trying to explain, I'm an actor in a movie with Robert De Niro! But they thought I was delirious, just out of my mind – until they cut my shirt open and saw all the wires."

He leans back in his chair, smiling. You can tell he's told this tale a thousand times. But the symbolism gets him each time. To become a "made man" in the mafia, he explains, gangsters go through the ritual of having their finger pricked and the blood burned on a picture of a saint. "So there I am – my finger being cut in the presence of Scorsese, De Niro and Pesci! That's me being made," he says.



Tight knit ... cast members gather at the Hard Rock Casino in Hollywood, Florida, just before they watched the series finale together. Photograph: Courtesy of Steve Schirripa

He was probably right. After numerous successful roles, eight years later he auditioned to play Christopher Moltisanti in a TV show called [The Sopranos](#) – about a dysfunctional New Jersey crime family. Christopher was the hot-headed, drug addict gangster who aspired to be a Hollywood scriptwriter – heir apparent to mafia boss Tony Soprano.

At the time, Imperioli remembers he wasn't that excited about it. He knew nothing about [David Chase](#) – the series' creator – and, based on the first script, he wasn't sure if the show was any good: "Is this a comedy? Is this a spoof? What is this?" he thought.

He left the audition convinced he'd blown it – "It didn't seem like I was impressing him [Chase] at all – but I didn't really care. It wasn't like I was auditioning for Scorsese." Chase offered him the job – and, after some deliberation, Imperioli accepted.



Blood on the streets ... Imperioli as Christopher Moltisanti in *The Sopranos*.  
Photograph: Moviestore/Shutterstock

The 55-year-old actor is speaking to me from his apartment on Manhattan's Upper West Side where he lives with his wife, Victoria – "our youngest [of three] went off to college last year", he says. It's half an hour from where he grew up in Mount Vernon and only four blocks from where his Italian ancestors lived when they moved to the US in the 1890s – he knows this because he's working on getting dual citizenship with Italy. "I'm proving that I've always been Italian," he says.

There have been reams written about *The Sopranos*, often rated as [the greatest TV series](#) of all time. It won Imperioli an Emmy in 2004, one of 21 the show picked up. After the late [James Gandolfini](#) – who played Tony Soprano – Imperioli is probably the show's most recognisable character.

Even though the show ended nearly 15 years ago, it's more popular now than ever. HBO reported a 200% surge in viewers last year in the US. And on the back of that, Imperioli and fellow cast member Steve Schirripa (Bobby Baccalieri) have written a new book, [Woke Up This Morning](#) – named after the show's theme song – which they are billing as the definitive oral history of *The Sopranos*.

The two actors have teamed up, too, with the actor Vincent “Big Pussy” Pastore for a live stage show – [In Conversation With the Sopranos](#) – which goes on tour next year. Though Imperioli’s recent activities have included [DJing on avant garde radio station NTS](#), and [leading Buddhist meditation sessions on Instagram](#), he is at the centre of all three Soprano spin-offs – the book, the show, [a podcast](#) called Talking Sopranos – so I ask him if there’s life after the series or whether he thinks he’ll for ever be defined by it.

He ponders for a moment. “I think I am defined by the Sopranos – but I don’t think it’s a detriment,” he says.

He takes me back to his first day on set. The young Christopher was supposed to drive backwards down a pavement, all the while talking to his boss, Tony Soprano, in the passenger seat. Imperioli didn’t know how to drive. “But I thought, how hard could it be – you’re on a set, they’re gonna block off traffic.”

Boom! I drove us into a tree. The airbags went off, Jim’s head snapped back and there was smoke everywhere

He got away with it at first, he says, but then they asked him to do the scene again – this time at twice the speed and for double the distance. “Boom, right into one of the trees, airbags go off, Jim’s [Gandolfini’s] head snaps back, smoke everywhere. I’m thinking this guy is the star of the show, they’re gonna fire me.”

He wrote off the \$60,000 Lexus – but Gandolfini found the whole episode a hoot. It was the start of what was to become a close friendship. After long days of filming they’d go out carousing in New York, sometimes to Little Italy, “to have dinner and be around wise guys”, and sometimes to Imperioli’s own speakeasy, the Ciel Rouge in Chelsea. “If we wrapped at four in the morning we could always go and open the bar – I had the keys.”



Buddying up ... Imperioli, left, with fellow cast members Steve Schirripa, centre, and Steven Van Zandt. Photograph: Courtesy of Steve Schirripa

On one Friday night, they started drinking before filming had even started. It was an episode in which Christopher and Tony were disposing of a body – Ralph, a made man who Tony had strangled in the previous episode. “We had to throw his body off a cliff and it was out in the woods,” recalls Imperioli. “It took a long time to set up so we went back into the trailer and started drinking – and drank a lot.”

In the end, the two men got so drunk the crew were worried they would fall off the cliff during the scene. “So they chained us to trees and covered the chains with leaves – that way we could go to the edge of the cliff and throw the body off.” He gives a big guttural laugh at the memory. Gandolfini didn’t enjoy the fame that came with The Sopranos, Imperioli says. He lived in New York – like most of the show’s actors – but he lost all his privacy. “You know, you’re on the street a lot, he didn’t blend into the background – he stood out, he was a big guy – it was Tony Soprano walking around town.”



Caring relationship ...Imperioli with the late James Gandolfini in the series two episode From Where to Eternity. Photograph: HBO

Imperioli had been with Gandolfini for a movie premiere just weeks before he died – and it seemed as if he had finally made some peace with the whole Tony Soprano hoopla, he says. He was calm and relaxed and happier than he'd ever seen him. "And then he was gone." Gandolfini died in 2013, aged 51. The day Imperioli found out, called while walking down the street in Santa Barbara, California, he says, "was one of the worst days of my life".

Imperioli has watched all 86 episodes over the past year while working on the book. Some of his favourite scenes are when the characters are taken out of their comfort zones, "When they lose a little bit of that mojo." There's an episode when Christopher's drug addiction is the target of an intervention from his friends and family, which rapidly goes downhill. "They're gangsters, a completely dysfunctional group of people, and now they're in this therapeutic modality of recovery, which none of them are suited for."

The ultimate fish out of water episode, he says, is Pine Barrens – when Christopher and Paulie "Walnuts" Gualtieri – played by Tony Sirico – get lost in freezing snow in the woods, chasing a Russian guy they thought they'd killed.

Of all the actors in The Sopranos, Sirico is the most like the character he plays, Imperioli says. The two knew each other before The Sopranos – but Imperioli always felt a little intimidated – not least because Sirico had ties with the real mafia as a younger man and even did time in prison for sticking up nightclubs. “He could be very insulting and nasty – and when I heard I’d gotta do this series with him, I wasn’t looking forward to it,” he says.

But then – [as with Gandolfini](#) – Sirico wound up becoming one of Imperioli’s best friends, and still is. It’s something about the unique chemistry of the show, he thinks.

He suggests that’s why The Sopranos is better than everything else. “It’s like alchemy.” You can talk about the quality of the writing, the acting, the film-making – but it was also a group of people with similar backgrounds that were in the same place at the right time. “We just liked being together. It was family.”

- Woke up This Morning: The Definitive Oral History of The Sopranos by Michael Imperioli and Steve Shirripa is published on 11 November. The stage show [In Conversation With the Sopranos](#) goes on tour next year.
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## **‘He was adamant he didn’t want it’: the pro-vax parents with vaccine-hesitant kids**



On TikTok, ‘unvaxed’ content racks up hundreds of thousands of views.  
Illustration: Kiki Ljung/The Guardian



[Emine Saner](#)

[@eminesaner](#)

Thu 4 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

Throughout the pandemic, Anna has worked for the NHS. She has seen the effects of Covid-19 first-hand and, although she worked remotely because she was in a vulnerable group, other colleagues – she is a physiotherapist – were deployed to Covid wards at the height of hospital admissions. “At the trust I work for, they’re setting up a long-Covid service,” she says. She comes home and her son Sam, 16, listens to her talk about it – and yet he is adamant that the coronavirus isn’t happening or that, if it is, it’s not serious. “You know: ‘Covid is a load of rubbish – it’s all about control’,” she says. “It’s all very conspiracy theory, a lot of his stuff.” He was adamant from the start that he wouldn’t be having the vaccine if and when it became available for his age group, and he has stuck to it. “He is very resistant,” says Anna. “He is pretty determined not to conform anyway. Part of it, I think, is him being a teenager, and the other bit of it is conspiracy theory: ‘It’s all a big con.’” His main source of information since the start of the pandemic has been social media, says Anna. “He watches a lot of YouTube.”

Just over a month ago, YouTube announced it would remove videos that spread misinformation about all vaccines, and would ban the accounts of

anti-vax activists; it had already banned content with false claims about Covid vaccines last year. [Facebook did the same in February this year](#), though a quick search reveals misinformation is still easy to find (one post I found within minutes claimed 80% of vaccinated women had miscarriages). On TikTok, “unvaxed” content racks up hundreds of thousands of views. Last month, NewsGuard, an organisation that rates the credibility of news organisations and monitors misinformation, found [Covid conspiracy theories were being viewed by millions on TikTok](#), and, in its research, children under 13 – the lower age limit – were able to access the app.

Even if children have avoided anti-vaccine misinformation on social media, they may have come across it at the school gate. There have been demonstrations outside schools across the UK; some protesters have loudhailers, and give alarming leaflets to children, or point them in the direction of websites with misinformation. At least one school was targeted by protesters showing images of [what appeared to be dead children](#), falsely claiming they had been killed by the vaccine, which unsurprisingly distressed children. The Association of School and College Leaders union found nearly 80% of British schools had been targeted in some way – mainly emails threatening legal action – and 13% had reported seeing anti-vax demonstrators directly outside the school gates; 18 schools said protesters had actually got inside.

In September, the UK’s chief medical officers recommended children between the ages of 12 and 15 be offered a single dose of a Covid vaccine, to join the 16- and 17-year-olds, who have been offered a jab since August. So far about 21% of 12- to 15-year-olds in England have had the vaccine; for the older age group, 56% have come forward. There are many reasons for the relatively low uptake – and it was always expected to be lower for children than much older people – such as issues with the rollout. In Scotland – where children are largely vaccinated in drop-in centres, rather than schools – take-up is about 53% in the 12- to 15-year-old age group.

But there is also hesitancy. In a survey [of nearly 28,000 pupils in England](#), published at the end of September, researchers found 51% of 13-year-olds were willing to have the vaccine, compared with 78% of 17-year-olds. For nine-year-olds, the figure drops to 36% (while no vaccine has been approved

for under-12s in the UK, last week, regulators in the US last week approved Pfizer's vaccine for children over the age of five).

When Lily, 13, had her vaccine at school, she was one of only about five from her class of 30 to have it. None of her close friends did. "We had conversations about it, when we were trying to make up our minds about what we would do," she says. "They would tell me their reasons about why they didn't want to have it, like they'd seen online about people having seizures when you get it. And also there was stuff about the vaccine making you infertile, and just making you very ill as well, apparently." They showed her videos they had seen on social media, mostly on TikTok.

"There's definitely a kind of feeling of: 'Oh, maybe it's not a good idea then. Why am I the only one who thinks it's a good idea to get it?'" she says. "I made, like, 10 different decisions. The night before, I decided I wasn't going to get it. I ended up changing my mind because I researched it."



'There was stuff on social media about the vaccine making you infertile.'

Illustration: Kiki Ljung/The Guardian

Lily had spoken to her parents about having the vaccine, and although she says they didn't put any pressure on her either way, "they did point out some reasons why it would be a good idea to get it. I think the main reason I

actually changed my mind and got the vaccine was because most of the reasons that my friends had for not getting the vaccine were because of themselves. But my parents' point was that the main reason I should get it is because of my grandparents and people like that."

Hesitancy doesn't mean teenagers are anti-vaxxers, says Russell Viner, a paediatrician and professor of adolescent health at the UCL Institute of Child Health, and one of the authors of the study of English pupils. "There's an element to which to hesitate and think is entirely appropriate, rather than just rushing in," he says. "I think the research shows that much of the hesitancy is about a lack of information, certainly at the time [they did the survey]." He has a 15-year-old, "and so we're going through all of these issues. Young people are saying: 'Do I really need it? How much will it benefit me?' I think we absolutely have to be transparent and honest in our response, which is that the chief medical officers have looked at this, and the balance of risks is in favour of vaccination but it isn't an overwhelming balance. So a level of thinking about it is appropriate in teenagers. That's the transparent, we-need-to-be-honest-about-the-science side of things.

"On the other hand, at a population level, we want our teenagers to be vaccinated and get the vaccination levels as high as we can. I think the right thing to do is probably what the government has largely been doing, which is not making it compulsory, and being transparent about the benefits and the very unlikely and very rare risks."

On balance, he says, "it's the right thing to do to vaccinate teenagers. But it's not an absolute no-brainer and that's why Britain didn't rush to it, unlike vaccinating over-80s. It's a much more finely balanced position."

This is how Clare and her 13-year-old son Jamie felt about it. Most of her family has been vaccinated (Clare wasn't because of underlying conditions), but Jamie is sure that he won't have the vaccine, and Clare supports his decision. "What influenced it was the JCVI report that didn't recommend the vaccines for healthy children," she says. Initially, the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation advised there were insufficient medical grounds to vaccinate healthy children between the ages of 12 and 15. And then "there was a swift turnaround from the government to suddenly say: 'Children under 16 will be vaccinated.'" The chief medical officers' decision

took into account the benefits beyond the low individual health benefits, such as children losing fewer school days, and reducing transmission to older family members.

“We’d already started the conversation with our son and he was very clear that he didn’t want the vaccine,” says Clare. Jamie was concerned about the (very small) risk of heart inflammation, and particularly because it was found to be higher in boys – about [162 cases per million after two doses of a vaccine](#), compared with 13 per million in girls. “That scared him. He said: ‘What if that happens?’ And I said: ‘It’s treatable.’ But he was adamant that he didn’t want it. He wanted to know more about it, he wanted there to be a longer time of knowing what the vaccine might do – those were his words. That isn’t to say we can’t change our minds.”

She is sure he hasn’t been influenced by social media, as he has tight restrictions on his phone, and since he is home-educated, in preparation for taking up a place at a specialist school, she doesn’t think he has been exposed to much, if any, anti-vax misinformation. “We’ve talked about what anti-vax is,” says Clare. “In the home education community, I suppose it won’t surprise you, there’s lots of anti-vaxxers, but they’re not our tribe. Politically, we wouldn’t be in that group.”

Viner is concerned about online anti-vax messages, and says he is “appalled” at the school protests. “It’s irresponsible to target young people coming out of schools when they’re not with their parents; they’re being given information that they may not seek, that’s being pushed at them. I think that’s reprehensible behaviour by anybody.”

Social media, he points out, has given voice to an anti-vax agenda in general, not just Covid vaccines. “I think what we’ve seen is very strategic use of social media by those opposed to vaccination, and young people are part of that. Because they’re high consumers of social media, you could argue that they’re more vulnerable. However, I think, most young people, *because* they’re high consumers of social media, are pretty savvy about what they read. There is a worry, but I think we should also be reassured that young people frequently show relatively high ability to recognise when unsupported ‘facts’ are being pushed. But that’s not always true.”

This, says Anna, is what she believes her son has been exposed to online. Incorrect information, she says, is “a huge concern. Teenagers are really impressionable, despite the fact that he’d argue that he wasn’t.” Does she challenge him about it? “Yes. I say: ‘How can you argue against something that’s blatantly happening?’ We have open dialogue, and I just say that this is what I know, and what I understand. But he says the research is rubbish.” She knows the risk to him from a Covid infection is very low, but the concern is there. “I’d be frightened if he got it in case he was one of the unlucky ones that became seriously unwell.”

We should be thinking about the way to reach young people with good information, says Viner. “They absolutely respond to trusted advisers, such as the chief medical officers, but they also respond to peers. There are some extraordinarily powerful voices in the younger generation who are hugely respected by young people, and using those kinds of mechanisms to reach young people would also be helpful.” Again, he stresses that he doesn’t believe young people are particularly hardline anti-vaxxers. “The hesitancy [in the research] was mostly ‘don’t knows’, rather than teenagers who were strongly anti. And I think the message from young people was: ‘Convince us. Give us the information.’ My son said to me: ‘I’ll have the vaccine if you tell me it’s the right thing to do and it helps my life go back to normal.’”

For Anna and Sam, their exchanges are largely good-natured, she says, although he can become “a bit loud and more defiant” when she asks about his sources for his “conspiracy theories”. “I’ve said: ‘You’ve had all your vaccinations.’ I’ve talked about polio and MMR and all the vaccinations that he’s had to keep him healthy, and that this really is no different to that. And it’s about stopping other people from becoming unwell. I will keep chipping away, but I do pick my moments.” For now, Sam is ignoring his invitation. “I still feel optimistic,” says his mother, “that at some point that he will take it up.”

*Names of parents and children have been changed.*

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[Business](#)

## **‘I’ve always aimed big’: Vietnamese tycoon behind £155m Oxford donation**



Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao has an estimated \$2.7bn (£2bn) fortune, part of which was made from VietJet, the airline she founded and runs. Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images



Rupert Neate Wealth correspondent

@RupertNeate

Thu 4 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

Nguyen Thi Phuong Thao began her business career as a sideline importing fax machines and latex rubber into the then Soviet Union while studying economic management at D Mendeleev University of Chemical Technology in Moscow. Before she had turned 21 – or graduated – she had made her first million.

Phuong Thao, who is popularly known as Madam Thao, is now Vietnam's first and only female billionaire with an estimated \$2.7bn (£2bn) fortune made from VietJet, the airline she founded and runs, alongside a vast property empire that stretches from skyscrapers in Ho Chi Minh City to five star beach resorts across the country as well as offshore oil and gas exploration and fossil fuel financing.

But her name may soon be well known in the UK as well as Vietnam after University of Oxford's Linacre College agreed to rename itself Thao College after a £155m “transformative donation” from her holding company Sovico Group.

“Education and research are the keys to the development and prosperity of mankind,” she said on announcing the deal. “I believe the long-term cooperation with Oxford University will bring new opportunities and good value to the community.”

The 51-year-old, who signed the deal with Linacre College’s principal Prof Nick Brown in the presence of the Vietnamese prime minister, Phạm Minh Chính, in Edinburgh in the run-up to the Cop conference, is no stranger to Oxford’s spires.



Vietjet aircraft prepare to take off at Tan Son Nhat airport in Ho Chi Minh City. Photograph: KHAM/Reuters

Her son, Tommy Nguyen, studied economic management at Oxford, where he followed in his mother’s footsteps by also setting up a sideline company. He founded the logistics firm Swift247, which transports documents from south-east Asia to the rest of the world, after he struggled to get his visa paperwork sent to the UK quickly enough to change schools. In the end his family sent a member of staff to personally courier the documents to him in London.

In his application to study at Oxford, he is said to have written “my mother is a role model for me to strive to follow”.

Phuong Thao has spoken of the difficulty of building her empire while raising her two children at the same time. “He [Tommy] kept insisting and begging [me] to take him to class,” she told the [Vietnamese business website Cafebiz](#). “Strictly, I had a meeting at 8:30. [I told him] go alone, even though my heart wants to go with you.”

She said she would prefer not to live life in the public eye. “But business leadership has turned me into a person of the collective, of the public. I must always be aware of the exemplary spirit of leadership, sharing among staff and I am forced to sacrifice my privacy and interests.”

Nonetheless, Phuong Thao has a habit of courting controversy to boost sales. In 2012 Vietjet promoted a new flight with beauty pageant contestants walking the aisles in bikinis. The airline, which now flies to more than 120 destinations, was fined 20m dong (£600) for the Hawaiian-themed stunt that violated aviation regulations.

Despite the fine, bikini-clad airline employees also welcomed home the national under-23 football team after they lost the final of the 2018 Asian Football Confederation Championship.

The incident prompted customers to ask Phuong Thao: “Do you want to rename Vietjet ‘Vietsex’?” The airline was fined a further 40m dong by the Civil Aviation Authority of Vietnam (CAAV). Undeterred, Phuong Thao wants to expand Vietjet to become the “Emirates of Asia”.

She has “always aimed big and done big deals”. “I have never done anything on a small scale,” she said of her university sideline. “When people were trading one container [of goods], I was already trading hundreds of containers.”



Linacre College is to change its name to Thao College after the donation.  
Photograph: Graham Turner/The Guardian

The donation to Linacre, which was named after the Renaissance humanist, medical scientist Thomas Linacre whom the college has described as “one of the great scholars of his time”, is the largest donation given to Oxford in at least 500 years.

Her £155m pips the previous modern-day record of £150m given by the US billionaire private equity tycoon Stephen Schwarzman in 2019 to fund a new humanities and performance space, to be called the Schwarzman Centre.

It is not the first time Oxford buildings or colleges have been renamed after donors. Harris Manchester college changed its name from Manchester College in 1996 after a donation from businessman Lord Harris.

The financier Wafic Saïd donated £70m in 1996, most of which went to the establishment of the Saïd Business School. Len Blavatnik, Ukraine-born billionaire and UK’s richest person, according to the Sunday Times, donated £75m to the university in 2015 for the construction of the Blavatnik School of Government.

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Linacre, which has already faced a barrage of criticism from academics for accepting the money and allowing the “commercialisation” of great seats of learning, said it was delighted to accept the donation as it has “long been one of the least well-endowed colleges at the university” with just [£17.7m in the bank.](#)

[Sovico’s role in various offshore oil and gas projects in the Vietnam basin](#) has also angered the Oxford University Climate Justice Campaign, which said: “We are sad to hear what Linacre’s actions have told us: that Linacre values money more than people and the planet.”

Phuong Thao and the college had anticipated that criticism. As part of the deal, Sovico has committed to reaching net zero emissions by the end of 2050 – and says it will draw on input from Oxford academics to achieve that goal.

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## 2021.11.04 - Coronavirus

- England Infection rates doubled in over-65s between September and October
- NHS Covid jabs to be compulsory for staff in England from April
- Analysis Hard line on NHS staff jabs may pay off
- Covid Virus has caused 28m years of life to be lost, study finds

## Coronavirus

# England Covid infection rates doubled in over-65s between September and October



The study found infections doubling in the oldest and most vulnerable with the sharpest rises in the south-west of England. Photograph: John Keeble/Getty Images

*[Ian Sample](#) Science editor*

*[@iansample](#)*

Wed 3 Nov 2021 20.01 EDT

Covid infection rates roughly doubled in the over-65s between September and October, according to researchers at Imperial College London who warn the virus is spreading from schoolchildren into more vulnerable age groups.

Scientists on the React-1 study analysed about 67,000 swabs taken across England between 19 and 29 October, and found higher rates of infection in

every region apart from Yorkshire and the Humber when compared to September.

While infection rates were highest among schoolchildren, with nearly 6% of 5 to 17-year-olds testing positive, the study found rises in every age group, including the oldest and most vulnerable where rates doubled to 0.8% in 65- to 74-year-olds and 0.67% in the 75s and over.

“Although the rates are much lower in these older and more vulnerable people, we did see a doubling of rates in that group and clearly that’s a worry,” said Prof Paul Elliott, director of the React study. “It’s driven from young school age but going right across the population.”

The study, which analyses swabs from a representative group of people in the community whether they have symptoms or not, recorded its highest overall infection rate ever for England, at 1.72%. The study launched in May 2020, however, after the spring wave that year, and because of a pause in data taking, missed the peak of last winter’s wave.

By far the sharpest rise in cases between September and October was seen in the south-west, home to the 10 lower tier local authorities with the highest rates in the country. According to the study, prevalence of the infection almost quadrupled from 0.59% in September to 2.18% in October in areas around Bristol, Swindon and Gloucester.

Elliott said the study could not explain why cases had surged in the south-west, but added that the rise might be related to [issues at the Immensa lab](#) which issued [tens of thousands of false negative](#) test results in the region, leading infected people to believe they were safe to mingle. The UK Health Security Agency is investigating how the lab failed to spot the problem before the public did.

Genome sequencing of some of the virus samples revealed that the newly emerged relative of the Delta variant known as [AY.4.2 is spreading faster than the original](#) Delta variant. The AY.4.2 variant made up only 4.6% of cases in the September round of the React study, but rose to 10.3% in the latest October analysis. “It is slowly increasing and the UK Health Security

Agency is keeping a watching brief on that,” said Prof Graham Cooke, a member of the team.

Towards the end of October, the study shows that infection rates began to fall across the country, including in the south-west, but the researchers stress that the decline coincides with the school half-term break when children mix far less than during term time. Further rises were still “very possible”, said Cooke.

This article was amended on 4 November 2021. An earlier version referred to the Immensa lab issuing “tens of thousands of false positive test results”; that should have said false negative test results.

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**NHS**

## Covid jabs to be compulsory for NHS staff in England from April



Many NHS staff groups are opposed to compulsory vaccination, fearing it will lead to an exodus from the profession. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

*[Denis Campbell](#) Health policy editor*

Wed 3 Nov 2021 12.22 EDT

Covid vaccination is to be made compulsory for the NHS's 1.45 million staff in England, despite criticism that forcing frontline personnel to get jabbed is heavy-handed and will lead some to quit.

However, the tough new approach will not come into force until April, after Sajid Javid heeded warnings that introducing it soon could lead to an exodus of staff during the winter, the health service's busiest time of year.

An announcement is due imminently, the Guardian understands.

The health secretary appears to have been influenced by NHS Providers and the NHS Confederation, the two organisations that represent NHS trusts in England, strongly advising him to delay implementing the move until next year.

On Monday, Chris Hopson, the chief executive of NHS Providers, said that while a majority of hospital bosses backed jabs becoming compulsory, more than 90% of them feared it could exacerbate the understaffing that is already endemic across the service.

He highlighted “the potential loss of those staff who don’t take the vaccine when the service is already under huge pressure and carrying 93,000 vacancies”. He said: “The government must recognise the risk of losing unvaccinated frontline staff and support efforts to maximise voluntary take-up first.”

The latest NHS figures show that 90% of NHS personnel in England – 1,303,605 out of 1,452,256 – have had two doses of vaccine. However, as recently as September the figure was as low as 78% – barely three out of four – in some trusts.

One senior NHS source said: “Given the NHS is a horror show just now, with unprecedented pressure all over the place, to chuck an additional spanner in the works by making Covid jabs mandatory now would be foolhardy, and Sajid Javid isn’t a foolhardy politician.”

The policy is likely to be controversial, with many NHS staff groups opposed to it.

“We do not think that making the Covid vaccine mandatory for doctors is either necessary or proportionate. So if it’s true that the Department of [Health](#) is pressing ahead with compulsory vaccination we would be very wary,” said Prof Helen Stokes-Lampard, the chair of the Academy of Medical Royal Colleges, which represents all the UK’s doctors professionally.

“While we do think that it is the professional responsibility of doctors to get the jab, when we know that more than 92% of them have already done so, you have to ask why such a heavy-handed approach is being taken, especially when this could well lead to damaging disputes at a local or national level which would be nothing more than a distraction from the real challenges the NHS workforce is facing right now.”

The British Medical Association, the doctors’ union, last week urged Javid to delay making jabs compulsory until the Department of Health and Social Care had undertaken an impact assessment to give ministers an idea of how many staff might quit if it is introduced.

Dr Chaand Nagpaul, the BMA’s chair of council, stressed the “legal, ethical and practical implications” of pressing ahead with the policy and said that “any reduction in healthcare workers could be devastating for patient services as we face a record backlog of care and winter pressures”.

Javid has already made vaccination mandatory for care home staff in England. From Thursday 11 November, anyone working in a care home will have to prove they have been double-jabbed or face being dismissed. The most recent data suggests about 90% of the sector’s 600,000 personnel have had two doses, leaving 60,000 who have not.

Social care experts have said compulsion could lead to many thousands of staff deciding to quit, worsening already chronic shortages in the service.

Some hospitals in the US have made vaccination compulsory for their staff. Last month, two hospital groups in New Jersey [fired 238 workers](#) for refusing to comply.

[RWJBarnabasHealth](#), which runs 15 hospitals in the state, terminated the contracts of 118 personnel while [Virtua Health](#) said 120 staff had “elected to discontinue their employment” instead of getting jabbed. Neither health provider disclosed details of what types of health professionals had left over the policy.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said: “We have taken action to introduce vaccination requirements in care homes and we recently consulted on extending this further across health and other social care services. No final decisions have been made and we will set out our response in due course.

“Vaccines are safe and effective and almost four in five people in the UK have already had both jabs to protect themselves against Covid-19. It’s never too late to take up the offer and we would urge everyone who is eligible to come forward as we head into the winter months.”

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## Health policy

# Javid's hard line on making NHS staff in England get jabbed may pay off



The health secretary, Sajid Javid, says his guiding principle is patient safety, hence his insistence NHS staff should be vaccinated. Photograph: David Cliff/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Denis Campbell](#) Health policy editor*

Wed 3 Nov 2021 14.06 EDT

Forcing NHS staff in England by law to [get vaccinated against Covid-19](#) if they want to keep their jobs is another example of the sometimes radical approach being taken by a health secretary who appears not to be scared of upsetting workers on the frontline with a notably muscular insistence on pushing through policies they oppose. GPs have already discovered this with Sajid Javid's edict that they have to see in person any patient who wants a face-to-face appointment.

Ministers have been discussing the pros and cons of compulsory Covid jabs for health staff since the spring. The proposal has triggered everything from unease to alarm to outright condemnation among organisations representing [NHS](#) personnel. Many, though not all, have opposed it.

The Royal College of Nursing has “significant concerns”. The GMB has decried it as “an incredibly bad idea”. The British Medical Association has warned of the potential minefield of “legal, ethical and practical” issues involved. Hospital bosses and others have warned that the exodus of frontline workers the forced jabs could trigger would be “devastating for patient services”, especially given the health service is already short of 93,000 doctors, nurses and other staff – and especially if compulsion were to be introduced before winter, when the NHS comes under its most intense strain.

However, while controversial, the principle of compulsion is not new or unique to Britain. Other countries such as France, Italy and Greece are already telling health workers to get jabbed or risk losing their jobs, as are some hospitals in the US.

Why is Javid taking such a tough approach? People in organisations and staff groups that have discussed the proposal with the Department of [Health](#) do not sense that Javid is motivated by what they characterise as his hardman approach to the NHS, which has included threatening to sack bosses of hospitals that fail to cut the backlog of elective operations and “name and shame” GP practices that see too few patients face to face.

When in September he announced a public consultation on the plan, he stressed one guiding principle: patient safety – to “do what we can” to protect patients in hospital from getting infected with Covid by anyone treating them. “It’s so clear to see the impact vaccines have against respiratory viruses which can be fatal to the vulnerable,” he said.

The many [thousands of patients](#) who have died after succumbing to hospital-acquired Covid illustrate the risks involved in staff remaining unvaccinated. It was likely even in September that mandatory jabs would be brought in, and Javid himself said only last week that compulsion [remained the “direction of travel”](#).

About 58% of hospital chiefs support compulsion, according to a recent survey of 172 NHS trust leaders by NHS Providers. However, it also found that 90% feared it could lead to staff quitting, thereby exacerbating widespread rota gaps.

If the health secretary has indeed listened carefully to the pleas from NHS Providers and the NHS Confederation, which also represents trusts, and as a result decided to delay implementation until April 2022, that would help the health service get through the winter and also give time for the policy to settle in, and potentially change the minds of NHS staff who have so far not got vaccinated.

When mandatory jabs for care home workers were unveiled in June, trade unions and other voices in the social care sector said it could prompt many staff to leave. Almost 13,000 have. But over the same five months the proportion of care home personnel who have been double-vaccinated has risen significantly, from 71.4% to 88.5%. So compulsion works – maybe.

In an opinion piece on Tuesday [in the BMJ](#), Daniel Sokol, a barrister and expert in medical ethics, pointed out that in France “the new law on mandatory vaccination for healthcare workers led to a massive boost in vaccination rates, from 60% in July (when the new requirement was announced) to over 99% in October”.

Might the same big rise in take-up be seen among NHS staff? Javid, whose stance is backed by public opinion, seems to be gambling that it will, that the sceptics will be proved wrong and that patients will be safer as a result.

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## Coronavirus

# Covid has caused 28m years of life to be lost, study finds



A doctor treats a patient with coronavirus at a hospital in south Russia. The highest decline in life expectancy in years was in Russia. Photograph: Vitali Timkiv/AP

*[Andrew Gregory](#)* Health editor

Wed 3 Nov 2021 18.30 EDT

Covid has caused the loss of 28m years of life, according to the largest-ever survey to assess the scale of the impact of the pandemic.

The enormous toll was revealed in research, led by the University of Oxford, which calculated the years of life lost (YLL) in 37 countries. The study measured the number of deaths and the age at which they occurred, making it the most detailed assessment yet of the impact of Covid-19.

Alongside significant falls in life expectancy in most countries, the number of years lost from premature deaths soared. Researchers said the true toll was likely to be even higher as they did not include most countries from Asia, Africa and Latin America in the study, due to a lack of data.

### Excess years of life lost

Dr Nazrul Islam, of Oxford's Nuffield Department of Population Health, who led the study, said he and his team were "shocked" by the findings, which were published in the medical journal the BMJ.

"We had to stop at one point to go over everything," said Islam, who has himself lost relatives and colleagues to Covid. Despite having personal experience of the impact of the disease, Islam was still taken aback by the figures. "Nothing has shocked me so much in my life as the pandemic," he said.

Researchers said understanding the full impact of Covid, the worst public health crisis in a century, required not only the counting of excess deaths, but also analysing how premature those deaths were. Using the YLL measure, an international team of researchers, led by Oxford's Islam, estimated the changes in life expectancy and excess years of life lost from all causes in 2020.

They compared the observed life expectancy and years of life lost in 2020 with those that would be expected based on historical trends in 2005-19 in 37 upper-middle and high-income countries.

Between 2005 and 2019, life expectancy increased in men and women in all the countries studied. In 2020, there was a decline in life expectancy in men and women in every country except New Zealand, Taiwan, and Norway, where there was a gain in life expectancy, and Denmark, Iceland and South Korea, where no evidence of a change in life expectancy was found.

### Life expectancy

The highest decline in life expectancy in years was in Russia (-2.33 in men and -2.14 in women), the US (-2.27 in men and -1.61 in women) and

Bulgaria (-1.96 in men and -1.37 in women).

The decline in life expectancy in years in England and Wales was -1.2 in men and -0.8 in women. In Scotland, it was -1.24 in men and -0.54 in women.

In 2020, years of life lost were higher than expected in all countries except Taiwan and New Zealand, where there was a reduction in years of life lost, and Iceland, South Korea, Denmark, and Norway, where there was no evidence of a change in years of life lost.

In the remaining 31 countries, more than 222m years of life were lost in 2020, which is 28.1m more than expected (17.3m in men and 10.8m in women).

The highest excess years of life lost per 100,000 people were in Russia (7,020 in men and 4,760 in women), Bulgaria (7,260 in men and 3,730 in women) and Lithuania (5,430 in men and 2,640 in women). In England and Wales it was 2,140 in men and 1,210 in women, while in Scotland it was 2,540 in men and 925 in women.

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## 2021.11.04 - Opinion

- Yorkshire cricket's race row exposes a sport that's gone backwards
- Cop26 will be derailed unless the rich world meets its obligation to the poor
- Let's call out the Tories' behaviour for what it is: corruption
- Tories do their best to trash what remains of their reputation

## OpinionYorkshire

# Yorkshire cricket's race row exposes a sport that's gone backwards

[Mihir Bose](#)



Azeem Rafiq at bat during the Specsavers County Championship match between Middlesex and Yorkshire at Lords on 21 September 2016.  
Photograph: Dan Mullan/Getty Images

Thu 4 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

The racism that cricketer Azeem Rafiq [suffered](#) while playing for Yorkshire goes beyond the county to the very heart of the English game. It reflects the fact that, in stark contrast to football, cricket has for decades drawn a veil over racism and become less diverse, not more so.

There is, of course, a very particular [Yorkshire problem](#), which explains why Rafiq's teammates, and his club itself, might have felt that calling him the P-word was acceptable dressing-room banter. That was not the only racist banter he was subjected to. Recently, while researching my book, *The*

Impossible Dream, Rafiq told me how for about two years some of his Yorkshire teammates had called him “Rafa the kafir”. For Rafiq, a practising Muslim who has been to Mecca for hajj – the pilgrimage all Muslims are meant to do once in their lifetime – that meant he was an unbeliever and is a devastating charge. He was puzzled because none of the people calling him “kafir” were Muslims or knew anything about Islam.

What he did not know was they were using the word “kaffir” – not the Islamic “kafir”, but the term used in apartheid-era South Africa to denigrate black and brown people. Rafiq only discovered this when [Yorkshire](#) later held an investigation into his allegations that he had suffered racism. His reaction was: “Wow. How was that allowed to be my nickname? These are not guys who have come from small towns. These are guys who played international cricket, travelling the world. They knew exactly what they were saying. I didn’t have a clue.”

Things could have been different. Yorkshire, which prides itself on being “God’s own country”, could have set the standard in English cricket for being inclusive. For almost half a century since the 1950s, migrants from India, Pakistan and Bangladesh, as well as the Caribbean, had been making Yorkshire their home. They played cricket but none of them made the Yorkshire team.

Throughout the 70s and 80s, on my visits to Yorkshire, I heard two contradictory stories. The white cricketers denied there was any racism and insisted that the reason the Yorkshire team was all-white was because people of colour did not play for the right clubs – the clubs that had traditionally formed the cricket pipeline for the county team.

Asian cricketers told a story of denial and felt so aggrieved that they set up their own clubs and even their own tournament, the Quaid-e-Azam (named after the founder of Pakistan, Muhammad Ali Jinnah), which is still going. Ironically, this meant that a version of the racial segregation practised by the Raj in India was recreated in Yorkshire.

While English colonials had taken cricket to the subcontinent as part of their civilising mission, they would not allow Indians into their teams: only people of pure European blood could play, though they would compete

against other Indian teams. Eventually, a decade before the Raj ended, the English allowed a team to be formed which included people of mixed blood, Indian Christians and Jews. The team was called The Rest, which shows how the English in India saw this assorted all sorts team.

Now, in the wake of the Rafiq scandal, almost identical stories of racial divide that I had heard 40 years ago have emerged. Asian cricketers speak of how they still play in teams that are completely Asian and are not voted into the county's prestigious leagues, yet white cricketers still deny there is racism. John Brooke, the white 81-year-old president of Lightcliffe cricket club, responding to allegations of discrimination in Yorkshire league cricket, even said: "People can be abused inappropriately because they are fat, or bald. I've played in dressing rooms where there's bullying but it may be to do with people's characteristics."

That Brooke could not understand the generations-long impact of racism, or that a black or brown person cannot change their skin colour, shows that when it comes to colour there is still an enormous gulf between communities.

It could be said that [Yorkshire cricket](#) has a particular race problem. It only fielded its first ethnic-minority player in 1992, decades after other counties had done so, and in the teeth of opposition from some of its greatest players, such as Fred Trueman, who thought it was "stupid". And that cricketer was not Yorkshire-born but Sachin Tendulkar, one of India's greatest cricketers – brought in after the original choice, the white Australian Craig McDermott, was injured. However, while other cricket counties may not have had Yorkshire's rigid racial divide, the English game at the highest level has in recent years become more and more the preserve of the public school-educated players, and opportunities for people of colour have dramatically decreased.

Whereas in the 1980s or 90s there were several black players in the England squad, now there is only Jofra Archer, who learned his cricket in the West Indies, and the number of black players in county cricket has dropped by 75% since 1990. And despite the fact that Asians play recreational cricket in large numbers, in the last decade the only significant one to have made the Test team has been Moeen Ali.

The result is that, on the field of play, football – which was much more white in the 70s and 80s – is now far more representative of the country. The effect can be seen in the way footballers, both white and black, have joined the campaign against racism by taking the knee. In cricket such a bonding between black and white is impossible as there are so few people of colour in cricket dressing rooms. Against such a background, that a white Yorkshire cricketer calling his Asian teammate the P-word might be treated as banter is not surprising.

This article was amended on 4 November 2021. John Brooke is 81, not 85 as an earlier version said.

- Mihir Bose's The Impossible Dream: Can We Ever Have a Non-Racial Sports World? is to be published by Birlinn
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## OpinionCop26

# Cop26 will be derailed unless the rich world meets its obligation to the poor

[Larry Elliott](#)



Illustration: Eva Bee/The Guardian

Thu 4 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

A couple of hundred years ago Britain was not a lot different from many poor countries today. Life expectancy was low, infant mortality was high, living standards barely rose from year to year, water-borne diseases were rife. People worked long hours and life for the struggling was, as Thomas Hobbes put it, “nasty, brutish and short”.

Then the Industrial Revolution came along and Britain, followed by other countries in the world’s temperate zones, discovered the elixir of economic growth. After pretty much flatlining for more than a thousand years, incomes per head started to rise much more quickly.

Growth has resulted in shorter working weeks, longer lives and fewer people living in absolute poverty. More money has been spent on health, education and sanitation – all of it much needed. But – and there was always going to be a but – it has come at a cost. Two centuries of using fossil fuels to power economic activity with no regard for the consequences has led to global heating, which has now reached potentially catastrophic levels.

The good news from the early days of the Cop26 conference in Glasgow is that everybody admits there is a problem. The US president, Joe Biden, [gets it](#), as does the British chancellor, Rishi Sunak. President Xi Jinping of China, although he has given the talks a miss, is as cognisant of the threat as France’s Emmanuel Macron or Germany’s Angela Merkel. The big beasts of global finance know they have to pledge obeisance to carbon net zero targets even while continuing to bankroll the fossil fuel sector.

It has taken a while to get everybody on the same page – much too long, in fact – but minds are now focused in a way they weren’t 10 years ago. Climate change deniers fought a long rearguard action against the scientists but have now been seen off. That’s welcome, as is the recognition that the challenges presented by the need to restrict temperature rises to 1.5C require a different form of economics.

Even so, there's a real risk that [Cop26](#) will end in failure, and that the search for a collective approach to tackling climate crisis will end in mutual recriminations and a blame game. The reason for that is simple: rich countries want poorer countries to set more stringent targets for reducing greenhouse gas emissions; poor countries say they will do so only if the plans are consistent with poverty reduction and a narrowing of the prosperity gap with the west. Poor countries point out that the current mess is largely the result of the long-term heating of the planet by rich countries.

Global heating is a problem that has developed over time. China is responsible for 28% of new global emissions; but of the stock of greenhouse gases, countries in Europe have contributed a third and the US just under a quarter. Rich countries are suffering much less from climate breakdown than poor countries, but it is the former that have the resources to reverse it. Beijing is not going to be made the fall guy if negotiations collapse, and says it is up to the west – with its abundant wealth – to make the running.

To meet the Paris goal of 1.5C, big amounts of CO<sub>2</sub> are going to have to be eliminated each and every year between now and 2050. That will come at a cost. The US investment bank Morgan Stanley has put a [price tag of \\$50tn](#) (£37tn) on five key areas of technology – including \$20tn for the development of hydrogen power, \$14tn for solar, wind and hydro power, and \$11tn for electric vehicles.

Despite plenty of promises, financial assistance has been slow in coming. Developing countries have every right to be cynical about the [\\$130tn of financial firepower](#) to tackle the climate crisis allegedly being marshalled by the world's biggest financial companies, when past pledges of a \$100bn a year from rich countries have yet to be met.

As the UN's trade and development arm, Unctad, noted last week, adaptation costs for developing countries have doubled in the past decade as a result of inaction. "These will only rise further as temperatures increase, reaching \$300bn in 2030 and \$500bn in 2050," it said.

It's not hard to come up with suggestions for what should happen. Western countries could meet their financial obligations without delay. They could

provide deeper debt relief for the growing number of countries in distress. Trade deals could be structured to prevent countries that take action against fossil fuel companies from being sued.

One idea from the economist Avinash Persaud is that countries that have contributed most to the stock of greenhouse gases should allow investors in climate crisis projects anywhere in the world to borrow from them at the ultra-low interest rates available in the west. This cheap finance would be rolled over for as long as the project showed some minimum rate of reduction in greenhouse gases. Persaud estimates that \$500bn a year from this source could stimulate \$50tn in private investment within 15 years.

Rich countries are insisting that money is tight in the aftermath of the global pandemic, but these are the sort of sums that will be needed for the west to be taken seriously in the developing world. Telling people with next to nothing that they are not going to be able to have what we take for granted is not going to cut it.

- Larry Elliott is the Guardian's economics editor
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## OpinionConservatives

# Let's call out the Tories' behaviour for what it is: corruption

[Keir Starmer](#)



Owen Paterson, pictured in Downing Street in 2014. Photograph: ZUMA Press, Inc./Alamy

Wed 3 Nov 2021 13.20 EDT

Imagine for a moment that someone senior at your place of work was found to have been getting paid hundreds of thousands of pounds to act on behalf of outside interests. Imagine another person was found to have sexually harassed a junior member of staff.

Now imagine if, rather than slinging them out, their mates at the company decided to exonerate them and shut down the HR department instead. I think we know what we'd call it: sleaze, a cover-up, a company not fit for purpose.

But today that is precisely what the government did. Tory MPs voted to let off one of their own, Owen Paterson, after he was found by the independent standards committee to have broken lobbying rules. Two days earlier, they had allowed Rob Roberts, a Tory MP who was found to have abused his power by committing sexual misconduct, back into their party.

That the Tories are yet again wallowing in sleaze comes as no surprise. From the pathetic attempts to defend Dominic Cummings when he breached lockdown to David Cameron's rebirth as a super-lobbyist, this government has always chosen to lay down with the dogs. The blasé manner in which it acts, the Trump-like attempts to fix the system to its own benefit, the complicity of those who justify and enable it, shows that it is now, inevitably, covered in fleas.

I am sick of people skirting around calling this out for what it is: corruption. Paterson was receiving money from a private company to ask questions on its behalf. Roberts was found to have made repeated and unwanted sexual advances toward a young staffer. Both of them should be gone – neither are fit to serve as MPs. Their continued presence in the Tory party is scandalous. It will further undermine public faith in politics at a time when we should be trying to restore decency and honesty.

But the rot starts at the top. We have a prime minister whose name is synonymous with sleaze, dodgy deals and hypocrisy. This is the man who allows his ministers to breach with impunity the codes that govern public life; who thinks it should be one rule for him and his chums, another for everyone else. With his every action he signals to his MPs: do what you like. There are no consequences.

He will be wrong on that last point, though. Because eventually, politicians who thumb their nose at decent people get found out – and voted out. Last week, the prime minister was pontificating on why the Roman empire collapsed. He notably failed to mention that one of the main factors was that the people grew tired of the arrogance and corruption of their rulers. More than a decade ago, I led the prosecution of MPs over their expenses. I was struck then by the hubris of those who assumed they could never be caught and how quickly it caused public anger to escalate. I am reminded of that

again today, as Tory MPs enrich themselves while putting up taxes for working people already facing spiralling energy bills and prices in the shops.

There are a number of simple things that could be done to clean up politics, which I believe would command overwhelming public support. If I were prime minister, I would ban anyone who holds ministerial office from selling themselves to companies that want to write legislation in their own interests. It is an absurd situation that shouldn't be allowed. You can choose to be a lawmaker or a lobbyist – you can't be both. I would introduce a truly independent anti-corruption and anti-cronyism commission, to ensure we never again see a situation where Tory MPs gorge their donors on billions of pounds of taxpayer money, as they did during the Covid crisis. And I would improve transparency around public spending and government contracts through a new Office of Value for Money.

But instead of trying to sort things out, we have a government that wants to stitch things up. Its plan is to permanently weaken the structures that hold MPs to high standards. It has appointed its own man to oversee the process – a Tory MP who not long ago was the [prime minister's wife's boss](#) – and gifted itself a majority on a committee to set the new rules. It would be laughable if it wasn't so serious. The Labour party won't have anything to do with this complete and utter sham process.

What we need now is to restore public faith in our democracy, not cynically exploit it. Because long after this government has gone, we will still be living with the consequences of its flagrant disregard for honesty and accountability in high office. The sooner we get on with cleaning up our politics, the better.

