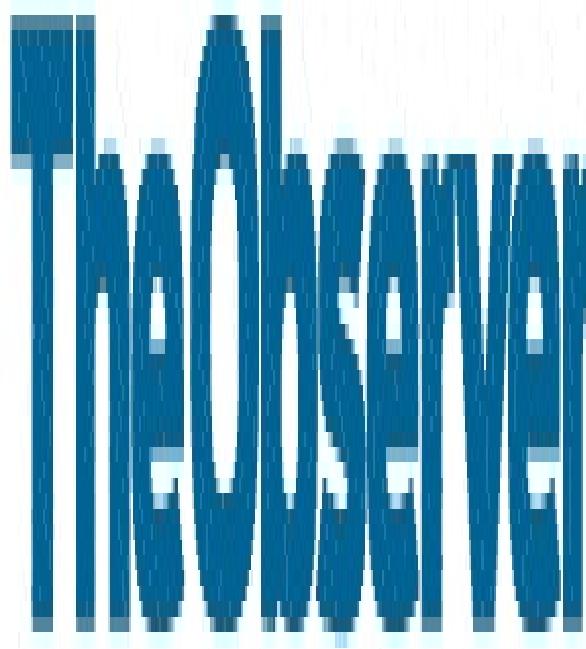


The Guardian

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2021.01.14 - 2021.01.17



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[The Observer](#)[Coronavirus](#)

Staff 'pressured to go back to work' in breach of UK Covid rules

One in nine employees say they were ordered to return, while firms avoid HSE fines for breaking regulations

- [**Bosses accused of putting workers' lives at risk**](#)
- [**Coronavirus – latest updates**](#)

Commuters getting on a Jubilee Line train during England's latest national lockdown. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

Commuters getting on a Jubilee Line train during England's latest national lockdown. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

[Michael Savage](#) [Tom Wall](#) & [James Tapper](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 16.00 EST

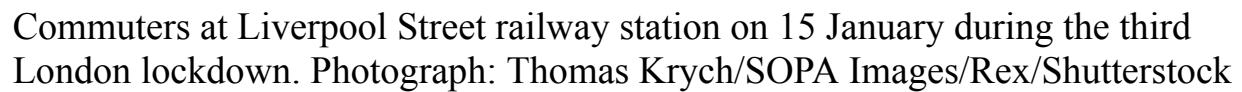
Thousands of workers feel pressured to return to their jobs when they still risk spreading coronavirus, and employers who breach Covid guidelines are avoiding serious punishment, according to evidence of major weaknesses in England's lockdown measures. One in 10 of those doing insecure work, such as zero-hours contracts and agency or gig economy jobs, said they had been to work within 10 days of a positive Covid test, according to research seen by the *Observer*. For workers overall the proportion is around one in 25.

More than one in nine workers said they had been [ordered back to their workplace](#) when they could have worked from home, according to the survey, carried out for the Royal Society for Arts, Manufactures and Commerce (RSA).

The government has been warned repeatedly that [economic support](#) on offer for people who are self-isolating is inadequate and puts pressure on them to return to work too soon. There have also been thousands of complaints about workplaces not being Covid-compliant during the current lockdown.

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors have not issued any enforcement notices on companies for Covid safety breaches since the start of the latest lockdown, despite having been contacted 2,945 times between 6 and 14 January about safety issues. Just 0.1% of about 97,000 Covid safety cases it has dealt with during the pandemic appear to have resulted in the issuing of an improvement or prohibition notice. No company has been prosecuted for a Covid-related breach.

[Coronavirus outbreaks in workplaces](#) rose by almost 70% in the first week of the national lockdown, with 175 Covid case clusters reported in English workplaces, not including care homes, hospitals and schools.



Commuters at Liverpool Street railway station on 15 January during the third London lockdown. Photograph: Thomas Krych/SOPA Images/Rex/Shutterstock

There is also evidence that families on low incomes are avoiding the Covid-19 testing system because they cannot afford to isolate if they test positive.

Meanwhile, there have been complaints that red tape is hampering access to the government's £500 compensation payments.

Jonathan Ashworth, the shadow health secretary, said: "With intensive care beds filling up and the virus still at sky-high prevalence, breaking transmission chains is urgent. But for millions who can't work from home on a laptop, or whose employer insists they still go to work, this is a phoney lockdown. We need clear enforcement, making workplaces Covid secure."

"Employees who don't need to be there shouldn't be forced into work, and those ill with Covid should be provided with decent sick pay and financial support to isolate. For ministers to have still failed to put in place these fundamentals is unforgivable."

A further 1,295 people were yesterday reported to have died within 28 days of testing positive for Covid-19, bringing the UK total to 88,590. The weekly total of 7,722 deaths was 23.5% higher than in the previous seven days. However, the number of cases is clearly falling – 339,956 positive cases have been recorded in the past seven days, a fall of 18.6% on the previous week.

Behavioural experts advising the government have been warning that ministers risk putting too much focus on a general failure to stick to social distancing rules, including a proposed advert warning that “grabbing a coffee can kill”. But experts and unions claim that unsafe workplaces may be playing a bigger role in spreading the virus.

Professor Susan Michie, who sits on one of the government’s scientific advisory groups, said too many people “are having to choose between risk of serious illness or death and losing their job – not to mention the risk of spreading the virus on the way to and from work”.

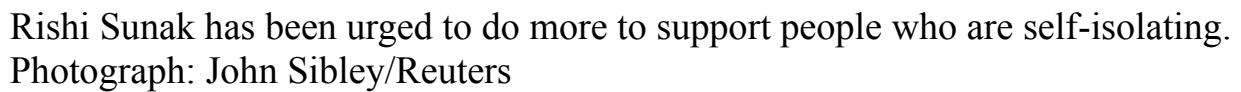
TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady said: “If the government is upping enforcement, ministers should start with employers who break Covid safety rules.”

“Self-isolation for two weeks is not an option for someone who works in the gig economy and may not be offered work subsequently if they are deemed ‘unreliable’, or for someone who is the family breadwinner,” said David Hunter, professor of Epidemiology and Medicine at the University of Oxford.

[Firms accused of putting workers’ lives at risk by bending lockdown trading rules](#)

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“As long as these issues are not addressed, the isolate part of the test, trace and isolate system will be much less effective than it needs to be, particularly in the face of the new more infectious strain of the virus.”



Rishi Sunak has been urged to do more to support people who are self-isolating.
Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

Alan Lockey, head of RSA's future work programme, agreed. "Millions feel forced to put themselves and others at risk of the virus because of insecure work, pressure from bosses, and the failings of our deeply inadequate welfare state," he said "Rishi Sunak must close this 'economic security trap' – the terrible trade-off between health and putting food on the table – by allowing self-isolating workers to access the furlough scheme, and retaining the £20 a week uplift in universal credit."

The HSE said it had scaled up its work to check, support and advise businesses, and had carried out more than 32,000 site visits during the pandemic. A government spokesperson said: "The law is clear that people can only leave the home to work if they cannot reasonably work from home. We have worked with trade unions, businesses and medical experts to produce comprehensive Covid-secure guidance so that businesses permitted to remain open can do so in a way that is as safe as possible for workers and customers."

[Close coffee shops and nurseries during lockdown, voters say in new poll](#)

[Read more](#)

The public are in favour of a tighter lockdown. A majority think takeaway restaurants and cafes (51%) and nurseries (61%) should now be closed, according to the latest Opinium poll for the *Observer*. A majority (53%) also think that there should be a “ban on people walking or exercising with anybody from outside their household”, and that “click and collect” should be suspended for all but essential shops (55%).

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[The Observer](#)[Coronavirus](#)

Coalition of child experts urge inquiry into UK's Covid crisis

A letter to the Observer calls for an urgent review of the long-term impact of lockdowns and school closures on a generation

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

School closures during the pandemic are widening the attainment gap between richer and poorer pupils. Photograph: James Veysey/Rex/Shutterstock
School closures during the pandemic are widening the attainment gap between richer and poorer pupils. Photograph: James Veysey/Rex/Shutterstock

[*Michael Savage and Sonia Sodha*](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 14.00 EST

Boris Johnson is facing demands from doctors, senior politicians and charities for a wide-ranging commission to examine the pandemic’s “devastating effect” on children, amid growing concerns about its impact on their education, development and mental health.

A major coalition of child health experts warns that many families are being “swept into poverty” by the pandemic, which is set to significantly add to the 4 million children living in deprivation before the Covid crisis.

In a letter to the *Observer*, they also warn of a “yawning gap” in attainment between rich and poor due to school closures, while the number of [children facing mental health issues](#) and distress will rise “with every day that lockdown keeps them isolated and uncertain about their futures”.

[Letters: our children are in crisis and need help](#)

[Read more](#)

“Children’s welfare has become a national emergency,” says the letter, whose signatories include the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, the National Children’s Bureau and some of the country’s leading child health academics. “An independent commission, to inform a cross-government strategy to steer children and young people clear from the lingering effects of Covid-19, could avert this deepening crisis. At present we have piecemeal solutions and stop-gap measures. The next generation deserves better.”

It warns that the challenges have been made harder by a decade of cuts to services families rely on. Some 1.5 million children under 18 will either need new or additional mental health support as a result of the pandemic. A third of those are new cases, according to the Centre for Mental [Health](#).

Lee Hudson, a consultant paediatrician and chief of mental health at Great Ormond Street hospital, said: “We know from the data that children and young people’s mental health has been deteriorating in this pandemic. Clinicians are seeing the effects of that every day: for example, the numbers of children presenting with eating disorders have dramatically increased. For children living in poverty, the risks are even greater. We’ve never needed a long-term strategy for child mental health more.”

The attainment gap was already growing before the pandemic hit. Poor pupils in primary school were 9.2 months behind their peers in 2018, [rising to 9.3 a year later](#), according to the Education Policy Institute.

Dr Xand van Tulleken, presenter of CBBC's *Operation Ouch!*, fears children's issues are being neglected. Photograph: Antonio Olmos/The Observer

Dr Xand van Tulleken, presenter of CBBC's *Operation Ouch!*, said: "I have been making television programmes and doing online sessions for kids and families through the pandemic. I hear and see every day how the restrictions and disruptions of lockdown present a huge challenge to families and to children. The urgency of the death toll from Covid has meant that these issues haven't had the attention they need in order to mitigate against harms to an entire generation. An independent commission would be an excellent starting point to start to address this."

The call for an independent commission has already gained some political support. Estelle Morris, a former Labour education secretary, said: "It is a cruel

irony that the government's action in policy areas affecting children and young people has been the most chaotic and disorganised. A commission would need to work quickly and the government would need to listen to what it says, but all that must be possible in such an important area.”

David Blunkett, another former Labour education secretary, said he supported the “deep and justifiable concerns” raised by the group. “It needs to be a very rapid process as any delay in acting to reverse the impact would lead to even greater distress and detrimental impact on the life chances on a whole generation,” he said.

Senior Tories also have concerns about the impact of the pandemic. [Damian Hinds](#), who served as education secretary under Theresa May, said: “The signatories are quite right that the impact on this generation is immense and many-faceted, and could still be felt many years from now. The school system, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services [CAMHS], children’s services departments and others will all face unprecedented challenges and will continue to evolve plans. But it also makes sense to look at the issues as a whole and how they interact.”

Justine Greening, a fellow former education secretary, said: “Britain needs a comprehensive plan to level up opportunity across our country, one that transcends party politics. It’s clear that Covid-19 has brutally widened inequalities, but if we work collectively on solutions then we have the best chance of building a fairer, levelled-up Britain.”

Robert Halfon, the Tory chair of the education select committee, said lockdowns and school closures had “potentially been a national disaster in terms of attainment, mental health and safeguarding hazards”. He added: “In the short term, the government needs to place mental health professionals in schools so that pupils and parents can access them when they need it. In the long term, they need to look at how the pupil premium is spent, rocket-boost the catch-up fund and come up with a real long-term plan for education.”

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/16/coalition-of-child-experts-urge-inquiry-into-uks-covid-crisis>

2021.01.17 - News

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- [**Carbon capture is vital to meeting climate goals, scientists tell green critics**](#)

[The Observer](#)[Republicans](#)

'It's not their party any more': Trump leaves Republicans deeply fractured

The president has ignited a civil war in his own party, creating bitter divides that will be felt for years to come

- [Trump isolated and enraged ahead of Biden inauguration](#)

Mitch McConnell listens while Donald Trump speaks to reporters before a meeting with Senate Republicans in Washington DC, 26 March 2019.

Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

Mitch McConnell listens while Donald Trump speaks to reporters before a meeting with Senate Republicans in Washington DC, 26 March 2019.

Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

[Richard Luscombe](#)

[@richlusc](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 13.38 EST

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The rancorous four-year administration of Donald Trump will reach its denouement on Wednesday with the [twice-impeached president](#) committing one final act of enmity: dropping a match to ignite a civil war inside his Republican party.

Trump heads for the [sanctuary of Mar-a-Lago](#), his Florida resort, a bitterly divided party floundering in his wake. Republicans lost the presidency and both houses of Congress in his last two years in office, while the Capitol riot, failures in the response to Covid-19 and Trump's lies about a "stolen" election are fresh in the minds of Republican detractors.

[Kellyanne Conway tells Bill Maher Americans 'better off thanks to Trump](#)
[Read more](#)

Many party members believe such fractures will be exposed in swing states and across primary elections in the coming months and years, as moderates seek to loosen the influence of Trump and his supporters.

"This president, in his irrational, illegal and seditious conduct, has been enabled by his Republican congressional cult, and there's been no restraints placed on him by that cult," the Watergate veteran Carl Bernstein told CNN this week.

One faction, Trump loyalists determined to punish elected [Republicans](#) who supported impeachment after the attack on the Capitol, features a number of new Congress members blindly devoted to Trumpism and determined to move the party even further right.

More than 100 Republican members of the House and a handful of senators voted to oppose certification of Joe Biden's victory in November's presidential election that Trump falsely insists he won.

Some have been reluctant to condemn the Trump-fuelled mob who invaded the US Capitol, or threats of more armed insurrection this weekend and around the inauguration on Wednesday that have prompted [an unprecedented lockdown](#) in Washington, thousands of national guard troops activated to prevent disruption.

“This isn’t their Republican party any more,” the president’s oldest son, [Donald Trump](#) Jr, said of moderate Republicans at a rally that preceded the insurrection. “This is Donald Trump’s party.”

Against them stands the traditional wing of the party, figures such as the outgoing Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, and the No 3 House Republican, Liz Cheney, keen to put Trump in the rearview mirror and forge a credible challenge in the 2022 midterms.

That bloc includes congressmen such as Adam Kinzinger, a Trump critic from Illinois who was [asked by the New York Times](#) if Republicans were expecting the acrimony of recent months to continue.

“Hell yes we are,” said one of 10 Republican congressmen to vote for impeachment this week.

Asked how he thought the moderate wing could limit or eliminate Trump’s cast-iron grip on the party, Kinzinger said: “We beat him.”

Trump, who is reported to be mulling [another run at the presidency in 2024](#), if he is not convicted in the Senate and barred from holding office, has amassed a huge war chest from supporters who [thought](#) they were donating to the failed efforts to overturn the election result.

Even if he does not run again, family members are predicted to carry the torch. His daughter Ivanka Trump and her husband, Jared Kushner, have bought property in Miami with an eye to [challenging Marco Rubio](#), a Florida Republican senator, in 2022. Despite recent fealty, Rubio has a [history of speaking](#) against Trump.



Marjorie Taylor Greene, Republican of Georgia, holds up a Stop the Steal mask while speaking with fellow first-term Republican members of Congress.

Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

Such intra-party battlegrounds are expected to include Wyoming and South Dakota, where Cheney and the No 2 Senate Republican, John Thune, have drawn Trump's ire.

Cheney, the daughter of the former vice-president Dick Cheney, is facing [calls to resign](#) from colleagues angered by her accusations of betrayal by Trump and her vote for impeachment.

Thune, one of the first Republicans to publicly acknowledge Biden's general election victory, is likely to be "primaried", an aggressive campaign by members of a politician's own party to replace them as a candidate in upcoming elections.

“I suspect we will see a lot of that activity in the next couple of years out there for some of our members, myself included,” Thune told the Times.

Many eyes, meanwhile, will be on the fortunes of newly elected rightwingers and fierce Trump apologists such as Marjorie Taylor-Greene, a QAnon conspiracy theory supporter from Georgia, and Lauren Boebert of Colorado, a gun rights supporter who has threatened to [bring her weapons into the House](#).

['I'm facing a prison sentence': US Capitol rioters plead with Trump for pardons](#)
[Read more](#)

Senior Republicans, including McConnell, are seeking to prevent more extreme politicians from seeking higher office. Scott Reed, a McConnell ally and former Republican strategist, told the Times: “In 2022, we’ll be faced with the Trump pitchfork crowd, and there will need to be an effort to beat them back.

“Hopefully they’ll create multi-candidate races where their influence will be diluted.”

The Trump camp is also looking for revenge beyond Washington. Efforts are under way to oust governors in Arizona, where Doug Ducey was criticised for certifying Biden’s victory, and in Georgia, where Trump has [called for Brian Kemp to resign](#).

Georgia elected two Democratic senators earlier this month, taking control of the chamber away from Republicans. Trump is furious at Kemp and other officials who in an [explosive phone call](#) resisted his demand that they “find” enough votes to overturn his presidential election defeat in the state.

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The Observer[Biden inauguration](#)

Washington: man arrested with fake inaugural ID and loaded gun

- Wesley Allen Beeler arrested ahead of Biden inauguration
- Security stepped up nationwide after Capitol attack
- [Biden must find words for a wounded nation](#)

A member of the Virginia national guard stands outside razor wire fencing surrounding the US Capitol. Photograph: Liz Lynch/Getty Images

A member of the Virginia national guard stands outside razor wire fencing surrounding the US Capitol. Photograph: Liz Lynch/Getty Images

Reuters in Washington

Sat 16 Jan 2021 17.03 EST

Officers in Washington DC arrested a Virginia man who tried to pass through a Capitol police checkpoint carrying fake inaugural credentials, a loaded handgun and more than 500 rounds of ammunition.

['I'm facing a prison sentence': US Capitol rioters plead with Trump for pardons](#)
[Read more](#)

The man, identified in court papers as Wesley Allen Beeler, was driving a pickup truck with several firearm-related bumper stickers, including one that read: “If they come for your guns Give ‘Em your bullets first,” the papers said.

Beeler presented an “unauthorized inauguration credential” at a Capitol police checkpoint on Friday evening, court papers said.

He was scheduled to appear in court on Saturday. His court-appointed lawyer could not immediately be reached for comment. Capitol police officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

Responding to news of the arrest, the Democratic US representative Don Beyer of Virginia said the danger was real and the city was on edge as Joe Biden’s inauguration approaches.

“Anyone who can avoid the area around the Capitol and Mall this week should do so,” Beyer wrote on Twitter.

US law enforcement officials are gearing up for pro-Trump marches in Washington and all 50 state capitals this weekend, erecting barriers and deploying thousands of national guard troops to try to prevent the kind of violent attack that rattled the nation when Trump supporters [stormed the US Capitol on 6 January](#).

The FBI warned police agencies of possible armed protests outside all 50 state capitol buildings starting on Saturday and through Biden’s inauguration on Wednesday, fueled by supporters of Donald Trump who believe his false claims of electoral fraud.

Michigan, Virginia, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania and Washington were among states that activated their national guards to strengthen security. Texas closed its capitol through inauguration day.

Steve McCraw, the director of the Texas Department of Public Safety, said in a statement late Friday that intelligence indicated “violent extremists” could seek to exploit planned armed protests in Austin to “conduct criminal acts”.

The attack on the US Capitol in Washington was carried out by Trump supporters, some of whom planned to kidnap members of Congress and called for the death of the vice-president Mike Pence as he presided over the certification of Biden’s victory.

The Democratic leaders of four congressional committees said on Saturday they had opened a review of the events and had written to the FBI and other intelligence and security agencies to find out what was known about threats, whether the information was shared and whether foreign influence played any role.

“This still-emerging story is one of astounding bravery by some US Capitol police and other officers; of staggering treachery by violent criminals; and of apparent and high-level failures – in particular, with respect to intelligence and security preparedness,” the letter said.

It was signed by the House intelligence chair, Adam Schiff, the homeland security chair, Bennie Thompson, the oversight chair, Carolyn Maloney, and the judiciary chair, Jerrold Nadler.

Officials have trained much of their focus on Sunday, when the anti-government “boogaloo” movement flagged plans to hold rallies in all 50 states.

In Michigan, a fence was erected around the capitol in Lansing and troopers were mobilized. The legislature canceled meetings next week, citing credible threats.

“We are prepared for the worst but we remain hopeful that those who choose to demonstrate at our Capitol do so peacefully,” the Michigan state police director, Joe Gasper, said.

The perception that the 6 January insurrection was a success could embolden domestic extremists motivated by anti-government, racial and partisan grievances, spurring them to further violence, according to a government intelligence bulletin dated Wednesday first reported by Yahoo News.

The Joint Intelligence Bulletin, produced by the FBI, Department of Homeland Security and National Counterterrorism Center, further warned that “false narratives” about electoral fraud would serve as an ongoing catalyst for extremists.

Thousands of armed national guard troops were in the streets in Washington in an unprecedented show of force after the assault on the Capitol. Bridges into the city were to be closed along with dozens of roads. The National Mall and other landmarks were blocked off.

Experts say the capitals of battleground states such as Wisconsin, Michigan, Pennsylvania and Arizona are at most risk of violence. But even states not seen as likely flashpoints are taking precautions.

[US Capitol riot: police have long history of aiding neo-Nazis and extremists](#)
[Read more](#)

The Illinois governor, JB Pritzker, said on Friday that while his state had not received any specific threats he was beefing up security around the capitol in Springfield, including adding about 250 state national guard troops.

The alarm extended beyond legislatures. The United Church of Christ, a Protestant denomination of more than 4,900 churches, warned its 800,000 members of reports “liberal” churches could be attacked.

Suzanne Spaulding, a former undersecretary for the Department of Homeland Security, said disclosing enhanced security measures can be an effective deterrent.

“One of the ways you can potentially de-escalate a problem is with a strong security posture,” said Spaulding, a senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies. “You try to deter people from trying anything.”

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[The Observer](#)[Folk music](#)

How a Scottish postie's simple sea shanty struck a global chord

Nathan Evans's viral TikTok covers have sparked a huge surge in interest in the formerly neglected genre, making him an overnight sensation

26-year-old Nathan Evans has become an international star Photograph:
ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

26-year-old Nathan Evans has become an international star Photograph:
ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

[Robyn Vinter](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 08.28 EST

It is no exaggeration to say that sea shanties have changed Nathan Evans's life. The 26-year-old postman from Airdrie, North Lanarkshire, has become a phenomenon online thanks to the driving, rhythmic a cappella music.

The sea shanty genre has unexpectedly broken into the mainstream, having become something of a global online obsession over recent weeks, mostly driven by the duet feature on the video-sharing social media app [TikTok](#).

The result is hundreds of versions of popular sea shanties with satisfying layers of harmonised voices, sung by people who have never met — and a boost to a genre that was previously relegated to being a niche, even novelty, branch of folk music.

Google searches for the term “sea shanties” are at an all-time high in the US, and the [Reddit sea shanties community](#) is currently the ninth fastest-growing on the site, having doubled in size in the last week.

For Evans, who has been performing music for years, posting songs after finishing his early morning deliveries, it began with a cover of an Irish folk song Leave Her, Johnny, which he shared with a handful of followers on [his TikTok account](#) last summer.

“I hadn’t listened to many sea shanties, and then when that video took off I realised that people actually really liked that kind of music, and I found I enjoyed doing them,” he said. Six months and millions of likes later, he has more than 400,000 TikTok followers.

He is also appearing on radio, television and in articles all over the world and has even been complimented by American singer -songwriter John Legend.

“It’s all gone so fast and it was all a bit overwhelming,” he said.

Evans, who writes his own music, never imagined that his first EP would be sea shanties, but he is grateful nonetheless.

“They’ve changed my life,” he said. “They’ve opened up so many doors and opportunities that I would never have had if it wasn’t for them.”

Arguably, both the biggest instigator and beneficiary of this trend is the Bristol band [the Longest Johns](#), who are veterans of the sea shanty game, having

formed in 2013.

