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2021.05.23 - Opinion

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[Names in the news](#)**Cher**

If anyone can turn back time, Cher can

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



Even an authorised film of the singer's life is bound to eclipse the rest of the crop of musical biopics



‘I had more life to live’: Cher. Photograph: Ian West/PA

‘I had more life to live’: Cher. Photograph: Ian West/PA

Sat 22 May 2021 10.00 EDT

Cher is the latest music star to get the biopic treatment. “[Ok Universal is Doing Biopic](#)” she tweeted, in her inimitable style, adding that the producers of both *Mamma Mia!*s are involved (and I hope that whoever plays Cher gets to re-enact that helicopter arrival).

It will be written by her friend Eric Roth, of *Forrest Gump* and *A Star Is Born* fame. Naturally, she included her favourite emoji, the ghost, in this announcement. A fan told her that she had been waiting for this for 50 years. “I Had More Life to Live,” [Cher](#) replied, which sounds like a potential title to me.

After the success of the [Freddie Mercury](#) and [Elton John](#) biopics, it was a given that more music flicks would follow, but the dial has moved towards the divas. [Madonna](#) is working on her own biopic. [Andra Day](#) elevated the tawdry *The United States Vs Billie Holiday*, [Gemma Arterton](#) will play a Dusty in *Memphis*-era Dusty Springfield and the trailer has just been released for [Jennifer Hudson’s turn](#) as Aretha Franklin in *Respect*.

There is a curious appetite for true-ish stories, for real lives remodelled into a semi-fictional state. They used to be low-end entertainment, the preserve of budget TV films in a world of bad scripts and Vaseline-lensed close-ups. Who can forget 2011’s [William & Kate: The Movie](#), which saw the future Duchess of Cambridge jumping off a boat to swim towards her royal romantic destiny?

Now we have eschewed such silliness in favour of prestigious Proper Telly such as *The Crown* – and, as it has shown, people are not always happy to have the lives of the those they know and love dressed up and shoved on stage. Fact and fiction begin to blur. Courtney Love has objected to the making of [Pam & Tommy](#), the series about her friend Pamela Anderson’s marriage to Tommy Lee and the theft of the sex tape the couple made, calling it “outrageous”. The family of the fashion designer Halston [recently](#)

[criticised](#) Netflix's eponymous series about his rise and fall, saying they were not consulted.

The producers of Cher's story said they were working with her on this biopic. In this case, that does not dent my enthusiasm one bit. There is so much to choose from, so much life lived. She was one of the first female rock stars, has a back catalogue stuffed with hit after hit, and her most recent achievement was rescuing an elephant from captivity in Pakistan. Never mind a film, I want seven seasons and a Christmas special.

Demi Lovato: why such a rumpus about a pronoun?



Demi Lovato: 'I feel that this best represents the fluidity I feel in my gender expression.' Photograph: Miguel Riopa/AFP/Getty Images

The pop star [Demi Lovato](#) has revealed that they now identify as non-binary and will be changing their pronouns to "they/them". "I feel that this best represents the fluidity I feel in my gender expression," they said, in a [video posted to Twitter](#), which was met with the predictable wave of derision and seemingly opened the floor to anyone who wished to speculate about their motives behind this announcement.

On the last season of *RuPaul's Drag Race UK*, two of the competitors, [Ginny Lemon and Bimini Bon Boulash](#), had a quiet conversation about being non-binary. I realise that to some extent they were preaching to the converted, but it was also illuminating because it lacked debate. It was two people discussing who they were. People fear what they don't understand and I think that conversation did a lot to explain it, without fuss and with heart.

Even if you have decided that Lovato is attention-seeking or silly, one of the most ridiculous reactions to anyone coming out as non-binary is to pretend that they/them pronouns are in some way difficult to use. It is easy to refer to someone using the words they would like. It isn't hard to use "they" in place of "he" or "she", because we do it all the time.

I am currently having a long administrative chat by email with a person whose name is used by men and women, and we haven't met in real life, so I don't know what their gender is. I call them "they" in conversation. So far, societal and linguistic norms have yet to collapse.

Saoirse Ronan: now is her hour upon the stage



Saoirse Ronan: treading London's boards for the first time.
Photograph: Vianney Le Caer/Invision/AP

[Saoirse Ronan will make her British stage debut this coming September, at the Almeida in London](#), where she will play Lady Macbeth in a new version of every bookish, black-lipstick-wearing teenage girl's favourite Shakespeare play. In 2016, Ronan appeared on Broadway in *The Crucible*, every bookish, black-lipstick-wearing teenage girl's favourite play not by Shakespeare, but this will be her first time on the London stage. She is joined by James McArdle as Macbeth, while the production, directed by Yaël Farber, promises a “feminist” version that will show a “more equivalent relationship” between the couple. Literary nerds assemble to argue that their relationship is pretty equivalent already – it's her idea to give Duncan a little dagger-shaped push into the great beyond, after all – but it is always nice to see a woman leading the casting announcements. [Ronan has been nominated for an Oscar four times](#) and, as excellent an actor as McArdle is (he's currently playing the creepy deacon in *Mare of Easttown* and is Olivier-nominated himself), it is likely that she will be the main draw. I'm already digging out the black lipstick. Is this, ahem, a “book now” button I see before me?

Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

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[OpinionRail industry](#)

The Observer view on the launch of Great British Railways

[Observer editorial](#)

The rebranding is a lost chance to transform and offer genuine public benefit



Liverpool Street Station. Photograph: Adrian Seal/Alamy

Liverpool Street Station. Photograph: Adrian Seal/Alamy

Sun 23 May 2021 01.30 EDT

It was a lot of hullabaloo about not very much, a three-word rebranding intended to be catchy but more likely to be lampooned, with the big issues dodged, a typical initiative from the Johnson government. The transport secretary, Grant Shapps, unveiled the [much trailed railways white paper](#) last week, making permanent the way railways have been run during the Covid crisis, but now under the new name Great British Railways, or GBR.

Rail franchisees will become contractees, managing their part of the system with cost-plus contracts, running no risk but with guaranteed revenue – contracted fees. This was inevitable. Two-thirds of the franchises awarded since 2012 have gone to single bidders. The [uncoordinated timetable changes](#) were a disaster. When Covid struck, the government had to [underwrite impossible franchise commitments](#). The system was broken.

What this is not is renationalisation, despite some overexcited reaction on the left. It is much-needed centralisation, setting the seal on what was happening anyway. The Department for [Transport](#) will transfer its existing powers to supervise the totality of the system, including Network Rail, to a new quango – Great British Railways.

GBR will direct timetables and fares and rent rolling stock from private sector contractors by paying them fees for contracted use, rather as Transport for London rents overground trains in London. It is a refined form of “rentier capitalism”, the state creating another area of economic activity that offers the private sector guaranteed returns for little risk. It won’t have to worry about revenue, only controlling its costs.

GBR will create an integrated national timetable (the government could do that now) and set fares (as it can now), making up any shortfall in revenue by subventions from the Treasury (as it had to when passenger numbers plummeted during the Covid crisis). It is today’s status quo – an enforced retreat from the botched privatisation of the 1990s – dressed up as a great reform.

Shapps, anxious to avoid any charge that he is a Tory Jeremy Corbyn, insisted that all the contractors would be recruited from the private sector (except if they are foreign – foreign publicly owned bodies are deemed to be private). Chiltern Railways, for example, will continue to be operated by the German Deutsche Bahn but rebranded as GBR.

What will have appealed to the prime minister is doubtless a rebranding of the network as Great British Railways that also stopped short of renationalisation.

But what prompted rail privatisation nearly 30 years ago was the creation of a structure in which the financing of rail investment was withdrawn from the Treasury and placed in the private sector, dictated by need rather than artificial government limits and control. Now, the taxpayer will finance investment in rolling stock and locomotives but will not own them; nor will it determine how much investment is undertaken; neither can it guarantee how well the stock is maintained; nor be able to secure commitments against overcrowding.

The hope is that greater integration will mean less overlap and waste. Possibly. Will fares, some of which have doubled in real terms since privatisation, come down? Almost certainly not, with Shapps setting a hoped-for target for cost reductions that may or may not be hit.

Imaginative reform, aside from the introduction of flexi season tickets, has been absent. One solution would have been for the government to take a foundation share in each rail franchise holder and require them to operate as a company consecrated not to maximising profits but to maximising public benefit. The government could have created a new class of such companies in which pension funds and others invest – companies dedicated to promoting social benefit.

This could have been within the context of a plan to transform the network. It needs to be electrified as part of the drive to net zero carbon emissions. [HS2](#) is to run to Manchester, but the east coast line to Leeds, Newcastle and Edinburgh is being delayed indefinitely. Nor are there plans for a high-speed east-west link across the Pennines. Addressing these issues would be a real rail revolution. Instead, we have a new logo and an enterprise that may quickly lose any sense of being great.

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[Opinion](#)[Diana, Princess of Wales](#)

The Observer view on Lord Dyson's report on the BBC's Princess of Wales interview

[Observer editorial](#)

Martin Bashir betrayed Diana, her sons and the public. Now the corporation must rebuild to win back our trust



Lord Dyson's report found Martin Bashir used 'deceitful behaviour' to obtain his 1995 Panorama interview with Diana, Princess of Wales. Photograph: NBC NewsWire/NBC Newswire/NBCUniversal/Getty Images

Lord Dyson's report found Martin Bashir used 'deceitful behaviour' to obtain his 1995 Panorama interview with Diana, Princess of Wales. Photograph: NBC NewsWire/NBC Newswire/NBCUniversal/Getty Images

Sun 23 May 2021 01.00 EDT

The [storm that has engulfed the BBC](#) over Martin Bashir's notorious 1995 interview with Diana, Princess of Wales is, at its heart, a story of betrayal. It

concerns, firstly, the betrayal of an unhappy woman trapped in a failing marriage who wanted to tell her side of the story and was cruelly exploited. Betrayed, too, was the trust on which the BBC, as Britain's premier public service broadcaster, depends. This more fundamental failure has buoyed its enemies, dismayed its friends and cast a shadow over its future.

Lord Dyson's authoritative report shows how Bashir employed "deceitful behaviour" to obtain the interview, then lied when challenged. The former *Panorama* journalist acted improperly and unethically and his belated disgrace is deserved. Yet Bashir is not the first reporter to employ questionable means in pursuit of a story. Certain newspapers and commentators should can their hypocritical bluster. [BBC](#) newsroom editors who took a share of the kudos for his scoop must also accept a share of the blame for his deceptions.

The [cover-up](#) maintained for years by senior executives in BBC management, after the interview came under critical outside scrutiny, is another, peculiarly noxious, form of betrayal. Whistleblowers who smelled a rat were penalised or sacked. The BBC's press office was drawn into a web of obfuscation. The allegations of wrongdoing were not properly reported. Internal inquiries were negligently handled and amounted to little more than whitewashes, possibly deliberately so.

Last week's welter of apologies – to the Queen, [Prince Charles](#), Prince William, Prince Harry and Diana's brother, Earl Spencer – has not dispelled the perception that top BBC executives, past and present, sometimes take an overly lofty view of their own importance and abilities. This conceit of BBC exceptionalism – of being broadcasting's "special one" – was always misplaced. The current director general, Tim Davie, exhibits a more grounded approach.

The sense of betrayal felt by Diana's sons is palpable and wholly understandable. As children, they witnessed their mother's trials in the harsh royal media spotlight. Even at the moment of her tragic death, she was pursued by paparazzi. Little wonder that they regard her mistreatment by Bashir and the BBC as part of the same problem. "It brings indescribable sadness to know that the BBC's failures contributed significantly to her fear, paranoia and isolation," [Prince William](#) said.

Yet William's claim that the manner in which the interview was obtained influenced what his mother said is unpersuasive. Diana knew what she was doing when she agreed to speak and later wrote a note insisting she had no regrets. She had previously [volunteered her views](#) to Max Hastings, then editor of the *Daily Telegraph*, who declined to publish them.

The princess had a love-hate relationship with the media. She often used them to her advantage. At the time she spoke, she and Charles had been separated for three years. The interview did not end her marriage, though it certainly did not help.

To view Diana one-dimensionally as a helpless, girlish victim – weak, mentally unstable and easily manipulated – is to betray the memory of a formidably intelligent woman. Her glorious, nation-cheering wedding day, the birth of her children, her charity work with the victims of Aids and landmines, and as a global ambassador for Britain, made Diana the best thing to happen to the royal family for many years. She rescued a petrifying institution from irrelevance. She deserved better, but she was no fool.

Attempts to [exploit the BBC's travails](#) for ideological and political ends are another, sadly familiar aspect of this national story of betrayal. Ministers talk menacingly about “reforming” the corporation's governance. Boris Johnson, that intrepid sherpa of crooked paths, demands that the BBC straighten things out. The malice of many on the Conservative right is only too obvious. Editorial integrity is not their main concern.

What they really want is to increase control over the BBC, direct its policy and personnel and influence its reporting. Leading Tories and their commercially self-interested Fleet Street cheerleaders have long claimed, absurdly, that BBC journalism is run by a leftwing cabal. They cannot abide what they perceive as anti-Brexit, unpatriotic stances. Now, in a sick reprise of the past, they seek to use Diana and her sons, coupled with Dyson's findings, as a club to batter down the doors of honest, independent reporting damaged by Bashir.

Clearly, some things must change. A new system for protecting whistleblowers is suggested. Senior editorial and management executives must be more accountable. But BBC governance has been radically

overhauled twice since 1995. Another big shake-up is not justified. [Rumoured government plans](#) to cut funding and increase privatisations as part of a secretive review of public service broadcasting must be firmly resisted.

However it does it, the BBC's most urgent task in the wake of the Bashir affair is to repair public trust while fending off predatory politicians. Allowing the Tories to politicise one of Britain's great institutions by remaking it in their unpleasant image would be the biggest betrayal of all.

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Boris Johnson cooks up a trade deal – cartoon

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[NotebookUK news](#)

Mozart may not make your children smarter, but music is a balm for their souls

[Fiona Maddocks](#)



The author of a new book has come up with novel ways to teach the young its joys



Welcome to the world of music. Photograph: Maria Zarnayova/EPA

Welcome to the world of music. Photograph: Maria Zarnayova/EPA

Sun 23 May 2021 02.00 EDT

The idea that listening to Mozart makes babies smarter surfaced in the 1990s in a study published in *Nature*: a [dubious theory](#), though naturally I tried it on my young, leaving us exhausted but, surely, super-alert. How the results compared with those of the Italian buffaloes whose mozzarella reportedly improved after [exposure to Mozart](#) I'll never know. Disappointingly, the “Mozart effect” theory has long been discredited: his music may bring you joy but it won't raise your IQ.

How to introduce children to music, as listeners, performers or serious musicians, remains a perennial question. A new book out in July, *The Musical Child* by Joan Koenig, is full of sensible ideas to try out on newborn and young. American-born, the author has run a successful, multilingual musical school in Paris, [l'école Koenig](#), for 30 years.

My feeling is that you will probably want Koenig to move in with you to help with those games-exercises, from clapping to squatting to waggling legs in the air, activities you may already be attempting with [Joe Wicks](#). Her informative book is the next best thing.

A BBC success story

In a galling week for the BBC, especially depressing for those of us who worked there during the period under scrutiny by the Dyson investigation, or who knew some of the figures now being called to account, here's something to raise spirits.

Those fast-receding principles – inform, educate, entertain – established by the first BBC director general, John Reith, still hold good in some quarters. The BBC's [*Ten Pieces*](#), a series of short films showcasing classical music aimed at seven- to 14-year-olds, is being shown on national TV for the first time this week, [daily on CBBC](#).

The diverse range of composers include [Florence Price](#), who sidestepped racial and sexual prejudice, an abusive marriage, two divorces and a broken leg to write her *Symphony No 1* (1933); [Delia Derbyshire](#), who created the *Doctor Who* theme, as we know it, in the BBC Radiophonic Workshop in 1963; [Kerry Andrew](#), who also sings with the brilliant [Juice Ensemble](#) and writes novels and short stories; and [Mason Bates](#), whose 2017 opera about the rise and fall of Steve Jobs has a part for Jobs's Apple co-founder, Steve Wozniak, and a number called One Button, Turn It On.

That opera belongs to an American genre nicknamed "CNN opera". Works about Harvey Milk, Malcolm X and Richard Nixon are other examples. In ordinary circumstances, the idea of a homegrown "BBC opera" genre might be quite lively, especially considering a [former DG](#) also ran, very successfully, the Royal Opera House. For now, let's not go there.

Glyndebourne glitz

Opening up coincided with the new season at Glyndebourne, an annual high day in mid-May. Time to dig out sou'wester, thermals and maybe an ushanka hat if available. The beautiful theatre is indoors, but the landscape is wide open. Ahead of Janáček's enthralling [*Káťa Kabanová*](#), we queued under awnings for temperature checks, canvas flapping in rain and gale. No surprise that the wind turbine, installed to controversy in 2012, [produces an](#)

[equivalent of 102%](#) of Glyndebourne's annual electricity requirements. An 18th-century windmill on the site apparently blew down in the last century.

Alert to everything the past year has taught us, the company is complementing its season with classic performances [free online](#). Tickets are still available for the festival. Step 4 willing, there will be increased ticket capacity from 21 June. The only dress code that anyone cares about? Wear a mask. The blingier the better.

Fiona Maddocks is the Observer's classical music critic

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[Opinion](#)[Surrogacy](#)

Too late or too great to gestate? Don't worry, Britain will welcome you

[Catherine Bennett](#)



In contrast to other countries, our surrogacy laws ignore the traumas faced by birth mothers



Naomi Campbell released this picture of ‘a beautiful little blessing’ on Instagram. Photograph: @NaomiCampbell

Naomi Campbell released this picture of ‘a beautiful little blessing’ on Instagram. Photograph: @NaomiCampbell

Sun 23 May 2021 02.30 EDT

‘A beautiful little blessing has chosen me to be her mother.’ Naomi Campbell’s [announcement](#), posted on Instagram last week, is unusually worded even given the fashion for “welcomed” in media reports of significant births, as if there really were some depot from which ready-made infants are now Deliverood for introduction to their new owners.

Campbell’s phrasing added to a general, not unreasonable belief, one reportedly shared by “friends”, that the 51-year-old Campbell’s baby was born via a surrogacy arrangement. In the US, one of the world’s most liberal destinations for commercial surrogacy, with clients including leading US celebrities – that is, in buying rather than supplying the service – it would have been, if so, an unremarkable transaction. [Kim Kardashian West](#) had children this way, ditto [Sarah Jessica Parker](#); a few years back, [Lucy Liu was open](#) about picking elective “gestational surrogacy”, being busy. “It just seemed like the right option for me because I was working and I didn’t know when I was going to be able to stop.”

True, Campbell may have adopted her baby and did not mention a surrogate mother in her announcement, but that's not necessarily indicative: not all the beneficiaries of these services are as scrupulous as were, say, Ayda Field and Robbie Williams in [expressing gratitude](#) publicly.

But either way, unstinting appreciation of Campbell's announcement is encouraging for pro-surrogacy advocates impatient for the day Britain becomes in this respect more like the US, Ukraine and – for now – [Russia](#). If it can never become a reproductive tourism destination on their scale, the normalisation of cases such as, possibly, Campbell's, must diminish the possibility of the UK becoming the opposite – that is more like Sweden, Iceland, France, Portugal, Bulgaria, Norway, Germany, Italy, Spain and Finland – in banning all surrogacy.

This relaxed approach contrasts not only with earlier worries about the exploitation of impoverished women, and what a squeamish UN considers the sale of children, but with often judgmental tendencies on women's reproductive behaviour, maybe for dodging the agony nature/God intended. Compare “too posh to push” with the non-existent tag for broody pregnancy avoiders: too late – or great – to gestate. For now, to the dismay of pro-surrogacy campaigners, who include, as well as would-be parents, MPs, lawyers and people who make – or would like to – a living from the fertility industry, surrogacy remains marginally available in the UK and not just because of the cost. [Vardags](#), a law firm advertising surrogacy expertise, tells clients: “If you have savings greater than £20,000 or family income of greater than £100,000 per annum, we can generally advise and represent you.” A surrogate mother might get around £15,000 in “expenses”.

In the UK, surrogacy agreements are legally unenforceable and the woman giving birth is, pending a successful application for a parental order by the intending parents, the legal parent. This, being a deterrent to some would-be parents and therefore considered unconscionably unenlightened by their advocates, takes account of the interests and possibly fluctuating thinking of those occasionally unpredictable machines, surrogate mothers. In not officially stipulating that a surrogate mother hand over her infant on delivery, it spares the state from supervising, effectively, the sale of children, via professionals, often from the poor to the rich.

Surrogacy remains marginally available in the UK and not just because of the cost

One way to avoid that happening, the United Nations human rights special rapporteur, Maud de Boer-Buquicchio, argued in her 2018 [report](#), would be, among other requirements, “if it were clear that the surrogate mother was only being paid for gestational services and not for the transfer of the child”. That transfer “must be a gratuitous act”.

Around the same time that her report became – elsewhere – a critical reference on surrogacy ethics, British MPs were rallying behind an all-parliamentary group on surrogacy (APPG) whose purpose, under its founder, [Andrew Percy](#), is to facilitate surrogacy as “just another way for people to create families just as adoption or any of the other routes to parenthood are”.

Still ignoring, for whatever reason, the health risks to the key suppliers (including pain, tearing, postnatal depression, incontinence, gestational diabetes, hysterectomy, a [heightened incidence of breast cancer](#)) that critically differentiate surrogacy, along with reports of abuse and the prohibition of this practice in neighbouring jurisdictions, Percy has been publicising a new APPG report asserting that existing law “is no longer fit for purpose”.

On that last point, of course, many women would agree. Anyone concerned about using someone else as a means to an end might conclude that the only ethical and safe reform is a domestic end to surrogacy, as in Sweden and beyond. Recourse to, in some cases, vulnerable mothers in more permissive countries is not, even if claimed as one by interested lawyers, an argument for a sanitised domestic version.

However, with both Percy’s outfit and since 2019, its allies in the Law Commission, publisher of a pitifully tendentious [consultation document](#) (supervised by a property lawyer, Professor Nick Hopkins) acting as if mutually choreographed by a hungry surrogacy industry, the UK promises to become, in meeting market demand, an ethical outlier.

The Law Commission's consultation (in which surrogate mothers are called "surrogates") [completely skipped](#) the Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, consulted only [two surrogate mothers](#), but listened repeatedly to surrogacy promoters. In a circular fashion, [the commission](#) showcases endorsement by the APPG, the [APPG invokes](#) the Law Commission.

Unless it derives from the preponderance of men in parliament and the law, it is hard to understand how leading policymakers could so comprehensively dismiss [questions raised internationally](#) about the instrumentalising of generally poor women and the commodification of children. But in the event, courtesy of Andrew, Nick et al – Lord Bethell is also super-keen – there now seems every prospect of legal change that will allow this country to become, just as our fish run out, a niche, global supplier of beautiful little blessings.

Catherine Bennett is an Observer columnist

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The weekly stats uncoveredCoronavirus

With Covid, averages are not the only story

[David Spiegelhalter](#) & [Anthony Masters](#)

We need local data to keep on top of local outbreaks



A member of the armed forces distributes Covid-19 leaflets to local residents of Halliwell, Bolton, yesterday. Photograph: Charlotte Tattersall/Getty

A member of the armed forces distributes Covid-19 leaflets to local residents of Halliwell, Bolton, yesterday. Photograph: Charlotte Tattersall/Getty

Sun 23 May 2021 03.00 EDT

It's a myth that statisticians are obsessed with averages. We learn most from examining variability and the current concern with variants hammers home the importance of local data.

[Across the United Kingdom](#), confirmed cases of Covid-19 are stable, at 22 per 100,000 people in the week up to 17 May. Six local authorities recorded less than two cases per 100,000; while in Bolton there were 385 per 100,000, over 17 times the national rate.

The excellent [Public Health England dashboard](#) provides even more granular data, down to the snappily named “middle-layer super output areas” (MSOAs) containing around 5,000 to 10,000 people. Three Bolton MSOAs had more than 1,000 per 100,000 (more than 1%) testing positive in that week, while other areas just a couple of miles away had fewer than 50 cases per 100,000.

Much of this variation is likely due to the rise of the Indian variant B.1.617.2. Cases are concentrated in younger people, who are less vaccinated but more resilient; 84% of over-40s in Bolton have been [vaccinated](#) up to 16 May, using the National Immunisation Management System population numbers. This is like the England-wide average, but, again, masks local differences.

The pattern of causation is complex, since similar factors, such as deprivation, ethnicity and multigenerational households, are linked to both the spread of the virus and vaccine uptake. Older white people hardly ever live with their grandchildren: of [white households containing someone over 70](#), only 1.5% contain children and other adults, but this compares with 35% of Pakistani and 56% of Bangladeshi households that have someone over 70.

As the national epidemic subsides, attention will move to local outbreaks, supporting intense local health responses such as extra testing and [Bolton and elsewhere](#).

It is vital that local data is publicly available and this is also true for economic statistics. There are now [GDP measures in English regions](#) to counter claims that national averages distract from local concerns - as [one heckler in Newcastle](#) notoriously put it: “That’s your bloody GDP. Not ours.” Statistics are for everyone and we all have a right to know what is going on around us.

David Spiegelhalter is chair of the Winton Centre for Risk and Evidence Communication at Cambridge. Anthony Masters is statistical ambassador for the Royal Statistical Society

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[Observer lettersManchester City](#)

Letters: it's unfair to single out Manchester City fans

Yes, the club is owned by the morally dubious regime of Abu Dhabi, but look at all the other organisations that depend on Gulf cash



A City fan celebrates his team winning the Premier League. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

A City fan celebrates his team winning the Premier League. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Sun 23 May 2021 01.00 EDT

As a lifelong Manchester City supporter and season ticket holder (even in the days when we were penniless in the third tier), I read with interest Nick Cohen's article on the use of our club as a vehicle for Abu Dhabi soft power and the moral issues it throws up ("[Man City play beautiful football but it masks the ugliness of their owners](#)", Comment). The assumption is that

Manchester City fans have become like “gangsters’ molls” and willing accomplices, ignoring the human rights abuses in their thirst for glory.

Without wishing to characterise Cohen as a “puritanical nag” (to use his phrase), his observations highlight just how dangerous a place the moral high ground is and that moral relativism is not the sole preserve of some City supporters. Do we equally condemn the UK government and workers when Gulf states buy arms to oppress their own and neighbouring people or a UK racing industry heavily dependent on Gulf cash? We will soon be watching the 2022 World Cup in stadiums built on the exploitation of migrant workers, while wearing replica outfits produced in sweatshops in China and Bangladesh.

On the wider issue of the ownership of football clubs, how wonderful would it be to send packing the oligarchs, the sovereign wealth funds and assorted venture capitalists trading on the deep emotional bond between clubs and their supporters and adopt the German model of fan-based ownership. On that I am sure Cohen and the majority of [Manchester City](#) supporters could agree.

David Cronin

Stockport

What’s more important – football or human rights? The latter every time. As a City fan of 65 years standing, I’ve loved the privilege of watching the likes of David Silva playing and know the quality on view is only possible because of the massive investment of the owners. Those same owners have also regenerated a biggish area of east Manchester, creating many jobs. All good.

On the other hand, I know the human rights record of Abu Dhabi leaves much to be desired. Would I like the regime to improve its human rights record? Very much so. Will that happen? I hope so, but wouldn’t put money on it. Ought I to end my love affair with City? Possibly/probably. Trouble is, I don’t think I can!

Alf Orton

Romford, Essex

The wrong sort of novelist?

Well, this is a puzzle. Of the last 13 books I have read, 12 were written by women. This wasn't a conscious effort. It just worked out that way. Yet not one of the authors featured in the long article "[Where are the all the young male novelists?](#)" (the New Review). I'm mortified. Am I reading the wrong sort of female novelist? Is Zadie Smith now a guilty pleasure? Should I cover my Donna Tartts with wallpaper to disguise them? What's going on? I need to know.

David Williams

Leeds

The shameless quad

Samuel Johnson wrote: "Politics are now nothing more than means of rising in the world. With this sole view do men engage in politics and their whole conduct proceeds upon it." I used to think this an overly cynical analysis but Will Hutton's excellent article ("[Public squalor and private wealth: how the 'austerity quad' sold their souls](#)", Comment) details how, shamelessly, Cameron, Clegg, Osborne and Alexander did exactly that.

Dr Bill Jones

Beverley, East Yorkshire

Labour needs Scotland

Andrew Rawnsley is surely right that the Labour party must start appealing to people all over England and not just rely on its traditional heartlands where its vote is waning ("[Labour won't see power again until it remembers the essentials of winning](#)", Comment). He is also right that Labour should seriously commit to reform of the first-past-the post voting system.

However, he omits one of the main reasons the party looks unable to form a government in the immediate future: in Scotland, the Labour vote has collapsed. The reason Tony Blair was able to win successive elections was not merely because of his supposedly successful centrism, it was largely because Labour in the 1990s was the party of Scotland and Wales and not simply of England. It is surely evident that Labour cannot return to power without it once again becoming a serious electoral force north of the border.

Stephen Chappell
Upper Colwall, Herefordshire

Don't tax boomers

Rowan Moore ([Notebook](#)) advocates a tax on “boomers” because of the inflation in property values. Yet he seems oblivious to the fact that the vast majority of boomers will be living in the property as their home, so to “realise the value” they would have to sell and then buy in the same market. An increased property value does not mean the council tax is reduced, or the repair and maintenance bills are lower, or the utilities cost less. Where is the money for a tax going to come from?

Joe Oldaker
Nuneaton, Warwickshire

Teasing out the truth

In Tim Adams's interesting interview, Daniel Kahneman states that “it's not in the interest of the judicial community to investigate themselves” ([Q&A](#), the New Review). We pride ourselves on our adversarial system that enables evidence to be teased out mercilessly to get to the truth. At least 39 Post Office workers have, through no fault of their own, been punished and their lives ruined by the law, which clearly failed to find that the evidence was wrong. Surely this is worthy of some investigation.

Peter Barbor
Wambrook, Chard, Somerset

Oil's time is up

That a major oil company intends to spend just \$2bn to \$3bn on renewables a year should come as no surprise (“[Eco investors turn up the heat on Shell over climate target](#)”, Business), especially as the price of oil is rising nicely towards \$70 a barrel.

Shell's directors want to make hay while the sun shines on the production of oil – because they know it won't be shining for long. CEO Ben van Beurden said in October 2020 that the company's oil output probably stopped

growing in 2019. So peak oil demand is already here. BP's "Outlook 2020" comes to the same conclusion.

The end of oil demand growth won't mean a precipitous fall – the transition to a global green economy will take years – but even a gradual drop may trigger a scramble to harvest and go, with dire consequences for oil prices, company profits and investor returns.

Perhaps eco-minded oil company investors, rather than quibble over percentage points of renewable spending, would be better off quitting the oil sector entirely.

Eurof Thomas
Cardiff

Penguin tartare, anyone?

As *Observer Food Monthly* has always tried to provide ideas for the most adventurous palate, may I ask why Roald Amundsen's Antarctic Penguin Surprise with a blood and cod liver oil jus was not included in this month's magazine, with an idea of cooking time and suitable veg? ("[The secret of how Amundsen beat Scott in race to south pole... a diet of raw penguin](#)", News.)

Ian Grieve
Gordon Bennett, Llangollen canal

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/theobserver/commentisfree/2021/may/23/its-unfair-to-single-out-manchester-city-fans-observer-letters>

[For the record](#)[UK news](#)

For the record

This week's corrections

Sun 23 May 2021 01.00 EDT

The Russell-Cotes Gallery is in Bournemouth, not Eastbourne, as an article on the reopening of museums and galleries said ([Now's the best time to enjoy Britain's treasures \(there are no tourists\)](#), 16 May, page 4).

An image was captioned as showing “a Neanderthal fossil jaw found near Rome”. In fact, it was of an unidentified fossil jaw discovered in a cave said to be one of the most significant places for Neanderthal history ([Tiny traces of DNA found in cave dust may unlock secret life of Neanderthals](#), 16 May, page 24).

Other recently amended articles include:

[Johnson 'must think again on plans to relax Covid rules'](#)

[Israeli airstrike on Gaza claims eight young cousins](#)

[UK government to host its first global conference on LGBTQ+ rights](#)

Write to the Readers' Editor, the Observer, York Way, London N1 9GU, email observer.readers@observer.co.uk, tel 020 3353 4736

OpinionConservatives

Ballot rigging is so last year. There are now new ways of buying votes

Nick Cohen



Politicians no longer use their own money as bribes; they use yours instead



A satirical 1853 illustration entitled 'THE VOTE AUCTION!' commenting on the prevalence of bribery in British parliamentary elections. Photograph: Chronicle/Alamy

A satirical 1853 illustration entitled 'THE VOTE AUCTION!' commenting on the prevalence of bribery in British parliamentary elections. Photograph: Chronicle/Alamy

Sat 22 May 2021 13.00 EDT

Bribery has always been the main concern of opponents of political corruption. The virtually non-existent threat of fake voters turning up at ballot stations and pretending to be legitimate citizens is as nothing when set against the crooked politician's promise to buy your vote. Since parliament passed the Corrupt and Illegal Practices Prevention Act in 1883, the UK has not seen as concerted an attempt to rig elections as the venality initiated by the Johnson administration.

Its bribery is practised in public view without the police intervening or anything like the level of public outrage a robust democracy would muster. Only a country in Britain's turgid decadence could view with complacency the communities secretary, [Robert Jenrick](#), and a junior minister in his very [own department](#) approving payments to each other's constituencies from a

government fund that was meant to help left-behind towns, not Jenrick's comfortable Tory seat.

You scratch my backyard and I'll scratch yours.

Few remark on the audacity of a government that seeks to suppress genuine voters by demanding photo IDs at polling stations, while getting away with perpetrating the oldest and most effective political swindle of them all.

Perhaps the government should try harder to avoid "accusations of pork-barrelling", an overly genteel [report](#) from the House of Lords quoted a witness as saying last week. The Commons public accounts committee was more [tough-minded](#) last year when it said ministers directed money from their £3.6bn towns fund to affluent constituencies, despite their officials warning that they were "the very lowest priority". Even the admirably forthright committee didn't realise that the government was practising electoral fraud.

The last major vote-rigging scandal was in Tower Hamlets in the East End of London. [Lutfur Rahman](#), the mayor found guilty by an election court on many counts of electoral fraud in 2015, ought to be remembered because he was a harbinger of Britain's future. His Tower Hamlets First party was a Bangladeshi communalist movement. The [Unite union](#) and the ultra-left backed it nevertheless, apparatchiks put identity politics before secular socialism and stood with Rahman to the end.

Meanwhile, [Boris Johnson](#) took the corrupt practices Rahman brought to the East End and spread them across the whole of England.

Of the 45 constituencies receiving a share of the first £1bn in funding for struggling towns, 39 are represented by Tory MPs

In 2015, [Richard Mawrey](#), the election commissioner, found a few instances of the type of fraud at ballot stations, which the Trump right in the US and Johnson right in the UK use to restrict the franchise. It is not wholly the invention of reactionary conspiracy theorists. But the logistics of fraudulent voting mean that it cannot swing elections in Tower Hamlets or anywhere

else. A corrupt operator would need to organise hundreds, and in all probability thousands, of fraudulent votes to fix a count. The chances of doing so without anyone noticing are nil.

The real charge against Rahman then and Johnson now is bribery. As the electoral commissioner said in the Tower Hamlets case, in 19th-century Britain, bribery was a relatively simple matter of candidates pressing banknotes (or, more probably, sovereigns) into the greedy hands of voters.