- Keir Starmer is the leader of the Labour party
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The politics sketchOwen Paterson

## Tories do their best to trash what remains of their reputation

[John Crace](#)



Tory MPs' vote in favour of an amendment meant Owen Paterson avoided a six-week ban from parliament. Photograph: House of Commons/PA

Wed 3 Nov 2021 16.08 EDT

Who would have guessed?

The debate on Andrea Leadsom's amendment to set up another committee, top heavy with Tories and chaired by the inadvertently [dominatrix-friendly](#) John Whittingdale, to determine whether the committee on standards had reached the right verdict on Owen Paterson had nothing to do with many of Paterson's friends believing the committee on standards had come to the wrong one.

It was a far, far nobler thing they were doing.

All the [Conservatives](#) wanted was to improve the right of appeal for Conservative MPs found in breach of parliamentary standards. That it was taking place on the very day the Commons was supposed to be voting to impose a 30-day suspension on Paterson – something that would ordinarily have gone through on the nod – was entirely coincidental.

At least that was roughly the explanation offered by Boris Johnson to [Angela Rayner](#) at prime minister's questions.

01:54

Angela Rayner taunts PM over Owen Paterson vote – video

The thing about Owen was that he seemed spectacularly dim. Off the scale dim. So stupid that he thought Randox and Lynn's Country Foods were paying him more than 9k a month for his brilliance.

And because they quite liked him. Certainly not to seek any commercial advantage from paid advocacy.

So dim also, that it had never occurred to him that he might be able to get up in parliament or go to the media to blow the whistle on concerns of

contaminated milks and dodgy meat, rather than have a quick word in a minister's ear.

Especially when he was offering Randox and Lynn's as solutions to these problems. So dim that he was found to have breached the rules at least 14 times and still [couldn't see what he had done wrong](#) after the parliamentary commissioner on standards had repeatedly pointed it out to him.

This was also roughly the same argument that Jacob Rees-Mogg used to open the 90-minute debate as he chose to talk about the amendment as a fait accompli even before Leadsom had introduced it.

He wasn't there to judge whether Paterson had breached the rules or not. That was not within his remit. All he was asking for was that another committee might be formed that would come to a different conclusion and let Owen off.

One that would make allowances for particularly thick MPs who were seemingly unable to grasp the consequences of their actions.

Predictably there were many interventions from opposition MPs, including Jess Phillips, Angela Eagle, Caroline Lucas and Margaret Hodge, all of whom were at pains to point out the obvious.

The whole thing stank. This was as clear an example of Tory sleaze as you could hope for. The government hadn't got the result it had wanted from the investigation so it was going to set up another body who would come up with the correct one. One rule for MPs, one for the rest of the country. No wonder people's trust in politicians was so low.

Rees-Mogg was horrified that anyone could believe this of him. The whole point of making this debate a party political issue was precisely because it wasn't.

Labour were bound to vote against the amendment because they believed in the old-fashioned, tribal values of natural justice so it was important that the Tories changed the rules and [Boris Johnson](#) called a three-line whip to get his man off. And it was some kind of remainder plot as all the Tories who had

been busted by the commissioner were leavers. Or something. It's often hard to follow his train of thought as it isn't always clear there is one.

Labour's shadow leader of the Commons, Thangam Debbonaire, kept it short and sweet, pointing out that the Tories had never expressed any doubt about the probity of the system before.

Indeed they had gone out of their way to insist that [sex-pest Tory MP Rob Roberts](#) couldn't be subject to a recall petition as it would be completely wrong to change the rules retrospectively. But now apparently it was OK. Go figure.

Much of the rest of the debate passed for surreal performance art. A government doing its best to trash what remained of it and parliament's reputation, while daring the public not to notice.

We even got Leadsom claiming her new committee was politically balanced as it had more Tories on it than opposition MPs. The SNP said it wouldn't be taking up its one token seat and Labour later followed suit.

So who is going to end up on the committee is a mystery.

Presumably Mark Francois, Craig Mackinlay and the four other Tory MPs whose suspensions had been recommended by the commissioner and had signed Leadsom's amendment were free?

Not all Tories look quite so enthused about the standards coup. Peter Bottomley said he couldn't vote for it and Aaron Bell said it would be moving the goalposts – it would make a [change for Paterson from the badgers moving them](#).

Steve Baker offered the unusual insight that the new committee could make things worse for Paterson.

Chris Bryant, chair of the standards committee, wound things up. More in sorrow than in anger. The process had been absolutely transparent. It had moved at Paterson's pace. His witnesses had been heard. And he'd had right of reply at various stages along the way. It was calm, forensic and devastating.

Paterson, who had been sitting wordlessly on the Conservative benches throughout, looked as if the penny had finally dropped – and he had begun to question his innocence.

Though not enough to vote against himself. Which was just as well as the government only won its three-line whip by 18 votes. There were a few Tories that had voted against the amendment and more that had abstained. And most of those who had voted for it had done so knowing they had sold what remained of their souls.

Just when you think the government can't get much worse, it finds new ways to surprise you.

*A Farewell to Calm* by John Crace (Guardian Faber, £9.99). To support the Guardian and Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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## 2021.11.04 - Around the world

- 'Honest mistake' US strike that killed 10 Afghan civilians was legal, says Pentagon
- Hong Kong Top court rules against government bid to expand riot prosecutions
- Hands-on advice Australian health agency encourages masturbation in social media post
- Pegasus project Israeli spyware company NSO Group placed on US blacklist
- Analysis Blacklisting shows US views company as grave threat

## [Afghanistan](#)

# ‘Honest mistake’: US strike that killed Afghan civilians was legal – Pentagon



Family members of victims gather after a US drone airstrike in Kabul killed 10 civilians in Afghanistan. Photograph: Wakil Kohsar/AFP/Getty Images

*[Julian Borger](#) in Washington*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 13.07 EDT

A Pentagon investigation that found a drone strike in Kabul that [killed 10 Afghan civilians](#) was an “honest mistake” and recommended no legal or disciplinary action has been met with widespread outrage from Congress and human rights groups.

Critics said the report contributed to a culture of impunity and failed to address systemic problems in the US conduct of drone warfare, making future civilian casualties inevitable.

The victims of the 29 August strike included Zemari Ahmadi, who worked for a US-based aid organisation, and nine members of his family, including seven children. Even though the investigation by the US Air Force inspector general, Lt Gen Sami Said, found that the drone operators had confused a white Toyota Corolla at the scene with a car linked to a terrorist group and also failed to spot a child visible in surveillance footage two minutes before the strike, it found no evidence of wrongdoing.

“The investigation found no violation of law, including the law of war. Execution errors combined with confirmation bias and communication breakdowns led to regrettable civilian casualties,” the report said.

“It was an honest mistake,” Said told reporters at the Pentagon on Wednesday. “But it’s not criminal conduct, random conduct, negligence.”

Said said the high-pressure conditions surrounding the strike, and fear of an imminent attack on Kabul airport by Islamic State, contributed to the mistake. The report also said “confirmation bias” was a factor. The drone operators saw what they expected to see, assuming the white Toyota in their sights was the same as the one they had been tracking, even though it is one of the most common cars in [Afghanistan](#).

The youngest of the Ahmadi children killed in the attack was two years old. The failure to recommend any legal or disciplinary actions drew immediate allegations of impunity in the [US military](#).

“When there is no accountability for a mistake this grave and this costly, it sends a message all the way through the command structure that the killing of civilians is just an ordinary cost of war,” the Democratic senator Chris Murphy [said on Twitter](#). “This is unacceptable.”

Marc Garlasco, a former Defense Intelligence Agency analyst who is now a military adviser to a Dutch peace organisation, Pax, said the high-pressure conditions should not be used as an excuse for the blunders. “Stop saying you were under pressure. The Afghans live that every day,” he said.

Adil Haque, a Rutgers University law professor who writes extensively on the law and ethics of war, said that a fundamental problem underlying the repeated civilian casualty incidents from drone strikes was the US refusal to ratify or adopt the [first additional protocol](#) to the Geneva conventions from 1977, which dealt with the protection of victims of armed conflicts.

The protocol says warring parties have a duty to verify that people they are targeting are not civilians. The US military only acknowledges a duty to take feasible precautions in “good faith” to avoid civilian casualties.

“You shouldn’t just be asking: are their movements consistent with the hypothesis that they are an Isis operative? You want to ask: is any of this inconsistent with them just being an innocent civilian driving a Toyota Corolla?” Haque said.

“Because the US does not expressly adopt that principle, it lends itself to this unstructured collection and analysis of information that’s not asking the right questions.”

Steven Kwon, a co-founder and the president of Nutrition and Education International, Ahmadi’s employer, said: “This investigation is deeply disappointing and inadequate because we’re left with many of the same questions we started with. I do not understand how the most powerful military in the world could follow Zemari, an aid worker, in a commonly used car for eight hours, and not figure out who he was, and why he was at a US aid organisation’s headquarters.”

Hina Shamsi, the director of the National Security Project at the American Civil Liberties Union, said: “The inspector general’s main findings of error, confirmation bias, and communication breakdowns are all too common with US lethal strikes, and his recommendations do not remedy the tremendous harm here or the likelihood that it will happen again.”

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## Hong Kong

# Top Hong Kong court rules against government bid to expand riot prosecutions



Riot police detaining two men in the central district of Hong Kong in 2019.  
Photograph: Dale de la Rey/AFP/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 02.48 EDT

Hong Kong's top court has quashed attempts by the city's government to prosecute people for rioting or illegal assembly even without being present at the scene – a ruling lawyers described as a landmark.

The five-judge panel in Hong Kong's court of final appeal, headed by chief justice Andrew Cheung, unanimously rejected an earlier ruling by a lower appeal court that people, such as supporters, could be criminally liable

without being actually present under the common law doctrine of “joint enterprise”.

Criminal lawyers said Thursday’s ruling was highly significant, impacting future prosecutions, and will be closely scrutinised amid an intensifying national security crackdown in the former British colony.

“They’ve effectively raised the bar for the prosecutors – and maybe even stopped a flood of sweeping and hasty charges,” one criminal barrister said.

“That does not mean that the government won’t try to bring different charges though after going back to the drawing board.”

Activists, diplomats and the foreign business community are also closely watching court developments after Beijing’s imposition on the city of a sweeping [national security law](#) last year, with some fearing it could threaten a legal system seen as the bedrock underpinning the Asian financial hub.

Britain handed Hong Kong back to Chinese sovereignty in 1997 amid guarantees that its social and commercial freedoms – and separate legal system – would be maintained under a “one country/two systems” formula.

Both Chinese and Hong Kong officials said the new security law was vital to stop any future violent movements from exploiting the city’s freedoms.

The appeal, in part, was brought by Tong Wai-hung, who was earlier acquitted of rioting in July 2019 – one of more than 10,000 people arrested during months of sometimes-violent anti-government protests that rocked Hong Kong that year.

While Hong Kong’s department of justice did not seek to overturn Tong’s acquittal they won an earlier appeal to show that a person’s presence at a riot or illegal assembly was not necessary for a conviction, under the “joint enterprise” doctrine.

In Thursday’s judgment, the appeal court panel noted the “taking part” was key to both the public order offences of rioting and illegal assembly, and could not be overridden by the joint enterprise doctrine.

“Both offences are participatory in nature,” it said. “There is no requirement for the persons taking part to share some extraneous common purpose.”

It also said that those offenders – both present and absent – who encouraged, promoted or organised criminal assemblies could be still be guilty of different and more serious offences, such as conspiracy or incitement.

Court of appeal judges earlier approved Tong’s demand to question their ruling, saying the question had “far reaching implications for the prosecution of the offences of riot and illegal assembly in the future.”

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## Queensland

# ‘Give yourself a hand’: Queensland Health encourages masturbation in cheeky social media post



Humorous comments flooded Queensland Health’s Facebook post about the benefits of masturbation with authorities saying they were prepared for a large public response. Photograph: Facebook

*[Donna Lu](#)  
[@donnadlu](#)*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 00.09 EDT

Queensland authorities surprised their Facebook followers with some “pleasurable” health advice on Thursday.

On its official [Facebook](#) page, Queensland Health shared a post about masturbation, which was accompanied by brightly coloured infographics detailing its health benefits.

“Give yourself a hand,” the post began, with a hand and winking emojis.

“Masturbation is a normal and healthy part of a person’s sexual experience and a great way to discover what you are comfortable with. The best part is, it’s for everyone – and also offers a wealth of health and sexual health benefits!”

“It’s important for us all to work towards normalising sex-positive messages about masturbation to reduce associated feelings of shame and fear, and improve overall sexual health and literacy.”

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Humorous comments in response to the post came thick and fast: “In these hard times we need to all pull together,” someone wrote. “Someone’s left the work experience kid by himself at Qld [Health](#),” another comment read.

“Gives the slogan ‘arm yourself’ a new meaning,” said another, a reference to the federal government’s “[arm yourself against Covid-19](#)” vaccination campaign.

Another: “Just brilliant! I wonder when all the funny comments will reach a climax?”

An article accompanying the Facebook post linked to [peer-reviewed research](#) that has found a correlation between masturbation and positive body image [in women](#), and that orgasms may help reduce menstrual cramping.

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It also provided recommendations for how to broach the subject with young people.

A Queensland Health spokesperson told Guardian Australia the aim of the post was to reduce the stigma associated with masturbation, communicate the health benefits, and share advice to parents on how to talk to their children.

“Since masturbation is often considered a taboo subject and this is the first time we have spoken about it on social media, our team was prepared for the large public response and for people to be shocked.”

“It’s been great to see that the majority of responses have been positive, and that it is generating healthy conversation,” the spokesperson said.

“We also wanted to encourage healthy conversations between our younger followers because we know talking about masturbation naturally flows into conversations on sexual health, self-care and consent.”

“Research shows the majority of young people get their sexual health information from online sources and feel shame and embarrassment when talking about masturbation and sex with friends and family. Unfortunately, many of these online sources are unreliable and aren’t reviewed or created by experts clinicians.”

According to 2014 data from the [Australian Study of Health and Relationships](#), conducted once a decade, 72% of men and 42% of women reported masturbating in the previous year.

The study’s lead author, Prof Juliet Richters, said the sex differences in masturbation prevalence and frequency were consistent across many studies.

The research found masturbation was relatively uncommon among younger women, a “disappointing” finding “as it is generally agreed to have benefits for women in learning about their own bodies and negotiating more rewarding sexual practice with partners.”

Richters, an honorary professor in sexual health at the University of New South Wales, said: “The idea that masturbation is in some way wrong or bad for you – it’s decades since that has no longer been thought by anyone in health or medicine.”

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## US foreign policy

# Israeli spyware company NSO Group placed on US blacklist



The US said it had ‘reasonable cause to believe … [NSO] has been involved in activities contrary to the foreign policy and national security interests of the US.’ Photograph: Joel Saget/AFP/Getty Images

*[Stephanie Kirchgaessner](#) in Washington*

*@skirchy*

Wed 3 Nov 2021 15.53 EDT

NSO Group has been placed on a US blacklist by the [Biden administration](#) after it determined the Israeli spyware maker has acted “contrary to the foreign policy and national security interests of the US”.

The finding by the commerce department represents a major blow to the Israeli company and reveals a deep undercurrent of concern by the US about the impact of spyware on national security.

The company's signature spyware – known as Pegasus – is alleged to have been deployed by foreign governments against dissidents, journalists, diplomats and members of the clergy, with [several alleged victims in the UK](#). Its clients have included Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Hungary and India.

The new designation – which places NSO in the company of hackers from China and Russia – comes three months after [a consortium of journalists](#) working with the French non-profit group Forbidden Stories, revealed multiple cases of journalists and activists who were hacked by foreign governments using the spyware, including American citizens.

The Guardian and other members of the consortium also revealed that [the mobile numbers of Emmanuel Macron, the French president, and nearly his entire cabinet](#) were contained on a leaked list of individuals who were selected as possible targets of surveillance.

“Today’s action is a part of the Biden-Harris administration’s efforts to put human rights at the center of [US foreign policy](#), including by working to stem the proliferation of digital tools used for repression,” the commerce department said in a statement.

The commerce department said it included NSO – as well as three other companies – on the so-called “entity list” because it had “reasonable cause to believe, based on specific and articulated facts, that the entity has been involved, or is involved, or poses a significant risk of being or becoming involved in activities that are contrary to the national security or foreign policy interests of the United States”.

In effect, it means that NSO will be barred from buying parts and components from US companies without a special licence. It also puts a cloud over the sale of the company’s software globally, including in the US.

The commerce department said that “investigative information” had shown NSO and another Israeli surveillance company called Candiru had developed and supplied spyware to foreign governments that used this tool

to “maliciously target government officials, journalists, businesspeople, activists, academics, and embassy workers”.

NSO has said that its spyware is used by foreign government clients to target serious criminals. It has denied that any of its clients ever targeted Macron or any French government officials.

But in the weeks that followed the publication of the Pegasus project, [Israeli officials met with counterparts in the US and France](#) to discuss allegations of abuse of the technology.

Israel has long claimed it maintains robust oversight over any weapon sales to foreign governments. But following the publication of the Pegasus Project this summer and its diplomatic fallout, Israeli officials – both in public and private – have appeared to distance the government from private weapons companies.

Yair Lapid, the country’s foreign minister, said in September that the government had only limited control on how defence exports are used. He added: “We are going to look at this again.”

When Pegasus – NSO’s signature spyware – is deployed, it can intercept phone conversations and texts, as well as photographs and any other material on a phone. It can also turn a phone into a listening device.

An NSO spokesperson said: “NSO Group is dismayed by the decision given that our technologies support US national security interests and policies by preventing terrorism and crime, and thus we will advocate for this decision to be reversed.

“We look forward to presenting the full information regarding how we have the world’s most rigorous compliance and human rights programs that are based on the American values we deeply share, which already resulted in multiple terminations of contacts with government agencies that misused our products.”

A spokesperson for the Israeli embassy in London did not immediately return a request for comment.

The Biden administration's move represents a victory for researchers at Citizen Lab and Amnesty International, who have documented multiple cases of alleged human rights abuses using spyware dating back to 2016. The research has been heavily criticised by NSO but the Biden administration's decision has, in effect, vouched for the researchers' findings.

"With this move, the US government has acknowledged what Amnesty and other activists have been saying for years: NSO Group's spyware is a tool of repression which has been used around the world to violate human rights," said Danna Ingleton, deputy director of Amnesty Tech. "This decision sends a strong message to NSO Group that it can no longer profit from human rights abuses without repercussions."

It also marks a step forward for US technology companies such as WhatsApp and Microsoft, who have said spyware made by NSO threatens the safety of their users.

WhatsApp, which is suing NSO in a US court following allegations that the technology was used to target 1,400 of its users in 2019, said the administration's decision was "an important step in protecting people's private communication and personal safety".

"We're grateful to see the US government stand up for human rights and hope to see more nations act to protect people's ability to have private conversations online," said a WhatsApp spokesperson, Carl Woog. NSO has denied it was responsible for attacks on WhatsApp users and is seeking to have the matter dismissed.

There was no immediate indication that the UK would follow the US in condemning NSO.

*Additional reporting by Oliver Holmes*

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## US national security

# US blacklisting of NSO Group shows view of major technology company as a grave threat



A branch of the Israeli NSO Group company, near the southern Israeli town of Sapir. Photograph: Sebastian Scheiner/AP

*[Stephanie Kirchgaessner](#) in Washington*

*@skirchy*

Wed 3 Nov 2021 14.57 EDT

The US commerce department's blacklist is usually reserved for America's worst enemies, such as Chinese companies that have been accused of aiding human right abuses, and Russians who proliferate biological and chemical weapons programmes.

But on Wednesday, [Israel's NSO Group joined their ranks](#), marking a rare decision by the Biden administration to include a major technology company

that is closely regulated by the Israeli government on its list of entities that threaten US national security.

Also included on the list was another Israeli surveillance company, Candiru, whose technology was recently alleged by researchers at Citizen Lab, working in conjunction with Microsoft, to have been used by its foreign government clients to target members of civil society with “untraceable” spyware.

The US government said the two companies were added to the list because of evidence that they had “developed and supplied spyware to foreign governments that used these tools to maliciously target government officials, journalists, businesspeople, activists, academics and embassy workers”.

NSO Group has long held that its spyware does not infect US users over US networks, and that its signature spyware, called Pegasus, is only meant to target serious criminals.

But the move by the administration – which according to Axios gave Israel just an hour’s notice before announcing its move – underlines that the US government sees NSO and its capabilities as creating a grave threat.

John Scott-Railton, a senior researcher at Citizen Lab at the University of Toronto, which has documented dozens of allegations of abuse involving NSO spyware’s use against journalists and members of civil society, said the placement of NSO on the blacklist would have an immediate “chilling effect”.

“This is not a list you want to be on,” Scott-Railton said.

In addition to the long list of journalists and activists who have allegedly been hacked by foreign governments using the spyware, the mobile phone of a senior US diplomat, Robert Malley, [was also contained on a leaked list of individuals selected as possible targets of surveillance by NSO clients](#). So too were senior French ministers and officials, including France’s president, Emmanuel Macron.

NSO has staunchly denied that any US or French officials have been targeted by its clients.

“It’s a harsh step but I assume it’s because the Israelis weren’t getting the message on the need for them to back NSO off,” said James Lewis, senior vice-president and director of the strategic technologies program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies.

The question now is what effect the US move will have – given how strategically important the surveillance industry is to Israel, one of the world’s largest exporters of spyware and similar tools. Technically, NSO’s inclusion on the so-called Entity List means that the company requires a special license to use any US-originating technology in its services.

“NSO will go away. Maybe the Israelis will quietly tell their companies to cool it. But it’s too important a market for them,” Lewis said.

But the implications are deeper than the technical restrictions. Foreign governments – especially in Europe – who use NSO spyware will now be knowingly working with a company that is seen by the [Biden administration](#) as a threat to US interests. That conclusion is based on a unanimous committee of US agencies, which includes the departments of state, defense, energy and – in some cases – the US treasury.

It also raises alarms for the company’s investors, including the largest single investor in the fund that owns NSO: the Oregon public pension fund. A spokesperson for the fund declined to comment.

NSO said it was “dismayed” by the news and would challenge the findings. Rod Rosenstein, the former deputy attorney general who serves as a lawyer for NSO, did not comment on whether he would continue to represent the company.

Nazak Nikakhtar, a former commerce department official who now serves as a partner at the Washington DC law firm Wiley Rein, said the move to add NSO to the US blacklist showed the US had become “hyper-vigilant” on issues around surveillance and cyber attacks, even when they involve nations that are allies.

Nikakhtar said it was likely that the decision had been based on a US intelligence report that traced “significant actions” to the company. “One bad act can trigger it, if it’s significant enough,” she added.

“We may not always be able to bring these perpetrators to justice or bring a prosecution against them. This designation is another tool the US government has to go after those and to penalize the company,” she said. “The reputational harm is significant.”

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**Nadhim Zahawi**

## **Nadhim Zahawi admits errors made over Owen Paterson affair**

01:04

'It was a mistake': Nadhim Zahawi admits errors made over Owen Paterson affair – video

*Matthew Weaver*

Fri 5 Nov 2021 08.22 EDT

The education secretary, Nadhim Zahawi, has accepted the government committed errors in its attempt to save the former minister [Owen Paterson](#) from suspension, but denied the debacle called into question the prime minister's judgment.

In a broadcast round, Zahawi accepted it was a “mistake” to try to link overhauling the standards system that had found Paterson guilty of paid advocacy with a parliamentary attempt to preventing him facing the punishment of suspension.

He admitted to not reading the standards committee’s report into Paterson’s conduct before voting in favour of overhauling the system.

Speaking to Sky News, he said: “The prime minister has always been very clear that paid lobbying is not allowed. The mistake is the conflation of creating a fairer system with the right of appeal for parliamentarians to be able to put forward an appeal process.

“Conflating that with the particular case of Owen Paterson was a mistake and I think the leader of the house, Jacob Rees-Mogg, came to the house yesterday ... upon reflection, yes it was a mistake, and I think it was right to come back very quickly to the house and say we need to separate these things out.”

[Paterson resigned](#) as MP for North Shropshire after the government ditched its plan to set up a new standards panel.

On BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Friday, Zahawi denied Johnson was trying to head off a potential investigation by the [standards commissioner](#), [Kathryn Stone](#), into the financing of the decoration of his Downing Street flat. Zahawi said it was "absolutely not true" that the new system that the government was forced to ditch was a "pre-emptive strike" against Stone.

He said: "That is absolutely not true, and Kathryn Stone and her duties are the responsibility of the [House of Commons](#), and the Speaker of the House."

Zahawi also defended his cabinet colleague Kwasi Kwarteng over his [suggestion on Thursday](#) that Stone should consider her position. Before the U-turn over the new committee to examine Paterson's case, Kwarteng said Stone should "decide [on] her position".

Zahawi told Sky: "I don't think Kwasi was saying anything different that Kathryn Stone has a responsibility to the legislature."

He added: "I think it's important to remind all parliamentarians and the country as a whole that Kathryn Stone works for the house, for the legislature, and I think it's only right that I echo the words of the Speaker by saying that it is up to the house how the commissioner and the procedures are delivered."

He admitted on BBC Breakfast to not reading Stone's report into Paterson, and appeared to take on trust his colleague's claims of innocence. "Owen says that much of it is contested, right?" he said. Referring to supportive witness statements published in the report, Zahawi added: "I think something like 14 people have sent statements [saying] that it is contested."

Zahawi reiterated the government's determination to change the system, but with cross-party support. He said: "The important thing to remember is that parliament as the legislative chamber of our country has absolutely the right to look at and improve the system."

Zahawi said the issue of the [Downing Street flat](#) had been looked at by Johnson's own ministerial standards adviser, Lord Geidt, "and the prime minister was found not to have broken any ministerial code".

He added: "I think it was looked at by Lord Geidt, it's a ministerial declaration and I think that's the correct way of doing this. We have very good robust processes. We always want to improve them, but I think that's the correct way of doing it."

He also denied that the government's handling of Paterson's case called into question Johnson's judgment. "I think actually it says that the prime minister, when wanting to be following a process that makes the system fairer ... wanted to do that.

"And very quickly realising that that's one thing that we should pursue on a cross-party basis and we'll come forward with proposals, and I hope, we can sort of set our politics aside and create a fairer system, because right of appeal, I think, is important, and your listeners will see that as important."

Zahawi avoided questions about whether Paterson had breached the parliamentary code. Asked on Sky News whether he believed his colleague did anything wrong, Zahawi said: "The commissioner had investigated and had come back on the investigation around what Owen Paterson was doing in terms of his work for two companies."

On the government's U-turn, he said: "We have to take collective responsibility as parliamentarians. It's a process that parliamentarians voted for."

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[\*\*Politics live with Andrew Sparrow\*\*](#)

[\*\*Politics\*\*](#)

# **UK politics: Labour demands investigation over Boris Johnson's free luxury holiday – as it happened**

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## Owen Paterson

# Tories engulfed in sleaze crisis after U-turn and Owen Paterson resignation



Owen Paterson, whose case led to an attempt to overhaul parliament's anti-sleaze regime. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

*[Heather Stewart](#), [Robert Booth](#) and [Aubrey Allegretti](#)*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 16.35 EDT

Boris Johnson was engulfed in a sleaze crisis following a humiliating government U-turn that saw veteran Tory MP Owen Paterson [resign from parliament](#) after Downing Street ditched a bid to shield him from lobbying claims.

Tory MPs reacted with fury after Johnson withdrew his backing from Paterson, less than 24 hours after ordering them to support a controversial amendment tearing up House of Commons anti-sleaze rules to protect him.

Shortly afterwards, the former Northern Ireland secretary said he would step aside rather than face a 30-day suspension and the prospect of a by-election in his North Shropshire constituency, saying, “I will remain a public servant but outside the cruel world of politics.”

“The last two years have been an indescribable nightmare for my family and me. My integrity, which I hold very dear, has been repeatedly and publicly questioned,” Paterson said.

Backbench Conservative MPs, many of whom had reluctantly supported the government’s extraordinary bid to reopen Paterson’s case on Wednesday, reacted with anger, calling it an “own goal” and “a masterclass in how to turn a minor local crisis into a disaster”.

Many questioned the judgment of the prime minister for failing to anticipate the scale of disquiet among his own MPs – or the fact that Downing Street’s bid to set up a cross-party committee to revisit Paterson’s case would be rejected by the opposition.

Johnson’s U-turn came shortly after the chair of the committee on standards in public life described the government’s behaviour as “a very serious and damaging moment for parliament and public standards in this country”.

Jonathan Evans, a crossbench peer and former director general of the Security Service, said the proposal to revisit anti-sleaze rules, which was backed by the full force of the government’s whips on Wednesday, was an “extraordinary proposal … deeply at odds with the best traditions of British democracy” and described it as “[as an attack on standards](#)”.

Former Conservative chief whip Mark Harper, who voted against the motion on Wednesday together with 12 colleagues, described this week’s events as “one of the most unedifying episodes I have seen in my 16 years as a member of parliament”.

“My colleagues should not have been instructed, from the very top, to vote for this,” he added.

After revelations in a 2019 Guardian investigation, [an investigation by parliamentary standards commissioner](#) Kathryn Stone found that Paterson repeatedly approached ministers and officials on behalf of two companies that were paying him more than £100,000.

The former Northern Ireland secretary has continued to protest his innocence – including in a series of interviews after Wednesday’s vote, in which he said he intended to clear his name.

Andrea Leadsom’s amendment, [passed on Wednesday at the behest of Downing Street](#), would have set up a cross-party committee chaired by former Tory cabinet minister John Whittingdale. But that idea foundered once Labour leader Keir Starmer said on Wednesday his party would not participate.

After Paterson’s resignation, Starmer said, “This has been an unbelievable 24 hours even by this government’s chaotic standards.

“Boris Johnson must now apologise to the entire country for this grubby attempt to cover up for the misdemeanour of his friend. This isn’t the first time he’s done this but it must be the last. And [Boris Johnson](#) must explain how he intends to fix the immense harm he has done to confidence in the probity of him and his MPs.”

He had earlier called Johnson’s attempt to prevent Paterson’s suspension “corruption,” and accused him of “leading his troops through the sewer”.

Amid reports from Conservative MPs that furious constituents had been emailing to raise the issue with them, Lib Dem leader Ed Davey said Johnson had “underestimated the British people and how badly this would go down, including among many lifelong Conservative voters.

“It just shows that the [Conservatives](#) are taking people for granted. The public wants decency and honesty from their government, instead under Boris Johnson all they get is lies, chaos and cronyism,” he said.

Several Tory MPs questioned the role of the chief whip Mark Spencer in the debacle, with one saying it would “make people think twice before trusting

the whips,” adding, “why take heaps of abuse for defending an unpopular government decision only for it to change its mind the next day?”

One frontbencher called the U-turn a “fucking disgrace and huge party mismanagement”. “Another day, another unforced error,” sighed another.

Asked whether Johnson continued to have full confidence in Spencer, the prime minister’s official spokesperson said: “yes”. A Downing Street source insisted last night: “we’re sticking foursquare behind the chief [whip]”.

One junior frontbencher, Michael Gove’s parliamentary private secretary, Angela Richardson, was sacked on Wednesday night after rebelling against the three-line whip by abstaining – only to be reinstated on Thursday morning.

Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng was sent out to defend the government’s position in a series of interviews on Thursday morning, just hours before his colleague Jacob Rees-Mogg admitted it had been a mistake to conflate calls for reform of the standards system with an individual case.

The prime minister said he was “very sad” that Paterson had decided to step down.

“He has had a distinguished career, serving in two cabinet positions, and above all he has been a voice for freedom – for free markets and free trade and free societies – and he was an early and powerful champion of Brexit,” Johnson said in a statement.

“I know that this must have been a very difficult decision but I can understand why – after the tragic circumstances in which he lost his beloved wife Rose – he has decided to put his family first.”

Chris Bryant MP, chair of the committee on standards, said: “The last few days have been regrettable and could all have been avoided if the proper processes were followed all along. Ultimately, Mr Paterson made the right decision in resigning.”

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## House of Commons

# ‘Absolute madness’: circus around an MP that riled the Commons



Owen Paterson’s breach of lobbying rules features on a poster stuck to a waste bin in Whitchurch, part of his former constituency in Shropshire.  
Photograph: Andrew Fox/The Guardian

*[Aubrey Allegretti](#)*

*[@breeallegretti](#)*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 17.47 EDT

It was while walking through the Commons lobby to vote to save their colleague, [Owen Paterson](#), from immediate suspension after breaching lobbying rules that the reality dawned for many Tory MPs that they could be making a grave mistake.

“This is absolute madness,” a minister said, as the MPs begrudgingly carried out an order by No 10 and the whips’ office to block the sanction of Owen Paterson that would have potentially left him facing a byelection.

When the tricky issue of Paterson's possible suspension reared its head last week, few expected the situation to end as it did. A two-year investigation into the North Shropshire MP by the standards commissioner and committee concluded that he should be banned from the Commons for 30 days.

Most Tories agreed it was a tricky position. Either they created a massive rift in the party by choosing to send down one of their own, or they stuck together and proceeded down a dangerous path risking allegations of "sleaze".

The vote was scheduled for Wednesday, and Paterson, his allies and the government set about devising a plan to spare him by creating a new committee chaired by a Tory MP to reconsider the case, and review the entire sanction system. Most keenly, they wanted politicians who felt wrongly adjudicated against to be able to appeal against the decision.

Other ideas were discussed that involved limiting Paterson's suspension. But these were rejected by the MP, who was steadfast in the belief that he deserved no punishment.

Bernard Jenkin was one of the four standards committee members in the Conservative party, but he recused himself from the investigation because he was a personal friend of Paterson, and his wife had been equally close to Paterson's wife, who died in 2020. He was said by colleagues to have worked the hardest behind the scenes to help Paterson.

The deadline for tabling amendments to motions was around 7pm on Tuesday. Much deliberation had gone into whose name should be top of the amendment. It was decided that Paterson or one of his close allies such as Jenkin being listed as the proposer would look too much like a stitch-up. So the former business secretary Andrea Leadsom was called upon.

Leadsom, one of the organisers said, had "the veneer of respectability" – a former Commons leader who was well-respected by Tory and opposition MPs for her work in strengthening the system set up for investigating MPs accused of bullying and harassment.

She was called, on Tuesday afternoon, to the office of the chief whip, Mark Spencer, and accepted the suggestion that she should propose a new committee to reform the standards system.

She was given a word document with the text of the amendment, but to avoid appearing to let Paterson off the hook, insisted on a hard deadline for the committee to report by – February 2022. Meanwhile, the former culture secretary [John Whittingdale](#) was lined up to chair the committee. Though given he was isolating with Covid-19 he was not able to attend any in-person discussions.

One senior Tory claimed the Downing Street aide Henry Newman was crucial in pushing for the move to protect Paterson. Iain Duncan Smith, the former Conservative leader, worked particularly hard lobbying the 2019 intake of Tory MPs, who were less likely to know Paterson. “I’m going to be putting my neck on the line for someone who literally wouldn’t recognise me in a corridor,” one grumbled.

As the deadline for tabling amendments drew near Jenkin was in a state of agitation. Tory whips began ringing MPs and asking if they would back it, and later that evening – after the chief whip called Boris Johnson to assure him they had the numbers – the prime minister agreed to go ahead with the plan.

When the Leadsom amendment finally went in at 6pm, frantic conversations began in the Table Office responsible for receiving submissions for inclusion on the order paper.

After some tweaks the clerks pronounced it was “in order”, meaning it was able to be submitted. “One hurdle down,” a Paterson supporter said, cautiously. There was then a nervous wait overnight as the Speaker and more clerks decided whether the amendment should be selected. At 11:15am on Wednesday, the white smoke came.

Minutes later, a message was texted to Tory MPs telling them they faced a three-line whip. Many frantically skim-read the report, raising fresh concerns with their whips and saying they still believed Paterson was guilty.

Some said that, despite reservations, they thought the standards system needed reform and so prepared to back the amendment, if grudgingly.

“He wasn’t being paid £100,000 just for his good looks, was he?” one MP said wryly, at around 2pm. The pressure continued to build as the slew of emails pouring in from outraged constituents gathered pace in the final hours before the vote. An anxious MP admitted: “My inbox is in meltdown. I know the usual suspects – the messages I’m getting aren’t coming from them.”

When the division bells rang just 247 Tories traipsed through the “aye” lobby in a total of 361. Ministers grumbled loudly about how they had been told to vote for a measure meant to provide “natural justice” they thought might do the opposite in Paterson’s case. Missing were several other ministers given permission to be away from the vote because they were meant to be on trips outside Westminster, but who were in fact hiding in their offices. Most were genuinely away on business.

As the result was read out, shivers were sent down the government frontbench as they realised the vote had only been won with a majority of 18. Cries of “shame” echoed around the chamber from furious opposition politicians who vowed to boycott the new committee, and comprehension dawned on the chief whip that the situation was unsustainable.

Depressed Tory MPs slunk off into the night, as their inboxes filled further with angry emails. One who reluctantly voted for the amendment said: “I really regret it.”

The recriminations were swift. Angela Richardson was sacked as a parliamentary private secretary to Michael Gove’s levelling up department, after refusing to follow the whips’ instructions and instead abstaining.

Alarm bells started ringing at No 10. The ever media-conscious prime minister would have been worried by the negative newspaper front pages that were landing that evening. “Shameless MPs sink back into sleaze,” proclaimed the Daily Mail.

Paterson's series of interviews that evening only made matters worse. "He was acting like he'd got away with it," a Tory observer noted.

The difficulty of reforming the standards system without cross-party consensus became increasingly obvious. Doubts grew among Leadsom and Whittingdale. They hoped the opposition boycott threats were just bluster. But that was not borne out.

Jenkin kept pushing, however, saying the committee would be fine because it could still be a quorate with only Conservative members. But his continued confidence was not shared by senior government figures. By Thursday morning, Johnson and Spencer had accepted that a massive mistake had been made.

While ministers were still out on the airwaves [defending the previous night's events](#), the Commons leader, Jacob Rees-Mogg, prepared to make a humiliating climbdown at the same despatch box he had stood at more than 12 hours earlier defending the amendment.

At the weekly business questions Rees-Mogg admitted the new committee to scrutinise Paterson and the whole standards system could not work without buy-in from the other parties. Peter Bone, a veteran Tory backbencher, also revealed that overnight his constituency office in Wellingborough had been vandalised, with the words "Tory sleaze".

Despite the high levels of anger the night before by those who felt strong-armed into supporting Paterson, it was nothing compared to the wave of fury unleashed when MPs realised it had all been in vain.

One said she had "been flung under a bus for one man" and asked "was it worth it?" Another, reeling just minutes after the U-turn, called it a "fucking disgraceful" situation and criticised the "huge party mismanagement" by the whips. Richardson was reinstated as Gove's PPS.

Realising the game was up, Paterson announced on Thursday afternoon he would resign as an MP. It was reported that he had had the rug pulled from under his feet and was given no notice of Rees-Mogg's statement, and had

instead been told by a reporter who had phoned him for his reaction while he was out shopping.

But Downing Street insisted he had been told before the extraordinary U-turn was announced. Leadsom escaped to Cop26 in Glasgow and Johnson released a tribute to Paterson that evening, saying he was “very sad” his friend and colleague for decades was leaving parliament.

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## 2021.11.05 - Spotlight

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‘There are millions of dollars at stake and that’s what guides the ship’ ... Andrew Garfield on playing Spider-Man. Photograph: Jason Bell/Camera Press

## **Andrew Garfield: ‘I don’t think I present as goody-goody’**

‘There are millions of dollars at stake and that’s what guides the ship’ ... Andrew Garfield on playing Spider-Man. Photograph: Jason Bell/Camera Press

by [Ryan Gilbey](#)

Fri 5 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

Andrew Garfield is smiling beatifically and clasping his hands together as if in prayer. The pose suits an actor who has cornered the market in the holy and heroic, from [a Jesuit priest in Silence](#) to a Seventh-day Adventist saving lives on the battlefield in [Hacksaw Ridge](#); from a man left paralysed by polio in [Breathe](#) to a credulous innocent who dies surrendering his organs in

[Never Let Me Go](#). He is a remarkable actor, but watch too many of his movies back to back and you are liable to hear celestial trumpets.

His prayer-like gesture of gratitude comes in response to my promise not to ask whether he and his fellow former web-slinger Tobey Maguire will be appearing in the new [Spider-Man: No Way Home](#). “I appreciate that,” says the 38-year-old, speaking over Zoom from Calgary, where he is shooting the murder-and-Mormons series Under the Banner of Heaven. There seems no point posing the Spidey question when he has greeted each identical inquiry this year with a display of shrugging bafflement that may or may not be genuine. (Let’s see when the movie opens next month.)

Besides, there is enough to discuss without speculating about projects in which he may not even appear. Mainstream, the first of his three new movies, is a kind of [Network for the internet age](#). Garfield plays a street-corner situationist who becomes a superstar when a video of him haranguing shoppers while dressed as a rat goes viral. He also howls at the moon, pretends to be a ninja and runs through Los Angeles naked but for a giant prosthetic penis. The film couldn’t be any wackier if people started vomiting emojis. Oh wait, they do.

Such exuberance may be in short supply today, he warns me. “A few of us went up a mountain yesterday. It was an insane 11-mile climb, so now I’m slightly not-a-person.” He is slumped on a sofa, his notoriously sculptural hair nowhere to be seen; in a classic can’t-be-arsed move, he is hiding his locks under a baseball cap. But if this is him on half-speed, it is still impressive. Just wind him up and watch him go.

Take the subject of Mainstream. “I had a lot of fun creating a really extreme character and I haven’t had a chance to hang out in those regions of myself – the ego and the id – in such an extreme kind of uncensored and shadowy, dark way, so what was appealing was that I got to go to very outlandish, outrageous, unlikable – or not even that, beyond likability or unlikability; that wasn’t even a consideration. It was attempting to reach the places that great liberated artists like Kanye West can sometimes get to, where he just goes beyond any form of delineation or box-making or pigeon-holing; it just

*is, it's that id place, those pure unconscious primal urges.”* Splendid. Now breathe.

Even admirers of Mainstream won’t be expecting it to figure in the Oscars race, whereas it will be a pity if Garfield isn’t nominated for one of the other two. In Lin-Manuel Miranda’s adaptation of Jonathan Larson’s musical Tick, Tick … Boom!, Garfield hurls himself into the role of that frantic, gifted playwright, who died in 1996 just hours before the off-Broadway opening of his soon-to-be-hit-show Rent. He is also excellent in [The Eyes of Tammy Faye](#) as the corrupt televangelist Jim Bakker, opposite Jessica Chastain as his doting wife, [Tammy Faye](#).

Oscar-worthy … watch the trailer for Tick, Tick … Boom!.

Aside from the misunderstood modern noir [Under the Silver Lake](#), where Garfield was an amateur gumshoe prone to voyeurism and stalking, Mainstream and The Eyes of Tammy Faye represent the first time he has played anyone who could be described as a jerk. “Let me see if I can correct you,” he says. “Um. Yeah. No. Maybe my character in [Red Riding](#) exhibits some self-centred kind of …?” On the contrary: in that Channel 4 crime drama from early in Garfield’s career, his character goes out in a blaze of glory, martyring himself for the cause of justice. “He does, yeah, you’re right. For whatever reason, I’ve found myself more in heroic, altruistic, champion-of-the-light kinds of characters and stories.”

He understands the desire to see performers explore moral ambiguity: “Tom Hanks is one of my favourite actors and I would love him to expose those darker regions of humanity that we all have in us.” Hanks has admitted that villains “require some degree of malevolence that I don’t think I can fake”.

We are vastly unknowable unless we meditate 18 hours a day and/or go on mushroom trips to discover ourselves

Does Garfield have malevolence in him? “I think if I said no, I’d probably have a nightmare tonight in which I’m shown all my malevolence. Any denial of it would probably pique its interest: ‘Oh, you reckon?’ I think we

are vastly unknowable unless we meditate 18 hours a day and/or go on mushroom trips to discover all the nooks and crannies of ourselves.”

What have his own mushroom trips taught him? “Ah, that may be a bit too personal to go into.” In 10 words or fewer? “Haha! Yeah, right. I’m definitely aware that I’m not aware of the majority of what I am.”

Unlike his *Silence* co-star Adam Driver, who can drop anchor anywhere between tenderness and savagery, Garfield is on the side of the angels – literally so in his Tony-winning performance on stage in [Angels in America](#). As with the actor, so with the man. He is warm, conscientious and affable – I could happily have talked with him for another hour or two – but he also comes across as a bit of a goody-goody. “Really?” he laughs. “I don’t agree with that! I don’t think I present as goody-goody. But that’s your story and you can stick to it if you want.”

I challenge him to name the last time he behaved like an arsehole, or used his fame to gain advantage. He can even treat this interview as a forum in which to apologise to someone he wronged. “That’s very sweet of you,” he says. “And now I have to prove I’m not a goody-goody.” His eyes search the room. “I don’t think I’ve ever used my fame to be an arsehole. I think I would be able to admit it. Maybe I *might* have used it to get a table at a restaurant occasionally.” Come on, I tell him, everyone says that. It is the equivalent of Theresa May [running through fields of wheat](#). “I’m sorry!” he says. “I guess I’m a goody-goody, then. Maybe that’s the extent of it.”

The lord works in mysterious ways ... watch the trailer for *The Eyes of Tammy Faye*.

The worst you could say is that he misspoke during an interview at the National Theatre in 2017. Referring to his preparation for *Angels in America*, [he described himself](#) as “a gay man right now, just without the physical act” – that old dilettante routine, of which LGBTQ+ people have justifiably grown sick.

Leaked emails in 2015 also described him refusing to leave his hotel room for a prestigious Sony jamboree at which the release date for his third [Spider-Man](#) outing – later scrapped, after the critical and commercial

disappointment of the second – was due to be announced: “Here we are about one hour away from our gala event and Andrew decides he doesn’t want to attend. He has a rather scruffy beard and he just wants to be left alone.” Still, it is small potatoes compared with some of his colleagues; Mel Gibson or Shia LaBeouf he is not.

Mainstream and *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* demonstrate that media attention can be toxic. How has he avoided being corrupted by it? “Well, I will co-sign *that*,” he smiles. “I appreciate you saying that. I think I’ve surrounded myself with things that make the deeper parts of me come alive rather than the ones that will be a coke-filled orgy of a moment and will then feel like total shit the next morning. I know that shit doesn’t last.”

He gives some of the credit to his mother. “She would always go back to nature and find herself being nourished by the small, natural things in life, in that pantheistic kind of way – the rabbits at the bottom of her garden – rather than anything flashy or fancy. I’ve had that awareness since I was a kid, so maybe it was her.”



Saving lives on the battlefield ... as Desmond T Doss in *Hacksaw Ridge*.  
Photograph: Mark Rogers/Lionsgate/Allstar

His mother died of cancer two years ago. Knowing the end was near, Garfield flew home from the set of *The Eyes of Tammy Faye* to be with her for the final weeks of her life. “It was the best possible version,” he says. “Me losing her rather than her losing me.” What was she like? “She was someone who had an awareness of the beauty that’s around us, and the kindness she could exhibit to someone in the street or at the store. That’s a good life. That’s a life well lived.”

It was she who nudged him towards acting when he was having a tough time at school. “What a dangerous, bold, loving, soulful thing to do. She knew I probably wouldn’t make any money from it, but she saw her son was having trouble and was not feeling a sense of joy about being alive. And it turned out to be the best worst decision she ever made, because now I’m talking to you about her and she’s embarrassed somewhere.”

Garfield’s mother was British and his father is American. He was born in Los Angeles and his family moved to Surrey when he was three. “I was raised in a sports household. Very competitive with my older brother. My dad’s a swimming coach, I did gymnastics and swimming, rugby and cricket and football.”

What he experienced as a sports prodigy, he says, was “a micro version of the Simone Biles thing”. He has been thinking a lot lately about Biles, the 24-year-old US gymnast who withdrew from [five of her six Olympics finals](#) this year to safeguard her mental health. “The fact that she decided to publicly honour her own fallibility may be the most inspiring move she could make. Most of us seeing that will go: ‘Oh my God! That means I can fail. I don’t always have to be ascending.’”