Jonathan “JD” Darley, Andy Yates, Robbie Sattin and Dave Robinson have spent the best part of the last decade performing sea shanties at festivals throughout the UK and had attracted a moderate fanbase.

But in late 2020, after the Longest Johns allowed Twitch streamers to use their music free of charge in the background of their streams, one song in particular exploded.

Sea shanties as they used to be sung: Reading Sea Cadets in 1941. Photograph: George W Hales/Getty Images

The Wellerman, a sea shanty originally from New Zealand, is currently No 5 in the world and no 2 in the US on Spotify’s viral chart, a list that takes into account listens and shares. Even more impressively, on Wednesday the Longest Johns’ version of The Wellerman entered Spotify’s top 200 most-streamed songs in the entire US.

This success has come in waves, they said, with a spike in popularity in the summer, then October, then again in December. “And then this has now happened and each one has gone bigger and bigger and bigger than the one previously as more people start to recognise and connect with the song,” Darley said.

“It’s just like this crazy spiral of growth that it’s seen.”

Promise Uzowulu, a 23-year-old nursing student from Houston, Texas, who goes by the [TikTok handle @strong_promises](#), is partly responsible for this recent wave.

His 43-second video, singing along to the Longest Johns’ version of The Wellerman in the car with his 21-year-old brother Frank, charts the sincere emotional trajectory familiar to new sea shanty fans and has had tens of millions of views.

Uzowulu said: “He put it on and I was sceptical at first because he plays some weird music. But to my surprise I really liked the song. I asked him to play it on repeat until I learned the chorus.

“The video shows the honest progression from scepticism to full-blown enjoyment.”

The Longest Johns credit the genre’s simplicity and approachability for this. Sattin said: “I’d compare it to football chants. It doesn’t matter if you’re in tune or not.”

The Wellerman itself may have a unique appeal during the pandemic too, as the song is about waiting for a ship to bring supplies while on a seemingly endless whale hunt. (Soon may the Wellerman come/ To bring us sugar and tea and rum/ One day, when the tonguin’ is done/ We’ll take our leave and go.)

“It’s people stuck in a bad situation hoping for better. Something about that seems to resonate with people,” said Robinson.

Yates added: “Or maybe they just need a food delivery.”

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[The Observer](#)[Health policy](#)

Firms accused of putting workers' lives at risk by bending lockdown trading rules

As workplace infections soar, an Observer study reveals no company has been punished this year for breaching Covid safety laws

- [**Staff pressured to go back to work in breach of Covid rules**](#)
- [**See all our coronavirus coverage**](#)

Thousands of non-essential workers are being asked by their bosses to return to the workplace. Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

Thousands of non-essential workers are being asked by their bosses to return to the workplace. Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

[*Tom Wall*](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 16.00 EST

Irresponsible firms are exploiting looser lockdown regulations to bring thousands of non-essential workers into sometimes busy workplaces, with little chance of enforcement action by the nation's safety watchdog.

Analysis by the *Observer* shows that no enforcement notices have been served on companies by [Health](#) and Safety Executive (HSE) inspectors for Covid safety breaches since the country went into the latest lockdown, despite being contacted 2,945 times about workplace safety issues between 6 and 14 January. Overall, just 0.1% of the nearly 97,000 Covid safety cases dealt with by the agency during the pandemic appear to have resulted in an improvement or prohibition safety notice, with not a single company prosecuted for Covid-related breaches of safety laws.

This comes as [the latest Public Health England surveillance data](#) suggests workplace infections surged as people returned to work in January. The number of coronavirus outbreaks in workplaces rose by almost 70% in the first week of the national lockdown, with 175 Covid case clusters reported in English workplaces, not including care homes, hospitals and schools. New polling carried out by the TUC shows that fewer than half of workers are in workplaces with Covid-secure risk assessments.

In the past week, the government has focused attention on the failure of some people to stick to social distancing rules, from the release of a video of police approaching an individual in a parked car to an advert warning that “grabbing a coffee can kill”. But experts and unions have warned that unsafe workplaces may be playing a bigger role in fuelling the pandemic.

“If the government is upping enforcement, ministers should start with employers who break Covid safety rules,” said TUC general secretary Frances O’Grady. She called for big increases in resources for the HSE to stop rogue employers getting away with putting staff at risk.

Non-essential shops are supposed to be shut and most workers are expected to work from home to reduce the transmission of the virus, but unlike the first national lockdown all businesses are allowed to provide click and collect services in England. This contrasts with Scotland, where non-essential retailers were on Saturday [banned from allowing customers to pick up goods ordered online](#).

Shop assistant Mike Richards, who works in a luxury fashion store in the centre of Birmingham, was furloughed during the first national lockdown in March but ordered to come into work last week to make sales calls alongside his colleagues under the guise of click and collect. “We got an email out of the blue saying, ‘You’ve got to get back into the store to sell.’ This is a luxury fashion brand – how can it be essential?”

A deserted Bull Ring shopping centre in Birmingham earlier this month. Unlike during the first national lockdown, all businesses are allowed to provide click and collect services in England. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

Richards (not his real name) had to travel by train into work and was told to call clients who had previously bought luxury handbags. “There were eight of us in the store that day. We were masked up but there was hardly any socially distancing,” he said. “Every single facet of what we’re doing could be done in the comfort of our own homes. But we’re being forced to go in. It’s an irresponsible act, for the sake of a little bit of profit for a multibillion-pound company.”

He added that staff had been given letters in case they were stopped by the police on the way to work. “It says, ‘We are carrying out duties of click and collect and home deliveries.’ Nowhere does it say, ‘This person is in the store selling’, which is what we are actually doing.”

Professor Susan Michie, who sits on one of the government’s Sage subcommittees, said people were being needlessly driven into workplaces amid a raging pandemic, which has pushed the NHS to the brink in many parts of the country. “Every day I get contacted by distraught people who are being forced into workplaces, which they feel are completely unsafe. They are having to choose between the risk of serious illness or death and losing their job – not to mention the risk of spreading the virus on the way to and from work.”

She added that click and collect services were providing transmission routes for Covid. “They should all be shut down unless absolutely essential,” said Michie.

As well as clamping down on click and collect abuses, Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, also placed a legal [obligation on employers to ensure people can work from home](#) wherever possible. This contrasts with England, where businesses only have to facilitate working from home.

Administrator Sandra Jackson, who works for a small vehicle supplier in Essex, was ordered to come in last week, even though there has been an outbreak of coronavirus, with just over a third of the workforce testing positive in December and January.

“I worked from home for one day and then I got a message saying, ‘This isn’t working. We won’t allow you to work from home.’ I’m absolutely furious about it.”

Tradespeople in England are still [allowed to carry out all types of work in people’s homes](#). Electrician Stuart Collins has been ordered to install smart meters in multiple homes every day. “If people had lost supply or if it was a new connection, I would have no issue whatsoever,” he said. “But exchanging existing meters for smart meters is not essential. All we are doing is assisting this virus to spread. They are putting financial gain ahead of people’s lives.”

Professor Stephen Reicher, who advises both the UK and Scottish government, called on UK ministers to follow Sturgeon’s lead. “People have got to have the right to work at home if they can,” he said. “These are not wild and woolly

ideas. They're happening in Scotland. They could be very easily done. But the UK government seems to want to keep its head in the sand."

Michie said more businesses were being allowed trade in England and more workers were going into workplaces because the government's lockdown rules were so broad that almost any businesses could claim to be essential. "The government has effectively handed responsibility to employers to say whether they are essential or not," she said.

[Staff 'pressured to go back to work' in breach of UK Covid rules](#)

[Read more](#)

The HSE said it had scaled up its proactive work to check, support and advise businesses on public health guidance. It added that it had carried out more than 32,000 site visits during the pandemic. "Inspectors continue to be out and about, putting employers on the spot and checking that they are complying with health and safety law. Our role in contributing to the national response to reduce Covid-19 transmissions and support economic recovery has been widely recognised," said a spokesperson.

A government spokesperson said: "The law is clear that people can only leave the home to work if they cannot reasonably work from home. We have worked with trade unions, businesses and medical experts to produce comprehensive Covid-secure guidance so that businesses permitted to remain open can do so in a way that is as safe as possible for workers and customers."

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<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/16/bosses-accused-putting-workers-lives-risk-bending-lockdown-trading-rules>

[The Observer](#)[Poverty](#)

Low-paid shun Covid tests because the cost of self-isolating is too high

Gig economy and patchy compensation could help coronavirus spread in some parts of England

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

A Just Eat delivery person: Who is checking if such workers are carrying Covid-19? Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex

A Just Eat delivery person: Who is checking if such workers are carrying Covid-19? Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex

[*James Tapper*](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 14.30 EST

Families on low incomes are avoiding the Covid-19 testing system because they cannot afford to isolate if they get sick, while red tape is hampering access to the government's [£500 compensation payments](#).

People in some of the most deprived areas of England, including Middlesbrough, Liverpool and the London borough of Newham, [are less likely to request a coronavirus test](#).

According to the CIPD, the association of HR professionals, when people on low incomes do self-isolate, they find it difficult to access the NHS Test and Trace support payment scheme. Freedom of information releases from 34 local authorities show that only a third of claims were granted.

Dr Wanda Wyporska of charity the Equality Trust said people avoided testing for a range of reasons, from caring responsibilities to employment worries. "Some people have said they're not going to take the test, because if they are told to isolate, they won't be able to work," she said.

Middlesbrough council said local testing data showed low take-up of PCR swab tests in the most deprived wards in the city, but higher levels of positive tests. The council plans to roll out rapid lateral flow tests at sites across the city in the coming days and said it will focus on those wards.

In Liverpool, more than half of people in affluent areas in the south of the city were being tested during the lateral flow testing pilot scheme, but take-up in deprived areas in the north of the city was far lower.

Data from Transport for London shows that tube stations in deprived areas are still busy. Before the pandemic, Dagenham Heathway station, in one of east London's poorest areas, and Highgate station in north London, where the average house costs more than £1.4m, both used to see about 19,000 journeys on weekdays. Last week, Dagenham Heathway averaged about 6,000 journeys (32% of pre-pandemic levels), while Highgate saw about 2,200 (11%).

Research to be published by Newham council later this month shows that nearly three-quarters of people say a guarantee that they would not lose their job would make them more likely to self-isolate.

Jason Strelitz, director of public health for Newham, said his team first began to notice the problem when they tried to set up a pilot study testing asymptomatic people in high-risk occupations. “We looked at retail and drivers, and we couldn’t get people to engage,” he said. “It was quite clear that people didn’t want to get tested because they didn’t want to have to deal with the consequences of a positive test.

“The decision to self-isolate is a very limited, narrow, private benefit. You’ve got it or you’ve been identified as a close contact. It’s not about your health; it’s about reducing transmission to the community. And I think if we’re going to ask you to do that, we need to recognise that that sits very differently with people depending on their work conditions.”

The growth of the gig economy in areas like Newham has resulted in hidden and unmeasured costs, according to Wyporska, who points out that the £500 compensation will not go far for a family whose breadwinner is off work for two weeks.

“There is a huge penalty if you don’t turn up to work. If you’re not seen as reliable, you go to the bottom of the pile,” she said. Managers will swiftly turn to someone who is available. “With some algorithms, if you’re not showing up for some time, that affects the amount of work you get.”

Shrinking employment rights and limited access to tribunals mean that workers whose ties to their employers and customers are frayed to insignificance are less likely to comply when asked to act for the benefit of the public.

Wyporska said: “Who’s checking if an Uber driver or a Deliveroo person is positive or not? It’s not in their interests to know. And even if they do know, they might carry on working. What incentive do people have to take a test that might deprive them of their income?”

The government says it has given local authorities £70m to cover test- and trace isolation payments, but many councils say they have already spent the money. People on low incomes who receive some benefits can apply, and those not on benefits can also get “discretionary” payments.

[What are the pros and cons of mass Covid testing in England?](#)
[Read more](#)

Ben Willmott, CIPD's head of public policy, said: "Our research shows that if you are a low-income person who is working, you can have no confidence you will be compensated if you self-isolate, and the process is so complex that you might be put off from claiming it in any case."

"There is also high variability in how the compensation scheme is applied across the country. We have to ensure that people contacted by NHS Test and Trace don't lose out financially for doing the right thing. It's a crucial part of the system, which is why we're calling for an urgent review – and it's compounded by the fact that statutory sick pay is so low."

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[The Observer](#)[Social care](#)

New £120m fund to provide boost for care sector staffing levels

Cash comes after survey reveals some providers report 50% staff absences

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Covid outbreaks in care homes have increased three-fold in the past month.

Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Covid outbreaks in care homes have increased three-fold in the past month.

Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

[David Connell](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 17.43 EST

The Covid-stricken [care home](#) and domiciliary care sector is to get an extra £120m government funding to help boost depleted staff levels, ministers announced on Saturday night.

The funds would help increase staff numbers, said the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC). Ministers said the aim was to help local authorities plug worker shortages and allow additional staff to take on administrative tasks, freeing up skilled colleagues to provide care. It could also help existing staff work extra hours with overtime payments or by covering childcare costs, the DHSC said.

The cash comes after a snapshot survey from the National Care Forum (NCF) earlier this month suggested that some [care services](#) were reporting staff absences of more than 50%.

The health secretary, Matt Hancock, said: “This funding will bolster staffing numbers in a controlled and safe way, whilst ensuring people continue to receive the highest quality of care.”

The minister for care, Helen Whately, said: “This additional funding gives a boost to the social care workforce during some of the most difficult days of this pandemic so far.

“Care workers have been doing the most amazing job throughout the pandemic. In challenging circumstances, they have been caring for some of the people most at risk from this virus with compassion and skill.”

The money comes after the government was warned that its plan to restrict “all but essential” movement of staff between care home and support provided in people’s homes, to reduce the threat of virus transmission among the most vulnerable, would result in acute staff shortages.

The sector suffered high infection rates and mounting death tolls during the first lockdown and the latest figures show that it is being similarly hit in the second wave.

Covid outbreaks in care homes have increased threefold in the past month, with the second-highest weekly total since April recorded last week.

Adam Briggs of The Health Foundation said the rise in reported care home incidents was “deeply concerning. He said: “Care homes cannot be neglected again.”

Ministers have promised additional tests for staff working in more than one setting ahead of every shift.

Professor Martin Green, of Care England, which represents independent adult social care providers, said he was “pleased” the government had listened to their “deep concerns about banning staff movement”.

He added: “Staff are our most precious resource and we want to do all we can to support them, especially in these incredibly difficult times.”

Vic Rayner at the National Care Forum welcomed the new funding, subject to “continuous review”.

She said that proposals to prevent staff movement had been “ill-thought through”, targeted low-paid care workers, and created a “high level of concerns”.

She said: “Care homes have been doing everything possible to reduce staff movement, and the prospect of enforcement was extremely unhelpful in a sector stretched to near breaking point.”

The funding comes on top of £149m announced in December to support the roll-out of rapid virus testing and visits.

The DHSC said that all funding would be available “later this month”. It added that the aim was to offer a jab to all care home residents and staff by the end of next week.

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[The Observer](#)[Coronavirus](#)

Calling all billionaires: here's how to keep your superyacht Covid-free

As the rich and famous isolate on the seas, a new catamaran is designed to keep the virus out

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

The ShadowCAT Haven is described as a ‘protective layer’ to the owner’s mothership. By acting as a buffer between the main yacht and outside world, Haven allows owners and charterers to maintain Covid-secure social bubbles on board. Photograph: Clint Jenkins

The ShadowCAT Haven is described as a ‘protective layer’ to the owner’s mothership. By acting as a buffer between the main yacht and outside world, Haven allows owners and charterers to maintain Covid-secure social bubbles on board. Photograph: Clint Jenkins

*Rupert Neate Wealth Correspondent
@RupertNeate*

Sat 16 Jan 2021 08.34 EST

It is a problem not many us have to consider: how to ensure your [multimillion dollar superyacht](#) remains a coronavirus-free zone despite taking on board crew from around the world.

But for the billionaire owners of floating luxury homes there is now a solution – a very expensive one, naturally. An Australian naval architecture firm is launching a new double-hulled support vessel, in which new crew and guests can isolate while they await coronavirus test results from onboard medical staff.

[The catamaran, called ShadowCAT Haven](#) and designed by Sydney-based firm Incat Crowther, is being promoted as offering rich owners a “protective layer between the shore and the vessel”, allowing them to “maintain their bubble of protection” from the real world.

Dan Mace, technical manager at Incat Crowther, said the design of the catamaran allowed crew and goods to be “sanitised” before passing to the “clean side”.

“With its certified helipad and generous guest lounge, the Haven allows guests transiting to the yacht to undergo testing and a brief but luxurious isolation period prior to transfer by tender to the mother vessel,” Mace said.

“The yacht industry, like most industries, has been hit hard by coronavirus, and like others it is looking to see how it can get back to a new normal,” he added. “Both owners and charterers want to get back aboard, but how to do this safely, given the nature of a vessel with crew and mobility.”

“This is where Haven is necessary as it allows owners and charterers to enjoy the yacht and maintain their bubble of protection, with Haven being that protective layer between the shore and the vessel – and the gateway through which all guests and crew pass.”



David Geffen sparked outrage when he posted photos of himself friends ‘avoiding the virus’ on his \$590m superyacht Rising Sun. Photograph: Paul Bruinooge/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images

As well as featuring an isolation centre and medical lab, the vessel also has space for jet skis, diving equipment and even a submarine and hydroponic gardens.

Mace said the cost of the Haven support yacht would vary depending on the owners’ specifications, but it would run into tens of millions.

Many of the world’s richest people have attempted to avoid the pandemic and associated global lockdowns by decamping to their superyachts for large parts of the past year.

David Geffen, the billionaire co-founder of Geffen Records and DreamWorks Pictures, [sparked outrage](#) last year when he posted photos of himself and friends “avoiding the virus” on his \$590m superyacht Rising Sun.

Geffen, who has an estimated \$8bn fortune, posted drone footage of his yacht on Instagram with the caption: “Isolated in the Grenadines avoiding the virus. I’m hoping everybody is staying safe.”

After the outcry Geffen deleted the posts. It was not possible to find out who he was sailing with at the time, but Geffen has regularly hosted celebrities, business executives and politicians on his yacht.

In 2019 he invited Amazon’s Jeff Bezos, his girlfriend Lauren Sanchez, former Goldman Sachs boss Lloyd Blankfein, venture capitalist Joshua Kushner and his supermodel wife, Karlie Kloss, and oil heir Mikey Hess.

On other cruises Geffen hosted Oprah Winfrey, Orlando Bloom, Katy Perry, business billionaire Henry Kravis, Jerry Seinfeld, Tom Hanks and Bradley Cooper.

BWA Yachting, a superyacht servicing company, has begun offering coronavirus tests to superyacht crews, to allay owners’ fears that workers may bring the virus on board with them. The company said it had so far tested the crews of more than 30 yachts.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/16/calling-all-billionaires-heres-how-to-keep-your-superyacht-covid-free>

The ObserverLabour

Anas Sarwar: ‘I’ll rebuild Labour party in Scotland’

Glasgow MSP pledges to replace internal wrangling with united purpose as he sets out his stall to succeed Richard Leonard

Anas Sarwar: ‘Speaking out against the racism I have faced was the hardest thing I have done in politics.’ Photograph: Ken Jack/Getty Images

Anas Sarwar: ‘Speaking out against the racism I have faced was the hardest thing I have done in politics.’ Photograph: Ken Jack/Getty Images

[Toby Helm](#) Political Editor

Sat 16 Jan 2021 17.00 EST

Anas Sarwar, a 37-year-old former dentist and member of the Scottish parliament, sets out his stall today to become Labour's next leader in [Scotland](#) as he says the cause of equality – not independence – should be top of the political agenda.

Sarwar missed out in the race for the leadership four years ago to [Richard Leonard](#), who resigned last week after failing to challenge the SNP as the dominant force in Scottish politics.

Writing online in the *Observer*, the son of former Glasgow [Labour](#) MP Mohammad Sarwar and an early frontrunner says his task is to “rebuild” [Labour](#) north of the border after recent electoral humiliations. It finished fifth in the 2019 European elections and fourth in the general election later that year in terms of the number of seats won.

His fellow MSP Monica Lennon, Labour’s [health](#) spokesperson at Holyrood, is seen as another likely candidate. With the campaigns for May’s Holyrood elections due to start in March, Labour sources say they hope to have a new leader in place by the end of February.

Sarwar says internal wrangling must be replaced by a sense of united purpose. “Over the past few years, I have gained a new perspective on our politics and realised that the things we argue about mean little to people’s lives. We spend too much time highlighting our differences, rather than focusing on what unites us.”

He says life cannot not be the same after Covid-19, and that the focus must be on advancing equality in society rather than the cause of taking Scotland out of the union.

“I firmly believe we cannot go back to society as it was before the pandemic – insecure work, hollowed-out public services, an underfunded health service, and the constant focus on another independence referendum when there’s far more important things we need to be dealing with.”

He adds: “Scottish Labour can compete again if we offer a positive alternative – a plan to heal our wounds, to reunite our people and to rebuild our country.”

He cites his own personal experiences growing up in Glasgow and facing racism, saying they have taught him about the need to speak up and act against

prejudice.

“Speaking out against the racism I’ve faced was the hardest thing I’ve done in politics. My family faced death threats as a result. But I’ve used that experience to spend my time in our communities working on what unites us and bringing people together – I have listened and I have learnt.

“I want to bring that same approach to our Labour movement so that we can rebuild our party and rebuild our country.”

Leonard resigned last Thursday, throwing Labour into turmoil just months before the crucial Scottish elections – which the SNP hope will demonstrate increased support for independence – are due to take place.

In a statement Leonard, who was from the party’s left and an ally of former leader Jeremy Corbyn, said after having failed to re-establish Labour as a threat to the SNP he had “come to the conclusion it is in the best interests of the party” to step aside.

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[The Observer](#)

[Carbon capture and storage \(CCS\)](#)

Carbon capture is vital to meeting climate goals, scientists tell green critics

Supporters insist that storage technology is not a costly mistake but the best way for UK to cut emissions from heavy industry

[Robin McKie](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 12.36 EST First published on Sat 16 Jan 2021 12.32 EST

A cement factory in Derbyshire. Carbon capture can help to reduce emissions of key industries. Photograph: John Finney Photography/Getty Images

Engineers and geologists have strongly criticised green groups who last week claimed that carbon capture and storage schemes – for reducing fossil fuel emissions – are costly mistakes.

The scientists insisted that such schemes are vital weapons in the battle against global heating and warn that failure to set up ways to trap carbon dioxide and store it underground would make it almost impossible to hold net emissions to below zero by 2050.

“[Carbon capture and storage](#) is going to be the only effective way we have in the short term to prevent our steel industry, cement manufacture and many other processes from continuing to pour emissions into the atmosphere,” said Professor Stuart Haszeldine, of Edinburgh University.

“If we are to have any hope of keeping global temperature [increases] down below 2 degrees C then we desperately need to develop ways to capture and store carbon dioxide.”

Carbon capture and storage involves the extraction of emissions from power plants and factories, condensing them and then pumping the resulting carbon dioxide into underground stores. Britain is considered to be well placed to develop and operate such technology given its many depleted North Sea oil fields where this sequestered carbon dioxide could be stored.

Several CCS development programmes have been launched over the past 20 years but have been cancelled as governments have vacillated over funding.

However, Boris Johnson – as part of his commitment to fight climate change – has pledged £1bn of public funds to help develop [four major CCS schemes](#) in Britain by 2030 as part of his plan for a “green industrial revolution”.

The aim is to make the UK a “world leader” in the technology and create thousands of jobs. But campaigners at Global Witness and [Friends of the Earth](#) Scotland said last week that a reliance on CCS was not a reliable way to decarbonise the energy system, and published a paper last Monday from the Tyndall Manchester climate change research centre that they said proved that CCS has a “history of over-promising and under-delivering”.

Both groups claimed CCS would not make “a meaningful contribution to 2030 climate targets” despite the investment, and instead urged the construction of

more renewable energy plants to be given priority.

How carbon capture works.

But the claims were last week dismissed by engineers and geologists. “These claims are quite unfair,” said Michael Stephenson, director of science and technology at the British Geological Survey.

“The science behind carbon capture and storage is extremely good. It offers us a genuine solution to some of the problems we face in trying to tackle global warming.”