I am delighted to report that we have progressed beyond the debased days of the 19th century. Now, it would be unthinkable for politicians such as Rahman and Johnson to use their own money to bribe voters. They use taxpayers' money instead.

The Tower Hamlets election court declared Rahman's victory void in part because he had directed "enormous sums of public money" to Bangladeshi organisations in the expectation that they would return the favour and get the vote out. When council officers objected, Rahman and his supporters overruled them. Singled out for favour were Bengali TV stations, which just happened to cover the politics of Tower Hamlets. Rahman's network extended into the mosques where 101 imams signed a letter in Bengali stating it was people's "religious duty" to vote for him. In many cases, Rahman gave money to organisations "that had not even applied for a grant".

The Johnson administration follows the lead of the Rahman administration. [Thirty-nine of the 45 constituencies](#) receiving a share of the first £1bn in funding for struggling towns are represented by Tory MPs. The Treasury was so shameless that it pumped money to Rishi Sunak's constituency of Richmond in Yorkshire, whose middle-class residents would be insulted if you told them they were close to beggary. The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government treated the criteria it used to hand money to one town rather than another when it rolled out the pork barrel as if they were [state secrets](#).

In Tower Hamlets, a corrupt regime tested the integrity of public servants. Speaking out was a risk. The electoral court reported that anyone who crossed Rahman knew he could rely on the Bengali media to portray critics

as “[racists and Islamophobes](#)”. Yet Rahman was ordering public servants to defend spending they knew to be unjustifiable and the bravest among them blew the whistle. Civil servants should ask the same moral questions today about how far down the line honest men and women can go with this government.

The public accounts committee concluded that the housing, communities and local government department civil servants’ “lack of transparency fuelled accusations of political bias”. The Johnson administration was risking “the civil service’s reputation for impartiality”, not least because government press officers were issuing statements to the media that were simply untrue.

As in Tower Hamlets in the early 2010s, so in all of England in the early 2020s – it is now rational for voters to think the [Conservatives](#) will give them money if they vote Tory. All political parties promise rewards for support in the form of tax and spending policies. Modern [Conservatives](#) are different. They are offering to direct specific taxpayer funds to specific neighbourhoods in return for votes.

If you live on the coast and want your town to be a free port, it helps to vote Tory. If you want the government to treat your town as “left behind” when it is nothing of the sort, the smart move is to equip yourself with a Tory MP who can cut a deal and hand out the loot.

We are witnessing institutionalised bribery. Whistleblowers and the courts eventually stopped electoral corruption in Tower Hamletseast London. Who will stop it spreading across the whole of England?

Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/22/ballot-rigging-is-so-last-year-new-ways-of-buying-votes>

Headlines saturday 22 may 2021

- [Daniel Morgan Priti Patel has added to our family's agony, says murder victim's son](#)
- [Animal rights Protesters blockade four McDonald's distribution centres](#)
- [Coronavirus Signs of rise in infections in England amid variant warnings](#)
- [Heathrow Dedicated terminal to be used for 'red list' arrivals](#)
- [Travel Spain to drop restrictions on British visitors from 24 May](#)
- [Scotland Travel to English hotspots banned from Monday](#)

Police

Daniel Morgan's son says Priti Patel has added to family's agony

Home secretary urged to 'bring our torture to an end' by allowing publication of report into police and media corruption

[Opinion: our father was murdered, yet we have no closure after 34 years – only anger and grief](#)



Private detective Daniel Morgan was murdered with an axe in 1987. No one has ever been convicted over his death. Photograph: Metropolitan police/PA

Private detective Daniel Morgan was murdered with an axe in 1987. No one has ever been convicted over his death. Photograph: Metropolitan police/PA

[Vikram Dodd](#) *Police and crime correspondent*

Sat 22 May 2021 02.00 EDT

The son of the murdered private detective Daniel Morgan has said the home secretary has exacerbated the 34 years of agony for his family by blocking the publication of the report into the role police and media corruption played in shielding his killers.

Breaking a public silence of over three decades, the son, also called Daniel, said the report of a panel investigating the 1987 murder should be published, without the government vetting it beforehand.

[In a piece for the Guardian](#), he said: “My family have endured enough words, suffering, waiting and pain: the only currency left with any value to us is action that brings our torture to an end.”

The panel was expecting to publish this coming Monday. However, on Tuesday members were told they [could not do so](#) until their report had been passed to the home secretary, Priti Patel, so she could review it and make changes if she thought necessary.

[Our father was murdered, yet we have no closure after 34 years – only anger and grief](#)
[Read more](#)

One of the main areas of inquiry for the panel was the conduct of Rupert Murdoch’s business empire, with two of those arrested after the murder having ties to the News of the World, the Sunday tabloid closed after the phone-hacking scandal.

Patel was a guest at Murdoch’s 2016 wedding in [London](#) to Jerry Hall. On Friday the Home Office said the home secretary would not discuss her relationship with Murdoch, or her attendance at his wedding, because it was a private matter.

No one has ever been convicted of the murder of Morgan, 37, who was found with an axe in his head in a south London pub car park in March 1987. The Metropolitan police have accepted their efforts have been blighted by corruption.

In the Guardian piece, Morgan's son dismissed the home secretary's claims she needed to see the report before publication in case parts of it breached human rights or damaged national security. Well-informed police sources say the case has no national security implications.

He wrote: "I urge the home secretary to stand aside. You say you want to review the report over concerns relating to the Human Rights Act and national security. You know you have made no preparations for any such review, because none was ever envisaged on your part.

"You have said you understand how we feel and you don't wish to compromise the integrity or the independence of the panel and their work. If this is true, we see no reason for you not to desist immediately, so that the panel's report may be published as it stands without any further delay.

"And I urge the [panel] to take whatever steps are in its power to stand up to the home secretary, to ensure that its independence and integrity is not compromised.

Morgan, 38, said the lack of justice as well as corruption thwarting justice had made the family's pain since 1987 worse.

"What remains most sickening is the failure of the institutions of the state to do what was required of them: the failure to address the police corruption that has protected those responsible for the murder from justice; and the repeated failure to confront that corruption over the decades; a failure of the police hierarchy at the highest ranks; the failure of the Home Office which is supposed to be responsible for the police."

The family had suffered throughout the generations, Morgan said. "We still have unspent grief, 34 years after the murder of my father. At this moment in time it's a living nightmare."

In her first public comments the home secretary defended her actions on Channel 4 News. Patel said: "I think it's important that I, as home secretary, actually receive the report before it is published.

“I have yet to receive this report and I think it’s right that I receive the report and read it before laying it in parliament. That is standard practice when it comes to reports of this nature and that is absolutely the right process to follow.”

The Home Office was asked several days ago to name a precedent for a report of this nature. It has yet to cite one.

The brother of the murdered private detective challenged the home secretary over her remarks.

Alastair Morgan said: “She would have received the report one day before publication, as is the convention, but she blocked publication and insisted she was entitled to redact if she saw fit. This was not part of the deal.”

The standoff between the government and the panel, which is refusing to hand over its report as demanded, continues, as do discussions to try to resolve it.

There is little or no chance the report will be published before parliament goes into recess next week.

The inquiry was ordered in 2013 by the then home secretary, Theresa May.

A Home Office spokesperson said: “Under the panel’s terms of reference agreed in 2013, it is for the home secretary to make arrangements for the report’s publication to parliament.

“Until the panel provide the home secretary with the report, she is unable to make those arrangements or meet her responsibilities to ensure it complies with human rights and national security considerations, should these arise.

“We hope the panel will reconsider and provide the Home Office with the report so those checks can begin swiftly and we can publish soon.”

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[Climate change](#)

UK animal rights group blockades four McDonald's depots

Activists plan 24-hour protest in attempt to get company to turn fully plant-based by 2025

01:14

Animal rights activists blockade McDonald's distribution centres across UK – video

[Nicola Slawson](#) and agency
Sat 22 May 2021 02.11 EDT

Animal rights protesters have set up blockades at four McDonald's distribution centres across Britain, which they say will affect about 1,300 restaurants.

Activists from Animal Rebellion used trucks and bamboo structures to blockade distribution sites at Hemel Hempstead, Basingstoke, Coventry and Heywood in Greater Manchester from about 4.30am on Saturday, the group said.

Locked on for workers rights, animal justice & to end the climate emergency. We take action to let global corporations know they have to change.

THIS IS HAPPENING NOW. Since 430am. Support our activists:
<https://t.co/pVXIUuJuWn#plantbased> [#ClimateAction](#) [#G7UK](#)
[@McDonaldsUK](#) pic.twitter.com/Rko4YeyXji

— Animal Rebellion (@RebelsAnimal) [May 22, 2021](#)

The group wants McDonald's to commit to becoming fully plant-based by 2025. Animal Rebellion said it would remain at the sites for at least 24 hours, causing "significant disruption" to the company's supply chain.

Kerri Waters, who has been a member of Animal Rebellion since its inception two and half years ago, spoke to the Guardian from Heywood where she and about 20 other activists have been since 4am on Saturday.

"Spirits are high, especially since it has warmed up a little, and we have had people come down to show their support," she said. "The police presence was very light at the beginning and in fact at one point they just left us. But now there are multiple police officers."

She said she hoped the action would make people stop and think. "As an ordinary, working-class woman, what I would like to say to others like me is that this isn't about taking anything away from you but if we continue to consume the way we do, this will seriously impact future generations. Today we have the ability to be able to create meats and dairy products in a plant-based version or a cultured version."

She added that campaigners accepted they could be arrested. "We understand the urgency of the situation. We're getting down to the line now: we have to make a massive change otherwise there's no future left."



Animal Rebellion activists at Basingstoke. Photograph: Andrea Domeniconi

In a video on Twitter, a protester in Coventry said the demonstration “feels like the absolutely right thing to do”.

She added: “We are in the middle of a climate and ecological emergency and we are still consuming huge quantities of meat on a scale that is just not sustainable for our planet.”

An Animal Rebellion spokesperson, James Ozden, said the action was aimed at calling out the animal agriculture industry for its part in the global climate crisis.

“The meat and dairy industry is destroying our planet: causing huge amounts of rainforest deforestation, emitting immense quantities of greenhouse gases and killing billions of animals each year,” he said.

“The only sustainable and realistic way to feed 10 billion people is with a plant-based food system. Organic, free-range and ‘sustainable’ animal-based options simply aren’t good enough.”

[Laugh if you want, but the 'McPlant' burger is a step to a greener world | Adrienne Matei](#)
[Read more](#)

The campaign group tweeted that it planned to cause “significant disruption” to McDonald’s by staying at the sites for at least 24 hours, which would affect restaurants restocking over the weekend.

A further tweet called on the burger chain to engage personally with the activists. It read: “We’re waiting for them to come talk to us, or we’ll stop their distribution to all 1,300 restaurants ALL DAY.”

A McDonald’s spokesperson said: “Our distribution centres are currently facing disruption. We are assessing the impact on deliveries to our restaurants and to menu items. We apologise to our customers for any disappointment caused.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/22/animal-rights-protesters-blockade-four-mcdonalds-distribution-centres-in-uk>

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Coronavirus

Signs of rise in Covid infections in England amid variant warnings

Boris Johnson still plans to end restrictions in June despite experts' fears over spread of India and Kent variants

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Members of the testing team wait for people to arrive for swab tests in Bedford. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Members of the testing team wait for people to arrive for swab tests in Bedford. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

[*Nicola Davis*](#) and [*Ian Sample*](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 13.33 EDT

Covid infection levels are showing early signs of an increase in England, data has revealed, as experts continue to warn the variant of concern first detected in India could grow exponentially in the UK.

On Friday, Boris Johnson [told broadcasters in Portsmouth](#) he has seen nothing to suggest it will be necessary to “deviate from the roadmap”, indicating that the planned lifting of all coronavirus restrictions in England on 21 June may yet go ahead.

However speaking at an online meeting of the Independent Sage group of experts, Prof Ravi Gupta of the University of Cambridge, a co-opted member of the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group, said that despite the UK’s vaccination programme, community spread of the India variant, B.1.617.2, will continue to rise.

“We still have people under the age of 30 not vaccinated, we have many people with only one dose, so this virus has plenty of space to expand exponentially and reach very high levels of infection with quite high levels of morbidity overall,” he said.

His comments came [as data from the Office for National Statistics](#) infection survey revealed early signs of a potential rise in the percentage of people testing positive for Covid in England.

According to data for the week ending 15 May, about 49,000 people in England, or one in 1,110, were positive for the virus, up from 40,800 or one in 1,340 the week before – although overall rates remain low.

“There were early signs of an increase in the percentage of people testing positive in the north-east, Yorkshire and the Humber and the south-east in the week ending 15 May 2021,” the ONS team noted.

By contrast around one in 4,340 people in the community in Wales, one in 1,550 in Northern Ireland and one in 1,960 in Scotland are thought to have had Covid in the most recent week.

Sarah Crofts, head of analytical outputs for the ONS Covid-19 Infection Survey, said there is a mixed picture of infection levels across the UK.

“Although we have seen an early indication of a potential increase in England, rates remain low and it is too soon to say if this is the start of a trend,” she said.

The swabs suggest that any rise so far is caused by the Kent variant. The time taken to perform genome sequencing means there is a greater lag in results for the B.1.617.2 variant first found in India. In the four weeks to 9 May – the latest period the ONS has data for – the survey found only two confirmed cases of the B.1.617.2 variant.

Christina Pagel, professor of operational research at University College London, said the ONS results do not necessarily give the full picture as the survey is based on random sampling, which can miss local pockets of spread or the growth of new variants.

“For instance ONS shows infections in Scotland declining whereas case numbers and positivity rate in Scotland are going up driven by localised spikes in Glasgow and East Renfrewshire,” she said.

Scientists advising the government expect infections to rise as England follows the roadmap out of lockdown, but the latest ONS numbers do not take account of the easing of restrictions on 17 May.

While Public Health England (PHE) has said it is highly likely current Covid vaccines will protect against severe disease, hospitalisation and death for the India variant, scientists are concerned that it appears to be more transmissible than the Kent variant, warning it [may fuel a serious third wave of infections](#), which could still lead to a rise in hospitalisations, an increase in cases of long Covid and [exacerbate backlogs in the NHS](#).

According to data released by PHE on Thursday there have now been [3,424 confirmed cases](#) of the B.1.617.2 variant in the UK, up from 1,313 cases confirmed by the previous Thursday.

Meanwhile the public have been warned not to be alarmed over the designation by Public Health England on Thursday of another variant, called AV.1, as a “variant under investigation”.

This has been detected in the UK, Greece and Chad, with most cases in the UK found in Yorkshire and the Humber.

Greg Fell, director of public health in Sheffield, said the variant is being monitored.

“There is no evidence to suggest this strain is any more transmissible ... or to suggest the vaccine doesn’t work against this strain,” he said.

“Please don’t be alarmed, we want you to continue doing what you have been for the past year. Follow the guidance, continue to wash your hands regularly and wear a mask indoors.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/21/signs-of-rise-in-covid-infections-in-england-amid-variant-warnings>

[Coronavirus](#)

Heathrow to open dedicated terminal for ‘red list’ arrivals

Airport responds to concerns that mixing of passengers could increase transmission of Covid variants

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



The separate arrivals facility will be introduced in Terminal 3 from 1 June.
Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

The separate arrivals facility will be introduced in Terminal 3 from 1 June.
Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

[Gwyn Topham](#) *Transport correspondent*
[@GwynTopham](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 12.12 EDT

Heathrow is to create a separate terminal for flights coming from “red list” countries, to address concerns over passengers from destinations with high rates of Covid-19 mixing with other travellers in the arrivals hall.

Britain’s biggest airport said it would introduce the dedicated arrivals facility in Terminal 3 from 1 June. It follows increasing disquiet over incoming flights, particularly from India, where the B.1.617.2 variant was first detected.

Under the new traffic light system, only returning UK citizens are allowed to fly home from red list countries, while holidays are permitted in green list countries – and potentially amber, with quarantine measures.

[Ministers had urged Heathrow](#) to segregate arrivals from higher-risk countries, with the transport secretary, Grant Shapps, saying on Thursday he wanted to “see people separated out as much as is practically possible”.

With many more passengers expected in coming weeks, after holidays were permitted to resume on 17 May, the airport said it would create the facility to help smooth the immigration process.

Although the airport said the current system – designed by the government – had built-in protection, there have been reports of long queues in immigration halls and experts have questioned the safety of travel with passengers from around the world mixing in airports. Border Force officials have had to spend much more time than before processing documentation, including pre-departure Covid test certificates from abroad.

A Heathrow spokesperson said: “Red list routes will likely be a feature of UK travel for the foreseeable future as countries vaccinate their populations at different rates. We’re adapting Heathrow to this longer-term reality by initially opening a dedicated arrivals facility in Terminal 3 from 1 June for red list passengers arriving on direct flights. We will move this facility to Terminal 4 as soon as operationally possible.

“While opening this facility will be very challenging logistically, our hope is that it will enable Border Force to carry out its duties more efficiently as

passenger volumes increase in line with the green list.”

The current red list system will remain in place until June. The spokesperson said there were several layers of protection to keep passengers and staff safe – including mandatory negative Covid tests for all international arrivals, face coverings, social distancing and segregation. Immigration halls have enhanced ventilation and cleaning regimes.

Heathrow had previously said it [would not open a dedicated terminal](#) without government financial help, with the cost of opening terminals mothballed since the start of the pandemic in 2020 running into millions. Discussions are being held over the level of assistance.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/21/heathrow-open-dedicated-terminal-red-list-arrivals-covid>

[Spain holidays](#)

Spain to drop Covid restrictions on British visitors from 24 May

Spanish PM says negative test not needed even as Boris Johnson warns against travel to amber list countries

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



British visitors to Spanish resorts such as Benidorm will still have to quarantine for 10 days after their return. Photograph: José Jordan/AFP/Getty Images

British visitors to Spanish resorts such as Benidorm will still have to quarantine for 10 days after their return. Photograph: José Jordan/AFP/Getty Images

[*Isabel Choat*](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 12.12 EDT

Spain will allow British holidaymakers into the country without the need to provide a negative Covid test from 24 May.

In a move aimed at restarting the country's battered tourist industry, the Spanish government has announced that visitors from the UK will be free to enter Spain "without restrictions and without health requirements". The same applies to visitors from Japan. All arrivals are still required to fill out a health form.

Speaking at a tourism fair in Madrid on Friday, the Spanish prime minister, [Pedro Sánchez](#), said: "Spain will be delighted, very delighted to welcome all British tourists, and tourists from some other countries with low Covid infection rates."

Spain is currently on the [UK's amber list](#), meaning travellers returning to the UK are required to take a Covid PCR test before they arrive, fill in a passenger location form, quarantine at home for 10 days on their return, and take a further two tests.

Spain's decision to allow non-essential, restriction-free travel contrasts with the stern warning from the UK Foreign Office, which continues to advise against non-essential travel to the country, with the exception of the Canary Islands.

The earliest [departures to Spain with Tui](#), the UK's largest tour operator, are from 7 June, except for the Canaries, which are available from 27 May.

The same applies to Thomas Cook's Spain packages.

"There isn't a clamour for holidays to amber list destinations. Portugal remains our most popular destination at the moment," said spokesman David Child.

This week [Boris Johnson](#) insisted that nobody should travel to the 170 or so countries on the amber list except in the case of an emergency.

He told the House of Commons on Wednesday: "You should not be going to an amber list country unless for some extreme circumstance such as the

serious illness of a family member. You should not be going to an amber list country on holiday.”

However, airlines are selling flights to amber list countries – on Monday easyJet is operating flights from Gatwick to Lanzarote, Málaga, Ibiza, and Palma Mallorca, for example – and have been lobbying for popular summer sun destinations to be added to the green list since it was announced on 7 May. The number of flights to Spain increased dramatically after international travel resumed on 17 May.

According to aviation data analyst Cirium there were 181 UK-Spain flights between 3 and 16 May compared with 969 between 17 and 30 May. Flights to Greece also leapt up in the same period.

In a Skyscanner survey carried out this week, Spain was top of the list of places consumers would like to see added to the green list, followed by Greece. The mounting calls led the health secretary, [Matt Hancock, to warn people not to pin their hopes on the green list being extended](#).

But travel expert Paul Charles of the PC Agency believes Spain’s decision will have a domino effect on other European destinations, increasing pressure on the UK to allow unrestricted travel. “You’re going to see more countries [lift entry restrictions] as they all follow each other. You’re going to see more start to let the British in and that will put pressure on the prime minister.”

He added: “Consumers are voting with their feet and booking trips to Spain; they know the rules, they know it’s not illegal and they know they have to self-isolate when they get home.”

[Coronavirus](#)

Scotland to ban travel to English Covid hotspots from Monday

Nicola Sturgeon announces ‘hopefully temporary’ ban affecting Bedford, Bolton and Blackburn with Darwen

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Nicola Sturgeon told Scots that the situation with the Covid variant first identified in India was likely to change quickly. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

Nicola Sturgeon told Scots that the situation with the Covid variant first identified in India was likely to change quickly. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

[Libby Brooks](#) *Scotland correspondent*

Fri 21 May 2021 09.26 EDT

A temporary travel ban between [Scotland](#) and Covid hotspots in England will come into force from Monday, Nicola Sturgeon has announced, as she confirmed that level 3 lockdown restrictions would continue in Glasgow for at least another week and warned that new cases had risen across the whole of [Scotland](#) by more than 25% over the past week.

Telling Scots that the situation with the coronavirus variant first identified in India was likely to change quickly, the Scottish first minister announced travel restrictions to Bedford, Bolton and Blackburn with Darwen, which are currently subject to enhanced health protection measures. The travel ban is not a legal restriction.

She said: “We know that there are particularly serious outbreaks in three specific English local authority areas – Bedford, Bolton and Blackburn with Darwen.”

“So for that reason, for Monday onwards, we are putting hopefully temporary travel restrictions on travel between Scotland and those three local authority areas in [England](#). So if you were planning to visit friends or relatives or to stay in those areas you must delay your visit.”

At the lunchtime briefing, Sturgeon also said that despite enhanced testing, contact tracing and accelerated vaccinations in the postcodes affected on the southside of Glasgow, “we don’t think we have turned the corner”.

Sturgeon said she knew “how unwelcome this is for individuals and businesses” in Glasgow, a city that has been subject to the toughest restrictions in Scotland since last September, but added that it was “not unreasonable” to surmise that these restrictions would continue for longer than another week.

Sturgeon also confirmed that Moray, the location of a previous hotspot, would be moving down to level 2 of the Scottish government’s five-tier system of Covid controls, the level at which the majority of mainland Scotland now sits.

There had been some speculation that East Renfrewshire, a local authority adjacent to Glasgow city, would return to level 3 because of a steep rise in the case rate there. But Sturgeon said this would not be necessary because, although the raw data showed higher rates than Glasgow, the total number of cases was considerably smaller – just 17 new cases, compared with 166 in Glasgow yesterday. She added that the East Renfrewshire cases related to specific household clusters, compared with more widespread community transmission in Glasgow.

Sturgeon was also asked about revelations on Friday that a Scottish government agency unlawfully kept the breakdown of deaths in care homes secret for almost eight months. The ruling from Scotland's information commissioner was the result of a collaborative project between the Scotsman, the Herald, DC Thomson and STV.

She said the decision by National Records of Scotland – which she emphasised operates independently of ministers – not to break down the deaths by care home did not mask the scale of deaths. “I want to be very clear that is not the case. The total number of people who sadly lost their lives to Covid who were residents in care homes has been reported.”

The Scottish Labour leader, Anas Sarwar, earlier described the revelations as “utterly shameful” and called for a Scottish public inquiry “without delay”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/21/scotland-to-ban-travel-to-and-from-english-covid-hotspots-from-monday>.

2021.05.22 - Coronavirus

- [Live Coronavirus news: Covid jabs opened up to people aged 32 and 33 in England; Taiwan reports 321 new cases](#)
- [Germany Visitors from UK to be banned over Covid variants of concern](#)
- [Hydroxychloroquine Scientist faces legal action for challenging study on Covid treatment](#)
- ['Cognitive warfare' Taiwan accuses China of spreading fake news about Covid outbreak](#)

[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Coronavirus live news: Britain records 2,694 new Covid cases; Dominic Cummings criticises government over lockdowns – as it happened

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Coronavirus

Germany to bar visitors from UK over Covid variants of concern

From Sunday, people travelling from Britain may only enter country if they are German citizen or resident

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



People who are only transferring from one flight to another will still be allowed in but they must remain in the airport transit area. Photograph: Action Press/Rex/Shutterstock

People who are only transferring from one flight to another will still be allowed in but they must remain in the airport transit area. Photograph: Action Press/Rex/Shutterstock

PA Media

Sat 22 May 2021 03.50 EDT

Britons are to be barred from entering [Germany](#) from Sunday onwards after the country's Public Health Institute designated the UK as a virus variant area of concern.

As of midnight on 23 May, people travelling to Germany from Great Britain and Northern Ireland may only enter the country if they are a German citizen or resident.

Spouses and children under 18 of a German citizen or resident can also enter, as long as the household are travelling together.

Those with an urgent humanitarian reason such as an immediate family bereavement are also able to enter. However, anyone entering the country from the UK must quarantine for two weeks on arrival, even if they test negative for the coronavirus.

People who are only transferring from one flight to another will still be allowed in but they must remain in the airport transit area.

The move comes after [Spain lifted travel restrictions](#) on British visitors, with the country's prime minister, Pedro Sánchez, saying Spain would be “delighted, extremely delighted” to receive British tourists again.

Spain is lifting its restrictions on travellers from the UK beginning on Monday.

Germany and Spain are both on the government's amber list, meaning travellers must quarantine at home for 10 days and take a pre-departure test and two post-arrival tests.

Medical research

World expert in scientific misconduct faces legal action for challenging integrity of hydroxychloroquine study

Australian and international scientists publish open letter defending Dr Elisabeth Bik and calling for science whistleblowers to be protected



Dutch expert in identifying scientific misconduct and error Dr Elisabeth Bik has been threatened with legal action for challenging the findings of a study promoting the drug hydroxychloroquine to treat Covid-19. Photograph: George Frey/AFP/Getty Images

Dutch expert in identifying scientific misconduct and error Dr Elisabeth Bik has been threatened with legal action for challenging the findings of a study promoting the drug hydroxychloroquine to treat Covid-19. Photograph: George Frey/AFP/Getty Images

[Melissa Davey](#)

[@MelissaLDavey](#)

Sat 22 May 2021 01.01 EDT

A world-renowned Dutch expert in identifying scientific misconduct and error, Dr Elisabeth Bik, has been threatened with legal action for questioning the integrity of a study promoting the drug hydroxychloroquine to treat Covid-19.

The case, filed with the French state prosecutor by controversial infectious diseases physician Dr Didier Raoult, has prompted hundreds of scientists from across the world to publish an open letter calling for science whistleblowers to be protected.

In March 2020, Bik [published a blog post analysing a paper](#) led by Raoult. His paper claimed the antimalarial drug hydroxychloroquine was effective in treating Covid infections, especially when given in combination with an antibiotic.

[French professor faces disciplinary case over hydroxychloroquine claims](#)
[Read more](#)

Bik [raised questions about the paper's methodology](#), including that the researchers had failed to control for confounding factors. In strong clinical trials, the control group (who are given a placebo) and the treatment group (who are given the drug) should be as similar as possible so scientists can be confident any effects are from the medication alone.

Bik pointed out that patients should be of similar age and gender ratio, be equally sick at the start of treatment, and analysed in the same way, with the only difference being whether they received treatment or not. She said the treatment and placebo groups in Raoult's study [differed in important ways](#) that could have affected the results.

Six patients enrolled in the treatment group at the beginning of the study were not accounted for by the end, missing from the data.

“What happened to the other six treated patients?” Bik said.

“Why did they drop out of the study? Three of them were transferred to the intensive care unit, presumably because they got sicker, and one died. It seems a bit strange to leave these four patients who got worse or who died out of the study, just on the basis that they stopped taking the medication ... which is pretty difficult once the patient is dead.”



Dr Didier Raoult has threatened Dr Elisabeth Bik with legal action.
Photograph: Daniel Cole/AP

Despite questions being raised by Bik [and other scientists](#), the then US president Donald Trump [promoted Raoult's paper and the use of hydroxychloroquine](#) for Covid, helping the French doctor gain attention.

In July, France's Infectious Diseases Society filed a [complaint against Raoult](#) that said it was unethical to promote hydroxychloroquine during a pandemic given there was little evidence it worked against Covid. The International Journal of Antimicrobial Agents [raised similar concerns](#).

Science is supposedly self-correcting, but has no measures in place to protect whistleblowers. The powerful editors and heads of institutions will just sue the people who call them out for integrity issues.

— Elisabeth Bik ☐ ☐ (@MicrobiomDigest) [April 29, 2021](#)

Evidence [from multiple strong and properly conducted studies](#) has since found hydroxychloroquine has little to no impact on illness, hospitalisation, or death from Covid.

Bik, who is hired as a consultant by scientific institutions worldwide to analyse data and identify research misconduct, went on to identify image duplication and potential ethical issues in 62 published articles from Raoult and his institute.

Raoult and his supporters have [relentlessly attacked Bik](#) since, calling her a [“nutcase” and a “failed researcher”](#) on Twitter and in media interviews, and publishing her contact details online. This is despite Bik also [exposing errors in papers](#) that found hydroxychloroquine provided no benefit to Covid patients.

Professor at the [@IHU_Marseille](#) keeps on doxxing my home address and financial info.

Please report [@EChabriere](#) and alter ego [@LeProfessionne9](#) massively. This is just disgusting.

— Elisabeth Bik ☐ ☐ (@MicrobiomDigest) [May 1, 2021](#)

Raoult’s colleague, Prof Eric Chabriere, revealed on Twitter that he and Raoult have filed a complaint against Bik and Boris Barbour, who helps run a not-for-profit website called PubPeer which allows scientists to analyse and provide feedback on each other’s work.

The legal complaint alleges harassment over Bik exposing data errors on PubPeer, and extortion because she has a [Patreon account where people can donate](#) to her work. She has responded to Raoult’s calls on Twitter to declare who is funding her by sharing links to her Patreon.

Lonni Besançon, a French postdoctoral research fellow at Monash University in Australia, said he had also received multiple death threats from Raoult’s supporters after raising concerns about Raoult’s work.

“But the attacks I get as a white man are a fraction of what women researchers and researchers of colour get,” he said.

Terrible. This lawsuit against Dr. Bik and the administrator of PubPeer is intended to silence public peer review. Scientists should not be punished civilly or economically for documenting problems with research that most charitably can be described as deeply flawed.
<https://t.co/iK48NMVhZl>

— Dr. Angela Rasmussen (@angie_rasmussen) [April 30, 2021](#)

He and other international scientists have [published an open letter](#) calling for the attacks on Bik to stop and for the scientific community to support her and other whistleblowers. As of Saturday it had [more than 500 signatories](#).

“Scholarly criticism, particularly on issues of research integrity, is fraught with challenges,” the letter said.

“This makes it particularly important to maintain focus on addressing such critique with scientific evidence and not attacks on people’s appearance, character, or person.”

[Surgisphere: mass audit of papers linked to firm behind hydroxychloroquine Lancet study scandal](#)

[Read more](#)

Bik was recognised internationally for conducting work “instrumental to ethical, sound, and reproducible research, but it also introduces her to personal risk as a whistleblower”.

“For several months, Raoult and some members of his institute have responded by insulting her on national television, disclosing her personal address on social media, and threatening legal action for harassment and defamation.

“Prof Raoult and his team’s behaviour toward Dr Bik and others have been pointed out by many international media outlets ... This strategy of harassment and threats creates a chilling effect for whistleblowers and for scholarly criticism more generally.”

Guardian Australia has contacted Raoult for comment.

L'[@IHU_Marseille](#) en roue libre...

Ils déposent donc plainte (à confirmer vu la source de l'info) contre [@MicrobiomDigest](#) et l'administrateur de Pubpeer [@BorisBarbour](#).

(et divulguent leurs adresses au passage, j'ai ajouté le flou...) pic.twitter.com/YCLwMFgrkZ

— Tipunch (@Tipuncho) [April 30, 2021](#)

Besançon said institutions and policymakers needed to act to protect whistleblowers like Bik, saying the threats against her had become “ridiculous”.

“We also want citizens and scientists who might try to sue whistleblowers to understand that it’s not a legal concern but a scientific one,” he said. “Dr Bik is an amazing scientist and we want to make sure that no dangerous precedent is set with the current legal situation around her.”

A [separate Change.org petition](#) was also launched in support of Bik by French citizen science movement [#Citizen4Science](#), and also had more than 500 signatures.

“The international scientific community and many of our doctors, pharmacists, caregivers, scientists and informed fellow citizens are worried and disillusioned to note that our country is allowing disinformation, cyberstalking and legal proceedings to flourish against the carriers of consensual scientific speech,” the petition, led by [#Citizen4Science](#) president Dr Fabienne Pinson, says. “The perpetrators are not even worried or simply called to order.”

Pinson told Guardian Australia the petition was “an active call to French authorities to intervene” and stop harassment of scientists and misinformation.

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Taiwan

Taiwan accuses China of spreading fake news about Covid outbreak

Beijing is using ‘cognitive warfare’ to undermine trust in the island’s government, says official



Fake news spread in Taiwan included reports that president Tsai Ing-wen had been infected and it was being covered up. Photograph: Annabelle Chih/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Fake news spread in Taiwan included reports that president Tsai Ing-wen had been infected and it was being covered up. Photograph: Annabelle Chih/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Reuters

Fri 21 May 2021 23.37 EDT

A Taiwanese official has accused China of spreading fake news about the Covid-19 outbreak on the island, saying this was why the government was

publicising and refuting instances of false information circulating online.

After months of keeping the pandemic under control, Taiwan is dealing with [a surge in domestic infections](#), and the whole island is under a heightened state of alert with people asked to stay at home and many venues shut.

Taiwan has repeatedly warned that [China](#), which claims the democratically governed island as its own, is trying to use “cognitive warfare” to try and undermine trust in the government and its response to the pandemic.

[How did Covid slip through Taiwan’s ‘gold standard’ defences?](#)
[Read more](#)

Speaking to reporters on Saturday, deputy minister of the interior Chen Tsung-yen said they had “clearly felt” the danger represented by Chinese propaganda and misinformation against Taiwan.

“The reason we are continuing to explain the contents of the fake information to everyone is to call attention to it. We must immediately intercept this, and not let cognitive warfare affect Taiwan’s society,” he added.

Chen listed examples of what he said was fake news circulating online, including that Taiwan president Tsai Ing-wen had been infected and it was being covered up.

“I want to say to everyone that this is really vile fake news,” he said.

Tsai tested negative this week after a worker at her residence was confirmed to be infected.

A security official watching Chinese activity in Taiwan said this week the Taipei government believed Beijing was engaged in cognitive warfare to “create chaos” and undermine public trust in how the pandemic is being handled.

China’s Taiwan affairs office said on Thursday that Taiwan’s accusations were “imaginary”, and that the government was trying to draw attention away from real problems. Taiwan should “stop playing political games, and

take practical measures to control the pandemic as soon as possible”, it added.

Taiwan said Saturday and Sunday were critical to breaking the chain of transmission, and urged people to stay at home.

The health ministry brought out its social media dog mascot, a shiba inu called Zongchai, to suggest songs about being alone people could sing at home to keep themselves entertained, like Taiwanese rocker Wu Bai’s hit Lonely Tree, Lonely Bird.