Remarkable ... with Claire Foy in Breathe. Photograph: Teddy Cavendish/Bleecker Street Media/Allstar

He had a similar epiphany. “I said: ‘I don’t want a big fat Russian gymnastics coach to be sitting on my back while I do the box splits at the age of nine. I wanna go be a punk with my friends and go skateboarding and listen to Rage Against the Machine and be a bit of a fuckup for a minute.’ There was a natural inclination to own being a fucking idiot.”

Hearing this, it is hard not to think back to him in that hotel room, nursing his scruffy beard and refusing to play ball with the bigwigs. His spell as Spider-Man now seems like a source of anguish. Speaking about it in 2017, he said: “I got my heart broken a little bit.” How so?

“I went from being a naive boy to growing up,” he says. “How could I ever imagine that it was going to be a pure experience?” He gives a dry, joyless laugh. “There are millions of dollars at stake and that’s what guides the ship. It was a big awakening and it *hurt*.

“Comic-Con in San Diego is full of grown men and women still in touch with that pure thing the character meant to them. [But] you add in market forces and test groups and suddenly the focus is less on the soul of it and more on ensuring we make as much money as possible. And I found that –

*find* that – heartbreaking in all matters of the culture. Money is the thing that has corrupted all of us and led to the terrible ecological collapse that we are all about to die under.”

He cracks up suddenly at his own portentousness, a full-blown goofy guffaw. “I’m just kidding, I’m just kidding!” Pause. “I mean, it’ll take a bunch of years before that happens.” Even the apocalypse doesn’t sound too bad coming from Mr Goody-Goody.

Mainstream is available on digital download in the UK from 8 November; Tick, Tick ... Boom! is on Netflix from 12 November; and The Eyes of Tammy Faye is in UK cinemas from 4 February 2022

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## Speculation nation: Can Xi Jinping's property tax deflate China's housing bubble?



Xi Jinping's efforts to introduce a property tax could pitch him against local governments who rely heavily on land sales for their revenues. Photograph: Noel Celis/AFP/Getty Images

[Martin Farrer](#) and [Vincent Ni](#)

Thu 4 Nov 2021 19.00 EDT

Xi Jinping's to-do list has seen a lot of ticks in recent months: more flights into Taiwan's defence zone; suppressing dissenting voices in Hong Kong; clipping the wings of tech barons; outlawing the out-of-school tutoring industry. The list goes on.

However, one key initiative – introducing a local property tax – has attracted fewer headlines but is apparently [so controversial within China's ruling Communist party](#) that even Xi is still only able to deal in trial schemes rather than wholesale change.

The decision to pilot the tax on all types of property in selected regions for five years – most likely important cities such as Shenzhen and Hangzhou – [was taken last month](#). It is seen as vital to reforming the country's bloated property sector, a concrete-and-glass divide between China's haves and have-nots which has been personified by the [woes of the heavily indebted developer China Evergrande](#).

The property tax is controversial because local governments rely on land sales for at least 40% of their revenues. This has encouraged an aggressive sales policy, aided and abetted by property developers happy to take on massive debts to buy the land and build ever more apartment blocks for buyers convinced the market is a one-way bet.

This decades-long party saw China's property developers build a debt mountain of around \$5tn, according to analysts at Nomura, before Beijing called time by restricting what they could borrow. When the music stopped, Evergrande was stranded on the dancefloor with \$300bn of debt, and it faces its latest [pay-up-or-default deadline](#) on 10 November.

Evergrande is just the tip of the iceberg though. Developers have to repay around \$92bn in the next year, and analysts at S&P have estimated that [more than a third](#) could experience difficulties meeting those obligations.

Kaisa Group, second only to [Evergrande](#) in terms of risky borrowing in US dollar bonds, became the latest focus for concern when its shares were suspended in Hong Kong on Friday morning because of cash flow problems.

Xi has clearly had enough of the sector's excesses. , But the question is whether the president's [property tax experiment](#) to bring the housing market under control is too little, too late.

Real estate investment accounted for 12-15% of GDP in [China](#) between 2011 and 2018, the Harvard economists Kenneth Rogoff and Yuanchen Yang estimate. This compares with a 7% share of GDP in the US at the peak of the housing boom in 2005. Once related property market activity is added to the Chinese numbers, the proportion of GDP is more like 30%.

Such a large property market does not necessarily create a problem. After all, China has a population of 1.4 billion and needed to build millions of new homes because hundreds of millions of people have moved to urban areas in the past 30 to 40 years.

## **Speculation nation**

The notion that prices can only go up has made buying a house in China enormously expensive, with a house price-to-household income ratio of 19 in the biggest "tier-one" cities such as Beijing or Shanghai, 10 in tier-two and seven in tier-three cities, Canada-based [BCA Research says](#). The average ratio in the UK is about 10 and in the US it is four, although mortgage rates are much lower in those countries, making it easier for households to manage the debt.

However, the speculative nature of the market is what really makes China stand apart. Between 2008-10, the proportion of people buying homes in China who were first-time buyers was 70%, according to the Survey and Research Center for China Household Finance. By 2018, after the property and construction sectors were jet-propelled by the 4tn yuan of post-financial crisis stimulus, that figure had dropped to 11.5%.

The same survey shows that first-time buyers were being replaced at a rapid rate by investors. In 2018, 22.5% of homebuyers already owned two or more dwellings, while 66% owned one. No wonder that [Xi had said the year before](#) that houses should be for “living in, not for speculating”.

Because these investors rarely rent out their properties, one-fifth of China’s housing – or at least 65m homes – lie empty. Rental yields are typically about 2% in China, which is way below the typical mortgage rate of 5.4%. In other words, the buy-to-let strategy that has proved popular for wealthy people in western countries such as the UK doesn’t make sense in China. Investors are instead buying the properties solely because they expect the value to keep going up.

“Clearly, housing in China has become an object of speculation which has made it unattainable for first-time homebuyers,” analysts at BCA Research wrote recently.

“Property developers have been building the wrong type of housing at the wrong prices and for the wrong type of buyers,” they said. “They have been building high-end houses and selling them at very high prices to high-income households who have been buying multiple properties as investments.”

The massive speculative bubble – China’s household debt is about 100%, or about the same as that of the US – has been magnified by property developers doing the same on an even bigger scale. While the cost of borrowing remained lower than the rate of house price growth, developers simply took on more debt to build ever more properties selling at ever higher prices while pocketing ever higher profits.

The catch is that with demand falling thanks to a declining population, fewer people starting families, and [prices also tumbling](#), those profits have disappeared and may soon turn into massive losses.

## **‘The music has stopped’**

It remains to be seen whether Beijing will allow Evergrande or any other large developer to fail. Most observers expect it to be a “controlled demolition” – in other words restructured in an orderly manner – and debts distributed via state-owned banks and institutions. Containing the impact of falling house prices in the wake of such restructuring and the introduction of a property tax could be more difficult.

Lower prices might be good for some people not yet on the property ladder, but with more than 90% of the urban population owning property and 40% of household wealth tied up in property, any disorderly collapse in values could trigger [social unrest such as that seen during past downturns](#).

This is what Anne Stevenson Yang, co-founder of Connecticut-based J Capital Research and a China specialist, fears. She says the Communist party supported free market activity as long as it unlocked value for the state. Now it wants to rein in the excess but the process of deflating the market is freighted with risk for Xi and his government.

“The buying of new apartments has got to be coming to an end,” she said. “The music has stopped and all these people can’t find a chair. Then what?”

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## Abba: Voyage review – no thank you for the music

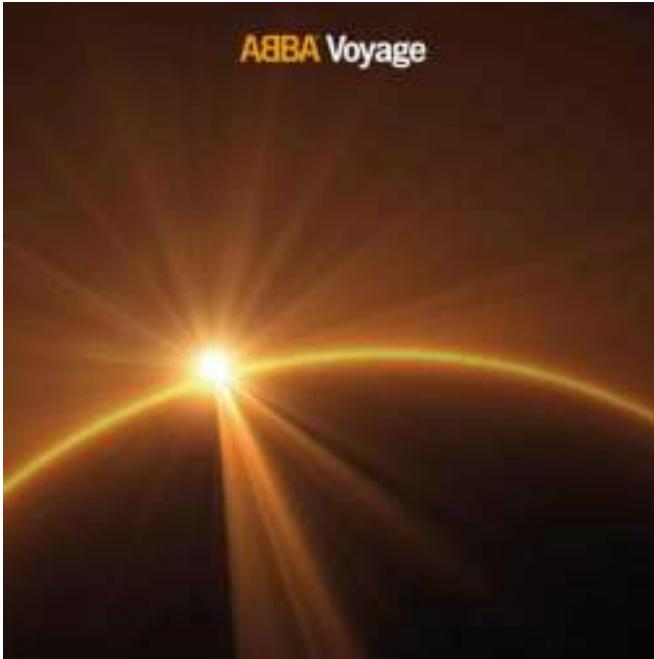


‘Terminally stuck in the past’ ... (L-R) Björn Ulvaeus, Agnetha Fältskog, Anni-Frid Lyngstad and Benny Andersson. Photograph: Baillie Walsh/PA

[Jude Rogers](#)  
[@juderogers](#)

Thu 4 Nov 2021 20.01 EDT

The journey to Voyage, [Abba](#)'s final studio album and their first in 40 years, began with a tweet from their shiny new Twitter account in August, coaxing people to "join us". Billboards across London followed, featuring images of a sort of solar eclipse, a glitter ball in a sci-fi silhouette. A week later came news of a 10-track album and a "digital avatar" concert residency in a custom-built London arena. The signs were good. Here was a band alive to their legacy as makers of sparkling pop, but also to the spirit of disco's futurism, understanding that they had to harness the shock of the new.



The artwork for Voyage. Photograph: AP

In September, one of two album taster tracks, [Don't Shut Me Down](#), fulfilled this brief exquisitely, morphing from vulnerable Swedish noir to piano-and-horn-propelled pop-funk. Its impact was unexpected and exciting and it became Abba's first Top 10 hit since 1981, charging Voyage with the promise of forward motion and glamour – qualities that felt wildly attractive in our messy, mid-Covid times. And so it is hard to reckon with the disappointment that Abba's ninth album delivers, as it prefers to languish in often bafflingly retrograde settings.

It begins with I Still Have Faith in You, the other taster track released in September. An epic example of the “bittersweet song” Anni-Frid Lyngstad and Agnetha Fältskog refer to in the lyric – in their different, yet still lovely, older voices – its meditation on how to confront and own the ageing process is precision-tailored, in glistening silver thread. The opening, elegiac string phrase yearns for resolution throughout, before returning wistfully in the song’s final bars. The second verse’s soft drum rolls (by Per Lindvall, veteran of Super Trouper and The Visitors) are among many fine, musical details that urge the women on. It is, admittedly, a little cheesy, but its tenderness still feels triumphant.

But rather than reflecting poignantly on the past, much of the rest of Voyage feels terminally stuck there. When You Danced With Me tells the story of a girl left behind in Kilkenny when a boy she loved “left for the city”. She’s spent years waiting for him to return, we’re told; presumably she’s oblivious to the existence in Ireland of train routes, driving tests or text messages. The Celtic-leaning melody in the intro recalls Abba’s incursions into other global settings, such as the Mexican battlefields in Fernando, or the Spanish-Peruvian musical moodboards of Chiquitita. The overall effect doesn’t prompt folkloric nostalgia, but mild nausea.

### Abba: I Still Have Faith in You – video

Then comes the album’s big crime against sense, sentimentality and sequencing, Little Things, a Christmas song shoved in at track three. All about the delights of the season, it includes a children’s choir singing about their grandma (the [St Winifred’s school singers](#) would sound like rebel punks in comparison), but also, in a jolting juxtaposition, intimations about mum and dad’s sex life. Particularly weird is the implication of a grim transactional quality behind a romantic gesture. “You’d consider bringing me a breakfast tray, but there’s a price,” Lyngstad sings, having noticed her partner’s “naughty eyes”. You hope if she’s presented with a breakfast sausage, she’ll impale it then bin it.

Admittedly, Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson have never been the most enlightened lyricists on the feminism front. One of Us and Gimme! Gimme! Gimme! (A Man After Midnight) are two Abba songs among many

featuring a fraught woman desperate for any man to pop along and quick-fix her loneliness. Now four decades have passed, and one can't help but despair at the chorus of I Can Be That Woman ("You're not the man you should've been / I let you down somehow") and that's after its terrible lyrical twist about a female her husband is sleeping with, who turns out to be ... a dog. Keep an Eye on Dan offers another miserable monologue from a pining divorcee, spoiling its fantastic mixture of *Visitors*-era iciness and *Voulez-Vous*-era disco propulsion.

Ulvaeus [recently said](#) these songs were written "absolutely trend-blind". It shows. Including tracks such as the rejected 1978 single Just a Notion (a reminder of early, jangly Abba glam, but nothing more) and Bumblebee (a naive attempt to say something universal about climate change) makes you doubt their quality control. At least Voyage's finale, Ode to Freedom, hints at a grand, closing statement, pastiching and stretching a phrase from a waltz in Tchaikovsky's Swan Lake. But then its lyric talks about the futility of writing an ode that's worth remembering, which leaves an odd note, especially when we're talking about a band whose songs are known around the world.

"If I ever write my ode to freedom / It will be in prose that chimes with me," it concludes. Maybe it's a reference to the female members' preference for privacy, or even Abba's determination to keep creating their unusual song structures in their Swedish reading of English – but it also suggests Abba feel they can exist in their own bubble. They can't. In the past, they excelled when they twisted the sounds of their times in their own way, when they were within glam, disco and electronic pop but also apart from these genres; when their idiosyncrasies elevated them, rather than diminished them. If only they had stopped at those two knowing songs, leaving the rest to our dazzling imaginations.

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[The reader interview](#)**Katy B**

Interview

## **The return of Katy B: ‘Being looked at all the time is not very natural’**

As told to [Christine Ochefu](#)



‘There should be a petition to sack the Queen and get Adele in’ ... Katy B.  
Photograph: "PR

Fri 5 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

**Was becoming an artist everything you expected it to be when you first started, and who inspired you the most to get into music?**  
*MYWORLD2014*

I went to uni and did music and I went to the Brit school, but I didn't really have any expectations. When you're that age, you're gigging and recording music, but you're doing it because it's what you do, and it just snowballs from there. I would say my dad definitely [got me into music]. He has a really, really wonderful voice and was a musician in his earlier life, making kind of Beach Boys vocal harmony music. When I was younger, he used to teach me guitar and piano and actually had good advice for me.

**I'd say, unlike most of your fans, my favourite song of yours is Disappear from your first album. I think it's an amazing bit of songwriting and storytelling: "I woke up one day to find that I had disappeared" is just beautiful. I wonder, unsubtly, if during your [five-year] public absence from music you again felt that you'd disappeared? What's it like now to reappear?** *OhWellPartOne*

I'm quite a shy person naturally; it's kind of stressful when you feel like you're being looked at all the time and eyes are on you. I needed time to dip out of that, because I'm not sure whether it's very natural. Going back into things I'll definitely do more of that, because there were times when I felt like I couldn't take a day off. It's exciting to be releasing music again and coming back into it with a different lens.

**The genres that you came up on [dubstep and UK funky] are pretty much dead now. How would you classify your new music?** *OooohYehhh*

They're not dead [laughs]! With any genre, music naturally evolves. Every couple of years everyone's like "UK garage is coming back" – it's never left! I get that it's probably not in the mainstream, but it's in different forms. House will never die and we've got [African house style] amapiano at the moment. I just did Ministry [of Sound], like 2,000 people, and that was a

UK funky rave; you still hear UK funky in every DJ set, every time it just goes off and makes people happy. I guess my new EP is a bit slower, though. There's no intense dancefloor stuff that I've had before. It's got a bit more of an R&B vibe to it, and those syncopated rhythms I love dancing to. It's a bit more chilled out.

**America ruined dubstep. Discuss.** *Paulie\_Walnuts*

It's a funny one because I went on tour in America and at one point I was like: "This is actually bonkers, I'm in a dubstep rave in California." But how Americans do club music or club culture – and this is obviously a generic statement because it's the birthplace of so much club music – is not the same as it is here, for that market and the EDM world. It's so amazing to travel through America and see their club subcultures; I felt like I was accessing some secret world. But I don't think they really understood me. I wasn't for the EDM people, and I wasn't poppy enough to be a pop star out there. So I think it's a kind of mixture; I'll just say: I don't know!

**Would you ever consider Eurovision if the chance came up? A slightly cut-down version of Perfect Stranger would be immense as an entry.**  
*Crossvader*

My dad was in Eurovision back in the 70s! He lived in Germany for a while, and appeared as part of a band called the [Les Humphries Singers](#), there were 20 of them or something like that; I don't think they did very well unfortunately [they came 15th in 1976]. I'm a very competitive person and we get zero points every year. I wouldn't put myself through that at all.

**Whose music do you prefer: Adele or Ed Sheeran?** *WordChazer*

Ed Sheeran's new song has been stuck in my head for like, three weeks. But I think I'd have to go with Adele, just because I feel like she's our queen or something. I think there should be a petition to sack the Queen and get Adele in.



Katy B performs during Pride In Manchester 2021 on August 28, 2021.  
Photograph: Shirlaine Forrest/Getty Images

**Do you feel like the music world you're returning to has changed over the last few years? If so, for good/bad/both? *Eelsupinsideya***

One hundred per cent. I feel like an old granny going into meetings, they're talking about DSPs (digital service providers) and all this jargon. I'm like: what? But I think it's exciting as well because there's not as many rules. Some of the people that I follow on Instagram haven't even got music out, but they're making money by putting up content. I feel quite old school; it's gonna take a bit of catching up to figure out what's going on. I do miss CD sleeves, though. I know we can still buy physical copies, but I feel like vinyl is different. I'm just attached to CDs, I don't want to throw them away.

**Do you feel like Jess Glynne sort of stole your mojo? I think you've got a much more interesting voice, but maybe the UK only has room for one flame-haired dance queen at once? *DrRic55***

No, I feel like her music is quite different to mine. There should be more flame-haired redhead singers; there's never enough!

**How did you cope with the pressure of being the anointed “face/voice of dubstep” when the genre crossed over? Do you think the mainstream**

**exposure was good for the scene in general? *jonbeat***

I don't know whether I would say "the face", but I was happy feeling like I was bringing a piece of London, or shining a light on that kind of world. And I think it's inevitable with anything that crosses over, things build, build, build, and then [the genre] settles into another realm because things are always changing. I think people that love dubstep and go to dubstep raves are still going. They don't care what the songs in the Top 10 are; they're not bothered it exists in a different space.

**Now that clubs have reopened, when the lights go on at the end of a night out, which song would you choose to have playing while you keep on moving? *sharmadelica***

They need to bring back playing slow jams at the end of the club night. It needs to be something really old school like Jaheim, maybe Just in Case. I'd do that, though there should be no lovemaking on the dancefloor.

**Can you get on all the rides at Alton Towers, or have you had to buy a pair of tactical platform trainers? *LiquidFootballFC***

Yeah, I can get on all the rides [laughs]! I do really love a theme park. I'm 5'3", I think it comes in quite handy being small because you can manoeuvre around. Only thing: being people's armpit height is horrible. That and not being able to see anything.

**Manze's or Goddard's? *zblargx***

I'm very passionate about pie and mash. I would have to say Goddard's. Sort of controversial as it's not very traditional, but it's because they do an apple pie and crumble with custard. So if you get pie and mash you can get that afterwards. You can get frozen pies from Goddard's as well; the business model is just out of this world.

*Katy B's new EP, Peace and Offerings, is out now*

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- [Genetics Gene common in south Asian people 'doubles risk of death'](#)
- [Europe Region once again at centre of pandemic, says WHO](#)
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## **UK reports 193 deaths – as it happened**

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## Genetics

# Gene common in south Asian people doubles risk of Covid death, study finds



A man holds his arm after receiving a dose of coronavirus vaccine in Mumbai, India. Photograph: Indranil Mukherjee/AFP/Getty Images

*Hannah Devlin* Science correspondent  
[@hannahdev](https://twitter.com/hannahdev)

Thu 4 Nov 2021 12.36 EDT

Scientists have identified a gene that doubles the risks of respiratory failure and death from Covid and could explain why people of south Asian heritage are more vulnerable to the disease.

The gene, which changes the way the lungs respond to infection, is the most important genetic risk factor identified so far and is carried by roughly 60% of people with south Asian backgrounds, compared with 15% of those with white European backgrounds. The finding could partly explain the excess

deaths seen in some communities in the UK and the impact of Covid-19 in the Indian subcontinent.

Prof James Davies, a geneticist at Oxford University's Radcliffe Department of Medicine and a senior author of the paper, said: "The genetic factor we have found explains why some people get very seriously ill after coronavirus infection ... There's a single gene that confers quite a significant risk to people of south Asian background."

Other scientists cautioned that the findings needed further confirmation and that genetic explanations should not overshadow other potentially more significant socioeconomic risk factors faced by ethnic minorities, including workplace exposure and unequal access to healthcare.

The study builds on previous work that identified a large chunk of DNA that appeared to influence how severely ill people become from Covid, based on genetic sequencing of tens of thousands of hospital patients in the UK and other countries. The latest study homed in on a single gene called LZTFL1, which was revealed to double the risk of respiratory failure and death.

The gene, which was previously unstudied, was found to act as a switch to turn on a crucial defence mechanism that prevents the Covid-19 virus from entering epithelial cells that line the lung. With the high-risk version of the gene, this response was blunted, meaning the virus would continue entering, infecting and damaging cells in the lung for a longer time period after exposure.

"Although we cannot change our genetics, our results show that the people with the higher-risk gene are likely to particularly benefit from vaccination," said Davies. "Since the genetic signal affects the lung rather than the immune system, it means that the increased risk should be cancelled out by the vaccine."

Davies said the findings also pointed to the possibility of new treatments targeting the lung cells' response. Most current treatments work by changing the way the immune system responds to the virus.

The findings could offer some explanation for why south Asian populations have been worst affected in the pandemic. In England's second wave, ONS data showed a risk of death three to four times higher for people of Bangladeshi backgrounds, 2.5 to three times higher for those of Pakistani backgrounds and 1.5 to two times higher for Indian backgrounds compared with the general population.

Unlike the excess risk seen in black populations in the first wave, in south Asian groups there remained a significant unexplained risk once socio-economic factors were taken into account. “[Genetic factors] would account for a large proportion of that,” said Davies.

Raghib Ali, of the University of Cambridge and an independent expert adviser on Covid-19 and ethnicity to the Race Disparity Unit in the Cabinet Office, said: “This is an important study which contributes to our ongoing efforts to understand the causes of the higher death rates from Covid in some ethnic groups and specifically as to why their outcomes or survival from Covid are worse after infection.”

However, others urged caution. Nazrul Islam, of Oxford University’s Nuffield Department of Population [Health](#), pointed out that some ethnicities are not well represented in the large genetic databases used to determine the prevalence of particular genes such as LZTHL1.

“It provides an easy gateway for policymakers to say ‘it’s genetic, we can’t do anything’,” he said. “We have to be very careful in analysing the data, questioning it repeatedly, and how we disseminate the findings. It has profound social issues.”

The study is published in the journal [Nature Genetics](#).

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## World Health Organization

# Europe once again at centre of Covid pandemic, says WHO

01:33

Europe ‘at the epicentre’ of Covid pandemic again, warns WHO – video

*[Jon Henley](#) Europe correspondent  
[@jonhenley](#)*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 10.45 EDT

Uneven vaccine coverage and a relaxation of preventive measures have brought Europe to a “critical point” in the pandemic, the [World Health Organization](#) has said, with cases again at near-record levels and 500,000 more deaths forecast by February.

Hans Kluge, the WHO’s [Europe](#) director, said all 53 countries in the region were facing “a real threat of Covid-19 resurgence or already fighting it” and urged governments to reimpose or continue with social and public health measures.

“We are, once again, at the epicentre,” he said. “With a widespread resurgence of the virus, I am asking every health authority to carefully reconsider easing or lifting measures at this moment.” He said that even in countries with high vaccination rates, immunisation could only do so much.

“The message has always been: do it all,” Kluge said. “Vaccines are doing what was promised: preventing severe forms of the disease and especially mortality ... But they are our most powerful asset only if used alongside public health and social measures.”

Catherine Smallwood, WHO Europe’s senior emergency officer, said countries that had mostly lifted preventive measures had experienced a surge in infections.

Vaccinations meant they had not seen “the same rates of hospitalisation or mortality we would have otherwise expected”, she said. “However, the more cases you have in crude terms, the more people will end up in hospital, and the more people will in the end go on to die. So there’s a very simple explanation for what’s going on.

“We have many susceptible individuals, including in high-vaccinated countries, and this is leading to unpredictable explosive outbreaks of Covid-19. And that’s not where we want to be right now.”

[Germany](#) reported a record-high number of Covid-19 cases on Thursday, with 33,949 infections in the past 24 hours compared to a previous high of 33,777 new cases in December 2020. The federal health minister, Jens Spahn, is to meet state health ministers to discuss how to limit the virus’s spread before the winter.

Bulgaria and Romania, the two eastern EU countries with the bloc’s lowest vaccination rates – 25.5% and 37.2% of adults respectively – this week reported their highest daily Covid-19 death tolls since the beginning of the pandemic.

Among the countries with the highest numbers of new daily infections, [Latvia](#), Lithuania and Estonia are facing critical overloads on their health care systems and tightening measures, with Latvia imposing a nightly curfew, barring all public and most private gatherings, and limiting shopping to all but essential goods.

Estonia closed all public events and gatherings to non-vaccinated people and required those who have had both jabs to wear masks indoors, while several Russian regions said they could impose additional restrictions to fight a rise in cases that has already prompted Moscow to reimpose a partial lockdown nationwide.

Facing a dramatic increase in infections, the Dutch government will reintroduce tougher social restrictions from 6 November, making mask-wearing obligatory in public spaces such as shops and Covid passes mandatory for museums and other public spaces.

The move follows neighbouring Belgium's decision to tighten its restrictions from Monday after case numbers hit their highest level in a year, reimposing mask-wearing indoors and encouraging people to work remotely.

Kluge said case numbers in Europe and central Asia had risen by 6% in a week, and deaths by 12%, with new daily infections surging by 55% over the past month. Europe and central Asia combined now accounted for 59% of all confirmed cases globally and nearly half of all deaths.

Insufficient vaccination coverage and the relaxation of public health and social measures were to blame, he said. With a billion doses now administered in Europe and central Asia, vaccines were saving "thousands upon thousands" of lives.

But while 70% of people in some countries are fully vaccinated, barely 10% are in others. "Where vaccine uptake is low, in many countries in the Baltics, central and eastern Europe and the Balkans, hospital admission rates are high," he said.

Kluge said the most alarming development was the rapid increase in infections and deaths in older population groups, with hospital admission rates more than doubling in a week and 75% of fatal cases now occurring in people aged 65 years and over.

"If we stay on this trajectory, we could see another half a million Covid-19 deaths in Europe and central Asia by the first of February next year, and 43 countries in our region will face high to extreme stress on hospital beds," he said.

Authorities must accelerate vaccine rollouts, including booster shots for at-risk groups, he said: "Most people hospitalised and dying from Covid-19 today are not fully vaccinated."

But public health measures such as test and trace, and social measures such as mask-wearing and distancing, were equally vital, he said, adding that WHO estimates suggested that 95% universal mask use in Europe and central Asia "could save up to 188,000 of the half a million lives we may lose" before February.

When applied “correctly and consistently”, preventive measures “allow us to go on with our lives, not the opposite”, Kluge said. “Preventive measures do not deprive people of their freedom, they ensure it.” Covid passes showing proof of vaccination should be viewed as “a collective tool towards individual liberty”.

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## Coronavirus

# UK Covid cases may have peaked for this year, study suggests



Copley academy, Greater Manchester, England, this September, where pupils are using lateral flow tests to help stem Covid-19 infections.  
Photograph: Anthony Devlin/Getty Images

*[Ian Sample](#) Science editor*

*@iansample*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 13.43 EDT

Scientists on the Zoe Covid study believe UK cases of coronavirus may have peaked for the year, a suggestion that prompted some experts to warn that it was too soon to know how the epidemic would play out in the weeks ahead.

The study, which estimates the [number of Covid cases](#) in the community from the information that users log on an app, found a clear decline in cases in under-18s since mid-October, with infection rates levelling off in most other age groups though still climbing in 55- to 75-year-olds.

The trends are based on 42,359 swab tests taken between 16 and 30 October and point to 88,592 daily symptomatic cases, a decrease of 4.7% on the previous week's Zoe data. The numbers equate to one in 53 people in the UK currently with symptomatic Covid infections.

"Young people have been driving the big numbers of cases, and the big numbers look from our data to have finished," said Prof Tim Spector, the lead scientist on the [Zoe study](#), at King's College London. "There are multiple reasons behind it, but a lot is driven by the pattern we are seeing with kids, plus the history of the past waves."

It comes as figures on Thursday showed that 37,269 people across the UK tested positive for Covid in the previous 24 hours, a small drop on the 41,299 seen the day before. However, the number of deaths within 28 days of a positive Covid test recorded over the same period – 214 – was almost the same as the 217 reported the previous day.

In the autumn term Covid infections have soared in secondary school children, a cohort largely unprotected because of the slow rollout of vaccines to the age group. The [Office for National Statistics](#) estimates that more than 9% of children in years seven to 11 were infected in the week ending 22 October.

But the sustained high rates of infection in schools have driven up levels of immunity to the virus and at some point, with help from vaccinations, cases are expected to fall back down. Outbreak modellers expect this to happen unevenly across the country, with hard-hit areas such as London among the first to see cases drop in the age group.

What is unclear is when infection rates at schools will peak. Scientists on the React study, at Imperial College, have reported similar evidence for a downturn in cases at the end of October, but warned that the decline could be temporary and driven by children being out of school for half-term.

Kevin McConway, an emeritus professor of applied statistics at the Open University, said cases had fallen for only a short time and what would happen next was highly uncertain. "While I very much hope personally that

the decline continues, I really don't think we can be anywhere near certain that it will," he said.

He added that while the Zoe study provided some plausible reasons for cases to keep falling, a lot seemed to be "expressions of hope more than definite predictions". McConway said: "We can hope that the peak for 2021 has been reached, but we still need to plan accordingly for what should be done if it hasn't been reached."

Mark Woolhouse, a professor of infectious disease epidemiology at Edinburgh University, said a worrying trend was the rise in cases in older and much more vulnerable people. "Even though the vaccines give very good protection against severe disease they do not give complete protection, and these age groups continue to dominate hospital cases. I would not want to conclude that the UK Covid-19 pandemic is in decline until it declines in older and more vulnerable age groups. That has not happened yet."

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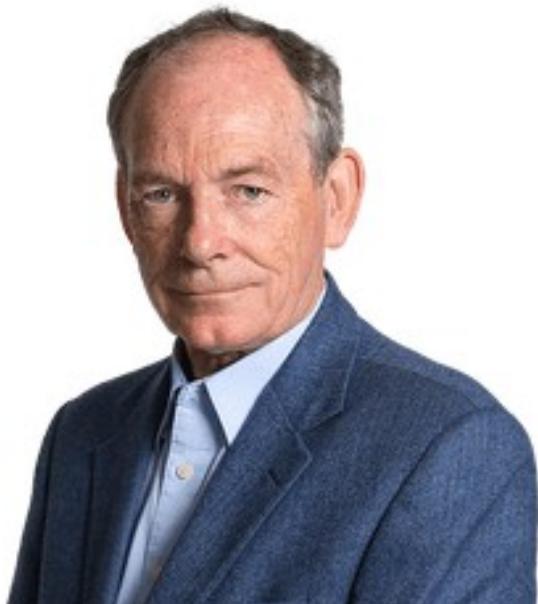
## 2021.11.05 - Opinion

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- The climate crisis is just another form of global oppression by the rich world
- The British army has serious questions to answer about the alleged killing of Agnes Wanjiru
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Opinion**Boris Johnson**

## The Paterson debacle shows that Johnson no longer has advisers – he has courtiers

[Simon Jenkins](#)





‘Downing Street has clearly treated parliament as a populist assembly, a lapdog to executive power.’ Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK PARLIAMENT/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 5 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

No one doubted it, not even Boris Johnson. The attempt to rescue his friend [Owen Paterson](#) from a mild penalty for a breach of the parliamentary code was an abject failure.

The Tories’ short-lived attempt to tear up the independent system for combating parliamentary sleaze has been scrapped. After the government’s U-turn, MPs were due a fresh vote over whether to suspend Paterson from the Commons, but he has now resigned from the “cruel world of politics”. The real worry is that the prime minister clearly had no clue what was wrong. He seemed not to get the point of ethics. Nor presumably to see that his volte face has now led to Paterson’s previously unnecessary resignation. Johnson has now had two years of constant brushes with Westminster’s ethics police – on holiday gifts, expenses, flat decoration and Priti Patel’s bullying – but in each case he just shrugs. He says, in effect, my will is the law.

At such moments, we must ask who guards the guardians. Downing Street has clearly treated parliament as a populist assembly, a lapdog to executive power. That 250 Tory MPs on Wednesday night, after damning dozens of ordinary MPs such as Keith Vaz and Ian Paisley for unethical behaviour, could obey Johnson's orders to bail out his friend is, if anything, more awful than Johnson's own decision.

I suppose it is to the credit of Tory MPs that they slept on their decision and now recognise their guilt, swiftly protesting. But what did they think they were doing? Do they regard it as acceptable for a private company to think it worth paying one of them a sweetener of £100,000? For Johnson seriously to have proposed (and for his MPs to have accepted) a hand-picked Tory “ethics” committee to replace one with whose decision he disagrees would be laughable were it not outrageous.

All power corrupts, the more absolutely it grows. Johnson last year forced the resignation of the ministerial standards officer, Sir Alex Allen, by rejecting his censure of the home secretary, Priti Patel, for bullying her staff. He found himself at odds with the Electoral Commission over his use of political donations to refurbish his flat, which even his aide Dominic Cummings thought “unethical, foolish, possibly illegal”. Two years ago, Johnson had to be dragged to the supreme court and stand corrected over his refusal to recall parliament. Now he has tried effectively to sack the House of Commons parliamentary commissioner for standards, who was reportedly soon to open another inquiry into his expenses. The prime minister plainly has a dysfunctional relationship with the law.

The cabinet must surely have opposed the original Paterson decision, yet failed to influence it. The same must have applied to the Tory party chairman, Oliver Dowden, and the leader of the house, Jacob Rees-Mogg, along with senior colleagues as Michael Gove or Rishi Sunak. They must have known it was wrong, yet they appear to have been Johnson’s lackeys.

So who does the prime minister listen to? Johnson’s most reckless decision as Tory leader was the sacking of the half dozen of his predecessor Theresa May’s senior colleagues who shared one thing in common: they were more able than him. He therefore saw them as a threat. The result has been two years of ineffective cabinet government. That left only the cabal, the

oligarchy that forms round every prime minister, the courtiers that inhabit No 10.

Even powerful leaders have whisperers in their ear, sometimes elder statesmen wiser than they are, sometimes courtiers whose cast of mind has rendered them briefly indispensable. Churchill had field marshal Alanbrooke, Thatcher had Willie Whitelaw, Tony Blair had Alastair Campbell. All needed someone who in a moment of crisis could tell them, “You are mad”. Of Whitelaw, Thatcher famously said: “Every prime minister needs a Willie.”

On entering office, Johnson was obsessed with loyalty alone, a serious defect in a leader. He bizarrely brought from his Brexit office the eccentric fanatic, Dominic Cummings, who lasted less than two years and presided over universal factionalism. With him had come an aide from Johnson’s London mayoral office, the property developers’ favourite lobbyist Edward Lister. After Lister suddenly resigned in January, he quietly joined the crony peers’ list and became Johnson’s “envoy to the Gulf”.

No one seemed secure. The press officers Lee Cain and Allegra Stratton lasted months under Johnson, not years. Johnson’s private secretary Simon Case, formerly a palace official, lasted three months before moving to be cabinet secretary while a relatively junior official, Dan Rosenfield, supposedly succeeded Cummings in charge of “strategy”. No one in Downing Street, I am told, would say boo to a goose, let alone a prime minister.

The talk now is that a chief whisperer in Johnson’s ear is Lord Geidt, formerly the Queen’s private secretary. He is said to have won the prime minister’s confidence and was in April duly appointed as Alex Allen’s successor as “independent adviser on ministerial interests”. A month later, he exonerated Johnson of any breach of the ministerial code or conflict of interest in the vexed issue of flat decoration. To Johnson this is a cardinal test of loyalty. It is hard to believe he would not have consulted so close an adviser as Geidt over the initial Paterson decision.

Opinion polls declare that the public is unmoved by the ethical contortions of the ruling classes. So what? They should matter, at least to a Britain that

loves hypocritically to lecture other nations on the evils of corruption. Johnson may have recoiled from his foolishness, but he was clearly guilty of trying to strip parliament of its role in overseeing the professional behaviour of politicians and ministers. He wanted to be the sole adjudicator of that behaviour.

In many countries, the national assembly would have its rights in these matters constitutionally embedded. Not in Britain. In many, there would be a role for the supreme court. Again, not in Britain. Those who share the Downing Street sofa with [Boris Johnson](#) do so unknown. Those who advise the prime minister may do so in secret, unaccountable to parliament. The result is a mess.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
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[Opinion](#)[Climate crisis](#)

# Never mind aid, never mind loans: what poor nations are owed is reparations

[George Monbiot](#)



Excerpt from a painting depicting the British East India Company in India, 1825-1830. Photograph: Print Collector/Getty Images

Fri 5 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

The story of the past 500 years can be crudely summarised as follows. A handful of European nations, which had mastered both the art of violence and advanced seafaring technology, used these faculties to invade other territories and seize their land, labour and resources.

Competition for control of other people's lands led to repeated wars between the colonising nations. New doctrines – racial categorisation, ethnic superiority and a moral duty to "rescue" other people from their "barbarism" and "depravity" – were developed to justify the violence. These doctrines led, in turn, to genocide.

The stolen labour, land and goods were used by some European nations to stoke their industrial revolutions. To handle the greatly increased scope and scale of transactions, new financial systems were established that eventually came to dominate their own economies. European elites permitted just enough of the looted wealth to trickle down to their labour forces to seek to stave off revolution – successfully in Britain, unsuccessfully elsewhere.

At length, the impact of repeated wars, coupled with insurrections by colonised peoples, forced the rich nations to leave most of the lands they had seized, formally at least. These territories sought to establish themselves as independent nations. But their independence was never more than partial. Using international debt, structural adjustment, coups, corruption (assisted by offshore tax havens and secrecy regimes), transfer pricing and other clever instruments, the rich nations continued to loot the poor, often through the proxy governments they installed and armed.

Unwittingly at first, then with the full knowledge of the perpetrators, the industrial revolutions released waste products into the Earth's systems. At first, the most extreme impacts were felt in the rich nations, whose urban air and rivers were poisoned, shortening the lives of the poor. The wealthy removed themselves to places they had not trashed. Later, the rich countries discovered they no longer needed smokestack industries: through finance

and subsidiaries, they could harvest the wealth manufactured by dirty business overseas.

Some of the pollutants were both invisible and global. Among them was carbon dioxide, which did not disperse but accumulated in the atmosphere. Partly because most rich nations are temperate, and partly because of extreme poverty in the former colonies caused by centuries of looting, the effects of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases are felt most by those who have benefited least from their production. If the talks in Glasgow are not to be experienced as yet another variety of oppression, climate justice should be at their heart.

The wealthy nations, always keen to position themselves as saviours, have promised to help their former colonies adjust to the chaos they have caused. Since 2009, these rich countries have pledged \$100bn (£75bn) a year to poorer ones in the form of climate finance. Even if this money had materialised, it would have been a miserly token. By comparison, since 2015, the G20 nations have spent \$3.3tn on subsidising their fossil fuel industries. Needless to say, they have failed to keep their wretched promise.

In the latest year for which we have figures, 2019, they provided \$80bn. Of this, just \$20bn was earmarked for “adaptation”: helping people adjust to the chaos we have imposed on them. And only about 7% of these stingy alms went to the poorest countries that need the money most.

Instead, the richest nations have poured money into keeping out the people fleeing from climate breakdown and other disasters. Between 2013 and 2018, the UK spent almost twice as much on sealing its borders as it did on climate finance. The US spent 11 times, Australia 13 times, and Canada 15 times more. Collectively, the rich nations are surrounding themselves with a climate wall, to exclude the victims of their own waste products.

But the farce of climate finance doesn't end there. Most of the money the rich nations claim to be providing takes the form of loans. Oxfam estimates that, as most of it will have to be repaid with interest, the true value of the money provided is around one third of the nominal sum. Highly indebted nations are being encouraged to accumulate more debt to finance their

adaptation to the disasters we have caused. It is staggeringly, outrageously unfair.

Never mind aid, never mind loans; what the rich nations owe the poor is reparations. Much of the harm inflicted by climate breakdown makes a mockery of the idea of adaptation: how can people adapt to temperatures higher than the human body can withstand; to repeated, devastating cyclones that trash homes as soon as they are rebuilt; to the drowning of entire archipelagos; to the desiccation of vast tracts of land, making farming impossible? But while the concept of irreparable “loss and damage” was recognised in the [Paris agreement](#), the rich nations [insisted](#) that this “does not involve or provide a basis for any liability or compensation”.

By framing the pittance they offer as a gift, rather than as compensation, the states that have done most to cause this catastrophe can position themselves, in true colonial style, as the heroes who will swoop down and rescue the world: this was the thrust of Boris Johnson’s [opening speech](#), invoking James Bond, at Glasgow: “We have the ideas. We have the technology. We have the bankers.”

But the victims of the rich world’s exploitation don’t need James Bond, nor other white saviours. They don’t need Johnson’s posturing. They don’t need his skinflint charity, or the deadly embrace of the bankers who fund his party. They [need to be heard](#). And they need justice.

- George Monbiot is a Guardian columnist
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**OpinionCrime**

# The British army has serious questions to answer about the alleged killing of Agnes Wanjiru

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)





Officer cadets at Sandhurst. ‘One servicewoman told MPs she found living in army mess accommodation more dangerous than being deployed overseas.’ Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

Thu 4 Nov 2021 11.50 EDT

The last time 21-year-old [Agnes Wanjiru](#) was seen alive in public, she was leaving a hotel bar with two soldiers.

Her body was found by a hotel worker two months later, stuffed into a nearby septic tank, naked but for her bra. The mother of a five-month-old baby, Agnes was a hairdresser who turned to sex work to support herself and her daughter, and had gone to the hotel expecting it to be full of partying British soldiers. An inquest later concluded that one or more of them must have killed her.

According to the Sunday Times, which has been [doggedly investigating](#) this tragedy for weeks, a man identifiable only as Soldier X has been separately named by at least four colleagues as the culprit; he is said to have confessed that night to killing a woman, leading appalled fellow soldiers to her body. One of them claims to have reported Soldier X to senior officers but not been taken seriously. Grotesquely, what happened that night was such an open secret that soldiers reportedly joked about it on Facebook, with nudge-

nudge references to septic tanks and “ghosts”. The rumour in the regiment was that Agnes had been accidentally choked to death in a sex game, but that story does not explain the stab wound found on her body.

If a woman was allegedly killed by a soldier in a British garrison town today, hopefully no effort would be spared to uncover the truth. But Agnes didn’t die in Colchester or Catterick. She was Kenyan, and she died in March 2012 near her home in Nanyuki, where the British army has long had a training base; a poor black woman in a faraway country whose death could apparently be brushed all too easily under the carpet. Her [sister Rose said](#) that “if Agnes had killed a white man, by now I wouldn’t even know where she is jailed. But whoever killed her went free and is living his life”.

In Nanyuki, complaints about the behaviour of British soldiers are reportedly prone to fall on mysteriously deaf ears. Kenya’s government [relies on British military assistance](#) in the fight against the Islamist terror group al-Shabaab, giving it a clear incentive not to embarrass its ally. Only after several weeks of Agnes’s face on British front pages did her family secure a promise that the Kenyan police investigation into her death would be reopened, and the killer hopefully [brought to trial](#).

Could her death become a broader tipping point for one of the few male-dominated institutions yet to face a reckoning over sexual violence? This week, Ministry of Defence sources briefed that army top brass would face a dressing down over “conduct and culture”, with the defence secretary, Ben Wallace, [reported to be keen](#) to “drive out unacceptable behaviour at all levels, particularly with respect to the treatment of women”. Wallace, a former captain in the Scots Guards, is said to have been alarmed by a series of scandals including Agnes’s death but also the suicide of a female cadet at Sandhurst, [Olivia Perks](#), who was also only 21. An inquest next year is expected to examine claims that she had spent the night with a senior officer and was afraid of being disciplined.

But these cases may be only the tip of the proverbial iceberg. The Tory MP Sarah Atherton, herself a former soldier in the Intelligence Corps, led a [remarkable investigation](#) earlier this year into the experiences of servicewomen and female veterans, for which the Ministry of Defence waived rules forbidding serving soldiers testifying to such inquiries.

Atherton's committee uncovered harrowing accounts of gang-rape, sexual assault, groping and exploitation. One servicewoman told MPs she found living in mess accommodation more dangerous than being deployed overseas. Others recalled contests to "bag the woman" on camp or aboard ships, and senior officers brushing complaints under the carpet to protect their own reputations. If this is what rogue soldiers do to their own female colleagues, how might they treat civilian women – often desperate or vulnerable – who they encounter on operations far from home?

In the wake of Sarah Everard's rape and murder at the hands of a police officer, some officers [talked of a policing culture](#) where predatory men went unchecked because female colleagues who complained were at best ostracised, and at worst afraid of nobody coming to their rescue if they were attacked on duty. Now imagine being a female soldier, knowing that in combat your life depends on your unit having your back, agonising over whether to report sexual harassment by one of them. The very phrase "closing ranks" comes from a battlefield tactic, and even today, military capability depends on units becoming so close-knit that soldiers are willing to die for each other. But if the culture that may have shielded Agnes Wanjiru's killer is to change, the armed forces must make it safe for them to expose rogues in their midst.

Memories will have faded over the nine years since Agnes's death, but surely not enough to make a fair trial impossible. There is no excuse now for not granting her family the justice they have long been denied. But almost as important is an explanation of *why* it was denied; who knew what really happened that night in Nanyuki, how it was covered up, and what the Ministry of Defence will do to ensure such a thing never happens again.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist
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**Opinion**[Owen Paterson](#)

## This Conservative sleaze row will soon matter to voters too

[Polly Toynbee](#)



Owen Paterson, who announced his resignation from politics today.  
Photograph: House of Commons/PA

Thu 4 Nov 2021 13.06 EDT

Corruption, chaos and calamitous party misjudgment finally led to [Owen Paterson's resignation](#) over breaking lobbying rules. Boris Johnson's blatant attempt to put himself in control of parliamentary standards, abolishing an independent system that was investigating Paterson, caused well over 100 of his own MPs to rebel. There is sympathy for Paterson. He is a man still mourning the loss of his wife, a fact he referenced in his resignation letter. But the trajectory of today's events appears to have had little to do with that sympathy or to suggest particular regard for Paterson personally: it's reported that he was never even warned of the U-turn that ditched him.

Who forced this humiliating reverse? What fright sent [the wretched Jacob Rees-Mogg](#) out to eat an unfamiliar dollop of humble pie? Following a wave of anger from within his own party and renewed cries of "Tory sleaze", the prime minister abandoned plans to overhaul the parliamentary standards system – one that had just found the former Northern Ireland secretary in breach of parliamentary rules by [lobbying for companies](#) that were [paying him over £100,000 a year](#).

The filthy miasma steaming off the Thames at Westminster had even choked up some of the government's loudest cheerleaders. The Daily Mail blasted across its front page, "Shameless MPs sink back into sleaze". Its leader was lethal: "So now we know the lengths to which a venal political class will go to protect its own." The Times leader was fierce: "It would be good for parliamentary democracy if this time [the prime minister] were made to pay a price." The Sun said: "The Tories have made a big mistake changing parliament's rules to save Owen Paterson's job", when it was "obvious the veteran MP's antics were out of order". When only the Pravda Telegraph stood by its party with a glowingly friendly interview with Paterson, the government had run out of shamelessness.