At present, most successes in reducing UK carbon emissions have come from the power industry where renewable energy sources have taken over electricity generation from coal, gas and oil plants.

However, some industries – such as steel and cement industries – emit vast amounts of carbon dioxide on top of those produced by generating the power they consume.

It will be much more difficult to bring down carbon emissions from these plants even though these industries are vital to the UK’s economic strength.

This point was stressed by Haszeldine. “When CCS was first touted, it was seen as a way of cleaning up electricity generated by fossil fuels, in particular those burning coal. But now it is clear it can play a key role in cleaning up other industries.

“We just need to push ahead with its development so that Britain can find ways of removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. The longer we delay then the worst things are going to be and claims that CCS will not work do not help.”

Bob Ward, policy director at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment, was also critical of the green groups’ claims.

“The opposition to CCS technology from some campaigners seems driven by a hatred of fossil fuel companies that is preventing a level-headed understanding of how we can stop climate change,” he told the *Observer*.

“Together with dithering policymakers, they share responsibility for stopping the UK from leading a global effort to develop this technology.”

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2021.01.17 - Opinion

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[Opinion](#)[Young people](#)

Boomers are already dreaming of escape to the post-Covid sun

[Barbara Ellen](#)



Millennials, meanwhile, will continue to struggle as they wait for their liberating jabs

Flickering wifi: the joys of working from home. If you have a job, that is.

Photograph: Jacob Lund/Alamy

Flickering wifi: the joys of working from home. If you have a job, that is.

Photograph: Jacob Lund/Alamy

Sat 16 Jan 2021 13.00 EST

The “wrong kind” of older, or middle-aged, people are supposed to be receiving the Covid vaccine by the end of March. Not the truly elderly, the vulnerable shielders, but the other lot – taking us to the 32m total who are fiftysomething and above. All those boomers/generation Xers, unleashed back on to streets and into shops, waving their Covid-secure passes, perhaps to book themselves some well-earned YOLO hols.

Meanwhile, younger generations may feel left behind in more ways than one. And there’s the looming problem: the vaccine is the great liberator, but it rather depends what you’re getting liberated into, especially if you’ve no money or prospects. Could it give youth yet another reason to resent their elders for their perceived easier ride?

There's a strong age element to Covid and not just because much older people are more likely to die. It's also about the socioeconomicics of life stages. This was evident early on when people started bragging about working from home on laptops in their gardens. All those smug ruminations on yoga and money saved on trains and coffee.

Meanwhile, many young people were crouched on single divans in shared flats, trying to work with flickering wifi. No gardens, kitchen-floor [Ashtanga](#) or delightful walks with the new puppy for them. If millennials/generation Y-ers were lucky, they were furloughed. If they weren't, they were sacked and back, defeated, living with their parents.

The vaccinations could end up taking far longer than the government projects. And this is as much about class as it is about age. Not all boomers are having comfortable lockdowns – they'll have ageing parents and struggling children to contend with and financial problems don't only affect the young.

Still, look at the post-pandemic landscape from a younger person's perspective: a [guaranteed global financial crisis](#), key life-building years derailed. Not only that, one of your biggest assets, your golden youth, puts you at the back of the vaccination queue. And so you must wait and watch (and seethe) as older Covid-secure people are sprung out of pandemic prison to start consuming, bursting into restaurants as soon as they open, booking holidays away from "Plague Island". And why shouldn't they? Except, to many younger folk, their whole life feels like one big Plague Island.

Is this one of the problems with older generations from the younger point of view – the impression that little thought, if any, is given to how others are coping? It's odd to think that the vaccine, the great societal get out of jail free card, could evolve into yet another dark, ugly, intergenerational row. Even weirder that, with a modicum of tact, some of this resentment could be avoided. If older people have anything to learn from the pandemic, it may be not to make it all about them.

Who would stay in Britain now if they could escape?



The shape of things to come? London's population is thought to have dropped by 700,000. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Is a reported exodus of foreign-born workers entirely due to the pandemic? A new [study](#) from the Economic Statistics Centre of Excellence estimates that the UK's population could have fallen by up to 1.3m in the past year, the biggest decline since the Second World War.

London is thought to have lost 700,000 people, a fall that could be largely due to the [job losses](#) caused by Covid, particularly in the hospitality, entertainment and service industries. Instead of appearing in unemployment figures, this development is manifesting as return migration. It is thought that foreign-born workers finding themselves jobless or furloughed have decided to return to their home countries. Others may have chosen to return because of UK Covid infection rates.

All of which sounds interesting and plausible, but there could be another reason for a sudden exodus – the hope-gobbling ghoul they call Brexit. The figures

cover the year up to September, when the last-gasp post-Brexit negotiations were in full swing. It seems logical that many foreign-born workers may have looked at a country that not only undervalued and demonised them, but was also badly screwing up the pandemic and thought: “To hell with this!” and booked a one-way ticket home. Who could blame them?

It’s relatively easy not to feel the loss of the hordes reported to have left the capital, but let’s see how different things feel post-pandemic. With figures still being assessed, presumably they will also end up including a fair number of British-born folk who have been all over social media making it very clear they intend to be part of the post-Brexit brain drain.

The big problem facing this post-Brexit (and Covid-riddled) isle isn’t going to be keeping people out, it’s going to be convincing (nay, begging) people to stay.

Stories about a long-distance pigeon and a missing raven fail to take flight



Yeoman Warder Ravenmaster Chris Skaife and one of his endangered charges.
Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

A couple of birds hit the news last week. One involved [a pigeon called Joe](#), a plucky little fella who appeared to have made his way to Australia from the US, only for the Melbourne authorities to declare that he posed a threat to biosecurity and would have to be put down.

So much for that heartwarming tale of feathered endeavour (and potential hook for a new Disney franchise). It turned out that Joe's US identity tag was fake; he was Australian in origin and wouldn't have to be killed after all, just globally denounced as a winged fraud. If Disney aren't interested in Joe's story, perhaps *Black Mirror* would be?

Meanwhile, Merlina, queen of the Tower of London's ravens, has [gone missing](#), [presumed dead](#). As legend has it, if there are fewer than six ravens in the Tower, then the kingdom will fall. It turns out that the Tower has a "spare"

raven (bringing the total to seven) and might soon be able to replace Merlina with a new chick from its breeding programme.

How lovely, but also a tad boring. Call me a tragic old goth, but I was quite enjoying the dark frisson of kingdoms falling. Things are pretty doomy right now, so we may as well go the full Edgar Allen Poe.

- Barbara Ellen is an Observer columnist

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Brexit teething problems – cartoon

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Names in the newsRussell T Davies

Russell T Davies, unafraid to cast his show based on actors' sexuality

[Rebecca Nicholson](#)



The writer is taking authenticity to new heights with his series about young gay men in the 1980s

Russell T Davies: ‘You wouldn’t cast someone able-bodied and put them in a wheelchair, you wouldn’t black someone up.’ Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Observer

Russell T Davies: ‘You wouldn’t cast someone able-bodied and put them in a wheelchair, you wouldn’t black someone up.’ Photograph: Fabio De Paola/The Observer

Sat 16 Jan 2021 12.30 EST

The last time [Russell T Davies](#) released a television series, I was enthralled by every episode and at the same time deeply relieved when it was over and I no longer had to think about any of it again.

The apocalyptic [Years and Years](#) served as a menu for the horrors of 2020, the only difference being that Davies stretched out the misery over a good few years, rather than cramming it all into a blockbuster 12 months. I have found myself thinking about it often.

Davies has a way of nailing a moment and a mood and *It's a Sin*, his eagerly awaited Channel 4 drama about young gay men in London at the beginning of the Aids crisis, promises to be an early standout of television this year. In [an interview](#) with the *Radio Times*, Davies talked about a newly realised desire for “authenticity” when it comes to casting.

“You wouldn’t cast someone able-bodied and put them in a wheelchair, you wouldn’t black someone up. Authenticity is leading us to joyous places,” he said, discussing the idea that gay characters should be portrayed by gay actors.

This led to a handful of “gay roles for gay actors”-style headlines, but the truth is that this discussion is more nuanced than that, though subtlety is not so headline-friendly. I don’t think it is quite the same as able-bodied actors playing disabled characters and I don’t think there is a definitive ruling to be handed out, once and for all, by the Gay Authority.

Davies seems to have found something special in the gay actors involved in telling this particular story about gay men and surely that is the goal for every creator. But it shouldn’t be a sweeping judgment or a final word. Some straight actors have played gay roles beautifully. Gay actors playing straight roles, particularly romantic leads, gives me a thrill, too, because it suggests that a different sort of progress is being made. It is surely only ever a matter of making the best choice, with the best intentions.

A drama about gay men written by a straight man with no experience of that world would probably sound alarm bells and rightly so; one written by people who know it inside out is far more reassuring. Authenticity exists behind the cameras as much as it does in front of them. Queer crews, queer writers and queer showrunners are more important than the sexual history of the performers. Still, progress rarely follows a straight line.

Sarah Ferguson and a royal romance at Mills & Boon



Sarah Ferguson, the Duchess of York: royalty in the royalties. Photograph: Ian West/PA

Over Christmas, BBC Two showed a wonderfully entertaining and nostalgic documentary called [Being Bridget Jones](#).

As well as featuring Hugh Grant charming the granny pants off most viewers, it also revealed that Bridget's creator, Helen Fielding, was knocked back by Mills & Boon for producing a novel that appeared to be too smutty for its standards. It was set in a refugee camp and Fielding explained that a key scene featured a snake that wasn't a snake.

The publisher has, however, found room in its stable to welcome the Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, the woman once married to notorious non-sweater Prince Andrew. While Ferguson has written a library's worth of children's stories and has dabbled in memoirs, dieting and self-help books, this makes her the first royal to try her hand at romantic fiction. Her debut novel, [Her Heart for a Compass](#), will be published in August and will tell the story of her great-

great-aunt, Lady Margaret Montagu Douglas Scott, using historical research and her own “imagination”. No doubt the secretary of state for culture, Oliver Dowden, will insist that it is clearly labelled as fiction, in case readers are easily confused.

Olivia Rodrigo, a Spotify star is born and she's only 17

Olivia Rodrigo: ‘fantastically teenage’. Photograph: Frazer Harrison/Getty Images

Last Monday, a Spotify global [streaming record](#) was broken by a brand new song that was played 15.7m times in a single day. Then that record was broken again on Tuesday, by the same song, when it was played more than 17m times. (The service is now writing the artist a cheque for roughly £2.29.)

The song is called [drivers license](#) – lower case, naturally, and no apostrophe, nanna! – by Olivia Rodrigo, star of Disney series *High School Musical: The Musical: The Series*, which is abbreviated by fans to HSMTMTS and which sounds like a stage whisper written down.

It looks like drivers license will take her to the top of the US pop charts. Rodrigo is just 17 and what we are witnessing is the birth of a celebrity in real time. It is, so far, an adorably gentle supernova of a *Star Is Born* story.

The song is so fantastically teenage that it's practically slamming the door as it refuses to do its maths homework. Knowing how obsessively I would play the same song over and over as an adolescent, it isn't out of the realms of possibility that 16m of those 17m streams came from a handful of crying kids in their bedrooms.

It is easy to see the charm of drivers license, which exists at the centre of a pop Venn diagram, borrowing the emotive breathiness of Billie Eilish, the narrative flair of Taylor Swift, the mopey melodrama of Lana Del Rey, with a bit of a Lorde-y stomp thrown in. It has, as young people probably don't say any more, all the feels.

- Rebecca Nicholson is an Observer columnist

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<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2021/jan/16/russell-t-davies-unafraid-to-cast-his-show-based-on-actors-sexuality>.

[Opinion](#)[Children](#)

Letters: our children are in crisis and need help

Under Covid, young people are suffering from increased poverty and illness. An independent commission could avert this

The closure of schools has widened ‘the yawning education gap’. Photograph:
Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

The closure of schools has widened ‘the yawning education gap’. Photograph:
Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Sat 16 Jan 2021 15.16 EST

The pandemic is having a devastating effect on the childhoods of children and young people across the country. Growing numbers of hard-pressed families are being swept into poverty, with more than 4 million children living in poverty even before Covid wrecked the economy. The closure of schools has widened

the yawning education gap and the spiralling numbers of young people suffering mental illness and psychological distress look certain to increase with every day that lockdown keeps them isolated and uncertain about their futures.

These challenges are taking place just as the local services that children and their families rely on to keep them safe are reeling from the combined effect of more than £2bn in funding cuts over the last 10 years, coupled with unprecedented demand for their help.

Children's welfare has become a national emergency. An independent commission, to inform a cross-government strategy to steer children and young people clear from the lingering effects of Covid-19, could avert this. This commission should bring together representatives from across the sector, including charities, school leaders, teaching unions, education experts, doctors and mental health professionals, as well as the children's commissioner.

A strategy to protect children from the worst effects of the pandemic should build on the principles for recovery set out by leading children's charities and must involve children, young people and parents in creating a vision for their futures. At present, we have piecemeal solutions and stopgap measures. The next generation deserves better.

Anna Feuchtwang, CEO, National Children's Bureau and chair, End Child Poverty; **Cathy Creswell**, professor of developmental clinical psychology, University of Oxford; **Jo Revill**, CEO, Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health; **Melanie Armstrong**, chief executive, Action for Children; **Dr Marian Davis**, GP and chair of the Adolescent [Health](#) Group at Royal College of General Practitioners; **Kathy Evans**, CEO, Children England; **Emma Thomas**, chief executive, YoungMinds; **Peter Grigg**, CEO, Home-Start UK; **Mark Russell**, CEO, The Children's Society; **Katharine Sacks-Jones**, chief executive, Become; **Joseph Howes**, CEO, Buttle UK; **Thomas Lawson**, chief executive, Turn2Us; **Niall Cooper**, director, Church Action on Poverty; **Dr Wanda Wyporska**, executive director, The Equality Trust; **Dr Lee Hudson**, clinical associate professor, Great Ormond Street UCL Institute of Child Health; **Leigh Middleton**, CEO, National Youth Agency; **Dr Marian Davis**, GP and chair of the Adolescent [Health](#) Group at Royal College of General Practitioners; **Dr Ronny Cheung**, consultant paediatrician and clinical lead for State of Child [Health](#) programme, Royal College of Paediatrics & Child Health; **Dr Carol Homden**, CEO, Coram Group; **Essi Viding**, professor of developmental psychopathology and co-director of Developmental Risk and

Resilience Unit, division of Psychology and Language Sciences, University College London; **professor Pasco Fearon**, chair of Developmental Psychopathology, research department of Clinical, Educational and [Health](#) Psychology, University College London; **Paul Bywaters**, professor of social work, University of Huddersfield; **Sarah-Jayne Blakemore**, professor of psychology and cognitive neuroscience, University of Cambridge; **Frances Mapstone**, interim CEO, Just for Kids Law; **Louise King**, director, Children's Rights Alliance for England; **Dr Damian Roland**, honorary associate professor in paediatric emergency medicine, Leicester University; **Ann John**, professor of public health and psychiatry, Swansea University, lead of the Adolescent Mental [Health](#) Data Platform; **Helen Dodd**, professor of child psychology, University of Reading; **Tamsin Ford**, professor of child and adolescent psychiatry, University of Cambridge; **Dr Bonamy Oliver**, associate professor in developmental psychology, UCL Institute of Education; **Thalia Eley**, professor of developmental behavioural genetics, Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience, King's College London; **Sally McManus**, senior lecturer, School of [Health](#) Sciences, City University of London; **Robin Banerjee**, head of the school of pPsychology and professor of developmental pPsychology, University of Sussex; **Sarah Halligan**, professor of child and family mental health, University of Bath; **Siobhan O'Neill**, professor of Mental [Health](#) Sciences, Ulster University and interim mental health champion for Northern Ireland; **Sam Cartwright-Hatton**, professor of Clinical Child Psychology, University of Sussex; **Dr Kathrin Cohen Kadosh**, reader developmental cCognitive neuroscience, University of Surrey; **Dr Nick Owen**, CEO, The Mighty Creatives; **Laura Payne**, campaign manager, 4in10 – London's Child Poverty Network; **Willem Kuyken**, Ritblat professor of mindfulness and psychological Science, University of Oxford; **Angelica Ronald**, professor of Psychology and Genetics and joint editor of Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, University of London; **Dr Maria Loades**, child and adolescent clinical psychologist and senior lecturer in clinical psychology and NIHR researchfellow, University of Bath; **Sarah Hughes**, CEO, Centre for Mental Health; **Sir Norman Lamb**, chair, Children & Young People's Mental [Health](#) Coalition; **Claire Donovan**, campaigns manager, End Furniture Poverty; **Jane Streather**, chair, North East Child Poverty Commission; **Monica Holton**, CEO, The Loveinspire Foundation; **Irene Audain**, chief executive, Scottish Out of School Care Network; **Andrew Copson**, chief executive, Humanists UK; **Julie Anderson**, professor of modern history, University of Kent; **Laurence Guinness**, chief executive, The Childhood Trust; **David Holmes**, CEO Family Action; **Becca Lyon**, head of

Child Poverty, Save the Children UK; **Dr Robbie Duschinsky**, head of the Applied Social Sciences Group, Primary Care Unit, University of Cambridge; **June O'Sullivan**, CEO London Early Years Foundation; **Purnima Tanuku**, chief executive, National Day Nurseries Association; **Dr Xand van Tulleken**, presenter of Operation Ouch; **James Matheson**, GP and chair of the [Health Inequalities Group](#), Royal College of GPs; **Alison Garnham**, CEO, Child Poverty Action Group; **Dr Elvira Pérez Vallejos**, associate professor Mental [Health](#) and Technology, the University of Nottingham; **The British Psychological Society**

White gloves and Whitehorn

How I enjoyed reading the excerpt from the late, lamented Katharine Whitehorn's Sluts column, even though I still have the original safely stashed away somewhere in my muddle of memorabilia ("[Thank you, Katharine Whitehorn, for giving all the female reprobates a voice](#)", Comment). The references to black stockings and white gloves were poignant. As a young fashion editor myself, in awe of the Katharine I would spot at fashion shows, it was always white gloves that famous photographic models (who would get out of bed for a mere three guineas an hour in those days) were required to bring on fashion shoots.

Happy memories of a bygone age, beautifully chronicled in your pages over the years by a brilliant writer whose words, I hope, will be savoured by generations to come.

Jenny Froude

Beckenham, Kent

Putin played his part too

Andrew Rawnsley writes: “Mr Trump has done far more damage to trust in America’s system of government than Vladimir Putin’s battalions of cyber-agents ever managed” (“[Tyrants gaze with glee at what Trump has done to American democracy](#)”, Comment). However, it is questionable whether Trump would ever have been in a position to wreak such havoc without Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election.

Robert Saunders

Balcombe, West Sussex

It's all me, me, me

I wish I could share Will Hutton’s optimism about “I” ending and “we” returning (“[The only way to vanquish the pandemic is for the age of national self-interest to end](#)”, Comment). But I fear the age of “I” is too hard-baked into the DNA of too many. It will take a generation at least to dissolve it.

I speak from experience, having been part of the yuppie generation spawned and nurtured during the Thatcher era. I look back in shame and disbelief at how great swaths of us behaved. How possessions were accumulated with little reason other than the desire to show one’s wealth and status.

This government actively encourages the “I” society. We’ve had a brief glimpse of the “we” returning but it requires more than a handclap for our NHS. This is where Sir Keir Starmer and Sir Ed Davey need to pool their resources. There’s a world of “we” supporters waiting for leadership.

Michael Newman

Shefford, Bedfordshire

Treating Covid in Germany

Philip Oltermann’s article on integrative treatment of Covid-19 in German hospitals is biased against anthroposophic medicine but rightly highlights how complementary treatments are provided in addition to state-of-the-art conventional treatments, including for critically ill patients in the intensive care ward (“[Ginger root and meteorite dust: that’s what Covid patients can expect in](#)

[Rudolf Steiner clinics](#)”, World). Anthroposophic medicine is fully integrated into the German healthcare system in line with the World Health Organization’s [traditional medicine strategy](#) that has set integration of traditional and complementary medicine into healthcare systems as a strategic goal.

There are many [peer-reviewed studies](#) on anthroposophic medicine and anthroposophic medications have been in use for decades, with an [excellent safety record](#). Mr Oltermann’s critique that patients should provide consent for such treatments does not hold because the treatments are not experimental and are provided in addition to standard care, based on long clinical experience and in hospitals openly publicising their integrative medicine approach. As the article reports, German insurance companies pay flat-rate payments for hospital treatment of coronavirus patients; the additional anthroposophic treatments are financed out of hospital budgets.

Mr Oltermann links anthroposophic medicine with those who are anti-vaccination. While this might be true for certain individuals, a recent [statement](#) by the International Federation of Anthroposophic Medical Association (IVAA) welcomes the Sars-CoV2 vaccines and supports their rollout worldwide.
Thomas Breitkreuz and Tido von Schoen-Angerer, president and vice-president of the International Federation of Anthroposophic Medical Associations
Brussels

Remember George Lamming

The publishing project that draws attention to hitherto neglected black writers, led by the author Bernardine Evaristo, is to be applauded (“[The lost novels of black Britain: Booker winner’s mission to put forgotten writers back in print](#)”, News).

An almost forgotten black writer of great literary merit is George Lamming. He came to Britain in 1950 from the West Indies when he was 23. His first novel, *In the Castle of My Skin*, won the Somerset Maugham award for literature in 1957. Perhaps his most challenging and appropriate work for our post-colonial times was *Natives of My Person*. Lamming went on to have a fine academic career in the US and the West Indies, as well as publishing several other acclaimed works. He deserves greater recognition.

Peter Bunyan

Billericay, Essex

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[**Opinion**](#)[**Donald Trump**](#)

If Trump looks like a fascist and acts like a fascist, then maybe he is one

[Nick Cohen](#)



The F-word is one we are rightly wary of using, but how else to describe the disgraced president?

Trump supporters prepare to invade the Capitol as part of the ‘Stop The Steal’ rally on 6 January. Photograph: Amy Harris/REX/Shutterstock

Trump supporters prepare to invade the Capitol as part of the ‘Stop The Steal’ rally on 6 January. Photograph: Amy Harris/REX/Shutterstock

Sat 16 Jan 2021 14.00 EST

Assurances that “fascism couldn’t happen here” are always appealing in Anglo-Saxon countries that think themselves immune because “it” never did. The US and UK did not experience rule by Nazism or communism in the 20th century and the ignorance our lucky histories fostered has weakened our defences in the 21st.

Even after all that has happened in Washington, apparently serious voices insist we cannot compare Donald Trump to any variety of fascist. Conservatives habitually say that liberals call everything they don’t like fascist, forgetting that the moral of Aesop’s fable was that the boy who cried wolf was right in the end. They used to chortle about [“Trump derangement syndrome”](#) that spreads in stages like cancer until sufferers “cannot distinguish fantasy from reality”.

They have bitten their tongues now that the reality of Trumpism is deranged mobs trying to overthrow democracy.

Their silence was broken last week by the historian of Nazism, Richard Evans, who with the effortless ability to miss every point a professorship at Cambridge bestows, decided now was the moment to denounce his colleagues, Timothy Snyder and Sarah Churchwell. They might compare the Trump and fascist movements but “few who have described Trump as a fascist can be called real experts in the field”, he wrote in the *New Statesman* with an audible sniff. “Genuine specialists”, such as, and since you asked, himself, “agree that whatever else he is, [Trump is not a fascist](#)”.

Before we get to why the argument matters, I should say the *New Statesman* needs to expand its fact-checking department. Snyder, whose work on how democracies turn into dictatorships is essential reading, does not say that the Trump movement is “fascist”. He writes that “post-truth is pre-fascism and Trump has been our post-truth president”. Churchwell’s astonishing studies of how German Nazis and American white supremacists fed off each other are a revelation. (And I come from the old left and thought I had learned about everything that was rotten with America at my mother’s knee.) When asked, she says she too is careful and characterises the Trump movement as “neo-fascist”.

The use of “fascism” in political debate is both a call to arms and a declaration of war. For once you say you are fighting fascism there can be no retreat. By talking of “pre-fascism” or “neo-fascism”, you acknowledge that the F-word is not a bomb you should detonate lightly; you also acknowledge the gravity of the times.