“At the weekend, don’t go out unless absolutely necessary,” the ministry said, showing Zongchai wearing glasses in front of a microphone.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/22/taiwan-accuses-china-of-spreading-fake-news-about-covid-outbreak>

2021.05.22 - Opinion

- Our father was murdered, yet we have no closure after 34 years – only anger and grief
- Hidden UK homelessness is about to get much worse, with Covid support being cut
- The ‘free speech’ law will make university debate harder, not easier
- There’s nothing guilty about the pleasure I get from TV shows by women, for women

[Opinion](#)[Metropolitan police](#)

Our father was murdered, yet we have no closure after 34 years – only anger and grief

[Daniel Morgan](#)

The home secretary's excuses for delaying publication of an independent panel's report ring hollow. We deserve the truth

- [Son says Priti Patel has added to family's agony.](#)
- Daniel Morgan is the son of murdered private investigator Daniel Morgan, whose story you can read [here](#)



‘At the very last moment, when we thought we might see the end of the road at last, we find that Priti Patel, the home secretary, has chosen to stand in our way.’ Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

‘At the very last moment, when we thought we might see the end of the road at last, we find that Priti Patel, the home secretary, has chosen to stand in our way.’ Photograph: Matt Dunham/AP

Sat 22 May 2021 02.00 EDT

There is a leap of vengeance and motivation that must be made for an act of despicable cowardice to take place.

A bloody and horrific murder. A coffin that has to remain closed.

In these circumstances, there are expectations of a notional level of justice in the aftermath: some accepted level of closure, some court-ordered retribution, some answers to the question of why?

Why this victim? Why this family?

Law is meant to give a level of reassurance for a concerned public. This is supposed to represent a starting point from which the surviving victims can begin to rebuild their lives, where the grieving can be anchored, a moment in time.

That is not something my family have known. We have never had that moment, we still have unanswered questions, we still have unspent grief, 34 years after the murder of my father, [Daniel Morgan](#). And anger. At this moment in time it's a living nightmare.

In 34 years we have never had anywhere near a satisfactory level of closure on the events before, during and after my father's death.

What remains most sickening is the failure of the institutions of the state to do what was required of them: the failure to address the police corruption that has protected those responsible for the murder from justice; and the repeated failure to confront that corruption over the decades; a failure of the

police hierarchy at the highest ranks; the failure of the [Home Office](#) which is supposed to be responsible for the police.

My family have been collateral damage in this. Our pain and suffering seems to count for nothing. A generation of grief.

If only failing to confront corruption was corruption itself. If only ... but hold on: it ought to be criminal.

What is deeply distressing, put plain to see, is that the [Metropolitan police](#) as an institution have been complicit in my father's murder but not prepared to do anything about it.

For years the Home Office was not prepared to do anything either, until 2013 when Theresa May – then home secretary – set up the Daniel Morgan independent panel (DMIP). Its purpose? To carry out a root-and-branch review of all these failures, and to explore the well-documented links between private investigators, police corruption and the press, free of state control.

[Who was Daniel Morgan and what is the new row over his murder case?](#)
[Read more](#)

It's a process required in the interests of the public and the nation at large. But now, eight years into what was supposed to be a one-year project, we are still awaiting the panel's findings.

We still have nothing that might begin to give our family the closure we deserve, not even the solace of recommendations that, if acted on, might protect future generations from the tragedy of failings we have experienced.

We have reason to believe that the police have made every effort to slow the progress of the DMIP, especially in response to requests for the mountains of information stemming from the many investigations into my father's death.

For us, the Met is a failed institution – one that can't demonstrate the capacity to admit failure and act upon it accordingly. Instead, the Met seems solely focused on protecting itself.

Now I urge current serving senior police officers to stop protecting those who came before them. In the past, police officers at a similar rank – at best – deliberately turned away from the stench of police corruption; they have sought to manage the fallout instead of confronting that corruption. You cannot allow the discussion to end with “that was the 80s” or “that was the 90s”. With my father’s murder, you know that senior police officers sought to prevent us ever understanding what really happened. As serving officers of the same rank, you cannot be blind to these facts. The inability to act now on previously known corruption is just another form of corruption.

We deserve the answers that we hope will be contained within the DMIP report. We know it isn’t going to make for happy reading. We are prepared for that. Until early this week, we had believed that we could expect to see the report this coming Monday. Before then it was last Monday. In the weeks, months and years prior to that, it was always just on the horizon.

And now, [at the very last moment](#), when we thought we might see the end of the road at last, we find that the home secretary has chosen to stand in our way. What are we supposed to make of this?

I urge the home secretary to stand aside. You say you want to review the report over concerns relating to the Human Rights Act and national security. You know you have made no preparations for any such review, because none were ever envisaged on your part. You have said you understand how we feel and you don’t wish to compromise the integrity or the independence of the panel and its work. If this is true, we see no reason for you not to desist immediately, so that the panel’s report can be published as it stands, without any further delay.

And I urge the DMIP to take whatever steps are in its power to stand up to the home secretary, to ensure that its independence and integrity are not compromised.

My family have endured enough words, suffering, waiting and pain: the only currency left with any value to us is action that brings our torture to an end.

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OpinionHomelessness

Hidden UK homelessness is about to get much worse, with Covid support being cut

[Freya Marshall Payne](#)

From 1 June landlords will be able to evict tenants – a particular concern for women hit by a ‘shecession’ during the pandemic



‘Despite the eviction ban being in place until 31 May, evictions from private rentals are already on the rise illegally.’ Photograph: Matthew Chattle/REX/Shutterstock

‘Despite the eviction ban being in place until 31 May, evictions from private rentals are already on the rise illegally.’ Photograph: Matthew Chattle/REX/Shutterstock

Sat 22 May 2021 03.00 EDT

Rough sleeping is the most extreme and visible experience of poverty and injustice in the UK. So, a year ago, when the pandemic hit and people were advised to “stay home”, the vulnerability and visibility of people on the streets forced the government to roll out its [Everyone In](#) scheme. It showed what campaigners have long known to be true: that rough sleeping could be ended if there was a consistent political will.

[Councils can house those not entitled to support in pandemic, high court rules](#)

[Read more](#)

Since then, the government has given the appearance of shifting its attitude towards rough sleeping. They [proposed](#) replacing the Vagrancy Act – which has criminalised both rough sleeping and begging since the early 19th century – with legislation that reflects the “compassionate society that this government is committed to as we build back better”. But the recent Queen’s speech failed to make good on this commitment. In fact, the speech neglected homelessness and the insecurity faced by private renters in favour of stoking a housebuilding boom, which will further exacerbate the housing and homelessness crisis.

Currently, the act means that people experiencing homelessness have been issued £1,000 fines and criminal records simply for having nowhere else to live, [even during the pandemic](#). The communities secretary, Robert Jenrick, who is responsible for the act’s review and any reform, has [said](#) that the government will assess “whether more appropriate legislation could be brought forward to preserve elements of the act that if removed, may otherwise hamper the ability of the police to deal with certain behaviours”. This is deeply worrying. We already have local council powers aimed at tackling “antisocial behaviour” – including putting up tents, street culture and begging – known as Public Space Protection Orders (PSPOs); and they too are [implemented](#) to [criminalise](#) homelessness.

Recent legislation points in a similarly dangerous direction. Only last month, the government released [new rules](#) that make sleeping rough and begging grounds for the Home Office to deny or revoke foreign nationals’ right to remain. Earlier this year, Priti Patel’s overhaul [revived](#) shelved plans to deport foreign nationals who are sleeping rough. That programme, rather

terrifyingly named the Rough Sleeping Support Service, should serve as a warning to all of the government's willingness to co-opt the language of support, and the boundaries it is willing to establish around who should receive help.

Rough sleeping is only the tip of the iceberg that is Britain's homelessness crisis, the majority of which still goes unseen. Hidden homelessness includes rough sleepers never officially counted by the ministry of housing, communities and local government but also people sofa-surfing, crammed into overcrowded private rentals without their own space, squatting, living in vehicles, starting new relationships or staying in abusive relationships to keep a roof over their heads.

The latest governmental homelessness and rough sleeping [data](#) signals that the pandemic has already increased hidden homelessness, and that it will get worse. Despite the eviction ban being in place until 31 May, evictions from private rentals – the [primary cause](#) of homelessness – are already on the rise illegally, as recent polling [revealed](#). Come 1 June, evictions are expected to soar, and the new [Renters' Reform Coalition](#) is calling for changes to the law to protect private renters who have built up arrears during the pandemic from homelessness.

Women's homelessness is overwhelmingly "hidden" – from the city streets, but also the cultural imagination, policy and provision. Frontline charity workers [warn](#) that the long-term effects of the pandemic on women and their children have yet to be seen, but short-term effects are already dire. Domestic violence and relationship breakdowns are the leading causes of women's homelessness and today we are facing a ["shadow pandemic of domestic violence"](#). Research by Women's Aid found that women simultaneously experienced more severe abuse during the UK lockdowns and [struggled](#) to access refuges, partly due to rising demand, and social distancing measures that reduced the number of beds available.

We are also seeing a ["shecession"](#), with women furloughed and laid off at higher numbers than their male counterparts, which is exacerbating the existing [gender housing-affordability gap](#). Combined Homelessness and Information Network [reports](#) show more women being counted on the streets

than usual and, because we know that many women sleeping rough carefully hide themselves for safety, numbers will be higher.

We do not yet know what that replacement to the Vagrancy Act will look like and all signs point to this being neither the complete decriminalisation of rough sleeping we urgently need, nor a suitable Covid recovery solution to the homelessness crisis.

Any recovery ought to involve comprehensive action to counter inequality: [building social housing](#) and introducing long-term eviction prevention policies so that everyone can access long-term housing; regulating the private rental market so that it is affordable to all and that tenants' rights are respected; minimum income guarantees; and strengthening public services and the welfare system.

Most importantly, these cannot be seen as separate issues; housing, social work and domestic abuse need to be integrated at the policy and provision levels, especially if women in hidden homelessness situations are to be supported. Strengthening the welfare state, for example, would also help tackle today's "shecession", since women are over-represented in the public sector. In these ways, "building back better" should address the structural inequalities that have always led to homelessness and which have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

- Freya Marshall Payne is a writer and researcher. She is currently exploring women's experiences of homelessness for her doctorate at the University of Oxford.

OpinionFreedom of speech

The ‘free speech’ law will make university debate harder, not easier

David Renton

Under the proposed bill, any lecture, seminar or guest speech could end up in a lawsuit



A University of Manchester building. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

A University of Manchester building. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Sat 22 May 2021 05.00 EDT

The government has published its [higher education \(freedom of speech\) bill](#). Under it, universities will have a new duty to secure freedom of speech for staff members, students and visiting speakers. Anyone (“a person”) will be able to sue (“bring civil proceedings”) where they believe that a university

or student union has failed to protect free speech. An official with the Orwellian title of “director for freedom of speech and academic freedom” will have to decide if courses, talks and university policies maintain academic freedom.

It is not wrong to think that free speech is often threatened. But much of the intimidation in recent years has come from Conservatives and the right. Take the equalities minister [publicly criticising a journalist](#) for doing their job. Or the culture secretary [intervening](#) in the curatorial decisions of museums.

As for the university sector, in 2019, Warwick lecturer Dr Goldie Osuri was accused of telling students: “The idea that the Labour party is antisemitic is very much an Israeli lobby kind of idea.” This year, Conservative MP Jonathan Gullis (a man who signed a letter that [made](#) use of the trope “cultural Marxism”) [said that](#) not just Osuri but the staff who investigated her and even her vice-chancellor all “need to go”.

In 2020, the Daily Mail newspaper published a story accusing a Cambridge professor, Priyamvada Gopal, of inciting racism. Later, it admitted it had libelled her, apologised and paid her £25,000 in [compensation](#). The conservative commentator Douglas Murray argued, in relation to a tweet that Gopal had authored, that only her race protected her from [dismissal](#).

[Campus free speech law in England ‘likely to have opposite effect’](#)
[Read more](#)

There is no limit to the range of orders that can be sought under the government’s new bill. Under it, Osuri or Gopal could sue their universities requiring them to say that free speech was absolute and the university would not dismiss them. (It would not give either lecturer any protection against Conservative MPs lobbying for their dismissal.)

But the bill empowers a much wider group of people than lecturers. It is almost unique in British law in the breadth of its provision. Compare, for example, our rules on judicial review: if someone wants to challenge a decision of government they must have “standing” – they must be affected by the decision they challenge. But in the bill there is no standing requirement. Any person, any business, any campaign can sue.

Think of what this will do to ministers' other policies: for example, their insistence that universities must implement the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) definition of antisemitism. Critics argue that the definition prohibits criticisms of Israel. If the bill is passed, then any university that has adopted the IHRA definition would be making themselves vulnerable to being sued – by a student, a lecturer, by anyone – for an order requiring the university to rewrite its policies and permit absolute free speech.

Isn't it a good thing if anyone can sue? Not if the result is that every lecture, every seminar, every guest speech could end up in court action. In civil litigation, the loser must pay the winning side's costs. The law is always, therefore, more attractive to the sorts of public campaigns that can find a wealthy sponsor to pay the bills if they lose.

Given the context in which it has emerged, the bill is clearly intended to protect rightwing campaigns, giving them a right to threaten universities in two ways at once. They will use the bill as a shield, demanding that their own speech is protected. They will use it as a sword, complaining that any radical speech is an attack on them.

If the bill passes then every time a university celebrates International Women's Day there will be men's rights organisations insisting that the university platform them, too. Every historian found to be teaching a course on the slave trade will give rise to demands that another lecture is provided, prioritising the slave owners' view.

The civil servants who drafted the consultation for the bill took the view that all speech should be allowed so long as it was speech that the speaker supported. Equality law, [they argued](#), agreed with them in favour of the maximum possible speech: "A speaking event where the content has been clearly advertised in advance is unlikely to constitute harassment if attenders attend with prior knowledge of the views likely to be expressed."

This assumes that speakers at controversial events will push a certain distance and no further. But the past few years have seen university events with provocateurs such as Milo Yiannopoulos, in the US, [who during a 2016 speech mocked a trans student](#), and at a 2017 event encouraged attenders to

call immigration enforcement on local undocumented people, even publicising the phone number. Is this the kind of free speech that we need protected?

The legislation creates a director for freedom of speech and academic freedom tasked with maintaining academic freedom in universities. Maintaining a university community in which as many people as possible get to speak requires tact, political sophistication, and the ability to see each individual event and the people protesting against it on their own terms.

Ministers may pretend that they have the skills to choose a free speech tsar who is capable of giving universities the right advice. But what we have seen from the Conservatives' other appointments is a determination to bring the public sector under one-party control, with fellow travellers put forward for roles in the [BBC](#), [EHRC](#) and [Ofcom](#).

Would the new director for freedom have the independence of mind to reprimand Jonathan Gullis when he called for Osuri's dismissal? To ask the question is to answer it. This will be a conservative appointee who will see their job as being to discipline people associated with the left, and to promote the narrow demands of rightwing culture warriors.

- David Renton is a campaigner and barrister. His next book is [No Free Speech for Fascists: Exploring 'No Platform' in History, Law and Politics](#)

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/22/the-free-speech-law-will-make-university-debate-harder-not-easier>

[Hadley Freeman's Weekend column](#)[Nancy Mitford](#)

There's nothing guilty about the pleasure I get from TV shows by women, for women

[Hadley Freeman](#)



Male reactions to Nancy Mitford's *The Pursuit Of Love* aren't just about sexism. They're also about fear



Lily James and Emily Beecham in The Pursuit Of Love. Photograph: Robert/Theodora Films & Moonage Pictures Ltd/BBC

Lily James and Emily Beecham in The Pursuit Of Love. Photograph: Robert/Theodora Films & Moonage Pictures Ltd/BBC

Sat 22 May 2021 04.00 EDT

Tomorrow night, the final part of the latest adaptation of Nancy Mitford's [The Pursuit Of Love](#) will screen on the BBC, but it is imperative you do not watch it. Or, if you do, you absolutely must hate everything about it: the characters, the author, the author's family and – most of all – everyone who enjoys any and especially all of the above. A man has decreed it must be so: “I demand an end to the glorification of these six dead posh women and their dysfunctional, unpleasant, and largely fascist family,” historian [Guy Walters wrote](#) – nay, *demand*ed – last week when promoting his [feature for the Daily Mail](#), which argued, well, that, for a further 600 or so words. Walters bemoaned the popularity of these “overvenerated, overrated and overprivileged women” because, ugh, is there anything worse than women who are loved too much? “Mitford moonies always take exception to the application of the f-word [fascist] to the family, but the unpalatable fact is that many of them were a bunch of sordid fascists, and those who weren't were either communist or politically apathetic,” Walters writes.

As a fully paid-up Mitford moonie, I don't know which members of the tribe Walters has been talking to but, believe me, they are not representative. We are very aware of the political predilections of the Mitford sisters, and that's exactly why we're fascinated by them. Otherwise, they'd be just another posh family; with two Nazis (Diana, Unity) and one communist (Decca) among the sisters, they are thrillingly *sui generis*, bewilderingly headstrong, extraordinarily extraordinary. Shock announcement: women don't have to be likable or even admirable to be interesting. They can be awkward, complex, inconsistent, morally dubious, frustrating, passionate and absurd. You know, the same things that make men interesting, too.

Alas, we don't even have the time to ask why a [book by Nancy](#) – neither a communist nor a fascist, and deeply in love as an adult with a Jewish hero of the French resistance – should be damned for the political affiliations of her sisters. (Although I'd actually far rather watch a show about the Mitfords' lives than another adaptation of Nancy's novel, but I'm awkward like that.) Note, also, my restraint in not pointing out the irony of an article in the Daily “[Hurrah for the Blackshirts](#)” Mail criticising others for their politics in the 1930s. Instead we can just file away this latest instalment in my ongoing series – magnum opus, even – entitled Men Explain Why Women Are Wrong To Like What They Like.

After Walters posted his article, he was inundated with [responses](#), largely from men, all of the “Good one, mate! Off to tell the wife why she's always been wrong about these posh birds” variety. Because it just so happens that those “Mitford moonies” tend to be women. There's a funny thing that happens with things that are largely favoured by women: they are treated as trash. Silly. Childish. “Guilty pleasures”, to use one of the most annoying phrases in the English language. We see this with fashion (which is dismissed in a way that, say, sport is not), with romantic comedies (which are sneered at in a way that, say, superhero movies are not) and with the Mitfords (who are written off as aristo Nazis in a way that [Evelyn Waugh](#), who was a dreadful snob, and [PG Wodehouse](#), who was accused in his time of being a Nazi collaborator, are not).

[I swore I'd never go camping. Now I'm toasting marshmallows – who even am I? | Hadley Freeman](#)
[Read more](#)

We especially see this with TV shows aimed at women. Earlier this year, I [tweeted](#) how “fascinating” (stupid) it is that [Sex And The City](#) – a show about a bunch of white women making jokes and shagging – is considered embarrassingly retro and borderline offensive, but *The Sopranos* – a show about a bunch of white men killing each other – is considered an untouchable classic. Well! The howl of outrage was so great that a friend in New York called to tell me I was “trending in America”. (I broke America! Watch and learn, Robbie Williams!) Well, I guess the truth hurts. Yes, [The Sopranos](#) had brilliant writing, but it also featured multiple episodes about Tony suffering from the runs. And, yes, *Sex And The City* talked about anal sex and blowjobs, but also breast cancer, bankruptcy and infertility. But the latter was originally created by a woman, starred women and was made for women, and the former was created by a man, starred mainly men and is adored by men – women, too, yes, but it’s the male approval that is the key factor here.

This isn’t (just) about sexism – this is about fear. It’s fear of women enjoying things that have nothing to do with male approval. It’s fear of women getting the joke that some men don’t. And, most of all, it’s fear of women who are smart in a very specific way: [Nancy Mitford](#) may not have been accoladed like Waugh, but she understood the human heart much better. “The charm of your writing,” Waugh once wrote to her, “depends on your refusal to recognise a distinction between girlish chatter and literary language.” Her brilliance was to understand that there need be no distinction at all.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/22/nothing-guilty-about-the-pleasure-i-get-from-tv-shows-by-women-for-women>

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Democrats

Bloody bombing of Gaza puts Biden at odds with progressives in generational divide



Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian American member of Congress, has a frank discussion with Joe Biden on the Tarmac of the airport in Detroit. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

Rashida Tlaib, the first Palestinian American member of Congress, has a frank discussion with Joe Biden on the Tarmac of the airport in Detroit. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

Cracks open in Democratic support for Israel as old guard in the party is challenged



[David Smith](#) in Washington

[@smithinamerica](#)

Sat 22 May 2021 02.00 EDT

With a giant Stars and Stripes and two gleaming cars at his back, Joe Biden turned to focus his remarks on one member of the audience. “From my heart, I pray that your grandmom and family are well,” [he told](#) Rashida Tlaib, the only Palestinian American in Congress. “I promise you, I’m going to do everything to see that they are, on the West Bank. You’re a fighter.”

It was a characteristic peace offering by the US president, even as protesters rallied outside the Ford plant in Dearborn, Michigan, and Tlaib herself challenged Biden over his unyielding support for Israel. But Tuesday’s gesture, and even [a Middle East ceasefire declared](#) on Thursday, may not be enough to heal a growing rift in the Democratic party.

[‘A radical change’: America’s new generation of pro-Palestinian voices](#)
[Read more](#)

Biden’s first hundred days as president were striking for their rare display of Democratic unity, pleasantly surprising the left with his ambitions for government spending, racial justice and the climate crisis. Alexandria

Ocasio-Cortez, a congresswoman from New York, said his administration [“definitely exceeded expectations](#) that progressives had”.

Even when a crack appeared last month over Biden’s plan to retain former president Donald Trump’s cap on the number of refugees allowed into the US, [the White House backed down](#) within hours after fierce blowback from progressives and harmony was restored.

But Israel’s bombing campaign against Hamas in the heavily populated Gaza Strip, which killed 65 children over 11 days, was of a different magnitude. It exposed a generational and political [divide in the party](#) that cannot be so easily bridged.

On one side are Biden, 78, the Senate majority leader Chuck Schumer, 78, House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, 81, and House majority leader, Steny Hoyer, 81, all of whom grew up in a political era when reflexive support for Israel was axiomatic. [Hoyer said this week:](#) “We must not allow extremists to hijack important discussions about securing a better future for Israelis and Palestinians by promoting a false narrative.”

On the other side is “the Squad”, progressive members of Congress and people of colour who include Tlaib and Ocasio-Cortez (both called Israel an “apartheid state”), Ilhan Omar of Minnesota (who described Israeli airstrikes as “terrorism”) and Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts ([who tweeted](#) “We can’t stand idly by when the United States government sends \$3.8 billion of military aid to Israel that is used to demolish Palestinian homes, imprison Palestinian children and displace Palestinian families”).



Protesters gather and demand that Jerusalem stop expelling Palestinian people from Israel at Israel's embassy in Washington this week. Photograph: Tasos Katopodis/UPI/Rex/Shutterstock

The generation gap reflects a broader trend among the US population. [John Zogby](#), a pollster, notes considerably more sympathy for Palestinians among voters under 40 than those over 60. "Older folks are able to conjure up the original legend of David Ben-Gurion [Israel's first prime minister] and the wars of 1967 and 1973," he said. "Voters under 40 conjure up Benjamin Netanyahu [Israel's current prime minister], the intifada and now several bombings in Gaza."

Youth is not the only force moving the Democratic party's centre of gravity. On Thursday the leftwing senator Bernie Sanders, 79, [introduced a resolution](#) blocking a \$735m weapons sale to Israel while his colleague Elizabeth Warren, 71, welcomed the ceasefire [but urged Biden](#) to press for a two-state agreement "that starts with taking all appropriate steps to end the occupation".

Several pro-Israel members of Congress [also raised questions](#) in recent days, a sign that, while backing for Israel's right to self-defense remains rock solid, skepticism about its government's treatment of the Palestinians is no longer taboo. The fact that "the Squad's" scathing comments went

unrebuked spoke volumes about how much has changed in a few short years.

[Logan Bayroff](#), a spokesperson for J Street, a liberal Jewish American lobby group, said: “There are shifts and you see it on the left side of the spectrum with vocal and unapologetic Palestinian rights advocacy from the likes of AOC [Ocasio-Cortez] and others but you also see it reflected across a large swath of the party.

“What is notable is that we’re still not seeing that reflected in terms of policy or rhetoric from the Biden administration. I think this is less one half the party versus the other and it’s more Congress pushing in one direction and the administration not following as of yet.”

Activists and analysts suggest that various push and pull factors are at work. Netanyahu’s [ostentatious alliance](#) with Trump, whom he praised for moving the US embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv, makes him a singularly unsympathetic figure for Democrats. Netanyahu fiercely opposed Barack Obama’s nuclear deal with Iran, which Trump scrapped but Biden is seeking to revive.



Donald Trump’s identification with the policies of Benjamin Netanyahu have weighed more heavily with younger Democrats than historic ties with

Israel. Photograph: Ahmad Gharabli/AFP/Getty Images

Bayroff added: “When you have an Israeli leader who has identified himself so closely with the ideology, rhetoric and tactics of rightwing ethnonationalism and has explicitly echoed Donald Trump and Trumpism – as well as aligning himself with other illiberal democracies and leaders like Orbán and Bolsonaro and Modi – that’s the antithesis of the pluralistic, diverse liberal democracy that most Democratic voters and an increasing number of Americans are supporting. So that is going to lead to a collision.”

Meanwhile a new generation of Americans, [including Jewish Americans](#), have grown up with a heightened consciousness of social justice movements. [Sanders and others](#) have compared the Palestinian struggle to Black Lives Matter and want to apply domestic principles to foreign policy.

Bayroff added: “We’re seeing an overall push in all aspects of American politics and policy from a rising generation and a lot of voters to centre human rights, dignity and equality and equal treatment and social justice for all people. When they see a 54-year occupation and a system where Palestinians have a different set of rules and don’t get to vote for their own government and face a different legal system than their settler neighbours, that is something that people reject and want to see the US work to end.”

But some [Democrats](#) who support racial justice causes are nevertheless uneasy with the comparison.

[Ron Klein](#), chair of the Jewish Democratic Council of America, said: “We made it clear to our friends in Black Lives Matter and various civil rights organisations we’re on the same team. The Palestinian issues are a separate set of issues. Don’t conflate the two, they’re totally different, and that is not part of the formal Black Lives Matter movement.”

Klein believes “the Squad’s” recent statements have gone too far. “I think that they’re wrong,” he continued. “They’re entitled to their opinion as elected members of Congress but they’re taking a lot of their information out of context. I’m not here to suggest that Israel always does the right things but Israel is a very strategic ally to the United States.”



Palestinians return to their houses which were destroyed by the Israeli military, in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip, on Friday. Photograph: APImages/Rex/Shutterstock

Still, the political and social upheaval of recent years has shaken many old certainties about crossing lines once perceived as uncrossable. Democrats who may have long harboured doubts about Israeli policy, but bit their lip because of assumed political risks, now feel at liberty to speak out.

Peter Beinart, editor-at-large of Jewish Currents, [tweeted](#): “The reason the American debate over Israel-Palestine could shift dramatically and quickly is that many Democratic politicians don’t need to be convinced that what Israel is doing is wrong. They just need to be convinced that they can say so without hurting their careers.”

Biden, who has impressed many young liberals with his bold agenda, finally seems to have [run into an issue](#) where old, cautious habits die hard. However, with Democrats holding only narrow majorities in both the House and Senate, “the Squad” might be deterred from causing a serious split over a foreign policy issue when so much is at stake on the home front.

[Max Berger](#), editorial director of the liberal group More Perfect Union, said: “I think it’s very unlikely that this portends any kind of significant rupture in

the Democratic coalition but it does open up a question: will the White House be as responsive to progressives on foreign policy as they have been on domestic policy? The honest answer is, we'll see.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/22/democratic-party-israel-palestine-biden-progressives>

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Coal

Richest nations agree to end support for coal production overseas

G7 countries reaffirm commitment to limit global heating to 1.5C after nearly two days of wrangling



Children play by the beach near a coal power plant in Java. Photograph: Kemal Jufri/Greenpeace

Children play by the beach near a coal power plant in Java. Photograph: Kemal Jufri/Greenpeace

[*Fiona Harvey*](#) *Environment correspondent*

Fri 21 May 2021 11.17 EDT

The world's richest nations have agreed to end their financial support for coal development overseas, in a major step towards phasing out the dirtiest fossil fuel.

After nearly two days of wrangling at a meeting of the [G7](#) environment and energy ministers, hosted virtually by the UK on Thursday and Friday, all reaffirmed their commitment to limiting global heating to 1.5C, and committed to phasing out coal and fully decarbonising their energy sectors in the 2030s.

Japan, one of the world's biggest sources of finance for coal power, along with China, held out on agreeing to stop helping to build until the final stages of the two-day virtual meeting. Japan's government raised concerns that if it halted the financing, China would step in and build coal-fired power plants overseas that were less efficient than Japanese designs.

The other G7 members – the UK, the US, the EU, France, Italy, Germany, and Canada – were all united in calling for an end to such financing. The rich countries that make up the G7, along with other major non-G7 economies such as China and South Korea, have played a major role in the past in financing fossil fuel development in poorer countries. Japan, China and South Korea in particular have offered to help build coal-fired power plants in cash-strapped developing countries.

However, the International Energy Agency said earlier this week that [all new developments of fossil fuels must end this year](#) to give the world a good chance of keeping within the 1.5C limit. A recent [increase in the use of coal](#), after last year's lockdowns around the world, is largely responsible for what is forecast by the global energy watchdog to be the [second biggest rise in emissions on record](#) this year.

[Milestones to net zero CO₂ carbon emissions in 2050](#)

John Kerry, the US climate envoy, said the US was determined to bring forward policies consistent with keeping within a temperature rise of 1.5C above pre-industrial levels, including phasing out coal. Referring to the IEA advice, he said the US would phase out unabated coal-fired power, which means power stations without technology to capture and store carbon dioxide.

Kerry said: "I will strongly recommend to the president that this is a policy that we should pursue ... But I guarantee that we will be completely

consistent with 1.5C. 1.5C governs the choices we have to make in the next 10 years. Any decision has to be within that framework.”

He said the G7 decision to affirm a 1.5C temperature limit, which according to scientists will require a halving of greenhouse gas emissions this decade as well as reaching net zero emissions by 2050, marked the first time that the countries had made such a commitment and was a major step forward. The 2015 Paris agreement requires countries to hold temperature rises “well below” 2C above pre-industrial levels, with a 1.5C limit as an aspiration.

“[There was] a greater sense of urgency than I have felt in G7 countries as a unit,” he said.

Barbara Pompili, France’s environment minister, said: “I am delighted that an agreement could be found regarding a key aspect of our G7 communique: the absolute end of new direct government support for international coal power generation. It gives a very strong signal to the world that coal is an energy of the past and has no place in our future energy mix. It sets the stage for a radical transition towards clean energy.

“That was a difficult decision for Japan in particular, and I am very pleased that Japan was able to take this decisive step.”

South Korea, another major source of finance for coal-fired power generation overseas, has already agreed to end the practice. That leaves China as the biggest source of such finance in developing countries.

China will now be keenly watched ahead of [Cop26](#), the vital UN climate talks to be hosted by the UK in Glasgow this November. The world’s biggest emitter has [yet to produce a national plan](#) for curbing greenhouse gas emissions by 2030, called a [nationally determined contribution](#) (NDC) and an essential part of any deal at Glasgow.

Amina Mohammed, deputy secretary-general of the UN, told the meeting: “We are running out of time to bend the emissions curve and cut emissions by 45% globally by 2030 and that’s from 2010 levels. This means all main emitters must deliver enhanced NDCs this year with concrete and credible targets that we can follow through to 2030. Important investments in the

targets we set for 2030 will determine the outcome of credibility of the 2050 targets. And it means no new coal starting now, phasing out coal in OECD countries by 2030, and in the rest of the world by 2040.”

[The world is moving away from fossil fuels, while in Australia, it's all systems go for coal and gas | Bill Hare](#)

[Read more](#)

The UK, which holds the rotating presidency of the G7 this year, as well as hosting the Cop26 summit, has also [called on all countries to phase out coal for power generation](#). However, its efforts have been overshadowed by a row over a [possible new coalmine](#) in Cumbria, now the subject of a [public inquiry](#).

The G7 communique contains a caveat, the Guardian understands, at the behest of the Japanese government, that would allow financing for coal in “limited circumstances at the discretion of each country”. It is understood this will only be used in exceptional circumstances.

The draft text reads: “We commit to promoting the increased international flow of public and private capital toward Paris Agreement-aligned investments and away from high-carbon power generation to support the clean energy transition in developing countries. In this context, we will phase out new direct government support for carbon-intensive international fossil fuel energy, except in limited circumstances at the discretion of each country, in a manner that is consistent with an ambitious, clearly defined pathway towards climate neutrality in order to keep 1.5C within reach, in line with the long-term objectives of the Paris Agreement and best available science.

“Consistent with this overall approach and recognising that continued global investment in unabated coal generation is incompatible with keeping 1.5C within reach, we stress that international investments in unabated coal must stop now and commit to take concrete steps towards an absolute end to new direct government support for unabated international thermal coal power generation by the end of 2021, including through Official Development Assistance, export finance, investment, and financial and trade promotion support.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/may/21/richest-nations-agree-to-end-support-for-coal-production-overseas>

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Wind power

May gales help Britain set record for wind power generation

In early hours of Friday, windfarm turbines provided nearly two-thirds of Britain's electricity



An engineering vessel among the EDF offshore windfarm at Teesport, England. Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

An engineering vessel among the EDF offshore windfarm at Teesport, England. Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

[Julia Kollewe](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 11.15 EDT

Powerful gusts of wind sweeping across Britain have helped the country reach a new all-time high for electricity generated from wind turbines.

A new record was set in the early hours of Friday for the share of wind power in the generation mix, with wind providing nearly two-thirds of Britain's electricity, according to provisional data from [National Grid](#).

Between 2am and 3am, wind was contributing 62.5% to Britain's electricity mix, beating the [previous record](#) of 59.9% from August last year, when gale-force winds brought by storms Ellen and Francis hit the country.

As the blustery weather buffeted the UK, there were several periods between 10pm on Thursday night and early Friday morning when wind was contributing more than 60% for the first time.

The amount of electricity generated from wind in the UK hovered around 16.3 gigawatts on Friday, after [hitting a record 17.6GW](#) on the bank holiday in early May. So far this month, wind makes up 18% of the electricity mix, below the 20% recorded in May last year, but much higher than the levels seen in May in previous years.

The Met Office issued a [yellow warning for wind](#) for Wales and southern England through Friday, with the strongest winds expected in the south-west with gusts between 50-60mph in coastal areas and 45-50mph inland. BBC Weather warned of [gusts of up to 78mph](#).

New milestones for wind power generation have been hit several times in the past year. On Boxing Day, when Storm Bella brought gusts of up to 100mph, [wind provided 50.7%](#) of Britain's electricity, sustaining high levels for 24 hours.

[2020 was the greenest year](#) on record for Britain's electricity system, when average carbon intensity – the measure of carbon dioxide emissions per unit of electricity consumed – reached a new low, according to National Grid.

An independent climate thinktank, Ember, said the UK's renewable electricity [outpaced its fossil fuel generation](#) for the first time last year and could remain the largest source of electricity in the future. It revealed that renewable energy generated by wind, sunlight, water and wood made up 42% of the UK's electricity last year compared with 41% generated from gas and coal plants together.

The UK is also on track for its [wettest May on record](#) after a very dry April, with further heavy rain and forecast this weekend, while the strong winds are forecast to ease on Saturday.