Was it the defection of their friendly press that tipped the scales against him? Ben Page, chief executive of Ipsos Mori, says: "Knowing No 10, they will have focus-grouped it." Those groups may have suggested in advance that it

would have no cut-through, but then came the jolting headlines. “It sticks two fingers up at the electorate,” warned the Mail. But will that show up in the polls? That’s the impossible question: how much does Johnson’s electorate care about these democratic disgraces?

Pollsters, political academics and Westminster observers have given up predicting when some “tipping point” might come; when the scales fall from voters’ eyes and they suddenly realise they have elected a gang of crooks, liars and cheats. “It’s priced in with Boris,” says Rob Ford, professor of politics at Manchester University, “as it was for [former Italian prime minister] Silvio Berlusconi. It was very different with John Major who stood as Back-to-Basics Honest John.”

Brazen it out, that seemed to be the Tory way. Business secretary Kwasi Kwarteng opened his flailing pitch on the Today programme with the jaw-dropping claim that his government was only “trying to restore integrity and probity in public life”. Chris Bryant, Labour MP and chair of the committee on standards, did not appear to be exaggerating one iota when he said this smacks of Putin’s Russia. Labour’s refusal to take part in Johnson’s new rigged system killed it at birth.

Until now nothing the non-stick prime minister has done has alienated his supporters. Professor Bobby Duffy, director of the King’s College Policy Institute, puts it like this: “Voters are like an 800lb gorilla sitting quietly in the corner getting on with their lives and eating their leaves … until suddenly that gorilla sits up and notices you, and then you’re in real trouble.” Yet Duffy doesn’t know when that “noticing” happens. “It builds over time. I’m astounded the Tories haven’t been noticed yet.”

Think how many political shocks have been absorbed already: proroguing parliament was a constitutional outrage; so was absolving Dominic Cummings of breaking Covid rules; and so was ignoring how Priti Patel’s bullying broke the ministerial code, causing Alex Allan to resign as Johnson’s adviser on standards. The panel selecting the next head of the broadcasting regulator, Ofcom, was dismissed so that the prime minister could try to shoehorn “not appointable” ex-Mail editor Paul Dacre into the job. Details of lush Covid contracts for pals of Tory ministers are still to unravel.

So most of Johnson's MPs, many who are themselves taking fat lobbying fees, all thought there was nothing to stop him abolishing the investigations system. The independent parliamentary commissioner for standards, [Kathryn Stone](#), was dead right to stand her ground after previous resignations had had zero impact.

On and on it goes, unless or until voters decide enough is enough. Might that be when, as Ford puts it, voters who priced in Johnson's bad faith decide: "It's one thing to suspect your wife is having an affair, but quite another to find her in bed with your best friend." That recognition of betrayal, according to pollsters, is unlikely to come as a result of any one of these outrages to democracy. Expectations of MPs are already very low: as Page's veracity index shows, only 15% of voters trusted them last year. So those offences only join the steady drip of charges. And what about those pledges of a high-wage, high-skilled, levelled-up future where Brexit delivers a £350m-a-week bounty to the NHS? That nirvana is not where the country is heading, so will there be a backlash when those promises are not met?

In the real world, prospects are worsening by the week. The latest bad news comes in the [Resolution Foundation's report](#) that, in this parliament, voters can expect the weakest annual growth in disposable household income since records began, just 0.1% or possibly zero. Now add in NHS waiting lists, which will remain high. When people find their earnings falling badly short, the lipstick may rub off the pig they elected, as they start to notice that the filth he wallows in really does stink.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

## 2021.11.05 - Around the world

- [Migration Greece accused of ‘biggest pushback in years’ of stricken refugee ship](#)
- [Ethiopia Nine factions to form alliance against government](#)
- [British Airways Owner warns of €3bn loss as it pins hopes on transatlantic travel revival](#)
- [‘I love you in your madness’ Crisis-hit Lebanon unveils slogan in bid to lure back tourists](#)
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## Migration and development

# Greece accused of ‘biggest pushback in years’ of stricken refugee ship



Refugees rescued from the Murat 729 in a migrant camp on Kos, Greece, on 31 October. Photograph: AP

Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Helena Smith](#) in Athens

Fri 5 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

It was hailed as the biggest search-and-rescue operation in the eastern Mediterranean for a decade. But the bid to save hundreds of refugees on a stricken ship in the Aegean Sea has led to allegations that the operation bore all the hallmarks of an illegal pushback before the Greek coastguard was forced to change tactics.

Only [days after 382 asylum seekers disembarked](#) on the island of Kos, criticism has mounted over their “unnecessarily prolonged” ordeal at sea.

Dr Apostolos Veizis, who heads the humanitarian aid organisation Intersos Hellas, said: “These were men, women and children seeking protection and they should have been taken to a safe port after the vessel sent out a distress signal.

“The nearest port was just a few miles away. Instead, they were kept on the vessel for four days, an unnecessarily prolonged period without access to basic services.”

The Turkish-flagged Murat 729 had been heading for Italy when it ran into engine trouble off Crete and issued a mayday call on 28 October.

Onboard were Pakistanis, Afghans, Bangladeshis, Syrians, Iranians and Lebanese – the biggest single influx of asylum seekers in years – taking a route that has become increasingly popular for Europe-bound refugees. More than 100 vessels, ranging from yachts to decommissioned cargo ships such as the Murat, are thought to have traversed the sea south of Crete this year.

By 8.30am that day, Tommy Olsen, who runs Aegean Boat Report, a Norwegian NGO that monitors people movement in the area, had received the first pictures and videos from passengers asking for help.

“You could see the boat drifting off the island and a Hellenic coastguard patrol alongside it,” he told the Guardian from his home in Tromsø, north of the Arctic Circle. “It was packed with people and the shores of Crete were clearly visible.”

What puzzled Olsen, who claims to be contacted by people in distress – “the victims of pushbacks” he says – up to 10 times a week, was the refusal of local authorities to accept they had located the vessel.

“Why Greek officials would insist they had not found the boat and then begin towing it away from Crete seemed very strange,” added Olsen, a veteran of migrant solidarity work on frontline Aegean islands. “It instantly made me think that what we were in fact seeing was not just another pushback but the biggest pushback in years.”

Hauled in the direction of [Turkey](#), the stricken ship spent the next three days being dragged across the high seas by the Greek coastguard.

“Every hour I’d get the boat’s geo-locations and you could see it going back and forth,” he said. “From 2pm on Thursday until the early hours of Sunday when the passengers were permitted to disembark it travelled 500km [300 miles]. All that time people were sending messages that they weren’t even being given water and that some were very sick.”

Greek authorities first acknowledged the Murat on Friday 29 October, saying it was in international waters off Crete and that Athens had appealed to Turkey to take it back.

The freighter's appearance had come against a backdrop of escalating tensions between the two countries over irregular migrant flows.

Friction has risen as boats carrying migrants and refugees have set out, reportedly unhindered, from the Turkish coast despite Ankara agreeing to prevent illegal flows under a deal with the EU in 2016.

Since March 2020, when Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, encouraged thousands of migrants to enter Greece – triggering a crisis that would see the EU scramble to reinforce its land and sea borders – the Aegean has allegedly become a theatre for pushbacks, with human rights groups claiming that thousands have been forcibly moved into Turkish waters before getting the chance to apply for asylum.

“What is of particular concern in this case is that the government was attempting to return people who wanted to seek asylum in Greece before an asylum procedure had taken place,” said Minos Mouzourakis at Refugee Support Aegean, an NGO offering legal assistance to refugees and asylum seekers. “That is a breach of EU law and fundamental rights.”

Pushbacks were among the issues at the top of the agenda when the Greek migration minister, Notis Mitarachi, held talks in Ankara this week.

Kyriakos Mitsotakis's centre-right government in Greece has vigorously rejected the claims about pushbacks – attributing them in large part to Turkish propaganda – but the leader accepts his administration pursues “tough but fair” border management policies securing the EU's external frontier.

Explaining the length of time needed to bring the cargo ship “to safe anchorage”, migration ministry officials in Athens laid the blame squarely with Ankara's refusal to respond to repeated requests for the vessel to be sent back.

But critics contend that the odyssey the refugees were subjected to, as the standoff unfolded, is also at odds with the Greek government's version of events. Shortly after the asylum seekers were brought ashore, Mitarachi praised the Hellenic coastguard, saying: "Greece stepped up, providing immediate humanitarian support to people in need as we always do."



People rescued from the Murat 729 are registered in a camp on Kos after spending four days at sea while Greece tried to persuade Turkey to take them back. Photograph: AP

Aid groups, piecing together the sequence of events, believe it was logistically impossible to push the ship back because it was so big and would have required the Greek coastguard also entering Turkish waters. Once it became clear a pushback was impossible, Athens resorted to appealing to Turkey, said Olsen, whose organisation is among a network of NGOs accused by Greek officials of aiding and abetting people smugglers – allegations he strongly rejects.

"We now know there were 136 children among the passengers and people with special needs," said Veizis. "Instead of the Greek coastguard, which is a rescue service, bringing them to safety, the government chose to keep them onboard and move them around as it tried to come to a deal with Turkey. Deals are for business, not humans seeking international protection."

It was, he insisted, the lack of safe and legal passage to Europe that was forcing so many to seek such dangerous routes.

Installed in their barbed wire-encircled reception centre in Kos, those onboard the Murat will be given the right to apply for asylum. The process is not expected to be easy: all must undergo 14 days of quarantine even if none, so far, have tested positive for Covid-19. On Wednesday, coastguard officials began taking their details.

Already Mitarachi has made clear his intentions. Announcing a meeting with the ambassadors of Pakistan and Bangladesh next week, the migration minister said he would request the return of all who were undeserving of asylum to their home countries. Pakistani and Bangladeshi nationals accounted for 252 of the ship's passengers.

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## Ethiopia

# Alliance of Ethiopian factions puts government at risk of overthrow



Tigray forces in northern Ethiopia. Photograph: AP

*Dan Sabbagh*

Fri 5 Nov 2021 12.58 EDT

Nine anti-government factions in [Ethiopia](#) have said they had formed an alliance amid growing fears that they will attempt to overthrow the government of Abiy Ahmed by marching on the country's capital, Addis Ababa.

The alliance, the United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces, includes Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF) and brings together members of previously rival ethnic groups, including the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA).

“There is no limit for us,” Berhane Gebrechristos, a former foreign minister and Tigray official, told reporters at an event announcing the alliance in Washington. “Definitely we will have a change in Ethiopia before Ethiopia implodes.”

Late on Friday, the UN security council called for a ceasefire, expressing “deep concern” over the escalation of fighting.

“Today the security council breaks six months of silence and speaks again with one united voice on the deeply concerning situation in Ethiopia,” Ireland’s UN ambassador Geraldine Byrne Nason said in a statement.

“For the first time, the council clearly calls for a cessation of hostilities. We believe this should happen immediately, and that all civilians must be protected,” she said.

The US, meanwhile, advised its citizens to “leave the country as soon as possible” on Friday, and warned that the “security environment is very fluid”. People had multiple options to leave via commercial flights, the state department added.

Ethiopia’s government on Friday called the alliance “a publicity stunt, asserting that some of the groups involved “are not really organizations that have any traction.” It also asserted that life in the capital had a “sense of normalcy” and rejected any notion of a siege.

But there is a growing sense of anxiety in the capital, with people panic buying goods and some fearful that the TPLF, which was the leading force in Ethiopia until 2018, would return to power in the country. Tigrayans living in the capital are also being subject to detention.

The United Front said it was being formed “to reverse the harmful effects of the Abiy Ahmed rule on the peoples of Ethiopia and beyond”, the groups said. It is also being formed “in recognition of the great need to collaborate and join forces towards a safe transition in the country”.

Abiy’s spokesperson, Billene Seyoum, when asked about the new anti-government alliance, referred to a comment she posted on Twitter in which

she defended Abiy's rule since he took office in 2018 after a wave of protests against the then TPLF-led government. His party was re-elected in June.

"The opening up of the political space three years ago provided ample opportunity for contenders to settle their differences at the ballot box in June 2021," Seyoum said in the post.

The emergence of the United Front is the latest development in a year-long war, in which the Ethiopian government and its allies have been on the defensive since June. Last weekend the TPLF and the OLA said they had seized towns 200 miles north of Addis.

It prompted Abiy to declare a state of emergency on Tuesday, a couple of days after he had called for citizens to take up arms to defend themselves, in a Facebook posting that was [subsequently removed by the social media giant](#) for "inciting and supporting violence".

The other seven groups in the alliance are less well known, and their overall military capability is uncertain as the bloody civil war continues to rage.

Tens of thousands have died in the conflict, which has seen accusations of massacres, sexual violence and human rights abuses on both sides – although a media and internet ban in Tigray has meant information about the conflict has been scant.

Humanitarian agencies are also largely unable to operate in the region, with the UN complaining that only a small proportion of aid is able to get through. Tigrayan leaders accuse Ethiopia of trying to starve its population, claims denied by the government in Addis.

However, this week, a joint [UN-Ethiopian report](#) on the conflict provided first-hand accounts of a string of human rights violations, some of which "may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity", according to Michelle Bachelet, the UN high commissioner for human rights.

The commissioner said "the majority of the violations" between November 2020 and June 2021 appeared to have been committed by Ethiopian forces

and their Eritrean allies. But since the Tigrayan counter-offensive had started, Bachelet added that there were “an increasing number of allegations of human rights abuses by Tigray forces”.

African and western nations have called for an immediate ceasefire. The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, said in a tweet late on Thursday: “The conflict in Ethiopia must come to an end. Peace negotiations should begin immediately without preconditions in pursuit of a ceasefire.”

US senators on Thursday introduced a new sanctions bill on parties to the conflict in Ethiopia. “This is a regional crisis that requires a coordinated and intensive international response,” said Senator Jim Risch, a Republican from Idaho.

The announcement of the alliance comes during a two-day visit to Addis Ababa by the US special envoy to the Horn of Africa, Jeffrey Feltman.

On Thursday, he met the African Union Commission chairperson, Moussa Faki, as well as the Ethiopian defence minister, finance minister and deputy prime minister, according to the state department. It was not clear whether the US envoy would meet Abiy.

*Agencies contributed to this report.*

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## International Airlines Group

# BA owner says US flights nearly full but warns of €3bn loss



The British Airways owner, IAG, reported a €485m loss for its third quarter, the key summer period between July and September. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

*[Gwyn Topham](#) and [Mark Sweney](#)*

Fri 5 Nov 2021 12.08 EDT

British Airways' owner, IAG, has said it is pinning its hopes on the revival of transatlantic travel next week, as it warned that pandemic disruption would drive a loss of €3bn (£2.6bn) for 2021.

The IAG chief executive, Luis Gallego, said the reopening of the US border to foreign nationals from Monday was a “pivotal moment for our industry”.

BA said its planes to the US, its biggest market, would be nearly full next week, and the airline would restore more services as UK leisure travellers

are allowed into America for the first time since in March 2020. Bookings have surged since the Biden administration announced it would relax the Covid-19 restrictions in September.

The airline's chief executive, Sean Doyle, said the signs were "very encouraging in terms of the demand for travel ... Bookings have been up 167% since the announcement came out."

While families and friends trips would push "very high load factors next week as the market opens up", Doyle said that BA was also seeing corporate or business travel pick up in bookings from both the UK and the US.

IAG, whose airlines also include Iberia and Aer Lingus, reported a €485m loss for its third quarter, the key summer period between July and September. It was lower than expected and less than the €1.3bn loss in the same period last year. An annual loss of €3bn would be lower than the €4.3bn deficit reported in 2020.

Passenger capacity in the third quarter hit 43% of levels achieved before the pandemic in 2019 – almost double the 21.9% recorded in the previous quarter – with the final three months of the year forecast to hit 60% of pre-pandemic capacity.

"There is a significant recovery under way, we continue to capitalise on surges in bookings when travel restrictions are lifted," Gallego said. "All our airlines have shown improvements."

In October, the government gave the industry a boost by moving to cut the number of countries on the "red list", which has the toughest restrictions, including 10 days of quarantine, from 54 to seven. All remaining countries [were removed from the list on Monday](#).

Coronavirus testing rules were also simplified last month, with PCR tests, which cost about £75 each on average, for international travellers scrapped in favour of cheaper and easier lateral flow tests.

Gallego said that "premium leisure" travel has proved to be a strong theme among travellers aiming to finally enjoy a holiday abroad, while there were

also signs of recovery in business trips.

“Long-haul traffic has been a significant driver of revenue, with bookings recovering faster than short haul as we head into the winter,” he said. “Premium leisure is performing strongly at both Iberia and British Airways and there are early signs of a recovery in business travel.”

IAG reported €2.7bn in passenger and cargo revenue in the third quarter, almost triple the €750m in the same period last year.

The company said that operating cashflow in the third quarter was positive for the first time since the start of the pandemic and is targeting a return to profitability in 2022, possibly as early as the second quarter.

Gallego said that BA’s plans to restart operations at Gatwick airport, serving primarily short-haul leisure routes, under a new BA-branded subsidiary were moving forward again after stalling in early talks with unions.

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Doyle added: “We succeeded in negotiating the flexibility and the competitiveness we need with our crew agreements and we are now working through the final stages of negotiations with our ground staff and with Gatwick airport, but we’ll be firming up our plans imminently in the coming weeks.”

Shares in IAG, which expects capacity overall this year to be 37% of 2019 levels, fell 1.5% in early trading on Friday morning but rebounded to be up 4% by mid-afternoon.

Analysts said recovery would be slow. Russ Mould, an investment director at AJ Bell, said IAG was “still stuck on the runway” and could not point to a return to profitability in 2022 with any degree of confidence.

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## Lebanon

# ‘I love you in your madness’: Crisis-hit Lebanon unveils slogan in bid to lure back tourists



Lebanon is suffering one of the deepest depressions of modern history, with Beirut’s famed nightclubs and other industries hit by lost tourism during Covid-19. Photograph: Hassan Ammar/AP

*Reuters*

Fri 5 Nov 2021 00.34 EDT

Lebanon’s tourism minister has announced a new slogan for the crisis-swept country that aimed to portray the precarity of life there as a point of pride, roughly translating to “I love you in your madness”.

Lebanon is suffering a financial and economic meltdown which the World Bank has labelled as [one of the deepest depressions](#) of modern history,

compounded by the Covid-19 pandemic and a [massive explosion at Beirut's port](#) that destroyed large parts of the city and killed more than 215 people.

“This will be our touristic identity that the world will see,” tourism minister Walid Nassar said at a news conference on Thursday with other senior ministers in Beirut.

The slogan was developed cost-free for Lebanon by Dubai-based advertising company TBWA, he said.

TBWA chief creative officer Walid Kanaan said it was “near-impossible” to find ways to market a country in the grip of multi-layered economic and political crises, but that he had found inspiration in Lebanon’s people.

“This is our country, a crazy country, crazy in its nightlife, crazy in its food and generosity. And no matter how crazy the situation in Lebanon is, we can only say, ‘we love you in your madness’,” Kanaan said, unveiling the slogan.

Originally a lyric in a song by Lebanese star singer Fairuz released before the outbreak of Lebanon’s 1975-90 civil war, the new catchphrase will be displayed on planes of Lebanon’s national carrier Middle East Airlines and used in social media campaigns, Kanaan said.

The official English translation will be “A crazy love”. Tourism, historically a major component of Lebanon’s economy, has dramatically declined since late 2019.

Some 2 million tourists visited the country in 2018, according to the former tourism minister, while media reports citing official figures suggest that numbers fell to a few hundred thousand in 2020.

Thousands of employees in the country’s food, beverage and hotel industry have been laid off and hundreds of hotels and restaurants have closed, industry representatives have said.

The slogan received immediate pushback from prime minister Najib Mikati. “If the ministers allows, ‘in your madness we love you’ - Lebanon is not mad – maybe the way it was managed led to that,” the three-time prime minister said.

Responding to Mikati’s comments, Nassar told Reuters the slogan was “bold, because Lebanese go to the extremes a lot.”

“We are extreme in everything,” he said.” In love, in hate, in patriotism. We take everything to the extreme.”

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## Prince Andrew

# US judge sets January hearing for Prince Andrew lawyers in Virginia Giuffre case



Prince Andrew, 61, was sued by Virginia Giuffre, 38, for unspecified damages in August. Andrew has denied Giuffre's claims. Photograph: John Thys/AFP/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Thu 4 Nov 2021 17.08 EDT

A US federal judge in New York on Thursday scheduled a 4 January hearing where lawyers for Britain's [Prince Andrew](#) are expected to argue for a dismissal of Virginia Giuffre's lawsuit accusing the Duke of York of sexually abusing her when she was under 18.

US district judge Lewis Kaplan in Manhattan issued the scheduling order one day after saying he expected Giuffre's civil case to [go to trial](#) between

September and December 2022, provided it is not settled or dismissed.

Giuffre, 38, sued Andrew for unspecified damages in August.

She accused Queen Elizabeth's second son of forcing her to have sex, more than two decades ago at the London home of British socialite [Ghislaine Maxwell](#), and abusing her at two homes belonging to the late financier and sex offender [Jeffrey Epstein](#).

Andrew, 61, has denied Giuffre's claims, and accused her of trying to profit from accusations against Epstein, whom Giuffre says also abused her, and people who knew him. The prince has not been charged with crimes.

Epstein killed himself in a Manhattan jail in August 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges. A medical examiner called his death a suicide.

Maxwell has pleaded not guilty to criminal charges relating to accusations that she helped recruit and groom underage girls for Epstein to abuse.

Her trial begins on 29 November in New York, where, separately on Thursday, her [lawyers argued](#) that she is subjected to such invasive surveillance in jail that it "rivals scenes of Dr Hannibal Lecter's incarceration" from the film *The Silence of the Lambs*.

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# Headlines

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## [Cop26](#)

# Poor countries at Cop26 concerned by G20's limited climate progress



G20 leaders will hold two days of talks with more than 100 other heads of state at Cop26 in Glasgow. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

*[Fiona Harvey](#) in Glasgow*

Mon 1 Nov 2021 03.00 EDT

The G20 is failing poor and vulnerable countries by not agreeing to a climate plan that would ensure their people's survival, leading figures at the [Cop26](#) climate talks have said.

Leaders representing more than a billion of the people most at risk from the climate crisis told the Guardian they were “extremely concerned” and had hoped for more from the [G20 summit](#) in Rome.

They said the prospect of limiting global heating to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, a vital threshold that [scientists say is a “planetary](#)

[boundary](#)”, was slipping away as the UN conference opened in Glasgow.

Gaston Browne, the prime minister of Antigua and Barbuda and chair of the Alliance of Small Island States, which represents 39 countries, said: “From what I’ve seen it appears we are going to overshoot 1.5C. We are very concerned about that. This is a matter of survival for us.”

He blamed the influence of powerful private-sector interests for the G20’s failure to come up with better plans, and said developed countries would also suffer the consequences of climate breakdown. “We are here to save the planet, not to protect profits. There are very powerful multinational firms and lobbies … who benefit from fossil fuel subsidies.”

The G20 produced what some analysts said was significant progress in Rome, with a pledge to reach net zero emissions by around the middle of century and take action this decade to [limit global heating to 1.5C](#), but poor countries said the promises were not accompanied by clear plans.

They urged the G20 leaders arriving in Glasgow for two days of talks with more than 100 other heads of state, which will be followed by nearly two weeks of talks among senior officials, to come up with more ambitious plans to cut greenhouse gas emissions. “I’m extremely worried, but despite the disappointment I’m still hopeful,” said Browne.

Sonam Wangdi, the chair of the Least Developed Countries group, which represents more than a billion people globally, said: “The progress is definitely not enough up to now. We are a long way from a 1.5C pathway. We need them to ramp up ambition. We have done our share, and we contributed least to the problem.”

At more than 1.5C of heating, many small islands face inundation from rising sea levels and fiercer storm surges, but Browne said developed countries were also at risk. “Many of them have coastal areas too,” he pointed out.

Steve Victor, the environment minister of Palau, said: “The G20 has lagged far behind where it must be to secure a safe future for the people of small

island developing states. This is not an abstract concept or political issue for us. The threat of climate change, to us, can't be overstated. We are now living it. The G20 makes up 80% of global emissions, they are the ones most critical for ensuring we can stay on a path to a 1.5C future.”

He said the G20 should agree to phase out coal, which it has failed to do, though it did agree to stop financing new coal development overseas. It should also halt fossil fuel subsidies, he added.

Bruce Billimon, the health minister of the Marshall Islands, said: “We live in a time in which the decisions we make will have impactful consequences in the future and coming generations, on our people’s health, wellbeing, safety and of course security.

“Already, at 1.1C, my country can feel the climate change effects, and beyond 1.5C, unquestionably, the people of the Marshall Islands and other vulnerable nations will be in peril. And the impacts will not only be felt in states like mine, but also, I believe it will be a ripple effect, thus in years to come all of the countries of the G20 as well.”

The UK said developing countries would have the opportunity on Monday to put these concerns to G20 leaders at a face-to-face meeting in Glasgow.

Officials from within the G20 felt that substantial progress had been made in Rome. “There has been a shift in the zeitgeist, recognising the need to look at the science and that we need to accelerate action in this crucial decade,” said one, adding that more progress could be expected at Cop26 on countries making moves away from coal, the dirtiest fossil fuel.

The G20 – which includes major fossil fuel producers such as Russia and Saudi Arabia that have long been hostile to climate action as well as the world’s biggest emitter, China – agreed to take action this decade on emissions, though they stopped short of pledging the 45% emissions cuts that scientists say are needed by 2030 to stick to the 1.5C limit.

Browne, however, said rich countries should aim to reach net zero by 2040 and developing countries by 2050.

Tom Burke, a co-founder of the green thinktank E3G, gave a positive assessment: “This is a shift from what they have previously said. The crucial words are on this decade. Previously they had only talked about 2050, which is too far away.

“This is an expression of a growing sense of urgency in the G20, driven by both events and science. This is a political signal that will add momentum to the cop and help in reaching agreement at cop. We were not expecting this language.”

Victor, however, said more was needed. “The message is simple. Show us your higher ambition. This decade is, perhaps, the decisive decade in history. If we fail to halve emissions by 2030, our chance to stay within the 1.5C limit will be lost, and with it the safe and secure future that the people of vulnerable countries deserve.”

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**Cop26**

# UN climate talks in Glasgow Cop26: India targets net zero by 2070 – as it happened

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[Cop26](#)

## Cop26 summit at serious risk of failure, says Boris Johnson

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'If Glasgow fails, the whole thing fails,' Boris Johnson warns before Cop26 – video

*[Peter Walker](#) in Rome, [Rowena Mason](#) and [Fiona Harvey](#) in Glasgow*

Sun 31 Oct 2021 15.50 EDT

The Cop26 climate summit is at serious risk of failure because countries are still not promising enough to restrict global temperature rises to below 1.5C, [Boris Johnson](#) has warned.

In a blunt admission after two days of preliminary talks at the [G20](#) meeting of world leaders, the prime minister conceded little progress had been made – and the conference is not on track to achieve a deal that keeps the goal alive. He put the chances of success as “six out of 10”.

“Currently, let’s be in no doubt, we are not going to hit it and we have to be honest with ourselves,” he said. The commitments being made so far were a “drop in the rapidly warming ocean”.

Johnson will set out the scale of the challenge facing humanity as he opens the [Cop26](#) leaders summit on Monday attended by almost 200 national representatives, including US president Joe Biden and India’s Narendra Modi, but missing key players such as China’s Xi Jinping and Russia’s Vladimir Putin.

He will tell gathered leaders that the world is at “one minute to midnight” in terms of keeping warming below 1.5C, with the UN predicting a rise of 2.7C on the current trajectory – which would lead to catastrophic consequences.

He gave his assessment after meetings with G20 leaders at a gathering in Rome, where he said their progress on climate change had only “inched forward”.

Only 12 of them have pledged to reach net zero emissions “by or around 2050”. Several key nations – China and Saudi Arabia – are only formally pledging to meet that goal by 2060.

The UK is also hoping for tougher pledges from countries for 2030, with experts warning emissions need to be halved by this date, when currently they are on course to rise by 15%. Australia, for example, set out a new 2050 net zero target this week, but did not make a headline commitment for this decade.

As hosts of Cop26, the UK has the significant role of encouraging and negotiating pledges from almost 200 countries, with many developing nations arguing developed nations have a responsibility to do much more as they have already profited from causing historical emissions.

After the leaders meet over the next two days, negotiators will work on texts with the hope of reaching a deal by 12 November.

Johnson may come back to the summit towards the end if it looks like an agreement may be within touching distance.

On the prospects of a deal that keeps to 1.5C, Johnson said: “It’s nip and tuck, it’s touch and go. We could do it, or we could fail by the middle of November.”

Following the G20, there was a sense of disappointment and some trepidation from No 10 about the outcome of the Glasgow summit, although Labour has accused the government of deliberately lowering expectations in order to declare victory if there is only a modestly improved deal at the end.

Speaking at a press conference, Johnson said pledges from countries to lower their emissions needed to be stronger. Experts believe that for 1.5C to

have a chance of success, countries need to make substantial and meaningful pledges of reductions by 2030 as well.

He will also ask for promises on phasing out coal, the move to electric vehicles, an end to deforestation, and finance – pledges of money to help developing nations deal with the climate emergency.

“The countries most responsible for historic[al] and present day emissions are not yet doing their fair share of the work,” Johnson said.

“If we are going to prevent Cop26 from being a failure, then that must change and I must be clear, that if Glasgow fails then the whole thing fails. The Paris agreement will have crumpled at the first reckoning.”

At the Paris agreement, made in 2015, world leaders committed to keeping the global temperature rise below 2C or as close to 1.5C as possible. Johnson said that agreement and “the hope that came with it” is currently “just a piece of paper”, which needed to be filled with “granular” pledges from every country.

Global average temperatures have already risen by 1.1C since the Industrial Revolution and only stringent emission cuts will prevent that increase from topping 1.5C.

Johnson said there were no “compelling excuses for our procrastination”, as the world has now seen firsthand the devastation that climate change causes – from heatwaves and droughts to wildfires and hurricanes.

His comments capped a weekend of at times dramatic language on climate change from Johnson, who told reporters travelling with him that he had been converted from previous scepticism following scientific briefings when he entered No 10.

Asked if a commitment in the G20’s end-of-summit communique to achieve carbon neutrality “around” the middle of the century was too vague, Johnson said he had hoped for more.

“I agree,” he said. “And that is a function really of the gap between some colleagues and others.”

Cop26 was going to be tricky, he said: “I’m not going to sugar coat it, I’m not going to pretend it’s other than it is. I think there’s a chance that we can make progress, everybody can see how to do it. It’s a question of will and leadership.”

Asked whether he had shown sufficient leadership given [last week’s budget](#), which froze fuel duty and cut levies for short-haul flights, and cuts to the aid budget, Johnson pointed to the UK’s achievements in cutting emissions, and targets for phasing out petrol and diesel cars.

Ahead of the summit, Downing Street said it would be contributing a further £1bn over five years to climate finance, taking its commitment from £11.6bn over five years in 2019 to £12.6 billion by 2025.

However, the pledged money will be drawn from the foreign aid budget, which Johnson’s government has slashed this year, and is contingent on the UK economy growing as forecast.

The G20 communique stressed the importance of fulfilling the commitment to provide \$100bn (£73bn) to help poor countries adapt to climate change. The UK has acknowledged that Cop26 is not going to meet the hoped-for \$100bn pledge this year.

The complex negotiations, which need to resolve more than 130 technical issues as well as the headline issue of “keeping 1.5 alive”, have already run into logistical trouble owing to Covid restrictions.

The main negotiating room has a capacity of 144 because of social distancing. Patricia Espinosa, the executive secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, said that “as we have 193 parties, that’s literally not enough”.

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## Brazil

# Jair Bolsonaro's security alleged to have used violence against Brazilian journalists at G20 - reports



Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro looks on as health workers join world leaders to pose for a group photo at the G20 summit in Rome. Photograph: Filippo Monteforte/AFP/Getty Images

*Reuters*

Sun 31 Oct 2021 23.45 EDT

Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro's security detail allegedly used violence against Brazilian reporters covering his trip to Rome for the G20 meeting, local media reported.

The alleged attacks against Brazilian reporters, who Bolsonaro has long accused of treating him unfairly and publishing fake news, capped a grim weekend for the right-wing president.

Videos from [G20](#) events on Sunday showed him as an isolated figure, who was not part of the photo taken at the Trevi fountain with world leaders. Out on the streets of Rome, he was loudly criticised for his handling of the country's brutal pandemic, with critics calling him "genocidal".

More than 600,000 people have [died from Covid-19 in Brazil](#), the second highest tally in the world after the United States. Bolsonaro has questioned the severity of the virus, shunned lockdowns, sowed vaccine doubts and pushed unproven cures. A Brazilian senate panel has recommended he be indicted for nine crimes related to his handling of the pandemic, including crimes against humanity.

Newspaper O Globo reported allegations that broadcast journalist Leonardo Monteiro of TV Globo was punched in the stomach and pushed by Bolsonaro's security after asking the president why he didn't attend any G20 events on Sunday. A video taken by UOL journalist Jamil Chade shows chaotic scenes with security staff jostling the press and Bolsonaro supporters chanting abuse at reporters.

Violência da polícia italiana e brasileira contra os jornalistas que acompanham Bolsonaro pelas ruas de Roma. Equipes agredidas, meu celular levado por um dos policiais e muita confusão.  
[pic.twitter.com/edYo7Xb1WV](https://pic.twitter.com/edYo7Xb1WV)

— Jamil Chade (@JamilChade) [October 31, 2021](#)

It was not clear if the security officers were Brazilian or Italian. O Globo reported that Italians had been given the job of providing security to Bolsonaro.

The president's office did not immediately respond to requests for comment on the alleged violence or why he was missing from the leaders' photo. The G20 press team also did not immediately respond to requests.

"Globo vehemently condemns the aggression against its correspondent Leonardo Monteiro and other colleagues in Rome and demands a complete assessment of responsibilities," TV Globo said in a statement.

Videos from the G20 events show Bolsonaro looking isolated.

The former army captain has seen his international support diminish since former US president Donald Trump lost his re-election bid, while Bolsonaro's skepticism toward Covid-19, vaccines and environmental concerns has won him few friends on the global stage.

In one video taken by Jamil Chade, Bolsonaro is seen striking up a conversation with Italian waiters as global leaders chat among themselves in the other part of the room.

“This video of Bolsonaro walking around alone in the G20 conference hall, while other world leaders are chatting, is painful to watch, but it adequately reflects the collapse of Brazil’s standing in the world,” Oliver Stuenkel, an international relations professor at the Getulio Vargas Foundation, a Brazilian university, tweeted.

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## 2021.11.01 - Spotlight

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Interview

## **Caroline Lucas on climate, consumerism and Cop26: ‘Boris Johnson is an absolute disaster’**

[Emine Saner](#)



Caroline Lucas outside the Houses of Parliament in London. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian



[@eminesaner](#)

Mon 1 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

If [Caroline Lucas](#) has always seemed an optimistic sort of politician, that outlook is being pushed to breaking point. Sitting through the budget last week was, says Lucas, “an unbelievable experience. It was like being in some weird parallel universe where there wasn’t a climate emergency, and we weren’t about to host the world’s nations at this big climate summit.”

It should have been a moment when the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, “was turbocharging the funding for the net zero programme”, says the Green party MP, ahead of the [Cop26](#) climate summit in Glasgow, which opened on Sunday. “It should have been the point where he reversed that unforgivable cut in aid, where we demonstrated some strong climate policies. Instead, the headlines were about cutting the cost of short-haul flights.”

Her voice rises. “It’s almost as if he was thinking: ‘What can I do to send the worst signal ahead of this Cop?’ If I were Alok Sharma [the president of [Cop26](#) and Conservative MP], I would be extremely angry because it feels as if he is being undermined by his own government.” She pauses, and gives

a brittle laugh. “So objectively, it’s quite hard, looking at the evidence, to feel optimistic.”

I had asked if Lucas felt positive about the summit, and she had given a long list of reasons why she didn’t – including the government’s slack approach to diplomacy, as host. She says Covid-19 has made it harder, but our efforts to get countries such as China on board still pale compared to what French politicians were doing ahead of the 2015 Paris conference. “We know that if you add up all of the different so-called nationally determined contributions – the individual countries’ assessment of how much they are going to cut their emissions by – that ought to be a minimum 45% cut by 2030. And if you add up what we’ve got so far, it’s leading to a 16% increase.

“So on the emissions reductions, we’re not there. On the finance, we’re not there. Since 2009, we’ve said we will be providing \$100bn to the developing countries by 2020, and we’ve still not got to that amount either.” On top of that, Lucas says, “The richer countries have not provided the [Covid] vaccines that they promised to poorer countries. I think the developing countries are going to arrive in Glasgow feeling incredibly let down.”

Still, she says, smiling as she speaks via Zoom from her home in Brighton, there are glimmers of hope. “The public pressure and movements are gathering like never before. We know the public want leadership on this – they want the government to go further, they are absolutely up for bolder and more ambitious action. I take some hope from that, but on the evidence right now, I think it’s not too late, but it’s going to be tough.”

Lucas has called Cop26 “our last best chance”. What will happen if it’s not successful? “This is the moment where it feels like public pressure and awareness is at its greatest. We know that this decade is going to be just about the most consequential in human history if we are serious about the existential threat that the climate crisis poses to humanity. But I’m also aware that if we don’t get a good result, it doesn’t mean we should all pack up, go home and give up. Every single fraction of a degree makes a difference in terms of climate impact, every single tonne of carbon emitted makes a difference. So we still have to keep fighting for the next best moment.”



Lucas addresses thousands of protesters outside the gate to the Cuadrilla fracking site in the village of Balcombe, Sussex, in 2013. Photograph: Kristian Buus/Corbis/Getty Images

Lucas also knows we are running out of “moments”. Her biggest fear is, “That we don’t act fast enough. That we exceed 1.5 degrees, that we get towards two degrees of warming and more of the extreme events that scientists have been warning are linked to the climate emergency really accelerate.” One of her favourite films is [Franny Armstrong's docudrama The Age of Stupid](#), set in 2055 – with its cities under floods or on fire, it looks more familiar this year than it did when it came out in 2009 – and she says a line from it still makes the hairs stand up on the back of her neck: ““Why is it, knowing what we knew then, we didn’t act when there was still time?” And frankly that is the question I go to bed thinking about, and wake up thinking about.”

Lucas was elected as the MP for Brighton Pavilion in 2010, and is still the country’s first and only Green MP. She grew up in Malvern, where her father ran a small business – her parents were “most definitely Conservatives” and politics wasn’t part of her childhood. “I came late to it,” she says. As a bookish child, she was most interested in poetry and novels; she went on to do a PhD in 16th-century literary romance.

In the early 80s, at university in Exeter, Lucas got involved with the anti-nuclear movement and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament (CND). “That’s what got me into politics more broadly,” she says. Although she never stayed at [Greenham Common](#), visiting the protest “was my kind of introduction to the broader political world”. When she worked in the CND bookshop in Exeter, Lucas read [Jonathon Porritt](#)’s book Seeing Green, “which put together concerns around the anti-nuclear movement with concerns around the women’s movement and poverty and environmental policies. For the first time in my life, I saw some of the connections. It was a sort of a lightbulb moment, coming across that book and realising there was actually a political party that linked to these different symptoms of a wider problem, which is basically an economic model that puts profit and growth above people and planet.”

One of the problems environmental campaigners face, apart from terrifying us, is how to sell the big changes we all – or at least those with affluent lifestyles – need to make. This is one of Lucas’s strengths, I think, because she is both clever and practical, and always seems pretty cheerful despite her dire warnings. On rampant consumerism, she says: “People are still going to need – and want – to consume things but there’s a lot of evidence to suggest that people get very frustrated, for example, when products have built-in obsolescence. A very popular policy that comes up again and again is a proper [right to repair](#).” It would be great to have repair cafes everywhere, she says, where you can get your broken toaster mended “while you’re having a coffee, chatting with friends”. Not upgrading your phone every other year, she says, “is not seriously going to undermine people’s quality of life, but will give us a better chance of a life that’s liveable for everybody into the future”.



Lucas, centre, with Labour MPs Clive Lewis, Nadia Whittome, Zarah Sultana and Claire Hanna, speaking to supporters of Labour's proposed low-carbon measures in London, October 2021. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

There are always ways to design fair policies “that people buy into”, she says. Take flying, for example. “The citizens’ assemblies came out really strongly for a frequent flyer levy. That means if you were to take one flight a year, it will be much the same price as it is now. But as soon as you start taking the second, third, fourth, fifth, the price ratchets up steeply – that reflects the fact that 70% of flights are taken by just 15% of the population. It’s a small number, relatively speaking, taking a hell of a lot of flights that is driving the biggest rise in emissions.”

What is frustrating, she says, is how so many of the policies that would also “get us off our current collision course with catastrophe” wouldn’t be about giving things up, but about improving life. “What is not to like about the vast majority of this agenda? Yet still we have governments who aren’t moving in the right direction.” The recently announced [heat and buildings strategy](#) – the one that said we should all have heat pumps – made Lucas furious, she says. Not only were the subsidies insufficient, but: “They put almost nothing into home insulation. It’s utterly inefficient and wasteful, and doesn’t work. If we had a comprehensive street-by-street, local authority-led

home insulation programme, that would get people's fuel bills down, improve people's health, get climate emissions down, create millions of jobs all around the country. There are so many win-wins." It was the same with other green initiatives. "It feels like you cannot underestimate this government's ability to balls up good ideas," says Lucas.

About Boris Johnson, she is scathing. "He's an absolute disaster as a prime minister. He doesn't do what is right, he does what he thinks is popular." On the Covid-19 crisis, "It has been so apparent that he waits until the last moment to act. He is utterly indecisive, doesn't want to be unpopular and doesn't want to take leadership. And, as a result, Britain has had one of the worst total death rates in the western world."

It also makes Johnson, Lucas believes, "uniquely ill-equipped to deal with a crisis like climate change, where you need public trust. At a time of crisis, whether that's Covid or climate, you need leaders who have integrity, consistency and courage. And those are three words I would not associate with Boris Johnson."

As for the conference speech made by the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, "You had to wait over an hour to get anything on climate and it felt like it was one issue among many that needed to be addressed. It wasn't the context within which all of those other announcements and decisions were being situated."

I'm not saying the Green Party has all the answers but we've been asking the right questions for a hell of a lot longer

The government's messaging is all over the place, says Lucas. In the summer, the Cop26 spokesperson, Allegra Stratton, was mocked for saying people should take small steps to combat climate change (she acknowledged it was not the whole answer) such as not rinsing dishes before putting them in the dishwasher. Lucas laughs, incredulous. "It insulted people's intelligence – people know that the actions we need have to be commensurate to the scale of the crisis. You cannot say that this is the greatest threat to humanity, and then [advise] not rinsing dishes before you put them in the dishwasher. It's the inconsistency that is so debilitating." When Lucas boards the train to Glasgow this week, she says it will cost her

four times more than if she were to take a cheap flight. “Lots of people aren’t in the privileged position I’m in to be able to say, ‘OK, in spite of that, I’ll go for that option.’ So let’s make it easier for people to do the right thing.”

Does she think there will be a Green government in her lifetime? She smiles. “Yes, I do. Because if there isn’t, then unless there’s a Damascene conversion of the other parties, the future is looking pretty grim. I’m not saying that the Green party is the only party that has the answers, but we’ve been asking the right questions for a hell of a lot longer.” The party is hampered by the voting system: “Clearly, a change in the voting system is what is necessary before Greens can take the position I would say we should rightfully have, if you look at the level of support for the party.” But it’s also a party with divisions over issues such as gender, as well as its frequent leadership changes – Lucas, who was leader between 2008 and 2012, is still probably its only recognisable face – and complicated internal democracy. It had record local election results this year, but the Green party still looks far from a meaningful power.



Lucas in 1998, demonstrating against genetically modified crops at Watlington, Oxfordshire. Photograph: Adrian Arbib/Alamy

What does she think of [Insulate Britain's](#) tactics? Last week, the protest group, which is campaigning to insulate all British homes by 2030, blocked roads on to the M25. “I think the tactics have become the story, so actually, we spend much less time talking about the need to insulate Britain and more time about whether or not it’s legitimate to take the actions they are doing,” says Lucas. “Although I’m absolutely a supporter of peaceful direct action, and have been [arrested and acquitted myself](#) for doing the same thing [in 2013 during a protest against fracking], I would feel more comfortable protesting on the issue of insulation outside the Treasury where they’ve got the money to be putting into those programmes, rather than on the M25 where motorists don’t have a lot of say over what policies get rolled out.”

One of the biggest lessons from her decades of environmental activism, she says, “is that change can sometimes happen very suddenly and in unpredictable ways”. Sometimes, change is almost overnight. One recent example was [the government’s U-turn over sewage spills](#) last week, placing a legal duty on water companies to reduce sewage discharges into rivers and the sea from storm overflows. “We were told it was absolutely impossible to change, that it will cost far too much and, in any case, the government’s policy was just fine. Then, within a matter of days, that changed. The thing that keeps you going is the idea that things can happen fast and sometimes you don’t know what will bring about that breakthrough.” Change, says Lucas, doesn’t have to be slow. Which is just as well.

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## Cop26

# ‘Time is running out’: your messages for world leaders at Cop26



Focus on the future Composite: Guardian/IPA/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Clea Skopeliti](#)*

Mon 1 Nov 2021 05.00 EDT

World leaders must commit to actions rather than promises, renewable energy rather than fossil fuels, and future security rather than present consumption, according to hundreds of messages from Guardian readers and supporters submitted to the [Cop26](#) climate summit.

As policymakers gather in Glasgow for the two-week summit, readers and supporters called for rapid divestment from fossil fuels, deeper investment in renewable energy and regenerative agriculture, and an end to the fixation on GDP as a measure of progress in society.

The summit, which culminates on 12 November, will consider concrete cuts to carbon emissions, following the 2015 Paris agreement in which nations [pledged to keep global temperature](#) rises to “well below” 2C above pre-industrial levels.

## Q&A

### **What is Cop26?**

Show

Cop stands for conference of the parties under the UNFCCC. This year is the 26th iteration, postponed by a year because of the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is being hosted by the UK in Glasgow.

For almost three decades, world governments have [met nearly every year](#) to forge a global response to the climate emergency. Under the 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), every country on Earth is treaty-bound to “avoid dangerous climate change”, and find ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions globally in an equitable way.

The conference officially opened on 31 October, and more than 120 world leaders will gather in the first few days – although Russia's Vladimir Putin and China's Xi Jinping were notable absentees. The leaders will then depart, leaving the complex negotiations to their representatives, mainly environment ministers or similarly senior officials. About 25,000 people are expected to attend the conference in total. The talks are scheduled to end at 6pm on Friday 12 November.

**Fiona Harvey** *Environment correspondent*

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

A callout asking readers and supporters what messages they would like to impress on world leaders as they head to Glasgow elicited more than 800 submissions from around the world. Hundreds of respondents implored

leaders to think about future generations and the burden they will bear as a cost of inaction.

Readers emphasised the need for people in richer countries to adapt their ways of living, while a number of messages urged world leaders to understand that the summit is humanity's "last chance" to implement meaningful climate solutions.

A sample of responses follows.

**'We need world leaders to commit to taking drastic action and to actually do it'**



Sachin Ganpat: 'Storms, droughts, rising seas – my children are going to suffer.'

"I live on the Caribbean island of Trinidad and Tobago. We, like the rest of the Caribbean, are paying the price for climate change even though we have contributed very little to it. Storms, droughts, rising seas – my children are going to suffer, not only for things you did but for the things you have avoided doing: reducing emissions and taking drastic action to prevent global warming. Where I live now is likely to be flooded out by rising seas in less than 100 years. It means my grandchildren are unlikely to continue to

live in our generational home – I'm the third generation to live here. The area we live in used to flood once every 10 years, now it's every year. In the Caribbean, it's become a waiting game every hurricane season. There is a sense of helplessness. We need you to commit to taking drastic action and to actually do it. There is no more time left to delay.”