The alternatives look like the euphemisms of formerly safe societies that, like Caliban, cannot bear to see their face in the mirror. The Trump leadership cult, the attacks on any source of information the leader does not authorise, the racist conspiracy theories, the servile media that amplify the leader’s lies are not “conservative” in any understanding of the term. How about populist? If it means anything today, populism is supporting the people against the elite. But what could be more elitist than denying the result of the people’s vote with the big lie, the [Joseph Goebbels lie](#), that Trump won the election he lost and then inciting brainwashed followers to storm democratic institutions? Followers, I should add, who included men dressed in “Camp Auschwitz” T-shirts and

waving Confederate flags and [wannabe stormtroopers](#) crying “sieg heil!” and “total negro death”. “Far right” and “extreme right” are no help. They are just polite ways of saying neo-fascist.

In his *The Anatomy of Fascism*, Robert Paxton, the pre-eminent authority on its ideology, wrote that the Ku Klux Klan in 1867 rather than Mussolini’s squadristi in 1920 could be seen as the first fascist movement. As with the Nazi party, the embittered officers of a defeated army formed the Klan. They mourned the defeat of the Confederacy and did not accept the legitimacy of the US government. They had uniforms, white robes rather than leather jackets, the fantasies of racial supremacy and deployed terror to maintain the subjugation of African Americans. Last week, police sources told the *Washington Post* they were shocked to see “former law enforcement and military personnel as well as senior business executives” among [the Washington mob](#). If they had known the history of military and bourgeois support for fascism, they would have been less surprised. It isn’t always powered by “the left behind”.

Paxton said last week that he had “resisted for a long time applying the fascist label to Donald J Trump”, but Trump’s incitement of the invasion of the Capitol “removes my objection to the fascist label”.

[Republicans fear assassination](#) if they vote to impeach Trump. Rupert Murdoch’s broadcasters are delivering [barely veiled threats of](#) violent insurrection if the Democrats pursue impeachment. “We see what’s happening around this country, how 50 state houses are being threatened on Inauguration Day,” warned one. “This is the last thing you want to do.”

I can see three objections to calling a large section of the Republican party pre-fascist. The first can be dismissed with a flick of the fingers as it comes from a self-interested right that has to pretend it is not in the grip of a deep sickness – and not only in the United States. The second is the old soothing “it can’t happen here” exceptionalism of the Anglo-Saxon west, which has yet to learn that the US and UK are exceptional in the 21st century for all the wrong reasons. The third sounds intelligent but is the dumbest of all. You should not call Trump or any other leader a pre- or neo-fascist or any kind of fascist until he has gone the whole hog and transformed his society into a totalitarian war machine.

The example of the stages of cancer, so beloved by believers in Trump derangement syndrome, explains the stupidity. Imagine you are a doctor

looking at pre-cancerous cells or an early-stage cancer that has not grown deeply into tissue. The door bursts open and a chorus of *Fox News* presenters and Cambridge dons cry that “real experts in the field” agree that on no account should you call it cancer until it has metastasised and spread through the whole body. A competent doctor would insist on calling a fatal disease by its real name and not leave treatment until it was too late to stop it. So should you.

- Nick Cohen is an Observer columnist

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Germany: Merkel's party chooses Armin Laschet as leader

New leader of centre-right CDU will run for chancellor in September, or have a big say in who does

Armin Laschet reacts after being elected at the party's 33rd congress.

Photograph: Hannibal Hanschke/Reuters

Armin Laschet reacts after being elected at the party's 33rd congress.

Photograph: Hannibal Hanschke/Reuters

[Philip Oltermann](#) in Berlin

[@philipoltermann](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 09.04 EST

Angela Merkel's continuity candidate, the centrist conservative Armin Laschet, has beaten one of her longest-standing rivals in the contest to lead Germany's Christian Democratic Union.

In a digitally-held party congress, Laschet beat the conservative hardliner Friedrich Merz by 521 to 466 votes in a run-off vote, following a strong speech that emphasised social cohesion and held up recent scenes from Washington DC as a warning example of divisive leadership.

The third candidate on the ballot, the foreign policy specialist Norbert Röttgen, was eliminated in the first round of voting.

Once the digital vote has been confirmed by a postal ballot, Laschet will formally replace Merkel's previously designated successor, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, who announced her resignation as CDU chair in February 2020 after an unsuccessful period in the spotlight. Merkel stepped down as party chair in December 2018.

In times of geopolitical unrest and pandemic uncertainty, Laschet's promise to follow Merkel's consensual course may also earn him the opportunity to lead the Christian Democrats into German elections on 26 September as his party's official candidate for chancellor.

In theory, the party could nominate another politician to run for the chancellorship: potential candidates would be Markus Söder, the popular leader of CDU's Bavarian sister party, the CSU, or the health minister, Jens Spahn, who ran as the number two in Laschet's campaign.

If Laschet were to be anointed as the CDU's chancellor candidate in the coming weeks, he would find himself up against campaigning against the colourless but competent Social Democrat Olaf Scholz, currently Germany's finance minister, and either Annalena Baerbock or Robert Habeck representing the Greens, currently second in the polls.

As a former member of the [“pizza connection”](#) – a loose network of young conservative and Green delegates who scoped out political similarities over dinner in the mid-90s – Laschet would seem a natural fit to lead the CDU into its first ever coalition with the ecological party.

Under current projections, a CDU-Green coalition would be the only power-sharing deal to guarantee an absolute majority at federal elections. Laschet, and his two rival contenders, had already ruled out a coalition with the far-right Alternative für Deutschland, currently polling at around 8%.

The only one of the three candidates to currently hold a governing post, the Roman Catholic from Aachen has governed Germany's most populous state, North-Rhine Westphalia since 2017 in a coalition with the pro-business Free Democrats. Previously an MEP and a minister for integration in his home state, he was a vocal ally of Merkel's open-borders policy during the 2015 refugee crisis.

Laschet was initially seen as the clear favourite to win the race for the German centre-right's leadership, but his nationwide approval ratings plummeted during the pandemic.

An early advocate of relaxing Germany's first lockdown in the spring, he drew criticism over lackadaisical leadership. Most recently, there were charges of nepotism over PPE procured from a fashion company that also employs his son to model its clothes on his Instagram channel.

According to a [recent poll](#) by broadcaster ZDF, only 28% of Germans surveyed thought he had the calibre to become chancellor, compared with ratings of 54% for Söder and 45% for Scholz.

Questions remain over his foreign policy views, which have yet to be fully probed. "The Germany that I envision is a European Germany", Laschet said in his speech on Saturday.

But his past complaints about "anti-Putin populism" and sympathetic comments about Syria's president, Bashar al-Assad, have raised eyebrows among colleagues in the broadly trans-Atlanticist CDU.

At Saturday's digital congress, the three candidates delivered short speeches in an empty congress hall, pitching their qualities to the 1,001 delegates watching on their home computers.

Laschet made the best of the unusual circumstances with a speech that would not have been out of place at the rival Social Democrats' congress, woven

around a personal story about his miner father's solidarity with his fellow workers.

[The Guardian view on the CDU after Merkel: a fork in the road | Editorial](#)
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Pointing to the recent scenes of mob violence in Washington DC, Laschet cautioned against inviting similar levels of division in German political debate and came close to likening his rival Merz to the US president: "Some people say you have to polarise opinion. I say no, you don't have to. Anyone can polarise opinion."

Merz's and Röttgen's speeches, by contrast, were lighter on storytelling and heavier on buzzwords, with both candidates seemingly trying to brush off some of the views they have been typecast for.

An impressive orator in more confrontational settings, Merz's speech in particular lacked focus. His boast that "my wife wouldn't have married me" if his views on women were really as outdated as his critics had painted them is unlikely to have swayed any female delegates.

Laschet reminded delegates in his speech that over the last 15 years many people will have voted for the CDU because they were fans of Angela Merkel, not because they admired her party. State elections in Baden-Württemberg and Rhineland-Palatinate on 14 March will serve as a first indicator whether the Laschet-led CDU can replicate that success.

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[The Observer](#)[Mountaineering](#)

Nepalese team makes first successful winter ascent of K2

Team of Sherpas reaches top of Pakistan peak – becoming first to summit world's second highest mountain in winter

The team of Sherpas reached the top of K2 in Pakistan on Saturday.

Photograph: Handout from Nimsdai PR

The team of Sherpas reached the top of K2 in Pakistan on Saturday.

Photograph: Handout from Nimsdai PR

[Peter Beaumont](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 10.42 EST

A team of Sherpas has accomplished one of the most coveted achievements in mountaineering: the first winter ascent of K2, the world's second tallest mountain, and the only one of the world's 14 peaks over 8,000 metres high never to have been climbed during the winter season.

Ten Sherpas, prominent among them Nirmal Purja, a former Gurkha and UK special forces member who had [previously climbed all 14 8,000-metre-plus peaks in just over six months](#), summited K2 in Pakistan on Saturday. They left their high camp at 1am for their summit attempt via the Abruzzi Spur in temperatures as cold as -40C but with low wind and in brilliant sunshine.

['It's not about ego', says speed climber who tamed world's 14 highest peaks](#)
[Read more](#)

K2 was first climbed 66 years ago by Achille Compagnoni and Lino Lacedelli; there had been six previous attempts in winter on the mountain, none of them successful.

In the world of high altitude climbing, so long dominated by western climbers and expeditions who have relied on Sherpas to assist them, the ascent – and by such a large team – marks an extraordinary achievement for Nepali mountaineering.

The team finally reached the summit at 5pm local time, waiting until they were all assembled before singing the Nepali national anthem and descending.

K2 was the last 8,000m peak awaiting a winter ascent after [Nanga Parbat](#) was climbed in 2016. Winter ascents of the world's very highest mountains are at best extremely rare, and the technical and weather challenges on K2 have beaten determined attempts by some of the world's strongest Himalayan climbers.

In a statement from the summit Purja said: “What a journey. I’m humbled to say that as a team, we have summited the magnificent K2 in extreme winter conditions.

“We set out to make the impossible possible and we are honoured to be sharing this moment, not only with the Nepalese climbing community but with communities all across the world.

“Mother nature always has bigger things to say and standing on the summit, witness to the sheer force of her extremities, we are proud to have been a part of history for humankind and to show that collaboration, teamwork and a positive mental attitude can push limits to what we feel might be possible.”

A winter ascent of the 8,611-metre K2 had been considered by many to be an impossible task due to the inclement weather conditions. Attempts on K2 are normally made in July or August, during the warmest periods – and only 280 people have reached its summit in comparison with 3,681 who have made it to the top of Everest. Climbers have been interested in climbing K2 in winter since the mid-1980s, not long after the first winter ascent of Everest.

Before the successful ascent on Saturday, Mingma Gyalje Sherpa, one of the summit team, underlined the importance to the Sherpa community of making the first winter ascent. “For all the other 8,000ers summited in winter, no Sherpa was with them, so this is an opportunity for Sherpa to demonstrate their strength,” he said.

“Besides alpinists, all the climbers take help from Sherpa to fulfil their dreams of 8,000-metre peaks. I have helped several foreign climbers to get to the summit of different 8,000ers. I was a little surprised to see no Sherpa on winter first ascent. So this climb is for all the Sherpa community who are so known because of our friends and clients from different foreign countries.”

The team took advantage of a brief weather window on the mountain, which is infamous for the heavy winds that hit it, especially during the winter months, to climb to a high camp at 7,350 metres from where they launched their summit attempt.

The ascent was quickly hailed as a historic achievement. “It’s done,” tweeted the Karakoram Club, an online community celebrating the area in the Himalayas where K2 is located. “The history books have been rewritten.”

Mountaineer Steve Razzetti tweeted: “Mountaineering history is being made as I post this. The Sherpa climbing team are above the Bottleneck and heading for the summit in perfect winter conditions.”

Alan Arnette, who has long chronicled Himalayan ascents, put the climb into a historical perspective in the US climbing magazine [Rock and Ice](#).

“That this latest holy grail of mountaineering should fall to a Sherpa and Nepali team is a clarion sign that the scales of high-altitude mountaineering are shifting.

“Ever since Maurice Herzog and Louis Lachenal made the first ascent of Annapurna in 1950, becoming the first humans to stand astride the summit of an 8,000-meter peak, climbing the world’s 14 highest mountains has been an imperialist and colonialist enterprise.

“The Sherpa have been the backbone of that enterprise – portering supplies, tending camp, fixing ropes – but reaped none of the glory or benefits.”

As news of the successful summit emerged it was also reported that a Spanish climber had died on the mountain.

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[Observer business agenda](#)[Goldman Sachs](#)

A year of lockdowns can't take the shine off Goldmans Sachs profits

Profits at the bank are down less than \$1bn even in a year when alleged scandal in Malaysia added to Covid woes

Goldman Sachs Manhattan headquarters: the bank has made money in retail and investment divisions. Photograph: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

Goldman Sachs Manhattan headquarters: the bank has made money in retail and investment divisions. Photograph: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

[*Kalyeena Makortoff*](#) Banking correspondent

[*@kalyeena*](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 19.04 EST

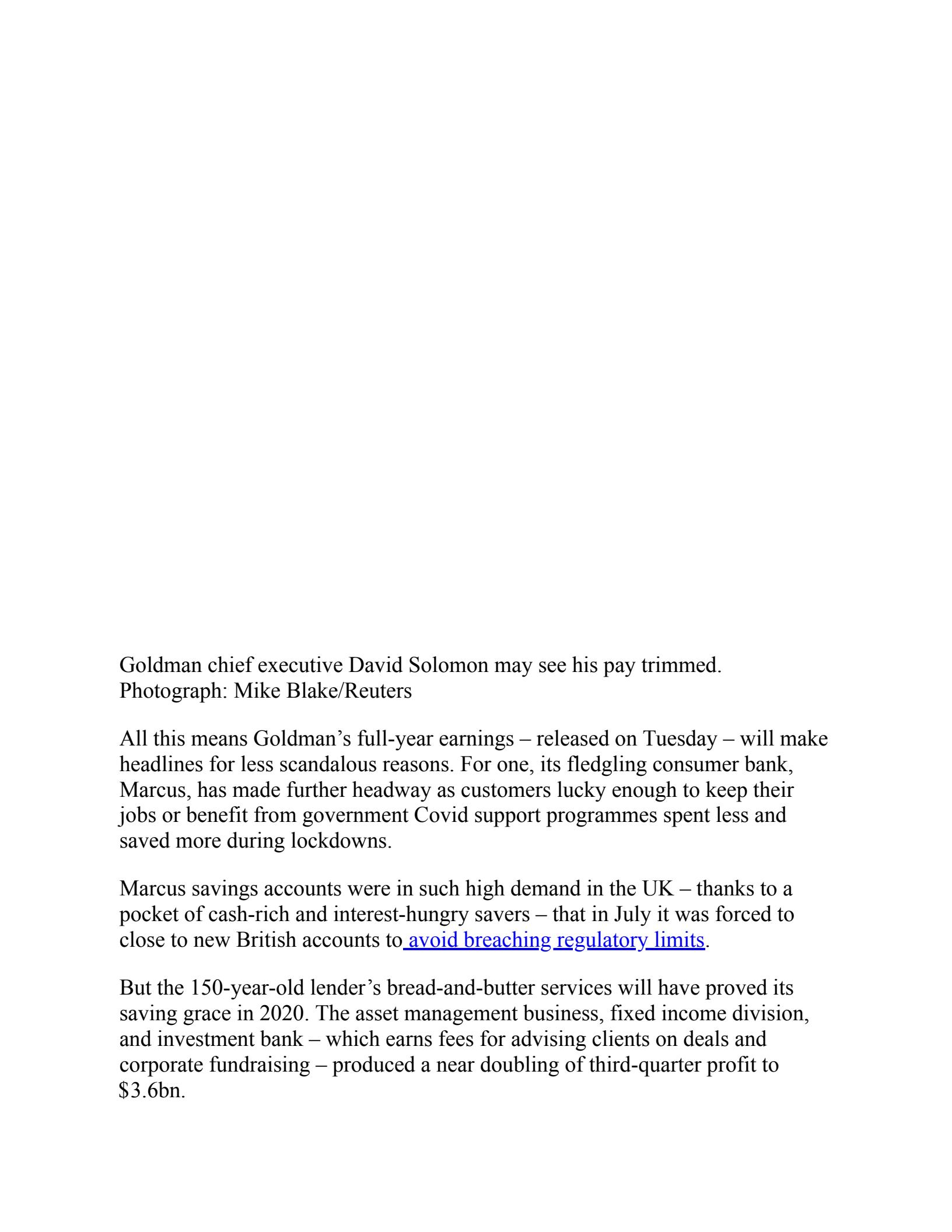
What is \$900m to a Wall Street giant like [Goldman Sachs](#)? Relatively little, when it counts the drop in profits for a year of record-setting market swings and economic turmoil, all sparked by a pandemic.

The firm should regard itself as lucky to be poised for profits of about \$7bn (£5bn) for the whole of 2020. That average analyst forecast, compiled by Refinitiv, is a mere 11% drop from the \$7.9bn it made in 2019, a year when the phrase “Covid lockdown” had never been uttered.

The projected decline is smaller than the \$2.8bn it put aside to cover a potential jump in defaults within the first nine months of the year alone, a number estimates suggest could rise to \$3.1bn for the 12 months to December. Those provisions pale in comparison with those of European peers such as HSBC, which already put by [\\$7.6bn to cover Covid-linked loan losses](#) by the third quarter.

The bank’s results will emerge unscathed from the [\\$2.9bn settlement](#) it reached in October with global regulators and the US Department of Justice, over its alleged role in the 1MDB corruption scandal. The announcement came just months after Goldman [agreed to pay \\$3.9bn](#) to the Malaysian government, amid claims it allegedly turned a blind eye while \$4.5bn was looted from the country’s sovereign wealth fund.

Goldman bosses, including chairman and chief executive David Solomon, will feel the pinch of a [\\$31m cut to their combined 2020](#) pay over the scandal, but hefty provisions previously put aside for the 1MDB case will largely cover the settlements.



Goldman chief executive David Solomon may see his pay trimmed.

Photograph: Mike Blake/Reuters

All this means Goldman's full-year earnings – released on Tuesday – will make headlines for less scandalous reasons. For one, its fledgling consumer bank, Marcus, has made further headway as customers lucky enough to keep their jobs or benefit from government Covid support programmes spent less and saved more during lockdowns.

Marcus savings accounts were in such high demand in the UK – thanks to a pocket of cash-rich and interest-hungry savers – that in July it was forced to close to new British accounts to [avoid breaching regulatory limits](#).

But the 150-year-old lender's bread-and-butter services will have proved its saving grace in 2020. The asset management business, fixed income division, and investment bank – which earns fees for advising clients on deals and corporate fundraising – produced a near doubling of third-quarter profit to \$3.6bn.

Those divisions have benefited from a recovery in merger and acquisition activity, which stalled at the start of the pandemic, and from US stock markets hitting fresh record highs in the latter half of 2020. It has given Credit Suisse a reason to be bullish on Goldman's earnings, with that bank's own analysts recently upgrading profit forecasts to \$7.4bn.

If JP Morgan's results last Friday are any indication, the market rebound could also help Goldman beat forecasts. Its Wall Street rival reported a 42% jump in profits to \$12.1bn for the fourth quarter, leaving full-year profits down 20% at \$29bn.

A strong performance could raise pay for Goldman traders, who are reportedly set to see 2020 bonuses rise 20% compared with 2019.

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[The Observer](#)[Royal Mail](#)

Weighty postbag of problems as Royal Mail reels from a Christmas hangover

Though the pandemic has boosted volumes, the company's new boss must get to grips with unions, nimble rivals and a declining letters business

Delivering mail in south London during this month's lockdown. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA

Delivering mail in south London during this month's lockdown. Photograph: Kirsty O'Connor/PA



[Joanna Partridge](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 11.00 EST

The image was arresting, and dispiriting. A mound of sealed [Royal Mail](#) sacks piled up in a large store room at a postal sorting centre in Bristol. Many of the items awaiting processing were doubtless Christmas presents which probably did not arrive on time.

The photograph, posted by the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) on social media in the middle of December, highlighted just part of the backlog in Royal Mail's system during the festive season.

The CWU published the photo to elicit support for members tackling what it said were "unprecedented workloads" as they tried to deliver Christmas cards, presents and surging online shopping orders during the pandemic.

But Royal Mail's problems didn't disappear along with the Christmas decorations: letters and parcels are still piling up around the country. Turning

around this chaotic performance will now fall to Royal Mail's new chief executive. [Simon Thompson](#), who took up his post last week, is Royal Mail's third full-time boss in under three years. April 2018 saw the [departure of Moya Greene](#) – whose eight years at the helm included the [controversial privatisation](#) of the firm – and her successor, Rico Back, made a surprise exit last May.

Thompson's problem is that mail volumes remain high while Royal Mail is having to operate within social distancing requirements and cope with staff absences as workers contract Covid or have to self-isolate.

Last Friday the company published [a list of 31 areas](#) which are not regularly receiving post, including Leeds, parts of Essex and east London, and some places in Bristol. This is despite it having retained around a third of its 33,000 temporary festive workers, hired 6,000 additional vehicles, and kept open four temporary parcel sorting centres.

Our members in Royal Mail are facing unprecedented workloads. They are doing absolutely everything they can to keep the country connected.

Pandemic + Christmas + record traffic

Serving the public is engrained in postal workers. Show them some love in the comments below □ pic.twitter.com/CTqOMjY7UX

— The CWU (@CWUnews) [December 16, 2020](#)

The London School of Management Education is in Ilford, east London, one of the areas where the postal service is disrupted. Executive director Dr Ravi Kumar said the school has been hit by delays in both receiving and sending mail for a couple of months. The higher education provider uses Royal Mail to post transcripts and assessments to its 550 students, all of whom are learning remotely.

Graduation certificates posted in late November using first-class recorded delivery took between four and six weeks to arrive, Kumar said, and even now the school is only receiving post once or twice a week.

Royal Mail declined to give details of Covid-related absences, but said it varied by area and added that it was working to deliver as normal a service as it could,

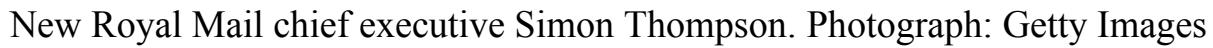
including drawing in extra resources and offering additional overtime where possible.

And the problems aren't limited to Royal Mail: social media platforms are awash with complaints about delayed or missing parcels from rival delivery firms including [Hermes](#), DPD and Yodel.

At Royal Mail, Thompson's in-tray is full, and he will have to grapple with many of the same problems as perplexed his predecessors. The former Ocado executive, who recently worked on the NHS test-and-trace programme, is not a stranger to the postal service: he has been a non-executive director since 2017.

Thompson will need to prioritise good relations with trade unions, which have clashed with Royal Mail as it tried to restructure and improve efficiency. The company finally [ended a two-year dispute](#) with workers in December, agreeing a settlement with the CWU that gives staff an above-inflation pay rise and a reduction in hours, although wider negotiations continue.

Investors will be relatively content to see that Royal Mail's share price has risen by 60% in the past nine months, reaching £3.86, which is 17% higher than its 2013 flotation price and values the business at £3.8bn. Yet Thompson will be unable to reverse the terminal decline in letter writing, thanks to emails, social media and text messaging. This has accelerated during the pandemic: Royal Mail delivered 1.1bn fewer letters in the five months to the end of August than in the same period in 2019.

A black and white photograph of Simon Thompson, the new chief executive of Royal Mail. He is a middle-aged man with short, light-colored hair, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and a dark tie. He is looking slightly to his left with a neutral expression.

New Royal Mail chief executive Simon Thompson. Photograph: Getty Images

The company wants to focus on the more lucrative parcels business. [Revenue earned from parcels overtook revenue from letters](#) for the first time in the first half of its current financial year.

But its universal service obligation requires Royal Mail to deliver letters six days a week and parcels five days a week to every address in the UK, at a standard price.

It is edging closer to [scrapping Saturday letter deliveries](#) after Ofcom – the communications regulator – said this would have no significant impact on consumers. The change would save Royal Mail an estimated £225m a year by 2022-23.

But this won't be enough to cover its losses by 2023, according to Dr Paul Simmonds of Warwick Business School. "They are fighting battles with one

arm tied behind their back in the market because of the cost of meeting this universal service obligation,” he said.

“They have a great infrastructure, which they could leverage through parcel deliveries, but it is a very expensive infrastructure to be forced to maintain.”