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[US news](#)

‘People feel safer’: some Americans still masking up despite CDC guidance

Some believe face coverings will stretch beyond the immediate pandemic in the US as confusion surrounding mask mandates persists



A person wearing a face mask stands in front of a sign explaining how to wear one properly in Grand Central Terminal in New York City. Photograph: Erik Pendzich/Rex/Shutterstock

A person wearing a face mask stands in front of a sign explaining how to wear one properly in Grand Central Terminal in New York City. Photograph: Erik Pendzich/Rex/Shutterstock

[Gloria Oladipo](#)

Sat 22 May 2021 05.00 EDT

For many Americans, when the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [announced](#) that fully vaccinated people do not need to wear a mask

in most indoor or outdoor settings, the news was met with enthusiasm, a sign that the Covid-19 pandemic was coming to an end.

But, despite an official green light for many to go maskless, amid confusion surrounding mask mandates, some Americans are choosing to mask up for the foreseeable future.

[Relief, reluctance and confusion: New Yorkers react to mask-free guidance](#)
[Read more](#)

“I will be wearing my mask indoors, unless I’m eating in a well-ventilated restaurant, but if I’m going shopping or whatever, I will be wearing my mask,” said Laur Kim, 21, who is currently a student.

Now some believe mask-wearing in America may also stretch beyond the immediate pandemic. Motivated by a range of reasons – from confusion and distrust of the CDC guidelines to newly appreciated health benefits of mask-wearing – some vaccinated people have decided to continue wearing a mask for now, with many planning to incorporate masks into their post-pandemic way of life.

Wearing masks has been heralded as a needed tool to limit the transmission of Covid-19, especially as research early in the pandemic showed asymptomatic people could spread the virus. Yet, despite their importance, mask mandates have been a repeated source of contention in the US, [prompting protests](#) and regular clashes between “anti-maskers” and [those enforcing mask mandates](#).

Now, alongside celebration is confusion on repeated rewrites of mask-wearing policy. Before the most recent update, the CDC had advised that vaccinated people could be maskless outdoors, but [still needed to wear a mask in public indoor spaces](#). Before that, in February, Dr Anthony Fauci, the top US infectious diseases expert, stated that it was “possible” that [masks would have to be worn until February 2022](#).

Confusion has also been exacerbated as states, cities and municipalities have varying mask mandate policies, with stricter states like Hawaii [upholding their mask mandate](#) versus more relaxed rules in Alabama, [where the mask](#)

[mandate was lifted weeks ago](#). Businesses big and small too have been thrown into the confusing mix, with some following guidelines to allow the unmasked, and others not.

The newest CDC policy also creates separate mask rules for vaccinated and unvaccinated people, with unvaccinated people still expected to mask. Mandating different mask policies, while questionably practical, has also created more confusion, with Fauci admitting that [many unvaccinated Americans misunderstood the distinction](#).

“To be honest, I was actually surprised when the guidance said, ‘Vaccinated people can do this. Unvaccinated people can do this.’ The reason is that that can cause confusion. It has caused confusion,” said Dr Monica Gandhi, an infectious disease doctor and professor of medicine at University of California, San Francisco.

With most Americans being unaware of the scientific justifications behind changing guidelines, seemingly conflicting information, [especially recommendations that get reversed](#), can increase the public’s mistrust in public health authorities.

“I think people get tired of hearing scientists go back and forth on recommendations. That reduces trust in public health advice and evidence

Dr Ethan Walker

“I think people get tired of hearing scientists go back and forth on recommendations. That reduces trust in public health advice and evidence. That’s my worry,” said Dr Ethan Walker, an epidemiologist and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Montana.

With varying perceptions on mask protocol, many have continued wearing masks to protect the safety and comfort of others. Even as vaccine rollout continues, [the majority of Americans are not fully vaccinated](#) and many, [due to underlying health conditions](#), cannot receive a dose. Frontline workers, such as waiters or cashiers, are also left vulnerable if people are maskless, given that it’s difficult to gauge someone’s vaccination status in real time.

“[With the pandemic], you’re thinking more about others and protecting others. A lot of my peers feel that way and I hope that that’s a lesson that we [all] get out of this pandemic,” said Ella Knibb, 20, who is a student.

After being in the pandemic, mask-wearing has also become normalized. Despite some disdain for masks and loosened restrictions, the majority of Americans [wear a mask anytime they leave the house](#). As mask-wearing is still expected, some people wear masks to avoid judgment or confrontation from others.

Zhiyeng Zhu, 26, a PhD student, doesn’t plan on wearing a mask outside, but has noted that he will continue wearing them in hospitals, around the elderly and around other masked people. “If there’s social pressure, where you’re entering into a space with lots of people wearing masks, you might want to avoid conflict and then you have to wear [a] mask,” said Zhu.

Mask-wearing has had another silver lining: limiting the spread of respiratory illnesses, such as the common cold or flu, and curbing exposure to air pollution.

As Covid-19 surged this past year, [the flu practically vanished](#), though scientists do not know what specific public health practices helped the flu disappear. Mask-wearing as an independent, isolated factor that can protect against transmission of the flu is still being studied, but researchers have found that wearing a mask [can limit the amount of cold or influenza virus a person discharges](#).

“Normally, in a year, I get three or four colds. This year I’ve had none, so I think even if a mask isn’t necessary [for] Covid any more, I wouldn’t be surprised if people start to wear one when they have a cold because, the fact that a lot of people have gotten less colds shows how effective it is,” said Odeya Rosenband, 20, who is a student.

Masks are also being used by some as a way to stay comfortable and limit exposure to pollution. While masking is not a permanent solution to air pollution’s impact on human health, Walker discussed how well-fitting, quality masks, such as N95s, can help reduce exposure to some pollutants

like wildfire particles. “Any little incremental improvement we can get could potentially have large impacts on human health,” said Walker.

Even as the new CDC guidelines caught some off guard, Gandhi and Walker both shared their approval of the science that justified the lifted restrictions on mask wearing, with Gandhi calling the decision “scientifically sound”. Overall, the decision of some to continue wearing a mask is one that makes sense given the tenuous nature of this past year.

“A lot of the reason that even vaccinated people are wearing masks is that it’s hard to completely imbibe this data. It feels really scary. We’ve come off a really anxious time ... people are traumatized and they feel safer with the mask. And I think that’s absolutely fine,” said Gandhi.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/may/22/us-mask-guidance-cdc-pandemic-future>

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- [Live UK Covid: Priti Patel vows to step up quarantine checks on people returning from amber countries](#)
- [Coronavirus Ministers consider diluting plan to relax rules as India variant surges](#)
- [Vaccine Labour: UK must 'get off the fence' over global access](#)
- [Education Focus on preschools during recovery, ministers told](#)

[Politics live with Andrew Sparrow](#)
[Coronavirus](#)

UK Covid: India variant case numbers rise to 3,424 – up 160% over past week – as it happened

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[Coronavirus](#)

Ministers consider diluting plan to relax Covid rules as India variant surges

Health secretary indicates plans for ‘freedom day’ in England on 21 June could be knocked off track

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Members of a testing team wait for people to arrive for swab tests in Bedford. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty

Members of a testing team wait for people to arrive for swab tests in Bedford. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty

[Jessica Elgot](#), [Heather Stewart](#), [Peter Walker](#)

Wed 19 May 2021 15.03 EDT

Ministers are considering diluting plans for “freedom day” in England on 21 June and delaying the end of all social distancing rules, as new figures showed another sharp increase in the Covid variant first detected in India.

The health secretary, [Matt Hancock](#), said no announcement would be made until 14 June on whether all restrictions would be lifted a week later, as planned.

“We’ve always known that one of the things that has the potential to knock us off track would be a new variant,” he said. “That’s why we made the presence of a new variant that could do that one of our four tests when we set out the roadmap, which is the test we must pass for going down each step.”

Meanwhile, he said, the government was “throwing everything” at speeding up testing and vaccinations in Bolton, Blackburn and six newly affected areas.

The number of confirmed cases of the variant B.1.617.2 uncovered in the UK had risen to 2,967, the health secretary said. That was up by 28% in just two days, from 2,323 on Monday.

The true number may be higher, as genomic sequencing to confirm the presence of the variant takes several days. Public [Health](#) England said the most recent sample included in the 2,967 total was taken a week ago, on 12 May.

No 10 has still not lost hope of allowing all restrictions to lift on 21 June. Sources said there was now more optimism in government than there was a few days ago about the prospect of forging ahead with the roadmap as planned. Next week is expected to be the crucial deciding week to show how the variant may have spread and to assess its transmissibility.

Officials had explored whether using Covid certification in venues such as pubs and restaurants could help remove the need for social distancing, but ministers have now rejected that prospect. However, it may be used for venues which have not yet been allowed to open – such as nightclubs and arenas.

The delay in lifting rules on social distancing, mask-wearing and work from home guidance may mean in practice that little would change on 21 June, apart from the opening of some high-risk venues on the condition of prior vaccination or testing on entry.

Diluting the government's plans is likely to infuriate Conservative MPs who are adamant the prime minister must stick to his roadmap, which he called a "one way road to freedom", when he announced it in February.

Businesses such as pubs and restaurants are also keen to see distancing rules lifted urgently, to allow them to serve more customers.

The deputy chief medical officer, Prof Jonathan Van-Tam, said that "the data will begin to firm up sometime next week", giving a better picture of the threat posed by the virus.

"That will then feed into models that will help them to understand how this looks in terms of the future prospects in terms of resurgent disease, and from there ministers will be able to make further decisions," he said.

Van-Tam said it was a race against the virus to vaccinate as many people as possible. "The challenge that's ahead of us in the next two to three to four weeks is to make sure that we outrun the virus through really vigorous push on vaccine delivery and that is why when you are called, you must come forward and help us finish the job."

Hancock said six new areas had been identified by the government as potential hotspots for the variant, based on analysis of data including travel routes and tests on sewage.

He said testing and vaccinations would now be accelerated in Bedford, Burnley, Hounslow, Kirklees, Leicester and North Tyneside.

Van-Tam urged the public to be cautious in these areas, and not "rip the pants out of it", by overdoing new freedoms such as meeting up in pubs and restaurants. "I would advise the residents in those areas to think very carefully about the freedoms they have, weigh the risks, and be very

cautious,” he said, suggesting they meet outside, and in smaller groups, if possible.

[England lockdown end date ‘very much in the balance’, expert warns](#)
[Read more](#)

Hancock and Van-Tam also played down the likelihood of foreign holidays this summer, with the health secretary stressing that the public should only be travelling to the 170 or so amber list countries for exceptional reasons. The travel lists are due to be reviewed every three weeks.

“We have been absolutely crystal clear that you should not go to an amber or red list country on holiday,” the health secretary said, when asked why some ministers had hinted that people could travel simply to see friends.

Hancock also repeated his promise to holiday in the UK this summer.

The increasing prevalence of the variant has raised renewed questions about whether the government should have acted earlier in placing India on the red list of countries from which travel is largely banned – a decision that was not made until 23 April.

The prime minister’s spokesperson confirmed on Wednesday that direct flights from India continued to arrive in the UK. He said that was so that UK citizens could return safely, and stressed that they would be subject to the strict hotel quarantine regime on arrival.

Hancock said the government’s approach had been, “surging vaccines and testing”, in the affected areas, hailing the fact that across Blackburn with Darwen and Bolton, the NHS had delivered 26,094 jabs over the past week, as well as 75,000 tests.

Prof Neil Ferguson, a member of the government’s Scientific Pandemic Influenza Modelling Group (SPI-M), said on Wednesday that the final stage of lockdown easing appeared “very much in the balance”.

He said there was a “glimmer of hope” that the B.1.617.2 variant might be less transmissible than first feared but that it would take time to be sure.

Asked whether it was realistic for England to [emerge fully from lockdown on 21 June](#), Ferguson said: “I think that’s being actively considered. I think it’s very much in the balance. The data collected in the next two to three weeks will determine that.”

He said early data suggested vaccines protected against serious illness but may be less effective at stopping transmission of the [variant first detected in India](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/uk-cases-of-covid-indian-variant-up-28-in-two-days-says-hancock>

Coronavirus

Labour says UK must ‘get off the fence’ over global Covid vaccine access

Shadow trade secretary backs US call for patent waiver as party proposes plan to increase production in poorer countries

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People wait to receive their second dose of a coronavirus vaccine at a medical centre in Kolkata, India. Photograph: Debajyoti Chakraborty/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

People wait to receive their second dose of a coronavirus vaccine at a medical centre in Kolkata, India. Photograph: Debajyoti Chakraborty/NurPhoto/Rex/Shutterstock

[Larry Elliott](#) *Economics editor*

Thu 20 May 2021 01.00 EDT

The [Labour](#) party is urging Boris Johnson to lead a drive by rich countries to boost global Covid-19 vaccine production and is warning the threat from new coronavirus variants will persist without immediate action.

Five members of the shadow cabinet have written to the trade secretary, Liz Truss, with a proposed 10-point plan designed to increase the ability of poorer countries to manufacture and distribute treatments for the virus.

In an article for the Guardian the shadow trade secretary, Emily Thornberry, says Britain should “get off the fence” and back US demands for a [vaccine patent waiver](#), while stressing that changes to intellectual property rights will not solve the problem of limited vaccine coverage in Asia, Africa and Latin America on their own.

Pressure on rich countries such as Britain has mounted in recent weeks after the decision of Joe Biden to back a patent waiver, and the issue will come up at next month’s G7 summit in Cornwall, where the UK has put the global fight against Covid-19 on the agenda.

The former prime minister [Gordon Brown has called on the G7](#) to provide £20bn this year to ensure blanket vaccine coverage and Thornberry said it was time for the prime minister to show leadership.

“On one of the central issues, the proposed waiver of vaccine patents, British ministers have not just stayed on the fence in the debate, but kept entirely silent,” she says in her article.

“What they should be saying, as Labour has, is that those talks must move quickly towards concrete proposals, but with the understanding that – on its own – a waiver of patents will not fix this crisis.”

Britain has been the single biggest donor to [Covax](#) – the global vaccine initiative – but Thornberry said a plan was needed to make the world safer now and in the future.

The letter to Truss – also signed by the shadow foreign secretary, Lisa Nandy, shadow business secretary, Ed Miliband, shadow health secretary, Jonathan Ashworth, and shadow international development secretary, Preet

Kaur Gill – followed discussions with NGOs, scientists and other experts, Thornberry said.

Labour's proposal involves a global effort to identify and equip the dozens of new facilities required in key countries and regions around the world to undertake vaccine production, or fill and finish operations. The letter to Truss accepts that the upfront cost, while unspecified, will be substantial but says the investment will pay for itself.

“We propose the world's largest ever coordinated investment programme – in partnership with the pharmaceutical industry – to ensure that these new facilities have the skills, technology and supplies they need to enable the safe and efficient mass production of vaccines,” the letter says.

“So while the costs of financing this plan will doubtless be substantial, they must be weighed against the human, social and economic damage we will avoid if we can bring this current pandemic to a rapid end, and ensure it will never be repeated on the same scale.”

Guardian business email sign-up

Labour's 10-point plan includes proposals for production and procurement, the transfer of skills and expertise, global regulation of new treatments and an effort to develop oral vaccines.

Johnson will host the G7 in three weeks but the letter calls on the prime minister to act without delay. The idea that the countries attending the summit – the UK, the US, Germany, Italy, Japan, Canada and France – cannot insulate themselves from the pandemic has been reinforced in recent weeks by the arrival in the UK of a [variant of the virus first detected in India](#).

“The fact that Covid-19 is still killing thousands of people every day around the world is down entirely to the unacceptable and growing gulf between countries like ours where more than two-thirds of adults have had their first jab and many countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean where vaccination programmes have barely begun, and where billions of

people are therefore still left unprotected. We cannot let that inequity continue,” the letter says.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/20/labour-uk-global-covid-vaccine-access-patent-waiver>

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Early years education

Focus on preschools during Covid recovery, UK ministers urged

Sutton Trust warns schools in England will ‘pick up the pieces’ if early years are not prioritised

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No-parking signs outside a preschool in east London. Photograph: David Mbiyu/Sopa/Rex

No-parking signs outside a preschool in east London. Photograph: David Mbiyu/Sopa/Rex

[Sally Weale](#) *Education correspondent*

Thu 20 May 2021 01.00 EDT

Ministers are being urged to put early years at the heart of the education recovery programme, with a warning that schools in [England](#) will be left to “pick up the pieces” for years to come if preschool children are not prioritised.

The Sutton Trust education charity has called for increased rates of funding for the sector, saying: “The pandemic has reminded us how crucial the [early years](#) sector is for the functioning of our daily lives and our children’s futures. But it also laid bare the fragility of a sector which comprises many small and poorly funded private and voluntary providers, particularly those in less well-off areas.”

According to Labour, 2,000 childcare providers have closed since the start of the year alone.

[England’s nursery schools driven towards extinction, says survey](#)

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In a YouGov poll commissioned by the Sutton Trust, one in five (20%) of the 570 parents of two- to four-year-olds who took part said they felt the pandemic had had a negative impact on their child’s physical development.

A quarter said the same of their child’s language development, and just over half (52%) said their child’s social and emotional development had been negatively affected, and two-thirds (69%) felt that not being able to play with other children had had an adverse effect on their child.

The government is expected shortly to announce its long-term plans for education recovery and funding post-pandemic. It has already pledged £1.7bn for short-term catchup, including a £350m national tutoring programme providing one-to-one and small group tutoring for those most severely affected by the disruption to education.

Experts have said the government will need to spend [in the region of £13.5bn](#) to plug the gaps in pupils’ learning over a sustained period. Sir Peter Lampl, the founder and chair of the Sutton Trust, said the government’s recovery plan should be ambitious, long-term and focused on disadvantaged families.

“But as today’s polling shows, we cannot forget the youngest children. It is more important than ever that there is greater access to high-quality early education for younger children from poorer homes whose development is at risk of suffering the most,” he said.

Meanwhile, research from the Institute for Fiscal Studies found that 30% of the £4.3bn the government has committed to spend on education in England in response to the pandemic in 2020-22 is not new but comes from underspending or existing budgets.

Dr Luke Sibieta, an IFS research fellow and author of the briefing note, said: “Meeting the prime minister’s pledge to ensure ‘no child will be left behind’ as a result of the pandemic is likely to require spending in the tens of billions.”

A Department for Education spokesperson said the government had invested £18m to support language development in the early years. “We know the early years are the most crucial point of a child’s development, which is why we have prioritised them throughout the pandemic by keeping nurseries open,” they said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/may/20/focus-on-preschools-during-covid-recovery-uk-ministers-urged>

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- [India Stench of death as Ganges river swells with Covid victims](#)
- [Royal Mail Company posts £726m profit amid pandemic demand for parcels](#)
- [Sewage Monitoring being used to track India variant, says Hancock](#)
- [US Republicans flout mask requirement in House chamber](#)

Stench of death pervades rural India as Ganges swells with Covid victims

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/20/stench-death-pervades-rural-india-ganges-swells-covid-victims>

Royal Mail

Royal Mail posts £726m profit amid pandemic demand for parcels

Growth in online shopping during Covid outbreak fuels dramatic turnaround for delivery company

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Royal Mail's annual pre-tax profits quadrupled compared with the previous year's results. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

Royal Mail's annual pre-tax profits quadrupled compared with the previous year's results. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

[Mark Sweney](#)

[@marksweney](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 05.14 EDT

Royal Mail's annual profits quadrupled in its latest financial year as the pandemic-fuelled online shopping boom provided a surge in demand for parcel deliveries and triggered a turnaround in the company's fortunes.

Pre-tax profit jumped to £726m in the year to 28 March, compared with a profit of £180m a year earlier.

"This time last year we expected the UK business to be loss-making," said Simon Thompson, chief executive at Royal Mail. "A lot has changed in a year."

The company, [whose former chief executive Rico Back resigned last March](#) as management battled unions over a £1.8bn plan to revive the company's fortunes, has proved to be one of the major winners of the pandemic online shopping boom.

Revenues were up 16.6% to £12.6bn and the performance was driven by a 39% increase in parcels revenue, which more than offset a 12.5% decline in revenues from its letters delivery operation.

The performance of the company, which has seen its market value triple to £5.2bn over the last year, prompted a one-off 10p dividend payment, the first since January last year. Royal Mail also said that it is to introduce a new dividend policy at 20p a share from this financial year.

"Last year stood out as one of remarkable change at Royal Mail," said Thompson. "It has been challenging at times but we have learnt that we can deliver results and change at lightning pace when we are united by a common purpose."

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Royal Mail, which is tipped to make a return to the FTSE 100 in next month's quarterly market value-based reshuffle, said that trading remained strong in April, the first month of its new financial year. Revenues climbed 24% year-on-year, with parcel volumes falling 2% but addressed letter delivery up a quarter.

The company said it was difficult to give guidance on financial prospects for the current year because of “significant short-term uncertainty” over public health, and economic growth.

In December, the company, which said it cut 2,000 managerial roles in the last year, [ended a two-year dispute with workers over pay, hours and job security.](#)

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/may/20/royal-mail-posts-726m-profit-amid-pandemic-demand-for-parcels>

[Coronavirus](#)

Wastewater monitoring being used to track India variant, says Hancock

Health secretary says sewage testing has helped identify places where vaccinations and testing are being stepped up

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Matt Hancock makes a statement to MPs about the latest scientific assessment on the India variant. Photograph: House of Commons/PA

Matt Hancock makes a statement to MPs about the latest scientific assessment on the India variant. Photograph: House of Commons/PA

[Linda Geddes](#) *Science correspondent*

Wed 19 May 2021 13.09 EDT

Wastewater monitoring is being used to identify cases of the India variant and track its spread, the health secretary, [Matt Hancock](#), has said.

Although coronavirus predominantly infects cells lining the respiratory tract, it is also shed in the faeces of some infected individuals. By collecting sewage samples from wastewater treatment plants, scientists can use PCR (Polymerase chain reaction) machines to detect and quantify the amount of RNA from Sars-CoV-2 in different areas – including new variants, such as the B.1.617.2 variant first detected in India, which is now spreading across the UK.

The wastewater scheme was piloted last summer, and has since been expanded to include [hundreds of sites](#) across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Speaking during the Queen’s speech debate earlier on Wednesday, Hancock told MPs that testing and vaccinations were being surged in six areas because wastewater analysis had identified places where the India variant was being transmitted.

He said: “Mobility data shows how often people travel from one area to another, and we look at this in deciding where the virus is likely to spread. And we analyse now wastewater, in 70% of the country, and we can spot the virus, and the variants in the water, to identify communities where there is spread.”

Although wastewater monitoring is not accurate enough to tell us how many individuals are infected with Covid in any given area at any given time, it can be used to understand where specific variants are circulating, and to provide an early warning of escalating cases in specific geographical areas.

This can be followed up with additional community testing and messaging, or the sewage equivalent of surge testing – where manhole covers are lifted up and samples taken from sewers in specific areas to try to narrow down the source of the outbreak.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/19/wastewater-monitoring-being-used-to-track-india-variant-says-hancock>

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Republicans

Republicans flout mask requirement in US House chamber

Lauren Boebert, Thomas Massie, Marjorie Taylor Greene, Chip Roy, Bob Good, Louie Gohmert and Mary Miller received warnings



Representative Chip Roy, center, speaks to reporters as he leaves a House Republican caucus candidate forum. Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

Representative Chip Roy, center, speaks to reporters as he leaves a House Republican caucus candidate forum. Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/Getty Images

[Coral Murphy Marcos](#)

Wed 19 May 2021 19.26 EDT

Republicans in Congress are rebelling against the mask requirement on the House chamber, which remains in place due to Covid-19 safety concerns

from Democrats, who hold the majority.

Several Republican lawmakers refused to wear masks as they stood in the chamber on Tuesday during a vote to approve a 9/11-style commission to investigate the 6 January Capitol attack. They encouraged other members to join them.

After Tuesday's votes, several of the Republicans who had declined to wear masks gathered outside the Capitol for a group picture.

[Fauci: Americans will probably need vaccine booster 'within a year or so'](#)
[Read more](#)

Lawmakers who refuse to wear a face covering are subject to a fine of \$500 for the first offense and subsequent offenses can result in a \$2,500 fine. In practice, however, the House sergeant-at-arms gives a warning for the first offense.

The seven lawmakers who received warnings include Representatives Lauren Boebert of Colorado, Thomas Massie of Kentucky, Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia, Chip Roy of Texas, Bob Good of Virginia, Louie Gohmert of Texas and Mary Miller of Illinois, according to the Associated Press.

Greene, [a Republican extremist, posted a photo of herself with three other Republicans](#) on the House floor without masks. The Georgia lawmaker tweeted "End the oppression!" along with "#FreeYourFace".

Massie also tweeted a card casting a "No" vote, along with a caption [estimating that 10 Republicans were going maskless on the floor](#) on Tuesday.

The Republican stunt comes after the House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, said she would continue requiring masks to be worn on the floor of the chamber. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) said earlier that day that fully vaccinated people can stop wearing masks in almost all settings, including indoors.

When asked why she kept the mask rule for the chamber, [Pelosi told Bloomberg](#) that it's not known how many lawmakers and their staff are vaccinated.

Democratic lawmakers in both chambers of Congress have a 100% vaccination rate against Covid-19, according to answers from a [CNN survey of Capitol Hill](#) published on Friday. However, for Republicans, the numbers are less clear.

In total, it is estimated that at least 44% of Republican House members are vaccinated and at least 92% of Republican senators are.

The Associated Press contributed reporting

- This article was amended on 20 May 2021 to clarify how many Republican congress members are vaccinated.

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2021.05.20 - Spotlight

- ['United nations of crime' How Marbella became a magnet for gangsters](#)
- ['Take it easy, nothing matters in the end' William Shatner at 90, on love, loss and Leonard Nimoy](#)
- [Hanif Kureishi I'd like to see a British Muslim Sopranos](#)
- [An avenue to other worlds Auditorial, a new idea for accessible storytelling](#)

‘A united nations of crime’: how Marbella became a magnet for gangsters

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/may/20/a-united-nations-of-how-marbella-became-a-magnet-for-gangsters>

William Shatner

Interview

‘Take it easy, nothing matters in the end’: William Shatner at 90, on love, loss and Leonard Nimoy

Hadley Freeman



William Shatner ... ‘I don’t have any secret potions. It must be genetic’.
Photograph: Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP

William Shatner ... ‘I don’t have any secret potions. It must be genetic’.
Photograph: Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP

His career has taken him from Shakespeare to Star Trek – and soon he will be swimming with sharks on TV. He discusses longevity, tragedy, friendship and success



[@HadleyFreeman](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 01.00 EDT

I think I'm arriving good and early for my interview with [William Shatner](#) when I click on our video chat link 10 minutes ahead of time. But Shatner has arrived even earlier: there he is, as soon as my Zoom screen opens, poking away at his computer. "I like to get in early to ease my mind. But it's OK, I can meditate afterwards," he says. His tone is often heavily ironical, as if he is daring you to accuse him of playing a joke on you. This has led to much discussion from fans about "the Shatner persona", although Shatner scoffs at the phrase. "I don't know what that even is," he says.

I think they think you play up to their expectations, I say.

"What are their expectations? That I'm Captain Kirk? Well, I *am* Captain Kirk! I don't know what people mean when they talk about my persona. I'm just myself. If you're not yourself, who are you?"

As it happens, I am asking myself those exact three words: who are you, strange person talking to me from my laptop? He certainly sounds like Shatner. But Shatner turned 90 in March, and the man in front of me doesn't look more than 60, as he bounces about in his seat, twisting to show me the view around him, with the agility of a man two decades younger. Is this

actually Shatner or a celebrity lookalike? You look amazing for 90, Bill, I say cautiously.

“Ninety?! A lie! Who told you that, CNN?”

Yes, and every single other news outlet.

“The press has spread this ridiculous rumour. I’m 55,” he says, and he really does look like he could be.

But you first appeared on [Star Trek](#) 55 years ago, I say, beginning to doubt myself.

“Oh, OK. Then I’ll admit to being 90,” he grins, enjoying my discombobulation.



Shatner with Heather Locklear and the cast of cop drama TJ Hooker, 1983.
Photograph: Bob D’Amico/Walt Disney Television/Getty

There is a website [dedicated to Shatner’s toupee](#), but his youthful appearance goes much further than impressive hair. Has he had some serious work done?

“No. Have you?” he shoots back.

No, because I'm just a journalist and can't afford it, I say.

"Ha! Well, I don't have any secret potions. It must be genetic. I ride a lot of horses and I'm into the bewilderment of the world, so I open my heart and head into the curiosity of how things work," he says. I'm not sure if "the bewilderment of the world" is an ingredient Olay can bottle, but it certainly works for Shatner. That, and horses.

"Yes, I'm a competitive rider in an equine skill called reining. I don't know if you know it, but it's very athletic and cowboyish," he says. This is not the only animal-based exercise Shatner has been up to lately.

"Have you heard of Shark Week?" he asks, our interview drifting ever further from my original expectations.

The annual week of shark TV shows on the Discovery Channel?

"Exactly! So they asked me to do it this year, and last month I went to the Bahamas to swim with sharks. Eighteen-foot tiger sharks! They put a 5ft shark in my lap! This will all be on TV," he says, but then he scowls. "Although they tried to have me say dialogue like: 'Yes, it's me, *the* William Shatner.' I don't say that! They had this concept of my persona, as you'd say, and it was just some idiot."

Shatner is talking to me from his lovely home in Los Angeles, where he has lived for more than 50 years, and his three daughters and five grandchildren all live nearby. He has filled his house, he says proudly, "with love and art". So much art, in fact, that he cannot fit any new art on the walls, "and that's a problem". I had assumed there wasn't much love currently because, in 2019, at the age of 88, he filed for divorce from Elizabeth Anderson Martin, his fourth wife of 18 years. And yet, when the landline rings, he tells me: "It's for my wife, she'll pick it up."

Aren't they divorced?

"That's a long story. I don't know if this is an appropriate time to get into the reasoning, but I've done something really nice," he says and chuckles to himself.

Did he get un-divorced?

“Well, that’s always hanging there and that makes the relationship really good. Maybe that’s the explanation and I’ve found the solution!” he says, now full-on cackling.

So he spent lockdown with his fourth wife?

“Yes. Are you married?” he asks, not very subtly changing the subject.

Well, I say, I’ve lived with someone for a decade.

“And how’s it going?” he asks.

Well, we have three kids so there’s not much time to think about that, I say.

“And you bore them all?”

I what?

“You. Bore. Them. All?”

I’m not sure if he means did I give birth to them or do they all find me incredibly tedious, but either way the answer is yes.

“That makes you very busy! You’ve got a whole nest, and that feeling of nesting and belonging is critical,” he says.

Is this something he’s discovered recently?

“It’s been a gradual dawning,” he says.

Leonard and I talked about all kinds of things in the dark of the limousine ... but something happened, I don’t know what

Shatner has been thinking about other dawns because over lockdown he has been working on another spoken-word album. The casual Shatner observer is probably aware of his [intensely serious spoken renditions of songs such as Rocket Man](#), but the real connoisseur knows that the good

stuff is in the pieces he writes, which are intensely personal; or, as he puts it, “they make a philosophical point and they’re also meaningful to me”. The best-known track from his 2004 album, *Has Been*, was his rendition of Pulp’s *Common People*, but the most extraordinary one was *What Have You Done*, in which he talks, voice cracking with grief, about coming home one evening and finding his third wife, Nerine Kidd, drowned in the couple’s swimming pool. She was 40. The autopsy found that Kidd, who was an alcoholic, had taken Valium and been drinking.

I tell him how powerful I found that particular track. He looks startled.

“How do you know about *What Have I Done*?” he demands.

Because it’s on *Has Been*, I say, starting to feel that confusion again.

“Is there a track on *Has Been* called *What Have I Done*?” he asks.

It’s called *What Have You Done*. It’s the one about your wife, I say.

“Oh my wife! Yes, my wife, that’s right. I didn’t make the connection but there’s a track on the new album called *What Have I Done*. Hmm, interesting,” he muses.

Despite having apparently forgotten the song’s title, it sounded like it meant a lot to him when he recorded it. I ask if it was hard to talk about his wife’s death in the recording studio.

“I couldn’t get through it. It took me several tries. I can see you’ve had some tragedies and it never goes away, right? And with *What Have You Done*, who is the question aimed at? Sometimes I think it’s aimed at me. Why didn’t I do more? During that period when we were together, we were so much in love and she was drinking, but I didn’t understand addiction. Subsequently, I was able to form a charity called the [Nerine Shatner Foundation](#), which has a house, which is connected to a halfway house and 11 women can live there. Women come up to me and say: ‘You saved my life.’ But not me; it was Nerine. She did that,” he says quietly.



Friends reunited ... Spock (Leonard Nimoy) and Kirk (Shatner) in 2009; the two fell out towards the end of Nimoy's life. Photograph: Mark Davis/Getty

Shatner has said that one person who really helped him through what he describes as the “searing pain” of Nerine’s death was his co-star and close friend, Leonard Nimoy, who played Spock in Star Trek, and who himself had struggled with alcoholism. Nimoy and Shatner were the same age and both Jewish, and I ask if their shared Judaism played a part in their friendship. I am Jewish, too, I add, in case the question sounds weird.

“You don’t look Jewish,” says Shatner, but not even he can maintain a straight face when saying that obvious lie, and he collapses into giggles. “But yes – of course! Leonard was only four days younger than me, and Boston [where Nimoy was born] is a lot like Montreal [Shatner’s home town], these old cities with big buildings where the snow drifts through the streets. I think he had a much more Jewish upbringing than me; he learned to speak Yiddish and I did not. But the similarities between us were incredible.”

Shatner revealed in his 2016 book about Nimoy, *Leonard: My Fifty-Year Friendship With a Remarkable Man*, that the two men grew apart towards the end of Nimoy’s life, and he never understood why. Has he figured it out since?

“No, and he was my dearest friend. We talked about all kinds of things in the darkness of the limousine, about divorce and children. But something happened, I don’t know what, it was so bizarre. But his daughter told me not long ago: ‘He really loved you.’ And that moved me to tears,” he says.

I tell him that their fallout reminds me of what happened to Harold Ramis and Bill Murray, two long-term collaborators and friends whose friendship blew up after Groundhog Day. Ramis pleaded with Murray for them to reconcile, but it didn’t happen until [Ramis was on his deathbed](#).

“Oh my God! I knew nothing about that! How can I find out more about the Ramis and Murray feud?” he asks.

You could Google “Ramis and Murray feud”, I say.

“Wow! I’ll look that up as soon as we’re done. Wow!” he says excitedly.

I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I just drifted with the currents of happenstance

Shatner was born and raised in Montreal, the grandchild of eastern European Jewish immigrants. “Jewishness was a very big part of my identity when I was growing up: synagogue, bar mitzvah, all the traditional things,” he says. “One of the numbers I’ve written on my new album has a rabbi chanting the opening while my father is urging me to stay with him. But I read from a different book.”

Instead, Shatner fell into acting, working as the business manager for a theatre after university and then training as an actor. He made his Broadway debut in 1956 in Tamburlaine the Great and understudied for Christopher Plummer in Henry V. Was he envisaging life as a classical actor? Shatner laughs at the thought.

“I didn’t know what I wanted to do. I just drifted with the currents of happenstance,” he says.

The currents of happenstance eventually led him to Star Trek, which launched in 1966. Within two years, it would make television history, when

Shatner and Nichelle Nichols (who played Uhura) enjoyed the first interracial kiss in a scripted show on US TV. “I don’t think in those stark terms, but I’m aware that the show had an impact,” he says. Yet the show was cancelled after just three series and Shatner was suddenly unemployed, broke and divorced, and living out of a camper van as he tried to support his ex-wife and their three daughters.

“That was a real blow. It was tough, supporting them. Eventually all three of them went to university. But yeah, that was hard,” he says.

Eventually, Star Trek became a cult favourite, thanks to TV reruns, then the movies took off at the end of the 1970s. Shatner, who starred in six of them, never had to live in a camper van again.