**Sachin Ganpat, 44, IT professional, Trinidad and Tobago**

## ‘Treat the climate crisis as an emergency’



**Julie Parker: ‘Why are governments failing so spectacularly?’**

“Around the world, governments acted to treat the Covid-19 pandemic as an emergency. We saw the money they're prepared to invest in order to deal with the pandemic. We've not seen anything like a similar response for climate change, which, without a doubt is a much bigger threat to our future survival. Why are governments failing so spectacularly to treat the climate and ecological crises as the emergencies they are? These are the defining problems of our time. The planet is fast approaching cascading tipping points which threaten the stable climate our planet has known for thousands of years, and with it, life as we know it.”

**Julie Parker, early 60s, retired research scientist, Bristol, UK**

## ‘End the blind pursuit of GDP’



Melissa Kowara: ‘The very nature of GDP is that you always want more.’

“We have to acknowledge that blind pursuit of GDP is the root cause of the climate crisis. In the case of countries like Indonesia, where most people live outside of the GDP, in the informal sector, to talk about GDP constantly is actually destructive. Much of Indonesia’s GDP comes from extractive industries like palm oil and building infrastructure, which often relies on land-grabbing. This colonial-style economy is why we are in trouble – land use and deforestation is Indonesia’s number one contributor to greenhouse gases. By design, the pursuit of GDP is destructive. We know that it’s not possible to grow infinitely in a finite world, but the very nature of GDP is that you always want more. We must shift this distorted view of the economy.”

**Melissa Kowara, 32, wooden toy maker and climate activist, Jakarta, Indonesia**

**‘Stand up to multinationals and fossil fuel companies’**



Nick Gutkin: ‘Listen to young people, and give us a seat at the table.’

“Time is running out. The vast majority of politicians will not be alive to see the worst consequences of the climate crisis, but those of my generation are keenly aware that we will be the ones to deal with a crisis we did not create. If ever there has been a time for selflessness, for leadership in the face of adversity, it is now. Stand up to multinationals and fossil fuel companies, to corporate interests weaving their money into political campaigns. Tax and emissions loopholes allow the largest polluters, including fossil fuel companies, to move their emissions around and use smart accounting to hide their emissions and avoid accepting responsibility. Stand up to those that say capitalism is the only solution, and dare to think differently. Listen to young people, and give us a seat at the table like the rightful stakeholders we are.”

**Nick Gutkin, 26, intern at a carbon crediting company, Rotterdam, the Netherlands**

**‘Talk about fair distribution of our planet’s resources’**



Marianne Morild: ‘What are the dreams we can dream and what are the dreams that are someone else’s nightmare?’

“We need to talk about what it means for us in the global north to lower our standard of living in order to save the world’s resources. How can we bridge the gap between people’s expectations and the reality of what one planet can offer, for a fair distribution? What are the dreams we can dream and what are the dreams that are someone else’s nightmare? Does lowering our standard of living necessarily mean lower quality of life? I think we have to reconsider a lot of the things that we take for granted: fashion, travel, lifestyle choices like that. Things that perhaps Covid restrictions showed us that we could actually do without.”

**Marianne Morild, 49, artist, Bergen, Norway**

**‘Reduce animal agriculture’**



Hannah Howarth: ‘It is important to work closely with farmers to support them with any such changes.’

“Animal agriculture is one key area which is not sufficiently talked about. Globally, livestock use more than 80% of the world’s farmland and 56% of the greenhouse gas emissions from food. Reducing animal agriculture would have positive implications for food security, climate change, pollution and biodiversity. It would free up huge amounts of land which could then be rewilded. It is important to work closely with farmers to support them with any such changes. But we cannot keep ignoring this elephant in the room.”

**Hannah Howarth, 31, postgraduate student, France**

**‘Think about future generations’**



Fergus McAteer: ‘Young people see no future.’

“I don’t expect you who are reading this to care about me, beyond in the most abstract sense. I want you to think about your children instead. Your grandchildren. Your nephews. Your nieces. Anyone you personally know and love under the age of 30. I want you to think about how your actions will shape the world they inherit. I want you to think about how [people in power are] pushing us further to the end of human civilisation, the death of progress, and the extinction of almost every living thing on this globe. Young people see no future.”

**Fergus McAteer, 30, quality assurance engineer, Edinburgh, UK**

**‘Solving the climate crisis is a question of political will’**



**Andrew Payton: ‘End all fossil fuel extraction now, stop cutting down the world’s tropical forests.’**

“We live on a finite planet, and economic growth is no longer a viable measurement of success, especially when surplus wealth is concentrated into a few hands. We need to act more urgently than we have ever done anything as a species. End all fossil fuel extraction now, stop cutting down the world’s tropical forests, invest in renewable energy and regenerative agriculture. We need to invest the carbon budget into expanding renewable resources as quickly as possible, but also with drastic cuts in energy needs in the western world. It’s a matter of political will. We don’t have time for more of the same schemes, clever accounting, and broken promises – the future of all species is at stake and you are failing us.”

**Andrew Payton, 35, works in online education, Virginia, US**

**‘Time is running out – I want to see actions, not promises’**



Wellington Victor da Silva: ‘We’ve had a lot of summits but not a lot of action.’

“I want to see actions instead of beautiful and unrealistic promises, I want to see trees being planted, I want to see renewable energy sources and cutting emissions. While you are postponing real and concrete actions, my country is drying up, our forests are being consumed by hell-like flames, my body is being exposed to harmful temperatures, our animals are being extinguished at an unprecedented level. I want to see progress – it’s just a matter of time until the irreversible. We’ve had a lot of summits but not a lot of action. The current president has weakened environmental protections – Brazil needs laws to regulate agriculture, mining and logging in the Amazon.”

**Wellington Vitor da Silva, 21, software quality analyst, Londrina, Brazil**

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## The big ideaBooks

# The big idea: Is democracy up to the task of climate change?



Illustration: Elia Barbieri/The guardian

*[Rebecca Willis](#)*

*[@Bankfieldbecky](#)*

Mon 1 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

It's time to acknowledge a difficult truth: our democracies are failing us on the climate crisis. As world leaders meet for the crucial Glasgow summit, rhetorical commitments abound. But no government has a plan compatible with the goal that they have all agreed is critical to our collective future: limiting global average temperature rises to 1.5C. In some democracies, such as the UK, there is at least a consensus that something must be done; in others, such as Australia, Canada and the US, political debate rages over the most fundamental questions. Faced with a problem of these proportions, some are running out of patience. The veteran Earth scientist [James](#)

[Lovelock](#) puts his faith in eco-authoritarianism. Climate change is so severe, he has said, that “it may be necessary to put democracy on hold for a while”.

Lovelock may state this explicitly, but in my many years of work on climate policy and politics, I have been struck by how often people make the same argument implicitly. Bill Gates, in his breathlessly upbeat book [How to Avoid a Climate Disaster](#), describes how enlightened investment strategies from well-meaning entrepreneurs could save the day. No need to bother, he implies, with winning hearts, minds or votes. Then there are those who look approvingly towards China, a country where the very lack of democratic accountability, they argue, allows leaders to take tough and unpopular decisions. The common theme in all these accounts is that the public are not to be trusted – they do not understand, or care; they are too selfish, or too shortsighted. Better to let the experts decide.

Could it be that the problem here is not too much democracy, but too little?

Yet proposals for some sort of eco-authoritarianism raise more questions than they answer. How, exactly, do we move beyond democracy? Who appoints the experts? Scientists may have evidence at their disposal, but how would they make deeply social decisions about who wins and who loses? Under whose authority would they regulate, and how exactly would that regulation happen – how would laws be made? The best that can be said about these proposals is that they gloss over the complex realities of political, social and legal change.

There’s also the fact that authoritarian states have not performed better, historically. [A recent study by the University of Gothenburg’s V-Dem Institute](#) showed that autocratic regimes lag significantly on climate action. Given the economic and political might of China, we have to hope that they find a way to buck this trend – but it would be reckless, not to mention ethically dubious, to suggest China as a political role model on climate. Despite the considerable flaws in our democratic systems, the alternatives crumble under any sort of close inspection. It is hard to disagree with Churchill’s pithy summary that “democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others”.

My experience leads me to a very different conclusion to that of the eco-authoritarians. The data just doesn't support the picture of an uncaring or uninformed public. Research consistently shows high levels of concern about climate change, across different ages, demographic groups and parts of the world. Yet this concern is coupled with a deep mistrust in government and political elites, and a breakdown in the means by which people's priorities are translated into political action. To generalise, we have a population that is cynical yet concerned about the climate, frustrated with the inability of politicians to act decisively in the face of growing climate impacts.

If we designed a meaningful dialogue between citizens, experts and governments, would we get better outcomes?

Could it be that the problem here is not too much democracy, but too little? What if we were to begin with the assumption that people can and do make sensible decisions if they have the evidence and the influence that they need? That if we designed a meaningful dialogue between citizens, experts and governments, we would get better outcomes?

Just before Covid-19 struck last year, I was part of an incredible experiment that did just this. [Climate Assembly UK](#) was a citizens' assembly commissioned by parliament, bringing together a representative group of 108 citizens. Over a series of weekends, they learned about climate science, impacts and action; discussed and debated with experts and each other; and then voted on recommendations. The assembly's findings are a coherent, far-reaching set of proposals for tackling the climate emergency – created by a different sort of democratic body. Processes such as this aren't intended to replace our system of representative democracy, but to make it work better. They allow citizens and politicians alike to talk about what they need from each other.

Citizens' assemblies on the climate crisis have now taken place in Scotland, France, Denmark and some US states, as well as at a local level in many areas. They show the potential of a move to a more deliberative democracy – one which goes beyond the blunt instrument of a vote, toward an informed conversation.

But making democracy work better for the climate doesn't just mean hearing more from people. It means hearing less from those economic interests, such as oil majors and airlines, that have a stake in the high-carbon status quo. We've recently seen [corporations suing governments](#) under trade law, claiming that climate policy, passed by democratically elected parliaments, has damaged their profits and is therefore illegal.

US scientist [Michael Mann](#) has documented this "new climate war". He shows that denial of the scientific facts of climate change has been replaced with more complex, but equally insidious, attempts to delay or derail legislation. A key tactic, Mann shows, is to deflect attention away from the workings of big companies, and towards individuals, by saying that it is up to each of us to make the right choices, and reduce our carbon footprint. When this doesn't happen, it is a short step to blaming people for the state we are in, and undermining faith in the ability of democracies to handle the climate crisis.

What is necessary, then, is not to dispense with democracy, but to double down on it. Seeing climate change not as something that can be solved by experts, nor through individual sacrifices – but by the negotiation of a new sort of social contract between people and the state. The novelist [Amitav Ghosh](#) refers to our current climate predicament as a "great derangement", a collective reluctance to face up to the reality of how the crisis will affect our lives. Pretending that we can bypass people and democracy is, to my mind, the ultimate derangement.

*Rebecca Willis is a professor of energy and climate governance at the University of Lancaster, and the author of Too Hot to Handle? The Democratic Challenge of Climate Change.*

## **Further reading**

[The New Climate War: The Fight to Take Back Our Planet](#), by Michael Mann, 2021 (Scribe, £16.99)

The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable, by Amitav Ghosh (University of Chicago, £11.50), 2016

# How to Avoid A Climate Disaster: The Solutions We Have and the Breakthroughs We Need by Bill Gates (Allen Lane, £20).

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[Tori Amos](#)

## **Locked down in Cornwall, the sea brought me energy and spiritual healing**

Tori Amos



‘A collaboration with the land, the water and the muses’ ... Tori Amos.  
Photograph: Desmond Murray

Mon 1 Nov 2021 04.15 EDT

The first lockdown, my family did medium-to-spicy well. It was me, my husband Mark, [my daughter] Tash and her boyfriend, Oliver. When the kids were fleeing university in London, and Tash said, “Is it OK if Oliver and I come down?” Mark and I said, “Of course!” – thinking that they would be down for three weeks at the most, like a long school holiday.

Five months later, they were still there. We were very fortunate to be in [Cornwall](#), in the country – we had more space than some people. We’re a hop, skip and a jump from the water. There’s a ferocious beauty to the Cornish coast. There’s the gorgeous beaches, but then there are the crags and

the rocks. There's something gently brutal about it. I surrendered to the land at a certain point: OK, I'm in exile here. I can't get back to the States, because I don't know if I can get back [into the UK] if I go. If I can't get back to Mark and Tash, then I'm going to evaporate. Because they are the reason I wake up in the morning.

By the third lockdown, however, in January of this year, I was not at my best. I was grieving not playing live for the longest time in my life, not doing what musicians do. There isn't the spiritual ceremony of the collaboration with a live audience. We're talking about a voltage that I can't achieve by myself. That was gone, and there was no way to recreate that. The closest thing was to go to the ocean and feel when the tides are coming in and hitting those rocks. Yes, the sea can be calm and gentle, but when the gales are blowing, my goodness – now that's voltage.

### Tori Amos: Spies – video

I became despondent and sad, and filled with loss. You're trying to find different coping mechanisms at 50-some years old, and sometimes not even realising that that's what you're needing to do. And that's where the songwriting began. The muses said to me: "Write from where you are. And where you are is on your knees in a grief and a sadness. You have to start from there." It was my own private little hell that I had to write myself out of.

At first, I wrote from the chair I was sitting in, because I couldn't get out of it – [I didn't have] the energy that it took. I was able to make dinner with Tash. It was something we would share. But Mark gave up on trying to coax me into the studio. I don't need to be by an instrument to write; it's just not necessary – it is at a certain point, once I'm exploring the structures that I've thought in my head, but I needed to get out of this lethargy.

The song Metal Water Wood came first. I was trying to combat this force of despondency, loss – a quagmire of "What is this that's zapping us, almost stealing our life force?" I started reading about Bruce Lee. I don't know why I was drawn to him. The muses take me to places sometimes, and it doesn't necessarily make linear sense. But he said: "Be like water." As a fire being,

as a fire creature, that was almost as if I was betraying the element that has always gotten me through stuff before.

Once it was wintertime and I started going out into the land, I began to realise I needed to do it more and more. In that act of engaging with it, it began showing me, it began collaborating with me, with the songs. And the muses, of course, were there. I had to say: “OK, I know I’m a guest here, but will you share your secrets with me?” And the land said to me: “Are you worthy? What are you going to do with these secrets, Tori? Will you honour them? Or are you going to bend them to suit your own needs? Or are you going to be really honest, that this has broken you?”

And I said: “I’m not the mom I want to be. I’m not the wife I want to be. I’m not the artist I want to be.” And they immediately rolled their eyes and said: “Oh, please stop with the dramatic postmenopausal crap.”



Tori Amos at home in Cornwall. Photograph: Jim Wileman/The Guardian

I want to step out of it, but you have to sometimes admit you’re not there. You’re in the middle of a complex conundrum. My mom passed away a couple of years ago. People talk about stages of grief. And sometimes you have to say: “You know, I miss my mom. And she’s not here, and I can’t call her. And she would know what to say.” And then Tash finally walks in the

room: “OK, I need my mom back. I’m sorry you don’t have your mom. I’m really sorry. And I miss grandma. But I need my mom.” Jesus. Then you go: “OK, I have to stop being the child missing her mother.”

When I was a child, I would travel by listening to the Beatles’ work and then playing it at the piano. The music was able to take me to anywhere in the universe. If the music was right, I could jump on that sonic spaceship and go. And I had to relearn that skill, but the trick this time was I needed to write a song in order to try and find my mom, Mary. She’s in Speaking with Trees and Flowers Burn to Gold. People have said to me: “I’m not trying to shame you, T, but you had a mother who had unconditional love. You’ve experienced that. What a gift. Can you hold on to that gift? She runs through your veins too, so if you can channel the songs, can’t you channel her?” And, God, that left me speechless.

The playwright Samuel Adamson, who I worked with on [The Light Princess](#), sent me a message. He’s such an amazing writer. He said: “I just had a vision. And I have to tell you, Cornwall’s protecting you.” I thought, What? And he said: “I’m just giving you a message. I know this to be true. She’s protecting you. She’s keeping you safe.” And I felt, OK, then I need to keep her safe. Not that she needs protecting in that way, but her stories. I need to give something back to this majestic, compassionate energy. The way to reflect that energy was a collaboration with the land, the water and the muses. Trying to give people a glimpse of this essence that I’ve spent 18 months with.

The mythology of Cornwall feels alive. It doesn’t feel in the past. If you squint your eyes and don’t look at the cafe on your right, but look around you, there’s something so ancient about it. You can kid yourself that [Sir Gawain and the Green Knight](#) are going to show up any moment or [Ragnelle](#) is going to show herself. There is a sense of being protected by something so ancient. I had to allow it into my bones.

As told to Annie Zaleski. Tori Amos’s new album, Ocean to Ocean, is out now on Decca.

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## 2021.11.01 - Coronavirus

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## Vaccines and immunisation

# Covid booster jabs offered at NHS walk-in clinics in England



A pharmacist prepares to give a Covid-19 booster jab in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire. Photograph: Karwai Tang/Getty Images

*Hannah Devlin* Science correspondent  
[@hannahdev](https://twitter.com/hannahdev)

Sun 31 Oct 2021 20.01 EDT

Covid booster jabs are now being given at walk-in clinics in [England](#) as the NHS aims to increase vaccine uptake before what is expected to be a challenging winter.

From Monday, anyone in an eligible group who had their second dose of a coronavirus vaccine at least six months ago can turn up at one of hundreds of sites to get their top-up without making an appointment. The walk-in centres are also offering vaccinations to 12- to 15-year-olds.

The move follows criticism of the booster campaign, with only about half of the 12 million people in England eligible so far for a third vaccine dose having received one. The vaccine rollout to teenagers has lagged behind that of countries including France, Italy and Spain.

People entitled to a booster jab are: those aged 50 and over, people who live and work in care homes; frontline health and social care workers; people aged 16 and over with a health condition that puts them at high risk of getting seriously ill from Covid-19; those aged 16 and over who are a main carer for someone at high risk from the virus, and; people aged 16 and over who live with someone who is more likely to get infections.

Nikki Kanani, a GP and the deputy lead for the [NHS](#) Covid-19 vaccination programme, said: “NHS staff are making it as easy as possible for people to get their top-up vaccination, and from today people can now go online, find their nearest site and go and get their booster without delay.

“The booster is not just nice to have. It is really important protection ahead of what we know will be a challenging winter.”

People are advised to use the NHS online walk-in finder to check where their nearest centre is and whether it is offering boosters, and vaccines for 12- to 15-year-olds. NHS England said almost everyone registered with a GP practice lives within 10 miles of a fixed vaccination site.

On Friday [clinical guidelines were amended](#) to allow care home residents and some vulnerable people to get their Covid booster vaccine a month early, in an effort to boost immunity during the winter.

The booster campaign is a central part of the government’s strategy for limiting hospital admissions because immunity from the initial two doses wanes over time, particularly in older adults and at-risk groups.

Protection against symptomatic illness falls from 65% up to three months after the second dose to 45% six months after the second dose for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine and from 90% to 65% for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, according to the latest evidence from the government’s scientific

advisers. Protection against hospitalisation is estimated to fall from 95% to 75% for Oxford/AstraZeneca and from 99% to 90% for Pfizer/BioNTech.

On Sunday a further 38,009 people were reported as testing positive for Covid-19 in the UK in the previous 24 hours, with the seven-day total down 14% on the previous week, and 74 deaths were reported, with the seven-day total up 16%. A total of 45,697,856 second vaccine doses had been administered as of 30 October, while a combined total of 7,925,851 booster and third doses had been delivered, a day-on-day rise of 361,428.

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[Coronavirus](#)

# Coronavirus live news: global Covid death toll hits 5m; Greece reports highest infections total

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## Global development

# ‘We are protected by prayers’: the sects hampering southern Africa’s vaccine rollout



A group of worshipers gather at a hill in Kuwadzana, Zimbabwe.  
Photograph: Nyasha Chingono

Global development is supported by



[About this content](#)

[Nyasha Chingono](#)

Mon 1 Nov 2021 05.00 EDT

Hymnal melodies reverberate around the hillside in Kuwadzana, a Harare suburb. On a blisteringly hot Saturday, members of the Apostolic church, dressed in white, hum and sing together.

Songs, long prayers and a little Bible reading punctuate the outdoor service. It's a spectacle for passersby.

Since the Zimbabwean government partly reopened church gatherings in August, Apostolic members, known for their open-air worship, can be seen every weekend around the capital.

The government has asked religious groups to endorse the Covid-19 vaccine. The [Catholic church](#), evangelical and adventist groups have done so.

Our preacher gave us an instruction that if we use little stones and holy water he prayed for nothing will happen to our families

*Miriam Mushayabasa, Apostolic church member*

But with a tradition of not seeking or trusting medical help, some of the “white garment” churches are refusing to encourage congregations to get vaccinated.

With millions of followers across southern Africa, the church’s stance could undermine Zimbabwe’s attempts to [vaccinate 60% of the population](#) by December.

“We believe in God, and science is entirely subject to God’s will,” says Gramaridge Musendekwa, of the Vadzidzi Apostolic church.

“I grew up on my parents’ prayers and I am passing it down to my children. My family will not take the vaccine because we are protected by prayers,” says Musendekwa, 38.

“I believe we should not be forced to get vaccinated. For us who grew up without medicine, vaccinations are an insult to our faith and religion. Surely the authorities can achieve whatever they want to do without involving us.”



Mistrust of medical help within the Apostolic church has led many sect leaders to refuse to support the vaccination programme. Photograph: Nyasha Chingono

The Apostolic position threatens the success of vaccination programmes in southern Africa, according to [research published in the Journal of Religion and Health](#) in 2017, which linked it directly to the rise of measles outbreaks in 2009 to 2010.

More than 85% of Zimbabweans [identify](#) as Christian, and 37% belong to the Apostolic church.

It is 2pm on a Saturday and no one at St Peters Apostolic church in Harare is wearing a government-mandated face mask.

After spending hours at a shrine, decorated with red and white flags, Miriam Mushayabasa, 34, a mother-of-three, believes she does not need a vaccine.

“Our preacher gave us a clear instruction that if we use these little stones and holy water he prayed for, nothing will happen to our families. Since Covid-19 began last March, my family and I have never suffered from this disease, we are as strong as ever,” says Mushayabasa.



So far 15% of Zimbabwe's population has been inoculated. Photograph: Philimon Bulawayo/Reuters

“My children are strong, so I have no cause to fear. I have always believed in prayers and this is how I choose to go through this pandemic.”

While the government mandates only the vaccinated can attend religious services, it is tough to enforce in the Apostolic churches, who meet outdoors on hilltops and in fields.

Zimbabwe's vaccination programme has [inoculated 15%](#) of the population since it began in February. It is [one of 15 African countries](#) to have achieved the [World Health Organization target of 10% of citizens by September](#).

Regular vaccine consignments are arriving from China, but the government says misinformation and general mistrust have slowed the vaccination programme.



Some leaders within the Apostolic church have been encouraging members to get vaccinated. Photograph: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP

Prosper Chonzi, Harare's health services director, says the authorities are running campaigns on the benefits of vaccination to increase take-up.

“Our efforts to continue engaging them [the church] are there, and now there is more literature. It was more people getting sceptical about the vaccine. There is more knowledge about the vaccine.”

Aaron Chakaipa, 40, reflecting the fears of his fellow Apostolic members, says, “I heard that if you get vaccinated, you will not be fertile any more. I

am really scared to take it.

“I believe an individual should make a personal decision and not be cajoled into taking the vaccination. Telling people to stay away from church if they are not vaccinated is the same as forcing the vaccination, which is not right.”

However, Andby Makururu, bishop and founder of the Johane Fifth of Africa Apostolic church in the eastern Manicaland province, is encouraging his members to get vaccinated.

“We are transforming the indigenous church to suit global standards. Johane the Fifth of Africa has been on a vaccination drive. In all our preachings, we encourage members to get vaccinations because the Holy Spirit does not cure all these diseases. So I am encouraging the Apostolic sect to go to hospitals and get treatment, I also get treatment and regular checkups,” he says.

He says sects who deny the benefits of vaccines are out of touch.

“Our children are getting vaccinated. Those that are still behind are lagging but we are moving with the times,” Makururu says.

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A woman hugs her daughter at Sydney airport on Monday morning as the first passengers to arrive in Australia without facing quarantine restrictions fly in. Photograph: Blake Sharp-Wiggins/The Guardian

## **'I've got to get to my daughter, I've got to hold her': families reunite at Sydney airport after international border reopens**

A woman hugs her daughter at Sydney airport on Monday morning as the first passengers to arrive in Australia without facing quarantine restrictions fly in. Photograph: Blake Sharp-Wiggins/The Guardian

by [Elias Visontay](#)

Sun 31 Oct 2021 20.57 EDT

Sydney airport has become the scene of tearful family reunions, with fully vaccinated Australians able to fly home and walk straight out of the airport

for the first time in 583 days.

Many of the passengers who were onboard the first flights from Singapore and Los Angeles walked into the arrivals terminal shortly after 6am on Monday morning to be greeted by emotional family members and loved ones.

Returning Australians were handed Tim Tams and hakea pincushion flowers as they made their way through a crowd of reporters.

“I’ve got to get to my daughter, I’ve got to hold her,” one woman said as she pushed through the throng to embrace her daughter.

Carlie Boyd was one of the first Australians to push a trolley of suitcases into the arrivals hall – clearing the heavily sterilised customs area at 6.28am and breathing in the crisp Sydney morning air for the first time in more than three years.

Boyd’s brother Ryan Boyd and sister Clare Lyons had arrived at the airport before 6am with a balloon and sign to welcome her, and raced to hug her.

“It’s been pretty stressful, so just to be able to come home without having to go quarantine is huge,” Boyd said.



Clare Lyons, centre, and Ryan Boyd, right, await their sister Carlie Boyd.  
Photograph: Blake Sharp-Wiggins/The Guardian



A hug in the arrivals hall. Photograph: Bianca de Marchi/EPA

She had been living in New York, and after being unable to secure a flight home during the months of quarantine arrival caps, bought her Qantas ticket to [Sydney](#) three days ago.

She and her siblings planned to surprise their parents at their Blue Mountains family home.

“There were a lot of people on that flight who have loved ones who are about to die or had people who died this week, so for them to be able to get off the plane and go and see them straight away is pretty amazing,” Boyd said.

01:17

Tearful reunions as Australia reopens international borders for first time in pandemic – video

Other passengers Guardian Australia spoke to said there were only about 70 people on the first Qantas flight, and that many were visiting dying loved ones.

When Ethan Carter walked into the arrivals hall and on to Australian soil for the first time in two years, he had only one thing on his mind. His mother, Joy.

“I’m anxious and excited and can’t wait to see her.”



Ethan Carter arriving from LA, on his way to see his mother in Perth.  
Photograph: Blake Sharp-Wiggins/The Guardian

Carter, who lives in Chicago, said he was desperate to see his mother, who has fallen ill and been moved into permanent care.

“She’s in WA, so I don’t want to talk about their laws … I might not ever be let in,” he said. “I’m really scared and emotional because I really want to see my mum.” He choked up as he added: “The doctor said that she hasn’t got long.”

He then approached border officials to discuss how he could fly to Perth to quarantine before visiting his mother.

He also issued a plea to the Western Australian premier, Mark McGowan: “Mark, think of the people that are suffering mentally to see their family, that’s also a health issue … You’ve got to bring families together again, you have to – everybody needs to be together, it’s so important.

“We respect that you’re trying to be safe, but everyone needs to be together, please.”

Elsewhere in the arrivals halls, some were meeting new family members for the first time.

Moments after her son Robert walked out of the customs hall with his partner, Ivan, and daughter, Pia, Deb d’Apice picked up her two-year-old granddaughter, held her up to her face, and stared into her eyes.

“It’s fabulous, I just feel fabulous,” she said.



Deb d'Apice meets Pia, her two-year-old granddaughter, for the first time.  
Photograph: Bianca de Marchi/AAP

Upstairs at the departure gates, travel-hungry Australians were gathering to make the most of the international travel freedoms that also came into effect on Monday.

After hearing that international trips would be allowed without an exemption – and knowing that she would not have to quarantine on her return – Nicole Forrest booked tickets with United Airlines to travel to Mexico with her daughter, 12-year-old Olive.

They will fly through Los Angeles before travelling to Tulum, where the pair from Cronulla are planning to enjoy beaches and visit local sites.

“It’s fucking exciting,” Forrest said. “It’s going to be a spiritual experience.”

Olive said she was most excited to sample the food in Mexico.



Cronulla residents Nicole Forrest and her daughter Olive, who are on their way to Tulum in Mexico. Photograph: Blake Sharp-Wiggins/The Guardian



Miad and Zahra Zandabi, who are moving to Boston. Photograph: Blake Sharp-Wiggins/The Guardian

Miad and Zahra Zandabi were flying to Boston, where they are moving to for a job that Miad organised more than a year ago but for which they had been unable to secure exit approvals.

“To be honest, we’re sad to be leaving Australia, but after the lockdown it’s very exciting to start anew,” Miad said. The Pagewood couple have family overseas, and hope to be able to visit them more easily.

Melanie Carrier posed for a photo at the Sydney departures sign before farewelling her partner, Richard Peake, and walking to her flight’s departure gate. She is travelling to visit family in Montreal who she hasn’t seen for more than two years.

“I just want to be able to go home,” she said. “We’ve missed weddings and birthdays, and I want to hug my parents again.”



Melanie Carrier, pictured with her partner Richard Peake, is flying to Montreal to visit her family for the first time in two years. Photograph: Blake Sharp-Wiggins/The Guardian

The experience of dropping someone off at departures felt strange to Peake, who noted that there was none of the typical congestion and parking shortages of pre-pandemic days.

While airline officials reported queues in the international terminal being the longest they’d been all year, the airport is far from its full capacity. On Monday there will be 16 international flight arrivals and 14 departures, up from the average of 10 arrivals and departures each day since July last year.

But while most arriving flights have been limited to 10 passengers, flights on Monday had no limits on how many vaccinated passengers they could carry.

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As Australians walked into the arrivals area and into the arms of their loved ones, airline executives and politicians held press conferences. Most struggled to hold the attention of media, who were instead focused on speaking to travellers.

“Today Sydney has reopened Australia to the world,” said the [New South Wales](#) tourism minister, Stuart Ayres.

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## 2021.11.01 - Opinion

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- [To avert climate disaster, we need resilient societies built on love, not just technology](#)
- [At Cop26 the stage is set for a battle over the next phase of capitalism](#)
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## [OpinionCop26](#)

# Jet-lag, climate villains and coffee: the seven stages of every Cop

[John Vidal](#)



'It may come down to conference chair Alok Sharma calling the US, China and the EU, the world's great emitters, into a room for a final haggle at 6.30am.' Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

Mon 1 Nov 2021 03.00 EDT

It's not the expectation that is unbearable with Cop26; it is the hope. The world, faced with the urgency of the climate crisis, demands that this is the summit to surpass all summits. Those of us who have experienced (or endured) them know that won't happen. There are seven stages to every Cop. This one is unlikely to be much different.

**1 The arrival.** Here we go again. Teams of jet-lagged lobbyists, diplomats, journos, bankers and business folk queue with delegations of indigenous

peoples and youth groups, lawyers, NGOs and economists to enter the parallel universe that is a UN climate Cop. Within hours, the complaints will start about the price of coffee, the distance between meeting rooms, the Glaswegian accents, the rain, the trains, the traffic, the UN security, the heavy policing and the dearth of good restaurants.

**2 The beauty contest.** Prince Charles will welcome the world to Glasgow with three minutes of top-drawer blah blah to be followed by more blah blah by 100-plus leaders about the future of Earth, the plight of the poor, coral reefs, forests, and the need for compromise, radical ambition, vision and hope. Polite applause from some.

**3 The great confusion.** By day three, none of the 15,000 delegates or the public will have any idea what is happening, and those who say they do will be lying. The negotiations will take place behind closed doors and involve the obsessive drafting and redrafting of papers that either do reflect a country's position or are "non-papers", which don't but might. The talks have their own incomprehensible language, with Bingos and Mrvs, Namas and Napas, BAs and BRs, Redds and Lulucfs. No one outside the negotiating rooms is supposed to understand.

**4 The squeeze.** The game of diplomatic poker is on. The dice are loaded against poor countries and by day four the low-lying states and least developed countries will be complaining loudly and publicly that the US, UK, EU and others are not putting up the \$100bn (£75bn) a year that they pledged, and are shifting the goalposts of the Paris agreement by calling for all countries to adopt the same targets.

The diplo-mud will fly. The sticking points will be over money, targets, scale of ambition, transfer of technology and timescales. The rich will be accused of being incompetent and negligent and will respond by saying, "Yah-boo, we're all in this together now." The conference chair, Alok Sharma, scurrying between groups of countries, will try to bridge the yawning divides that will have opened between the carbon haves and have-nots.

01:53

Pope Francis urges radical response to climate crisis at Cop26 – video

**5 The cavalry.** At a certain point, usually near the end of week one, the many charities and the environment, development, climate and church groups, along with scientists, activists, indigenous peoples and celebrities, will stage demonstrations and stunts: gluing themselves to doors and floors, singing, invading press conferences and hanging off roofs. Most will be chucked out of the halls and banned from re-entry by UN guards. It is a bloodletting, and relieves the tensions.

The climate villains will now be named – usually the US for its bullying tactics, the Saudis for their defence of fossil fuels, Brazil for cutting down the Amazon, Australia for its coal and the EU for not offering enough. Britain, now out of Europe, can be expected to be accused of doublespeak – pretending to side with the poor but actually working with the rich.

**6 The trick.** In week two, the negotiators hand over the proposals drawn up in week one to incoming ministers and their teams of political advisers. The horse-trading now begins. The powerful will have already twisted arms, offered aid, threatened sanctions and squeezed the pips out of the poor to make them fall in behind. But equally, China, India and others will use their diplomatic clout to counter-offer and raise the stakes. Ministers furiously brief their media friends.

It's now a high-risk crapshoot. The tension will be unbearable as negotiations narrow down to a few paragraphs, then falter, stumble and inevitably nearly collapse. Rumours will fly that delegations are quitting, or that another draft has been agreed but rejected. Ministers will furiously brief their media friends. There will be a long and ghastly night as the corridors fill with exhausted delegates, the restaurants close, the coffee runs out and the long wait begins.

**7 The sting.** Cop should finish on the Friday night of week two, but – as with Cops in the past – this one is more likely to go to the wire on Saturday. A final text will be drawn up and a last plenary meeting will be called. An “awkward”, or “principled”, group of countries will now grandstand and call on the world for something better.

In the end it may come down to Sharma calling the US, China and the EU, the world's great emitters, into a room for a final haggle at 6.30am. An

agreement, weak or strong, will or will not be struck. Sharma will summon all the diplomatic muscle he can and then invite all countries to agree. The world will pray.

- John Vidal is a former Guardian environment editor
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## OpinionClimate crisis

# To avert climate disaster, we need resilient societies built on love, not just technology

[Gaia Vince](#)



Illustration: Matt Kenyon

Mon 1 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

When things look especially bleak for humankind, it's worth reminding ourselves who we are – what makes us such a special species. Beyond our machines and our buildings, beyond our fiery conquests, beyond all of it, we're exceptional creatures because we are capable of love. And not just one to one and within our families, but on a massive scale.

This is especially pertinent as we face the climate crisis. It's easy to get caught up in the excitement of our technological transition, which dominates the climate adaptation narrative. We are the technological ape, and our

technologies will be vital in [solving this crisis](#): windmills to decarbonise our energy systems, flood defences against rising seas, and air conditioners to survive brutal heatwaves. We will need many more technological fixes, and much faster.

Just as essential to our survival, however, are social fixes. Love is often seen as a charming but irrelevant characteristic in our species' story – an evolutionary quirk, relegated to a footnote for poets and playwrights to ponder. But love is what draws us together to forge the strong, caring societies that make us so successful as a species. And it is what will, [ultimately, save us](#) from this crisis.

For citizens of rich countries, the climate crisis is primarily a social crisis – and we have not begun the social adaptation required. Indeed, we're not even discussing the extent of the problem. We face a catastrophic failure of our social systems to protect the most vulnerable people from the devastating impacts. The biggest issue [will be poverty](#), and the solution is not technological but social.

Take food. Climate change will hit crops around the world – heatwaves, droughts and extreme storms will cause harvests to be lost regularly, potentially [slashing crop production](#) by a third by 2050. We're already experiencing problems. Canada's pea production is down by about half, and [wheat harvests reduced](#) by more than a third compared with last year's, for instance, because of extreme weather.

This means food prices will go up around the globe. Wheat failures will make a range of products more expensive in UK shops – pasta prices are expected to [rise by about 50%](#) in the next month. Rice and other cereals, fruit, vegetables, oils, cotton and coffee will all be similarly affected over the coming decade. Heat and drought also make crops less nutritious, so families will struggle to afford their weekly shop and get less benefit from what they do buy.

The climate crisis demands resilient food systems. Logistically, this means large-scale storage and adapting to new food sources, including [insect proteins](#) and algae. Just as importantly, it means strengthening social systems

so that everyone has access to nutritional foods, whatever their circumstances.

We can't lurch from crisis to crisis hoping the charitable sector will provide. When food prices rise – as they will – food banks will receive fewer donations at a time when demand is greatest. Food poverty is already shockingly prevalent, and disproportionately affects people with disabilities and minority groups. The past year in Britain has seen a [vast rise](#) in the use of food banks.

Unless we manage deep societal adaptation to climate breakdown, the coming crisis will make hunger worse. That takes planning for adequate welfare systems for a hotter world with less reliable agriculture. There is no shame in being poor or hungry; the shame lies with a government that allows people to struggle with basic needs while others [accumulate obscene wealth](#).

Inequality is a killer. We've seen this through the Covid pandemic; we will see it to an [even greater extent](#) as the climate crisis deepens. Climate change is a threat-multiplier. Londoners may not die directly from storm surges that wash away their homes, or stronger cyclones, as people in equatorial regions will. But they may well die from a social system that cannot adapt to accommodate regular flood damage, higher food prices and incapacitating heatwaves, and people are already weakened by poor healthcare and underfunded services.

Today, a lack of regulation means we're continuing to [build poor housing stock](#) without adequate insulation and buildings unable to generate their own energy through [heat pumps](#) or solar installations, which are highly vulnerable to extreme weather.

This means that the poorest families risk being stuck in uninsurable, unsaleable houses. As flood-prone areas depopulate and businesses move away, the poorest people will be left behind – needing to travel further for schools, for work and for every other amenity. Safer places outside flooding zones will experience [climate gentrification](#), in which richer people move in and push up the property prices, or pay huge sums to shore up their properties.

When people in the hardest-hit tropical regions of the world are forced to flee their climate crisis – and not in their hundreds but in their hundreds of thousands – that will become our climate crisis too. We need to plan today for the influx of large numbers of traumatised people, with preparations for adequate housing and healthcare, so they do not overwhelm our ability to take them in. Managed well, [climate migration](#) could help revive depopulated towns and boost our economies. Done poorly, it could end up swelling the population of desperate and homeless people on our streets.

A resilient society is one in which people have their basic needs met, including universal access to healthcare, shelter and nutrition, so they can cope with the climate challenges we know are coming. We must create societies that are confident and flourishing so they are not threatened by disaster and migration, but are resilient and welcoming. That means ensuring people don't feel disenfranchised, but included.

Love is itself an evolved human survival adaptation. We see evidence of compassion in our ancestors, dating back hundreds of thousands of years, including in their care for disabled people. Love and empathy are what enable us to cooperate with complete strangers and create the social networks on which we all depend. These intergenerational systems, through which we also transmit our technological knowledge, are the scaffolding around which we weave our system of care and support for each other.

The solution to our climate crisis lies in deploying this power. Dealing with the challenges of the climate emergency requires a strong society. None of us could survive alone. Social resilience involves creating stronger communities that care for one another in times of disaster. The acute crisis of the Covid pandemic showed us how communities could band together to protect the vulnerable.

But this is no substitute for responsible governance. We must love ourselves enough to demand more of our leaders. This climate challenge demands a strong, responsive societal adaptation, which needs leadership and vision to build.

As humanity faces its biggest challenge, we need to adapt our societies by retrieving the love for one another that is the very basis of our humanity.

- Gaia Vince is an author, journalist and broadcaster. Her latest book is Transcendence: How humans evolved through fire, language, beauty and time
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## [OpinionCop26](#)

# At Cop26 the stage is set for a battle over the next phase of capitalism

[Simon Lewis](#)



‘Heatwaves, floods and droughts we see in the news make catastrophe easier to imagine.’ A street becomes a river in the floods in Sicily, Italy, this month. Photograph: Sanne Derkx/Getty Images

Mon 1 Nov 2021 05.00 EDT

The most important UN climate change talks since the 2015 Paris Agreement are upon us, with more than 120 world leaders arriving in Glasgow for [Cop26](#). The question now is, amid all the big talk, will it make a difference?

Given that Cop1 was held in 1995 and carbon dioxide emissions are [now 14 billion tonnes a year higher than back then](#), we can be forgiven for thinking Cop26 is all a charade. But this time it is different, because it is a battle not

only over reducing carbon emissions, but also over the rules of a new phase of capitalism that will affect us all.

Governments are facing extreme pressure to act now. Climate impacts are hitting home. The climate crisis is no longer abstract and no longer about the future. The heatwaves, floods and droughts we experience or see in the news, and endless reports of more to come, make catastrophe easier to imagine. Public pressure gets ever higher, from Insulate Britain blocking roads to surveys showing most people are seriously concerned about the climate emergency.

Scientific reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change have unflinchingly shown that we can only stabilise Earth's climate by reducing greenhouse gas emissions to an average of zero, known as net-zero emissions. This means that the transition away from fossil fuel energy is not a matter of if, but when.

The transition to powering society using renewables is also now technologically and economically feasible. The costs of wind and solar have plummeted to below the cost of building plants to produce electricity generated by oils and gas, with further falls expected. The economic argument for inaction is now gone.

Given that countries and companies have left it to the last possible second to take action, and the stakes are sky high, an avalanche of announcements are arriving. What should we make of them?

The bewildering complexity of the Glasgow talks can be seen, at its simplest, as a battle among three major blocs of countries, companies and protest movements. They aren't formal groupings and don't negotiate together, but can be grouped as they want similar outcomes.

The first is composed of the income poor and vulnerable countries, marginalised communities and the protestors who will be outside the SEC as negotiations take place. They want urgent action to limit warming to 1.5°C, the finance to achieve this, and a plan to adapt to climate change. Equity is at the heart of their demands.

The second bloc want to delay climate action by almost any means necessary. These are extractive states, such as Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Australia, and their allies in the fossil fuel and airline industries.

The third bloc want a transition to net zero that consolidates their position of power in the world. This is composed of the EU, US, and China, big companies such as Unilever and Amazon, along with much of the financial industry. Aside from China they all argue for markets to deliver net zero efficiently.

The three-way battle has already led to some surprising and rapid changes. Countries accounting for some [77% of global carbon dioxide emissions](#) are now covered by mid-century net zero announcements, including countries traditionally hostile to climate action, including Saudi Arabia, Russia, and Australia, as well as the US, EU, UK and China.

But why are climate delayers voluntarily announcing net zero targets? This may be a mix of global opprobrium from the first bloc and plain cynicism because they think they won't face the consequences of missing these targets. However, it is also likely to be because within the third bloc the EU have agreed, and the Democrats in the US have proposed, "carbon border adjustments" to impose tariffs on high carbon imports. This means exporter countries will need to reduce their emissions to access these huge markets.

This battle to shape the future will continue in Glasgow as countries [negotiate rules on transparency](#), which would allow the UN to check what various nations are doing to achieve their targets. Negotiations on the rules governing carbon markets will also be tense. The prospect of interlinked markets for a new fungible global commodity – carbon – is a bonanza that banks and the financial industry are pushing for. But many are wary that carbon accounting tricks will trump real emissions reductions.

Overall, there are serious problems with the seemingly sensible thinking of bloc three: that if governments in the core zones of the global economy invest to kick-start a green industrial revolution, then the market will drive down prices for new technological solutions that outcompete fossil fuels and drive down emissions, and carbon border adjustments will bring the world with them.

Critically, this will not be anywhere near enough to shut down most of the fossil fuel industry and actually resolve the climate problem. Stopping new exploration for fossil fuels needs to go hand-in-hand with investing in alternatives. Yet, many governments who set themselves up as rational followers of the science are self-delusional. They cut emissions at home while also licensing yet more oil, coal and gas for export. Norway, the UK, the US and Canada are all doing this.

A perhaps more fundamental problem of the EU, US and UK market-driven approach is that markets are not fair. The Covid vaccines scandal has shown how new technology and market approaches have left billions vulnerable. Unprecedented international cooperation is needed to tackle the climate crisis. And within countries, if the transition to net zero is not experienced as a fair and just transition, plans will be derailed and catastrophe beckons.

Glasgow is a pivotal moment. The world cannot afford any more delays in climate action, so the climate-wreckers must not get their way. But for the most powerful countries and companies, they must realise that a transition to net zero can't be achieved by relying on markets. They need to listen to the vulnerable countries and people. Solving the climate crisis needs action that is both fast and fair.

- Simon Lewis is professor of global change science at University College London and University of Leeds
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## OpinionWater

# Is this a watershed moment when it comes to sewage in England's rivers and seas?

[Rachel Salvidge](#)



‘Since privatisation, the water sector has paid out billions of pounds in dividends and bonuses, but it has not found the cash to stop the rampant pollution.’ Photograph: Penelope Barritt/Rex/Shutterstock

Mon 1 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

The groundswell of disgust over water firms dumping raw human sewage into England’s rivers and seas has grown into a roiling tsunami threatening to overwhelm the government. By their own confession, water companies say they dumped untreated sewage into English water bodies more than [400,000 times last year](#), for a total of about 3.1m hours.

As shocking as that seems, you can safely assume this figure grossly underplays the true picture because not all sewage discharges are recorded, and because the sector is allowed to self-report its spills, a practice that begs to be abused.

Take a look at Southern Water, which was [fined £90m](#) for repeatedly and deliberately dumping raw sewage into seas along the south coast, while misreporting its performance to the regulator, the Environment Agency. Or you could ask the data scientist who has calculated that Thames Water [may not be reporting 95%](#) of its illegal dirty discharges. For its part, Thames Water says it will look carefully at the findings and stresses that it regards all untreated sewage discharges as unacceptable.

So how did we get into this mess?

When water companies' sewerage infrastructure is overwhelmed by sewage and rainwater, it is dumped into rivers and on to beaches via combined sewer overflow pipes, rather than allowing it to back up and cause flooding. In many cases it's not illegal because the Environment Agency issues the firms with permits allowing the discharges on condition that it only happens under "exceptional circumstances" when there is heavy rainfall – and only then if the water company is already treating a specified volume of sewage. But companies are dumping with such appalling regularity, and during dry weather, that the term "exceptional" has lost all meaning.

But when called out over the horrific pollution, the sector and the Environment Agency simply point at the [creaking infrastructure](#) they inherited from the Victorians, perhaps not realising that in doing so they're demonstrating just how overdue an upgrade to the system is. It hardly needs saying, but there are around 27 million more people in the UK now than at the end of the Victorian era, so you'd think someone somewhere might have thought about the extra sewerage capacity needed to cope with that.

Apparently not. Since privatisation, the water sector has paid out [billions of pounds in dividends](#) and director salaries and bonuses, and although it has invested in water treatment it has not found the cash to stop the rampant pollution. Given that the financial regulator, Ofwat, has not seen fit to force

them to end it, can we really blame them? They have fiduciary duty to their shareholders, after all.

I'm kidding: of course we can blame them, but the regulators and successive governments are also at fault. The half-starved Environment Agency, with its budget repeatedly slashed, is reduced to accepting whatever figures the industry supplies to it rather than play the role of fearsome watchdog. By its own admission, aside from the occasional prosecution, it can't take on polluters with paltry resources, despite the best efforts of its remaining frontline staff.

Meanwhile, the population keeps growing, rainfall intensifies, and all across the country ugly pipes continue to spew their nauseating contents into our waters, choking wildlife and infuriating water users. Fish die, beaches are closed, rivers run rich with effluent.

But things could be about to change – because the water sector's dirty little secret is now exposed, thanks to the [hard graft of campaigners](#) who have refused to stop banging on about it and lockdown-enforced staycations focusing more people's minds on the state of the UK's coastlines and rivers.