Online shopping orders are expected to decline once coronavirus restrictions ease and shops reopen, but few analysts expect them to drop back to pre-pandemic levels. The lockdowns have changed consumer behaviour in a way that benefits companies like Royal Mail.

But in the parcel delivery market, it is competing with cheaper, leaner rivals that aren’t bound by the same service obligations, and which may soon get access to the Post Office’s branch network. The decade-long exclusive partnership between Royal Mail and the Post Office ends in March; after that, [customers will be able to drop packages](#) for other courier companies off at post offices.

Royal Mail’s history goes back more than 500 years – the onus is now on Thompson to make it a business fit for the post-pandemic world.

Royal Mail’s rivals



DPD delivers parcels for Marks & Spencer and Asos. Photograph: Darren Staples/Reuters

Royal Mail is still by far the largest parcel delivery company by volume in the UK, but it faces tough competition from a range of leaner, younger competitors. The company said in December it was on course to deliver more parcels in the UK in the three and a half weeks before Christmas than some of its rivals handle in an entire year.

Hermes

The UK's second-biggest parcel firm after Royal Mail has 5,500 full-time employees as well as a network of 27,000 couriers, who are mostly self-employed. The company handled 600 million parcels in 2020, a 50% increase on the 400 million processed in 2019. Hermes, part of the German Otto group, can trace its origins in the UK back to the 1970s, when the Grattan mail order catalogue business decided to launch its own home delivery model.

DPD

The parcel delivery firm announced in 2020 that it was creating 6,000 new jobs, including 3,500 drivers and 2,500 new full-time staff in depots, hubs and management positions. DPD, which handles parcels for Marks & Spencer and Asos, also announced a £200m investment to expand its next-day parcel delivery service. The firm, which is owned by France's La Poste group and operates delivery services around the world, reported a 40% rise in parcel volumes over the Christmas period compared with a year earlier.

Yodel

Parcel carrier Yodel is part of the multibillion-pound business empire owned by Sir Frederick Barclay and the family of Sir David Barclay, who died last week. It handles more than 160 million parcels a year, and claims a relationship with 85% of the UK's top retailers. With headquarters in Liverpool, the company runs more than 50 sites across the UK, including three sorting centres and employs 10,000 people. Yodel said it carried a record number of parcels during its peak season from 15 November to 2 January, 37% more than during the same period in 2019.

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[The Observer](#)[Royal Mail](#)

Not-so-special delivery: how to claim for late post

Royal Mail will compensate you for delayed items – in cash or with first-class stamps. But not all services are covered

If your post hasn't turned up, you may be entitled to claim. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

If your post hasn't turned up, you may be entitled to claim. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/PA

[*Hilary Osborne*](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 11.00 EST

If you have experienced [Royal Mail](#) delays you may be able to claim for compensation. Letters and parcels sent by special delivery should arrive on a specific day, while first-class post should arrive the next working day after it is sent, and second-class post within three working days.

[Compensation for delays](#) kicks in when your post is three or more working days late, or 24 hours late if it was sent by special delivery. You can lodge a compensation claim for lost post 10 working days after it was due to arrive, or five days for special delivery.

For delays on first- and second-class post, compensation is six first-class stamps; on special delivery items compensation starts at £5 and rises to £10 if the delay goes on for seven or more working days.

“There are, however, rules that mean Royal Mail does not have to pay compensation if it’s impractical or unreasonable for it to deliver an item,” says Kate Hobson at [Citizens Advice](#). “This could be because an individual’s health and safety could be put at risk or for any other reason Royal Mail believes it would be impractical or unreasonable to deliver an item.”

The person due to receive the post can make the claim, or the sender. Whoever makes the claim will need to provide details and, where possible, evidence of where the item was posted and when, which service was used and who it was posted to.

“It’s usually easier for the sender to claim because they’re more likely to have the evidence that’s needed, such as the amount paid for postage, the type of postage used (eg, first class) and the contents,” says Hobson.

Once your post is delayed long enough to make a [claim for loss](#), you may be due more compensation. If the item was not sent using special delivery and has no real value – a Christmas card or postcard, for example – the limit is six first-class stamps again. If it is a more valuable item and you can provide evidence of its value and of postage, you can claim for a loss and a refund of up to £20 or £50 for Signed For mail.

“If you’re unhappy with its response you may be able to escalate your complaint to the [Postal Review Panel](#),” says Hobson. “If your complaint is unresolved you may then be able to escalate to the [Postal Redress Service](#), but not all Royal Mail services are covered.”

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'Stressed' millennials are setting the agenda at work

[Phillip Inman](#)

Younger employees know what works in the workplace – and that outmoded ways of doing things are bad for our health

Larger companies are keen to keep hold of their better-educated younger employees. Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images

Larger companies are keen to keep hold of their better-educated younger employees. Photograph: Westend61/Getty Images

Sat 16 Jan 2021 12.00 EST

A snowflake millennial is tougher than you think, especially in the workplace. They have watched their parents cope with an increasingly insecure jobs market since the turn of the century and in growing numbers told their friends and family that long hours, short term contracts and a shouty boss is not for them.

They don't join trade unions or argue with the boss about a pay rise, though some do. Their confidence – however much they appear to quiver and quake – gives them the steel to quit and search for a different job that comes – they hope – without the debilitating stress that wrecks everyone's physical and mental health.

It's why many of the world's largest companies, keen to avoid losing their better-educated younger employees, are adopting new ways of working. Firms like [Unilever, which last month said it would pilot a four day week](#) in its New Zealand offices, know that sticking to existing work patterns when the pandemic begins to ease means stagnation at best and commercial suicide at worst.

And to a great extent, Britain's economic success rests on all employers recognising that the old-fashioned, board-knows-best, top-down ways of doing things – where the compact between worker and employer is largely a one-way commitment in the employer's favour – are not only outmoded, they contribute to low and declining levels of worker productivity.

[Even those who chase jobs in the professions](#) – architecture, engineering, medicine and the law – and kid themselves that it is worth the bullying, low wages and debt, are questioning their priorities.

Cary Cooper, president of the British Academy of Management, who will give five keynote speeches in the next fortnight promoting a root and branch review of corporate life, says: "The millennials have it right. The older generation is wrong."

An adviser to governments and countless large corporations, Cooper despairs at the reliance on command and control structures that mean managers manage, mostly relying on instinct in their dealings with people, while everyone else does their bidding.

He is not the only one. Like Cooper, the management consultant John Seddon has written several books on the subject and concluded that support, not

control, is the answer to the problem of a dejected staff delivering barely adequate customer service.

In his latest book “Beyond Command and Control” Seddon points out that two of the founding fathers of modern management thinking – Peter Drucker and Martin Bower of the consultancy Mckinsey – say their chief regret is the way public and private sector boardrooms remain devoted to top down management to the exclusion of any meaningful involvement by employees in decision making.

There is a wealth of data bearing out their view that a business which involves and supports its staff is going to have a better relationship with its customers, and be more profitable.

Cooper struggles to understand why companies that spend money advertising a job, employing someone and possibly spending huge sums on training, seem happy to let them walk out the door, either to another firm or to the long term sick register.

Stressed millennials that get a doctor’s note are as strong as those that move jobs

Such is the rise in work-related stress, anxiety and depression that in 2018 official figures showed for the first time that these three categories accounted for more than half of all working days lost due to ill health in the UK.

Stressed millennials that get a doctor’s note are as strong as those that move jobs. Both have admitted they cannot cope when previous generations struggled on, alluding to a Dunkirk spirit that celebrates glorious failure.

The generally accepted definition of a millennial is that it includes everyone born between 1981 and 1996 and so this year the first wave of millennials will celebrate their 40th birthday.

There is widespread sympathy for the debts they must pay if they went into higher education and the exorbitant rent or mortgage loan repayments that weigh on their finances every month.

But the jibes about their delicate disposition and obsession with self-care and self identity are equally widespread. We might not have as many pub

conversations or chats over the garden fence as we did before the pandemic, but that doesn't mean the derision has subsided.

In her instructive book about Labour's catastrophic election defeat in 2019 "Beyond the Red Wall" Deborah Mattinson documents the responses of people in Darlington, Stoke on Trent and the Manchester satellite town of Accrington to life and politics. Mostly made up of older people, the focus groups had little positive to say about young people and graduates in particular.

Millennials are not going to save the country, only traditional values, say the red wallers.

Yet if the pandemic is going to offer anything positive, it must be a better balance in our work lives. Traditional values in the workplace will only accelerate Britain's steady decline.

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[Coronavirus](#)

UK shuts travel corridors and requires negative Covid tests to enter

All foreign arrivals will also have to quarantine in toughening of measures in response to new strains

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

[Heather Stewart](#) and [Peter Walker](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 13.58 EST First published on Fri 15 Jan 2021 12.35 EST

[Boris Johnson](#) has announced a dramatic tightening of the UK's borders, with all international arrivals to be forced to quarantine as well as demonstrate they have had a negative Covid test.

After months of criticism of the government's lax border policies, which Labour claimed were “costing lives”, the prime minister said he was tightening the rules to prevent new variants of the virus reaching the UK and safeguard the vaccination programme.

“It is vital to take these extra measures now when day by day, hour by hour, we are making such strides in protecting the population,” Johnson told a Downing Street press conference.

Despite some tentative signs that infections [may be levelling off](#), he also underlined the desperate situation facing England's hospitals, urging the public to think twice before going out at the weekend.

“There are now more than 37,000 Covid patients in hospital across the UK and, in spite of all the efforts of our doctors and nurses and our medical staff, we are now seeing [cancer treatments](#) sadly postponed, ambulances

queueing, and intensive care units spilling over into adjacent wards,” he said.

The perilous state of the NHS was underlined by a Guardian analysis that showed two-thirds of all [NHS](#) trusts across England were [treating more coronavirus patients](#) last week than they did at the peak of the first wave of the pandemic

Figures show that in 17 trusts the number of people with coronavirus outnumbered all other patients. On the current trajectory, the number of people being treated for Covid in England’s hospitals could be double that of the April 2020 peak within weeks.

With the number of new Covid cases increasing by 55,761 on Friday, and a further 1,280 people reported to have died within 28 days of testing positive, sources made clear the government would await evidence on whether the Covid-19 vaccines prevent transmission before considering laying out a timetable for [lifting lockdown restrictions](#).

However, England’s chief medical officer, Prof Chris Whitty, appearing alongside Johnson, said there was early evidence that the measures put in place in London and the south-east had begun to bear fruit in controlling the virus.

“The peak of the infections, we hope, already has happened in some parts of the country particularly in the south-east, east of England and London, where there was initially a really big surge with the new variant, and it is fantastic that that is beginning to happen thanks to what everyone has done,” he said. “Other areas that went into lockdown a bit later, that peak will be a bit later.”

As well as announcing the new border rules, Johnson hailed the progress of the government’s vaccination programme, saying that almost 3.3 million had received a jab, including 1.3 million people aged over 80 – 45% of the total – and more than 100,000 older care home residents.

The new travel restrictions, which will come into force at 4am on Monday, will mean the suspension of all the remaining travel corridors, which had

allowed arrivals from certain destinations to avoid quarantine.

A new pre-flight testing regime was already due to come into place on Monday morning. It had originally been meant to start on Friday, but was delayed by the government at the last minute after the Department for [Transport](#) failed to produce the relevant guidance in time for passengers and airlines to be ready.

The government had also already announced that it would [halt arrivals from South America and Portugal](#) in an effort to prevent a Brazilian variant of the virus reaching the UK.

The additional measures, which also include increasing spot checks on members of the public who should be in quarantine, make it the toughest border policy the government has adopted at any time during the pandemic.

Quarantine will last for 10 days, the prime minister said, unless arrivals pay to have a Covid test after five days and receive a negative result. The measures will remain in place at least until 15 February.

Johnson faced a grilling this week from the senior Labour backbencher Yvette Cooper, who had urged him to take precautionary measures to prevent [new variants](#) of the virus arriving in the UK.

Cooper chairs the home affairs select committee, which has repeatedly highlighted shortcomings in the enforcement of travel restrictions since the onset of the pandemic.

It is unclear as yet whether the Brazilian variant of the disease that is causing concern, or other new and emerging variants, could be vaccine resistant.

Business groups were taken by surprise by the new border measures. Joss Croft, the chief executive of UKinbound, the trade body for the overseas tourism industry, said his members would need financial help from the government.

“Consumer safety is paramount and although the removal of all travel corridors is regrettable, given the current trajectory of the virus it’s an understandable decision. With our borders effectively closed, the government needs to provide urgent, tailored support for the inbound tourism industry,” he said.

The shadow transport secretary, Jim McMahon, said: “Unfortunately this announcement was inevitable. However, it is closing the door after the horse has bolted.”

He added: “The government urgently need to put in place a forward-looking strategy [for] testing on borders and wider controls, while also delivering on the long-promised sector-specific support for those industries who will be so hard hit by this news.”

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Coronavirus

UK to face delay in delivery of Pfizer Covid vaccine

In a letter to the EU commission health and social affairs ministers of six states called the situation ‘unacceptable’

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

[Nadeem Badshah](#) and agency

Fri 15 Jan 2021 17.32 EST Last modified on Sat 16 Jan 2021 05.18 EST

Pfizer is upscaling production at its plant in Puurs, Belgium, in efforts to produce more doses for 2021, temporarily reducing deliveries to all European countries. Photograph: Olivier Hoslet/EPA

The UK is among several countries facing delays in delivery of the [Pfizer/BioNTech coronavirus vaccine](#) due to upgrades in its production capacity, the company has said.

The US pharmaceutical firm is increasing production at its plant in Puurs, Belgium, in an effort to produce more doses than originally planned for 2021, temporarily reducing deliveries to all European countries.

Shipments of the vaccine, produced in partnership with Germany's BioNTech, to the UK are set to be affected this month.

The UK has secured 40 million doses of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine.

A government spokesperson said: "We are in the process of understanding the implications of Pfizer's announcement today to our plans. However we continue to plan to hit our target of vaccinating all four priority groups by 15 February."

The [Oxford/AstraZeneca](#) jab is also licensed and being used in the UK.

European governments have said the credibility of their vaccination programmes are at risk due to Pfizer's decision.

"This situation is unacceptable," the health and social affairs ministers of six EU states – Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia – said in a letter to the EU commission.

"Not only does it impact the planned vaccination schedules, it also decreases the credibility of the vaccination process."

Germany, Europe's largest purchaser of the vaccine, said that it regretted the "unexpected and ... very short notice" announcement as the company had promised "binding delivery dates" until the middle of next month.

Norway and Lithuania had earlier said that the pharmaceutical company was reducing supplies across Europe.

“What we want is for Pfizer-BioNTech to restore their deliveries to the agreed schedule,” Lithuanian health minister Arunas Dulkys told Reuters.

A Pfizer spokesperson said: “We understand a change to deliveries has the potential to create uncertainty.

“However, we can confirm the overall projected volumes of delivery to the UK remain the same for quarter one (January to March).

“We continue to liaise with the UK Government and the Vaccines Taskforce to work through short-term impact of these changes to our January deliveries and support the goals of the UK Covid-19 vaccination programme.”

Boris Johnson said on Friday that the UK has vaccinated more than 3.2 million, with almost 45% of over-80s and 40% of care home residents receiving doses so far.

PA Media contributed to this report.

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[Coronavirus](#)

Questions will be asked over timing of closing UK travel corridors

Analysis: poor implementation ends another week of shifting Covid policy by the government

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

Passengers arrive at Heathrow airport on Friday. Travel corridors will be axed in effect from Monday morning. Photograph: Matthew Childs/Reuters

The announced [closure of all international travel corridors](#) to the UK marks the end of another week of changing policy, with the timing and implementation

dismaying many.

Travel corridors will be axed in effect from Monday morning. The corridors, which exempted inbound travellers from the requirement to quarantine for 10 days, may make little practical difference to the airline and travel industry in the current context.

Schedules have been slashed and comparatively few people are likely to have travelled to or from the majority of the few dozen destinations remaining on the corridor list: some obscure, some no longer linked by flights to the UK, others barring British travellers. Holidays are banned; a few Caribbean destinations with longer-staying visitors are the most likely to have affected travellers, with the likes of Dubai already recently removed from the list.

The industry has said it accepts the overwhelming public health case for the move. The suspension of all corridors will coincide with the requirement for pre-departure testing for all arrivals – a policy that many airports and airlines had called for months ago, if globally coordinated, as an enabler of safer travel.

Both the UKinbound tourism body and Airlines UK, which represents UK carriers, have urged the government to make it clear the measure is temporary and, until it is lifted, to provide [more financial support](#) to a sector that is in effect in the deep freeze.

While the government will point to the emergence of new variants, questions will again be asked on the timing, coherence and implementation of the rules. Boris Johnson imposed a ban [on flights from Brazil this week](#) – almost three weeks after UK flights were barred by Brazil.

Enforcement of negative Covid tests for travellers arriving in England [had to be delayed](#) from 4am on Friday after the government only published the requirements late on Wednesday evening – a matter of hours before affected flights could have departed, leaving passengers perplexed and some paying hundreds of pounds for unnecessary paperwork.

Even now, the Business Travel Association is warning the government has yet to issue detailed information on where those travelling for work can get acceptable tests. Essential workers – medical researchers, energy suppliers and humanitarians – must, it suggests, be able to travel with confidence in procedures and in the knowledge they can return home.

There is a sense of déjà vu after the similarly botched introduction of the “[test to release](#)” scheme – which still allows people arriving in the UK to apply to exit quarantine early after five days with a further negative Covid test. That scheme also had a lengthy period between announcement and implementation – and then arrived with a list of suppliers that could not deliver, to the cost and frustration of many who ended up out of pocket and in isolation.

The bigger question may yet prove to be why public health measures at the borders first promised by ministers a fortnight ago have taken two weeks to introduce, should new variants from abroad be discovered in the UK.

The transport secretary, Grant Shapps, joked on Friday he was the last person to give advice on whether people should book travel – a reference, no doubt, to the travel corridor to Spain [he axed while on holiday](#) there last year.

Unfortunately, no one is better placed to answer than Shapps.

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[Coronavirus](#)

UK 'nowhere near' looking at lifting Covid lockdown restrictions

Ministers waiting for results of vaccine research before laying out timetable, sources say

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

[Heather Stewart](#) and [Nicola Davis](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 13.04 EST Last modified on Sat 16 Jan 2021 08.51 EST

Elderly residents wait to receive their first Covid-19 injections at Lichfield Cathedral, Staffordshire. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Ministers are awaiting evidence on whether the Covid-19 vaccines prevent transmission of the virus before they can even consider laying out a timetable for lifting lockdown restrictions, government sources say.

With early data suggesting the [tide may be beginning to turn](#) in some parts of the country, Boris Johnson has come under pressure from lockdown sceptics on his own backbenches to say how and when the “stay at home” order can be loosened.

But a Downing Street source insisted: “It’s just too soon. We’re nowhere near even looking at what the process would be.” Johnson issued a video message on Friday, urging the public to “think twice before leaving the house this weekend”.

As well as analysing the latest data on case numbers and hospitalisations, it is understood ministers are waiting to see Public [Health](#) England (PHE) research on the impact the vaccines may have on limiting the spread of the disease. “That’s very important,” one government insider said.

Clinical trials demonstrated the overwhelming efficacy of the vaccines in preventing patients from becoming ill and dying with Covid but did not make clear whether those people could still be vectors for the virus.

Johnson has been notably cautious about promising an end to the lockdown, warning that he cannot yet say whether schools will be able to reopen after the February half-term.

He is [unlikely to follow Scotland](#) and [Wales in tightening restrictions](#), focusing instead on compliance. The new business secretary, Kwazi Kwarteng, urged employers earlier this week to take “every possible step” to enable their staff to work from home.

Data published by the government’s Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) on Friday offered some early signs that infections appear to be levelling off.

The latest [R number](#) for the UK is 1.2 to 1.3, and 1.1 to 1.3 in England, with the number of new infections in the UK growing by between 2% and 5% every day, according to Sage. The week before, the R value for the UK was 1.0 to 1.4. The R value indicates the average number of people to whom an infected person passes the virus.

The number of people [testing positive for the virus](#) showed an increase on Friday, however, to 55,761, up from 48,682 on Thursday.

While overall the R number suggests the outbreak is continuing to grow, there are regional differences, with London, the south-east and [the east of England](#) showing signs that infections could be levelling off or even potentially falling.

In the capital, the R number is between 0.9 and 1.2, with the number of new infections somewhere between shrinking by 2% and growing by 3% a day. But experts warn the figures do not reflect the present moment in time.

“These estimates represent the transmission of Covid-19 over the past few weeks due to the time delay between someone being infected, having symptoms and needing healthcare,” the team behind the government’s R number data said.

The Sage estimate is based on R values calculated from a number of teams, including the MRC Biostatistics Unit at Cambridge University, whose own analysis is more upbeat – potentially because its number is calculated from different types of data to some other groups, including from mobility trends.

Lockdown-sceptic Tory backbenchers have seized on early signs that the second wave may have peaked to press the case for the government to loosen restrictions.

The Covid recovery group chair, Mark Harper, has set 8 March as a deadline for starting to reopen some aspects of the economy – three weeks on from the government’s [15 February deadline for vaccinating the most vulnerable groups](#).

The Conservative MP Steve Baker wrote to colleagues earlier this week to say [Johnson’s leadership would “inevitably be on the table”](#) if he failed to set out “a clear plan for when our full freedoms will be restored” – though when the letter leaked to the Sun he quickly tweeted his support for the prime minister.

Only 14 Conservative MPs voted against the latest lockdown rules, which expire at the end of March – but many others supported the government while calling for restrictions to be eased as soon as is practicable.

However, ministers are focused on the fact that cases remain at an extremely high level, and the lag between infection and hospitalisation means the situation in hospitals will get worse before it gets better.

Experts say it is too soon to assess whether cases have peaked. Dr Michael Tildesley, of the University of Warwick, who is part of the Scientific Pandemic Influenza Group on Modelling (SPI-M) that feeds into Sage, said more time was needed before it became clear how case numbers were changing.

“There are early signals in the south-east and London that spread may be slowing, but there is still a lot of uncertainty around this,” he said.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/15/uk-nowhere-near-lifting-covid-lockdown-restrictions-vaccine-research-results>

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Immigration and asylum

Legal action launched against plan to house asylum seekers at Yarl's Wood

Home Office criticised for plans to accommodate 200 people seeking asylum at 'prison-style' camp

The construction of prefab-style accommodation at Yarl's Wood follow a series of damning reports about two former army barracks sites in Kent and Wales being used to hold up to 600 asylum seekers. Photograph: Handout

The construction of prefab-style accommodation at Yarl's Wood follow a series of damning reports about two former army barracks sites in Kent and Wales being used to hold up to 600 asylum seekers. Photograph: Handout

Jamie Grierson Home affairs correspondent

[@JamieGrierson](#)

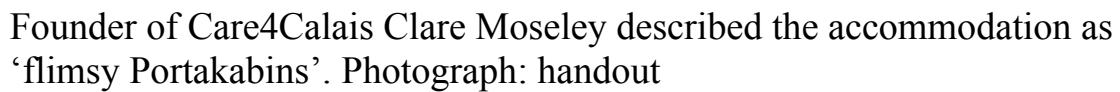
Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Pressure is mounting on the Home Office over its plans to house nearly 200 asylum seekers in what campaigners have described as a “prison-style” camp on the site of an immigration jail.

The construction of prefab-style accommodation at the privately run Yarl’s Wood centre in Bedfordshire follow a series of damning reports on conditions at [two former army barracks sites](#) in Kent and Pembrokeshire being used to hold up to 600 asylum-seeking men.

Campaigners have started legal action against the expansion of Yarl’s Wood, which is set to house its first asylum seekers imminently, while councillors in Bedford have spoken out against the new development.

The Home Office has invoked emergency powers under town and country planning legislation to speedily construct the cabin-style accommodation without seeking planning permission through conventional channels. Images of the new site have been leaked to the Guardian.



Founder of Care4Calais Clare Moseley described the accommodation as ‘flimsy Portakabins’. Photograph: handout

The tension over the Yarl’s Wood site comes as the chief inspector of borders and immigration, David Bolt, said he hoped to be able to inspect the camps on the former Ministry of Defence sites “within a few weeks”.

Rosie Newbigging, a former Labour parliamentary candidate for Welwyn Hatfield, in Hertfordshire, and a volunteer for refugee support charity Care4Calais and Stand Up to Racism Bedford, has sent a letter before action to the Home Office and Bedford borough council – the first step in judicial review proceedings.