[George Takei: ‘Getting cast as Lt Sulu in Star Trek was life-changing’](#)
[Read more](#)

But Shatner has done a lot more than Star Trek. He starred in two other TV shows, for a start: TJ Hooker and Boston Legal, and guest starred in The Practice. He is always fun when he makes occasional appearances in films such as Miss Congeniality and Dodgeball, and he has written about 30 books (with, perhaps, some help.) But he knows he will always be best known for Star Trek: “I understand that it’s a phenomenon and in your and my lifetime there will never be another thing like it, because it would take another 50 years and, as we already discussed, I’m already 52.” He is a good sport about it, but when I ask one too many Trek questions (ie two) he changes the subject and tells me he has recently done a project with a company called [StoryFile](#), which will recreate him as a 3D talking hologram.

“Isn’t that incredible? So it could be on my gravestone and people can ask it questions, and as long as the electronics work there will be some kind of permanence,” he smiles.

It feels rude to ask a 90-year-old if he worries about death, so I ask instead what he wishes he had known at 20 that he knows at 90.

“Here’s an interesting answer!” he says perkily. “I’m glad I didn’t know because what you know at 90 is: take it easy, nothing matters in the end,

what goes up must come down. If I'd known that at 20, I wouldn't have done anything!"

Our time is up now, and so Shatner and I say our farewells. "This is always the awkward bit, before you turn off [the camera]," he says, and then in his ironical voice he says: "Pleasure seeing you! Bye! Bye!" And then, just like a 3D hologram when the electronics stop working, he vanishes.

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Interview

Hanif Kureishi: ‘I’d like to see a British Muslim Sopranos’

[Arifa Akbar](#)



‘Why is it we are so good at protests but we can’t organise a substantial leftwing political party? ... the writer at his home. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

‘Why is it we are so good at protests but we can’t organise a substantial leftwing political party? ... the writer at his home. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

As his new play *The Spank* opens in Italy, the writer talks about the power of ludicrous ideas, the crisis facing the middle class – and why he can’t get white liberals off his phone



[@Arifa_Akbar](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 01.00 EDT

Hanif Kureishi has been reflecting on toxic masculinity. He has heard a lot about it in the past year and it has entered the fiction he has been writing over lockdown – at quite a rate by the sound of it – and sparked stories about predation, sexual misdemeanour and “what’s going on between men and women”.

But he is just as interested in the benign, everyday dynamic between male friends. Most of the men he knows are good people, he says, who get together to talk about music and books, tease each other and chew the cud about life. He misses them now, locked away in his study in west London, although he has grownup sons up the road for company (they live with their mother). There’s the dog, too, which they take to the park together most days.

There is a natural drama in the way friends report their lives to each other over a pint or a coffee, he says, and he has written a play structured around just that: two men sitting down to talk over a drink. It looks at how well they get on and how catastrophically they fall out. It was written before the pandemic and scheduled to run at the Coronet in London before everything

closed last year. Now it has opened at Teatro Stabile di Torino, one of Italy's seven national theatres, after Kureishi's Italian girlfriend showed it to the play's translator, Monica Capuani. It stars Filippo Dini (also the director) and Valerio Binasco.

Its two characters are, like Kureishi's friends, good men: a picture of middle-class, middle-aged masculinity, even when one of them strays in his marriage and the other tells on him. That decision has a devastating effect on friendship and family life, although the play is sprinkled with its own bathetic comedy. It is called *The Spank*, for starters, which sounds more like a French farce than a serious drama. And there is a plotline of an ineptly taken "dick pic" that ends up being sent to a teenage daughter instead of a lover.



Middle-class masculinity and a 'dick pic' ... *The Spank*. Photograph: Luigi De Palma

"It's a comedy in the Chekhovian sense," he says, "with a lot of ridiculousness, but I hope it's also quite moving. [My Beautiful Laundrette](#) is a comedy about a gay Pakistani and a gay skinhead who fall in love and run a launderette together. That's a pretty funny idea too. I like ludicrous ideas but I also like them to be serious."

At 67, Kureishi is avuncular and warm on Zoom, even if he delivers his dry humour deadpan. He made his name as a screenwriter and novelist with a punkish sensibility in the 1980s, with edgy ideas about sexuality, race and class. But theatre is where he began, at the age of 18, when his father came across a letter he had composed to the Royal Court in London in his bedroom. “He read it and forced me to ring up the Royal Court. When I went there, they gave me a job. I read scripts, worked backstage, at the box office and later I became writer.”

His play [Borderline](#), directed by Max Stafford-Clark, was staged in 1981, and he reckons it was the first drama at the Royal Court about “so-called Asian people”, focusing, as it did, on immigrants living near Heathrow airport. “It was a big break for me. It was one of the few theatres that gave chances to people of colour then. It was a great apprenticeship. I learned a lot from directors. You learn a lot from actors too. You see an actor who can’t say a line and you think, ‘Is it the actor or is there something funny about the line?’”

Now, after decades away from the stage he has returned, although *The Spank* was written partly out of frustration. He had written a BBC TV drama with his son, Sachin Kureishi, which was greenlit and then not made. He turned to the idea of two men talking on stage because the format was simple. He liked the thought of it coming to life without all the fuss of TV.



‘A pretty funny idea’ ... My Beautiful Laundrette. Photograph: Alamy

Although it was written before the pandemic, *The Spank*’s minimalism seems perfect for our socially distant times. It also resonates with contemporary anxieties about class. “As we’ve seen in this pandemic,” says Kureishi, “the rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer, and the middle classes are going down. I’m saying that the middle classes aren’t immune from the catastrophes of the world. My children’s lives could easily be far worse than my life, for instance.”

Kureishi has three sons – twins Sachin and Carlo, 26, with his former wife Tracey Scoffield, a film producer, and Kier, 22, with Monique Proudlove, a charity worker. Kureishi’s conversation often returns to them: how they keep him interested in the world, how he is worried for their future, how two (Sachin and Carlo) are also writers. It is clear he is an incredibly proud father. If *The Spank* is about the romance of friendship, Kureishi also rates fatherly friendship highly, especially now they are grown. “This is the best bit because I don’t have to tell them to do their homework or clip them round the ear. I can enjoy their company and enjoy listening to them.”

In his 2004 memoir, [My Ear at His Heart: Reading My Father](#), he wrote of his sons’ relationship to their mixed heritage. Kureishi himself is mixed race, with a white British mother and a British Pakistani father. They were

children then, gleefully comparing their skin tones. What is their experience of being mixed-race *men*? “They’re very proud,” he says. “They also live in a much freer time than I ever did and they don’t suffer discrimination.”

Last June, [Kureishi wrote with hope](#) about racial equality in the aftermath of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter protests. Since then, we’ve had [Derek Chauvin’s conviction](#) for Floyd’s murder in America but also the much-criticised [Sewell report into race in the UK](#). Is he still as optimistic? “There’s a very odd thing going on in the world. We have had the Black Lives Matter protests, we have heard women complaining about abusive behaviour, we’ve had protests against the [Super League](#) and the invasion of the pitch at Old Trafford. So there are uprisings and protests – but at the same time, we have a rightwing government. Why is it that we are so good at uprisings and protests but we can’t organise a substantial leftwing political party? I’ve been on demonstrations with my kids but how do we transform that activism into political and social change? I’m puzzled by this.”



British Asian stories ... the TV version of The Buddha of Suburbia.
Photograph: Alamy

As for diversity in film and theatre, Kureishi feels we are in a much better place, although he has seen the patronising effects of “white guilt” in recent times: “You see far more black actors now and obviously I’m not against

that. What I don't like is when white people get really guilty and start being nice to you. Black people are winning all the prizes and it's rather wretched to see. I said to one of my kids the other day, 'Since George Floyd [was murdered] the phone hasn't stopped ringing.' Black people are being patronised by white liberals. That's not what we need. What we want is real, substantial equality and real substantial change."

Does he think there are interesting enough stories being told about British Asian lives? "I don't know how many really good British Asian writers have emerged in the last few years," he says, but what he would be interested to see is a British Muslim family drama with all the complexities of that contemporary identity. "There's never been a proper Muslim drama on British television like, say, *The Sopranos*, with a really in-depth look at business and culture and relationships and marriage. I'd really like to see that. I'm too old to write it, but somebody should."

Black people are being patronised by white liberals. Since George Floyd's murder, the phone hasn't stopped ringing

In the 1980s, Kureishi wrote with deftness about racial and sexual identities, portraying their multiplicity in such works as [The Buddha of Suburbia](#) and *My Beautiful Laundrette*. Where does he stand on sex and gender today? "We see biology viewed through the lens of culture and this was always the case. Freud was talking about how gender was a construct, that it was a spectrum and so on, at the turn of the 20th century. It's really interesting to see how in some countries they are worried about the notion of gender superseding biology. You think, 'Why are you worrying about this and not whether the trains are running on time?' It's very odd."

He thinks the battles around gender are ultimately born out of a "terror" of change: "If we divorce the idea of what a man is and what a woman is from biology then we can reconstruct ourselves in ways that we like. To those who are creative, that's a wonderful idea because we can remake ourselves. That's why we were so impressed by David Bowie in the 1970s and the idea that you could wear a dress and be a heterosexual man. It's liberating because you can have new kinds of relationships, friendships and conversations. That's terrifying for some people and liberating for others."

He is fired up enough about the subject to have written stories about gender during the pandemic. He is also writing another play, with Carlo, about a father-son relationship set in lockdown, in which simmering family tensions explode during a game of chess. He says he feels honoured to have *The Spank* staged in Italy but deeply regrets not being there. On the day of its premiere, he sends me a video of the clamorous applause as the actors take their bows, with the accompanying words: “Awful not to be there.” He adds: “I’d like to have had lunch with the actors. I’d like to have been in the building. I’d like to have seen the lights go down and the actors walk on stage.”

This article was amended on 20 May 2021. The mother of Kureishi’s son Kier is Monique Proudlove, not Tracey Scoffield as stated in an earlier version.

- [The Spank is playing at Teatro Stabile di Torino](#), Italy, until 30 May.

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[Media](#)

An avenue to other worlds: Auditorial, a new idea for accessible storytelling

The Guardian has launched an [experimental feature format](#) on World Accessibility Awareness Day, in partnership with Google and the Royal National Institute of Blind People



The Guardian commissioned a series of special illustrations for the project, including this one showing some of the animals Bernie has recorded. Illustration: Yukai Du/The Guardian

The Guardian commissioned a series of special illustrations for the project, including this one showing some of the animals Bernie has recorded. Illustration: Yukai Du/The Guardian

[*Max Sanderson*](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 03.00 EDT

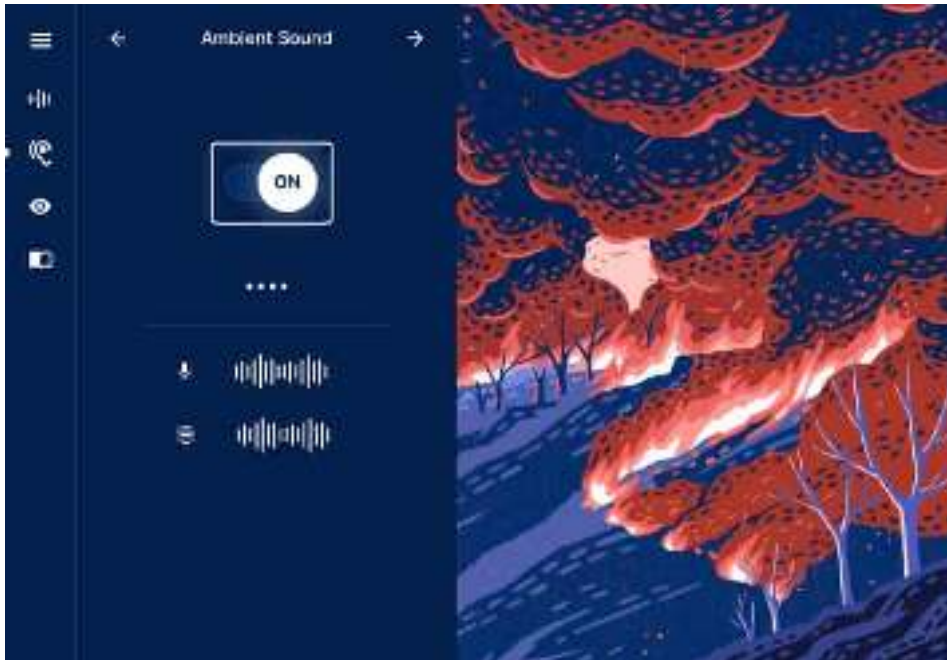
Audio storytelling is an avenue into other worlds. So when the Guardian was approached to take part in an experimental project to make journalism more accessible to low-vision and blind users, it felt like an opportunity we couldn't turn down. Audio has always been about making stories more accessible, and this was an opportunity to push that even further.

The result is [a storytelling website called Auditorial](#), created to showcase the possibilities of accessible stories for blind and low-vision audiences. The story is our own, paired with Google technology and the invaluable accessibility user-testing and expert advice provided by the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) – an example of what can be done when inclusive design and thinking are at the forefront from the start.

The website, which was created over a seven-month period, was born out of [an episode](#) of our [Science Weekly podcast](#) from 2018. And the story, similar to the original podcast, is based on Bernie Krause, one of the founders of a field known as soundscape ecology. Over 15 or so minutes, we use his story to explore the devastating effects of the climate crisis and other human-induced environmental destruction on the sounds of the natural world, from coral reefs to Costa Rican rainforests.

The Auditorial platform uses an assortment of accessibility features and tools to tell the story, including multimodal films with video and audio speed control, high contrast, text-only mode, and scale and focus controls. Users can press play to start the story and adjust the audio, visual and written settings as they are taken through the story.

The final product is something we are really proud of. There have been many lessons learned along the way, and our ideas of what we would end up with have changed as the project progressed; we were trying to do something that had never been done before. The hope is that we can go on to apply some of its key tenets to more of our journalism – and encourage others to do the same.



The website offers many customised options for the story experience, including the option to turn ambient sound on and off. Photograph: The Guardian

Enrich your storytelling with sound

Many low-vision and blind users currently access journalism online through screenreading software, which converts text into audio. This is often done in a synthetic voice and doesn't always discriminate between essential text and other aspects, meaning the experience can be jarring.

But, as with podcasts, when a story is presented in audio, the result is a more immersive experience, where sound design and intonation can add emphasis and emotion, and characters are able to tell their story in their own words. While this won't be possible for all of our online journalism, it's something we should consider when thinking about things such as how we label images using something called "alt tags".



The team worked to create more narrative alt tags to improve the story experience, such as this one describing the scene of Bernie Krause recording. Photograph: The Guardian/Google/RNB

Write narrative visual descriptions

For those using screenreading software, alt tags are essential for letting users know what an image shows. And while most websites – including the Guardian’s – do provide these, they are often written as succinct labels. This can lead to quite a disjointed narrative experience.

So a big lesson for our team was how to make alt tags more descriptive and more in line with the narrative. They should feel part of the reader experience and, if done correctly, should play a role in telling the story to a person using assistive technologies.

[The option to switch to a light or dark colour mode is one of the ways the website lets people tailor the story to their specific visual preferences.](#)

Offer alternative colour schemes

An important part of the project was providing visuals to enhance the story for users with low vision, such as light or colour sensitivities.

We addressed this by giving users the opportunity to choose between black and white, yellow and black, and blue and white, which are popular combinations. But Google was also able to introduce light and dark modes – a real game-changer for people who struggle with bright screens.

Accessible journalism

The Guardian has always been dedicated to digital innovation. When new storytelling formats and platforms emerge, we try to consider how these technologies will work for our audiences, and experiment with them to bring Guardian journalism to life. Auditorial is just the latest iteration of that.

While we continue to try to make our journalism as accessible as possible, there are always going to be things we can improve on. Throughout this project, we have learned so much from our partners at Google and the RNIB about accessibility and inclusive product design – findings we are really excited to be able to share with our readers everywhere.

- *We'd love to hear what you think of the Auditorial prototype. Please get in touch with any feedback, questions or queries at auditorial@theguardian.com.*

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2021.05.20 - Opinion

- The secret of Johnson's success lies in his break with Treasury dominance
- Britain could steer a global vaccination programme – but where is the leadership?
- 'Can you postpone nightfall?' Every call from Gaza with my family could be the last
- The dog has a cough – and I'm £80 poorer

[OpinionLabour](#)

The secret of Johnson's success lies in his break with Treasury dominance

[William Davies](#)

Gordon Brown's rule-based approach shaped Whitehall for two decades. But the Tories are forging a new politics that has little regard for prudence



Illustration: Eva Bee/The Guardian

Illustration: Eva Bee/The Guardian

Thu 20 May 2021 02.00 EDT

The Conservative party's growing electoral dominance in non-metropolitan England, so starkly re-emphasised by results in the north-east, has been attributed to various causes. Brexit and the popularity of Boris Johnson both count for a great deal. But while Labour is [busy telling voters](#) how much it deserved to lose, this is only half the picture. A major part of Johnson's appeal is the way he has escaped the shadow cast by one of Britain's three

most significant political figures of the past 45 years: not Margaret Thatcher or Tony Blair, but Gordon Brown.

[Gordon Brown: without winning an election, he has left a legacy greater than Tony Blair's | Jonathan Freedland](#)

[Read more](#)

The [1994 meeting](#) between Blair and Brown at the Granita restaurant in Islington, north London, shortly after John Smith's death, is the founding myth of New Labour: the moment when Brown agreed to let Blair stand for the leadership, on certain conditions. In addition to Blair's much disputed commitment to serve only two terms in office should he become prime minister, there was also his promise that Brown, as chancellor, would get control over the domestic policy agenda. At least the second of these commitments was honoured, resulting in a situation where, from 1997 to 2007, the Treasury held an overwhelming dominance over the rest of Whitehall, while Brown was implicitly unsackable.

But, together with his adviser Ed Balls, Brown was also the architect of a new apparatus of economic policymaking designed for the era of globalisation. The central problem that Balls and Brown confronted was how to build the capacity for higher levels of social spending, while also retaining financial credibility in an age of far more mobile capital than any confronted by previous Labour governments. The fear was that, with financial capital able to cross borders at speed, a high-spending government might be viewed suspiciously by investors and lenders, making it harder for the state to borrow cheaply. The first part of their answer endures to this day: [operational independence](#) was handed to the Bank of England, accompanied by an inflation target. No longer could politicians seek to win elections by cutting interest rates, a move that aimed to win the trust of the markets.

On top of this, Brown also introduced a culture of almost obsessive fiscal discipline, as if the bond markets would attack the moment he showed any flexibility – the same paranoia that shaped Clintonism. His [“golden rule”](#), outlined in his first budget, stated that, over the economic cycle, the government could borrow only to invest, not for day-to-day spending. The Treasury governed the rest of Whitehall according to a strict economic

rubric, demanding every spending proposal was audited according to orthodox neoclassical economics.

Balls later wrote that their thinking had been guided by an influential 1977 article, [Rules Rather than Discretion](#), in which two economists, Finn Kydland and Edward Prescott, sought to demonstrate that policymakers will produce far better economic outcomes if they stick rigidly to certain principles and heuristics of policy, rather than seeking to intervene on a case-by-case basis. Brown's robotic persona and his mantra of "[prudence](#)" conveyed a programme that was so focused on policy as to be oblivious to more frivolous aspects of politics.

Elements of this Brownite machine remained in place during the David Cameron-George Osborne years: a chancellor acting as a kind of parallel prime minister, transforming society through force of cost-benefit analysis, only now the fiscal tide was going out rather than in. Even "Spreadsheet Phil" Hammond sustained the template as far as he could, in the face of ever-rising attacks from the Brexit extremists in his own party. The point is that, from 1997 to 2019, the government largely meant the Treasury. Those powers that are so foundational for the modern nation state – to tax, borrow and spend – were the basis on which governments asked to be judged, by voters and financial markets.

Various things have happened to weaken the Treasury's political authority over the past five years, though – significantly – none of these has yet seemed to weaken the government's credibility in the eyes of the markets. First, there was the notorious cooked [Brexit forecast](#) published in May 2016, predicting an immediate recession, half a million job losses and a house price crash, should Britain vote to leave. The referendum itself, a mass refusal to view the world in terms of macroeconomics, meant there could be no going back to a world in which politics was dominated by economists.

Consider how different things are now from in Brown's heyday. Johnson's first chancellor, [Sajid Javid](#), lasted little more than six months in the job, resigning after one of his aides was sacked by Dominic Cummings without his knowledge. His second, Rishi Sunak, may have high political ambitions and approval ratings, but scarcely forms the kind of double-act with Johnson

that Brown did with Blair, or Osborne with Cameron. Johnson's cabinet is notable for lacking any obvious next-in-line leader.

What's more interesting are the parts of Whitehall that have suddenly risen in profile under Johnson: communities and local government under Robert Jenrick, and the Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport under Oliver Dowden. With the "levelling up" agenda of the former, (manifest in such pork barrel politics as the [Towns Fund](#)) and the "[culture war](#)" agenda of the latter (evident in attacks on the autonomy of museums), a new vision of government is emerging, one that is no longer afraid of expressing cultural favouritism or fixing deals. Balls and Brown were inspired by "rules rather than discretion"; now there's no better way to sum up [Jenrick's disgraceful governmental career](#) to date than "discretion rather than rules".

In the background, of course, are the unique fiscal and financial circumstances produced by Covid, in which all notions of prudence have been thrown out of the window. With the Bank of England buying most of the additional government bonds issued over the last 15 months (beyond the wildest imaginings of Balls and Brown), and with the cost of borrowing close to zero, the rationale for strict fiscal discipline or austerity has currently evaporated. Paradoxically, a situation in which the Treasury can find an [emergency £60bn](#) to pay the country's wages makes for a popular chancellor, but may make for a less powerful Treasury.

Amid all this, [Labour](#) is left in an unenviable position, which is in many ways deeply unfair. So long as the Tories are associated with Brexit, England and Johnson, the voters don't expect them to exercise any kind of discipline, fiscal or otherwise. Meanwhile, [Labour](#) remains associated with a Treasury worldview: technocratic, London-centric, British not English, rules not discretion. What's doubly unfair is that, thanks to the serial fictions of Osborne and the Tory press from 2010 onwards that [Labour](#) had "spent all the money", it is not even viewed as economically trustworthy. In the end, it turned out that public perceptions of financial credibility were largely shaped by political messaging and media narratives, not by adherence to self-imposed fiscal rules.

In the eyes of party members, New Labour will be for ever tarred by Blair and Iraq. In the eyes of much of the country, however, it will be tarred by

some vague memory of centralised Brownite spending regimes. The fact that Labour receives so little credit for Brown's undoubted successes as a spending chancellor is due to many factors, but ultimately consists in the fact that the technocratic, Treasury view of the world was never adequately translated into a political story. Osborne simply presented himself as the inheritor of a centralised "mess" that needed cleaning up.

The recent elections demonstrated that all political momentum is now with the cities and nations of Britain: the Conservatives in leave-voting England, Andy Burnham in Manchester, the SNP in Scotland, Labour in Wales. Rather than making weak gestures towards the union jack or against London, Labour needs to think deeply about the kind of statecraft and policy style that is suited to such a moment, so as to finally leave the world of Granita and "golden rules" behind.

- William Davies is a sociologist and political economist. His latest book is *This is Not Normal: The Collapse of Liberal Britain*

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/20/johnson-fiscal-orthodoxy-gordon-brown-golden-rules-prudence>

Opinion Vaccines and immunisation

Britain could steer a global vaccination programme – but where is the leadership?

[Emily Thornberry](#)

In the absence of proposals from the government, we have a plan to ensure the world is safe now and secure in the future

- Emily Thornberry is the shadow secretary of state for international trade



A doctor walks past a notice saying there are no Covid-19 vaccines available at a health centre in Srinagar, Indian-administered Kashmir, 18 May 2021. Photograph: Dar Yasin/AP

A doctor walks past a notice saying there are no Covid-19 vaccines available at a health centre in Srinagar, Indian-administered Kashmir, 18 May 2021.

Photograph: Dar Yasin/AP

Thu 20 May 2021 01.00 EDT

We are 140 days into what Boris Johnson has proudly called “the year of British leadership”. But looking at this government from the outside, you would never know it. Where is the British leadership over the conflict in [Israel and Palestine](#), over the Chinese genocide against the Uyghurs, or over the worsening humanitarian crisis in Yemen? And what claim to global leadership can this government make while [taking an axe](#) to vital education, health and climate crisis programmes across the developing world?

But there is one area where global leadership is required more urgently than any other, and where it is currently nowhere to be found from Johnson’s government: the international fight against Covid-19. The humanitarian crisis in India highlights the alarming and growing gulf between countries such as ours, where more than half of the population have [had their first jab](#), and many countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean where vaccination programmes have barely begun.

Thousands are still [dying every day](#) around the world simply because we are not producing the volume of vaccines we need at the pace we need them to save those lives. And the longer Covid-19 runs rampant among unvaccinated populations, the more likely that aggressive new variants will emerge that [threaten the success](#) of existing vaccine programmes.

That cycle needs urgently to be broken through coordinated [action at a global level](#), but where is the leadership coming from to make that happen? Again, not from Johnson’s government.

On one of the central issues, the proposed [waiver of vaccine patents](#), British ministers have not just sat on the fence in the debate, but have kept entirely silent. What they should be saying, as Labour has, is that those talks must move quickly towards concrete proposals, but with the understanding that – on its own – a waiver of patents will not fix this crisis.

In recent weeks, talking to NGOs, scientists and other experts in the field, Labour’s shadow cabinet has explored potential solutions to the fundamental

global shortage of vaccine supplies. Today we have written to our counterparts in government outlining the key elements of a comprehensive 10-point plan to transform the volume of vaccine production worldwide.

We propose a global effort to identify and equip the dozens of new facilities required in key countries and regions around the world to undertake [vaccine production](#), or fill and finish operations, building on the model of Oxford's new Vaccines Manufacturing Innovation Centre.

We propose the world's largest ever coordinated investment programme – in partnership with the pharmaceutical industry – to ensure that these new facilities have the skills, technology and supplies they need to enable the safe and efficient mass production of vaccines. And we propose the necessary institutional arrangements – from a regulatory body to oversee vaccine production standards to a formal trade and investment agreement among participating countries – to replicate at a global level the successful direction provided in Britain by the vaccine taskforce.

[Animals are our overlooked allies in the fight against Covid | Melanie Challenger](#)
[Read more](#)

But in addition to these nuts-and-bolts measures, we propose the determined global pursuit of new innovations that would transform the fight against Covid-19 and future viral diseases, including the development of orally active vaccines to be produced and distributed in capsule form.

In common with every element of our plan, the pursuit of these transformative goals is not just to help the world stop the spread of Covid-19 but to establish the mechanisms, infrastructure and tools that will allow us to tackle future pandemics much more efficiently and effectively. So while the costs of financing this plan will doubtless be substantial, they must be weighed against the human, social and economic damage we will avoid if we can bring this current pandemic to a rapid end and ensure it will never be repeated on the same scale.

It is therefore a plan to make the world safe now and more secure in the future, and one that Labour's shadow cabinet has worked intensively under

Keir Starmer's leadership to develop. During this so-called year of British leadership, is it too much to ask for Boris Johnson's government to do the same?

- Emily Thornberry is the shadow secretary of state for international trade

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/20/britain-global-vaccination-programme-leadership>

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[OpinionGaza](#)

My family in Gaza ask me ‘can you postpone nightfall’, for that is when the bombing arrives

Samiha Olwan

As the days pass, it gets harder to stay in touch. My friends send photos to me in Australia of their children sleeping under tables, covering their ears and eyes against death



A plume of smoke rises from a residential area in Gaza on 18 May. ‘There is no such thing as a safe place in Gaza,’ writes Samiha Olwan. ‘The constant shelling is affecting everything and everyone I know.’ Photograph: Mahmoud Khattab/Quds Net News/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

A plume of smoke rises from a residential area in Gaza on 18 May. ‘There is no such thing as a safe place in Gaza,’ writes Samiha Olwan. ‘The constant shelling is affecting everything and everyone I know.’ Photograph: Mahmoud Khattab/Quds Net News/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Thu 20 May 2021 03.02 EDT

I haven't seen my younger brother, Abdallah, in person for more than four years. It takes a few minutes to end our video calls these days. With a shaky voice and a reluctant smile, he blinks away his tears to reassure me he is strong, despite the constant explosions that rock his home. When I ask if there is anything I can do, he answers: "Can you postpone nightfall?" I conceal my anxiety as I say "Goodbye!" and "Take care!" again and again. I prolong the conversation because I am terrified this could be the last time I speak to him.

Two days later, 5am in Perth, midnight in Gaza, I message him frantically. I've learned over the past few days that this is about the time Israeli bombing intensifies. Bombs raze buildings to the ground while residents are trying to sleep inside. I urge him and my other younger brother to move to where my older brother is staying in Khan Younis, in the southern part of Gaza which seems to be hit less frequently. I think if they stick together under one roof then they can console each other as the bombs fall.

[I live in Sheikh Jarrah. For Palestinians, this is not a 'real estate dispute' | Lucy Garbett](#)
[Read more](#)

Later that day, Israel bombs Khan Younis, proving there is no such thing as a safe place in [Gaza](#). The constant shelling is affecting everything and everyone I know. Whole families are obliterated together in a single strike. What am I thinking? Who am I to decide where my brothers should seek safety? Wouldn't it be better if they each stayed in different areas so there is less chance of losing them all? I am in no place to make this decision for them, and I am heartbroken knowing they can't make it either.

As the days pass, it gets harder to stay in touch. They are now limited to a maximum of three hours of electricity a day, enough to charge their phones, fill up their water tanks and glimpse the impact of the strikes on their TV and phone screens. I use social media to make sure they are alright. I follow the news and my friends' news feeds.

I was born and raised in Gaza and I left for Perth in 2014. In Gaza, I survived two Israeli aggressions and I thought I had seen it all. I know what it's like to be surrounded by death. But my family and friends in Gaza are living through their fourth Israeli aggression and the worst by far, with new Israeli weapons, and more devastating capacity to terrorise and destroy.

Most of my friends are living through this as first-time parents, struggling with not being able to keep their children safe or provide any relief. Most times, my friends send me photos of their children sleeping under tables, covering their ears and eyes against death. But when they see how distraught I am, they send videos of the kids, spirited and playful, to cheer me up.

['They know they're going to die': Australians fear for their relatives in Gaza as fighting escalates](#)

[Read more](#)

In Perth, Gaza makes the news headlines. I pick up my six-year-old from school when another parent approaches: "I hope the violence on both sides stops." My heart sinks. I mumble a faint thank you, hold on to my child, and leave with my frustration and long-held trauma. I have no energy to argue or explain that what is happening in Gaza is not just another round of violence or a religious conflict between two equal sides.

Maybe if there was more media coverage of the events unfolding in Jerusalem for over a month before this latest bombardment began, I wouldn't have to explain. Palestinians were being forcibly displaced from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah neighbourhood in East Jerusalem. Palestinian protesters were met with despicable violence; worshippers were attacked while praying during the holy month of Ramadan, all to make room for nationalist settlers to celebrate. And that's just the most recent of events.

But I find it extremely hard to share stories of home. How can I simply explain that my family has been held in a cage in Gaza, the world's largest open-air prison, stripped of basic human rights by a state that has been controlling everything in their lives for the past 14 years? A state that denies people equality, freedom and justice. The bombs falling on Gaza are only one extreme expression of this violence.

Samiha Olwan is a researcher in literary, cultural and gender studies with a PhD in English and comparative literature from Murdoch University, Western Australia and a masters degree in cultural studies from Durham University, UK. Before arriving in Australia in 2014, Samiha worked with the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights in Gaza and taught at the Islamic University of Gaza

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/may/20/can-you-postpone-nightfall-every-call-from-gaza-with-my-family-could-be-the-last>

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[OpinionDogs](#)

The dog has a cough – and I’m £80 poorer

[Adrian Chiles](#)



I thought my pet insurance would cover the routine vet bills. I was wrong



‘To be fair, the policy will come into its own if our dog needs a liver transplant or contact lenses’ Photograph: Marko Geber/Getty. Posed by models

‘To be fair, the policy will come into its own if our dog needs a liver transplant or contact lenses’ Photograph: Marko Geber/Getty. Posed by models

Thu 20 May 2021 03.00 EDT

The writing is on the wall for gas boilers, I understand. Not a moment too soon, in my view. I think it was Auberon Waugh who said that you don’t truly become an adult until both your parents have died. I think the moment comes (hopefully) sooner than that; I think it comes when, for the first time, your boiler is your responsibility, and you realise how expensive the bloody things are. Sadly, I can’t imagine that whatever replaces them will be any cheaper. Either way, boilers join the long list of everyday things I don’t understand how people can afford if they don’t happen to have loads of money. Also in this category: cars, insurance, pensions, residential care and mobile phone contracts. Do feel free to add to this list.

To my own, I have recently added dog ownership. The costs are simply astounding. I knew vets’ bills could be painful, but I assumed you just took the hit with pet insurance premiums and then it was all taken care of. We

bought the best version of the best-rated pet insurance we could find and almost looked forward to our first “free” vet consultation. “Yes,” said the vet. “He’s got a cough.” This cough would pass, we were told, and we should keep him away from licking other dogs’ bits until it did, and this information would be £80, please. “Oh, we’re insured,” I said. Oh no we weren’t: not for these £100 consultations, which is roughly what the majority of our vet visits are likely to cost.

To be fair, the insurance will come into its own if our dog needs open heart surgery, a liver transplant or contact lenses or something. But for bog-standard dog stuff, nope, we’ll be digging deep. As we will for dog food, too. It is important, you see, to have precisely the right balance of protein, carbohydrates, fats, vitamins and what not, appropriate for your breed of dog at its particular age. Our reassuringly specific and expensive dry food contains beta-glucans, pomegranate, and green tea extracts, if you don’t mind. I bought into this nonsense about dog nutrition until one day it dawned on me that if he could survive chewing on other animals’ faeces and all manner of litter and dirt, he could probably manage without green tea extracts.

I found some recipes for dog food in another newspaper. Beef with barley; lamb and millet, and a brilliant anti-dogbreath biscuit featuring parsley and buckwheat. He’s wolfed all three down, apparently unfussed by the absence of beta-glucans. I am looking forward to writing something about cooking for dogs in the Guardian. Ideas welcome. Please no pomegranate.

Adrian Chiles is a broadcaster, writer and Guardian columnist

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- ['We have our differences' Blinken and Lavrov polite but firm in first face-to-face encounter](#)
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[Russia](#)

Kremlin hails ‘positive steps’ in US ties as Biden waives pipeline sanctions

US secretary of state and Russia’s foreign minister are polite but firm in their first face-to-face encounter



The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, have met face-to-face for the first time, in Reykjavik, Iceland. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

The US secretary of state, Antony Blinken, and the Russian foreign minister, Sergey Lavrov, have met face-to-face for the first time, in Reykjavik, Iceland. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

[Luke Harding](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 08.42 EDT

Relations between the [US](#) and [Russia](#) have taken a tentative step forward after the Kremlin welcomed a decision by the Biden administration not to

impose significant sanctions on a [controversial Russian pipeline](#) delivering gas to Germany.

The Kremlin spokesperson, Dmitry Peskov, on Thursday hailed what he called “positive steps” in ties with Washington, ahead of a face-to-face summit between Joe Biden and Vladimir Putin, due to take place in [Europe](#) in the next few weeks.

On Wednesday, the first high-level discussions between Moscow and Washington since Biden took office were held in Reykjavik.

The US secretary of state, [Antony Blinken](#), and his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov, held their first face-to-face encounter on the sidelines of an Arctic Council meeting in the Icelandic capital, a city with a deep history in US-Russian relations.