So what is the government planning to do about it? Initially, not much. But public pressure is a powerful thing and the furore of recent days has embarrassed the government into making [a number of changes](#) to the environment bill that is currently making its way through parliament. It is keen to show it is serious about tackling sewage pollution now everyone knows it's happening.

Over the past few months, the government has been dragged from its position that giving the water firms a stern ticking off was all that was needed, to reluctantly adding amendments to the bill requiring it to make plans to reduce discharges; though these changes are lacking targets or timelines to make the reforms concrete.

More recently, as part of a parliamentary ping-pong, the House of Lords [demanded stronger action](#), adding their own amendment to the bill which would place a duty on “sewerage undertakers to take all reasonable steps to

ensure untreated sewage is not discharged from storm overflows into inland and coastal waters”. In response, the government has said it intends to table its own amendment that would place a direct legal duty on water companies to “progressively reduce the impacts of sewage pollution from storm overflows”.

You’ll notice that “reducing the impacts of sewage pollution” is not the same as saying it will require the sector to stop it entirely. The devil, as always, will be in the detail. The difference this time around is that everyone is watching.

- Rachel Salvidge is an environmental journalist and deputy editor of the [ENDS Report](#)
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- ['We didn't deface the Eiffel Tower' Barnaby Joyce dismisses French anger at axed submarine deal](#)
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## Aukus

# Macron accuses Australian PM of lying over submarine deal

00:29

'I don't think, I know': Macron accuses Scott Morrison of lying about submarine contract – video

*Katharine Murphy in Rome*

*@murpharoo*

Sun 31 Oct 2021 15.27 EDT

Emmanuel Macron has accused the Australian prime minister, Scott Morrison, of lying to him over an abandoned \$90bn submarine contract, in a significant escalation of tensions between Paris and Canberra.

The French president levelled the accusation in impromptu comments to Australian journalists on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Rome. He said he had a lot of “respect and friendship” for Australia and Australians, but that respect between nations needed to be reciprocated.

“I just say when we have respect, you have to be true and you have to behave in line and consistent with this value,” he said.

When asked whether he thought Morrison had lied to him by not revealing Australia’s secret dialogue with the UK and US over the acquisition of nuclear submarines, a dialogue that ultimately became the Aukus pact, Macron was direct in his response. “I don’t think, I know,” he said.

Morrison denied he had lied to the French president. He said he had told Macron that he had formed the view that conventional submarines would not meet Australia’s strategic interests when the two leaders met in Paris after a G7 summit this year.

He said when the two had dined together at the Élysée Palace, “at that stage we had not concluded any other arrangements with any other parties”.

Morrison said he understood Macron’s disappointment, but that he did not resile from the decision to abandon the French contract and proceed with the acquisition of nuclear-powered submarines in partnership with the US and UK. He said doing otherwise would have elevated French disappointment above Australia’s national interests.

Macron expressed scepticism to Australian journalists that the Aukus nuclear submarines would arrive on schedule. He noted there was an 18-month review of the feasibility of the arrangement, and quipped: “Good luck.”

Morrison said he was confident the acquisition would proceed as planned.

Under the Aukus pact, Morrison dumped a contract with [France](#) to build 12 diesel-powered submarines in favour of a deal with the US for at least eight nuclear-powered submarines. France said it had been “betrayed”, “stabbed in the back” and “deceived”.

The escalation in tensions comes before a meeting between Australia’s foreign minister, Marise Payne, and her French counterpart designed to get the relationship back on track.

The dispute with France dominated Morrison’s trip to Rome for the G20 summit. Shortly after Morrison had arrived in Italy, Joe Biden [moved to repair](#) his own damaged personal and political relationship with Macron by acknowledging that the [Aukus announcement](#) had been a “clumsy” episode handled with a lack of grace.

Biden told Macron [with television cameras present](#) that he was “under the impression that France had been informed” about Australia’s intention to ditch the contract “long before” the Aukus pact was revealed publicly.

It was unclear whether the US president was rebuking Morrison, or his own senior staff for failing to keep him abreast of the nuances.

After Biden's public rapprochement with Macron, Morrison doubled down on the decision to proceed with the nuclear submarines. He said his government had kept the Biden administration up to date "with the status of the conversations and discussions with the French government".

Macron met a number of other world leaders while at the G20 summit, but he did not schedule a bilateral discussion with Morrison.

Australia's prime minister will see Macron again at the Cop26 summit in Glasgow. Morrison was due to depart Rome for Scotland on Sunday evening.

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## [Australian foreign policy](#)

# ‘We didn’t deface the Eiffel Tower’: Barnaby Joyce dismisses French anger at axed submarine deal



Acting Australian prime minister Barnaby Joyce has dismissed ongoing French anger at the axing of the \$90bn submarine contract. Photograph: Mick Tsikas/AAP

*[Daniel Hurst](#) in Canberra and [Katharine Murphy](#) in Rome*

Mon 1 Nov 2021 03.24 EDT

Australia’s acting prime minister, [Barnaby Joyce](#), has dismissed the diplomatic row over the scrapping of the French submarine contract by declaring: “We didn’t deface the Eiffel Tower.”

Other members of the Coalition also played down the fallout, saying Australia’s actions were not as bad as “cheating on a lover”.

They made the comments hours after the French president, [Emmanuel Macron](#), criticised Australia's handling of plans to end the French contract and instead partner with the US and the UK to acquire at least eight nuclear-powered submarines.

Asked whether he thought the prime minister, Scott Morrison, had lied in the lead-up to announcement, Macron [told reporters](#) in Rome: "I don't think, I know."

Morrison later denied Macron's claim, telling reporters: "It's not true."

Joyce, the leader of the Nationals and acting prime minister while Morrison is overseas, implicitly accused [France](#) of overreacting to the cancellation of the \$90bn deal, saying contracts had terms and conditions that allowed for an exit.

"We didn't steal an island; we didn't deface the Eiffel Tower," Joyce said.

Joyce said he understood the French sentiment, but he was "certain that with time, like all things, we can get over this and move on".

Matt Canavan, a backbench senator from the same party told ABC TV: "We have not cheated on a lover here or somehow requested a divorce, we have changed a business arrangement and done so in the best interest of our country."

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While Joyce and Canavan attempted to minimise the significance of Australia's decision, the Australian foreign minister, [Marise Payne](#), took a step towards repairing the relationship with France.

On Monday Payne met for more than an hour with the French ambassador, Jean-Pierre Thébault, who returned to Canberra after being recalled to Paris

for consultations at the height of the diplomatic crisis.

When he left Canberra in September, Thébault [told Guardian Australia](#): “We thought we were mates and we were stabbed in the back.”

Payne said Monday’s in-person meeting was “constructive” and added that Australia was “focused on moving forward in our relationship with France”.

“This is another important step in that process, building on discussions between our countries’ leaders,” Payne said.

“Australia looks forward to regular engagement continuing.”

Thébault has yet to comment on the outcome of the meeting, but he is scheduled to address the National Press Club in Canberra on Wednesday.

Labor’s foreign affairs spokesperson, Penny Wong, welcomed the meeting, but said Payne’s efforts would be “undermined and damaged by what the prime minister has done and how he is now dealing with it”.

“It is unprecedeted to see a world leader so bluntly assert that we are led by a man whose word he doesn’t trust,” Wong told ABC TV.

Wong said France was an important power in the Indo-Pacific and Macron would take a leadership role in the EU after the retirement of German chancellor Angela Merkel.

She said the Australian government should have ensured it managed the issue in a way “that minimises disruption to our relationship with France”, adding: “On what possible planet is a good idea for us to have a stoush with them?”

The Labor senator Kristina Keneally told Sky News that Joyce was “not exactly helping here” and asked: “Are there any adults in this government? I mean, come on!”

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Macron [has told Morrison](#) that Australia’s decision was about more than the submarine contract.

In a phone call last week, Macron said it was also a “unilateral decision” to scale back the French-Australian strategic partnership and “broke the relationship of trust”. France has urged Australia to propose “tangible actions” to heal the diplomatic rift.

At Senate estimates last week, the secretary of the defence department, Greg Moriarty, said there had been “a number of engagements with French officials about our thinking about capability requirements” but added: “I did not discuss cancellation of the Attack programme with any French official prior to the night before [the announcement].”

Asked whether representatives of France’s Naval Group were blindsided, Moriarty said: “They were surprised and disappointed – understandably.”

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## [Japan](#)

# Ruling party of Fumio Kishida wins comfortable victory in Japanese election



Japan's PM and ruling Liberal Democratic party leader, Fumio Kishida, puts rosettes by successful general election candidates' names at party HQ in Tokyo on Sunday. Photograph: Behrouz Mehri/AFP/Getty Images

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies*

Sun 31 Oct 2021 21.45 EDT

Japan's ruling conservative party defied expectations in Sunday's general election, with a comfortable victory that will boost the prime minister, Fumio Kishida, as he attempts to steer the economy out of the coronavirus pandemic.

Kishida's Liberal Democratic party secured 261 seats in the 465-member lower house – the more powerful of Japan's two-chamber Diet – slightly down on its pre-election 276 seats.

The party and its junior coalition partner, Komeito, together won 293 seats, more than the 261 required for an “absolute stable majority” that gives them command of parliamentary committees, making it easier to pass bills.

Japan’s Nikkei share index rose 2.3% on Monday to a one-month high.

Kishida said his administration would attempt to compile an extra budget this year that would support people hit by the pandemic, including those who lost their jobs and students struggling to pay tuition fees.

“The lower house election is about choosing a leadership,” Kishida told public broadcaster NHK. “With the ruling coalition certain to keep its majority, I believe we received a mandate from the voters.”

The Constitutional Democratic party of Japan, the biggest opposition group, lost more than a dozen seats. But the rightwing populist Japan Innovation party, whose base is in the western city of Osaka, quadrupled its presence to 41 seats to become the third-biggest party in the chamber.

Some exit polls had predicted an uncomfortably close night for Kishida and the LDP, which has governed Japan almost without interruption since the mid-1950s and last lost a lower house election in 2009.



Officials of the election administration committee count ballot papers for Japan's general election in Tokyo on Sunday. Photograph: Kazuhiro Nogi/AFP/Getty Images

[Kishida](#), who became prime minister last month after his predecessor, Yoshihide Suga, decided not to run in the LDP leadership race, said he would prepare Japan's health service for a possible wave of winter Covid-19 cases and tackle income inequality as he attempts to revive the pandemic-hit economy with a multi-trillion yen stimulus package.

“The overall trend is in favour of stability. The LDP cleared the hurdles it absolutely had to,” said Tobias Harris, senior fellow at the Center for American Progress. “We’ll see a lot of stimulus.”

Kishida, 64, had hoped that his focus on a vaguely defined “new capitalism” that would redistribute wealth to Japan’s struggling middle classes would help his party retain its healthy majority in parliament.

He had also promised a more responsive leadership amid criticism that Shinzo Abe, who stepped down last year, and his short-lived successor, Suga, had lost touch with voters, particularly during the coronavirus pandemic.

Voter apathy was reflected in the turnout, which at just under 56% was the third lowest since the end of the war.

Unusually for an incoming leader, Kishida did not enjoy a political honeymoon, with approval ratings about 50%, the lowest in two decades for a new administration in Japan.

Several opposition parties had attempted to capitalise on unusually close cooperation, with five of them, including the communists, agreeing before the campaign not to compete against each other in marginal constituencies in an attempt to consolidate the anti-LDP vote.

They called for more help for low-income families, as well as to allow married couples to use separate surnames and for the legalisation of same-sex marriage – two changes Kishida has said he opposes.

“I focused on the candidates’ policies on same-sex marriage and LGBT issues. I have many friends in gay or lesbian couples. I hope public understanding on these issues will deepen,” said Eko Nagasaki, an 18-year-old woman who voted for the first time.

Several polls had indicated that Kishida, a softly spoke centrist whose rise had been met with indifference by many voters, lacked the profile to lead the LDP to a convincing victory. Last month he defeated three rivals to become party president – effectively securing him the premiership – including Taro Kono, a reformist whose popularity among voters was not shared by many party MPs.

Kishida, who had delayed a decision on his attendance at Cop26 summit until the election results were in, will now come under pressure to offer more details of his plans for the world’s third-biggest economy, as well as ensure that Japan’s medical infrastructure is better able to cope with a possible rise in Covid-19 cases.

On the foreign policy front, he backs party plans to dramatically raise defence spending in response to an increasingly uncertain security environment in north-east Asia.

The LDP included in its election platform a pledge to double defence spending to 2% of GDP, citing rising tensions between China and Taiwan and North Korea's resumption of ballistic missile tests.

Japan, whose postwar "pacifist" constitution forbids it from using force to settle international disputes, has traditionally kept spending on defence to within 1% of GDP. Any attempt to break through that symbolic barrier could encounter resistance at home and spark protests from China.

Yoshihiko Suzuki, who voted for opposition candidates, said he hoped Kishida's win would bring an end to the "arrogance and complacency" that had characterised his predecessors' administrations.

"I hope this election comes as a wakeup call for them," the retired 68-year-old said. "If it does, the LDP will become a better party, considering the number of talented lawmakers they've got."

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[Japan](#)

## Japan election: rightwing populists sweep vote in Osaka



Hirofumi Yoshimura, the Osaka governor and acting leader of the Japan Innovation party, in October. Photograph: Yoshio Tsunoda/AFLO/Rex/Shutterstock

*[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo*

Mon 1 Nov 2021 05.28 EDT

On a night when an expected challenge by the main opposition party quickly fizzled out, candidates from a tiny local party seized one seat after another in Japan's general election, turning an economically vital region into a citadel of rightwing populism.

Nippon Ishin no Kai (Japan Innovation party) almost quadrupled its seats from 11 to 41 on Sunday to become the third largest party in the lower house of Japan's parliament, after winning almost every seat in the western prefecture of Osaka.

While the biggest opposition group, the Constitutional Democratic party of [Japan](#), and its allies were counting their losses, Ishin was becoming the most intriguing backstory in an otherwise lacklustre election.

By the early hours of Monday, the ruling Liberal Democratic party (LDP), despite [winning the national vote](#), had been summarily dismissed from Osaka by the upstarts from Ishin.

Liberals and leftwingers will shudder at Ishin's rise. But the party succeeded where their candidates had failed, exploiting disillusionment with the LDP and its junior coalition partner, Komeito, and hoovering up votes from people who could not bring themselves to vote for a five-party opposition bloc that included the socialist and communist parties.

"Nippon Ishin gathered votes from conservative voters who are frustrated with the LDP-Komeito government," the Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper said on Monday.

A new governing coalition in which Ishin replaces Komeito as the LDP's official parliamentary ally is unlikely, however. While Ishin shares the LDP's enthusiasm for higher defence spending and a tougher line on China and North Korea, its opposition to income redistribution would be anathema to the prime minister, Fumio Kishida, who campaigned on promises of closing Japan's [wealth gap](#).

Ishin's emergence as a force in national elections could be an uncomfortable reminder to Kishida that his party is no longer the natural home of conservative voters.

Yoichiro Sato, a professor of international relations at Ritsumeikan [Asia Pacific](#) University, said Ishin was "really sweeping the Osaka region. They've emerged as an important conservative bloc," adding that its MPs would oppose Kishida's "new capitalism" mission to boost incomes.

Yu Uchiyama, a politics professor at Tokyo University, did not rule out a political marriage of convenience between the ruling party and Ishin MPs who support changes to Japan's "pacifist" constitution – an [ideological obsession](#) of Kishida's mentor, the former prime minister Shinzo Abe.

“There is a lot of interest, especially in Asia, over whether Japan will try to revise its constitution, but by the look of it that won’t be possible with the (existing) ruling coalition,” Uchiyama said. “But the Japan Innovation party looks like it has captured a lot of seats, so we may be seeing some sort of constitution-related coalition, even if the possibility of constitutional revision remains low.”

Formed in 2015 by [Toru Hashimoto](#), the [controversial](#) former mayor of Osaka, Ishin benefited from the popularity of its acting leader, Hirofumi Yoshimura, who also serves as Osaka governor.

“The thing I’m most surprised by is how well Ishin has done,” said Kenneth McElwain, a political science professor at Tokyo University. “Yoshimura developed a major national profile, which I think has also served as a tailwind for the party overall.”

Despite triggering panic-buying of iodine gargle solution last year after wrongly claiming it was [effective against coronavirus](#), the 44-year-old Yoshimura – whom one party colleague described as a “pop idol” – won praise for his leadership and communication skills during the height of the pandemic.

Yoshimura, who has 1.1 million followers on [Twitter](#) – more than the Tokyo governor, Yuriko Koike – subscribes to traditional rightwing causes such as constitutional reform and prime ministerial visits to [Yasukuni](#), a controversial war shrine in Tokyo.

But he is not always an exact fit for the Japanese right’s ideological template, having campaigned for a ban on [hate speech](#) towards ethnic Koreans and other minorities in Osaka.

### *Agencies contributed reporting*

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# Headlines

- [Covid Those eligible for booster jabs to be invited a month earlier in England](#)
- [Texas Concert crush at Astroworld Festival leaves at least eight dead](#)
- [Boris Johnson Labour calls on ethics watchdog to look into flat revamp](#)
- [Analysis Has PM stooped low enough to make Tory voters turn?](#)
- [Goldsmith villa PM will not declare holiday in MPs' register](#)
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## Vaccines and immunisation

# Those eligible for Covid boosters to be invited a month earlier in England



A woman receiving a Covid booster in Merseyside. A change to the system means boosters can now be pre-booked after five months. Photograph: Martin Rickett/PA

[Sarah Marsh](#)  
[@sloumarsh](#)

Sat 6 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

Booster jabs will be available to book for those who need them a month earlier than expected in [England](#), in an effort to speed up the programme, the government has announced.

Those eligible for the top-up vaccination will receive their booking invitation five months after their second dose instead of six, after a change to the system means boosters can be prebooked.

Office for National Statistics figures show that the prevalence of coronavirus infections in England remained at about 1 in 50 people in the week ending 30 October, steady at its highest level of the year. Prevalence was unchanged from the previous week, after five weeks of rising infections.

Infection rates decreased for older secondary school pupils over the week, the ONS said, dropping to 7.5% from 9.1% the previous week.

Other suggestions that the spread of Covid is slowing include England's R number falling to between 0.9 and 1.1, down from a previous estimate of 1.1-1.3.

More than 9m top-up jabs have already been administered across the UK and from Monday, the English booking system will allow someone to prebook their booster appointment a month before they are eligible. Everyone over 50 and all those most at risk from Covid-19 should get a booster six months after their second dose. Currently, someone can only book an appointment at six months.

The health secretary, Sajid Javid, said the plans would “accelerate the booster programme”. He urged people not to delay getting jabbed.

Dr Michelle Drage, chief executive of Londonwide LMCs, which represents GPs in 27 of the capital’s 32 boroughs, doubted that the change would increase uptake much. “It may make a small difference. But it doesn’t tackle the levels of vaccine hesitancy and denial that are prevalent in communities right now.”

But Ruth Rankine, director of primary care at the NHS Confederation, applauded the move. “Vaccination remains at the heart of our response to the pandemic,” she said. “Primary care sites will do everything they can to ensure that those eligible for vaccination get them without delay, and to do that well, the supply will need to match the volume and timing of appointments as they are booked.”

The latest evidence from the government scientific advisory panel shows that protection against symptomatic disease falls from 65%, up to three

months after the second dose, to 45% six months after the second dose for the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, and from 90% to 65% for the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

The booster programme is designed to top up this waning immunity. Early results from Pfizer show that a booster after a primary schedule of the same vaccine restores protection to 95.6% against symptomatic infection.

The vaccines minister, Maggie Throup, said it was vital that people book their slots ahead of winter to protect themselves and their loved ones.

The NHS national medical director for England, Stephen Powis, said: “While this winter is undoubtedly going to be different, the most important thing you can do is come forward for both your Covid booster and flu jab as soon as possible – now with the added convenience of booking in advance – making it even easier to protect yourself and loves ones.”

The offer of a first and second Covid-19 vaccine is open to anyone who is eligible. Vaccines are available free of charge and from thousands of vaccine centres, GP practices and pharmacies.

There are more than 500 extra vaccination sites now in England compared with April this year, up from 1,697 to more than 2,500.

Vaccines are also available in schools for those aged 12-15, to offer the best possible protection this winter, as well as in more than 200 vaccine centres.

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[The ObserverTexas](#)

## Teenagers among eight dead in Houston Astroworld festival concert crush

01:14

Astroworld: police describe events at fatal festival concert – video

*[Alexandra Villarreal](#) and agencies*

Sat 6 Nov 2021 15.15 EDT

Eight people were killed and dozens injured in a crowd surge at a music festival in Houston on Friday night, in what the city's mayor called "a tragedy on many different levels".

Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Sylvester Turner said the dead ranged in age from 14 to 27, the second teenaged victim being 16 years old. Thirteen of 25 people taken to hospital were still in care, he said, five of them under the age of 18.

Turner said it was too early to draw conclusions about what went wrong.

Judge Lina Hidalgo, Harris county's top elected official, said: "It may well be that this tragedy is the result of unpredictable events, of circumstances coming together that couldn't possibly have been avoided. But until we determine that, I will ask the tough questions."

The surge towards the stage at the Astroworld festival occurred just after 9pm, while the rapper Travis Scott was performing. The Houston fire chief, Samuel Peña, said crowd movement caused panic and injuries. Then "people began to fall out, become unconscious, and it created additional panic".

[Map](#)

The show was called off and the festival cancelled. In a tweet on Saturday, Scott said he was "absolutely devastated by what took place last night" and

pledged to work “together with the Houston community to heal and support the families in need”.

Hidalgo told reporters: “When we read these ages – 14, 16, 21, 21, 23, 23, 27 – it just breaks your heart and I know that the images we’ve seen are hard to stomach and I imagine more will surface that are hard to stomach.”

Family members for six of the dead had been notified, Turner said, adding that identifying information would not immediately be released. Hidalgo said family for one victim had not been found and one victim had not been identified.

Police have opened a criminal investigation. The Houston police chief, Troy Finner, told reporters there were “a lot of narratives out there right now” about alleged criminal behavior among festival-goers.

“I think that all of us need to be respectful of the families and make sure that we follow the facts and evidence and that’s what we’re trying to do here in the Houston police department,” he said.



The crowd watches as Travis Scott performs at Astroworld Festival at NRG park on Friday in Houston. Photograph: Jamaal Ellis/AP

But he added: “I will tell you, one of the narratives was that some individual was injecting other people with drugs.

“We do have a report of a security officer, according to the medical staff that was out and treated him last night, that he was reaching over to restrain a citizen and he felt a prick in his neck. When he was examined he went unconscious. They administered Narcan, he was revived and the medical staff did notice a prick that was similar to a prick that you would get if somebody is trying to inject.”

Scott, 29 and a Houston native, founded the Astroworld festival in 2018 and it has taken place at NRG Park each year since except for 2020.



An ambulance is seen in the crowd during the Astroworld music festival in Houston. Photograph: Twitter @anthony\_t8/Reuters

Scott's performance on Friday was livestreamed by Apple Music. The Houston Chronicle reported that the rapper stopped a number of times during the 75-minute set when he spotted fans in distress, asking security to help them. Emergency vehicles, lights and alarms flashing, cut through the crowd.

In a 90-second video released on Twitter on Saturday, Scott said that, while on stage, “I could just not imagine the severity of the situation.” He

described himself as “absolutely devastated” by the incident.

A senior Houston police officer, Larry Satterwhite, was near the front. He said it seemed the surge “happened all at once”.

“Suddenly we had several people down on the ground, experiencing some type of cardiac arrest or some type of medical episode,” he said. “And so we immediately started doing CPR, and moving people right then, and that’s when I went and met with the promoters and they agreed to end early in the interest of public safety.”

An audience member, Seanna Faith McCarty, described the chaos.

“Within the first 30 seconds of the first song, people began to drown – in other people,” [she wrote on Instagram](#). “The rush of people became tighter and tighter. Breathing became something only a few were capable of. The rest were crushed or unable to breathe in the thick, hot air.”

Suddenly, McCarty said, she realized she and those around her were at risk of being trampled to death.

“It was like watching a Jenga tower topple,” she wrote. “Person after person were sucked down. You could not guess from which direction the shove of hundreds of people would come next. You were at the mercy of the wave.”

Officials transported 17 people to hospital, including 11 in cardiac arrest, Peña said. Event promoters had arranged for medical units to be on the scene but they were “quickly overwhelmed”. More than 300 were treated in a field hospital. Peña said one person hurt was 10 years old. Approximately 50,000 people attended the event, Peña added.

The fire department set up a reunification centre at a hotel, for families who had not heard from loved ones. The Houston office of emergency management [created a hotline](#) for people unable to contact festival-goers.



Travis Scott performs at Astroworld Festival at NRG park on Friday.  
Photograph: Jamaal Ellis/AP

On Saturday, Hidalgo told reporters she “spent time at the reunification center talking to families, hearing their anguish, those that didn’t know where their loved ones were”.

“Sometimes it’s harder not to know,” she said.

It was the most accidental deaths at a US concert since the Station nightclub fire, which killed 100 people in Rhode Island in 2003.

In a statement, [organizers](#) said: “Our hearts are with the Astroworld festival family tonight – especially those we lost and their loved ones.”

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/nov/06/astroworld-festival-concert-crush-leaves-at-least-eight-dead>

## Boris Johnson

# Labour calls on ethics watchdog to look into PM's flat refurbishment



Boris Johnson leaves 10 Downing Street in London as more questions were asked about financial affairs. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

*[Aubrey Allegretti](#) and [Heather Stewart](#)*

Fri 5 Nov 2021 13.23 EDT

Parliament's ethics watchdog has been urged to investigate Boris Johnson's Downing Street finances after this week's sleaze scandal, as Kathryn Stone was said to be undeterred by government attempts to undermine her.

Angela Rayner, Labour's deputy leader, called on Stone, the parliamentary standards commissioner, to open a new investigation into the [refurbishment of the prime ministerial flat](#), which reportedly cost £200,000 and was initially funded by a Tory donor.

It comes after the government attempted to [overthrow a ruling by Stone](#) in relation to lobbying by the Conservative MP Owen Paterson. Ministers also tried to overhaul the system designed to crack down on sleaze. Rayner accused the prime minister of trying to install a “sham group of Tory stooges who would do his bidding”.

On Friday Johnson threw down the gauntlet to Stone by [refusing to declare](#) the costs of his Marbella holiday last month, which was funded by the family of the Tory peer and minister Zac Goldsmith.

Amid growing anger over the sleaze debacle, a Conservative former member of the standards committee said it was “quite convenient” timing for Johnson to be trying to “trash the existing disciplinary system” in an attempt to escape scrutiny of his own actions.

Stone has said she will decide whether to investigate the refurbishment of No 11 Downing Street once the Electoral Commission has completed its own investigation. The commission is understood to have completed its inquiry and has handed a draft of its findings to the Conservative party.

Allies of Stone regard this week’s chaotic events in parliament as part of an attempt to undermine her authority, but two sources told the Guardian she was undeterred and would continue to take a robust approach to investigating MPs’ conduct. On Wednesday she released a statement saying she intended to remain in post until the end of her term in December 2022.

Rayner said in a letter to Stone on Friday that Johnson’s behaviour this week in trying to shield Paterson by changing the standards system “demonstrates that the prime minister is clearly attempting to disempower the role of the parliamentary commissioner for standards and even remove you from your post at a time when he is facing a potential investigation by you for breaching the rules yet again”.

She added: “This situation is deeply concerning for all of us who believe in democracy and basic standards of decency, integrity and honesty in public life. This situation also makes it all the more important that you are able to carry out your investigation into whether the prime minister broke the rules

in relation to the financing of the refurbishment of his Downing Street flat, just as he broke the rules on a number of occasions in the past.”

Rayner said the government-backed attempt to overhaul the standards system by creating a new committee chaired by a Tory MP was an attempt to “make Conservative MPs judge and jury over allegations of corruption and rule-breaking”, adding it was a “blatant attempt” to prevent the Stone from investigating him.

Dominic Grieve, a former Tory member of the standards committee, said Johnson’s intervention “clearly could only be interpreted on the basis that he intended to rubbish the committee and the commissioner and undermine them”.

He added: “What this group of ministers – led by this prime minister – have done is to say this is a chum whom we are going to help. And in doing so it doesn’t matter if we trash the existing disciplinary system, which leaves it in tatters for the future. And it just so happens that at the same time, well, that might be quite convenient, because the prime minister himself might be the subject of its scrutiny shortly over his issues of non-declaration.”

The question of whether the government is trying to oust Stone was underlined when Conservative headquarters issued guidance to Tory MPs on how to answer the question about whether she should resign. It did not tell them to disagree but only to say changes to the standards system were “about strengthening the process more broadly”.

Sir Malcolm Rifkind, a Tory grandee and former chair of the standards and privileges committee, told the Guardian he was “genuinely worried” the Conservatives’ reputation was being “seriously being damaged by events of this kind”.

He said Downing Street should confess it “got it wrong” and “show some contrition given the way they’ve used the power they have got has not been in the best public interest”. He added: “They’ve got to show that they’re learning from experience, that this is not the way either to treat the [House of Commons](#) or the country as a whole. The reputation of the government will

not just be temporarily but potentially permanently damaged, if the public assume that this kind of behaviour was going to continue every so often.”

Downing Street declined to rule out the possibility Johnson could [nominate Paterson for a peerage](#) despite the former MP being found to have committed an “egregious” breach of parliamentary rules on paid lobbying.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/nov/05/labour-calls-on-ethics-watchdog-to-look-into-pms-flat-refurbishment>

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## Conservatives

# Has Boris Johnson stooped low enough to make Tory voters turn?



A protester holds a placard at a demonstration in London in April.  
Photograph: MI News/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock



[Heather Stewart](#) Political editor

Sat 6 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

Tom Morrison, the Liberal Democrat candidate for the marginal Conservative seat of Cheadle, only realised this week's Westminster sleaze crisis would be picked up by constituents when he was buttonholed by a former Tory voter in Aldi. "There was a real air of disappointment: 'Why is he [Boris Johnson] doing this?' And then he said: 'It's just not fair,'" Morrison says.

The Lib Dems, who came second to the Tories in 90 seats in [December 2019](#), are targeting voters they call "soft Conservatives" who backed Johnson at the last general election but may have reservations about him now – not least because of the perception of sleaze.

Canvassers in [Chesham and Amersham](#), where the Lib Dems overturned a 16,000 majority to take the seat in June, also said they heard repeatedly from former Tory voters who felt let down by Johnson's government.

It is a fear of this cut-through to voters that will be causing jitters among ministers, and which helped contribute to a screeching U-turn after a [48-hour shambles](#) over lobbying this week.

“There’s almost a drumbeat of sleaze that’s happening all the time now, and that’s why it’s cutting through,” said Morrison. “I think previously people have voted Conservative because there’s a sense of responsibility, and this just flies in the face of that – and that’s what really disappoints people.”

Johnson’s kamikaze attempt to protect the longstanding MP [Owen Paterson](#) from a 30-day suspension after he was found by the independent sleaze watchdog to have lobbied on behalf of two companies, was the latest example of this government pushing the boundaries of probity.

But the boldness of the move – with the [Conservatives](#) whipping their MPs to protect a colleague who was paid more than £100,000 a year and had approached ministers and officials more than a dozen times, underlined a view in No 10 that voters barely notice such issues.

But the opposition parties certainly noticed. The Lib Dems highlight Conservative MPs in their target seats, including Steve Brine in Winchester, Alex Chalk in Cheltenham and Bim Afolami in Hitchin and Harpenden, [who voted for](#) the amendment to save Paterson on Wednesday.



Steve Brine in the Commons. Photograph: UK parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

Both they and Labour believe Johnson’s amorality is a chink in the government’s armour that they hope to exploit. Certainly the latest YouGov

poll, carried out after the Paterson debacle, showed the Conservatives' lead fall to just one point – 36% to Labour's 35%.

Elections experts say it is also important to watch the “don’t knows”. Many may have voted Conservative in 2019 and have concerns about the Johnson regime, but have not yet alighted on an alternative.

Keir Starmer’s [noticeably punchier approach](#) this week – calling Johnson’s behaviour “corrupt” and accusing him of “leading his troops through the sewer” – reflected Labour’s belief that voters are beginning to notice a pattern of behaviour.

The Labour leader laid a heavy focus on questions over the financing of Johnson’s No 10 flat during the disastrous [Hartlepool byelection](#) campaign in May, which Labour lost, with analysts subsequently raising questions about whether sleaze matters at the ballot box. But Hartlepool’s new MP, Jill Mortimer, was among the 13 Conservatives who defied a vigorous whipping operation to vote against the save-Paterson amendment on Wednesday.

Paula Surridge, an elections expert and deputy director of the UK in a Changing Europe thinktank, points to some evidence that new Conservative voters – those who backed Labour in 2015 but supported Johnson in 2019 – are more concerned about issues of fairness and corruption than longtime Tory voters.

When asked in the British Election Study whether they agreed that “there is one law for the rich and one for the poor”, for example, 48% of loyal Conservative voters agreed, compared with 76% of Labour-to-Conservative switchers. Similarly, 26% of loyal Conservatives disagreed against just 9% of “new” Conservatives.

After the parliamentary battles of the Brexit process, Johnson was able to paint himself as being on the side of the leave-voting public against the Westminster elite – making the point visually during the December 2019 election by literally driving a bulldozer through a wall of polystyrene bricks.

Surridge says: “For the Conservatives, a concern must be that being seen by voters as protecting those with wealth and power could undermine the connection with their new voters. While currently the Labour party seems to struggle to capitalise on this, there is a danger of voters tuning out and staying home. In close contests, who votes might be the difference between winning and losing.”

The Lib Dems believe Rishi Sunak’s tax-raising budgets will also play badly with potential Tory switchers. Recent internal polling showed 61% of 2019 Conservative voters think Sunak will raise their taxes.

Johnson faces a series of tests in the coming weeks with by-elections looming not just in Paterson’s seat of North Shropshire, but in Old Bexley and Sidcup after the [death of James Brokenshire](#), and also Southend West – though the latter will not be contested, out of respect for David Amess, who was killed last month.

Both Paterson’s and Brokenshire’s seats are regarded as super-safe – but Chesham and Amersham was also seen as an impossible target before the Lib Dems took it in June.

One senior Tory who knows Johnson well says sleaze will not dent the prime minister’s popularity until it does. “I think it is a key risk for him,” he said. “At some stage, there could be a scandal that totally undoes him – and all these things that have gone before, [Barnard Castle, the flat](#), this – builds up into a rich tapestry in people’s minds.”

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**Boris Johnson**

## **Johnson will not declare Spanish holiday in MPs' register, says No 10**



Boris Johnson and Zac Goldsmith at the UN in 2019. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

*Peter Walker* Political correspondent  
[@peterwalker99](https://twitter.com/peterwalker99)

Fri 5 Nov 2021 09.46 EDT

Boris Johnson will not declare a free luxury holiday he received at the Spanish villa belonging to the Goldsmith family in the register of MPs' interests, Downing Street has said, meaning he does not have to detail the value of the gift.

Johnson [listed](#) the near week-long stay in the Marbella property in October in the [register of ministerial interests](#). It confirmed the holiday was provided free of charge by the family of Zac Goldsmith, the former Conservative MP who is now a peer and an environment minister.

However, this register does not detail monetary values. The separate register of MPs' interests does but on Friday Johnson's spokesman said the prime minister had no plans to list it there.

"Earlier this year the prime minister received hospitality from a long-standing family friend who provided their holiday home," the spokesman said. "In line with transparency requirements, he has declared the arrangement in his ministerial capacity, given the hospitality was provided by another minister."

Asked if this was an attempt to avoid revealing the cost, they added: "The declarations in terms of the transparency requirements have been met by the prime minister. Ministerial code declarations fall outside the remit of the Commons register."

The unusual decision to not make a full declaration will heap pressure on Johnson. He has previously had to apologise to the parliamentary commissioner for standards, Kathryn Stone, for making incomplete or late declarations.

Stone, who is also expected to adjudicate on whether Johnson broke rules in the way he financed a refurbishment of his Downing Street flat, faced [calls from ministers](#) this week to resign after the government [briefly and disastrously tried](#) to reverse her decision over the suspension of the Tory MP Owen Paterson for breaking paid lobbying rules.

No 10 said the decision to avoid the MPs' register was based on a [section of the MPs' code of conduct](#) detailing the rules for registering overseas visits. Part of this states they do not need to be declared if they are "wholly unconnected with membership of the house or with the member's parliamentary or political activities (eg family holidays)," which appears to be the No 10 argument.

While Goldsmith is a friend of Johnson's, and particularly of the prime minister's wife, Carrie, he was also made a peer by Johnson after he lost his Commons seat in 2019, and given a government job.

The Goldsmith family property is marketed online for rentals for as much as £25,000 a week. After the holiday, the Guardian [revealed](#) that documents indicated the villa had been held by an opaque offshore structure based in multiple tax havens.

The papers suggested the minister and his family may have owned the property through a Maltese company held by companies in the Turks and Caicos Islands and administered by a wealth-planning firm based in Switzerland.

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**Boris Johnson**

## Muzzling the watchdogs? Boris Johnson's record with regulators



Opposition parties have said the PM has been trying to hobble Kathryn Stone. Photograph: UK Parliament/Jessica Taylor/PA

*Peter Walker Political correspondent  
[@peterwalker99](#)*

Fri 5 Nov 2021 12.31 EDT

Since becoming prime minister, [Boris Johnson](#) has faced repeated accusations of seeking to undermine people and organisations that independently scrutinise the government, or trying to trim their powers. Here are some examples:

**Kathryn Stone – parliamentary commissioner for standards**

Johnson is charged with trying to push out or sideline Stone, the independent officer tasked with investigating claims that MPs have breached rules, over her inquiry into the now resigned Tory MP [Owen Paterson](#).

After Stone recommended Paterson be suspended from the Commons for 30 days for breaking paid lobbying rules, a decision subsequently supported by the cross-party standards committee, Johnson backed a move to suspend this, and introduce a standards committee with a built-in Tory majority.

While Johnson was forced into a [swift U-turn](#) following an outcry, opposition parties said the PM was trying to hobble Stone, who has previously found him in breach of rules, and is likely to investigate who paid for the [controversial refurbishment](#) of his Downing Street flat.

## Alex Allan – independent adviser on ministers’ interests

The high-ranking civil servant [quit abruptly](#) in November 2020 after Johnson overruled him by refusing to sack Priti Patel despite a formal investigation finding evidence that the home secretary had bullied civil servants.

Johnson argued that because the report said Patel’s breaches of the ministerial code might have been unintentional, this exonerated her. Allan clearly disagreed.

Earlier that year, the most senior civil servant in Patel’s department, Philip Rutnam, [had also resigned](#), saying the home secretary had orchestrated a “vicious and orchestrated campaign against him”.

## Ofcom – attempts to fix recruitment of a new boss

Ofcom is one of the most powerful independent regulators in the country, with a remit covering telecoms and broadband as well as broadcasting, and as such, there is considerable interest as to who might become its new chair.

Paul Dacre, the former editor of the Daily Mail, is very much Johnson's choice for the role, but was turned down after an interview panel did not think he met the criteria.

Rather than seek a more qualified candidate, ministers instead [reopened the process](#) with a change to the job description, intended to give Dacre a better chance.

## **Electoral Commission – limiting its powers and independence**

Among a [series of measures](#) in the government's elections bill, introduced to the Commons in September, are some that critics say would limit the Electoral Commission, which, regulates elections across the UK and can launch prosecutions for wrongdoing.

The commission [has been examining](#) whether Johnson committed any offences in the way the Downing Street flat refurbishment was financed. Its report is now understood to have been sent to No 10.

The elections bill would stop the commission launching prosecutions, and would oblige it to follow a "strategy and policy statement" put together by the lead Cabinet Office minister, Michael Gove. Critics say this would give Gove the ability to limit its work, although the government says the statement would have to be approved by MPs.

## **Judicial review – restrict its use**

The judiciary is one of the most fundamental elements of oversight in politics, and critics say ministers are trying to cripple this by limiting the use of judicial review, where a judge examines the lawfulness of an action or a decision of a public body. While ministers say the right has been abused, a number of MPs and peers [have warned](#) the plans would greatly limit accountability.

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## 2021.11.06 - Spotlight

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- [Exclusive Read an extract from Huma Abedin's memoir](#)
- ['I feel like an animal in a cage' In bed with insomniac Britain](#)
- [The Q&A Moby: 'I have been accidentally celibate for six years'](#)

## Huma Abedin

Interview

# **Huma Abedin on Anthony Weiner: ‘He ripped my heart out and stomped on it over and over again’**

Hadley Freeman



Huma Abedin: ‘I lived with shame for a very, very long time.’ Photograph: Chris Buck/The Guardian



[@HadleyFreeman](#)

Sat 6 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

Walk of shame, huh? I'll take it," says Huma Abedin, reading the name of the lipstick on the makeup artist's table. It is a bright, cool day in Manhattan and we are at a photographer's studio, where Abedin is having her photo taken for this interview. Having watched her from afar for so long, first as Hillary Clinton's elegant, silent assistant, then as the mostly silent and increasingly unhappy spouse of the former congressman Anthony Weiner, I had expected her to be quiet, anxious and guarded, but Abedin, 45, is none of those things. Someone so beautiful could come across as imperious, but with her big, open-mouthed laugh and "Oh gosh, you know better than me!" air, she veers closer to goofy. After 25 years of working for Clinton, she has a politician's knack for making those around her feel comfortable. She leans forward keenly when spoken to, and makes sure to use everyone's name when talking to them. She tells us, twice, that she ate "*so much* comfort food over the weekend at the hospital", where she waited while Bill Clinton was being treated for a urological infection; he was discharged the day before our interview. "Just burgers and fries, burgers and fries. Food is my weakness," she says rolling her eyes at herself. Everyone is instantly disarmed. But then she picks up that lipstick and at the word "shame" the makeup artist and I look down awkwardly and Abedin becomes – as she has been for so long,

she tells me later over lunch – “the elephant in the room again”. “I lived with shame for a very, very long time,” as she puts it.

The question Abedin hears most is: why? Why did she stay with [Weiner](#) after he accidentally tweeted a photo of his crotch while sexting women online in 2011, leading to his resignation from Congress? Why, when he ran for New York City mayor in 2013, did she assure voters that she had “forgiven him”? And why did she stay with him when it then emerged he was still sending women photos of the contents of his trousers? Why did she only separate from him but not divorce him when, in 2016, he sent a woman a photo of himself aroused while lying in bed next to his and Abedin’s toddler son, Jordan? And why were there official emails between her and Hillary on Weiner’s laptop, thereby prompting the then director of the FBI, James Comey, to announce the fateful reopening of the investigation into Clinton’s emails days before the 2016 election?

Well, her new memoir, [Both/And: A Life in Many Worlds](#), makes a good fist of answering most, if not all, of these questions. Having started the book believing that Abedin’s choices were so unrelated as to be incomprehensible, I finished it feeling as if I probably would have often done the same. This is the first interview she has given about her book: “And I’m glad it’s not a TV one, because that’s really not me, being in front of the camera,” she says. I ask why she decided to write the book at all, given that it would, inevitably, thrust her right back into the bright glare of public scrutiny.

“I think if I’d written this book when people wanted me to write it, in the midst of all the heat and intensity, it would have been a much more bitter book. I needed the time. But I feel like I’m somebody who’s been in the public eye on and off for the past 20 years and someone else has been writing my story, and it felt like the right time for me to write it,” she says.

I was desperately in love with him. I didn’t know who I could trust, so we receded into our corner

In order to understand what she did, Abedin says, as she eats her omelette and chips in a downtown restaurant, you have to understand where she came

from. People tend to start with her long relationship with Hillary Clinton, who she has worked for since she was 20 years old, and think that shaped how she handled her own husband's very public betrayals of her. It's true that it's hard not to boggle at the symbolism that she was working at the White House when the president, after initial denials, finally admitted he'd had an affair with Monica Lewinsky. But Abedin loathes this line of thinking. "I know that people want to make this comparison" – between Bill Clinton's scandal and Weiner's – "because it seems to the outside world so similar, but to me it wasn't," she insists. Instead, she says, to really understand how she, a devout Muslim, was married to an American Jew who ended up in prison for sex offences, you have to go back to her beginnings.

Abedin was born in Kalamazoo, Michigan, the daughter of two professors, both India-born Muslims. When she was two, her parents were offered jobs at the university in Jeddah and so the family moved to Saudi Arabia. Her parents raised her to be devout but also modern; she has no problem, she writes, with women who opt to wear the hijab as long as they have "the choice". When she was 17, her father died from progressive renal failure, which her parents had kept hidden from the children for most of their childhood. I ask what she learned from her father and she says: "To make your own choices, but be thoughtful about them, not rash."

Her mother encouraged her to go to university in the US and she went to George Washington University in Washington DC. She'd spent her summers in the US, so the culture shock wasn't too great, but because of her faith she doesn't drink alcohol, which differentiated her from the other American students. There was something else, too: "As was expected of any girl with my background, I would lose my virginity to the man I would marry," she writes, and that is exactly what she did, waiting until she married Weiner at the age of 33.

She applied to be a White House intern while still at college, and was assigned to the first lady's deputy chief of staff. She was offered a permanent position even before she graduated. "I officially became a member of a lifelong club known as Hillaryland," she writes. From the moment she arrived, Abedin was in awe of the Clintons, Hillary especially, and it's an impression that has not waned in the 25 years she has spent working alongside her. She tells me that one of the reasons she wrote her

memoir “was to show the world that she’s this incredible person, and I wanted to present her as a human, away from the caricatures”. But it’s hard to see the human when so many of the descriptions of her in the book sound like a press release (“Diplomacy is about meeting the world with open eyes, attuned listening and small gestures of outreach. It was second nature to Hillary Clinton”). This is also how she talks about her in person. The only criticism Abedin allows of Hillary in the book is of her occasionally unfortunate taste in clothes (“the coat that looked like a carpet that HRC thought was colourful and fun”). Meanwhile, her [attendance at Donald Trump's wedding to Melania Knauss](#) (“When the invitation came [Hillary] figured, why not? When someone is getting married, you go”) and even her [vote for the war against Iraq](#) (“she was clear about her reservations”), which Abedin advised against, are justified. From very early on, the two women developed a close relationship based on mutual respect, and it’s easy to see why Abedin – a young woman who lost her father and was living far away from her mother – would cleave to the Clintons.

“I wasn’t necessarily politically motivated. It felt like [being part of] the cause, and every day you were doing something important,” she says, and that cause was the Clintons.



With Anthony Weiner on their wedding day in 2010. Photograph: Barbara Kinney/Polaris/eyevine

Yet her devotion to the cause occasionally crashes up against historical fact, and in the case of the Clintons in the late 1990s, that means Lewinsky. Abedin does her best to get around this when recalling how rumours of the president's affair with the intern began. "Given all the manufactured stories that had come before this one – that the Clintons were murderers, thieves – it seemed very likely that this one could be untrue," she writes.

Come on, I say. By the time Lewinsky came along, the president had already been accused of sexual impropriety by [Gennifer Flowers and Paula Jones](#) (the latter of which he still denies). There must have been some part of Abedin that thought Lewinsky was telling the truth.

"No," she replies before I finish the question.

Why not?

"For me, as an intern, it seemed not possible. We never saw [the president]! You would turn on the TV and it was [Ken Starr](#) this, Ken Starr that, Whitewater this, Whitewater that – but when you turned away from the TV and you looked at your desk, really important work was continuing. Northern Ireland, the Middle East peace process. The other stuff was just distractions on TV. Maybe if I hadn't been an intern it would have been different, but I knew how it was [in the White House] and it seemed impossible," she says. Throughout our time together, she never says Lewinsky's name. I ask how the Clintons feel about Ryan Murphy's recent dramatisation of the scandal in [Impeachment: American Crime Story](#). "It's not a conversation that we discussed internally," she replies crisply.

When the [Democrats](#) gained seats in the 1998 midterm elections, despite the impeachment, Abedin knew exactly who to credit. "It was Hillary Clinton's effort, her struggle and her strategising, her broken and open heart that had saved the presidency ... Hillary Clinton was the saviour, not the liability," she writes, channelling her internal Barbara Cartland.

As I read this sentence out loud to her, Abedin quotes it along with me. "Her broken heart, yeah," she says smiling a little.