Newbigging, who has raised more than £16,000 towards her lawsuit [on a crowdfunding website](#), said: “Development of the site is already under way, with the Home Office claiming that emergency provisions under town and country planning regulations, allow them to develop sites without planning permission or essential environmental or social risk assessments.

“This means that there has been no consultation, none of the usual scrutiny by responsible agencies, and in fact there has not even been publication of the plans in the public domain.

An interior image of inside Yarl’s Wood. Photograph: handout

She added: “The emotional impact of using camp-style accommodation, in a remote area, next to an immigration removal centre, with virtually no access to support in the community, is something we all need to oppose.”

Louise Jackson, portfolio holder for health and wellbeing at Bedford council, said she had a constructive meeting with Home Office officials but significant concerns still remain.

“I’m fundamentally opposed to that model. I think they’re treating some vulnerable people with complete lack of dignity,” she said.

“It looks like a prisoner of war camp. These people are traumatised. You don’t make that journey for no reason.”

She added: “I find it unacceptable that with hotels, holiday parks, offices shut, the only suitable accommodation for people fleeing war and life trauma is a Portakabin on an industrial park.”

Jackson said it had echoes of “the hostile environment” policy spearheaded by the former prime minister, Theresa May, which drove the Windrush scandal.

“We’re an area with a high infection rate, in a pandemic, you’re talking about moving 200 people from somewhere else in the country, into unsuitable accommodation which helps the virus to spread. All these ideas were conceived prior to the new variant being identified, she said.

“Why hasn’t the home secretary gone back in light of what we now know about the new variant and reviewed the plans?”

More than 50 organisations, including Stand Up to Racism, Refugee Council, Freedom From Torture, Unite and Doctors of the World have signed a petition to stop the move.

The founder of Care4Calais, Clare Moseley, said: “It’s the freezing cold middle of winter and the Home Office thinks it’s acceptable to force vulnerable refugees to live in flimsy Portakabins.

“The people that come to the UK for asylum are traumatised, they’ve escaped unimaginable wars and persecution, to lock them up at Yarl’s Wood is cruel. The prison-style camp the Home Office is building at Yarl’s Wood will be a place of misery for refugees, when what they need is a place of safety.”

The minister for immigration compliance, Chris Philp, said: “To ensure we have sufficient accommodation available to meet our statutory obligations we are considering the use of a vacant site adjacent to the existing Immigration Removal Centre to accommodate asylum seekers while their claim is being fully processed.”

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[Trump administration](#)

US health secretary Alex Azar tells Trump Capitol attack threatens legacy

Azar calls attack ‘assault on our democracy’ and urges peaceful transfer of power in formal resignation letter

Alex Azar with Donald Trump at an event in Washington. Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

Alex Azar with Donald Trump at an event in Washington. Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

Guardian staff and agency

Fri 15 Jan 2021 22.28 EST

The US health secretary, Alex Azar, warned [Donald Trump](#) in a letter that last week's attack on the Capitol threatened the administration's legacy, and he urged the president to support a peaceful transfer of power.

In the two-page, formal resignation letter, dated 12 January, Azar recited what he saw as the administration's key accomplishments but voiced concern that last week's siege in Washington and Trump's false claims of widespread voter fraud "threaten to tarnish these and other historic legacies of this administration".

"The attacks on the Capitol were an assault on our democracy and on the tradition of peaceful transitions of power," Azar wrote.

"I implore you to continue to condemn unequivocally any form of violence, to demand that no one attempt to disrupt the inaugural activities in Washington or elsewhere, and to continue to support unreservedly the peaceful and orderly transition of power on January 20, 2021," he added.

Azar says he will resign at noon on 20 January, when Joe Biden is sworn in.

Azar is [not the first member](#) of Trump's cabinet to issue strong words in the wake of the attack, in which five people died and which led to the president's second impeachment.

Betsy DeVos, Trump's education secretary, resigned after the attack, saying in a letter to the president that she blamed his "rhetoric" for "the mess caused by violent protestors overrunning the US Capitol in an attempt to undermine the people's business".

Elaine Chao, Trump's transportation secretary, also resigned, calling the attacks "traumatic and entirely avoidable".

Azar took up the role of health secretary in 2018, overseeing the department during the unprecedented coronavirus crisis, which has so far claimed the lives of nearly 400,000 Americans. Some experts are estimating half a million deaths could be possible by the end of February.

Earlier on Friday, Azar told NBC News the US did not have a reserve stockpile of Covid-19 vaccines, but it was confident that there would be enough produced for second doses.

“We now have enough confidence that our ongoing production will be quality and available to provide the second dose for people. So we’re not sitting on a reserve any more. We’ve made that available to the states to order,” Azar said.

The news on Friday came as [Joe Biden called](#) for a vast expansion of federal aid in order to vaccinate 100 million Americans in his first 100 days in office. Biden has tapped [Xavier Becerra](#), the attorney general of California, to lead the health department.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/15/us-health-secretary-alex-azar-tells-trump-capitol-attack-threatens-legacy>.

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Kamala Harris

History-maker Kamala Harris will wield real power as vice-president

Kamala Harris: ‘I feel a very big sense of responsibility ...I will be the first, but I will not be the last.’ Photograph: Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc/Getty Images

Kamala Harris: ‘I feel a very big sense of responsibility ...I will be the first, but I will not be the last.’ Photograph: Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc/Getty Images

The first woman and first south Asian to hold the office will be key to securing Biden’s legislative agenda in a Senate split 50-50

- [**Kamala Harris: how will America’s next vice-president wield her power?**](#) Join the Guardian and cultural critic Margo Jefferson for a live

[conversation on 18 January at 4pm ET. Register here](#)

[Miranda Bryant in New York](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.10 EST

When [Kamala Harris](#) raises her right hand and takes the oath of office on Wednesday she will realize a multitude of historic firsts – becoming America's first female, first Black and first south Asian American vice-president.

Exactly two weeks after a deadly attack on the Capitol by Donald Trump supporters, and a week after the president's second impeachment, it will be a barrier-breaking moment for millions of women across the US and the world that it is hoped will signal a distinct shift away from the chaos and racist rhetoric of the previous administration.

[Can Kamala Harris as vice-president be both loyal deputy and heir apparent?](#)
[Read more](#)

But for Harris, it will also be deeply personal. The California senator has [said](#) she will be thinking of her late mother Shyamala Gopalan Harris, an activist and breast cancer researcher who immigrated to the US from India in 1958, and children who were told by their parents: "You can do anything."

"I feel a very big sense of responsibility ... I will be the first, but I will not be the last," she told ABC, echoing her mother's words and those of her powerful victory speech.

Bakari Sellers, a friend and supporter, said it will be an "amazing moment" for Harris and her sister Maya, with whom she is very close and was the chairwoman of her presidential campaign, and that their mother "is going to be looking down on them both".

"Personally it's going to be an awesome feeling, and then she'll have a sense of history because from a historical perspective there's so many women who chipped away at that glass ceiling and now she has broken it. And I think that she will feel the weight of that history on her shoulders," added Sellers, an attorney, commentator and author of *My Vanishing Country*.

But with the coronavirus pandemic still raging across the US, and amid heightened security fears following the attack on 6 January and the [threat](#) of

unrest from far-right extremist groups, the inauguration will look very different from previous years.

There will be minimal in-person spectators at the inauguration, themed “America United”, and a virtual parade. Guests will include Vice-President Mike Pence (but not the president, who has said he won’t attend) and former presidents and first ladies Barack and Michelle Obama, Bill and Hillary Clinton and George W and Laura Bush.

Kamala Harris and her husband, Doug Emhoff, take a selfie with the owners of Floriana restaurant as they pick up a carry-out order in Washington DC.

Photograph: KBD/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Harris, 56, is expected to be sworn in just before Biden, 78, at around midday in a televised ceremony in front of the US Capitol that will include performances by Lady Gaga and Jennifer Lopez.

Together with her husband Doug Emhoff, who will become America's first "second gentleman", she will then take part in a pass in review, a tradition with members of the military, and attend a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at Arlington national cemetery with the new president and first lady, Dr Jill Biden.

She will also feature in an evening prime-time television special called *Celebrating America*.

It signals to the world that we are an interracial democracy

Manisha Sinha

Manisha Sinha, history professor at the University of Connecticut and author of *The Slave's Cause: A History of Abolition*, said Harris's vice-presidency has galvanised huge enthusiasm among Black women and the Indian American and Asian American communities and signifies "a new direction in American democracy".

She added: "It's also a symbol to the rest of the world that has been watching the United States in horror, just to have her and Biden take over is really important. It signals to the world that we are an interracial democracy and that certainly her election is a rejection of the kind of white supremacist politics that Trump brought back into vogue."

But, she warned, the whole country is not behind America's increasingly diverse political landscape, demonstrated by a "tremendous racist backlash".

"There is a strong unregenerate minority in this country that is willing to overthrow democracy in the United States rather than accept the election of people like Barack Obama and Kamala Harris to the presidency and vice-presidency of the United States."

Harris's role will be far more than symbolic. Unusually for a vice-president whose official role is largely ceremonial, she will wield considerable power.

Biden has vowed that Harris will be the "last person in the room" making important decisions, modelled on his relationship as vice-president with Obama, and has asked the vice-president-elect to bring her "lived experience" to every issue. Harris has said she wants to be a "full partner".

But in addition to her White House duties, following the Democrats' two recent Senate [victories](#) in Georgia, Harris will also play a high-profile role in passing legislation on Capitol Hill.

Kamala Harris heads into the Senate chamber for a procedural vote in December. The Senate may continue to occupy her time as vice-president.
Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

Despite their constitutional duty as president of the Senate, vice-presidents are only allowed to vote to break a tie. But with the balance of power evenly split 50-50 with Republicans, it is likely that Harris will be required to spend more time than perhaps she imagined with her former Senate colleagues.

The last two times that the Senate had a 50-50 split was for six months in 2001, under the vice-presidency of Dick Cheney, and in 1954. Harris is likely to be in this position for at least two years.

Jennifer Lawless, a politics professor at the University of Virginia, said Harris's pivotal role in the Senate will mean she "is going to be cast in a very different light than previous vice-presidents" and will make her crucial in terms of putting forward a legislative agenda.

"Now that doesn't mean that she's not going to weigh in on important policy decisions or try to be a broad adviser to Joe Biden, [but] at least for that first 100 days, she's pivotal to ensuring that any piece of tied legislation gets passed because that's how Joe Biden's going to build a legislative record."

In a lot of ways, she's basically just taking on an additional job – she's going to be a senator plus vice-president

Jennifer Lawless

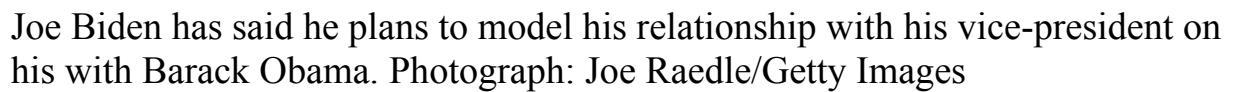
She added: "I can't remember another time, and in contemporary history there isn't one, where the vice-president is basically the person determining whether legislation gets to the president's desk."

The extent to which her Senate responsibilities will shape her vice-presidency will depend on what happens in the 2022 midterms, said Lawless. But she believes it could constrain her ability to work across party lines as well as other responsibilities and potential to travel.

"In a lot of ways, she's basically just taking on an additional job – she's going to be a senator plus vice-president ... that's sort of poetic in that women have been doing three times as much work as men forever," said Lawless.

Harris allies insist nothing has changed in her approach to the vice-presidency in which she will be a "governing partner" to Biden.

A source familiar with the situation said: "If she needs to be there [the Senate] for anything, she will, but the president-elect won because people want the gridlock in Washington to end. Our goal is to work across the aisle to get things done."



Joe Biden has said he plans to model his relationship with his vice-president on his with Barack Obama. Photograph: Joe Raedle/Getty Images

Despite an impeachment trial, expected to take place in the Senate in the early days of the new administration, Harris has [said](#) they will be “hitting the ground running” on their first day of office, starting with a [\\$1.9tn rescue package](#) to address the pandemic and the economic crisis. Their other top priorities, the source said, will be racial justice and climate change. “She is approaching this as a partner to him and they have to address those together.”

The pair are said to have a “wonderful dynamic” and are in constant contact. Their spouses are also said to have a good relationship and are well acquainted after travelling extensively together on the campaign trail.

She’s thoughtful, she is deliberate, she is strategic, she thinks more than one step ahead

Dan Morain

Dan Morain, a California-based journalist and author of biography Kamala's Way: An American Life, said she is an "incredibly talented politician".

"She's thoughtful, she is deliberate, she is strategic, she thinks more than one step ahead, she thinks many steps ahead."

In California, where Harris was district attorney and attorney general before being elected to the Senate in 2016, Morain said she was known for being "tough and demanding" but also "incredibly charming and charismatic". He believes there is little doubt that Harris, who ran against Biden in the 2020 presidential election, will run again for president in the future.

Lateefah Simon, a civil rights activist who worked for Harris in San Francisco and considers her a mentor, cannot wait to see the vice-president-elect – who she refers to as the MVP (Madam Vice-President) – in the White House.

"Kamala shifts that conversation, not only for little Black girls, but for all women who believe that they have to wait their turn," she said. "Kamala showed us that there's no turns – if you're right for the job, you work hard, and you take it."

Additional reporting by Lauren Gambino

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/16/kamala-harris-vice-president-history-maker-power>

US Capitol breach

Nancy Pelosi says lawmakers who aided in Capitol attack may be prosecuted

House speaker's comments come after a congresswoman said she saw colleagues leading 'reconnaissance' tours before the riot

- [US politics live – follow all the latest](#)

The House speaker, [Nancy Pelosi](#), has said it is possible that members of Congress could face prosecution if found to have "aided and abetted" the violent attack on the Capitol earlier this month that left five people dead.

"Justice is called for as we address insurrection perpetrated against the Capitol last week," the Democratic speaker told reporters on Friday.

"If, in fact, it is found that members of Congress were accomplices to this insurrection," the Democratic speaker said, "if they aided and abetted the crime, there may have to be actions taken beyond the Congress in terms of prosecution for that."

Pelosi's comments came after Mikie Sherrill, a Democratic congresswoman of New Jersey, said she saw colleagues leading groups on "reconnaissance" tours of the Capitol a day before the riot.

More than 30 Democrats have signed [on to a letter](#), spearheaded by Sherrill, seeking more information about the tours that took place at the Capitol on 5 January.

At the press conference – [her first since the House impeached Donald Trump](#) for a second time over his role in encouraging the pro-Trump mob – Pelosi announced there would be a review of Capitol security.

She said retired Lt Gen Russel Honoré was being tapped to lead a security review of the US Capitol in the wake of last week's deadly insurrection.

Honoré is perhaps best known for overseeing humanitarian aid efforts in Louisiana following Hurricane Katrina. Pelosi said Honoré would conduct an immediate review of security and inter-agency interaction and Capitol “command and control”.

Pelosi would not provide specific details on when she would transmit the article of impeachment to the Senate.

“They’re now working on taking this to trial,” the speaker said of the impeachment managers. “You’ll be the first to know when we announce that we’re going over there.”

Once the Senate receives the article, the chamber must begin a trial to determine whether the president should be convicted and removed from office.

Though the trial will probably conclude after President-elect Joe Biden has taken the oath of office on 20 January, a conviction could prevent Trump from running for president again. A handful of Republican senators have already criticized Trump and signaled that they have not decided whether to support conviction, but at least 17 would need to break ranks to convict.

Meanwhile, the justice department inspector general announced on Friday that it was launching a review of the department’s role in the riot. The inspector general, Michael Horowitz, said his office would “assess whether there are any weaknesses in DoJ protocols, policies, or procedures that adversely affected the ability of DoJ or its components to prepare effectively for and respond to the events at the US Capitol on January 6”.

The justice department has already opened 175 criminal investigations in connection to the Capitol riot, and that number is expected to surpass 300 by the end of Friday, a federal prosecutor said.

Speaking at a press conference, Michael Sherwin, the acting US attorney for the District of Columbia, said his office was exploring “more significant felony charges” against those involved in the riot.

Sherwin said there were also growing indications that law enforcement officers, both current and former, participated in the riot.

“We don’t care what your profession is,” Sherwin said. “We will charge you, and you will be arrested.”

Steven D’Antuono, the FBI assistant director who leads the Washington field office, said even friends and family of the rioters were providing tips to the bureau.

D’Antuono said: “You might want to turn yourselves in instead of wondering when we’re going to knock on your door – because we will.”

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US Capitol breach

Police officer recalls moment Capitol mob yelled: 'Kill him with his own gun!'

- Officer Michael Fanone feared for his life as he lay injured
- ‘You’re only 30 guys going up against 15,000’

Victoria Bekiempis in New York and agencies

Fri 15 Jan 2021 12.24 EST Last modified on Sat 16 Jan 2021 06.52 EST

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A Washington DC police officer who tried to stop Trump-supporting insurrectionists from attacking the Capitol on 6 January has revealed that some rioters shouted “‘Kill him with his own gun!’” as he lay injured on the ground.

Officer Michael Fanone of DC Metropolitan police described his experience of the attack – which left at least five people dead, including a Capitol police officer – in a harrowing interview with [CNN](#). Fanone said that the frenzied mob was ripping his gear off him, including his spare ammunition, police radio and badge.

The police officer, who has spent almost 20 years on the force, endured several Taser shocks in the back of his neck before things got worse. “Some guys started getting a hold of my gun and they were screaming out, ‘Kill him with his own gun,’” he said.

Fanone is still recovering from a minor heart attack he suffered during the assault.

He told CNN that he would rather have been shot than dragged into that crowd, where he did not have any control. While Fanone weighed using deadly force, it was clear to him that he lacked sufficient firepower. Fanone

thought that the rioters would still overpower him and feel like they had a reason to kill him if he had opened fire.

“So, the other option I thought of was to try to appeal to somebody’s humanity. And I just remember yelling out that I have kids. And it seemed to work,” he said in the interview.

Several people then formed a circle around Fanone until help came. “Thank you, but fuck you for being there,” he remarked of those who encircled him.

Fanone, who works as a plainclothes narcotics detective, had put on his uniform and rushed to the Capitol with his partner. He was among the dozens of officers injured while trying to keep insurrectionists, many of whom were armed, from storming the building.

A US Capitol police officer, Brian Sicknick, died of injuries sustained during the attack. Sicknick was reportedly bludgeoned with a fire extinguisher. The FBI is reportedly investigating 37 people in connection with the killing.

“We were getting chemical irritants sprayed. They had pipes and different metal objects, batons, some of which I think they had taken from law enforcement personnel. They had been striking us with those,” Fanone said. “And then it was just the sheer number of rioters. The force that was coming from that side ... It was difficult to offer any resistance when you’re only about 30 guys going up against 15,000.”

Another Metropolitan police officer, Christina Laury ,told CNN she had arrived at the Capitol around 12.30pm and tried to keep anyone from breaking through the line.

“The individuals were pushing officers, hitting officers. They were spraying us with what we were calling, essentially, bear Mace, because you use it on bears,” Laury said.

“Unfortunately, it shuts you down for a while. It’s way worse than pepper spray ... It seals your eyes shut ... You’ve got to spray and douse yourself

with water. And in those moments it's scary because you can't see anything and have people that are fighting to get through.

"They were getting hit with metal objects. Metal poles. I remember seeing pitchforks. They're getting sprayed, knocked down," recalled Laury, who luckily was not hit with anything.

Officer Daniel Hodges, who was seen in video getting crushed in a doorway while fighting back rioters, told CNN: "There's a guy ripping my mask off – he was able to rip away the baton and beat me with it."

"He was practically foaming at the mouth so just, these people were true believers in the worst way," said Hodges, who like Fanone and Laury rushed to help defend the Capitol.

Several other officers managed to rescue Hodges.

Dozens have been [charged](#) for their role in the deadly chaos. The Washington DC federal prosecutor recently said he expected the number of people charged "will grow into the hundreds", NPR [reported](#).

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[US news](#)

Donald Trump appeal says government should defend E Jean Carroll lawsuit

Justice department puts itself in between president and writer who sued after Trump dismissed 1990s rape allegation as bookselling ploy

E Jean Carroll has accused President Donald Trump of raping her in a Manhattan department store in the 1990s Photograph: John Minchillo/AP
E Jean Carroll has accused President Donald Trump of raping her in a Manhattan department store in the 1990s Photograph: John Minchillo/AP
Reuters

Fri 15 Jan 2021 22.49 EST

The US justice department has said Donald Trump should not be forced to defend himself against a defamation lawsuit by the author E Jean Carroll, [who accused him of raping her](#), and that the government itself should be substituted as the defendant.

In a filing with the 2nd US circuit court of appeals in Manhattan, the department said Trump qualified as a typical “employee of the government” entitled to immunity under federal law from Carroll’s claims, and was also shielded because he spoke about her in his capacity as president.

The law “provides a broad grant of immunity” to Trump, the justice department said, echoing arguments the president has made in other litigation.

[Revealed: White House liaison sought derogatory info on E Jean Carroll from DoJ official](#)
[Read more](#)

Carroll, a former Elle magazine columnist, sued Trump in November 2019 after he denied having raped her in a Manhattan department store in the mid-1990s. Trump said Carroll made up the story to sell a new book, adding: “[She’s not my type.](#)”

A lawyer for Carroll had no immediate comment, having yet to review the filing.

Trump is appealing against US District Judge Lewis Kaplan’s [refusal on 27 October to drop Trump from the case](#). A reversal would likely doom Carroll’s defamation claim.

It is unclear whether the justice department will pursue the case on Trump’s behalf after the inauguration on 20 January of Joe Biden, the Democrat who defeated Trump, a Republican, in the November presidential election.

Trump also faces other legal threats after leaving office, [including criminal and civil probes in New York](#) into his business dealings.

Carroll has said she would wait until after the appeal to seek a deposition from Trump and to collect a DNA sample to compare against a dress she wore at the time of the alleged rape.

Trump has denied the claims of several women who have accused him of sexual misconduct.

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Palestinian territories

Mahmoud Abbas announces first Palestinian elections in 15 years

Legislative polls to be held in May, presidential election set for July

Recent polls suggest a tight contest between Fatah, which runs the occupied West Bank, and their Hamas rivals in Gaza Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Recent polls suggest a tight contest between Fatah, which runs the occupied West Bank, and their Hamas rivals in Gaza Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Reuters

Fri 15 Jan 2021 20.52 EST

The Palestinian president, Mahmoud Abbas, has announced parliamentary and presidential elections, the first in 15 years, in an effort to heal long-standing internal divisions.

The move is widely seen as a response to criticism of the democratic legitimacy of Palestinian political institutions, including Abbas's presidency.

It also comes days before the inauguration of the US president-elect, Joe Biden, with whom the Palestinians want to reset relations after they [reached a low under Donald Trump](#).

According to a decree issued by Abbas's office on Friday, the Palestinian Authority (PA), which has limited self-rule in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, will hold legislative elections on 22 May and a presidential vote on 31 July.

"The president instructed the election committee and all state apparatuses to launch a democratic election process in all cities of the homeland," the decree said, referring to the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

Palestinian factions have renewed reconciliation efforts to try and present a united front since Israel reached diplomatic [agreements last year with four Arab countries](#).

Those accords [dismayed Palestinians](#) and left them more isolated in a region that has seen allegiances shift to reflect shared fears of Iran by Israel and Sunni-led Gulf Arab states.

['It's a game and we lost': Palestinians decry Gulf moves towards Israel](#)
[Read more](#)

Hamas, the Islamist militant group which is Abbas's main domestic rival, welcomed the announcement. "We have worked in the past months to resolve all obstacles so that we can reach this day," a Hamas statement said. It called for fair elections in which "electorates can express their will without restrictions or pressures".

With Biden taking office on 20 January, "it is as if the Palestinians are telling the incoming US administration: we are ready to engage" said Hani Habib, a Gaza analyst.

But the veteran West Bank analyst Hani al-Masri was sceptical that the elections would happen. He cited internal disagreements within Abbas's Fatah and Hamas, and likely US, Israeli and European Union opposition to any Palestinian government including Hamas, which they regard as a terrorist group.