“We seek a predictable, stable relationship with [Russia](#),” Blinken told Lavrov, echoing previous comments made by Biden. “We think that’s good for our people, good for Russian people and indeed good for the world,” he said.

[Russia officially dubs US and Czech Republic ‘unfriendly’ states](#)
[Read more](#)

He added: “It’s also no secret that we have our differences and when it comes to those differences ... if Russia acts aggressively against us, our partners, and our allies, we’ll respond. President Biden has demonstrated that in both word and deed, not for purposes of escalation, not to seek out conflict, but to defend our interests.”

The Biden administration had [earlier signalled](#) it would take a tough line on Nord Stream 2, a Moscow-led project that will export gas directly from Russia to Germany, bypassing Ukraine.

However, earlier this week the White House said it would waive sanctions on the main German company behind the pipeline and its German chief executive, Matthias Warnig, a former Stasi officer who worked with Putin, then a KGB operative, in the East German city of Dresden.

The US administration's approach has attracted criticism from opponents of the Kremlin and from leading Republicans. Senator Marco Rubio called the waiver "naive, deceitful and weak", the [Washington Post reported](#), and Senator Ben Sasse said it gave Putin "massive strategic leverage in Europe".

Germany's chancellor, Angela Merkel, on Thursday reacted positively. In an interview she said Biden "has now moved towards us a bit on the Nord Stream 2 conflict". Merkel held out the prospect of further talks with the US to intensify economic ties.

The Biden administration this week imposed sanctions on eight Russian companies and vessels involved in the pipeline. But these measures notified to Congress are unlikely to stop its completion this summer.

Speaking after his meeting with Blinken, Lavrov described their discussion as "constructive and useful", saying both sides understood the need to mend ties.

He added: "We have serious differences in the assessment of the international situation. We have serious differences in the approaches to the tasks which have to be solved for its normalisation.

"Our position is very simple: we are ready to discuss all the issues without exception, but under perception that the discussion will be honest, with the facts on the table, and of course on the basis of mutual respect."

Even before Wednesday's talks the two diplomats had laid down almost diametrically opposed positions for the meeting, previewing what was likely to be a difficult and contentious exchange over myriad issues including Ukraine, the Arctic, Russia's treatment of the opposition figure Alexei Navalny, and accusations of cyber malfeasance, including claims Russia-based hackers were responsible for a [ransomware attack](#) on a US pipeline.

The meeting also followed a spate of tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions as US-Russia relations threatened to return to cold war lows.

After the meeting, which ran for a longer-than-expected hour and 45 minutes, the US state department said Blinken had called for Russia to

release two Americans it holds, [Paul Whelan](#) and [Trevor Reed](#). He also raised “deep concerns” about Russia’s military buildup on the Ukrainian border and its [actions against the Voice of America](#) and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, the department said.

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[Cher](#)

Cher announces biopic to be made by Mamma Mia! producers

As she celebrates her 75th birthday the megastar reveals plans to co-produce a film of her own life story



Cher at the Billboard Music Awards, October 2020. Photograph: Amy Sussman/BBMA2020/Getty Images for dcp

Cher at the Billboard Music Awards, October 2020. Photograph: Amy Sussman/BBMA2020/Getty Images for dcp

[Laura Snapes](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 05.13 EDT

[Cher](#) has announced that a biopic about her life is in the works at Universal Pictures. She will co-produce the project, alongside [Judy Craymer](#) and Gary Goetzman, who produced the film adaptations of Mamma Mia! – the second of which, 2018's [Here We Go Again](#), starred Cher.

Cher said that her “dear dear friend” Eric Roth – of Forrest Gump and the most recent A Star Is Born adaptation – will write the screenplay. He worked with [Cher](#) on the 1987 legal thriller Suspect.

“Gary and I are thrilled to be working with Cher again and this time bringing her empowering and true-life odyssey to the big screen,” Craymer said in a press release. “One cannot help but be drawn to and inspired by Cher’s larger than life talent, fortitude, unique wit, warmth and vision. Her unparalleled success in music, film and TV has inspired generations. We could not be happier to tell her story to cinema audiences.”

[Turn back time: Cher’s greatest fashion moments on her 75th birthday](#)
[Read more](#)

Cher celebrates her 75th birthday on Thursday (20 May). She shared the news of the biopic in characteristic fashion on her Twitter feed, making the announcement 42 minutes after tweeting that she had to take a shower. In response to a fan who said they had been waiting for a Cher film for 50 years, the singer, actor and campaigner said: “I had more life to live.”

During that half century, Cher has sold more than 100m records and waged several musical comebacks – notably launching a solo career after her divorce and subsequent creative split from Sonny Bono, and pioneering the use of Auto-Tune in pop with 1998’s Believe, which won the Grammy award for best dance recording in 2000.

Her filmography includes Silkwood, Mask, The Witches of Eastwick and Moonstruck, for which she won the Academy Award for best actress.

Recently, [she co-founded Free the Wild](#), an organisation aimed at stopping the suffering of wild animals in captivity. Their efforts successfully rescued Kavaan, the world’s “loneliest elephant”, who was confined in a shuttered zoo in Islamabad, Pakistan.

[Cher at 74: 'There are 20-year-old girls who can't do what I do'](#)
[Read more](#)

The Cher biopic will follow a recent rash of music films, some more successful than others, and is one of the few high-profile feature films about female musicians. [Rocketman](#), about the life of Elton John, and [Judy](#), about Judy Garland, were met with acclaim.

But the Queen film *Bohemian Rhapsody* was accused of “straightwashing” the group’s story, [The United States vs Billie Holiday](#) was panned for foregrounding violence and degradation, and the David Bowie film [Stardust](#) – made without the involvement of Bowie’s estate, or the inclusion of his music – currently holds a [21% rating](#) on criticism aggregator Rotten Tomatoes.

Forthcoming music biopics include projects on Celine Dion, Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Marianne Faithfull, Michael Jackson, Teddy Pendergrass, Bob Marley and Madonna.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/may/20/cher-announces-biopic-to-be-made-by-mamma-mia-producers>

China

Bytedance CEO stands aside to do more ‘daydreaming’ about the future

Zhang Yiming will change role after saying he lacks the right skills to manage and prefers ‘reading and daydreaming’



Zhang Yiming, founder and chief executive of Bytedance, has quit, saying he is ‘not very social’. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

Zhang Yiming, founder and chief executive of Bytedance, has quit, saying he is ‘not very social’. Photograph: Shannon Stapleton/Reuters

Agence France-Presse

Thu 20 May 2021 01.57 EDT

The Chinese boss of TikTok’s parent company has said he is leaving the role because he lacks managerial skills and preferred “reading and daydreaming” to running the tech giant.

Zhang Yiming, the co-founder of Bytedance – which created the popular short video TikTok app – [said on Thursday](#) that he will step down as chief executive and transition to a new role by the end of the year focusing on “long-term strategy”.

Liang Rubo, with whom he set up the firm, will take over the role.

Beijing has tightened the screws on China’s booming tech sector, levying fines – including on Bytedance last month – for allegedly flouting monopoly rules, and issuing stark warnings to the coterie of billionaire digital bosses about their responsibilities to society.

But in an unusually candid open memo by one of Asia’s new tech rich, Zhang said: “The truth is, I lack some of the skills that make an ideal manager.

[The new food stars of TikTok](#)
[Read more](#)

“I’m more interested in analysing organisational and market principles... than actually managing people.”

The 38-year-old added that he is also “not very social, preferring solitary activities like being online, reading, listening to music, and daydreaming about what may be possible”.

Zhang has also been under enormous pressure to convince the world that TikTok will not hand data over to China’s ruling Communist party, while also protecting his image at home by not appearing to give in to demands from the west.

News of his departure comes as Beijing clamps down on the unprecedented influence of some of China’s biggest technology firms.

E-commerce giant Alibaba [was fined 18.2bn yuan](#) (\$2.78bn) last month as part of a push by regulators to rein in dominant digital platforms.

As Alibaba’s problems mounted, its founder Jack Ma has been unusually absent from the spotlight after speculation that brash comments by him to

regulators brought the hammer down on his firm.

Bytedance was among 34 tech companies summoned by regulators in April that were told to undergo “complete rectification” and “heed the warning” of Alibaba.

TikTok is believed to have around 1 billion users worldwide including more than 100 million in the United States.

While he was US president, Donald Trump made a series of demands on the Chinese company over security concerns, including calls for the [US operations of TikTok be sold](#) to an American company or it would be shut down.

The firm has insisted it would never provide user data to the Chinese government.

ByteDance now has more than 60,000 staff in 30 countries and last year Zhang said they were looking to recruit around 40,000 more.

The company also runs a series of popular products including Douyin - the Chinese version of TikTok - as well as news aggregation app Jinri Toutiao and productivity app Lark, which features cloud storage, chat and calendar functions.

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China

China skyscraper wobble due to ‘winds, rail lines and warmer weather’ – reports

Preliminary verdict in Shenzhen suggests combination of factors led to shaking, and finds no safety problems



The SEG Plaza in Shenzhen, left, which was evacuated after occupants felt it shaking. Photograph: Barcroft Media/Getty Images

The SEG Plaza in Shenzhen, left, which was evacuated after occupants felt it shaking. Photograph: Barcroft Media/Getty Images

*[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei, and agencies
[@heldavidson](#)*

Thu 20 May 2021 00.59 EDT

The wobbling of a skyscraper in the Chinese city of Shenzhen was likely caused by a combination of winds, underground rail lines, and fluctuating temperatures, according to preliminary findings reported by local media.

The near-300m-high (980ft) SEG Plaza first began [shaking on Tuesday afternoon](#), prompting an evacuation of people inside while pedestrians looked on in horror.

There were no earthquakes in the area and local authorities said engineers had not found any safety abnormalities in the building or surrounding environment. Nor did the level of movement exceed building code limits.

Chinese media said a preliminary investigation, confirmed by the department of emergency management of Guangdong province, had found the wobbling was vertical rather than horizontal and that it was caused by a combination of winds, two underground rail lines under the building and the stretch of the steel caused by the rising temperature. The preliminary findings reportedly noted the building does not have [a tuned mass damper](#) – a huge pendulum-like device to prevent excessive swaying.

Meanwhile management of the building rejected reports that it started wobbling for a second time on Wednesday.

[Panic as 300-metre-high skyscraper wobbles in China](#)
[Read more](#)

The 21-year-old building was sealed off to the public but some vendors went back inside to retrieve items. On Wednesday afternoon Jimu News reported two separate vendors said they felt the building shake again. A spokesman for Shenzhen SEG, the building's developer, later denied this, telling reporters management had confirmed no further shaking.

Bystander videos published by local media on Weibo showed the skyscraper shaking as hundreds of terrified pedestrians ran away outside.

00:49

People flee in panic as 300-metre skyscraper wobbles in China – video

The building is named after the semiconductor and electronics manufacturer Shenzhen Electronics Group, whose offices are based in the complex.

It is the 18th tallest tower in Shenzhen, according to the Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat skyscraper database. Building collapses are not rare in [China](#), where lax building standards and breakneck urbanisation lead to constructions being thrown up in haste.

Authorities were yet to say when or if the building would reopen.

“They claim the building is safe. but I bet it will be nerve-racking entering the building,” said one commenter on Weibo.

Others expressed anger, suggesting the government department should move their office to the building, while some urged patience.

“They say ‘some further investigations are needed’. So stop asking and leave them some time. You want some solid conclusions instead of something that was made up, don’t you?”

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[Kate Moss](#)

Kate Moss auctions Sleep With Kate video as non-fungible token

Supermodel is one of a number of famous women asserting control of their image online



A still from Kate Moss's non-fungible token, Sleep With Kate, bids for which have already reached £11,000. Photograph: Courtesy of the Moments in Time Collective

A still from Kate Moss's non-fungible token, Sleep With Kate, bids for which have already reached £11,000. Photograph: Courtesy of the Moments in Time Collective

[Priya Elan](#) *Deputy fashion editor*

Thu 20 May 2021 02.00 EDT

Kate Moss joins a growing number of female celebrities who are attempting to take back some control of their own image using the new art form of

[NFTs](#) (non-fungible tokens) – one-of-a-kind assets that are linked to photos, videos, audio and other types of digital files, and can be bought and sold.

The supermodel is auctioning a video of herself sleeping, called Sleep With Kate, which is attracting bids of up to £11,000. It is being sold with two other NFTs, also video artworks, Walk With Kate and Drive With Kate, with all proceeds going to the mental health charity Gurls Talk.

In a statement [on Instagram](#), the supermodel said: “Time is the thing that there is never enough of. I’m intrigued by who will want to own a moment of mine. I was also drawn to the idea that this ownership can be used to help others in need hopefully gain more of it.”

In April the model Emily Ratajkowski announced she was auctioning an NFT of herself standing in front of an image by the photographer Richard Prince. “The digital terrain should be a place where women can share their likeness as they choose, controlling the usage of their image and receiving whatever potential capital attached,” she [tweeted](#). “Instead, the internet has more frequently served as a space where others exploit and distribute images of women’s bodies without their consent and for another’s profit.”

[The reality behind NFTs – podcast](#)
[Read more](#)

She said she wanted to use the new medium of NFTs to set a precedent for women and [ownership online](#) through a blockchain – a set of digital contracts – that “allows women to have ongoing authority over their image and to receive rightful compensation for its usage and distribution”.

Others such as Zoë Roth, the woman in the [disaster girl meme](#), and Laina Morris, behind the [Overly Attached Girlfriend meme](#), sold their photos as an NFT for \$500,000 and \$411,000 respectively, gaining ownership back of an image that was shared by millions.

[Can anyone become an NFT collector? I tried it to find out](#)
[Read more](#)

“Images in the public domain are owned by everyone by definition,” said Amit Katwala, the senior editor of Wired UK. “NFTs are attaching the notion of ownership to something that can’t really be owned – you don’t own the image itself but you own the right to call yourself the owner of that image.”

The fashion designer Edeline Lee, who makes NFT clothing – fashion items that exist only in the digital world – believes this conversation is still evolving. “People in the crypto universe have different tastes and viewpoints from the ‘flat’ world, so the market and the narrative is being formed around their values,” she said. “Blockchain technology is great because authenticity and ownership is indisputable, and everyone can publicly see who exactly owns the piece.”

Elena Silenok, the CEO of Clothia, a fashion company that creates clothing in NFTs, agrees. “The rules haven’t yet been set in stone,” she said. “[They] are still a very new medium, so we are very excited to see what the future holds. The fundamental benefits surrounding ownership and transparency are so tremendous that I’m sure we’ll continue to see new use cases across industries – be it in the form of experiences, art or access.”

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Headlines friday 21 may 2021

- [BBC Government considers shake-up after damning Diana report](#)
- [Live UK politics: Diana could have been 'inveigled' into BBC interview, says Buckland](#)
- [BBC Prince William condemns 'deceit' over Diana interview](#)
- [Harry and Oprah Prince says trauma led him to use alcohol and drugs](#)

[Diana, Princess of Wales](#)

Boris Johnson: BBC's Diana interview failings must never happen again

PM says he is 'obviously very concerned' after inquiry condemns Martin Bashir's 1995 broadcast

00:30

Boris Johnson: BBC failings in Diana interview must never happen again – video

[Ben Quinn](#)

[@BenQuinn75](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 08.33 EDT

Boris Johnson has called on the BBC to get its house in order as a senior minister said [damning findings](#) about Martin Bashir's 1995 Panorama interview with Diana, Princess of Wales, means the governance of the BBC and how it operates will have to be examined.

Their comments came as the Metropolitan police said they would assess the contents of John Dyson's report "to ensure there is no significant new evidence", after previously deciding not to begin a criminal investigation.

The prime minister also added to pressure on the [BBC](#), saying he was "obviously very concerned" about the report.

"I can only image the feelings of the royal family and I hope very much that the BBC will be taking every possible step to make sure nothing like this ever happens again," he said.

Earlier, the Met said it had determined in March that "it was not appropriate to begin a criminal investigation into allegations of unlawful activity in connection with a documentary broadcast in 1995, but should any significant

new evidence emerge it would be assessed”.

Asked by the BBC’s Today programme about potential police involvement, Justice Secretary Robert Buckland said it was a matter for the police and the independent prosecutorial authorities, but he added: “I think anybody reading the headlines and the summary of Lord Dyson’s findings will be struck by his use of those words, fraud and deception and the like, and clearly those sort of issues, I’m afraid, could and do arise.”

Dyson’s report into how a BBC interview with Diana and the “very striking” reactions of her sons to its findings had raised “some very serious questions” for the broadcaster, Buckland said.

“The government has to, in the light of these serious findings, consider the matter very carefully and comprehensively indeed,” Buckland told Radio 4’s Today programme.

“Because it wasn’t just the decision of a reporter or a production team, there were decisions made much further up the chain about the conduct of these individuals that have now proved, according to Lord Dyson, to be unfounded and wrong.

[The Guardian view on the Diana inquiry: a piercing exposé | Editorial](#)
[Read more](#)

“And therefore, the government does have a responsibility to look very carefully to see whether the governance of the BBC does need reform in the light of these devastating findings.”

A former chair of the BBC, Michael Grade, meanwhile described [Prince William’s criticism of the BBC](#) as “unprecedented” and called for “serious structural change” within the corporation.

“I think there has to be an editorial board of independent, outside specialist non-conflicted journalists who can hold BBC journalism to account, and review its coverage of elections, Brexit, the Middle East and so on, but which will be a very good sounding board,” he said.

Grade said he did not believe any government would “use something as crude as this to bash the BBC with” because the public would not stand for it.

02:15

Prince William slams 'deceit' of Diana BBC interview – video

But amid fears among others that the government would seize the opportunity to move forward with controversial changes to the BBC, Buckland said “serious questions” were now being raised for the corporation on the morning after William launched a furious attack on the failings.

Buckland told Sky News: “I think an apology is a start but I don’t think it is the end of it, which is why, all of us, looking at its governance, looking at the way it operates, need to do that in order to make sure that this sort of behaviour, this sort of thing, doesn’t happen again.”

His comments came as renewed pressure was heaped on the BBC on Thursday night in a televised statement by William, who said the “deceitful” way the BBC secured an interview with Diana had “substantially influenced” its content.

“She was failed not just by a rogue reporter but by leaders at the BBC who looked the other way,” he said, as a similarly scathing statement was released by his brother, Prince Harry, who said the deceptive practices exposed had played a part in their mother’s death.

There was also fresh criticism of the broadcaster from the graphic designer Matt Wiessler, who was commissioned by Bashir to create the mocked-up documents. He said there was a culture within the BBC whereby it admitted mistakes only “under duress”.

He told the Today programme: “I just feel that there is this culture within the BBC that the little people – me being the whistleblower – that we don’t really need to be addressed.”

[An inquiry](#), conducted by Dyson, a former supreme court judge, found that Bashir had engaged in “deceitful behaviour” by commissioning fake bank

statements to land the interview – a “serious breach” of the BBC’s editorial guidelines.

In his 127-page report, Dyson also criticised the conduct of Tony Hall, the corporation’s former director general, who was accused of overseeing a flawed and “woefully ineffective” internal investigation into the issue. When other media organisations began asking questions about how the BBC had secured the world exclusive, Dyson said the corporation “covered up in its press logs” what it knew.

The crisis for the BBC comes after a [group of influential figures concerned about the future of public service broadcasting this week accused the government](#) of undermining confidence in Britain’s creative industries with “drip-fed” stories suggesting plans for the privatisation of public broadcasters.

The accusations, made at the launch of the [British Broadcasting Challenge](#) group, coincided with the publication of [an open letter](#) to the culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, signed by more than 120 people, including the writers Hilary Mantel and Salman Rushdie, who voicing alarm about the BBC’s future.

A strategic review of public service broadcasting is already under way, with an advisory panel appointed by the government in November.

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[BBC](#)

Prince William condemns BBC ‘deceit’ over Diana interview

Harry also criticises media practices after damning report about Martin Bashir Panorama programme

02:15

Prince William slams 'deceit' of Diana BBC interview – video

[Mark Sweney](#) and [Caroline Davies](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 17.00 EDT

Princess Diana’s sons have condemned the [BBC](#) over the Martin Bashir Panorama interview with their mother, saying the corporation’s failures contributed to the fear she felt in her final years and was part of a “culture of exploitation and unethical practices that ultimately took her life”.

In a blistering statement, Prince William said BBC leaders had failed [Diana, Princess of Wales](#), with their “woeful incompetence”, and that the “deceitful way” the interview was obtained had substantially influenced what his mother had said. He said he was saddened the corporation had not properly investigated complaints earlier and that his mother had never known she had been deceived.

Prince Harry said: “The ripple effect of a culture of exploitation and unethical practices ultimately took her life.”

It follows an inquiry, conducted by the former supreme court judge John Dyson, into the broadcast.

It found that Bashir had engaged in “deceitful behaviour” by commissioning fake bank statements to land the interview – a “serious breach” of the BBC’s editorial guidelines, Dyson concluded.

In his 127-page report, the judge also criticised the conduct of Tony Hall, the corporation's former director-general, who was accused of overseeing a flawed and "woefully ineffective" internal probe into the issue. As the then head of BBC News, he was aware Bashir had told "serious and unexplained lies" about what he had done to persuade the princess to speak to him.

And when other media began asking questions about how the BBC had secured the world exclusive, Dyson said the corporation "covered up in its press logs" what it knew.

"Without justification, the BBC fell short of the high standards of integrity and transparency which are its hallmark," the report said.

In his statement, Harry said: "Our mother was an incredible woman who dedicated her life to service. She was resilient, brave, and unquestionably honest. The ripple effect of a culture of exploitation and unethical practices ultimately took her life."

"To those who have taken some form of accountability, thank you for owning it. That is the first step towards justice and truth. Yet what deeply concerns me is that practices like these – and even worse – are still widespread today. Then, and now, it's bigger than one outlet, one network, or one publication. Our mother lost her life because of this, and nothing has changed."

In his statement, William said Lord Dyson's findings were "extremely concerning."

He said the investigation had found BBC employees had: "lied and used fake documents to obtain the interview with my mother; made lurid and false claims about the royal family which played on her fears and fuelled paranoia; displayed woeful incompetence when investigating complaints and concerns about the programme; were evasive in their reporting to the media and covered up what they knew from their internal investigation."

His statement added: "It is my view that the deceitful way the interview was obtained substantially influenced what my mother said. The interview was a

major contribution to making my parents' relationship worse and has since hurt countless others.

“It brings indescribable sadness to know that the BBC's failures contributed significantly to her fear, paranoia and isolation that I remember from those final years with her.

“But what saddens me most, is that if the BBC had properly investigated the complaints and concerns first raised in 1995, my mother would have known that she had been deceived. She was failed not just by a rogue reporter, but by leaders at the BBC who looked the other way rather than asking the tough questions.”

He said the programme should never be aired again. “In an era of fake news, public service broadcasting and a free press have never been more important. These failings, identified by investigative journalists, not only let my mother down, and my family down; they let the public down too.”

Lord Grade, who was the BBC chairman between 2004 and 2006 – said the BBC's “cover-up”, had been worse than Bashir's behaviour. “It's taken 25 years to get the truth.”

The devastating findings provoked widespread condemnation and prompted a series of apologies from current and former BBC executives – including one from the corporation to the royal family.

The corporation also handed back every award it received for the interview, including a Bafta.

Diana's brother, Earl Spencer, said he “draws a line” between the Panorama interview and her death two years later.

00:55

'Diana didn't know who to trust': Earl Spencer speaks about Bashir interview – video

The BBC's current director general, [Tim Davie](#), said the corporation accepted “in full” the report by Dyson, the former master of the rolls who

was appointed to look into the circumstances surrounding the interview.

“Although the report states that Diana, Princess of Wales, was keen on the idea of an interview with the BBC, it is clear that the process for securing the interview fell far short of what audiences have a right to expect,” said Davie.

“The BBC should have made greater effort to get to the bottom of what happened at the time and been more transparent about what it knew. While the BBC cannot turn back the clock after a quarter of a century, we can make a full and unconditional apology.”

Some bonds go back a very long way. pic.twitter.com/BFpBiScOyT

— Charles Spencer (@cspencer1508) [May 20, 2021](#)

The 1995 interview made Bashir a star after an audience of almost 23 million tuned in to hear Diana reveal details of her life and make the famous comment that there were “three of us in this marriage”, in reference to Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall.

However, Bashir used fake bank documents to persuade Earl Spencer that the media were paying associates of the family for information – in an attempt to secure a more sensational and revealing interview.

“I apologised then, and I do so again now, over the fact I asked for bank statements to be mocked up,” said Bashir, in a statement. “It was a stupid thing to do and was an action I deeply regret.”

However, Bashir, who quit the BBC last week, insisted Diana would have committed to an interview regardless of the deception – Dyson concluded the princess was “keen on the idea of a television interview” with “any experienced and reputable reporter”.

The BBC has a handwritten note from Diana stating that the documents played “no part in her decision to take part in the interview”.

“I re-iterate that the bank statements had no bearing whatsoever on the personal choice by Princess Diana to take part in the interview,” said Bashir.

Hall’s investigation in 1996 concluded Bashir “wasn’t thinking” when he commissioned the graphic but was ultimately an “honest and honourable man”.

However, Dyson said the investigation “covered up” facts about how Bashir had secured the interview and he heavily criticised its conclusion that his dealings with Diana were “absolutely straight and fair”.

“This conclusion was not justified, even on an interim basis,” said Dyson. “The investigation by Lord Hall and Anne Sloman [a former senior executive at BBC News] was flawed and woefully ineffective. In light of [Bashir’s] serious and unexplained lies, Lord Hall could not reasonably have concluded, as he did, that Mr Bashir was an honest and honourable man.”

Responding to the report, Hall, who left the BBC last summer, said he accepted his inquiry “fell well short of what was required” and that he was “wrong to give Martin Bashir the benefit of the doubt”.

Lord Birt, director general of the BBC at the time of the interview, called Bashir a “rogue reporter” and said the findings of the report reveal a “shocking blot” on the BBC’s editorial integrity and reputation.

“We now know that the BBC harboured a rogue reporter on Panorama who fabricated an elaborate, detailed but wholly false account of his dealings with Earl Spencer and Princess Diana,” said Birt, who apologised to those affected by the deception. “This is a shocking blot on the BBC’s enduring commitment to honest journalism.”

Lord Grade said the reported raised legitimate questions about “how many more cover-ups are there in the files of BBC journalism that we haven’t been told about”.

Hall was director general at the BBC when the broadcaster took Bashir on again as religion editor in 2016.

Bashir [quit the BBC on health grounds](#) last week the same day Dyson delivered his report to the corporation, after being on sick leave for several months. The 58-year-old has had quadruple heart bypass surgery and been seriously unwell with Covid-related complications.

The BBC aired a 35-minute Panorama investigation into the 1995 interview – titled Princess Diana, Martin Bashir and the BBC – on BBC One at 7pm on Thursday. It had been scheduled to air on Monday night.

Mark Stephens, media lawyer at Howard Kennedy, said that the publication of the report could open the door to legal action by those adversely affected by the deceit.

Ahead of the publication, Earl Spencer shared a black and white family photograph of himself and Diana as children. He tweeted the image alongside the words: “Some bonds go back a very long way.”

The picture shows the siblings sitting side by side in the summer sun, with a young Charles wearing trunks and Diana appearing to be in a swimsuit.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/may/20/bbc-martin-bashir-used-deceitful-behaviour-to-secure-diana-interview-report-finds>

Prince Harry

Prince Harry says trauma of Diana's death led him to use alcohol and drugs

Duke of Sussex says he tried to 'mask' his emotions and to 'feel less like I was feeling' on TV series The Me You Can't See



In this image provided by Apple, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, appears in a scene from “The Me You Can’t See”. Photograph: AP

In this image provided by Apple, Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, appears in a scene from “The Me You Can’t See”. Photograph: AP

PA Media

Fri 21 May 2021 01.35 EDT

The Duke of Sussex has said the trauma of his mother's death led him to use alcohol and drugs to mask his emotions and to “feel less like I was feeling”.

Prince Harry was 12 years old when Diana, Princess of Wales, died in August 1997 in a car crash while being pursued by the press in Paris.

In the first three episodes of Apple TV's *The Me You Can't See*, he addressed traumatic memories from his childhood including the moment he was famously photographed with his brother, father, uncle and grandfather walking behind Diana's coffin at her funeral.

[The Me You Can't See review – Oprah, Harry and the perils of A-list activism](#)

[Read more](#)

“For me the thing I remember the most was the sound of the horses’ hooves going along the Mall,” the 36-year-old told his series co-host [Oprah Winfrey](#).

“It was like I was outside of my body and just walking along doing what was expected of me. [I was] showing one tenth of the emotion that everybody else was showing: This was my mum – you never even met her.”

He also told Winfrey his family did not speak about Diana's death and expected him to deal with the resulting press attention and mental distress.

“My father used to say to me when I was younger, he used to say to both William and I: ‘Well it was like that for me so it's going to be like that for you’,” he said.

“That doesn't make sense. Just because you suffered doesn't mean that your kids have to suffer, in fact quite the opposite – if you suffered, do everything you can to make sure that whatever negative experiences you had, that you can make it right for your kids,” he said.

Harry said his family told him to “play the game” and life would improve. But he objected, telling Winfrey: “I've got a hell of a lot of my mum in me.”

“The only way to free yourself and break out is to tell the truth.”

[Prince Harry appears to criticise way he was raised by his father](#)

[Read more](#)

The series focuses on mental health, with Harry telling Winfrey the trauma of the loss caused him to suffer anxiety and severe panic attacks from ages 28 to 32. “I was just all over the place mentally,” he said.

“Every time I put a suit on and tie on ... having to do the role, and go, ‘right, game face’, look in the mirror and say, ‘let’s go’. Before I even left the house I was pouring with sweat. I was in fight or flight mode.”

He said: “I was willing to drink, I was willing to take drugs, I was willing to try and do the things that made me feel less like I was feeling.”

He told Winfrey he would drink a week’s worth of alcohol on a Friday or Saturday night “not because I was enjoying it but because I was trying to mask something”.

During the first three episodes of Apple TV’s *The Me You Can’t See*, he also addressed harassment on social media of him and his wife, Meghan.

“Every single ask, request, warning, whatever it is, to stop just got met with total silence or total neglect,” he told Winfrey, referring to his attempts to get assistance from his family with the attacks levelled at the Sussexes online.

“We spent four years trying to make it work. We did everything that we possibly could to stay there and carry on doing the role and doing the job.”

He did not go to his family when Meghan felt suicidal because he was ashamed the situation had got “that bad” and also suspected the royals would not have been able to help.

“That was one of the biggest reasons to leave, feeling trapped and feeling controlled through fear, both by the media and by the system itself which never encouraged the talking about this kind of trauma,” he said.

“Certainly now I will never be bullied into silence.”

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2021.05.21 - Coronavirus

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- [Myanmar Doctors sound Covid warning as neighbours see record cases](#)
- [India variant Confirmed cases of variant in UK rise 160% in a week](#)
- [New York Governor announces \\$5m Covid vaccine lottery incentive](#)

Taiwan

‘Not a lot of trust’: Taiwan wrestles with home working in wake of Covid surge

Work culture of presenteeism sees some staff told to switch on GPS location tracking by distrustful managers

- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



Taiwan has a strong culture of presenteeism at work. Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo

Taiwan has a strong culture of presenteeism at work. Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo



[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 00.00 EDT

When Amanda asked a colleague to bring her laptop home from their tech-company office, anticipating that Taipei was about to join the ranks of global cities suddenly working remotely, managers refused to release it. She told him to grab it anyway, and soon enough the Taiwanese capital was placed under restrictions amid a shock coronavirus outbreak. Her company soon sent an office-wide email saying that 50% of staff would be staying home.

“But it still had reminders that working from home means you are working at home and your equipment must be connected at all times, and you’re expected to work eight hours and this is not a holiday,” she says.

“There’s not a lot of trust.”

Taiwan has recorded more than 1,400 cases of the Kent Covid-19 variant since Friday, the first large outbreak the island has experienced since the pandemic began. On Wednesday [the whole island was put on alert level 3](#) of a four-tier system, which includes people being asked to work remotely where possible. It has caught people unaware, and is forcing businesses to

address a deeply entrenched culture of presenteeism, which demands that [people must show up to be counted](#).

“Taiwanese work culture is incapable of trusting that its employees can work effectively from home,” says the [Taipei writer Kathy Cheng](#), who collects anecdotes of various attempts at or refusals to allow working from home.

There are many instances where working from home is not viable, such as in Taiwan’s dominant manufacturing industry, and the issue often disproportionately affects lower paid and [more vulnerable workers](#). The government says it does not want to impose a lockdown, and in the absence of a government order, companies that should be able to switch to remote working have struggled to develop concrete plans, or have instead implemented strict monitoring at work.

Some have resisted entirely, and on Taipei’s first working day under level 3 there was still a significant number of commuters.

“After the pandemic situation got serious in Taipei (and many companies have already started working from home), management still insisted it’s safe to commute in to the office,” says one woman who works for a leading apparel manufacturer.

One woman says her HR representative claimed that employees couldn’t be trusted to work from home; another reports that their managers suggested snap polls to test whether people were at their desks; others have been told to enable GPS-tagging of their location when working from home. The intense distrust and resistance in the middle of a health crisis has drawn frustration.

“It is unfortunate, that over the last 18 months or so while the pandemic raged outside of Taiwan’s borders, that companies in general haven’t actively tried to develop contingencies and strategies for a transition to remote work,” [writes James Bell](#), founder of a Taipei food company.

The level 3 alert encourages businesses to facilitate flexible work, but no financial or childcare support has been announced for parents, even after schools were ordered to close.

Amanda, who did not want her real name published, appreciates her employer's efforts to send workers home, but says there is no flexibility for employees who have children needing homeschooling, or for those who live close to the office and can avoid public transport. The division of who should come in and who should stay at home was also left to departments.

"Some are asking us to come in half the week; some are doing one week on, one week off ... you're just mixing people willy nilly," she says, adding concerns about ventilation in the sealed, air-conditioned building.

Taiwan is likely to see further restrictions imposed if the outbreak isn't contained soon, and health experts have raised concerns that authorities and the population – having lived mostly without Covid for so long – are not aware of the most recent information about how it is transmitted.

Not all businesses are struggling with the arrangements, however. Law firm Winkler Partners immediately closed to the public on Monday and said most staff would be working from home. Tern Bicycles' Taiwan office went into working-from-home mode two weeks ago when cases started to rise, with its sales director, Matthew Davis, saying it had largely ironed out the kinks after taking similar precautions in early 2020.

"We've got about 60 employees, a mixture of about 80% local staff and 20% international ... It's a challenge for everybody to get used to the different environment and switch to online-only communication," he says. "[But] the bigger thing was biting the bullet and making the decision."

Davis, who has lived in Taiwan for 16 years, says the culture of presenteeism was not just imposed from the top, but he hoped the current situation might prompt mass cultural change.

"Our focus is always on employee output and capability, not physical presence ... Our belief is that's the way forward and how to get and retain the best people. Maybe there's some efficiencies in this that lead to better work-life balance."

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Global development

Myanmar doctors sound Covid warning as neighbours see record cases

The potential arrival of a highly transmissible variant could overwhelm health systems already struggling after military coup



Police march in Yangon as protesters gathered for a demonstration against the military coup in February. Photograph: Ye Aung Thu/AFP/Getty Images

Police march in Yangon as protesters gathered for a demonstration against the military coup in February. Photograph: Ye Aung Thu/AFP/Getty Images

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[About this content](#)

[Lizzy Davies](#) and [Rebecca Ratcliffe](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 04.59 EDT

Doctors in [Myanmar](#) have warned the country would be unable to cope with a major outbreak of Covid-19 as hospitals and medical facilities struggle to function in the aftermath of February's military coup.