This idea that Hillary had, through forgiveness and loyalty, fixed her husband's transgression and saved his career seems to echo your later belief that you could fix your husband and rescue his political career, I say to her.

"Yes, yes, yes!" she says excitedly, as if she'd never put those ideas together.

So did seeing how Hillary handled her husband's infidelity – silently, stoically – influence how Abedin later dealt with Weiner?

"If it did, it was subconscious. I think what really drove me was I was desperately in love with my husband. I think all of the ugliness from the outside, it made us into a bubble. I didn't know who I could trust, and so much of the conversation was so embarrassing, so we kind of receded into our corner," she says.

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The first time Weiner asked Abedin on a date was in 2001. She declined, saying she was busy working for Hillary. So he loudly asked Hillary to give Abedin the night off, and Hillary, to Abedin's horror, told her to go have fun. She managed to shake off the obnoxious congressman that night, but they bumped into one another frequently at political events. She was the quiet, well-liked aide who hid from the spotlight; he was the brash congressman who yelled about his political causes to any passing camera. And yet, by 2007, they were friendly, and she was falling for him. He was not fazed by her job, which was extremely demanding, given that Hillary was now a senator and also running for the presidency. "Other men would find this whole Clinton world really overwhelming and more than they could handle," she says. Also, unlike other men, he had no problem with what she describes as her "limitations" – her decision not to have sex until she was married. The man who would soon be routinely described as a sex addict in the media didn't even kiss her until a year into their relationship. "And he was fine with that," she says. She'd always assumed she'd marry a Muslim, so he gave up alcohol and pork, and fasted during Ramadan alongside her. When he proposed, in 2009, she accepted. "It was a real journey for me to get to a place where I could allow myself to marry someone outside my faith. But he was my first love, and my greatest soulmate ... Then everything exploded. He didn't just break my heart, he ripped it out and stomped on it over and over again," she says calmly.



‘I’ve been in the public eye for years and someone else has been writing my story.’ Photograph: Chris Buck/The Guardian. Dress: [Gabriela Hearst](#). Shoes: [Chloe Gosselin](#). Earrings: [White/Space](#)

The first warning sign came as they were discussing their wedding plans and she handed him his BlackBerry to call his dad. Her eye was caught by an email from a woman. It was “fawning, flirtatious and very familiar”, she writes. He insisted it was “just a fan”. Because he was known for being a straight talker – to a fault – she believed him. But later, she would remember what he said to her right before she saw that email: “I’m broken and I need you to fix me.” Has she ever asked him what he meant?

“Often I’ll raise things with Anthony, and I think there’s a lot he doesn’t remember. But I think, in hindsight, it really was a self-realisation that something didn’t feel right, and my guess is that committing to me, committing to being married, exposed those vulnerabilities: ‘Am I good enough to be in a relationship with somebody?’ That’s what a lot of people who have these insecurities feel,” she says.

Soon after, they got married and their wedding was officiated by none other than ... Bill Clinton. “Every wedding is a wonder,” intoned the man who, just over a decade earlier, had been impeached for lying about infidelity. I tell Abedin that often when she describes Weiner in the book – “charming,

charismatic and clearly attractive to lots of women” – it sounds like she could be describing Bill. Was that part of his appeal?

“No! Not at all!” she gasps. She was, she says, just deeply in love with him.

Only 10 months into their marriage, Weiner texted Abedin to say his Twitter account had been hacked. This, of course, was a lie, and after a few days he had to admit, to his wife and then the public, that the person who had posted a photo of Anthony Weiner’s crotch to Anthony Weiner’s Twitter account was [Anthony Weiner](#). The media cackled. Abedin cringed. Then the New York Times found out she was pregnant and, even though she was still in her first trimester, they printed it, and that’s how the Clintons and most of her friends found out. But she didn’t leave him. It was, Weiner told her, just an online thing, like a computer game, and he was sorry. It’s not like he had sex with someone else, she told herself. Abedin had barely dated at all before Weiner and he was, she writes in the book, her “first and only”. I ask if she thinks this inexperience caused her to be naive about her husband. “I don’t think I was naive – I think I wasn’t rash. Also, because I lost my father when I was young and that was such an important relationship in my life, I thought: ‘Am I going to deprive this child of a father, without giving him another chance?’ I feel I made a very thoughtful decision about it.” He resigned from Congress, they went into therapy, and six months later their son, Jordan, was born.



At the swearing in of Congress in 2011. Five months later, Weiner resigned following a Twitter photo scandal. Photograph: Charles Dharapak/AP

A few months after that, it was Abedin who was in the spotlight when five Republican members of Congress, including former presidential candidate [Michele Bachmann](#), [wrote a letter](#) saying Abedin should be investigated for possible terrorist “infiltration” of the state department. “Abedin has three family members – her late father, her mother and her brother – connected to Muslim Brotherhood operatives and/or organisations,” they wrote.

This was complete nonsense: none of Abedin’s family had any connection to the Muslim Brotherhood. Looking back now, Abedin sees this episode as a precursor to the heightened Islamophobia that would soon unfold in the US: “Michele Bachmann was the appetiser for what came next, and I was the experiment.”

For so long, Abedin had been, she says, “the token Muslim in American politics”. Hillary trusted her expertise on the Middle East and she often acted as translator on trips to the region. But now American politicians and some foreign ones were questioning her loyalty. Senator [John McCain](#) gave [a speech](#) to the Senate defending her: “Huma represents what is best about America ... I am proud to call her my friend.” More Republicans, including Lindsey Graham and the then House speaker John Boehner, spoke up for

her, and the scandal faded. It was a testament to how well liked Abedin was in the American political world, whereas her husband was totally isolated.

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When Weiner mooted the idea of [running for mayor of New York in 2013](#), Abedin was enthusiastic. He was such a good politician, and what had happened in 2011 had clearly been an aberration, she thought. “I couldn’t imagine Anthony would do anything to risk it all again,” she writes. Abedin, for the first time, made a public statement defending her husband. “I love him, I have forgiven him, I believe in him,” she said at a press conference to persuade voters. Hillary was horrified and I ask Abedin why. After all, Hillary had stood by her husband after his infidelities. “Hillary has always approached how she tried to help me from the perspective of a friend, and she felt that I didn’t need to do what I did,” she says.

I ask if Hillary ever mentioned to Abedin their shared experience of being married to chronically unfaithful husbands.

“No. No. I don’t think she – I don’t want to be talking about private conversations with her. But she has this incredible empathy, compassion and problem-solving gene that she can’t shake. There’s no, ‘This is what I did so you should do this.’ No. She didn’t have to. I’d seen what she’d gone through,” she says.



Abedin publicly supporting Weiner in his campaign to run for mayor of New York, July 2013. Photograph: Donna Aceto/Polaris/eyevine

Soon after Abedin made her public statement of forgiveness, it emerged Weiner was still sexting. Abedin doesn't include this detail in the book – and who could blame her – but this time he was doing so under the unforgettable alias "Carlos Danger". New Yorkers rejected the possibility of Mayor Danger.

No one could understand why she stayed – not even the Clintons, although they never said so explicitly. But no one in her family was divorced, and she just couldn't picture it for herself. She told Weiner in 2014 that she wanted a separation, but they still lived together. Outsiders tutted, but he made life easier for her. Abedin was extremely busy working for Clinton, now secretary of state and, imminently, presidential nominee. He was happy to stay home and look after their son while Abedin travelled the country. Anyone who has been married with kids will know that, for pragmatic purposes, you sometimes tolerate more than you should.

A month after Hillary was named the Democratic nominee in the 2016 election, Weiner called Abedin. He told her the New York Post was publishing a picture of him and Jordan. She assumed it would be a paparazzi photo of the two of them in the park. It wasn't. It was a photo taken by Weiner showing himself aroused and in bed, and next to him lay their sleeping toddler son, and he had sent it to a woman on the internet. Abedin threw him out of their apartment and publicly announced their separation. Strangers called Child Services saying they were concerned for Jordan's safety, so now, while going through a very public scandal, and a separation, and helping to helm an especially fevered presidential campaign, she was also being investigated by Child Services. Just one of those things would drive most people to a nervous breakdown. How on earth did she not collapse?

Each time I thought he had reached a new nadir, he shocked me by going even lower ... That's not behaviour you can control

“God,” she replies. “My faith has carried me through this life and, when I was at my lowest moments, that’s where I went. I think the average American doesn’t know about Islam, but, no question, that is where I find my balance.”

Things were about to get even worse for Abedin. A few weeks later, it was alleged that Weiner had been sexting a 15-year-old girl – a federal offence. “Each time I thought Anthony had reached a new nadir, he shocked me by going even lower,” Abedin writes.

Maybe he was testing you to see how much you could take, I say.

“I think the isolation and the shunning from society made him retreat more into these spaces and, as a result, it felt as though whatever it was Anthony was dealing with, it was not being treated properly and we both had to get to the bottom,” she says. He went into rehab and that was when doctors first told her that Weiner had an “addiction”. Does she think he’s a sex addict?



‘Bitterness is not the word.’ Photograph: Chris Buck/The Guardian. Styling: Bailey Moon. Hair: Antonio Velotta. Makeup: Tegan Rice for Charlotte Tilbury Beauty. Clothes: [Michael Kors](#). Shoes: [Marion Parke](#). Earrings: [Briony Raymond](#)

“There are certain questions for him to answer, not me. What I do know is that somebody who intentionally loses everything and falls into the same pattern again, that’s not behaviour you can control,” she says.

It’s an addict’s behaviour, but maybe not to sex, I say. Maybe he was addicted to self-destruction, or even public shame. She nods emphatically.

Because Weiner’s alleged victim was underage, the FBI seized his laptop. When they found [emails on it from Abedin to Hillary containing classified information](#), Comey announced he was reopening the investigation into Hillary’s emails and whether she used a private server for official communications. The election was less than two weeks away. Abedin’s two worlds – her Clinton world and her tattered marriage – had collided in the most spectacular fashion. Within days, [Comey cleared Clinton](#), but the damage had been done.

Abedin says she’s put all her anger behind her, but she still sounds pretty angry when talking about Comey. “Do I believe [the reopened investigation] was the singular factor in her loss? No. Do I believe it was a factor? Yes, I do,” she says. The first thing she heard after Clinton gave her [concession speech on 9 November](#) was reporters shouting, “Do you blame yourself, Huma?” She says she still has no idea why her emails were on her ex-husband’s computer. I ask how she felt when President Trump thanked Comey after winning the election. After a long pause she says: “I’m not sure I have a word you can print.”

Almost exactly a year after that, [Weiner was sentenced to 21 months in prison](#). Before he was incarcerated, the two of them attempted to file for divorce, but because of the enormous media interest, Abedin reluctantly withdrew the petition. (They are currently finalising details of their divorce.) She had expected to spend that year working as chief of staff to the first female president; instead, she was shuttling her son to prison for visits with his father in a country that was enacting a so-called [Muslim ban](#), and she still laughs at the dystopian absurdity of it. Were she and Hillary bitter after the election?

“Bitterness is not the word, but I was angry. There was also a lot of ‘I told you so’ [to the public and media]. Like, ‘I told you this Muslim ban was

going to happen!'''

Jordan is now nine and I ask if he has his father's all-too-recognisable surname; she says he does. How has she explained that photo of him lying in bed next to his father?

"That's a conversation that, when he's at an age when it's appropriate, we're going to have. He knows there are moments when there are [photographers] around and he's had to deal with the gaggles," she says. The first thing Jordan asked her when she told him she had written a book was: "Does that mean those men are coming back?"

After Weiner was released, and [registered as a sex offender](#), he got an apartment in the same building as Abedin, to make things easier for Jordan. This remains the status quo. In 2019, after he told Abedin he was dating again, she did the one thing she had always resisted: she looked through his old phone. It turned out that, after 2013, while they were still married, he hadn't just been sexting women – he'd been having sex with them, sometimes in their family home. With a therapist, they then went through a disclosure process, in which he told her everything. Knowing the truth at last helped her to shake off the anger, the shame and the resentment, and to move on. These days she says they are "more than civil to each other" but when I ask what he's doing now for a job, her voice hardens: "You'd have to ask him. I assume he's doing stuff." (According to a [New Yorker interview](#) in December 2020, he's running a company that makes "countertops out of concrete and crushed Heineken bottles".) Abedin, meanwhile, is still working for Hillary. "She's doing a show for Apple TV, she and her daughter have set up a production company, and there's all these amazing projects," she says brightly. It was always about the cause. I ask her if she's seeing anyone and she goes all fluttery: "Oh my goodness. This is a question I was not prepared for. No, I'm not seeing anyone. I don't really go on dates. That's kind of sad, now that I think of it. But if you have any leads, I'll take them."

What is she looking for in a partner?

She thinks for a moment: "Somebody not in politics, don't you think?"

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## Huma Abedin

# **‘If Hillary Clinton loses this election, it will be because of you and me’ – an exclusive extract from Huma Abedin’s memoir**



Huma Abedin: ‘Yelling didn’t make anyone feel better, but I did it anyway.’  
Photograph: Chris Buck/The Guardian

*Huma Abedin*

Sat 6 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

If there was a single night I truly believed [Hillary Clinton](#) would become president, it was 28 July 2016, when she took to the floor in her white Ralph Lauren suit to formally accept the nomination. As a blizzard of confetti and a hundred thousand red, white and blue balloons descended from the cavernous ceiling, the song Stronger Together, written and recorded for that evening, echoed through the hall, competing with the deafening sounds of

fifty thousand supporters clapping and cheering for the woman in white on stage. Once HRC accepted the nomination, she began tossing giant blue balloons emblazoned with white stars out to the audience; to Tim Kaine, her running mate; to Chelsea, who had spoken so eloquently to introduce her mother; to her husband, who had given his own moving tribute to her on the second night of the convention and now looked exuberant as he waded through the waist-high drift of balloons that rained down.

Afterwards, our delegation of about 20 Clinton/Kaine family members, campaign staff and officials made its way through the balloons to the small backstage hold area, and Tim Kaine surprised me by leading the rest of our group in an impromptu singing of Happy Birthday. It was my 41st birthday. This new decade was turning out to be pretty extraordinary. Or so it seemed.

A month later, after a long day in the midst of a week of fundraising events on Long Island, I joined Anthony and our son Jordan in a home that had been lent to us so that I could stay close to the Clintons. The house was a pristine construction of glass and wood, with a tennis court and rectangular granite pool in the back. It was this scene of unblemished perfection that would soon be the setting for the collapse of my entire house of cards.

When I walked through the front door that evening, Anthony was in the middle of his end-of-day routines with Jordan, and I joined my nightly conference calls. He played games with Jordan while bathing him, then dressed him in pyjamas and handed him to me so I could read him a bedtime story. Anthony had been checking his phone regularly, but no more than I.



‘I’d seen what she had gone through’: Abedin with Hillary Clinton on her campaign plane in 2016. Photograph: Carolyn Kaster/AP

Jordan fell asleep beside me, and I continued to sit with him, my dress crumpled around me, the lamp still on, his picture book open in my lap, my iPhone in my hand as I began responding to the messages that had come in over the past 30 minutes.

“Can you talk?”

Anthony had quietly walked into the room. From the tone, I knew it was bad.

“The New York Post called.” Really bad.

It was late. There was simply too much going on in my world for Anthony’s problems to surface at this moment. The Democratic National Committee server being hacked; Trump publicly calling on Russia to find Hillary’s emails; warnings about Russian election interference; death threats from Islamic State. I was also planning the final two months of the campaign. On the home front, Jordan’s first day of school was the following week and I was worried I wouldn’t even be in town for it. I didn’t have the bandwidth to contend with any more problems.

Distracted and overwhelmed, I half-heartedly asked, “What is this about?”

I wondered why Anthony would do this now, just when we both had so much at stake in our lives

He opened with an apology, the admission that he didn’t entirely know what was in the story. He simply said the Post had a picture of him and that Jordan might be in it. I envisioned a photo of Anthony and Jordan out somewhere. On the ferry. On the subway. On a park bench. I inferred that he had sent some such picture to another woman. I had given up on expecting him to respect the vows of our marriage, but our child’s image being shared felt more violent than any humiliation I had faced in the past.

The stakes were already so high, almost unbearably so, and I needed help navigating how to handle the story. Around midnight, I emailed Clinton’s adviser Philippe Reines all I knew, which was essentially nothing. “Philippe, I think I have a problem,” I typed before falling into a night of fitful sleep. I knew only one thing: it wouldn’t be as bad as Anthony said. It would be worse. And it was.

A response from Philippe appeared in my inbox in the early hours: “You need to look at this picture yourself.” And so I clicked on the link Philippe sent. I wish I could take back the image that appeared but I can never erase it. There was Jordan, sleeping peacefully next to an indecent Anthony, an image shared with a stranger, or a “friend” in Anthony’s view, and now for the entire world to see. This crossed into another level of degradation, a violation of the innocence of our child. There were no more “What were you thinking?” questions left in me. It was over.



‘The stakes were almost unbearably high.’ Photograph: Chris Buck/The Guardian. Styling: Bailey Moon. Hair: Antonio Velotta. Makeup: Tegan Rice for Charlotte Tilbury Beauty. Clothes: [Michael Kors](#). Heels: [Larroudé](#). Earrings: [Briony Raymond](#)

If there was anything unforgivable in a marriage, a partnership in raising a child, this was it. It was not rage that motivated me that morning, because the word rage would not do justice to what I was feeling. I think God had put me in this perfect glass and wood-framed house for a reason, because I would have destroyed everything around me if I had been in my own home. I simmered until I thought I would explode. After checking to make sure Jordan was still asleep and closing the door to his room, I marched out to the living room, where Anthony was lying on the sofa, still fully dressed from the previous night, his eyes bloodshot, phone in his hand, no doubt having seen the article as soon as it posted. I informed him I was putting out a statement announcing our separation, to which he responded quietly: “OK.” I then told him that he needed to find another place to live when we returned to Manhattan. He would not be welcome to sleep in the apartment or spend any nights alone with our son ever again. He nodded, looking down while I screamed at him. The yelling didn’t make anyone feel better, but I did it anyway.

I went outside and got on the phone with Philippe a little after 7am, and asked him to help me with a statement. Then I steeled myself, took a few deep breaths, and dialled Hillary Clinton. She did not need this. Our campaign did not need this. She counted on me, had faith in me, and I was bringing more scandal, more shame to what should have been a laser-focused effort to close out the campaign. She said that she was glad I was finally moving on with my life. I then dialled Bari Luri, now Chelsea's chief of staff, and emailed Bill Clinton's team, too, apologising to them all. I knew they would face questions about this on the campaign trail.

Never, for one second, did I think Anthony would do anything to harm or expose our child. Ever. Until now

I thought the image might kill my mother, so I sent her an email, told her I was leaving Anthony and assured her I was fine and that Jordan would be OK. I was glad she was close by, visiting family in New Jersey, because I knew she would come to help me; but I couldn't have her hear my voice in that moment because then she would know just how bad it was. Everyone has a limit and I had finally reached mine, ages after everyone else had gotten there. The next day, my mom, my sister, my nephews would all descend on us.

I received all sorts of messages that began with "I don't know what to say", because "I'm sorry" didn't seem quite enough this time. Most people congratulated me for finally freeing myself from Anthony.

Twenty-four hours later, my family were on their way to join us, and the fundraisers were in full swing. But I had something else on my plate. New York state Administration for Children's Services (ACS) was making their first visit to interview Anthony and me, to ensure that Jordan was "safe". Children's Services investigations can be triggered by calls to the agency from members of the public concerned about the wellbeing of a child. Enough people had called in to report us that Children's Services said they had no choice but to open a case. It was a tense and uncomfortable visit. A young woman and two or three men in suits filled the chairs at the dining table and asked questions. Anthony couldn't remember enough details to answer. When was the photo taken? Who was it sent to? Were there others?

What was happening in the image? Was the child awake? I felt like I was in a bad movie where the acting was subpar and the plot made no sense.

After a few minutes, they shifted their attention to me. Did I have any prior knowledge of Anthony taking suggestive pictures in which Jordan was present? I tried not to let the anger within me distort my voice when I said of course I did not. Never, for one second, did I think Anthony would do anything to harm or expose our child. Ever. Until now. The barrage of questions continued, and in the brief silences during their note-taking, my mind could escape back to the old world I had lived in, the world of reason. I wondered why Anthony would do this now, just when we both had so much at stake in our lives. I was on the campaign of a lifetime which, if successful, would be historic. His life was finally back on track. He was in talks to anchor a television news show, write a book, launch a podcast. None of these opportunities could possibly survive the scandal. And they didn't.



Weiner resigning from Congress. Photograph: Timothy A Clary/AFP/Getty Images

When the investigators said they needed to interview Jordan, I became protective of him and tried to resist. The young woman, who had identified herself as the primary investigator, assured me that she would only ask him a

few general questions about how he was doing, and there would be nothing that would make him uncomfortable.

It took a few excruciating minutes. I brought her upstairs and introduced her to Jordan as Mommy's friend who wanted to say hello. Jordan was eager to tell her how much he loved to play chess, and liked watching Paw Patrol. Then she asked him what form of punishment his parents gave him if he misbehaved. My heart stopped. I was shocked at the implication in her question. "No cookies!" Jordan chirped back.

When the investigator told me she could see that our family was closely bonded, it felt like things would be OK. Then she went on to ask me if it was possible my assessment of Anthony's parenting lacked the accuracy it would have had if I was present in the home on a regular basis, and what I heard, between the lines, made me want to ask, "You mean if I worked less?" I had been the primary breadwinner for most of my marriage, so not working was not an option. I expressed as much to her.

She nodded that she understood and kept writing her notes.

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On the night of 24 October I returned home to find the Children's Services investigator waiting for me. Had I considered what life would be like if Anthony went to prison, she asked. By then, it had been alleged that Anthony had sexted with a teenage girl. Each time I thought he had reached a new nadir, he shocked me by going even lower. But I must have looked blank because she then offered, as kindly as she could, "You seem perplexed." Perplexed didn't begin to describe it.

"I just need to get through the next 15 days," I responded. "Just 15 days. Then I can think about things like prison."

It may have sounded flip, but I really had no answers to this question – or to so many others. I just didn't.

On 28 October, on a flight to Cedar Rapids, the reporters on board our campaign plane heard about a letter FBI director [Jim Comey](#) was sending to Congress announcing that the FBI was reopening the email investigation.

When we landed, we discovered that the investigation seemed to have something to do with some emails found on Anthony's laptop.

The instant I heard the word "Anthony", my heart stopped. No, no, no. I had handled this, I had taken control of this. I had sent him away. It had cost us a fortune, I had cobbled together a life of relative normalcy for my son, I came to the office every day. This couldn't be happening now. But there was no time to linger on any of that. I caught up with Hillary Clinton in a tented area, as she was about to walk out to deliver her speech, to let her know about this latest development.

While her eyes opened wide with surprise, she shook her head, then simply said, "OK, keep me posted," as though it was just another hiccup, and walked out on stage.

On the plane after the event, we heard that the letter Comey had sent to Congress was out. It turned out that the Southern District of New York, which was prosecuting Anthony's case involving the teenager, had found emails of mine on his laptop and to this day I do not know where or how because I never knew they were there. They called the FBI's New York office, who then called the DC office, which meant the laptop ended up with Comey. They didn't alert Anthony's attorneys or mine. I watched Clinton's face as she processed it.

The moment she made eye contact with me, I just broke down.

I had held it together for months – through the night of the shocking photo, all the meetings with Children's Services, the paparazzi on the street, becoming a single parent overnight, the daily hate messages. But now that I knew the investigation somehow involved my own email, tears flowed out of me. Clinton stood up from her seat, came over to hug me and then walked with me to the bathroom so I could compose myself. On a plane full of colleagues, Secret Service agents, reporters, photographers – everyone with eyes simultaneously averted and questioning – she did that.

When I got home that night, heart pounding furiously, I called Anthony at the treatment facility he had entered. It seemed he hadn't heard the news because he had no idea what I was talking about.

“How could your emails be on my laptop?” he asked. It was a question neither of us can answer to this day. Then he went into Anthony mode, where there is a solution to every problem: “I am sure it’s a mistake and they will figure it out.” His attitude was confident, almost dismissive.

“Anthony,” I said, wanting to shake him through the phone, “if she loses this election, it will be because of you and me.”

That night, I wrote one line in my notebook. “I do not know how I am going to survive this. Help me God.”

This is an edited extract from Huma Abedin’s memoir, *Both/And: A Life in Many Worlds*, published by Simon & Schuster at £20. To support the Guardian and the Observer, order your copy at [guardianbookshop.com](https://guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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## Sleep

# ‘I feel like an animal in a cage’: in bed with insomniac Britain



‘When you don’t sleep well, you worry about it, and when you do sleep well, you overanalyse it.’ Digital illustration: Justin Metz/The Guardian



[Tom Lamont](#)

Sat 6 Nov 2021 05.45 EDT

Paul Chan has tried hot tea, hot baths, hot-water bottles, a cold breeze from an open window, mental maths, brainteasers, very slow breathing in bed and very brisk walks around his bedroom. Now, on a random night in October, the 52-year-old from Liverpool tries to get to sleep by imagining that he is James Bond. Why not? Chan is among that enormous proportion of the British public – one in three, [according to an NHS estimate](#) – who suffer from routine bouts of sleeplessness. He has just been to the cinema to see [No Time to Die](#) and as he closes his eyes for the night, he decides to start at the beginning, mentally recreating the movie in as much detail as he can manage. Scene one. A frozen lake in [Norway](#) ...

A little way north, in Durham, Lucy Adlington is alert, awake, and stuck. The 36-year-old silversmith cannot fall asleep but is hesitant to clamber out of bed for fear of waking the rest of her household. Somewhere between 3am and 4am, she picks up her smartphone and, speaking softly, begins to dictate a voice message. What does it feel like, being awake, alone, out of options, in the smallest and quietest hours of the night? “Like being an animal in a cage,” Adlington says, murmuring into her phone.

She is documenting her experience of a wakeful night because, a few months ago, I went in search of insomniacs. In particular, those who would be willing to further interrupt their nights to describe the sensations and frustrations of insomnia, helping to paint a picture of sleeplessness in Britain in 2021, one night-time voice note at a time. Some of those who respond to my request on the Guardian website are close to despair. Many are seeking treatment, trying tricks, open to wheezes, superstitions, suggestions. Quite a few have come to shrug and accept their condition. People find their insomnia stressful, ridiculous, useful, cruel. As Adlington can testify, one of the worst aspects of the condition is its self-sustaining nature. “So frustrating,” she tells me, “because anxiety causes the insomnia. But when you know you’re going to feel tired and terrible tomorrow, the insomnia causes the anxiety.”

Every long-term insomniac knows the listable reasons. Anxiety. Depression. Guilt. Booze. Caffeine. Irregular bedtimes

In Essex, Freddie Lewis, a 17-year-old college student, has been using his hours awake to do some homework. “Trigonometry,” he croaks, in a 2.40am voice note. Lewis was convinced that some difficult maths would help lull him to sleep. “Didn’t work,” he concedes, finally wandering downstairs to the family lounge to watch TV.

In Manchester, marketing agent Joe Harper, 31, is refusing to abandon his bed just yet. “It’s 3.25am. I haven’t slept at all tonight,” he says, running through the list of questions he’s been lying awake asking himself.

“Have I drunk too much caffeine? Have I spent too much time on my phone? What have I eaten? Am I drinking enough water? What am I worried about? What do I want to do at work? What do I want to do in my personal life? What do I want to buy my girlfriend for her birthday?” To counter this endless, nagging scroll of doubts, night after night, Harper has tried reading for hours in bed. He has tried herbal remedies. He has tried doing more sport during the day. He has tried doing less sport during the day.

Every long-term insomniac with the ability to Google knows the listable reasons they may not be sleeping well. Anxiety. Depression. Guilt. Regrets.

Late meals. Too much booze. Caffeine. Irregular bedtimes. Noise from the street. Porous curtains. Crap mattresses. Side-effects from prescription medication (or from recreational drugs). Overactive glands. Undiagnosed organ conditions. The menopause. The fear of tomorrow. The fear of death. As for possible cures, “I have tried literally hundreds of online and home remedies,” says a property lawyer in Bath, an insomniac for 15 years. “I have read just about every article ever written,” says a retired lecturer in Bolton, an insomniac for 65 years.



Many describe the insomniac’s algebra – an incessant totting up of the maximum possible amount of sleep left to be squeezed from a night. Digital illustration: Justin Metz/The Guardian

As Katy Cowans, 48, a lawyer from Barnsley, puts it: “Us veterans? We’ve heard of every cure, trust me.” Try earmuffs, they’ve been told, or eye masks. Warmer milk or a cooler bedroom. Try meditation, mindfulness, acupuncture, or something from the therapy bucket (cognitive behavioural therapy, stimulus control therapy, sleep restriction therapy, relaxation therapy). Bin your bedside clock! Deactivate your phone! Don’t catnap! Don’t smoke! Most of the insomniacs I speak to have tried sleeping pills at one time or another.

There's an A to Z of these pills: antihistamines and amitriptyline to zopiclones and zolpidems. Adlington in Durham has been prescribed some antihistamines by her GP, not that they are doing much for her tonight. Renny Whitehead, 47, a photographer from Brighton, used to take the stronger zolpidems, but that was when he was working topsy-turvy hours as a flight attendant. Tonight, he pops a milder zopiclone. While he waits for the drug to kick in, he records a voice note.

Whitehead can't actually remember responding to my request for insomniac volunteers, back in the summer. His sleep was terrible at the time, he says. His brain was mush. He figures he must have volunteered to take part during the middle of another restless night, forgetting about it by the morning. Tonight, when the zopiclone kicks in, Whitehead sleeps well, for about an hour. Then, abruptly, he wakes. It is about 1am. He tosses and turns.

Around sleepless Britain, as pills are being swallowed, alternatives to medication are being trialled. A man in Warrington says he finds the BBC World Service helpful; he listens through a special under-the-pillow speaker. A grandmother in London reports that switching from the World Service to Radio 4 meant she avoided regular overnight news bulletins that tickled her curiosity and nudged her out of unconsciousness. Digby Cox, a retired civil servant in Derbyshire, has started writing long emails at night. "My family tell me they always know when I'm not sleeping," Cox says, "because their inboxes fill up."

When I'm on this insomnia thing, it's like there's a wall I can't penetrate. All night, all my senses are alive

Fabio Sorbello, 44, from Cheltenham, uses an array of methods to get to sleep. Press-ups. Classical guitar practice. A microdose of alcohol, "less than a shot". Meanwhile, the property lawyer from Bath prefers to stage imaginary football matches in his head. "Second by second in real time, possession-based tiki-taka, no goals."

The retired lecturer in Bolton favours novels, but only bland ones, she says. Hilary Yallop, 32, a doctor based in Sheffield and the mother of a 15-month-old baby, uses her time awake to catch up with a friend living in Hong Kong.

Otherwise she tries to “complete” some item from the news, Yallop says, reading every article on it she can find; or counts the dots on the wall of her daughter’s room, “like counting sheep ... [Sleep](#) deprivation does strange things.”

Chan, meanwhile, is still out on Her Majesty’s Secret Service. By now, the Liverpudlian has made his way through a painstaking recreation of the first half of the Bond movie. He has choreographed fights. He has travelled between glam locations. But he isn’t asleep yet, and picks up his phone to record another groggy voice note. “I think I must have done 40-odd scenes,” he sighs. Will oblivion ever come?

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Chan’s trouble with insomnia started when he was a boy, living above his parents’ takeaway restaurant. “It never got quiet before midnight,” he says. For Adlington, the sleeplessness began about six years ago, with night terrors that jolted her awake and set her up for bad nights. It was the Covid lockdowns of 2020 that knocked Lewis out of his usual sleep routines, and he hasn’t found a way back yet. A lot of mothers are experiencing worse sleep due to pandemic-based anxieties, according to a [2020 study](#) by the Centre for Population Change at Southampton University. The same researchers also found that sleeplessness among British people of colour rose steeply last year, again attributed to Covid worries.

Cox, the retiree in Derbyshire, recalls that he rarely slept for more than four hours a night during the years he was caring for his wife, Jenny, in the final stage of her life. When Jenny died in March 2020, Cox slept comparatively well for a time, he says. Then something changed. He started going for weeks at a time on what felt like only an hour a night. “When I’m on this insomnia thing, it’s like there’s a wall I can’t penetrate,” Cox says. “All night, all my senses are alive.”



‘That lovely being-surrounded-by-pillows-and-blankets thing, I just don’t get that any more.’ Digital illustration: Justin Metz/The Guardian

Cowans, the Barnsley lawyer, is certain that her own trouble sleeping stems from traumatic experiences in her childhood. Cowans had lost two siblings to a genetic illness by the time she was 14. Before they died, she became accustomed to exhausting overnight vigils in the local hospital, “listening to Radio 1 with them until it stopped at 2am. Not much sleep, then straight off to school. Doesn’t take a specialist to figure out where the insomnia might have come from, right?” In her 20s Cowans was a music journalist, up all hours at gigs. “The insomnia actually came in handy.” However, she retrained as a lawyer and now has to be at her desk by 9am, come what may. She has two daughters who need to get off to school around 7am.

On this night in October, her insomnia no longer any use, Cowans tries reading a thriller in bed. It gets later and later. Soon she is counting the hours remaining until her early start. This insomniac’s algebra – an incessant and despairing totting up of the maximum possible amount of sleep left to be squeezed from a night – is described in one way or another by many people. Cowans has five hours left. After her daughters are off to school, she figures, she might be able to sneak in a 30-minute doze at her desk before she logs in for her first Zoom meeting of the day.

For many of the respondents who contribute to this story, the boundary between employment and rest has blurred. A 56-year-old public sector worker from Devon does housework at 3am. A 50-year-old tutor from Birmingham does the same, dabbling in a bit of poetry writing, too. “The best ideas come at night,” she reports. Sometimes, Chan finds himself designing bizarre items of furniture in his head (“A bookcase that also functions as a ladder? Made only of plywood?”). Cox has been known to garden in the dark. He once cut down a tree before sunrise.

Sometimes the hours can feel like they fly by and you end up having really interesting thoughts and clear views on life

Zoe Jewell, 35, a London film-maker whose son is only a few weeks old, is among the hundreds of thousands of parents around the country who are up and awake in the night, feeding, changing nappies. So far, Jewell reports, “I’ve found being up in the small hours a strangely peaceful experience.”

In Durham, Adlington has been trying to heed the advice of the philosopher [Alan Watts](#), who believed that if you can’t sleep, you ought to make productive use of the time. At 4.20am, the silversmith takes the risk of rousing her household, clammers out of bed and opens her laptop to work. Forty minutes later, at 5am, Whitehead’s decision about sleeping or working is taken out of his hands. His alarm clock buzzes, letting him know it is time to get up and drive from Brighton to London for a photography job. Reluctantly, Whitehead begins his day.

He records another voice note from the road, comparing his own disjointed night with that of his wife, who slept beside him. She seems able to approach bedtime with something like relish, he says, while for Whitehead there is only dread. “That lovely being-surrounded-by-pillows-and-blankets thing, I just don’t get that any more.” Cowans’ partner, who lives in another household, sometimes texts her in the evening, not to say “goodnight” but to say “good sleep”. Sorbello, in Cheltenham, says he is sleeping about as well as he has in 20 years, a fact that he puts down in large part to having found a new partner.

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The somnolent other halves of insomniacs play a funny role in all of this. I know because I am one. On my side of the bed, most nights, I can rely on regular blackouts. My wife is not so lucky. I sometimes become aware of a bedside lamp turning on. Maybe she's reading. Maybe she has her big headphones on to listen to music. If I feel anything, through many layers of unconsciousness, it's partly pity (that she should be suffering) and partly relief (that I can roll over and carry on with my zeds). In the morning, more than anything else, there's guilt – that I should have enjoyed a night's sleep that could not be shared.

There are insomniacs who are, frankly, and fairly, jealous of their sleepier bedmates. A retired Samaritans worker in Leeds explains that her husband "can sleep on a brush", which prompts long nights of envy that leave her feeling ashamed. A charity worker in West Yorkshire says she feels notably uncharitable towards her partner's snoring, "the sound boring into my brain". Sometimes insomniacs pity us sleepyheads, though. In 2019, The School of Life, a mindfulness organisation based in London, [published a book](#) that set out to exalt the benefits of insomnia, "so we may feel less persecuted by, and alone with, our sleepless nights", as the anonymous authors wrote.

Strange insomniac advantages were described in the book. What a chance, wrote the authors, to make all those excellent, imaginary speeches that eluded us during the day. What a chance to observe a loved one without their guard up. "We can see again the person we first got together with. We can focus on the details we found so endearing ... "

One night last summer, awake again and fiercely missing his wife, Cox went out to the garden and grabbed some paint from his shed. He took himself off for a walk, eventually making it to an underpass near his home. What followed was out of character, Cox tells me. "I'm a retired civil servant. Graffiti would have been unthinkable for me, once. But with sleeplessness comes a different perspective. And I just had the urge to do something." He found an empty piece of wall, and sprayed a heart.

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Chan has slept! A bit! Thinking back over his night, the next morning, he realises he got as far as Bond's journey to the bad guy's island before he

conked out. Adlington, up at 4.20am, spends the whole of the next day feeling like a phone on 20% battery. “It’s something you end up living with,” she concludes. “And so you learn to live with it.” Lewis was still awake in front of the telly when his father woke up the next morning (Dad made them both a consoling breakfast). Cowans gets her kids to school, but then feels too guilty and conscientious to sneak that catnap at her desk.

“When you don’t sleep well, you worry about it, and when you do sleep well, you overanalyse it,” says Harper, who passed a mixed night of his own. Harper says he has reached a sort of truce with his insomnia, learning to “kind of give it a nod of acknowledgment” and laying down his weapons against it. “The hours can sometimes feel like they drag by. But they can sometimes feel like they *fly* by, to be honest, and you can end up having some really interesting thoughts, some really clear views on life.” For Harper, a turning point came when he realised that, however often he felt like the only person in the land still awake, he cannot have been. Going by the NHS estimate, there would be many millions of others in Britain, on any given night, with their eyes wide open like lizards.

A lot of respondents mention this – the solitude of insomnia, and their sense of being abandoned by the easy sleepers of the world. In her own tired murmurings, Cowans started to wonder about her neighbours. “So quiet,” she muttered in a 2am voice note. “I wonder if anyone else on my street is awake … I’d love to know.” Insomnia is that most contrary of afflictions, common as the common cold and a near universal human experience, yet one that leaves people feeling utterly alone. “But you’re not alone,” Harper says. A 31-year-old teacher in Manchester concurs. She reports the curative effects of reminding herself, every so often, that there are different time zones around the globe and at any time, fully half of the human population are wide awake, too. “Stopped me feeling quite so forsaken,” she says.

If nothing else, there is always the promise of tomorrow night and that elusive perfect sleep. Cox has been through all sorts of eccentric nights in his time as an insomniac. Nights when he chopped down trees. Nights when he went out on impromptu memorial missions, paint pot in hand. Nights, he tells me, when he walked around his deserted village at 4am, headphones blasting Brahms and his arms conducting wildly, there being nobody around

to see and snigger. This night in October is different. While a silversmith worked on her laptop at 4am, and a sixth-former watched TV, Cox slept through until morning. Eight hours. Bliss.

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2021/nov/06/i-feel-like-an-animal-in-a-cage-in-bed-with-insomniac-britain>

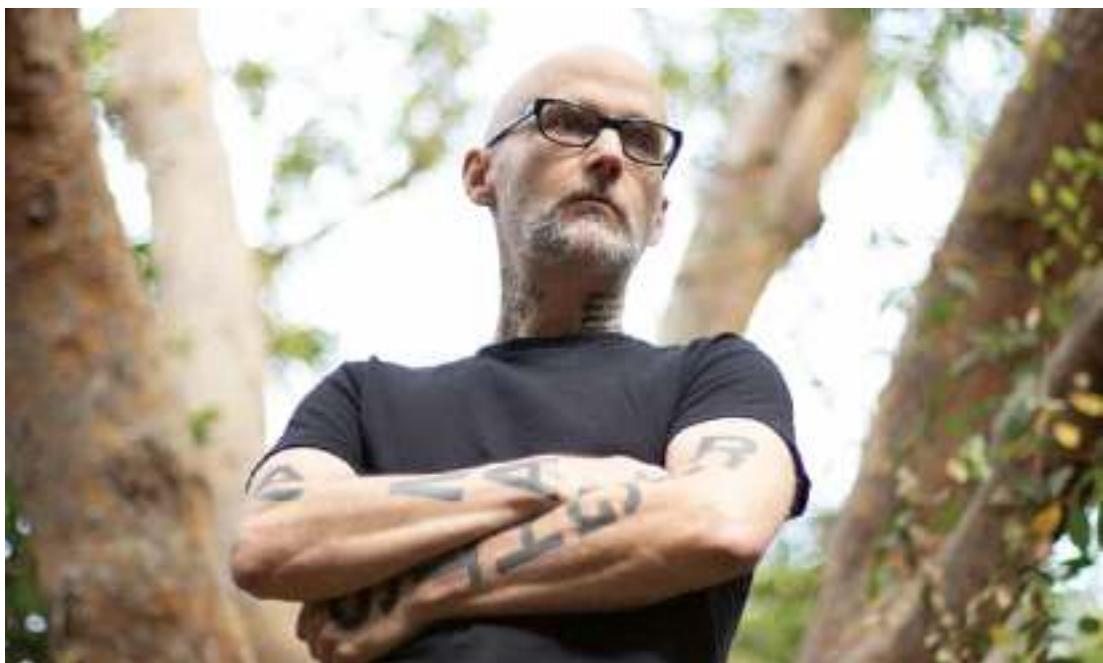
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## The Q&AMoby

Interview

# Moby: ‘I have been accidentally celibate for six years’

[Rosanna Greenstreet](#)



Moby: ‘I’ve had enough of sex, money and fame.’ Photograph: Travis Schneider

Sat 6 Nov 2021 05.30 EDT

Born in New York City, Moby, 56, became a global star with his 1999 album, Play; his records have now sold more than 20m copies. His latest, Reprise, is a collection of orchestral recordings of his classic hits; [Gregory Porter](#) covers his song Why Does My Heart Feel So Bad? on his new album Still Rising. Moby lives in Los Angeles.

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

Being argumentative.

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?**

People who are engaged in horrible behaviour and are arrogant about it, whether it's anti-maskers, the pro-gun people or anti-science people.

**What was your most embarrassing moment?**

In the early 90s, I went on a date and at the time I had been going to the gym. She said, jokingly, "Oh let me punch your stomach." So I flexed my stomach and, in that moment, made a loud fart.

**Describe yourself in three words**

Awkward, enthusiastic and driven.

**What do you most dislike about your appearance?**

My big beautiful full head of hair.

**Who is your celebrity crush?**

Sylvia Plath.

**What did you want to be when you were growing up?**

As someone who was obsessed with Star Trek and [Space: 1999](#), I wanted to be a scientist on a spaceship.

**What was the last lie that you told?**

"I am sorry I can't come to your event because I'm busy." Often that means I'm listening to old records and watching [30 Rock](#) reruns.

**What is the worst thing anyone's said to you?**

Twenty years ago, I was having a break-up conversation and the coup de grâce she administered was that she had never liked my pancakes.

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

One of my best friends has a tiny dog named Bagel, and if it came down to my life or Bagel's, I would happily give up my life for Bagel.

**Which living person do you most despise, and why?**

The Fox News host Tucker Carlson: he's a smug liar.

**When's the last time you changed your mind about something significant?**

Realising that people who make a huge effort to express how much they publicly hate me should be dealt with compassionately.

**How often do you have sex?**

Never: I have been accidentally celibate for six years.

**What is the closest you've come to death?**

My last birthday before I got sober, I was very drunk and self-pitying. I was crossing a freeway in New York and thought about rolling over to see if a truck would run over me.

**What has been your closest brush with the law?**

In 2006, I was hosting an animal rights fundraiser in Washington DC with Alec Baldwin. After they closed the bar, I stole a screwdriver, broke in and stole alcohol. I wasn't caught.

**What keeps you awake at night?**

Climate change.

**Would you rather have more sex, money or fame?**

I've had enough of all three.

**How would you like to be remembered?**

As someone who tried to help animals.

**What is the most important lesson life has taught you?**

Ultimately, we die and are returned to this universe, so why are we so worried about likes on Instagram, grey hair and flabby stomachs? We should have a little more lightness of being.

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## 2021.11.06 - Coronavirus

- [Live Coronavirus live: England speeds up booster jab rollout, Ukraine reports record daily death toll](#)
- [England Infections dip among secondary schoolchildren](#)
- [California Town declares itself a ‘constitutional republic’ to buck Covid rules](#)
- [New Jersey Why telling a cop you have Covid could get you 10 years in prison](#)

[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

# Coronavirus live: Russia cases hit record daily high, England speeds up booster jab rollout – as it happened

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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2021/nov/06/coronavirus-live-news-england-speeds-up-booster-jab-rollout-ukraine-reports-record-daily-death-toll>

## Coronavirus

# Covid infections dip among secondary schoolchildren in England



The ONS's figures raised hopes that the wave of cases that swept through schools at the start of the autumn term may finally be on the decline.  
Photograph: Ben Birchall/PA

*[Ian Sample](#), [Denis Campbell](#) and [Tobi Thomas](#)*

Fri 5 Nov 2021 12.02 EDT

Covid infections have fallen among secondary schoolchildren in England for the first time in weeks, but experts from the government's pandemic advisory body [are warning](#) that deaths and hospitalisations from the disease across the UK could soar over the next nine days.

Figures released on Friday by the Office for National Statistics show that infection rates among children aged 11 to 16 in school years seven to 11 dropped to 7.5% in the week ending 30 October, ending rises throughout September, and down from a high of 9.1% the week before.

While the infection rate is still far higher than in any other age group in the UK, scientists said the downturn may signify that cases have peaked in England, at least for the time being. While the data includes the October half-term week when children mixed less, the ONS said the tests performed in the week ending 30 October would have identified those infected before the break.

The ONS figures raised hopes that the wave of disease that swept through schools at the start of the autumn term may finally be on the decline.

“For the first time in several weeks, we are seeing a decrease in infections among secondary school-aged children in England, although rates do remain high,” said Sarah Crofts, the head of analytical outputs for the ONS Covid-19 infection survey.

“We will continue to closely monitor infection rates in this age group to see any impact of half-term in next week’s data.”

The data comes amid new projections from a subcommittee of experts of the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) that deaths from Covid across the four home nations could rise sharply from now until Sunday week, 14 November.

Estimates drawn up by the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling, Operational sub-group (SPI-M-O) show that the daily death toll could rise from the 155 recorded on 27 October – the day it met – to potentially as many as 350 by 14 November. The biggest increases could come in England and Wales, with a much smaller rise in Scotland and [Northern Ireland](#).

The [latest figures from the ONS](#) has revealed that in the week ending 22 October, 752 deaths occurred in the UK where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate, a slight decrease of 15% from the previous week, in which 882 deaths were recorded.

In the month of October there has generally been a decrease in Covid-19 deaths across the UK. From 1 October to 22 October, 2,574 deaths occurred

where Covid-19 was mentioned on the death certificate. That was down by a fifth on the same period in September, where there were 3,227 deaths.

[Government data on coronavirus deaths](#), based on whether a death occurred within 28 days of a positive Covid-19 test, reveal that in the week to 3 November, a total of 877 deaths were recorded, a slight decrease of 14% on the 1,018 deaths seen in the previous week.

The [ONS report](#) paints an uncertain picture for the UK with an estimated 1,103,300 people infected in England in the week ending 30 October, or one in 50 people, a similar figure to the week before. According to the study, infections in England rose more slowly in the latest two weeks, continued to increase in Northern Ireland, with the trend uncertain in Wales and Scotland.

The ONS report states: “It is too early to determine the impact of the half-term holiday on the numbers of infections among school-aged children. This is because the tests that were carried out during the week ending 30 October will have identified positive cases from those who became infected before the half-term period.”

Paul Hunter, a professor in medicine at the University of East Anglia, said the report provided “some reassurance” that Covid infections in England may have peaked and supports what has been seen in the daily case reports, which have been falling for a couple of weeks.