"Will it end the division or perpetuate it ... and will its results be respected by the Palestinians, Israelis and Americans?" Masri asked in a social media post.

The Palestinians' last parliamentary ballot, in 2006, [resulted in a surprise win](#) by Hamas, creating a rift that deepened when Hamas seized military control of Gaza in 2007.

Recent polls suggest a tight contest. In December 2020 the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research found that 38% would vote for Fatah in parliamentary elections, against 34% for Hamas.

But it predicted that Hamas would have the edge in a presidential vote, with 50% preferring the Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh and 43% Abbas.

[Occupying Palestine is rotting Israel from inside. No Gulf peace deal can hide that | Raja Shehadeh](#)

[Read more](#)

Although Abbas [won the last presidential election in 2005](#), Hamas did not run against him.

Hamas dropped its boycott of the political process the following year, running a well-organised parliamentary campaign under the banner "Change and Reform" and defeating the hitherto-dominant Fatah faction that was widely seen as corrupt, nepotistic, out of touch and divided.

It remains unclear how Abbas will overcome the logistical difficulties of holding elections in three areas, each under different control.

Israel captured East Jerusalem in the 1967 Middle East war and annexed it in a move that has not won international recognition. It regards all of Jerusalem as its capital, while Palestinians seek the city's east as capital of a future state.

Israel forbids any official activity in Jerusalem by the PA, saying it breaches 1990s interim peace deals.

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Brexit

‘Internexit’ for Leave.EU as domain name temporarily suspended

Error message greets visitors to site registered in name of Irish businessman who claims he does not know campaign group

The EU’s online registry marks the domain as under a server hold. Photograph: Neil Hall/Reuters

The EU’s online registry marks the domain as under a server hold. Photograph: Neil Hall/Reuters

[Alex Hern](#)

[@alexhern](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 18.10 EST

Leave.EU has been forced to “Internexit” after the group’s EU domain name was temporarily suspended. It comes after the Irish businessman in whose name the pro-Brexit campaign group’s domain name is registered denied having any involvement with the organisation.

Now visitors to the site are greeted with an error message, and the EU’s online registry marks the domain as under a server hold, meaning it is “temporarily inactive and under investigation”.

Following Brexit, UK organisations are no longer able to use the .EU top-level domain, a change which – ironically – affected the pro-Brexit group, the most prominent owner of an EU domain name in Britain.

Irish businessman Sean Power, who is based in Waterford, is still registered as the legal owner of the domain name. However, he has long insisted he has [no knowledge of Leave.EU](#), and had never heard of the organisation before the Guardian contacted him on 7 January. “My lawyers are looking into this on my behalf presently and will be in touch as deemed necessary in due course,” he said last week.

Last week, Neale Richmond, a member of the Irish parliament, wrote to ComReg, the country’s communications regulator, calling for an [investigation into how Leave.EU was able to secure the domain name](#). “It is utterly ridiculous to think that Leave.EU could brass-plate an address in Waterford to maintain their domain name,” Richmond said on Friday. “They wanted to leave the EU, they have, that means they leave their domain too.

“Many other questions in relation to data storage, fundraising, finances, donations and political activities would need to be answered if Leave.EU were genuinely relocating to Waterford.

“Leave.EU are quite simply not welcome in [Ireland](#), their questionable activities over the past number of years have brought a new level of toxic politics in the UK and beyond.

“I welcome the suspension of this domain; I sincerely hope this is the end of this odious website and the related traffic driven to this odious brand. Good riddance.”

But Andy Wigmore, the communications director for the campaign group, told the Guardian: “We’ll be back up soon – our lawyers will be taking action against those (and they know who they are) who have broken those delicious EU laws they love so much.”

Calling Richmond a “third-rate EU fanatic,” Wigmore added: “if he wants to make those cowardly defamatory allegations outside of parliamentary privilege let’s see how massive Billy big balls Neale is then.

“And any more nonsense from Brussels lovers like him and we may decide to put the full weight of Leave.EU behind the IREXIT campaign.”

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[Spain](#)

Former Spanish king's ex-lover says she was threatened by spy chief

Corinna Larsen tells court 'chilling' warning to her and her children came on the orders of King Juan Carlos

Corinna Larsen claims she was persecuted by Spanish intelligence following the end of her relationship with Juan Carlos. Photograph: Valery Sharifulin/Tass
Corinna Larsen claims she was persecuted by Spanish intelligence following the end of her relationship with Juan Carlos. Photograph: Valery Sharifulin/Tass

[Sam Jones](#) in Madrid

[@swajones](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 12.30 EST

The ex-lover of Spain's former king Juan Carlos has told a court in Madrid of the “chilling” moment when she claimed the head of the country's intelligence services threatened her and her children on the monarch's orders.

Corinna Larsen told the court Félix Sanz Roldán met her in London after her relationship with the king had ended to warn her that if she did not follow his instructions he could not guarantee her safety. She claimed she later returned to her home in Switzerland where she discovered a book about the death of Princess Diana and subsequently received a cryptic phone call about tunnels, which she took to be an allusion to the princess's fatal accident in 1997.

The allegations came during a one-day libel trial brought by Sanz Roldán, the head of intelligence from 2009-19, against a former police officer, José Manuel Villarejo, who he claims defamed him in a 2017 TV interview in which he said he had threatened Larsen's life.

Villarejo, who has been on remand since 2017 and is awaiting trial on separate charges including extortion, money laundering and bribery, could face up to two years in prison if convicted in the libel case and on another charge of making a false complaint.

Larsen, also known as Corinna zu Sayn-Wittgenstein, claims she was persecuted by Spanish intelligence agents following the end of her relationship with Juan Carlos, who abdicated in 2014 amid plummeting popularity. She said in her affidavit to the court in Madrid that threats were made against her because she held “information and documents concerning financial and business dealings of the king emeritus and other members of the royal household”.

Giving evidence via video link from Westminster magistrates court in London on Friday morning, Larsen said she believed agents from a security firm acting on behalf of Spain's national intelligence centre (CNI) had occupied her home and office in Monaco in April 2012, and that CNI officers intended to steal her documents, wipe computer files and install surveillance equipment.

After she was asked to vacate her home and office for five days so they could be “swept” by the agents, she complained to Juan Carlos. The following day she received an email from a man she believed to be Sanz Roldán, the CNI head, which claimed it had all been a misunderstanding.

She told the court Sanz Roldán came to see her a month later at the Connaught hotel in London acting at the king's behest.

"The general explained various conditions and instructions and recommendations that I should follow," said Larsen.

"He said unless I followed them, he could not guarantee my physical safety or the physical safety of my children. Of course [the words] terrified me. I think anyone would be terrified. The fact that the head of the Spanish intelligence services travelled to London to meet me was chilling in itself."

Larsen then returned to her home in Villars-sur-Ollon in Switzerland, where she found that a copy of a book about the death of Princess Diana had been left on her coffee table.

Early the following day, she told the court, she received a phone call from an unknown number and was told, in Spanish, that there were "many tunnels between Monaco and Nice". The phone call, said Larson, brought home "the reality of the threats and of the danger I found myself in".

She said she had met Villarejo in April 2015 after one of her closest friends told her Villarejo had information about how the CNI intended to implicate her in criminal activity. It was during that two-hour meeting that Larsen told him of the meeting at the Connaught and what she described as the threats from Sanz Roldán.

Sanz Roldán denied issuing any threats when he gave evidence on Friday and said Villarejo's comments during the TV interview were a lie.

"I have never, ever threatened a woman or a child – ever," he told the court. He said his presence in London in May 2012 was a matter of public record but he could not say any more because he was subject to the laws governing intelligence work. However, he stressed the CNI was only allowed to operate in Spanish territory and within Spanish laws.

The public prosecutor dropped the libel case against Villarejo later on Friday but the state's attorney did not follow suit.

Juan Carlos announced he was leaving Spain in August after a series of damaging allegations about his financial arrangements that have tainted the

monarchy and embarrassed his son, King Felipe VI, who has stripped him of his annual stipend.

It is alleged in documents from the Swiss prosecutors that Juan Carlos received a \$100m “donation” from the king of Saudi Arabia that he put in an offshore account in 2008. Four years later he allegedly gifted €65m from the account to Larsen.

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[G7](#)

UK plans early G7 virtual meeting and presses ahead with switch to D10

South Korea, India and Australia to be invited to join face-to-face summit in June

Leaders at the G7 summit in Biarritz, France, in August 2019. Photograph: Reuters

Leaders at the G7 summit in Biarritz, France, in August 2019. Photograph: Reuters

[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor

Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.24 EST

Boris Johnson is planning to host a virtual G7 summit of world leaders within weeks of Joe Biden becoming US president in an attempt to set an ambitious agenda covering climate change, a worldwide vaccination programme, future pandemic preparedness and relations with China.

He is also pressing ahead with plans to convert the face-to-face annual summit of the G7 in June into a D10 of leading democracies. It is due to be the first in-person meeting of world leaders for nearly two years, after the US-hosted G7 [was cancelled](#) and the Saudi-hosted G20 meeting [moved online](#) last year.

The proposal to expand the [G7](#) into a wider group has met resistance from some European states concerned it will be perceived as an anti-China alliance and a means of diluting the power of EU countries. Concern has been expressed within French and Italian diplomatic circles.

An early virtual meeting of the G7 would provide Biden with a platform to show renewed US commitment to multilateralism.

Johnson secured agreement to turn the UK-hosted G7 summit in June into a D10, an idea that has been circulating in US thinktanks for nearly a decade. As a result, South Korea, India and Australia are to be invited to all sessions of the event, which is due to be attended as usual by the US, Italy, France, Japan, Germany, Canada and the UK.

Johnson's expansion of the G7 is partly motivated by a wish to dovetail with Biden's interest in promoting democracy as superior to authoritarianism. Biden has long proposed a summit for democracy in the first year of his presidency, and the D10 summit could provide a platform or a way station for a larger event. The prime minister is also keen to see the D10 combine to form a technological rival to China, and more broadly sees the G7 as a golden opportunity to show UK global leadership post-Brexit.

Johnson, perceived by some Biden staffers as a Trumpian populist who has damaged multilateralism, knows he has work to rehabilitate himself with the new US administration, although the degree of tension has reduced due to the UK leaving the EU without a hard border on the island of Ireland.

No country sought to block the British plan for the D10, partly as it is the host's prerogative to organise the summit in the form they prefer. It is common, for instance, for other countries to be invited to some sessions.

But diplomats from Italy, one of the countries with strong economic links with China, have expressed concern that this new format will be perceived as a building block of a new anti-Chinese alliance in the Indo-Pacific. Europe has shown notable determination to run its own China policy, last month agreeing an investment deal with China that angered the incoming [Biden administration](#).

Italy wants to ensure the G7 is not being transformed permanently, and French policy thinkers have questioned the D10 format. In a paper for the Institut Montaigne, Michel Duclos, a former ambassador, and Bruno Tertrais, a political scientist, wrote: “It goes without saying that Prime Minister Johnson will not fail to prepare an agenda for the G7 likely to please the Americans, thus including a ‘pro-democracy’ dimension. Let us not be surprised, moreover, if London tries to exploit the exercise for the benefit of ‘Global Britain’, by seeking in practice to downgrade the place of the European Union.”

Johnson [had been due to fly to India](#) to discuss the format of the summit with Narendra Modi this month but has felt forced to postpone the visit owing to the scale of the coronavirus crisis. One of Johnson’s goals for the new group is to develop 5G technologies to prevent China dominating this critical element of 21st-century digital infrastructure, a goal already set by Biden advisers.

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[Simon Rattle](#)

Simon Rattle decries Brexit as he applies for German citizenship

Conductor laments impact on UK musicians' careers and describes application as 'absolute necessity'

Simon Rattle announced this week that he was cutting short his tenure with the London Symphony Orchestra to return to Germany. Photograph: Robbie Jack/Corbis/Getty Images

Simon Rattle announced this week that he was cutting short his tenure with the London Symphony Orchestra to return to Germany. Photograph: Robbie Jack/Corbis/Getty Images

Reuters in Berlin

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.34 EST

The conductor Simon Rattle, who announced this week that he was [cutting short his tenure at Britain's leading orchestra](#) to return to Germany, has applied for German citizenship after Brexit.

The Liverpool-born musician lamented the barriers thrown up by Britain's departure from the [European Union](#) to the careers of young musicians who had grown used to performing freely to the continent's music-hungry public.

"My passport is on the way," Rattle told a news conference on Friday, when asked if he had followed many EU-based Britons in applying for citizenship that will let them continue to work freely around the bloc. "Like for many, this was an absolute necessity."

Britain's classical music scene was taken by surprise when Rattle announced he would end his tenure at the London Symphony Orchestra in 2023 to become music director of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra in Munich.

[Simon Rattle is leaving London. Is this a taste of the capital's future? | Charlotte Higgins](#)
[Read more](#)

Rattle said his decision to return to [Germany](#), where he conducted the Berlin Philharmonic for 16 years, was taken so he could be close to his family in the German capital, but he made his frustration with Britain's political direction clear.

"The fact that musicians and artists in general suddenly have to get visas for [Europe](#) is absolutely not the Brexit bonus we were talking about," he said. "We will have to fight it."

Rattle, who lives with his wife, the Czech soprano Magdalena Kožená, in Berlin, said spending more time there and cooking for their children during the past year of coronavirus lockdown had helped to crystallise his desire to work nearer to home.

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UK weather

UK weather: snow and ice warnings issued for Scotland and parts of England

Vaccine distribution efforts affected by bad weather with appointment delays and cancellations

A snow plough clears the A69 near Stocksfield, Newcastle. Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

A snow plough clears the A69 near Stocksfield, Newcastle. Photograph: Owen Humphreys/PA

[Nigel Bunyan](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 10.18 EST

Snow and ice warnings have been issued for much of [Scotland](#) and parts of England for the weekend.

The Met Office expects a band of heavy snow to bring disruption to road and rail networks as it sweeps eastwards in the early morning.

A snow warning is in place for [London](#), with up to 4cm expected to fall in the south-east and East Anglia.

Motorists have been told to expect continuing icy conditions across much of [England](#), Wales and Scotland.

Temperatures were as low as -6C early on Friday in parts of Yorkshire and Cumbria, with yellow warnings likely to last through most of the day.

Yorkshire Ambulance said it had stood down from the [major incident status it declared on Friday](#). However, staff would continue to monitor the situation.

Efforts to press on with the vaccine distribution have been affected by the bad weather.

At one point a vaccination centre in Barnsley, South Yorkshire, was closed, with patients told to await new appointments.

Pensioners on the over-80s list at Newcastle's Centre for Life were told they could rebook rather than risk making a trip in the icy conditions.

Newcastle Hospitals tweeted: "There's enough vaccine for everyone, so don't worry about making a trip to Newcastle."

Leeds University delayed the opening of its asymptomatic Covid-19 test centre, saying: "We know travel in the snow can be tricky, so if you are late you will still be seen."

Brighter Futures, which provides homes, hostels and health services for the homeless and mentally ill in the Midlands, activated its severe weather emergency procedure.

The organisation is giving emergency accommodation to everyone it sees sleeping rough.

A juror in the trial of Paweł Relowicz, who denies raping and murdering student Libby Squire, was unable to get to Sheffield crown court on Friday due to the weather.

The case had already been postponed on Thursday when three jurors found themselves unable to make the journey.

About 700 homes in the Hebden Bridge area of West Yorkshire lost their gas supply when water froze in a pipe.

Becky Mitchell, meteorologist at the Met Office, said: “Saturday is the next day we could potentially see some snow.”

Areas at lower levels and further south could be see up to 2-5cm of snow or face rain or sleet.

Saturday’s Met Office weather warning states: “At first the main hazard may be rain falling on to frozen surfaces leading to ice, especially on higher level routes. However, snow becomes more likely during the early morning.

“Heavier snowfall is more likely above 200 metres in Scotland and northern England, where 5-10cm of snow may accumulate, possibly 20cm on highest routes.”

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Brexit

Brexit delays Mojo magazine as cover CDs remain stranded in EU

Mojo tells subscribers that, while the magazine is ready, ‘the CDs which are produced in the EU are not yet in the UK’

A 2020 issue of Mojo, complete with cover CD, in a newsagent. Photograph: Alan Wilson/Alamy Stock Photo

A 2020 issue of Mojo, complete with cover CD, in a newsagent. Photograph: Alan Wilson/Alamy Stock Photo

[Archie Bland](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

The venerable cover CD, beloved of music magazine buyers for a generation, has been challenged by [Brexit](#) after Mojo was forced to postpone distribution of its next issue because of a delay in delivery.

In an email to subscribers on Friday, Mojo said that while the magazine itself was printed, “the CDs which are produced in the EU, are not yet in the UK”. It is understood that the issue was caused by hold-ups in the process caused by new trade rules.

Mojo, which apologised to readers and said they would be given early access to the digital edition of the magazine, is the victim of [the latest logistical hiccups](#) to strike business since the Brexit transition period ended.

German freight giant DB Schenker paused UK deliveries on Thursday, blaming increased paperwork, while companies including [Fortnum and Mason have reported problems](#) delivering to customers in the EU and Northern Ireland.

[Marks & Spencer said it was concerned](#) that a third of the products in its Irish food halls, including Percy Pigs, would now be subject to import tariffs. Meanwhile, international delivery giant [DPD also said it was “pausing” road service](#) from the UK into Europe last week.

Mojo’s problem represents another challenge to the economics of the cover-mounted CD. Once a prized staple of music and technology magazines and even [deemed a threat to the music industry](#) when they appeared in weekend newspapers, they are now largely anachronistic as most people access entertainment online and fewer have CD players.

The heritage music magazine is not the only publication to fall foul of Brexit-related issues. Electronic Sound magazine also said it had been forced to delay its next issue, editor Push told the Guardian, saying that a problem with the free vinyl sent to subscribers was “the result of issues with changing to a UK supplier”.

Oliver Condy, editor of BBC Music Magazine, said he had feared the same issue with cover CDs and he had been “planning for this for months and months”.

“We sent materials to the [CD] presses a couple of months early,” he said. “We haven’t seen the results yet, but we’ve got our fingers crossed it will be fine.”

Bauer, Mojo magazine's publisher, declined to comment, saying it was "still a live situation".

- This article was amended on 16 January 2021. The original incorrectly said Ocado was among the companies reporting problems delivering to customers in the EU and Northern Ireland. The firm only has customers in Great Britain (primarily England).

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- [England 65% of NHS trusts exceeded first wave peak for Covid patients last week](#)
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France's Covid toll passes 70,000 – as it happened

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[Coronavirus](#)

65% of English NHS trusts exceeded first wave peak for Covid patients last week

Exclusive: number of Covid patients could be twice that of April 2020 peak within weeks

- [NHS crisis in charts: how Covid has increased strain on health service](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

[Pamela Duncan](#), [Ashley Kirk](#) and [Haroon Siddique](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 13.15 EST First published on Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.11 EST

A total of 134 of 207 trusts in England had more Covid patients on at least one day last week than at their first-wave peak. Photograph: Tom Pilston/The Guardian

Two-thirds of all [NHS](#) trusts across England were treating more coronavirus patients last week than they did at the peak of the first wave of the pandemic, a Guardian analysis reveals.

Figures show that in 17 trusts the number of people suffering from coronavirus outnumbered all other patients.

On the current trajectory, the number of people being treated for Covid in England's hospitals could be double that of the April 2020 peak within weeks. On Thursday, the [equivalent figure](#) stood at 32,925, 74% higher.

Speaking on Friday evening, Prof Chris Whitty said the peak number of people entering hospital would be in the next week to 10 days for most places.

England's chief medical officer said that while they were hopeful the peak of infections had already happened in the south-east, east and London, where there was a sharp rise in the Kent variant, it would be later elsewhere.

"The peak of deaths I fear is in the future," he said. "The peak of hospitalisations in some parts of the country may be around about now and beginning to come off the very, very top."

Health leaders have been warning for weeks about [the potential for the current wave to overwhelm the NHS](#), but Guardian research reveals many trusts may have already reached that point.

The Guardian analysis also shows:

- Six trusts, in London, the east of England and south-east, have become Covid-majority trusts (meaning that, on average last week, more than half their beds were taken up by coronavirus patients). Two others have 50% of their bed capacity taken up by Covid patients.
- A further 34 trusts had at least a third of their general and acute bed capacity taken up by coronavirus cases last week.

- 15 NHS trusts treated at least three times as many patients in the week to Tuesday as they did in the first wave.

Dr Rob Harwood, the chair of the British Medical Association (BMA) consultants committee, said that while its members were used to dealing with winter crises “this is like nothing we have experienced before”.

He said: “These statistics drive home what a perilous situation the NHS is in, and the impact on patients and staff cannot be underestimated.

national share

“With hospitals filling with Covid patients, ambulances are already queueing at their doors, with incredibly sick people being treated in vehicles because there is no space inside. Elective care has all but stopped, with even urgent operations in some areas being postponed.

“While all efforts are being made to increase capacity, demand is rocketing and there will come a point when we cannot stretch the existing workforce any further. This is before we consider that [almost 100,000 staff are absent](#), around half of whom are off due to Covid.”

A total of 134 of 207 trusts in England – or 65% – had more Covid patients on at least one day last week than at their first-wave peak. The trust with the highest weekly peak when compared with the first wave was [East Sussex Healthcare NHS trust](#), where 422 Covid patients were treated on both Monday and Tuesday – 5.7 times its mid-April peak of 74 patients.

The trust has responded by increasing recruitment of staff, including of people who have left the NHS, postponing some routine operations and suspending home births and births at its midwife-led unit, because it cannot guarantee timely ambulance response times in the event of an emergency.

The trust where there has been the highest total number of Covid patients in the last week was the Mid and South Essex NHS foundation trust, which had an average of 777 patients on any day over the last week and 2.5 times as many Covid patients on one day as during its first-wave high.

On Monday, it said [oxygen supply had reached a “critical situation”](#) at the trust’s Southend university hospital because its staff were treating more and

more people with the virus.

trusts with highest increases

Other than the Nightingale hospital in Exeter, the highest Covid occupancy rate was in the Whittington [Health](#) NHS trust in London. There 63% of beds were occupied by coronavirus patients last week, an average of 145 beds, compared with 79 for non-Covid patients, with just seven unoccupied. Whittington hospital announced at the end of last month that it was suspending non-urgent adult services.

Other trusts where Covid patients took up a majority of beds were North Middlesex university hospital NHS trust, West Hertfordshire hospitals NHS trust, Medway NHS foundation trust, Homerton university hospital NHS foundation trust, Dartford and Gravesham NHS trust, Milton Keynes university hospital NHS foundation trust and Croydon Health Services NHS trust.

Chris Hopson, the NHS Providers chief executive, said: “Rising admissions rates mean trust leaders are becoming increasingly concerned about ensuring there is enough capacity – in terms of beds and staff – to safeguard the quality of care for patients.

“The number of beds in hospital occupied and those staying over a week in hospital are both continuing to rise nationally.”

Amid concerns about the pace of vaccination of the NHS workforce and availability of appropriate PPE, Dr Samantha Batt-Rawden, the president of grassroots organisation the Doctors’ Association UK, said the wellbeing of staff “giving all” to keep patients safe must be a priority.

“The NHS is currently under enormous strain and staff are at breaking point,” said Batt-Rawden. “The number of admissions to hospitals is still increasing, with patients having to be transferred from the south to the north-west to try and free up space in ICU. This is not sustainable. Doctors have told us they feel that they are running on fumes.”

Dr Nick Scriven, immediate past president of the Society for Acute Medicine described the figures as “alarming”, adding: “Given that infection rates are still massively high, pressure will continue probably for another two to three months as we know hospital admissions lag 10 days behind infections and ICU

(intensive care unit) admissions a few days more. Inpatient numbers will stay at unprecedented numbers as Covid leaves people in hospital extremely frail needing often weeks of care so admission rates can easily be greater than the rate of people leaving hospital.”

Dr Katherine Henderson, president of the Royal College of Emergency Medicine, said: “We are only just beginning to see the worst of it. It is likely that the situation will deteriorate further.”

Every region in England treated more patients in the week to Thursday than at their first-wave peak, with every region experiencing its highest-ever figure on either Wednesday or Thursday.

searchable table

The east of England is treating more than two and a half times as many people as it did in its first-wave peak, with the south-east nearing that multiple.