Fears are growing about the potential impact of a highly transmissible variant as neighbouring countries, [chiefly India](#) but also [Thailand](#) and [Laos](#), battle record numbers of Covid cases.

Last year, more than 3,000 people in Myanmar died when the pandemic hit, with the UN warning the country was particularly vulnerable given its weak public health system.

But there are concerns a third wave could prove far more deadly because, since the [military seized power](#) earlier this year, most hospitals are not operational due to a strike by doctors and other medical workers.

The number of people being tested has plummeted and the vaccination programme has been thrown into confusion. The UN has warned that medics

fear arrest or detention by the junta “at a time when Myanmar needs them the most”.

One doctor based in Yangon said a fresh outbreak would place extraordinary strain on the public healthcare system.

“I think it would be a disaster,” said the medic, who cannot be named for security reasons. “Even in [the] Covid second wave, the government had a shortage of human resources – doctors. That’s why many medics and volunteers helped us with everything. But now, most of the charity clinics’ doctors, medics and volunteers are being arrested by the junta.”

Another doctor, who also cannot be named, agreed: “This could become a perfect storm, and Myanmar is not in a position to respond. Even if the hospital situation normalises to pre-February levels, the capacity will be critically insufficient to deal with a large outbreak.”

A medic in Mandalay, Myanmar’s second biggest city, said she had treated about 20 Covid patients in recent months and believed the virus was circulating at a low level. “Fortunately it is not spreading massively,” she said.

She worries that health services would be unable to cope with an outbreak if new variants, such as the strain first detected in India, spread over the border.



Medical workers protest against the junta in Mandalay earlier this month.
Photograph: SH/Penta Press/Rex/Shutterstock

Mandalay general hospital is barely functioning, and there is only one small charity facility capable of treating patients with severe Covid in the city, she said. It can handle about 20 patients, and equipment is basic. “Compared to the hospital, we have no HFNC [to give patients oxygen] and no patient monitors [which show vital signs],” she said, adding they have just oxygen cylinders and medicines.

A private hospital in the city is also capable of caring for patients who develop pneumonia, she said, but can accept only a very limited number of people, and the medical bills are unaffordable for most. “For the treatment cost you could buy a car,” she said.

Patients who test positive for Covid are referred to the military hospital for treatment, but are too afraid to go. She fears that she could be targeted by security forces for caring for patients outside of the military facility.

Alarmed by the possibility of a major new outbreak, the charity Medical Action Myanmar (Mam) has said it is [raising funds for oxygen concentrators](#) to treat patients. A Mam UK spokesperson said: “We are frightened of the impact that Covid will have on an already compromised population.”

[‘Pray for Myanmar’: Miss Universe pageant gets political](#)
[Read more](#)

According to the [Myanmar ministry of health and sports](#), to date, the country has had more than 143,000 confirmed Covid cases and 3,216 deaths. However, as testing levels have fallen to a fraction of what they were before the coup it is impossible to know the true scale of infections.



A Covid-19 vaccination site at the Ayeyarwady Foundation quarantine centre in Yangon, January. The vaccination programme has been thrown into confusion since the coup. Photograph: Nyein Chan Naing/EPA

Dr Khin Khin Gyi, speaking for the ministry, [warned last month](#): “There is a possibility of a third wave of the pandemic coming.”

For the medics taking part in the Civil Disobedience Movement against the junta, which in turn has imposed a violent crackdown on protesters, the prospect of a health emergency during the strike brings much soul-searching.

“Yes, it is a very difficult decision,” said the doctor in Yangon. “The ethical and moral dilemma obviously.” But the surgeon said they would continue “until we win”.

“The unity among junior doctors, thinking about the brighter future if we have democracy, the creativity of generation Z and the resistance of the people (especially the poor ones) against the junta. I think those are the things that motivate me every day.

“There are people who died resisting the junta. This is the least I can do.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/may/21/myanmar-doctors-sound-covid-warning-as-neighbours-see-record-cases>

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Coronavirus

Confirmed cases of India variant in UK rise 160% in a week

Latest figures from PHE come as another new variant is designated ‘under investigation’

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



So far more than 33,000 test kits have been given out in Bolton as part of the surge testing programme, and over 3,400 test kits have been given out in door-to-door visits. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

So far more than 33,000 test kits have been given out in Bolton as part of the surge testing programme, and over 3,400 test kits have been given out in door-to-door visits. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

[Nicola Davis](#) *Science correspondent*
[@NicolaKSDavis](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 14.31 EDT

The number of confirmed cases in the UK of the Covid variant of concern that was first detected in India has risen more than 160% in the past week, data shows, and another new variant has been designated as “under investigation”.

Data from Public Health England (PHE) shows there have now been [3,424 confirmed cases](#) of the B.1.617.2 variant in the UK, up from 1,313 cases confirmed by last Thursday.

“Cases are still predominantly affecting the north-west of England – particularly Bolton – and London, but we are seeing clusters of cases across the country,” PHE said.

The figures are likely to be an underestimate as there is a time lag between samples being collected and the variant in positive tests being determined. PHE says the majority of samples relating to the new total date to around 10-14 days ago.

“Accounting for the proportion of samples that have been sequenced, we are likely to have had over 11,000 cases up to 15 May due to the Indian variant,” said Paul Hunter, a professor in medicine at the University of East Anglia.

According to PHE, evidence suggests that B.1.617.2 may be more transmissible than the Kent variant that emerged last year and became dominant in the UK.

Dr Jenny Harries, the chief executive of the UK Health Security Agency, said it was very important that people did not become complacent as the UK starts to get back to normal life.

“As cases of [B.1.617.2] continue to rise, it is absolutely vital that people living in areas where prevalence is high come forward to get the vaccine. It is the best defence we have against the spread of this disease,” she said.

Another variant of the coronavirus has been designated as “under investigation”, meaning it is potentially worrisome and requires further research.

Known as VUI-21MAY-01 or AV.1, the variant has been found in the [UK, Greece and Chad](#), and it is not yet clear in which country it was first detected. PHE said there had been 49 cases in the UK to date, mainly concentrated in Yorkshire and the Humber.

PHE has said there was no evidence Covid vaccines would be less effective in protecting people against severe illness and hospitalisation from either B.1.617.2 or AV.1.

So far more than 33,000 test kits have been given out in Bolton as part of a surge testing programme and more than 3,400 test kits have been given out in door-to-door visits.

[Another report](#) released by PHE on Thursday revealed suspected outbreaks of acute respiratory infections such as Covid had risen 59% in a week in England, with 257 reported in the week ending 16 May, up from 162 the week before.

The case rate of Covid per 100,000 people was lowest in the south-west, at 8.9, and highest in the north-west, at 38.5.

While some have pointed to the success of [areas such as Sefton](#) in tackling a surge of B.1.617.2, Sefton council’s director of public health, Margaret Jones, told the Guardian that the affected area already had high vaccination uptake and was relatively affluent, with few houses of multiple occupation and good support for self-isolation. What’s more, Sefton had a low background Covid rate before the outbreak there was first detected.

Jones said several steps to manage the outbreak were taken before it was revealed that B.1.617.2 was involved and surge testing began, including detailed contact-tracing and offering advice and support. “I think other areas face a bigger challenge than we had,” she said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/may/20/confirmed-cases-of-india-variant-in-england-rise-160-in-a-week>

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New York

New York governor announces \$5m Covid vaccine lottery incentive

- Vaccinated people to receive ticket for \$5m lottery prize
- Nearly half of New Yorkers have received full vaccine dose



A vaccination site at the 34th St subway station in Manhattan. The new incentive will allow those who get vaccinated to receive a \$20 lottery ticket for the \$5m Mega Multiplier Lottery. Photograph: Lev Radin/Pacific Press/Rex/Shutterstock

A vaccination site at the 34th St subway station in Manhattan. The new incentive will allow those who get vaccinated to receive a \$20 lottery ticket for the \$5m Mega Multiplier Lottery. Photograph: Lev Radin/Pacific Press/Rex/Shutterstock

[Coral Murphy Marcos](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 15.32 EDT

New Yorkers could win up to \$5m from the [New York](#) state lottery if they get vaccinated against Covid-19 at a state-run clinic, Governor Andrew Cuomo announced on Thursday.

[Rudy Giuliani's son Andrew announces run for New York governor](#)
[Read more](#)

The new incentive, called the “Vax & Scratch”, will allow those who get vaccinated to receive a \$20 lottery ticket for the \$5m Mega Multiplier Lottery.

Thirteen winners will get a monetary prize ranging from \$20 to \$5m.

New York's initiative is one of many incentives that have been recently launched across the US as officials search for new ways to boost the dwindling demand for Covid-19 vaccines.

Ohio offered a similar incentive two weeks ago, where residents who received their first jab could win one of five \$1m prizes. Thus far, Ohio has seen an [increase in vaccinations](#) after weeks of decline.

[In New Jersey](#), residents 21 and older can get a free beer after receiving their first vaccination. In Alabama, residents who received a vaccine or Covid test were able to [take a free drive](#) on the famed Talladega Superspeedway.

Joe Biden's goal is to have at least one vaccine dose [administered to 70%](#) of the country's adult population by 4 July. But despite an early surge in demand, vaccination rates have been dropping in recent weeks.

At least [38.1% of Americans](#) are fully vaccinated. In New York, at least 42.9% of the population has received their second dose of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, or Johnson & Johnson's single-shot vaccine.

2021.05.21 - Spotlight

- [From Beyoncé to David Bowie 10 of the best Glastonbury sets ever](#)
- [Duran Duran Almost everybody in a situation like ours sabotages themselves](#)
- [‘Luckily I’m very decisive’ Liverpool’s new mayor plans fresh start for city](#)
- [Will you get douze points? Take our fiendish Eurovision quiz](#)

10 of the best ...Music

From Beyoncé to David Bowie: 10 of the best Glastonbury sets ever



You had to Bey there ... Beyoncé at Glastonbury. Photograph: Cathal McNaughton/Reuters

You had to Bey there ... Beyoncé at Glastonbury. Photograph: Cathal McNaughton/Reuters

Ahead of a livestreamed version of the festival, here are some of the biggest and best performances from years gone by



[Dorian Lynskey](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 04.00 EDT

Beyoncé **2011**

Jay-Z walked so that Beyoncé could run. By facing down a reactionary backlash in 2008 (Hip-hop? At Glastonbury?!), he left the festival's future wide open. Three years later, [Beyoncé was imperial](#) from the moment she opened with Crazy in Love and fireworks. Her glamorous spectacle, studded with savvy cover versions, permanently reset expectations of what a Glastonbury headline set could be.

David Bowie **2000**

Emerging from a decade of hit-and-miss experimentation, Bowie made peace with his back catalogue on [his return to Worthy Farm](#) for the first time in 29 years. A dream setlist, executed with lashings of charm and gusto,

instantly revived his reputation overnight and opened the door to future headliners like Paul McCartney and Bruce Springsteen. He was ready to be loved again.

Blur

2009

Blur's big reunion packed an emotional wallop which nobody fully anticipated. Yes, there was Phil Daniels and "woo-hoo!", but the sad songs meant the most: the crowd singing Tender's healing refrain between the encores; Damon Albarn sitting down to weep after To the End; the dreamy wonder of The Universal. Warmer and wiser, [Blur](#) weren't just reunited but subtly transformed.

Mary J Blige

2015



Photograph: Jim Dyson/Getty

Sometimes one song can make a set unforgettable. The heavens opened for the duration of Blige's I-will-survive showstopper No More Drama, turning

it into a cosmic battle with the elements. Perhaps the festival's single greatest vocal performance, it achieved the impossible: making one grateful for rain.

New Order

1987



Photograph: Local World/Rex/Shutterstock

The first time [New Order](#) played Glastonbury, in 1981, they were a boozy mess with just one album. They returned armed with confidence, hits and lasers at a time when the festival's musical diet was still rather wholegrain. A frenzied final version of Sister Ray illustrated how far and how fast they'd travelled.

The Killers

2004

Between the booking and the performance, the Killers' debut album went supernova, with the result that the overflow from the New Bands tent almost

filled the surrounding field. To be within earshot was a thrill, but to be at the epicentre during Mr Brightside was like being strapped to a rocket.

Leonard Cohen

2008



Photograph: Luke MacGregor/Reuters

The 73-year-old was only a few weeks into his comeback tour when he played to the biggest crowd of his life, and he was visibly overwhelmed by the love of a new generation. What sticks in the mind is Cohen's expression of amazed gratitude as tens of thousands of people passionately sang Hallelujah with him to the accompaniment of the setting sun. A real moment.

Pulp

1995

Thank guitarist John Squire's broken collarbone for what was arguably Britpop's finest hour, because it obliged Pulp to replace the faltering [Stone Roses](#) at the 11th hour and seize the opportunity by the throat. Like

Radiohead in 1997 and Coldplay in 2002, they were playing future classics fresh out of the box and seemed to grow in stature with every song. Right time, right place, right band.

Orbital **1994**



Photograph: Mick Hutson/Redferns

The suggestion that live [dance music could go toe-to-toe with rock](#) was still very much up for debate in 1994, until two unassuming men with machines and lights eclipsed even Britpop's rising stars in terms of feel-the-future euphoria, cementing Glastonbury's relationship with rave culture. "A religious experience," according to fans and future headliners the Chemical Brothers.

Lizzo **2019**

[Stormzy brought the gravitas, but Lizzo threw the best party](#) at the last pre-lockdown Glastonbury. Having as much fun as it is possible for a human

being to have without incurring serious injury, she was part dance instructor, part motivational speaker and part best friend. The songs were pretty great, too. The secret to Glastonbury success: look like you're ecstatic to be there.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/may/21/from-beyonce-to-david-bowie-10-of-the-best-glastonbury-sets-ever>

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Duran Duran

Interview

Duran Duran: ‘Almost everybody in a situation like ours sabotages themselves’

[Laura Barton](#)



Duran Duran ... (clockwise from left) John Taylor, Simon Le Bon, Nick Rhodes, Roger Taylor. Photograph: Nefer Suvio

Duran Duran ... (clockwise from left) John Taylor, Simon Le Bon, Nick Rhodes, Roger Taylor. Photograph: Nefer Suvio

Forty years on from their debut album, the new romantics have teamed with Giorgio Moroder and Graham Coxon for a new LP. They discuss their wild heyday, ageing with grace – and which vaccine they would rather have



Fri 21 May 2021 01.00 EDT

“It’s hard to believe that this was the last place Ziggy Stardust ever stood,” says Nick Rhodes, keyboardist and founding member of [Duran Duran](#), striding to the point, front and centre stage at Hammersmith Apollo, where David Bowie laid his beloved persona to rest. We look out across the hundreds of empty seats. A pigeon flutters around the rafters.

It is Tuesday afternoon, and as we wait for his fellow band members to arrive, Rhodes and I make our way up to the empty backstage bar. He is in black suit, T-shirt, trainers, carrying a faint whiff of eyeliner, and makes for amiable company. As we walk, he notes the tour posters that line the venue walls, shares tales of Kate Bush and Kylie and Lou Reed, and divulges his unexpected preference regarding Covid vaccinations. “Normally, I like very modern things,” he says, with a nod towards the more recently approved Johnson & Johnson and Moderna jabs. “But with the vaccine, I wanted the AstraZeneca, because it’s old school.”

It is 43 years since Duran Duran formed, springing out of the nightspots of Birmingham and quickly getting swept up into the “new-” scenes: wave and romantic. There were No 1 singles, world tours, Live Aid, Grammys. Later came lineup changes, side-projects, contract disputes, hiatus and reunion.

Today they stand among the bestselling artists of all time, and their post-reunion success rolls on; their [last album, 2015's Paper Gods](#), debuted in the Top 10 here and in the US.

This week they released a new single, Invisible, to be followed, this year, by a new album, which sees collaborations with Giorgio Moroder, Mark Ronson and Erol Alkan. There are live shows planned for September, a Radio 2 special with Claudia Winkleman, and a new video created by an AI artist named Huxley. Ahead of the interview, there have been instructions from their record label that our conversation must not dwell on the past; instead we must understand that Duran Duran are a band focused on the future.

Still, when drummer Roger Taylor arrives, the pair are happy to indulge in a little nostalgia. “The early days here were something else,” says Taylor, recalling the five nights Duran Duran once played at Hammersmith. “They never used to have gates at the back here, so there’d be a thousand kids in that alleyway at the back. We’d look out the dressing room window, and you’d just see this sea – of mostly girls, I have to say, and it was the first time I think we really realised that it was going crazy.”

“It was super exciting,” adds Rhodes. “But it was bizarre, because you’d go out shopping to buy a T-shirt or something and suddenly you get locked into a store and they’d have to call the police to get us out of a place. It was just odd, surreal, because we were just kids from Birmingham who’d come up to London and started a band, and suddenly out of nowhere ...”

The strangest thing was that Duran Duran had never seen themselves as pin-ups. In their eyes, they were more of an arthouse band, “a bit more underground,” says Taylor – something like Japan, with a strong aesthetic vision. The record company clocked their commercial appeal: perfect pop heart-throbs for the dawn of the MTV era. “They looked at these five pretty good-looking guys and thought: ‘We’re going to put them on all the teen mags,’” Taylor continues. “And once you go down that avenue, it’s hard to get back.”

For a while, life was crackers. “If you look at some of the early schedules you think: ‘Are they even physically possible?’” Rhodes says. “Moving countries three times in a day, playing live and doing press conferences in all of them. You get to a point where you think: yes, it’s great to be ambitious and light on your feet, but you need to be slightly more sensible, because otherwise ...”

“When you’re 22 years old you don’t know how to say no,” adds Taylor, who these days exudes an air of tanned composure. There was no single breaking point, no one moment of collapse, but Rhodes recalls making “a very conscious decision when I was 21 not to take any more drugs”. It was not that he had a particular problem, he says. “But I could see what was happening, and I thought: ‘I don’t ever want to be out of control like that.’ But that was a lucky decision that other people don’t necessarily make; I’m sure I made other decisions that weren’t as wise as that one.”

“It’s interesting that almost everybody who finds themselves in a situation like Duran Duran sort of sabotages themselves,” says bassist John Taylor, when he arrives wearing a maroon and yellow baseball cap and carrying a book by the thriller writer Mick Herron in his blazer pocket. “How long do you want to live like that for? It’s fun for a minute and then it stops being fun.”

He remembers quite particularly when things changed: doing promotion in Australia in the late 1980s. “I remember walking out of the hotel and there being nobody there. I’m walking down the street – streets we’d never been able to walk down before, we’d have had to have minders – and I almost wanted to stop people and say: ‘Do you know who I am?!’” He grins. “But then it was like: hang on, I’m free to walk down this street, and it’s kind of fucking great!”



Duran Duran in 1982 ... (from left) John Taylor, Roger Taylor, Simon Le Bon, Nick Rhodes, Andy Taylor. Photograph: Gunter W Kienitz/Rex/Shutterstock

It must be a strange balance for them these days, I say: a band known for innovation, for often being at the forefront of technology, but vividly remembered for posing with feathered hair and pastel suits on a yacht in the Rio video, their success today resting on their 80s popularity. Rhodes smiles beatifically. “One has to accept age with grace,” he says. “While all bands would still love to be 18 years old, you have to embrace your history. There’s no point pretending. The way you just avoid it becoming nostalgia is by rearranging things, changing the visuals and the setlist. We don’t have to play Hungry Like the Wolf every night.”

The band are all far-flung now, with families, side projects, lives that span from Los Angeles to Chelsea. But they refer to an almost gravitational force that Simon Le Bon, sitting next to John Taylor in hoodie and blue jeans, says he felt right from his very first audition. The band started playing the track Sound of Thunder, and he stood up and invented a verse on the spot. “I thought: ‘God, this is the real thing, this is how it’s supposed to be,’” he remembers. “And I knew that I had to hold on to it as a job, and I had to hold on to those melodies, and I had to hold on to these guys because I knew

there would never be anything in my life that was more creative and more immediate and more absolute than being in Duran Duran.”

“There was a certain inevitability about the new album,” John Taylor continues. “We get to the end of a touring cycle and we know we need time away from each other – but it’s like a chemical thing, it’s a pull that happens, almost like a mission; we have to go back!”

“I wasn’t into making a new album at all,” counters Le Bon. “I was like: ‘Let’s just do a single’, because I thought nobody’s going to listen to a whole album, people just listen to singles now. But I think I was on my own in that camp and it was a band decision. That’s how we work: four people and no leader.”

Arriving at the studio, “we show up with no ideas whatsoever and run up at it like a lump of clay in the middle of the room”, says John Taylor. Invisible began with a Le Bon lyric, “a personal thing about a relationship where one person is not listening, and the other person starts to think: maybe I’m just not here”. Soon it grew into something broader, “about being human, and realising there’s a lot of us and we don’t all get heard”. It is a year since it was recorded, but Taylor notes that in that time, as the world has weathered isolation, upheaval and political protest, the song has acquired new layers of meaning. “It’s become enormously resonant,” he says. “And I’m glad that we are not coming back with a party song. That would feel tone deaf.”



‘Once you go down the avenue of appearing on the cover of teen mags, it’s hard to get back.’ Photograph: Nefer Suvio

This is not to suggest that the new album is without party songs. In particular, it was a long-held dream to work with Moroder, “the first person who could tell us exactly what to do”, says Roger Taylor. “He comes in like a doctor, with his suitcase with his little keyboard inside.” Also making an unexpected appearance on the new album is Blur’s Graham Coxon, who has “given so much life and surprise to the music”, says Le Bon.

The three producers and Coxon help fill the place once occupied by guitarist Andy Taylor (none of the Taylors are related). Taylor joined the band’s reunion in 2000, but by 2006 they had once again parted ways. Today, Rhodes describes their relationship as “not one of those situations where hell freezes over”; an unreleased album featuring the guitarist may see the light of day.

But his departure altered the careful equilibrium of the band: for years, Taylor had offered a musical counterpoint to Rhodes. “His record collection disturbed me!” Rhodes says. “A lot of real heavy rock things, stuff that you would have avoided the kids at school for.” Beside him, Roger Taylor smiles. “But you collided,” he says, “and made something really incredible.”

It was, Rhodes agrees, “Andy’s edge and Andy’s rockiness” that gave Duran Duran something special. “It really worked because it was going completely against the disco grooves and the electronic pulses,” he says.

“It was what the Americans liked as well,” adds Roger Taylor. “Because they were still playing FM rock in America; we were the only new wave band that had heavy guitar, so it crossed over.”

The world has changed considerably of course, since their early days; they talk about the grand piano in the corner of the old EMI offices, being “taken out for a ride in the Rolls-Royce” by the record execs who told them they were “going to be the next big thing” and about bobbing around the office chatting to the international office and the art department and “hanging out with the secretaries”.

It would be easy to look for scandal in such a setting, but largely, the band have remained free of disrepute – a 2018 accusation against Le Bon of groping an American fan at a record store event in [1995 was denied as “simply untrue”](#). When I ask if there are any lessons to be learned from their younger days in the music industry, Rhodes says that there are few from their perspective as a band: “We treat people with great respect as we did then,” he says.



Live in Argentina in 2017.

It has been strange to see the business adapt to streaming, Rhodes says. “It’s amazing that the labels are so rich and becoming more powerful again,” he adds. “Because it’s like the guy who does the worst job in the world and gets promoted.” In 1997, he “pushed the button on the world’s first download for sale”, he points out. It would be another six years before the launch of iTunes. “Six years!” he says. “And in that six years all they did was try and smash up some small guy in the middle of nowhere who’d illegally downloaded a couple of songs.”

How did it feel to push that button? Did he realise how much it would change? “Sort of, yes: that’s why I wanted to do it,” he says. “I didn’t understand why people were being so foolish about trying to smash it up. What’s the thing we all learned about at school, the Luddites? It was like that – trying to stop progress.”

I wonder if it is strange to be thought of as an 80s band. People are critical of the greed and selfishness of that decade, Rhodes says, “but if you look at art and fashion and design, it was absolutely extraordinary. And it was an exciting landscape for music and for being able to create your own sound. None of us would have been seen dead copying someone else’s sound then. Everyone had to have their own identity, that was your badge of honour.”

This was the change they felt as the decade ended, he says, and perhaps, by extension, what we are seeing again now, too. “The 80s was about individualism,” he explains. “Whereas once we got towards the 90s it was more about wearing the same trainers, and the same jeans, and being part of that clique.” And how did that feel for an 80s pop star? Rhodes looks waspish. “I’ve never owned a pair of jeans in my life!” he says.

Invisible is out now

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Liverpool

‘Luckily I’m very decisive’: Liverpool’s new mayor plans fresh start for city

Joanne Anderson is keen to show the change from her predecessor and aims to rebuild trust



Joanne Anderson: ‘Our values are expressed in what we do and what we say.’ Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Joanne Anderson: ‘Our values are expressed in what we do and what we say.’ Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Maya Wolfe-Robinson](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 01.00 EDT

Liverpool’s new mayor has pledged to appoint external, independent chairs to oversee aspects of council decision-making and to listen to the opinions of all the city’s residents, not just those of “a selected few”.

Joanne Anderson [made history](#) this month when she became the first black woman to be directly elected as mayor of a major UK city. Aside from the strides in terms of diversity – every previous leader of Liverpool has been a white man – Anderson is determined that her leadership will be the beginning of a fresh start for the city.

On Wednesday the council voted to [accept the recommendations](#) of [a report](#) by Max Caller, a local government executive, including that government-appointed commissioners should oversee some council departments – the first official step in drawing a line under the previous administration.

Addressing the meeting, Anderson said: “It’s our job now to rebuild trust of our citizens after what’s happened.”

“The proposed intervention and the appointment of the commissioners is something that we face over the next couple of years”, she added, pledging to “work constructively with the commissioners” to make the necessary improvements.

The [catalyst for Caller’s inspection](#) was the arrest of the former mayor and other council officials on suspicion of bribery and witness intimidation as part of an investigation into allegedly corrupt property deals. The scandal [loomed large](#) over the mayoral vote. Stephen Yip, an independent with no previous political experience, ran on an anti-corruption message and garnered 40.8% of the vote, to Anderson’s 59.2%.

Anderson is keen to show the change from her predecessor, Joe Anderson. The coincidence in names (they are no relation) does not help (confusingly, the former mayor’s daughter is also called Joanne and sits as an elected councillor). This week Joe, who vehemently denies all allegations against him, launched a website in an effort to clear his name, and he plans to seek legal action against the government, saying the Caller report contains “lies and smears”.

The new mayor says she “has no response to that. I can only focus on the recommendations that we’ve been given by Caller and how we will implement them.”

Elected as a councillor in 2019, she is a relative newcomer to local politics, and before the campaign she did not have a high media profile. “I have no baggage,” she said, but she described her initial weeks as mayor as “heavy”, with “a lot of decisions to make within the first week”.

Although Anderson does not have local authority experience, as an equality consultant she has “worked in one way or another for all kinds of sectors, business, health, education. So I’m not fazed by that,” she said, but she’s had “tough decisions to make”.

“Luckily, I’m very decisive,” she added. In her first week she dismissed the previous cabinet and appointed a new team, including a deputy, Jane Corbett. The councillor of nearly 20 years was one of the few singled out for praise in the Caller report for “exemplary” work scrutinising development deals.



Anderson in her office in the Cunard Building overlooking the Mersey. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Anderson plans to seek out “external, independent input” to the cabinet. She added: “We’ll be much more engaged with stakeholders, and not just a selected few. If I’m going to engage with the hospitality sector [for

example], it's going to be open to all the hospitality sector, not just key people or figureheads."

Anderson said that since her election, "men have offered advice, women have offered support." One exception was a congratulatory call from Marvyn Rees, she said, whose victory in Bristol in 2016 made him the UK's first directly elected black mayor.

Both preside over English cities that played a huge role in and benefited from the horrors of Britain's slave trade. That history means Anderson's victory is particularly poignant. She said that just under a year ago, following George Floyd's murder in the US and widespread protests, she felt "absolutely devastated".

"Obviously the world was upset, but for a lot of black women in my circle we were really affected by it. Especially those of us who had been fighting for race equality all our lives and it just didn't feel like it had got any better, and a whole year later I'm leading the city, so it's nuts," she said.

While her large family were "not arsed" by her new role, she said, she was "absolutely loving" the reaction from young girls in the city.

Following Labour's poor local election results, what lessons did she think the national party could learn from some of the successes? "Our values are expressed in what we do and what we say," Anderson said. "We have committed socialists up here in the north in key positions."

She highlighted an emphasis on grassroots politics, referencing some wards in Liverpool where she said every person knows the name of their councillor. Anderson said Liverpool had a long history of community wealth-building projects. "They're our foundations and our roots, it's not really about the label."

Her definitions of socialism are not based on theory but experience: "When you've got, you share, and when someone's in need, you help them."

Anderson said she was not too "entrenched in national politics", preferring to focus on her city, and had no plans for a move to Westminster should

Liverpool vote to scrap the mayoral role in a planned referendum in 2023.

Despite having joined the party under Jeremy Corbyn, she said Labour had “got to move on. He’s not the leader any more, it’s about the policies.”

During the campaign she lamented that Keir Starmer was seen in the region as having “a lack of passion”, with a strategy of taking the middle ground which often seemed as though he “just forgot about us on the left”, but she hoped he would “move into a phase of just being himself”.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/may/21/luckily-im-very-decisive-liverpools-new-mayor-plans-fresh-start-for-city>.

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Will you get douze points? Take our fiendish Eurovision quiz

[Eurovision](#)

Will you get douze points? Take our fiendish Eurovision quiz

From Abba to Bucks Fizz, dancing grannies to French diplomacy, our quiz requires some serious song contest chops to get 12 points – or a perfect 20

[Vampires, naked apes and free booze! The wildest Eurovision performances ever](#)

[Martin Belam](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 05.00 EDT Last modified on Fri 21 May 2021 05.01 EDT



From Wogan to Conchita Wurst ... it could only be Eurovision. Composite: Rex/Getty

After last year's hiatus, the Eurovision song contest is finally back on Saturday night at 8pm on BBC One, with all the glitz, glamour and camp delight that entails. To get you in the mood, take our fiendish [Eurovision](#) quiz. Can you avoid the dreaded *nul points*? Let us know how you do in the comments below ...

- *If you do think there has been an egregious error in one of the questions or answers, please feel free to email martin.belam@theguardian.com. But remember, the quizmaster's word is always final and you don't want him to get stroppy now, do you?*

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2021.05.21 - Opinion

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Let's make sure our personal data works for us – not against us – after the pandemic

[Laura Spinney](#)

The Covid crisis has shown that consensual information-sharing does not have to erode our democratic rights



Illustration: Ben Jennings/The Guardian

Illustration: Ben Jennings/The Guardian

Fri 21 May 2021 01.00 EDT

How is it that we live in a world that is awash with our personal information, where most of us would be shocked if we knew exactly how much we give away about ourselves each day – and yet, when a crisis came along in which that information could have made all the difference, it didn't?

If we take one lesson from Covid-19, it should be that our information needs to work harder for us – and not just in a pandemic, but all the time.

You may remember hearing, early on in this pandemic, that efforts to get contact tracing up and running were faltering. In [November](#) 2020 they were still faltering, which meant that many governments lacked a detailed picture of infected people's movements and contacts. If you can't see the enemy, you can't beat it – ask any Trojan. And although containing Covid-19 is about more than just good contact tracing, a robust [correlation](#) exists between the two.

But you may also recall hearing early on that the pandemic was being exacerbated by an infodemic – an explosion of information and misinformation that was hampering containment efforts. Plenty has been [written](#) about the echo-chamber effect of social media, though Italian researchers recently [reported](#) the sobering finding that users of the left-leaning platform Reddit and the (far) right-leaning one Gab are more likely to see a diverse range of news and opinion than users of Facebook and Twitter. Not only is our information not working for us, it's often working against us.

The two great repositories of our personal data are the state and social media. Long battles have been fought to prevent the former knowing too much about us, but few anticipated our willingness to give that information away over the internet. The Harvard professor Shoshana Zuboff coined the phrase [surveillance capitalism](#) to describe this new trend, and the manipulation that flowed from it.

In an ideal world, free speech-loving social media would provide a counterweight to secretive, centralised states. They did in China, foiling government efforts to suppress news of a disease outbreak in late 2019. But as that epidemic grew into a pandemic and pummelled the globe, it became clear that this wasn't generally what was happening. More often, state surveillance was [working for the state](#), capitalist surveillance was working for the capitalists, and citizen users were losing out. This shouldn't come as a surprise, but maybe preventable mass death will finally prod us to do something about it.

Covid-19 has actually done us a favour, in showing that our information can work harder for us without any erosion of democracy. After the Sars outbreak of 2003, Taiwan had a public debate as to how much privacy people would be willing to relinquish in an epidemic, and with what checks and balances. The conclusions were translated into a new legal framework, and when Covid erupted, the government was able to cross-reference the national health insurance database with customs and immigration information and mobile phone data. The digital minister, Audrey Tang, didn't hide the fact that this meant a temporary loss of privacy, but her [emphasis](#) all along was on civic engagement and openness about the solutions it generated. And her “digital democracy” approach worked – at least until this month's [outbreak](#), which suggests the state may have let down its guard. Kelsie Nabben, a researcher at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology in Australia, who has studied the Taiwanese case, says surveys have revealed “extremely high levels” of public trust in Taiwan's official Covid response – even though trust in the government was [low](#) before the pandemic.

Contrast many other countries, including the UK, where tech companies proposed contact-tracing solutions but wrangled with governments over privacy issues. Once those had been resolved, the solutions often turned out to be hard to integrate into healthcare systems. Many people saw the proposed apps as black boxes sucking in their data for nefarious purposes. Take-up was disappointing, especially among [some groups](#) at high risk for Covid-19.

The Taiwanese solution might not have worked everywhere. Cultural, historical and other factors determine what people value and the sacrifices they're prepared to make for them. The point is, the Taiwanese had that debate and hit on a solution that worked for them. Now other countries need to have the same debate, which is hard to separate from the question of whether and how to regulate social media.

In their desperation to remain unregulated, tech companies have begun to give back more. Several years before the pandemic, Facebook launched its [Data for Good](#) initiative, which grants external researchers access to its anonymised user data. An Italian research group that had reported the echo-chamber effect of Facebook's algorithms used the platform's data to [show](#)

that last spring's lockdowns hurt poor neighbourhoods more than richer ones. But Walter Quattrociocchi, an associate professor at Rome's Sapienza University and a member of that research group, says Data for Good shows just how much more the companies could be doing.

He is among those arguing for co-regulation, whereby democratic institutions set standards that the tech giants agree to implement, and a national or even supranational "digital agency" monitors that they are doing so – holding them to account for changes to their algorithms, but also facilitating collaboration in future emergencies. This agency would be staffed by lawyers, social scientists and ethicists, but above all by data scientists who understand how data and algorithms work.

Co-regulation isn't the only solution being proposed, but it is one way that the state and tech giants could hold each other in check in the interests of the citizen. Does a digital agency sound Big Brother-ish? Yes, but we already live in a surveillance society that isn't working for us. Would it introduce red tape? Almost certainly, but as the historian Yuval Noah Harari recently [pointed out](#), when you're talking about surveillance, a little bit of bureaucratic inefficiency may be no bad thing.

Such an agency could have a more proactive role, too. Countries with public healthcare systems, like the UK, are sitting on an untapped goldmine in the form of patient records. These are already being used to treat individuals but they could be having a productive second life, being pooled and analysed to deepen understanding of the causes of disease. That's not happening yet, at least not systematically, and it's a missed opportunity – especially since Facebook and others have shown that it is possible to protect individuals' privacy when the questions you're asking are about populations. The digital agency could push to make that second life a reality, on behalf of all of us.