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## [California](#)

# California town declares itself a ‘constitutional republic’ to buck Covid rules



Hundreds gather in Sacramento, California, to protest coronavirus mandates in May 2020. Photograph: Josh Edelson/AFP via Getty Images

*Dani Anguiano in Los Angeles*

[@dani\\_anguiano](#)

Fri 5 Nov 2021 06.00 EDT

A northern [California](#) town has declared itself a “constitutional republic” in response to Covid-19 health restrictions imposed by the governor, in the latest sign of strife between the state’s government and its rural and conservative regions.

The city council in Oroville, located at the base of the Sierra Nevada foothills about 90 miles from the capital of Sacramento, [adopted a resolution](#)

this week stating it would oppose state and federal orders it deems to be government overreach.

Oroville leaders said the designation was a way of affirming the city's values and pushing back against state rules it doesn't agree with, although a legal expert said the designation was merely a gesture and did not grant the city any new authority.

Tensions have existed throughout the pandemic between the rural north and California's leadership, which has been among the first to implement lockdowns, mask mandates and vaccination requirements.

In Butte county, fierce opposition to Covid lockdowns and school closures drove support for recalling the state's governor, Gavin Newsom, with 51% of voters in the county backing the ultimately [failed effort](#). Newsom's policies, however, appear to have worked and the state had the lowest Covid infection rate in the US last month.

Last year, Oroville [refused to enforce](#) state requirements prohibiting indoor dining. Butte county, where Oroville is located, [declined](#) to recommend a mask mandate earlier this fall, even as cases surged and a local medical center reported [treating more patients](#) than at any other point during the pandemic.

Before passing the resolution, council members argued they were taking a stand and advocating for residents to make their own health choices.

"I assure you folks that great thought was put into every bit of this," the city's mayor, Chuck Reynolds, said. "Nobody willy-nilly threw something to grandstand."

But the city's declaration does not shield it from following federal and state laws, said Lisa Pruitt, a rural law expert at the University of California, Davis, who said it was not clear what the designation meant.

"A municipality cannot unilaterally declare itself not subject to the laws of the state of California," Pruitt said. "Whatever they mean by constitutional republic you can't say hocus pocus and make it happen."

Leaders in the city of 20,000 say the resolution is an effort to push back against state government and affirm the city's values and commitment to the constitution. Oroville drafted its resolution from scratch after not finding any examples of other cities with similar resolutions, said Scott Thomson, the city's vice-mayor.

"I proposed it after 18 months of increasingly intrusive executive mandates and what I felt to be excessive overreach by our government," said Thomson. "After the failed recall in California, our state governor seems to [be] on a rampage and the mandates are getting more intrusive. Now he's going after our kids and schools."

The majority of speakers at the Oroville city council meeting expressed their support for their resolution – applauding its introduction and calling council members "heroes" – with several specifically citing the state's [vaccine requirement](#) for schoolchildren.

"We're hoping that becoming a constitutional republic city is the best step in order to regain and maintain our inalienable rights protected by the constitution of the United States. What will be left if we don't have that? if we don't have bodily autonomy?" one speaker said in tears. "What else are they gonna want me to let them do to my kids? Where does it stop?"

The resolution does not affect local schools, which fall under the purview of the school district, Thomson said, but is a way for the community to declare it will not use city resources to implement state rules it does not agree with.

"We're not ignorant that there are serious issues at hand, we just do not agree with the way it's being handled."

One council member argued that mandates were "political theater" and that the immune system is the best defense against disease. The best protection against Covid-19 is vaccination – Butte county has a vaccination rate of 48%, according to [New York Times](#) data.

The council approved the resolution by a 6-1 vote on Tuesday, even as one member who voted in favor of it warned residents it had "no teeth" and was a "political statement".

The city's efforts tap in to a common sentiment in rural northern California that the region is ignored, but also over-governed by the state, Pruitt said. Signs for the state of Jefferson, a movement to secede from California, are common here. But, Pruitt says, the city's gesture does not grant it more power or the ability to ignore state law.

"It seems to make the people of Oroville feel better that their city council has made this gesture but as a practical matter it doesn't make any difference," Pruitt said.

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## Coronavirus

# Why telling a cop you have Covid in New Jersey could get you 10 years in prison



A line for Covid testing in Newark, New Jersey, in October 2020, at a time when cases in the state were rising steeply. Photograph: Seth Wenig/AP

*[Jessica Glenza](#)*

*[@JessicaGlenza](#)*

Fri 5 Nov 2021 05.00 EDT

Deja Lewis was walking down a sidewalk in Salem, New Jersey, in the early, frightening days of the Covid-19 pandemic in April 2020, when she was stopped by police.

Lewis, 28, was arrested on warrants related to failure to pay traffic tickets, and an incident in which she “escaped” from a police vehicle. She had been a witness to a fight and left the back of the patrol car, her attorney said.

While she was in custody, police said she coughed “in close proximity” to officers, and said she had Covid-19, though no dashboard, body or in-station videos exist to prove the assertion either way.

The allegation has landed Lewis, who otherwise has no criminal history, with a potentially ruinous terrorism charge – one that could land her in prison for 10 years and leave her with a \$150,000 fine.

The rare and serious penalty was available to prosecutors only because New Jersey was in a state of emergency, in this case because of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Lewis is among nearly four dozen people hit with life-altering terrorism charges – the sort of charges normally brought against people who perpetrate bomb threats – after the former New Jersey attorney general led a campaign to show law enforcement “we have their backs” amid the early days of the pandemic.

“It’s a miscarriage of justice,” said Lewis’s attorney, public defender Logan Terry. The most recent plea agreement offered to Lewis would sentence her to five years in state prison with restitution. “This is a poor person, and if this was a rich white lady this would not be happening. This is a poor black lady and they’re going to stick it to her, and I think it’s wrong.”

The charges brought by New Jersey prosecutors are formally called “terroristic threats in the second degree”. Each count can result in a possible 10-year prison sentence and a \$150,000 fine and prosecutors may bring this heightened charge only during a state of emergency.

The first apparent terroristic threat charges in New Jersey came on 14 March 2020, two days before the White House would call on Americans to stay home for 15 days to “slow the spread” of Covid-19. The charges were brought against a Bergen county woman who allegedly coughed on an officer during a domestic violence incident.

From there, the former New Jersey attorney general Gurbir Grewal would continue to bring serious charges against people throughout New Jersey, tacking them on to otherwise minor arrests.

Grewal has since joined the Biden administration as the director of enforcement for the Securities and Exchange Commission.

“By ensuring that prosecutors filed serious charges in each of these cases, we let our officers know that we have their backs and that we appreciate the dedicated and professional way that they have met the challenges of this unprecedented emergency,” Grewal told the Guardian in June, before he joined the administration.

However, defense attorneys for people charged with second-degree terroristic threats said the cases are rarely as clearcut as prosecutors make out. Instead, they argued charges often hit the poorest and most vulnerable residents of the state, those living with mental illness and addiction disorders, and are brought against people accused of otherwise minor crimes.

“New Jersey was unusually aggressive early on in saying, ‘We’re going to prosecute these to the full extent of the law,’ not just charging assault,” said Chad Flanders, a professor at St Louis University School of Law who wrote a [law review article](#) on anti-terrorism statutes deployed during the pandemic.

Flanders said it would be more appropriate for prosecutors to bring charges under less severe assault statutes or disorderly persons statutes. “The idea we’re going after knuckleheads with 10 years and \$150,000 fine – there’s sort of a disconnect to me.”

Anti-terrorism statutes “carry pretty serious penalties”, said Flanders. “And if you look at the history of the laws, they’re originally designed for people who call in bomb threats to buildings and cause a serious disruption.”

The charges echo how prosecutors once used anti-terrorism laws to charge people who allegedly threatened to transmit HIV and Aids. These kinds of charges have made the US a world leader in punishing HIV transmission, alongside [Russia, eastern Europe and sub-Saharan Africa](#).

In some cases that attorneys described to the Guardian, New Jersey prosecutors specifically cited precedents set by HIV prosecutions in the 1990s to try to compel Covid-19 test results or to further prosecution.

One notorious case prosecutors cited is [State v Smith](#), in which a New Jersey appeals court upheld the conviction and 25-year prison sentence of an HIV-positive inmate. The inmate, Gregory D Smith, threatened to kill corrections officers by biting or spitting on them. HIV cannot be spread through saliva, a fact known for more than a decade by the time the conviction was upheld.

In all the Covid-19 cases, the charges came as public health authorities called on law enforcement to release people from jail to avoid spreading the virus, and when New Jersey had the highest per-capita Covid-19 death rate of any state in the nation.

Despite these warnings, some New Jersey defendants charged under anti-terrorism statutes found themselves detained for far longer periods than they might during a non-emergency situation. That is because New Jersey waived a requirement that defendants be indicted within 90 days of arrest, as backlogged courts struggled to adapt to the pandemic.

In one case, a northern New Jersey man spent eight months in jail awaiting indictment. His crime, his attorney said, was telling arresting officers, “I have corona,” when he was asked if he had any health problems.

“It’s obviously not a threat in the common definition of the threat nor in the legal definition of the threat, and it was a direct response to their questioning,” said the man’s attorney, who asked not to be named to protect their client from retaliation.

After release, he was asked to return to jail indefinitely to get a coronavirus test.

“It was just so absurd and offensive to me for him to go in [to jail] to prove he was a Covid-negative, when obviously he could get tested on the street,” the man’s attorney said. They described the case as an example of how “Covid is used to hurt some of the most vulnerable people, and to continue to hurt them.”

All told, the New Jersey attorney general’s office publicized charges of terroristic threats in the second degree against at least 45 people, possibly

the most concerted campaign to criminalize threats of Covid-19 transmission in the US.

It is possible the campaign was influenced by the Trump Department of Justice. In March 2020, the then deputy attorney general, Jeffrey Rosen, issued a memo arguing anyone threatening to spread Covid-19 could be prosecuted under federal anti-terrorism statutes, especially charges of perpetrating a biological weapons hoax.

New Jersey prosecutors also distinguished themselves by bringing the only known criminal case against a health worker in the pandemic for alleged Covid-19 transmission. Prosecutors in Camden county charged a home health aide, Josefina Brito-Fernandez, with the equivalent of four felonies for allegedly transmitting Covid-19 to an elderly patient who later died.

Her patient's death and the case brought against her "destroyed" her life, she told the Guardian. Brito-Fernandez earned \$11 an hour at the time she was charged, was threatened with deportation as a result of the case and has lost her license to practice.

"At the beginning of the pandemic, there's a lot of uncertain information and the gut reaction in a lot of jurisdictions – not only in New Jersey, not only in US – is criminal law," said Nina Sun, an assistant clinical professor and deputy director of global health at the Drexel University Dornsife School of Public Health.

Sun said many anti-terrorism threat statutes date from the 9/11 era, when anthrax-laced letters were sent to prominent politicians and journalists.

"That situation of bioterrorism is arguably quite different from what we're seeing now with a naturally occurring infectious disease," said Sun.

Prosecutors have apparently stopped bringing new second-degree terroristic threats charges. The last anti-terrorism charge related to the pandemic, according to the attorney general's office, came in December 2020, when a Secaucus man arrested for drunk driving coughed on police and said he had coronavirus.

“We will not tolerate those who endanger the first responders working on the frontlines of this pandemic,” the acting attorney general of New Jersey, Andrew J Bruck, said in a statement to the Guardian.

“We are committed to safeguarding our law enforcement officers and other emergency workers, and we will hold accountable individuals who deliberately threatened to expose these heroes to a deadly virus,” he said.

Since then, at least some of the people who were charged pleaded guilty to lesser charges, served or are serving time in jail, or have entered prosecution deferment programs. But others said their lives have been “ruined” by the case against them. More said they believed the charges were unjust, but feared speaking out because of potential retaliation from police or prosecutors.

“People lives [sic] are being ruined because of these kind of charges with no proof of having Covid at all,” said Lewis, the woman arrested on warrants related to traffic tickets, via an email. “How can u [sic] assault someone who hasn’t gotten Covid?”

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## 2021.11.06 - Opinion

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## [OpinionCop26](#)

# At Cop26, I've found I have more in common with protesters than politicians

[The civil servant](#)



‘Civil servants, like the public, prefer urgent action to fatuous words.’  
Photograph: Peter Summers/Getty Images

Sat 6 Nov 2021 02.00 EDT

Say what you like about how dismally difficult it is to get a ticket, but “global Britain” still knows how to put on a show. [Cop26](#) has now finished its first act – the [world leaders’ summit](#) – starring more than 120 heads of state, thousands of their aides and hangers-on, and the city of Glasgow.

I’m one of the hundreds from the British civil service working with the UN to stage-manage by far the most ambitious summit in either’s history. There was no shortage of volunteers – thousands of us applied, and for all the

reasons you'd expect: idealism, ambition and simply to be present at a critical moment in modern world history.

The world leaders' summit was a two-day blizzard of high-level speeches, bilaterals, "[family photos](#)" and [declarations](#). The basic idea? That an outpouring of presidential pageantry at the start of Cop26 provides political sustenance for the far trickier 10 days of negotiations ahead.

We'll see: I'm not a negotiator. But I *can* tell you what it feels like to be at the heart of the storm.

The sheer scale of Cop26 impresses, long before you step inside; the police presence, the protesters, and the myriad cordons, diversions and temporary structures are all visible for miles around. Less impressive are the daily [queueing and access problems](#) generated by security and Covid apparatus struggling to cope with numbers some Premier League clubs would bite your arm off for.

But once you're in, there's lots to see. Especially for lucky backstage grunts like us, who can access the two behemoth restricted plenary spaces (named Cairn Gorm and Pen Y Fan, after the mountains), as well as the maze of the pavilion, where gimlet-eyed government and NGO reps lure in delegates with Ted-style talks, free food and sustainably made merchandise. Behold too the [giant globe](#) beneath which every self-respecting delegate flocks to get that vital selfie.

This isn't a natural habitat for civil servants, unused as we are to the commercial whiff of fresh paint, glue and chipboard that emanates from the newly finished exhibition space, or to the acres of Cop26 "partner" branding that festoons every inch of wall space. You're never more than 10 metres from armed UN security guards, though they never seem to lift a finger to prevent unwary delegates being barged by phalanxes of journalists and photographers [stalking a celebrity](#) or "marquee" politician through the main drag.

There's a distinct airport vibe, including in the uber-VIP world leaders' lounge, whose soft furnishings and ethereal beings I caught a glimpse of between the praetorian guards who prowl its interior. UN officials are

reportedly bemoaning a “[business-class mentality](#)” among delegates. Such a contrast with what’s going on outside – the protesters, [bin collection strikes and travel disruptions](#), and the “[large, naked Scottish man](#)” who flashed Joe Biden.

As a whole, the Cop process seems, according to [civil society groups](#), to have become even more exclusive – and Covid restrictions don’t explain this. I saw it myself walking through the plenary zones, and Monday’s [VIP reception](#) photo demonstrates the shameful and persistent absence from the main leadership rostrum of women, people with disabilities and the young who – most of all – will face the consequences of the magical thinking that all homogenised elite groups seem to specialise in.

Speaking of which, do civil servants working at Cop26 share the “[cautious optimism](#)” touted by Britain’s prime minister? My guess is no, we don’t. Some are veterans of previous Cop events, G7s and other diplomatic conclaves, but almost all of us carry scars from Covid and Brexit which remind us that, while good intentions are necessary, they are also woefully insufficient.

Is “optimism” even an appropriate response to the climate emergency? It may be the closest thing to genuine hope that our showman prime minister is capable of mustering, but it’s not enough, as [his speech](#) at the Cop26 opening ceremony amply demonstrated. I listened to it in the company of some youthful delegates from several continents – their reaction to Boris Johnson’s remarks was one of muted, fascinated disgust.

Civil servants, [like the public](#), prefer urgent action to fatuous words. After all, we’re the ones who’ll wrestle with the implementation of climate action plans, financing and legislation, long after the politicians have scuttled off into gilded obscurity.

This is what we share with the activists and the protesters outside Cop26: an instinctive understanding of what real change requires, and an acceptance of the inescapable fact that keeping the planet within anything like 2C of warming means [leaving fossil fuels in the ground](#).

All else is theatre – which is why, on Saturday, many of us will be joining the [global day of action](#).

- The civil servant is a serving member of the UK civil service
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Opinion[Owen Paterson](#)

## Owen Paterson was just the fall guy. This week's chaos was all about Boris Johnson

[Marina Hyde](#)





‘The departing MP for North Shropshire was simply useful for the prime minister’s personal goals – until he wasn’t.’ Owen Paterson arriving at a Cabinet Office meeting in London, 2014. Photograph: Stefan Rousseau/PA

Fri 5 Nov 2021 10.40 EDT

An edifying week in the government of Britain, a country run by the third prize in a competition to build Winston Churchill out of marshmallows. Yup, this man is our sorry lot: this pool-float Targaryen, this gurning English Krankie cousin, this former child star still squeezing himself into his little suit for coins. The sole bright spot for Boris Johnson is that furious Tory MPs are currently only comparing him to the [nursery rhyme Duke of York](#). Still, give it time.

On, then, to the unforced blunderrhoea of the [Owen Paterson affair](#) and its fallout. The sheer full-spectrum shitshow of it makes sense when you understand two things: the Carl von Clownewitzes behind the government’s shameful “strategy” for sweeping aside a vital democratic check on corruption; and the fact that for Johnson, none of it was to do with Owen Paterson. The departing MP for North Shropshire was simply useful for the prime minister’s personal goals – until he wasn’t.

We'll deal with the second point first. By far the most consequential investigation currently approaching Kathryn Stone's in-tray concerns the man already [investigated more times](#) than any other MP in the past three years by the standards commissioner: one Boris Johnson. Once an Electoral Commission probe into the same business has reported, a parliamentary standards investigation is [widely expected](#) to look at the extravagant refurbishment of Johnson's Downing Street flat, how it was paid for, how the public was told it was paid for, when and in what order they were told it, what the PM's wet fish cabinet secretary ([Simon Case](#)) and pet fish "standards adviser" ([Christopher Geidt](#)) were told – and a whole lot of other difficult questions that have the prime minister sweating like The Silence of the Lambs' [Buffalo Bill](#) on Grand Designs. Or like Theresa May in a field of wheat. Or simply like Boris Johnson being asked a straight question to which the answer can't be, "She's just a friend, I swear." Take your pick.

It's odd – given his hideously negligent mismanagement of the pandemic – that many [Westminster experts](#) believe the flat refurbishment has the greater potential to damage Johnson with voters. But there it is. There's no accounting for taste, neither in red lines nor soft furnishings. Perhaps it's because most normal voters, who simply want [£840-a-roll gold wallpaper](#) and handcrafted rattan backscratchers and so on, pay for such things themselves when the bills are presented.

At least seven months and a lot of press reports later, Johnson eventually [reimbursed the taxpayer £58,000](#) for the flat makeover. But that isn't the end of discussions on the matter, and you can quite see why the obliteration of the standards commissioner ASAP might seem so appealing. (No 10 insists the two are unrelated.)

Anyway, we move on to the personnel involved in this week's epic fail, with the ringleaders being Johnson himself, Tory chief whip Mark Spencer, and leader of the house Jacob Rees-Mogg. I don't know if Johnson knows anything at all about classical history and the ancient world – he wears his learning so lightly, it's just impossible to tell – but I think you'd stop shy of hailing this particular brains trust as the third triumvirate. Even given how badly [the second one](#) turned out.

Quite why Johnson, the Conservative party, and indeed wider society continue to tolerate Rees-Mogg being in any sort of position of responsibility or judgment is anyone's guess. The justification that he has some kind of yoof "following" feels desperately 2017, a relic of a time when this country's ruling class could afford irony. Lavishly inept, the Moggster convinces about as much as an English toff from an early-90s American movie, played by some beta Derek Nimmo.

I never quite understand why the [Grenfell-victim-blaming, frontbench-lolling](#) Rees-Mogg is so keen to cite his Nanny in public. It's like someone defecating in the middle of your drawing room floor while telling you which finishing school they attended. And if Nanny wishes to sue me for saying Jacob turned out atrociously, then I'd be very pleased to see her down the Strand for four days of courtroom fun.

As for Johnson's other consigliere in all this, Spencer, he's done an absolute Bismarck. [The ship](#), unfortunately – not the diplomatic genius. His cunning plan to overhaul the standards regime has been shelled, torpedoed and scuttled, and is now at rest 15,000 feet under the Atlantic.

It is genuinely beyond comprehension that Spencer failed to predict that opposition parties would simply refuse to support the government's new standards stitch-up: a committee chaired by John Whittingdale (who was himself once investigated by the standards committee over a [trip to the MTV awards](#) in Amsterdam with his girlfriend, a dominatrix sex worker). There may well be toe fungus with more of a tactical clue than Spencer. You can quite see how he is being wishfully lined up as the second fall guy of the week.

The first, of course, was [Owen Paterson](#), who was absolutely bang-to-rights on the breach of rules, but who has clearly been through the most unspeakable tragedy and should have been handled thousands of per cent more sensitively and intelligently by his friends.

However, none of those friends was [Boris Johnson](#), who last indulged in male friendship some time around the John Major administration, and now feels it only as the twitch of a phantom limb. Johnson's very much the best man who lets you down on the morning of the wedding. "Mate, is it today?

Fuck! I'm an idiot. No mate, can't do it. I'm still in Verbier. Gutted I won't be able to try to shag her at the reception now. Anyway, have a good one."

All of which makes the [prime minister's statement](#) on Paterson's resignation one for the do-me-a-favour files. "I am very sad parliament will lose the services of Owen Paterson," this ran, "who has been a friend and colleague of mine for decades." Mmm. If that's the case, how come your friend reportedly only found you were pulling the rug out from under him when a [BBC reporter phoned him in the supermarket](#), a U-turn which could realistically only lead to his resignation a few short hours later?

Let's play out with how the British prime minister spent the eve of this shameful vote. Boris Johnson had left his own climate conference on a private jet, incidentally, to have dinner at the Garrick Club with the longtime climate denialist Charles Moore. Also incidentally, Moore used to be Johnson's editor when he published his various fabrications about the EU. Incidentally – again – Johnson fairly recently sought to install Moore as [chairman of the BBC](#). (Moore has, incidentally, previously been a [licence-fee refusenik](#)). Still incidentally, Moore is a real friend of Owen Paterson's, and has been a significant advocate for his foolhardy defence ...

We sadly have no space for any more of the incidentals, incestuous connections, hypocrisies and potential stitch-up attempts in this single meeting between two chaps in a men-only club. But then, all that really needs to be said is that this is Boris Johnson's Britain. We just live in it.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
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[Opinion](#)[Facebook](#)

# Mark Zuckerberg and the tech bros are still on top – but their grip is loosening

[Jane Martinson](#)



‘Nick Clegg, now Facebook’s mouthpiece, spoke of babies, barbecues and barmitzvahs. The key was what he didn’t say – bulimia and Brexit.’  
Photograph: Hugo Amaral/Sopa/Rex/Shutterstock

Sat 6 Nov 2021 05.00 EDT

It has been a bruising time for Facebook. The company is still absurdly profitable – Meta, its renamed parent company, which also owns Instagram and WhatsApp, generated \$86bn (£63bn) in revenues last year, while Facebook’s own revenues grew by 56% in the second quarter. But away from the lucre, there is diminishing lustre. It stands condemned by critics and a widely feted whistleblower. And now it finds its standing diminishing among its peers.

I have been at the Web Summit in Portugal, a sort of Davos for the technology industry, which ended on Thursday with the sense that after years of talk about harm and regulation, the demands are increasing and change is finally in the air.

While it is true that most of the 40,000 startup founders, investors and other attendees still yearn to be the next \$7tn company like Meta, there was also genuine discussion about the kind of tech and the kind of society that discovers children are being harmed and democracies undermined and yet does little or nothing about it.

The summit heard again from Facebook whistleblower Frances Haugen, who repeated her belief, already expressed to a US Senate subcommittee and backed up by leaked internal documents, that the company knew it was causing harm and carried on doing it anyway. She was unequivocal: Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg should stand down, and possibly face trial.

Zuckerberg did not attend. Instead Nick Clegg, once Britain’s deputy prime minister, now Facebook and Zuckerberg’s mouthpiece, turned up virtually, his image beamed to delegates on a big screen. Even from this distance, it was unedifying. He said he has “worked at Meta for three years”. That set the tone. Meta is a new name unveiled just last month. Anything to avoid

using the [increasingly toxic F-word](#), it seems.

Clegg spoke of content; risible again. It's "babies, barbecues and barmitzvahs", he said. The key was what he didn't say – no mention of bulimia and Brexit.

Roger McNamee, one of Facebook's earliest investors and a former mentor to Zuckerberg turned vehement critic, said the stakes are high and warned that democracy "[may never recover](#)" if Facebook does not change. He said misuse of users' data should be labelled as being unethical as child labour and compared the runaway trains of big tech to corporations controlling food and drugs at the turn of the century – essential industries that are out of control due to the lack of regulation. The answer, he said, was to make the buying and selling of data illegal – something that would crush the business model of all internet platforms.

In contrast with previous years, the tech masters of the universe looked different, post-Covid. There was more diversity: women made up 50% of the 40,000 attendees, if only one-third of the speakers. There were more people from minority groups present. A different crowd, seemingly with different expectations.

Martin Sorrell, the advertising guru, the sage of Soho whose economic forecasts are followed around the world, reported little sign yet of a consumer backlash but said the increasing pressure means companies such as [Facebook](#) (or Meta, as Zuckerberg would have us call it) may not be allowed to use their wealth – equal in some cases to the value of nation states – to snap up so many rivals as they have in the past.

And so at the close, they all departed, and after rubbing shoulders with the tech masters of the universe, what did I learn? That in some ways they are as they have always been, relatively young, whip-smart, overwhelmingly white, overwhelmingly male. The tech bros still dominate. They shape our world, and as ever, they seek to shape it in their image.

But there is also a sense that their grip is loosening, the landscape is changing, and my feeling is that the Zuckerberg generation of tech masters may lack the depth perception to navigate it.

If the rising anxiety we feel about the web, social media and big tech is so evident among practitioners at their own place of reflection and worship, the Davos of tech in Europe, it will take more than a new branding metamorphosis to assuage it.

- Jane Martinson is a Guardian columnist
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**Guardian Opinion cartoon**

**Boris Johnson**

## **Martin Rowson on a week of explosive Tory sleaze – cartoon**

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## 2021.11.06 - Around the world

- ['Two sets of laws' Racial tensions simmer in the town where police shot Jacob Blake](#)
- [Marília Mendonça Brazilian singer dies in plane crash on way to concert](#)
- ['She betrayed us' Arizona voters baffled by Kyrsten Sinema](#)
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- [Taiwan China regime says independence backers will be blacklisted](#)

## US policing

# ‘Two sets of laws’: racial tensions simmer in the town where police shot Jacob Blake



A rally calling for justice for Jacob Blake on 4 January in Kenosha.  
Photograph: Morry Gash/AP

*[Mario Koran](#) in Kenosha, Wisconsin*

Sat 6 Nov 2021 05.00 EDT

As a wind swept leaves past the steps of the Kenosha county courthouse last week, the streets were sparsely trafficked as another day of proceedings came to a close in the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse, who shot three people last year, wounding one and killing two.

The muted scene around the courthouse stood in stark contrast to the chaotic scene that played out in the [Wisconsin](#) city on the night of 26 August 2020. And it belied the scale of what is at stake for Rittenhouse, his victims, and

their family members, and for America as a whole, as it faces yet another legal reckoning over racism, rightwing politics and policing.

“The past year has been a living hell for the family,” said [Justin Blake](#), the uncle of Jacob Blake, who in August 2020 was shot seven times in the back by a Kenosha police officer and left paralyzed from the waist down.

“To see your loved one, someone you helped raise and take to the ballpark and make a good young man out of, to see the video of him shot like that, it takes your breath away. I can’t even watch it any more,” Blake said from the steps of the courthouse.



Justin Blake: ‘The past year has been a living hell for the family.’  
Photograph: Carrie Antlfinger/AP

While Rittenhouse stands accused of six criminal counts, including homicide, much more is on trial in the court of public opinion: the police shooting that set off the protests, selective enforcement of laws, and a justice system that incarcerates Wisconsin’s Black residents at a higher rate than [any other state in the nation](#).

Racial justice advocates say any verdict will not resolve long-simmering racial tensions that boiled over last August. But Kenosha as a community must find a way to move forward regardless of the outcome.

For Blake's family, the past year has in some ways been framed by gunshots and [two videos](#) depicting two wildly divergent responses from police. In one video, Blake, who carried no gun, was shot multiple times in front of his children.

In another, Kyle Rittenhouse, now 18, is seen trotting past police, assault rifle slung over his shoulder, as bystanders identified him as the shooter. Police did not intervene as Rittenhouse left the scene.

Last month, the US Department of Justice [announced](#) that the officer who shot Blake, Rusten Sheskey, will not face any federal criminal civil rights violations. By then, Wisconsin prosecutors had already cleared Sheskey of state criminal charges.



Kenosha police officer Rusten Sheskey was captured on cellphone video shooting Blake in the back seven times. Photograph: Kenosha Police Department/ZUMA Wire/REX/Shutterstock

Adelana Akindes, a 26-year-old activist who grew up in Kenosha, said she was not surprised by the response from authorities in the wake of the police shooting and the ensuing protests.

She described Kenosha, a majority-white rust belt city of 100,000 that sits between Milwaukee and Chicago on the shores of Lake Michigan, as the

kind of place where drivers of color are profiled by police and the sheriff calls for lawbreakers to be “[warehoused](#)” for life so “so the rest of us can be better”.

“It’s a racist place,” she said. “Not always outwardly so. But you can look at the people in power and see it,” pointing to the sheriff’s comments.

The night of the deadly protest, former Kenosha city council member Kevin Mathewson put out a call on Facebook asking the Kenosha Guard rightwing militia group and other armed civilians to protect lives and property. Within minutes, the Kenosha Guard leapt into action.

Akindes, who identifies as Black, said activists in Kenosha had historically been slow to mobilize, but when video emerged showing police shoot Blake in the wake of George Floyd’s death in Minneapolis, people took to the streets.



Protesters rally in Kenosha, calling for police officer Sheskey to be fired.  
Photograph: Mark Hertzberg/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

“Everyone had a very visceral reaction,” she said. “This type of uprising doesn’t usually happen in Kenosha, but it was an escalation of the tensions that were already building. It was amazing to see how many people turned up to support Blake.”

Akindes said the night of 26 August, she and several other activists were on their way to join a larger demonstration when two unmarked cars swerved into her path. Officers bound her hands, [arrested her](#) and took her to a detention center for violating curfew. She wasn't released until the next day.

Akindes is a named plaintiff in a lawsuit filed in federal court that alleges law enforcement targeted demonstrators protesting police brutality. More than 150 peaceful protesters were arrested over the nine days of demonstrations, according to the suit – not a single one of them pro-police or members of armed militias.



Adelana Akindes, left, after she was released from a day in police custody on 27 August 2020. Photograph: Morry Gash/AP

“In Kenosha, there are two sets of laws,” reads the [complaint](#). “One that applies to those who protest police brutality and racism, and another for those who support the police.”

Videos that surfaced after the night of protests reinforced that perception. One video captured police on patrol the night of 26 August providing water and expressing support for armed militia members. “We appreciate you guys, we really do,” one officer said.

Rittenhouse became a cause célèbre in some rightwing circles, with the Fox News host Tucker Carlson hailing him as someone who “had to maintain order when no one else would”. Fundraising generated hundreds of thousands of dollars to his defense fund. A [data breach revealed a list](#) of donors who contributed, including public officials and Wisconsin law enforcement officials.

“Stay strong brother,” wrote one donor whose email account was connected to a law enforcement officer in Pleasant Prairie, seven miles west of Kenosha.

Kim Motley, an international human rights and civil rights attorney, said she saw a disturbingly “cozy” relationship between police and armed militia groups that led to selective enforcement laws the night of 26 August.

Motley is representing Akindes in a class-action lawsuit that accuses Kenosha law enforcement of constitutional violations. In asking the court to dismiss the lawsuit, the city said its enforcement helped curb “rioting, mayhem and attacks” during the uprising and were thereby justified.

Separately, Motley is representing Gaige Grosskreutz, who Rittenhouse shot in the arm, in a suit that alleges law enforcement officials condoned the efforts of white nationalists to use violence against those protesting police brutality.

The attorney representing Kenosha county and Sheriff David Beth said in a statement that the allegations against his clients were false and failed to “acknowledge that Grosskreutz was himself armed with a firearm when he was shot and Grosskreutz failed to file this lawsuit against the person who actually shot him.”

Motley said she sees a real “us-versus-them mentality” from law enforcement in Kenosha.

“I’m from this part of the world. And there has always been a real warrior mentality with the policing that I see in Kenosha county,” she said. “It seemed like police were giving a wink and a nod to militia members that night. I don’t think they wanted anyone to die, but certainly I think there was

implicit support for people like [Rittenhouse] to act like law enforcement and to impose punishments as they saw fit.”

Motley said the complicity that appeared to exist between police and militia members set the stage for what was to come.

“Frankly, I feel like Kenosha was training for what happened at the US Capitol.”

With so many issues converging in one case, the concept of justice depends on the perspective of victims. But at the very least, she said, it would include an accounting for the actions taken that night. And it would involve attempts from the city and police to reach out to the community to begin the healing process.

“At the end of the day, there’s only so much police can do. And there’s only so much community members can do. But if neither side is willing to reach across the aisle, it’s just going to be worse,” she said.

Kenosha councilman Jan Michalski, who represents the Uptown neighborhood that experienced much of the damage from the protests, said the city has taken steps toward healing through listening sessions the mayor has led and efforts to support activists that can serve as violence disruptors across the city.

Many of the Uptown storefront windows are still boarded as the community worries over the reaction to the coming verdict. But Michalski said people have come together to rebuild the area and neighborhood development plans are under way.

“The trial has divided folks, certainly. And it’s been hard to tamp down the anger with all the publicity we’ve gotten. But the city of Kenosha is full of good people. People want to feel safe from crime, and also safe from police. And I think that’s a reasonable position,” he said.

For Bishop Tavis Grant II, who accompanied Justin Blake to the courthouse, the verdict in the Rittenhouse trial is only the beginning of a longer march toward justice.

“When we talk about people who don’t have access to capital, access to healthcare, people who don’t have access to the American dream, this is just the tip of the iceberg,” he said.

“In all reality, this is not an answer or panacea. No matter what the verdict is, we’ve still got a hell of a lot to fight for, and fight about.”

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**Brazil**

# **Brazilian singer Marília Mendonça dies in plane crash on way to concert**

01:05

Marília Mendonça: remembering her life and career – video obituary

*Guardian staff and agencies*

Sat 6 Nov 2021 05.27 EDT

Marília Mendonça, one of Brazil's biggest singers and a Latin Grammy winner, has been killed in a plane crash on her way to a concert.

The 26-year-old pop star died alongside her producer, her uncle – who worked as her adviser – and both the pilot and co-pilot of the plane.

Her press office said their plane crashed between Mendonça's home town of Goiânia and Caratinga, a small city 220 miles north of Rio de Janeiro. The aircraft was around seven miles from Caratinga, her destination for that evening's gig.

Mendonça posted a video to her 38 million Instagram followers showing her walking toward her plane while carrying a guitar case hours before her death. Photographs and videos show the wreckage of the plane laying beneath a waterfall.

The rising star performed country music, in Brazil called sertanejo. She was known for tackling feminist issues in her songs, such as denouncing men who control their partners, and calling for female empowerment.

Minas Gerais state's civil police also confirmed Mendonça's death, without providing details about the cause of the accident, which occurred shortly before arrival. An investigation has been launched to determine the cause of the crash.

Politicians, sports stars and fans all made tributes to the singer. “I refuse to believe, I just refuse,” Brazil forward Neymar tweeted about the passing of his friend.

The Brazilian president, Jair Bolsonaro, also used social media to mourn the passing “of one of the greatest artists of her generation”.

“The entire country receives the news in shock,” he said.

Mendonça was the most listened to artist in Brazil on Spotify last year, and set a record during the pandemic as she moved her concerts online. One performance was the most-watched live stream in the world, peaking at 3.3 million viewers on YouTube.

Dubbed Brazil’s “queen of suffering”, she first found fame in 2016 with a much-lauded live album. Her LP *Todos os Cantos* won her the 2019 Latin Grammy for best sertanejo album. She was nominated for the same award this year for “Patroas”.

“You always make me cry, you’re unique and eternal,” said fan Michelle Wisla on Twitter.

The singer’s staff initially announced she was alive and well after news of the accident emerged.

Mendonça leaves behind a son, who will turn 2 years old next month.

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## Arizona

# Arizona voters baffled by Kyrsten Sinema: ‘she betrayed us’



A demonstration against the Senate filibuster on 26 July in Phoenix, Arizona. Photograph: Brandon Bell/Getty Images



*[David Smith](#) in Washington*

*[@smithinamerica](#)*

Sat 6 Nov 2021 04.00 EDT

[Allie Young](#) believed in Kyrsten Sinema. Her vote helped elect the seemingly progressive Democrat from Arizona to the Senate in 2018. But she wonders what happened to Sinema when she got to Washington.

Young, a voting rights activist and citizen of the Diné, or Navajo Nation, is appalled by Sinema's refusal to reform or abolish the filibuster.

"She has [betrayed](#) her constituents," Young, 31, said by phone this week. "The sort of inaction that she's taking right now is an action and it's making the BIPOC community, especially in Arizona, distrust her more and more as the days go by."

Republicans have deployed the filibuster to block legislation brought by Democrats to safeguard voting rights four times this year. [On Wednesday they thwarted debate](#) on the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act, named after the civil rights hero and congressman.

It is an issue that hits home for Young, who last year organized a second ["Ride to the Polls"](#) campaign in Arizona that led Indigenous people more than 20 miles on horseback to polling places so they could cast their votes.

“Her campaign was something that attracted us because back then she seemed to be a little more progressive than she is now. That’s the part that we’re all having trouble understanding. What happened?”



Allie Young, left, with a group of Native Americans, riding on horseback to the polls in 2020. Photograph: Larry Price/AP

The bewilderment deepened late last year when Sinema nominated Young for the Congressional Medal of Honor Society’s Citizen Honors Award for her contribution to increasing voter registration and turnout. Young reflected: “The fact that nomination came from her and her office tells me that she knows the importance of the Native vote.”

“[But] she’s not protecting our right to vote and, if she doesn’t end the filibuster and these voting rights acts don’t get passed, that will affect us. We’re already seeing some of these voter suppression laws that have been passed earlier this year and how they will affect the Native vote.”

This has led to the oft-asked question: what does Sinema really want? “A lot of folks are talking about how she’s trying to stay bipartisan. She thinks

that's the key to everything that's happening in the divisiveness that we've seen," Young says.

"It's very devastating to all of us Arizonans and those who trusted in her. That's the point of this election process. We vote in and we elect leaders that should be held accountable and that's what we're doing now. We put faith in a leader that's going to show up for us and protect us and fight for us and we're not seeing that right now."

Earlier this year the US supreme court upheld Arizona laws that ban the collection of absentee ballots by anyone other than a relative or caregiver, and reject any ballots cast in the wrong precinct.

The inaction that she's taking right now is making the BIPOC community, especially in Arizona, distrust her more and more

*Allie Young*

Republicans, who control the governorship and both chambers of the state legislature in Arizona, are also pushing to end same-day voter registration, a move that would hurt the Navajo Nation, with 170,000 people and 110 communities spread over 27,000 square miles, mostly in Arizona.

Young explained: "Sometimes it's incredibly difficult to get to the poll. It's difficult to get anywhere, to even get to a hospital or a clinic or a grocery store, so making multiple trips to ensure that our vote is counted is nearly impossible for a lot of people."

Young argued the case for protecting voting rights with Kamala Harris at a White House meeting and is collecting signatures of Navajo leaders to register their discontent with Sinema. She welcomes the prospect of another Democrat challenging her in a primary election one day.

The filibuster, which is not in the US constitution, enables the Senate minority to block debate on legislation. Barack Obama has called it "a Jim Crow relic", a reference to its long history of thwarting civil rights legislation.

Apart from blocking voting rights legislations, Republicans have used it to [block the creation](#) of a 9/11-style commission to investigate the 6 January insurrection at the US this year. Activists regard eliminating the procedure as crucial to other issues including immigration reform and reproductive rights.

In a CNN town hall last month, [Biden indicated willingness](#) to “fundamentally alter the filibuster”, adding that it “remains to be seen exactly what that means in terms of fundamentally – on whether or not we just end the filibuster straight up”.

Once she got to Congress, she turned her back on the very same people who helped get her in office

### *Channel Powe*

But just as on his economic agenda, senators Joe Manchin of West Virginia and Sinema stand in his way. Both have repeatedly [defended the filibuster](#), with Sinema arguing that it “protects the democracy of our nation rather than allowing our country to ricochet wildly every two to four years”.

[Just Democracy](#), a coalition led by Black and brown organizers, is coordinating with Arizona groups to step up the pressure on her to reconsider.

This includes a psychological thriller-style parody movie trailer, [The Betrayal](#), about Sinema turning her back on people of color in Arizona, ending with: “Now playing in Sinemas near you.” It will be backed by an advertising campaign in Arizona and run alongside horror content on the streaming service Hulu.

[Channel Powe](#), 40, a local organizer, former Arizona school board member and spokesperson for Just Democracy, said: “We’re going to make it politically impossible for Senator Sinema to continue to stand by the filibuster. In this week of action we are creating a surround sound effect that pushes Senator Sinema on the filibuster. We wanted to share the terrifying consequences of the world that Sinema is enabling.”

Powe added: “Once upon a time, she was a mentor of mine in a 2011 political fellowship that I participated in. I looked up to her. Kyrsten used to be a fierce fighter for the people. But once she got to Congress, she turned her back on the very same people who helped her get her in office.”

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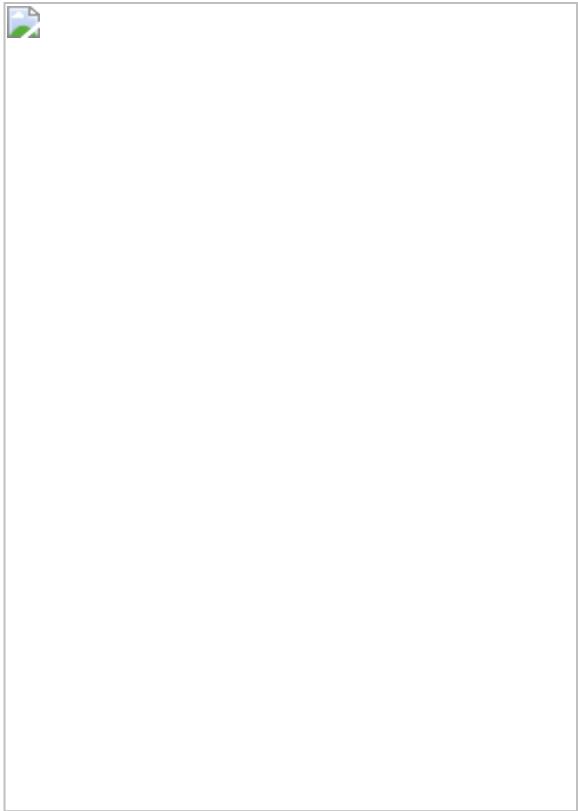
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## **Madagascar paying price for cheap European flights, says climate minister**



The road between Amboasary Atsimo and Ambovombe, Madagascar. ‘People from this deep south of Madagascar are victims of something that they didn’t do,’ the minister told the Guardian. Photograph: Rijasolo/AFP/Getty Images

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Sat 6 Nov 2021 03.00 EDT

More than a million people facing the first climate-induced famine in [Madagascar](#) are paying the price for cheap flights in Europe and appliances such as gas heaters, the country's environment minister has said.

For several years now, the south of Madagascar has suffered [successive droughts](#) of increasing severity, and the situation has deteriorated sharply

over the last few months. In August, the UN said the country was facing the world's first climate change famine. On Tuesday, a World Food [Programme representative](#) spoke of a "heartbreaking" visit to the country.

Speaking to the Guardian at Cop26, Baomiavotse Vahinala Raharinirina, Madagascar's minister for the environment and sustainable development, said the failure of rich countries to meet a \$100bn climate finance target means her country cannot afford to build a water pipeline to alleviate the island's [worst drought in 40 years](#).

Developed countries have been promising to deliver the \$100bn in climate finance to help countries such as Madagascar adapt since 2009, but last week that target was [delayed yet again](#).



Baomiavotse Vahinala Raharinirina, Madagascar's minister for the environment and sustainable development. Photograph: Madagascan government

Raharinirina said a pipeline that would bring water from the north of the island to the drought-stricken south would only cost \$9m, but the country could not afford it. "I was wondering three days ago during a negotiation session why it is so difficult for rich countries to pay this money. It's not aid. It's accountability," she said. "My opinion is that in the north, there is a

psychological distance to the problem. People see documentary and pictures but do not feel it like we feel it when I go to the southern part of my country.”

She added there was a dissonance between the behaviour of Europeans and Americans and the consequences for people in the global south such as Malagasy enduring 45-degree temperatures all year round with little rainfall, calling for the global north to reflect on how countries such as Madagascar can live “with dignity”.

“People from the deep south of Madagascar are victims of something that they didn’t do,” she said.



Madagascar is facing its worst drought in 40 years. Photograph: OCHA/Reuters

“They move to the west of Madagascar and it’s a real risk to the biodiversity. When they move, they directly go to the protected areas where they can find resources like wood and medicinal plants – things that are normally forbidden,” she said.

Madagascar is the fifth largest island in the world and is home to many animals and plants found nowhere else on Earth. [More than 600 new species](#) were discovered between 1999 and 2010.

Raharinirina argued that cheap flights in the global north should be banned and asked Britons not to fly to popular holiday destinations such as Spain. “We should forbid the low-cost flights where you sometimes have two people go from Paris to Madrid or from Edinburgh to Vienna. It’s a high-cost flight for people in my country. They pay the price of that.

“In September, I was attending the IUCN congress in Marseille, and I was totally shocked to see people dining outside restaurants that they are heating [with gas]. This should be illegal,” she said.

“There are many things that should be changed in the way of life of many European or North American or Chinese people. You have to make a choice or have to make a sacrifice.”

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## Taiwan

# China says Taiwan independence backers will be blacklisted



Taiwan's foreign minister Joseph Wu is one of the island's top officials to be blacklisted by China. Photograph: Vladimír Šimíček/AFP/Getty Images

*Staff and agencies*

Sat 6 Nov 2021 03.26 EDT

China has said it will hold those who support “Taiwan independence” criminally liable for life, provoking anger and ridicule from the island at a time of heightened tension between the neighbours.

For the first time, [China](#) has spelled out the punishment that awaits people deemed to back independence for Taiwan – top officials of the self-ruled island among them.

China has not ruled out using force to bring Taiwan under its control, despite the island operating as an independent country, and its government vowing

to defend its freedom and democracy.

China's Taiwan Affairs office has named the island's premier, Su Tseng-chang, the parliamentary speaker, You Si-kun, and the foreign minister, Joseph Wu, as being "stubbornly pro-Taiwan independence", as it made public for the first time that it had drawn up a list of those falling into the category.

China would enforce punishment for those on the list by not letting them enter the mainland and special administrative regions of Hong Kong and Macau, spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian said on Friday. Such blacklisted individuals would not be allowed to cooperate with entities or people from the mainland, nor their companies or entities that fund them be allowed to profit from the mainland.

Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council admonished China, saying Taiwan was a democratic society with rule of law and not ruled by Beijing.

"We do not accept intimidation and threats from an autocratic and authoritarian region," the council said, adding that it would take the "necessary countermeasures to safeguard the safety and wellbeing of the people".

In a Twitter post on Saturday, Wu wrote: "I've received countless notes of congratulations after being blacklisted and sanctioned, for life, by the #CCP", referring to the Chinese Communist party.

"Many are jealous for not being recognised; some ask where they can apply for it. To deserve the rare honour, I'll keep fighting for #Taiwan's freedom and democracy."

China says Taiwan's president, Tsai Ing-wen, is a separatist bent on declaring formal independence. Tsai says Taiwan is already an independent country called the Republic of China.

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