There are many other lessons we should take from this pandemic – the need to address inequality, for instance, and to invest more in healthcare – but like the Athenians smuggled into Troy inside a big wooden horse, these problems would be far easier to solve if we could see them clearly. So let's solve the information problem first.

- Laura Spinney is a science journalist and the author of *Pale Rider: The Spanish Flu of 1918 and How it Changed the World*

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Biden's global corporation tax plan is hugely popular, so why isn't Britain backing it?

[Polly Toynbee](#)



The Tories claim UK corporation tax will be higher than the US's proposal, but the suspicion is this plan will be dropped



‘Britain is a money-laundering centre, with far laxer implementation of rules and lower fines than the US imposes on its banks.’ The City of London.
Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

‘Britain is a money-laundering centre, with far laxer implementation of rules and lower fines than the US imposes on its banks.’ The City of London.
Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

Fri 21 May 2021 03.00 EDT

When something radical is proposed by an American president the idea stops being “leftwing” and soon becomes blindingly obvious common sense. Of course the world should agree a [minimum corporation tax rate](#) to stop a race to the bottom in which countries undercut each other, depriving themselves of tax revenues, needed now more than ever.

Never waste a good crisis: there’s no better time for change than following this global disaster when every country needs to repair its economy. Adopting a universal tax floor ends once and for all the [scandal of tax havens](#) where apparently respectable companies, pretending to all kinds of bogus corporate social responsibility, hide their money from the citizens that sustain them.

Joe Biden's plan for an international agreement on a 21% minimum rate has gathered phenomenal support, including from Germany, France, Canada, Italy and Japan. Ángel Gurría, the head of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the club of 37 rich nations, says a "[once in a lifetime](#)" deal is within striking distance and could be signed this summer.

Here's our national shame, yes, yet another one: Britain is the only G7 country [not to back it](#). Yesterday, Labour tabled an amendment to next Monday's finance bill demanding a review of the impact that applying this tax rate would have over the next few years. How much tax would it bring in, how much evasion and avoidance would it prevent, and what is the true size of the tax gap for the next two years?

The government will refuse, of course. The figures would be as embarrassing as Britain's refusal to back the Biden plan. Here's the puzzle: why should Boris Johnson and Rishi Sunak balk at this when they claim their own plan is to raise the UK corporation tax even higher, to [25% in 2023](#)? It's highly popular and it seemed one of the few measures that might give some substance to "levelling up" spending. Labour suspects, as do tax campaigners, that it will be quietly dropped under strong Tory business pressure. What other reason could there be for blocking a tax rise lower than the one they claim they will impose?

Here's one clue. Answering questions for the government in the Lords, the Treasury minister Lord Agnew, [gave the game away](#): "Lower corporation tax rates are broadly a good thing. Personally, I do not like to see tax on productive activity, employment or any of the things that make a country prosperous ... we should always aspire to lower tax rates, particularly on corporation tax." What's more he wanted to undercut other countries: "We will try to set it still at a competitive rate, so the US, Canada, Korea, Japan and Germany will all have higher rates than the one to which we are moving."

Analysis by the campaigning group Tax Justice UK says that the tax rise would have brought [£13.5bn into the Treasury](#) last year. This would rise to £22bn if the government did set it at 25%. A report from Church Action for Tax Justice, signed by a group of bishops and former archbishops, calls on

the government to promote the Biden plan, saying it could [raise \\$640bn globally](#), more than 27 times what it would cost to vaccinate the whole world.

The government has made various excuses, including that Biden is not doing enough to see that the big tech companies are taxed in each country where they earn their profits. The UK introduced its own digital services tax (DST) ahead of any international agreement, but Robert Palmer, the head of Tax Justice UK, points out that our DST raises a [puny £500m](#) a year. Tory tax phobia is a more likely explanation, and a refusal to be prevented from undercutting others in future.

[The secret of Johnson's success lies in his break with Treasury dominance | William Davies](#)
[Read more](#)

But another reason is Britain's responsibility for so many tax havens. This would end that archipelago of British-sponsored tax avoidance in places such as the [Cayman Islands](#) and Bermuda. Britain itself is a [money-laundering centre](#), with far laxer implementation of rules and lower fines than the US imposes on its banks.

Britain is blocking what the Tax Justice Network calls “the best opportunity for a generation to curb corporation tax abuse across the board”, standing against the world in defence of tax havens. Inflicting this shame on ourselves is odd: this is highly popular and would yield fat sums for whatever else Johnson wants to spend money on – a few more bridges, perhaps.

No one knows with this government who is influencing ministers, who has their ear, what deals are struck or what winks and nods point to post-ministerial lucrative careers. With emails, texts and WhatsApps zinging about unseen by their officials, we may never know why. But Labour's shadow chancellor, Rachel Reeves, rightly sees this as prime territory – a popular tax to raise urgently needed funds, which Labour would spend better. Labour's 2010 corporation tax rate was 28%, now it's 19%. Returning to that old rate will feel right if Biden succeeds in raising the US tax to 28%, as he plans, [yielding \\$2.5tn](#) over 15 years for his great spending programme.

For those who think Labour is done for, just count the ways this government is accumulating own goals.

This article was amended on 21 May 2021 to correct the name of the group Church Action for Tax Justice.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist

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If Labour is to thrive, it needs to bring back its radical values

[Paul Dennett](#)

The party won in Salford by putting people before profit. It's a lesson the party leadership should heed

- Paul Dennett is mayor of Salford



‘Thanks to our investments in MediaCity, Salford is now home to the largest hub of digital and tech industries in the country outside the capital.’

Photograph: Mark Waugh/Alamy Stock Photo

‘Thanks to our investments in MediaCity, Salford is now home to the largest hub of digital and tech industries in the country outside the capital.’

Photograph: Mark Waugh/Alamy Stock Photo

Fri 21 May 2021 04.00 EDT

Labour had a terrible time during the recent local elections. It lost control of [eight councils and lost 327 council seats](#) across England. But the news was not so bleak everywhere. There were areas of the country where Labour increased its vote, not least in the Greater Manchester region, where mayoral candidate [Andy Burnham](#) won 67% of the votes. Meanwhile in Salford, our election campaign returned stunning results for Labour. The party [gained two council seats](#) and Labour councillors made gains across the city, increasing the party's vote share even in areas where it doesn't normally enjoy support.

[Andy Burnham: Labour's red wall seats would have been safer under me](#)
[Read more](#)

So what went right in Greater Manchester – and what can Labour learn from how we do business here? First, you have to factor in the Burnham effect. Andy Burnham won [in every single ward](#) area of every single borough in Greater Manchester – even wards where Labour failed to pick up councillors. Burnham was always a popular, well-known politician, but he made his name here when he bravely defied the government over phoney negotiations for business and job support during the pandemic. His popularity has grown since he pushed to bring buses back under public control, after more than 30 years of deregulated chaos.

But in Salford, a Brexit-voting city with high rates of poverty, support for Labour is clearly growing not just in Conservative areas but also in our former heartlands that recently saw increased support for the Conservatives in 2019. Salford saw the biggest swing to Labour of any [Greater Manchester](#) borough – and I believe we have a story to tell.

When I was first elected mayor in 2016, I stood on a clear manifesto to build truly affordable housing for [Salford](#) residents, to in-source services – rejecting the push to turn councils from service providers to commissioning hubs for private contracts – and build an inclusive model for economic growth that benefits all of our city. These weren't just empty promises. Already, we've committed to building 600 council houses, and have 3,000 more in the pipeline. We've also protected services other areas of the country have lost. [Salford](#) has seven more libraries than we had at the start

of the coalition government's austerity measures in 2010, and we've retained all five of our local authority-owned nurseries.

We've invested billions in infrastructure-led development of key industries, combating chronic post-industrial decline. Thanks to our investments into MediaCity, Salford is home to the largest hub of digital and tech industries in the country outside the capital. We have a burgeoning arts and creative sector following sustained investment from the council, and the introduction of large anchor institutions such as the Lowry theatre – and we want the city to become a future centre for logistics and manufacturing, with the reopening of the Manchester-Liverpool ship canal to heavy freight via Port Salford (already, the council has invested millions in this project – and levered in many tens of millions more, providing railhead connections, road alterations and a new lifting bridge over the canal).

All this has been made possible through sustained borrowing through Salford's capital programme over many decades. Calculated investments, designed to raise revenues either via commercial services, rents or an increasing local tax base, have helped us protect services during a decade of austerity. Much of this investment occurred before my tenure in office – and ran against the grain of political wisdom at the time, which saw a council's job as stepping back and allowing the market to do its business.

Salford's council has proudly stood by what some might call “traditional” [Labour](#) values – economic collectivism, a belief in the positive power of the state and local government to plan the local economy, social solidarity and the desire to put people before profit. The trajectory of growth – which expects to see 40,000 new jobs created by 2040 - reflects the council's ambition to produce skilled, dignified employment for communities whose traditional industries were destroyed by Tory deindustrialisation in the 1980s.

Most importantly, we have communicated our policies and message clearly and repeatedly to the population in Salford. On the doorstep in the recent election, it was heartening to see that so many residents already knew what we stood for. They knew what we were doing and understood our commitment to rebuilding Salford's economy. People saw that a vote for

Labour represented a clear push for building council housing, bringing buses back into public control and insourcing local authority services.

If the Labour leadership learns anything from our experience in Salford, it should be this: voters are not demanding that we shed our party's progressive history in order to find a way back to power. They are not demanding that we adopt fiscal conservatism, that we shy away from economic planning or that we support the entrenched interests at the top of the economic pyramid who benefit from reducing wages and the conditions and security of work. Quite the opposite – many voters are furious that our party seems to have neglected its historic mission.

To win back the seats in its former heartlands, Labour must not be ashamed of its radical roots, its belief in the state and government as vehicles for positive economic change or its ethos of solidarity and togetherness. These are all strengths that can unite all of Labour's voting tribes; young and old, urban and rural, in common agreement about the humane, caring, ecologically friendly and fair society that we want to build in the future.

- Paul Dennett is mayor of Salford

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[OpinionStudents](#)

Is Boris Johnson really going to sacrifice arts degrees for the Conservative cause?

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



Cutting subsidies and tuition fees is part of broader and more audacious attack on England's liberal institutions



‘Enter the education secretary Gavin Williamson, scoffing, just as students return to campus, at ‘dead-end courses that leave young people with nothing but debt’.’ Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

‘Enter the education secretary Gavin Williamson, scoffing, just as students return to campus, at ‘dead-end courses that leave young people with nothing but debt’.’ Photograph: Hollie Adams/Getty Images

Thu 20 May 2021 12.00 EDT

Imagining the future is never easy. But for teenagers in a pandemic, struggling to get a feel for university life from “virtual open days” now being conducted strictly via Zoom, it’s perhaps uniquely tough. This year’s lower sixth, only too aware of a harsh jobs market out there, are more anxious than ever about getting their decisions right.

Is university even worth it? Should they follow their hearts and study what they love, or buckle down to something boring but more likely to lead to a job? Enter the education secretary Gavin Williamson, [scoffing](#), just as students return to campus, at “dead-end courses that leave young people with nothing but debt” – increasingly taken to mean almost anything but the government’s approved priorities of science, technology, maths and engineering.

[Job prospects vary widely for graduates in England, data shows](#)
[Read more](#)

Reading classics hardly held Boris Johnson back, and nor did his fiancée Carrie Symonds's degree in art history and theatre studies stop her enjoying a successful career in PR. But their baby son's future choices may be narrower. Williamson has already suggested [halving subsidies](#) for creative subjects such as drama, art and music, whose graduates may enrich lives but [usually earn less](#) than those heading into banking.

Even this week's promised consultation on [cutting tuition fees](#) to £7,500 carries a possible sting in the tail. Lower fees imply lower budgets for all but Stem departments, which will get extra funding to reflect the greater cost of running these courses. Some fear that liberal arts and humanities courses could become increasingly unviable in all but elite universities, unhappily for the child with a passion for history or flair for languages. There seems little room in Williamson's vision for considering what teenagers actually like and are good at, or what society values more than money, or the fact that if every 18-year-old chose to read maths tomorrow then the earnings premium attached to that subject might not survive a market suddenly flooded with mathematicians. The lingering suspicion, meanwhile, is that all this heralds a reduction in student numbers by the back door.

Margaret Thatcher was so loathed in academia that her alma mater [Oxford refused her](#) an honorary degree, but even she presided over rising student numbers. Her successor, John Major, opened up higher education by turning the old polytechnics into universities, and Tony Blair went further, promising degrees for up to half of all 18-year-olds, equipping them to compete for high-skilled jobs. Countless kids duly became the first in their families to go to university, watching our parents sob through our graduation ceremonies at the sight of sons and daughters miraculously acquiring opportunities they'd never had. But that quantum leap came at a cost, which the introduction of tuition fees has only ever partly shifted on to students themselves.

In England, graduates don't start [repaying student loans](#) until they earn over £27,295 a year, and on current trends the Department for Education estimates that fewer than a third will ever earn enough to pay off the lot.

Ministers have eyed the resulting black hole nervously for years but a [recent change in government accounting rules](#), forcing ministers to include future loan losses on balance sheets, has concentrated minds.

Reducing fees and scrapping courses liable to produce lower earners – not just creative subjects, but perhaps also those that are willing to take kids with very poor A-level grades – could obviously help limit those losses. That, in turn, frees up money for further education and more vocational courses, following promises made to “red wall” voters that their children should be able to train for decent jobs without leaving their home towns. If so, we could be looking at a surprisingly radical redistribution of funding from a higher education sector still dominated by middle-class kids to a long-underfunded FE sector serving more working-class ones – and one that crucially consolidates a historic shift in the Conservative base.

The new dividing line in politics [isn't class, but education](#) and its role in perpetuating liberal values, with leftwing parties across Europe and the US increasingly attracting graduates, while people who only ever finished high school lean to the right. The new squeeze on academia and the arts at university, together with threats to purge museum and gallery boards of [supposedly “woke” trustees](#) or make the BBC reflect more “red wall” sensibilities, suggests a broader and more audacious attack on liberal institutions. A prime minister with a mandate to remake the country for Conservative ends may finally have a strategy for doing so.

What if Johnson actually means it? That question is too rarely asked of a man whose talk of “levelling up” is still seen as empty rhetoric on the left, and taken barely more seriously by some traditional Tory voters. They just can't imagine him threatening their own children's chances of trotting off to read art history, and they may yet be right. Perhaps it's really all a mirage, encouraging kids in Hartlepool to wait at home for a glittering future that never quite comes, while others still reap the timeless rewards of going to university.

But a Conservative party seemingly willing to sacrifice the union for Brexit, or [throw farmers to the wolves](#) in return for a free trade deal with Australia, isn't necessarily the one they know. If he does actually mean it, then we may be watching a new Boris Johnson emerge; less the hapless incompetent

lurching from one Covid crisis to the next, and more a man whose ruthlessness it was never wise to underestimate.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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The pro-Palestine movement is broad but it can't be a home to antisemitism

[Keith Kahn-Harris](#)

Antisemitic incidents in London on the same weekend as protests underline the need for an honest reckoning



Pro-Palestine protest in London, 16 May. Photograph: Vuk Valcic/SOPA Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Pro-Palestine protest in London, 16 May. Photograph: Vuk Valcic/SOPA Images/Rex/Shutterstock

Thu 20 May 2021 12.25 EDT

Last Sunday saw one of the most dramatic [antisemitic incidents](#) in the UK in recent years. A convoy of cars, flying Palestinian flags, drove through Jewish neighbourhoods in north London and their occupants were filmed

shouting antisemitic and misogynistic threats (aimed at Jews, not just Israelis).

An upsurge in violence in Israel-Palestine is always accompanied by an upsurge in antisemitic incidents in the Jewish diaspora, including in the UK. As well as the convoy incident, we have also seen a number of others, including graffiti on a messianic Jewish synagogue in Norwich.

Many activists responded quickly in condemning the convoy and pointing out that such actions don't help the Palestinians themselves (although some dismissed it as trivial or even as a "false flag" operation). But regardless of whether activists condemn it, such incidents will only deepen the suspicion many British Jews have that pro-Palestinian activism is irredeemably antisemitic.

Disagreements over whether the Palestinian cause disproportionately attracts antisemites, or even if it is intrinsically antisemitic, tend to be fractious and bitter. It is certainly hard to deny (although some do) that antisemitic discourse and violence has been propagated by some pro-Palestinian activists. There is also [some evidence](#) to suggest that anti-Israel views are correlated to an extent with antisemitic views.

One way to break out of this impasse is to see the antisemitism issue as the most visible manifestation of a much wider challenge: how to manage the consequences of the popularity of the Palestinian cause.

It's not that "everybody" supports the Palestinians, or pays lip service to doing so. In "western" countries, support for Israel is deeply embedded on the right, as well as in the centre and centre-left (albeit the latter is often combined with support for a Palestinian state within the framework of a two-state solution). The current situation of the Palestinian people is proof enough that sympathy towards their plight is not universal enough to have actually led to a change in their circumstances.

When I talk about the popularity of the Palestinian cause then, I am referring not to the sum total of its impact, but to the diversity of supporters it attracts. And it is that diversity that leads not just to bitter conflicts over the place of antisemites within this disparate movement, but also to much wider – and

rarely addressed – challenges in defining what international support for the Palestinians means.

Take the large [demonstration](#) held in London last Saturday. It was prompted by outrage at Palestinian suffering in Gaza, Sheikh Jarrah and elsewhere. Beyond that, what did it actually *mean*?

Social media quickly identified some of the most outrageous attendees – the far-right antisemite Michèle Renouf and two young men in Saddam Hussein T-shirts – but there was much more to the demonstration than that. Some protesters wielded Turkish flags, others held banners printed by the Socialist Workers party. Muslims played a prominent part in the march and there was also a Jewish contingent, but just pointing to the presence of Jews and Muslims does not do justice to the diversity present within both broad categories. The demonstration itself was organised by groups in which leftwing activists play an outsized role, such as the Stop the War coalition, as well as Muslim organisations such as Friends of al-Aqsa.

This diversity allows both supporters and detractors to derive their own meanings for the march: the presence of neo-Nazis, supporters of authoritarian regimes and Islamists can be seen as proof of the irredeemable corruption of the whole enterprise. Conversely, one could also point to the strong presence of one's own type of activists as proof that they provide the inner meaning of the march: the strong turnout from leftwing activists (Jeremy Corbyn was one of the speakers) could allow supporters to see the wider cause as intrinsically part of the left.

All we can say with certainty about the march is that outrage bound it together, without any kind of unanimity of what the vision for Palestine (or Israel) should be. The danger posed by the diversity of this and other marches for Palestine is that those who participate will see themselves as legitimated for everything else they do too. The very visible presence of the [Neturei Karta](#) – a strictly orthodox anti-Zionist sect – at pro-Palestinian demonstrations, has often been leveraged as a way of “proving” that one's own pro-Palestinian activism can never be antisemitic. And even if there is no evidence that the participants in Sunday's antisemitic convoy attended Saturday's demonstration, they may well have drawn succour from the

protests across the world that they were indemnified for their actions in advance.

Effective politics requires collective action and cooperating with others in the pursuit of common goals. This raises complex issues over where that cooperation should stop, and how to prevent being used as a useful idiot by those with antithetical agendas. In the heat of anger and emotion generated by the current violence in Gaza, it is hard to engage with these questions, particularly in the midst of a demonstration. That's why an honest reckoning with the tensions and differences within the diverse range of people who see themselves as pro-Palestinian needs to happen before the next round of violence.

Such a reckoning is long overdue, and it isn't just about Jews and antisemitism. It also goes beyond the issue of Palestine. The actions of Bashar al-Assad in Syria and the Uyghur genocide in China are leading to increasingly bitter conflicts within the left over how to respond. It is becoming difficult for those who oppose Assad and the Uyghur genocide (or who were personally victims of either) to find their place within some parts of the "anti-imperialist" left.

Pro-Palestinian activism needs cooperation across ideological lines, and the first step is to recognise that those lines actually exist. That recognition can ground a clear-eyed, wary activism that resists the temptation to validate all of those who march alongside you.

The prize for this wariness could be an even broader and more effective campaign. I would march for Palestine if I didn't worry about validating those whose wider agenda was antithetical to my own. And I am not the only one.

- Keith Kahn-Harris is a sociologist and author of *Strange Hate: Antisemitism, Racism and the Limits of Diversity*

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Carlos Ghosn

Carlos Ghosn ordered to repay £4.3m to Nissan and Mitsubishi

Fugitive businessman loses wrongful dismissal claim as Dutch court finds he did not have valid contract



Ghosn claimed that he was wrongfully dismissed by a joint venture, Nissan-Mitsubishi BV, and was therefore owed €15m (£13m) in compensation. Photograph: Anwar Amro/AFP/Getty Images

Ghosn claimed that he was wrongfully dismissed by a joint venture, Nissan-Mitsubishi BV, and was therefore owed €15m (£13m) in compensation. Photograph: Anwar Amro/AFP/Getty Images

*[Jasper Jolly](#) and agencies
[@jjpjolly](#)*

Thu 20 May 2021 14.01 EDT

Carlos Ghosn, the fugitive automotive executive, has been ordered to repay £4.3m to Nissan and Mitsubishi by a Dutch court after he failed in the first step in a legal claim.

Ghosn led the Japanese carmaker Nissan and France's Renault in an alliance, before falling from grace spectacularly. At the end of 2018 he was [arrested by prosecutors in Tokyo](#), charged with concealing his income, but [fled to Lebanon a year later](#).

The alliance, which Japan's Mitsubishi also joined, was at one point the world's second-largest carmaker by volume, and Ghosn was one of the most prominent and outspoken leaders in the global industry.

Ghosn had asked an Amsterdam court to overturn his sacking after his initial arrest by a Dutch company that formed [part of the alliance](#). Ghosn claimed that he was wrongfully dismissed by a joint venture, Nissan-Mitsubishi BV (NMBV), and that he was therefore owed €15m (£13m) in compensation because of lost wages and severance payments.

However, the court found that Ghosn did not have a valid contract with the company, and said he must repay nearly €5m in salary he received during 2018.

The court found that Ghosn had wrongfully determined his own salary and sign-on bonus at NMBV, and that the board member who had signed his employment contract did not have the power to do so.

Ghosn will appeal the ruling so that he can give evidence, according to a spokesman.

“As today's verdict has been rendered without hearing Mr Ghosn and other key witnesses, the defence team will now take the case to the court of appeal where Mr Ghosn's right to witness evidence will be granted,” the spokesman said in a written statement. “We are satisfied with the court verdict which ruled out any bad faith from Mr Ghosn.”

Guardian business email sign-up

A [Nissan](#) spokesman said: “We are pleased that the court has dismissed Carlos Ghosn’s unfounded claims against NMBV and ordered Mr Ghosn to repay the significant sums he appropriated unlawfully. As judicial proceedings concerning Mr Ghosn’s misconduct are under way in other jurisdictions, [Nissan](#) will not be making any further comment at this time.”

Lebanon – to which Ghosn has family links – does not have an extradition treaty with Japan, but Nissan is pursuing separate civil litigation against him.

The carmaker in 2019 [settled charges](#) brought by the SEC for \$15m, while Ghosn agreed a \$1m settlement. Neither the carmaker, Ghosn, nor another executive admitted or denied the SEC’s charges that they “engaged in a scheme to conceal more than \$90m of compensation from public disclosure, while also taking steps to increase Ghosn’s retirement allowance by more than \$50m.”

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Austria

Elderly man has wrong leg amputated at Austrian clinic

Freistadt Clinic apologises for ‘tragic mistake’ which local media said the patient did not initially recognise because of his illness



An Austrian clinic has apologised for mistakenly amputating the wrong leg of an elderly patient. Photograph: Anne-Christine Poujoulat/AFP/Getty Images

An Austrian clinic has apologised for mistakenly amputating the wrong leg of an elderly patient. Photograph: Anne-Christine Poujoulat/AFP/Getty Images

Guardian staff and agencies

Thu 20 May 2021 20.40 EDT

An Austrian hospital amputated the wrong leg of a patient, it said on Thursday, blaming human error for what it called a “tragic mistake”.

The elderly patient was suffering from many illnesses, the Freistadt Clinic, in a town of the same name near the Czech border, said in a statement. Previous sicknesses have affected his legs, to the point that his left leg required amputation.

“We are deeply shocked that on Tuesday, 18 May, despite quality assurance standards, the wrong leg of an 82-year-old man ... was amputated,” the clinic said, adding that the mistake was first noticed during a bandage change on Thursday morning.

“We have to find out how this failure, this mistake could happen. I would like to apologise publicly here,” the clinic’s medical director, Norbert Fritsch, said at a news conference.

Austrian [news outlet Heute](#) reported that the patient did not initially recognise the mistake, because of his illness. It also said the 82-year-old was asked to confirm beforehand, but his articulation was limited, it reported Fritsch saying.

The error appears to have been made shortly before the operation, when the leg that was to be amputated was marked, the clinic said.

“Unfortunately the mistake, in which the right leg was removed instead of the left, occurred as a result of a sequence of unfortunate circumstances,” it said, adding that it was investigating what happened and would review its standards.

The patient has been offered psychological assistance and must still undergo another operation to remove his left leg from mid-thigh.

“The operation is planned shortly,” the clinic said.

Reuters contributed to this report

Climate change

School strike for climate: thousands take to streets around Australia

Students marched at 47 sites around the nation to call for action to halt global heating



Protesters at the School Strike 4 Climate rally in Melbourne on Friday.
Photograph: William West/AFP/Getty Images

Protesters at the School Strike 4 Climate rally in Melbourne on Friday.
Photograph: William West/AFP/Getty Images

[Mostafa Rachwani](#)

[@Rachwani91](#)

Fri 21 May 2021 03.36 EDT

Thousands of students across Australia walked out of classrooms to take part in the School Strike 4 Climate on Friday, calling for greater action on global heating.

Defying pouring rain in Sydney, strikers chanted for climate justice, condemning the gas, coal and fossil fuel industries, and the Morrison government's recent decision to fund [a \\$600m gas-fired power plant](#).

One of the organisers of the strike, Natasha Abhayawickrama, told Guardian Australia students across the country want to see the government take on a more robust climate policy.



Climate strikers march in Melbourne on Friday. Photograph: James Ross/AAP

“We want some meaningful climate action,” she said.

“The government’s decision to put \$600 million towards a gas plant, in addition to allocating so much money in the budget towards gas and fossil fuels, will only drive us further into the climate crisis.

“Right now we need clean, renewable energy to be funded, for us to have a safe future.”

Abhayawickrama said it was a sense of uncertainty that brought together students from across the country.

Strikes were held in 47 different places in Australia, from Alice Springs to Launceston, Cairns, Margret River, Bendigo and Port Macquarie.



Hobart was one of the 47 sites around Australia where students and supporters gathered to protest global heating. Photograph: Philip Bohle

In [Sydney](#), a sea of young people, holding their characteristically clever signs, marched through the CBD in the driving rain.

Covid marshals were scattered among the crowd, holding up QR codes for attendees to be able to sign in, and distributing masks and hand sanitiser.

Preethika Mathan, from Santa Sabina College in Strathfield, said the huge turnout reflected how strongly young people feel about climate change.

“We’ve all heard someone say ‘you’re going to die of old age, we’re going to die of climate change’, and I think that’s the main sentiment here.”

“We feel like we’re on the frontline of the climate crisis, in the sense that we’re the first generation who will feel its impacts. We have to live through this, whereas older generations just to survive it.”



Students in Sydney ignored pouring rain to take part in the School strike 4 life protest. Photograph: Joel Carrett/AAP

Charlotte Dillion and Barisha Tashnin, year 11 students at Fort Street High School, said they decided to come to the strike because they felt their voices were not being heard.

“Climate change is an imminent threat, and we need to do something about it, and the government’s lack of action is frankly appalling and quite frankly offensive that they don’t care about us,” Tashnin said.

“The government is not taking the action it needs to, and it is our future we are fighting for, and we deserve to live in a world where we have the rights where everyone before us did.”



Climate strike protesters marching towards Queensland's parliament building in Brisbane. Photograph: Dan Peled/AAP

MC and organiser Ruby Bron, also from Santa Sabina College in Strathfield, said she felt uplifted seeing all the support for the strike:

“It’s truly amazing to see so many people at the rally, we were a bit unsure about our turnout at first, but to see this many people is truly inspiring,” she said.

“I’m so glad so many people came out and supported our demands for climate justice.”

Bron explained that young people felt the need to be at the forefront of climate activism because they feel it will affect them the most.

“It is our future that climate change is going to be affecting, young people are often on the front lines of the climate movement and we know that the continuing impacts of climate change will affect us for generations.

“It will affect us and our children, and could prevent us from doing the things that older generations got to enjoy in life.”

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[Migration](#)

Spanish aid volunteer abused online for hugging Senegalese migrant

Luna Reyes targeted by far-right supporters after footage of gesture goes viral

00:59

Spanish aid volunteer abused online for hugging Senegalese migrant in Ceuta – video

[Ashifa Kassam](#) in Madrid

[@ashifa_k](#)

Thu 20 May 2021 11.32 EDT

The image captured the raw humanity of the moment: a Red Cross volunteer tenderly consoling a Senegalese man moments after he stepped foot in Spain's north African enclave of Ceuta.

Hours after the footage went viral, however, Luna Reyes set her social media accounts to private after she was targeted by a torrent of abuse from supporters of Spain's far-right Vox party and others incensed by the [unprecedented arrival of 8,000 migrants](#) in Ceuta.

[[#GraciasLuna](#)]

Somos una organización en la que hay muchas Lunas, que ayudan a diario a personas como las que llegan a Ceuta. O a Argineguín. O a Canarias. O que están en tu barrio

En todo el mundo, [#EnTodasPartes](#) [#Humanidad](#) [#Voluntariado](#) [#Independencia](#) [#Neutralidad](#)

📷 [@BernatArmangue](#) pic.twitter.com/wMOvJCVtEW

— Cruz Roja Española (@CruzRojaEsp) [May 19, 2021](#)

“They saw that my boyfriend was Black, they wouldn’t stop insulting me and saying horrible, racist things to me,” the 20-year-old, who has been volunteering with the Red Cross since March as part of her studies, told the Spanish television channel RTVE.

As news spread of the abuse, the internet began fighting back. Messages hailing the hug soon began pouring in, drowning out the insults and sending the hashtag #GraciasLuna trending in [Spain](#).

Emotiva imagen desde el drama de Ceuta. Una trabajadora de la Cruz Roja se abraza a un exhausto inmigrante pic.twitter.com/aH8JrKYush

— EL MUNDO (@elmundoes) [May 18, 2021](#)

“We will not allow hatred to win,” Rita Maestre, a councillor for the city of Madrid, [said on Twitter](#). “Those of us who see this embrace as a symbol of the best of our country outnumber the others.”

Reyes downplayed the gesture, describing the action of hugging someone in need as “the most normal thing in the world”. She hadn’t caught the man’s name but had seen he was battling exhaustion and had given him water.

“He was crying, I held out my hand and he hugged me,” she said. “He clung to me. That embrace was his lifeline.” Days after he arrived in Ceuta she hadn’t seen him again.

As she worried that he might have been among the 5,600 people [sent back](#) to Morocco, plaudits rolled in on Twitter from Spanish TV presenters, artists and the highest levels of government.

[Ceuta influx highlights fragility of EU’s approach to migration](#)

[Read more](#)

“#Gracias Luna for representing the best values of our society,” said [Spain’s economy minister, Nadia Calviño](#). “Much more than a photo. A symbol of hope and solidarity,” [remarked Spain’s labour minister](#), Yolanda Díaz.

The secretary general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Jagan Chapagain, also weighed in. “Luna represents our very best,” [he wrote](#). “#Gracias Luna, for shining a light. Gracias Luna for showing the world what humanity looks like.”

Reyes didn’t address the message of support in her brief remarks to reporters. She said she was still reeling from the experience of being on the frontlines as thousands of migrants, many of them weary from swimming around the breakwater that straddles the border, [arrived in Ceuta in the span of 36 hours](#). “We were not trained to see something like that,” she said.

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Alaska

‘Second bite is one that broke the bones’: Alaska man describes bear mauling

Allen Minish was surveying land when he locked eyes with a brown bear in an encounter that left him with a crushed jaw and deep cuts

- **Warning: contains image of injuries sustained in the attack**



The brown bear Allen Minish saw in a remote area 190 miles north-east of Anchorage was bigger than the 300lb black bears he had seen before. Photograph: Bob Strong/Reuters

The brown bear Allen Minish saw in a remote area 190 miles north-east of Anchorage was bigger than the 300lb black bears he had seen before. Photograph: Bob Strong/Reuters

Associated Press

Thu 20 May 2021 13.49 EDT

Allen Minish was alone and surveying land for a real estate agent in a wooded, remote part of [Alaska](#), putting some numbers into his GPS unit when he looked up and saw a large brown bear walking about 30ft (10 meters) away.

“I saw him and he saw me at the same time,” Minish said by phone on Wednesday from his hospital bed in Anchorage, a day after being mauled by the bear in the chance encounter.

The attack left Minish with a crushed jaw and a puncture wound in his scalp so deep that the doctor said he could see bone.

Minish startled the bear on Tuesday morning just off the Richardson Highway, near the small community of Gulkana, about 190 miles north-east of Anchorage.

The bear, which Minish said was larger than the 300lb (136kg) black bears he had seen before, charged and closed the ground between them in a few seconds.

Minish tried to dodge behind small spruce trees. But that didn't stop the bear.

As the bear neared, Minish held up the pointed end of his surveying pole and pushed it toward the bear to keep it away from him.

The bear simply knocked it to the side and the force of the blow knocked Minish to the ground, he said.



Allen Minish shows lacerations on his head after a mauling by a brown bear.
Photograph: Allen Minish/AP

“As he lunged up on top of me, I grabbed his lower jaw to pull him away,” he added. “But he tossed me aside there, grabbed a quarter of my face.”

“He took a small bite and then he took a second bite, and the second bite is the one that broke the bones ... and crushed my right cheek basically,” he said.

When the bear let go, Minish turned his face to the ground and put his hands over his head.

And then the bear just walked away.

Minish surmises the bear left because he no longer perceived him as a threat. The bear’s exit – Alaska state troopers said later they did not locate the bear – gave him time to assess damage.

“I realized I was in pretty bad shape because I had all this blood everywhere,” he said.

He called 911 on his cellphone. While he was talking to a dispatcher, he pulled off his surveyor’s vest and his T-shirt and wrapped them around his

head in an attempt to stop the bleeding.

Then he waited 59 minutes for help to arrive. He knows that's how long it took because he later checked his cellphone record for the length of the time he was told to stay on the line with the dispatcher until rescue arrived.

Before help arrived, Minish said he worried about the bear returning to finish him off.

"I kept hearing stuff," he said.

But every time Minish tried to lean up to look around, he got dizzy from his blood loss.

"He didn't come back, and so I just lay there and worried about it," he said.

Minish, 61, has had his share of bear encounters over the 40 years he has lived in Alaska, but nothing like this. He owns his own surveying and engineering business, which takes him into the wild often.

[Colorado woman killed in rare black bear attack, authorities say](#)
[Read more](#)

"That's the one lesson learned," he said. "I should have had somebody with me."

He had left his gun in the vehicle on this job but said it wouldn't have mattered because the bear moved on him too fast for it to have been any use.

Minish can now add his name to the list of six people he knows who have been mauled by bears in Alaska.

"I guess I feel lucky," Minish said, adding that someone told him he was better off hurt than dead.

"In all honesty, it wouldn't have mattered either way. You know, if it killed me, it killed me. I had a good life; I'm moving on. It didn't kill me, so now let's move on to the other direction of trying to stay alive," he said.

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