A recent fall in case numbers indicates that these figures may decrease in the coming weeks. Data from early this week showed tentative signs of easing admissions in London and the south-east, but subsequent data is less encouraging. Admissions continue to rise England-wide, although the pace has slowed.

An NHS spokesperson said: “Hospitals facing most pressure from high Covid-19 infection rates are receiving support from the wider NHS through Nightingale hospitals and neighbouring hospitals, as well as the independent sector.”

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<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/15/two-thirds-of-nhs-trusts-in-england-treated-more-covid-patients-last-week-than-at-peak-of-first-wave>

Coronavirus

Global report: coronavirus death toll reaches 2 million

‘Heart-wrenching milestone’ says UN chief; China reports 130 new cases in flare-up; India starts mass vaccination campaign

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Data from Johns Hopkins University showed the latest figure was reached on Friday, with an average of 11,900 daily deaths being recorded this year.

Photograph: Jekesai Njikizana/AFP/Getty Images

Data from Johns Hopkins University showed the latest figure was reached on Friday, with an average of 11,900 daily deaths being recorded this year.

Photograph: Jekesai Njikizana/AFP/Getty Images

Tom Phillips

Sat 16 Jan 2021 00.21 EST

More than two million people have lost their lives to the Covid-19 pandemic worldwide, with the United Nations secretary general, António Guterres, lamenting the impact of the “vicious virus”.

“Our world has reached a heart-wrenching milestone,” Guterres announced on Friday in [a video](#) marking the moment.

“Behind this staggering number are names and faces: the smile now only a memory, the seat forever empty at the dinner table, the room that echoes with the silence of a loved one,” he added, calling for greater global solidarity to fund vaccination efforts and urging citizens to stick to containment measures such as physical distancing and masks.

Data from Johns Hopkins University showed the latest Covid milestone was reached on Friday, with an average of 11,900 daily deaths being recorded in 2021 so far, according to Reuters – representing somebody currently dying every eight seconds because of Covid.

The global death toll [hit one million in late September](#), nine months after the new coronavirus was first detected in the Chinese city of Wuhan. Disturbingly it has taken just over three months for that number to double, with some of the worst hit countries – including the US, Brazil, Mexico and the UK – witnessing a surge in infections and deaths.

“What was never on the horizon is that so many of the deaths would be in the richest countries in the world,” said Dr Bharat Pankhania, an infectious diseases expert at the University of Exeter. “That the world’s richest countries would mismanage so badly is just shocking.”

The US has the world’s highest official death toll and, with more than 386,000 fatalities, accounts for one in every four deaths reported worldwide each day.

The next worst affected countries are Brazil, with more than 207,000 deaths; India with 152,000; Mexico with 138,000; and the UK with more than 86,000.

Together those five countries contribute to almost 50% of all Covid-19 deaths in the world but represent just 27% of the global population, Reuters reported.

Europe, the worst-affected region in the world, has reported more than 615,000 deaths so far and accounts for nearly 31% of all Covid-related deaths globally.

Infection figures are also still soaring in countries including **Mexico**, which posted a record 21,366 new infections on Friday, around double the daily rate of increase of just a week ago. **Brazil**, where the city of Manaus was running out of oxygen to treat Covid-19 patients, recorded 69,198 new infections in the previous 24 hours.

China, where the disease was first detected, said 130 new cases had been recorded on Friday, as authorities continued to battle a severe outbreak in the north-east that has put more than 28 million people under lockdown.

Total case numbers remain well below what China saw at the height of the outbreak in early 2020, but concerns about a new country-wide wave are growing with a major national holiday a month away and estimates of 296 million railway passenger trips during the lunar new year break.

In his statement marking two million deaths, Guterres urged world leaders to “boost vaccine confidence and knowledge with effective communication grounded in facts”.

[Global immunisation: low-income countries rush to access Covid vaccine supply](#)

[Read more](#)

But that is not happening everywhere. In Brazil, where an average of more than 1,000 people are dying each day, President Jair Bolsonaro has repeatedly questioned the safety of vaccines and said he will refuse to be vaccinated himself.

“Nobody will be forced to get vaccinated,” Bolsonaro vowed this week during an internet broadcast. “If you don’t want it, don’t have it. That’s your right. After all … we don’t have proof [they are safe].”

According to the University of Oxford, 35 million doses of various Covid-19 vaccines have been administered around the world, many of them in rich

countries such as the UK.

On Friday the British prime minister, Boris Johnson, claimed “the biggest and fastest vaccination campaign in our history” was under way, adding: “The chances are that you know someone personally who has already received a vaccine.”

In the United States, the incoming president, Joe Biden, has unveiled ambitious plans to vaccinate 100 million Americans in his first 100 days in office.

“This will be one of the most challenging operational efforts ever undertaken by our country – but you have my word, we will manage the hell out of this operation,” he said.

India on Saturday launched one of the world’s biggest vaccination programmes, aiming to inoculate a quarter of a billion people in the coming months including healthcare workers, people aged over 50 and those at high risk.

On the programme’s first day 300,000 people were to be vaccinated at 3,000 centres.

But in many developing countries, including Brazil, vaccination has yet to begin, with some specialists convinced government inaction means many countries will fare even worse this year than last.

“Of course the pandemic took the whole world by surprise and killed many people – that’s why you call it a pandemic,” said Mariana Varella, a Brazilian public health writer.

“But we didn’t need to be in the situation we are in, with his number of dead, with the health system overwhelmed.”

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[Joe Biden](#)

Biden details sweeping effort to vaccinate 100m Americans in 100 days

President-elect calls for huge expansion of federal aid as administration faces array of obstacles to historic project

Joe Biden discusses his coronavirus relief plan in Wilmington on Friday.
Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

Joe Biden discusses his coronavirus relief plan in Wilmington on Friday.
Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

[Jessica Glenza](#)
[@JessicaGlenza](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 18.25 EST

President-elect [Joe Biden](#) has called for a vast expansion of federal aid in order to vaccinate 100 million Americans in his first 100 days in office, an ambitious target set as a new and more transmissible strain of Covid-19 is expected to sweep the country.

Seeking to mount the most complex and logistically challenging vaccination campaign in US history, Biden's administration will have to confront vaccine hesitancy, a burned out healthcare workforce, a lack of clear information on vaccine distribution and demand that far outstrips supply.

"Get more people vaccinated for free," said Biden, listing his goals, in remarks from Wilmington, Delaware. "Create more places for them to get vaccinated. Mobilize more medical teams to get shots in people's arms. Increase supply and get it out the door as soon as possible.

"This will be one of the most challenging operational efforts ever undertaken by our country – but you have my word, we will manage the hell out of this operation."

Donald Trump will leave Biden with a complex, multi-layered crisis caused by the coronavirus and worsened by the current administration. In nearly every instance, the Trump administration sought to leave Covid-19 response to states, distancing itself from fights for protective gear, supplies, tests and now confusion over vaccine supplies.

['No time to waste': Biden unveils \\$1.9tn coronavirus stimulus package](#)
[Read more](#)

Biden called the effort so far a "dismal failure".

Achieving his goal to vaccinate 100 million people in his first 100 days would double the pace set by the Trump administration, which pledged to get 20 million vaccinated by the end of 2020. So far, only 12 million have received shots.

Even as vaccines are rolled out, many more Americans are expected to succumb to Covid-19, in part because a more transmissible variant called B117 is expected to overtake dominant strains in the US in roughly eight weeks, further straining health resources.

“Things will get worse before they get better,” said Biden, adding: “The policy changes we’re making will take time to show up in the Covid statistics.”

It often takes weeks for infected individuals to be diagnosed, hospitalized or die.

Biden’s incoming chief of staff, Ron Klain, has said he expects Covid to have claimed 500,000 American lives by the end of February, because “we haven’t fully funded the Covid response”. Already, the virus has killed more than 390,000 Americans and left 25.7 million unemployed as the economy backslides amid rising cases.

Biden laid out a more ambitious, and expensive, plan to take control of the coronavirus than any undertaken by the Trump administration. One analyst at the left-leaning Center for American Progress called it “a sharp departure from the Trump administration’s fend-for-yourself approach”.

This is a nice summary of the Biden vaccine plan

And its a smart one

We need more simplicity in our approach, more widespread availability, equity achieved through focused delivery, better communication, more supply.

Oh -- and a federal government that is helpful to states

<https://t.co/MmQX98iquh>

— Ashish K. Jha, MD, MPH (@ashishkjha) [January 15, 2021](#)

Biden pledged to set up 100 federally funded vaccination sites at places like school gymnasiums and sports stadiums; to “staff up” the centers with “thousands” of workers; and establish community vaccination centers in hard-to-reach and hard-hit places.

“We commit to making sure communities of color, rural neighborhoods, and those living with disabilities and seniors are not left behind in our vaccination plans,” said Biden. He also called the disproportionate impacts of Covid-19 on minorities and marginalized Americans “unacceptable, unconscionable”.

Under the Biden plan, pharmacies would also be “activated” to distribute vaccines through appointments. That prompted CVS, one of the largest chains in the country, to say it was ready to distribute 1m shots a day through 10,000 locations. Biden also said states would have more transparent tools to plan for the number of doses to be delivered.

Biden’s administration also needs to approve new vaccines to solve supply shortages, and improve supply chains for the personal protective equipment health workers need to safely do their jobs. Gloves, for example, have been in short supply for months.

To solve these shortages Biden pledged to use the Defense Production Act, which allows the government to direct private suppliers to produce goods, in order to make protection gear, vaccines and vaccination supplies.

Another major challenge of the vaccination effort has been convincing Americans to get injections, as Trump has sown misinformation and confusion throughout the pandemic. Biden said his administration would undertake “a massive public education campaign” and increase transparency to help Americans understand the vaccine.

Importantly, Biden also called on Americans to “mask up” for 100 days, an effort he said could save 50,000 lives if Americans universally committed to wear face coverings. In spite of the new B117 variant, scientists believe human behavior remains the most powerful tool to bend the curve of new infections.

“Our administration will lead with science and scientists,” said Biden.

Biden’s speech came one day after he announced a [\\$1.9tn rescue package](#) for the American economy, which included funding for his vaccine efforts, as the economy deteriorates amid widespread Covid-19 transmission. In December, an additional 787,000 workers applied for unemployment assistance.

Biden’s speech came the same day that the world marked the [deaths of 2 million people](#) from the coronavirus one year into the crisis, and as an uneven recovery saw wealthy nations begin to vaccinate their populations, while developing nations could only wait.

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Coronavirus

Covid vaccine: 72% of black people unlikely to have jab, UK survey finds

Sage voices concern at BAME uptake and says more must be done to increase trust in vaccine

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

Linda Geddes

Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.00 EST Last modified on Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.02 EST

People queue outside an NHS Covid-19 vaccine centre in Birmingham.
Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Advisers from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) have raised fresh concerns over Covid vaccine uptake among black, Asian and minority ethnic communities (BAME) as research showed up to 72% of black people said they were unlikely to have the jab.

Historical issues of unethical healthcare research, and structural and institutional racism and discrimination, are key reasons for lower levels of trust in the vaccination programme, a report from Sage said.

The figures come from the [UK Household Longitudinal Study](#), which conducts annual interviews to gain a long-term perspective on British people's lives.

In late November, the researchers contacted 12,035 participants to investigate the prevalence of coronavirus vaccine hesitancy in the UK, and whether certain subgroups were more likely to be affected by it.

► Quick guide

Who in the UK will get the new Covid-19 vaccine first?

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Overall, the study found high levels of willingness to be vaccinated, with 82% of people saying they were likely or very likely to have the jab – rising to 96% among people over the age of 75.

Women, younger people and those with lower levels of education were less willing, but hesitancy was particularly high among people from black groups, where 72% said they were unlikely or very unlikely to be vaccinated. Among Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups this figure was 42%. Eastern European groups were also less willing.

These figures are higher than [previous estimates](#) by the [Royal Society for Public Health](#). Its poll of 2,076 UK adults found 57% of respondents from BAME backgrounds would take a Covid jab if advised by their GP or another health professional, compared with 79% of white respondents.

“Trust is particularly important for black communities that have low trust in healthcare organisations and research findings due to historical issues of unethical healthcare research,” said the Sage experts.

“Trust is also undermined by structural and institutional racism and discrimination. Minority ethnic groups have historically been underrepresented within health research, including vaccines trials, which can influence trust in a particular vaccine being perceived as appropriate and safe, and concerns that immunisation research is not ethnically heterogeneous.”

The report emphasised the need for engagement with trusted sources such as GPs, and scientists from within BAME communities to respond to concerns about vaccine safety and efficacy.

“Approaches should acknowledge the historical issues in healthcare research to address mistrust towards government and healthcare services experienced in black communities in relation to vaccination,” it said.

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Coronavirus

Covid vaccine jabs accompanied by organ music at Salisbury Cathedral

800-year-old building becomes temporary vaccination centre for priority patients invited by GPs

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Cubicles are seen inside Salisbury Cathedral, Wiltshire, for people to receive an injection of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA
Cubicles are seen inside Salisbury Cathedral, Wiltshire, for people to receive an injection of the Pfizer coronavirus vaccine. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA
[Steven Morris](#) and agency

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 11.17 EST

Soothing organ music was played as hundreds of people over 80 received [Covid jabs](#) in what must be the UK's most spectacular and historic vaccination centre – [Salisbury Cathedral](#).

Louis Godwin, 95, a former RAF flight sergeant, gave a thumbs-up after being vaccinated in the cathedral, which dates back more than 800 years. He described receiving the Pfizer/BioNTech jab as absolutely marvellous.

“I’ve had many jabs in my time, especially in the RAF,” he said. “After the war, I was sent to Egypt and I had a couple of jabs, which knocked me over for a week. “This one, the doctor said to me: ‘Well that’s done,’ and I thought he hadn’t started. So it’s no trouble at all and no pain.”

Godwin said the coronavirus pandemic had meant he was unable see his family, but that he had been using FaceTime and Zoom to keep in touch.



Louis Godwin receives his vaccination. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

He said: “This is a terrible virus and I would suggest that the vaccine is nothing, you don’t feel a thing, you don’t even feel the pinprick, so anybody that needs one and can get one, I would say go ahead and do it quickly. It’s the only way we’re going to beat the virus.”

Graham Turner, 88, a chaplain at Salisbury Cathedral, wore his cassock to receive his vaccine. He described the music as marvellous and praised staff as terrific.

“It is just a treat in every way,” he said. “It’s a wonderful place to visit. I happen to be used to it and I feel I’m among friends.”

Local GPs invited a group of patients to be vaccinated and the cathedral organised a programme of music, which was played on its 19th-century [Father Willis organ](#).

The Very Rev Nicholas Papadopoulos, the dean of Salisbury, said the cathedral was delighted to be helping. “We are proud to be playing our part in the life-saving vaccination programme, which offers real hope in these difficult times,” he said.

“This place has stood here for 800 years to give glory to God, and to serve the city and the region. What better way could there be of doing that than hosting Salisbury’s stage in the vaccination programme. It is absolutely wonderful.”

He described the vaccines as “a real sign of hope for us at the end of this very, very difficult year”.

“I doubt that anyone is having a jab in surroundings that are more beautiful than this so I hope it will ease people as they come into the building,” he said.

A nurse prepares a vaccine dose in Salisbury Cathedral. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

Dr Dan Henderson, the co-clinical director for the Sarum South Primary Care Network, said about 1,000 patients and staff would receive vaccines on Saturday.

“I doubt that anyone is having a jab in surroundings that are more beautiful than this so I hope it will ease people as they come into the building,” he said.

“It is a bonus to be in such an iconic, wonderful place. It’s great to be getting the vaccine out there and getting them in people’s arms and knowing that this is hopefully the start of some sort of normality again.”

The cathedral, refectory and gift shop are all closed and [services are taking place online](#).

The medieval nave of Lichfield Cathedral in Staffordshire was also turned into a vaccination centre on Friday. Field hospital-style facilities and waiting areas were set up inside the cathedral, including along its central aisle.

The Dean of Lichfield, the Very Rev Adrian Dorber, said: “It’s a real glimmer of hope after a very dark year, and we are delighted to be able to offer the place as a nice, airy, socially distanced space in which this can take place.

“I hope it’s a symbol of how all the communities can come together to facilitate the rollout of this amazing vaccine. We’ve got some really well-drilled volunteers and a really capable staff, who have gone into battle action and done it.”

Michael Fabricant, the city’s MP, [tweeted](#): “They came in the middle ages for the cure. They still come today.”

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[India](#)

India begins world's biggest Covid vaccination programme

Country of 1.3 billion people hopes to vaccinate 300 million citizens by August

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

[Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#) South-Asia correspondent

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.57 EST First published on Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.51 EST

A health worker shows Covid-19 vaccine in Mumbai, India. Photograph: Rajanish Kakade/AP

[India](#) has begun one of the world's biggest Covid-19 vaccination programmes, the first major developing country to roll out the vaccine, marking the beginning of an effort to immunise more than 1.3 billion people.

The first dose was administered to a health worker at All India Institute of Medical Sciences in Delhi, after the prime minister, [Narendra Modi](#), kickstarted the campaign with a national televised speech.

[India cases](#)

“We are launching the world’s biggest vaccination drive and it shows the world our capability,” Modi said. He implored citizens to keep their guard up and not to believe any “rumours about the safety of the vaccines”.

It is not clear if Modi, 70, has been given the vaccine like other world leaders as an example of its safety. His government has said politicians will not be considered priority groups in the first phase of the rollout.

India has registered more than 10.5m coronavirus cases, the second highest in the world, and 151,000 deaths. The government has been preparing for the vaccine rollout for weeks, and over the past few days shipments were sent to more than 3,000 sites set up for injections.

The Indian health ministry has drawn up plans for 300 million people, almost the equivalent to the population of the US, to be vaccinated by August. Frontline healthcare workers, police and the army have been given priority, with those over 50 and with co-morbidity conditions to follow, all free of cost. Maharashtra, home to Mumbai and the state worst hit by coronavirus, plans to vaccinate 50,000 healthcare workers on the first day of the vaccine rollout.

Across the vast country, more than 200,000 vaccinators and 370,000 team members have been trained for the rollout. Large-scale trial runs have been conducted in at least four states and authorities have readied 29,000 cold storage units to transport and hold the vaccine safely.

Two vaccines have been given emergency approval for India’s immunisation programme; the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, known in India as Covishield, and a domestic product, Covaxin, developed by the pharmaceutical company Bharat Biotech.

The approval of Bharat Biotech's vaccine, which was co-sponsored by an Indian government body, has proved controversial. Covaxin is still in phase 3 human trials and a full dataset on its efficacy has not been released or peer-reviewed, unlike the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine or the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines which have been authorised in the UK and the US.

India's drugs controller general, VG Somani, insisted Covaxin was "100% safe".

The government has ordered 5.5m doses of Covaxin and 11m doses of Covishield. Boxes of Covishield were dispatched bearing the message "may all be free from disease".

Significantly for ease of availability and low cost, both vaccines will be produced domestically. The Serum Institute of India, one of the world's biggest vaccine makers, has already produced and stockpiled around 50m doses of Covishield.

The institute has billions in pre-orders from countries around the world also desperate for the vaccine. The Indian government is negotiating how much stock to release for export, given fears that it could lead to a domestic shortage.

The government faces another challenge of growing vaccine opposition in India. According to a survey of more than 8,000 people carried out by Local Circles, 69% of Indians are hesitant about receiving the vaccine.

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2021.01.16 - Coronavirus uk

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'I cry a lot on the train home': London medics fight to save Covid patients

Alison Gordon, a critical care physiotherapist, working to clear a patient's lungs. Photograph: Tom Pilston/The Guardian

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Schools

Schools demand No 10 explain unauthorised use of rapid Covid tests

MPs and scientists also push for answers after it emerged MHRA has not approved use of rapid tests

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Josh Halliday

Fri 15 Jan 2021 16.36 EST First published on Fri 15 Jan 2021 09.03 EST

A worker processes an Innova IVD lateral flow Covid-19 test. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

School leaders have demanded urgent clarity about the government's flagship mass-testing strategy for schools after the UK's medicines regulator said daily coronavirus testing should not be used as an alternative to self-isolation.

Headteachers said they were alarmed after the Guardian [revealed](#) that the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) had not authorised the use of 30-minute lateral flow tests to allow students to remain in classrooms instead of sending whole "bubbles" home.

The daily testing policy is at the heart of Boris Johnson's £100bn "[Operation Moonshot](#)" strategy because it allows people who test negative to stay in school or work when they would otherwise have to self-isolate. However, the MHRA has expressed serious concerns about using the tests in this way and told the government on Tuesday it had not authorised them for this key purpose.

The Department of [Health](#) and Social Care (DHSC) claimed on Friday that the primary purpose of using rapid testing in schools was to find positive cases and that this did not require the MHRA's approval, but that it was providing regulatory oversight.

Ministers have repeatedly said the [use of daily Covid-19 tests](#) is critical to keeping children in education because it means those who test negative can remain in classrooms, instead of whole year groups having to self-isolate. Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, [said last month](#): "Testing on this scale brings real benefits to education, it means more children, teachers and staff can stay in their classes in schools and colleges without the need to self-isolate."

Geoff Barton, the general secretary of the Association of School and College Leaders, said: "School leaders and staff are utterly tired of this endless confusion over lateral flow tests, alongside much else that has been landed on their plates during this crisis."

"All they want is clarity about what is the right thing to do, and the reassurance that there is a sound scientific basis for what is proposed. What is obvious is that there are severe misgivings in many quarters about the use of lateral flow tests as an alternative to self-isolation for close contacts of positive cases. We

call on the government to provide a clear and unequivocal statement on this matter.”

The MHRA said on Friday that anyone who had been in close contact with a positive case who tests negative with a self-administered test should still self-isolate – undermining the core strategy to keep children in schools – but later said this did not apply to schools. The regulator said it was not required to authorise the daily tests used in schools because they were supervised by a trained person, usually a teacher.

There was confusion and anger among headteachers, including those in secondary schools where daily testing was introduced last week.

Paul Whiteman, the general secretary of school leaders’ union NAHT, said the government had “serious questions to answer” about its schools testing policy.

“The suggestion that the MHRA have not approved these tests to be used as an alternative to self-isolation is alarming, as that is precisely what the government are suggesting schools should do as part of their testing strategy. The government also needs to urgently explain why it took such an approach if the MHRA approval was not in place,” he said.

UK cases

The use of the lateral flow tests, which take up to 30 minutes to produce a result, has divided experts. Some say they should be welcomed because they can quickly and cheaply identify infected people that would otherwise not have been identified. But others point to their [low accuracy](#) and say they risk doing more harm than good, especially when used in the way proposed by government, which is centred on keeping children in schools.

The Labour MP Maria Eagle said she had written to the health secretary, Matt Hancock, to explain the “safety and lawfulness” of the daily testing policy, amid concerns about a [sharp rise in cases](#) at a Jaguar Land Rover site in Merseyside that has been carrying out rapid testing of workers.

Prof Jon Deeks, a biostatistician of the University of Birmingham, said: “It’s clear that the regulator has agreed this is not a safe way of using these tests. We urgently need clarity from the government about what their mass-testing plans

are for the future. It's important for schools, teachers and children to know what the position is.”

The government has spent at least £1.5bn on the lateral flow devices and they have been used by universities, care homes and hospitals. Ministers announced this week they would be distributed to all 317 local authorities in England.

A senior MHRA official confirmed its position in an email seen by the Guardian on Friday. The official wrote on 29 December that its approval “ONLY allows for the test to be used to ‘find’ positive cases. MHRA HAVE NOT approved the test for use in a ‘test to enable’ scenario” – such as allowing those who test negative to remain in school or the workplace.

The email added: “Any other use of the kit is outside of MHRA’s remit and at the manufacturer’s own risk. We are therefore unable to comment any further on this matter.”

A Department for Education spokesman said: “Daily testing of close contacts as a replacement for self-isolation is only possible on test sites in secondary schools and colleges, where a trained member of staff oversees the testing. The MHRA themselves have made clear that they do not need to authorise this programme.

“We continue to evaluate this programme to make sure it is delivering on its aim of keeping students in education while reducing transmission across the community.”

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[NHS](#)

NHS crisis in charts: how Covid has increased strain on health service

There has been high demand for healthcare in England this winter. These charts show where the pressure points are

[Ashley Kirk](#), [Pamela Duncan](#) and [Paul Scruton](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.11 EST Last modified on Fri 15 Jan 2021 23.37 EST

Photograph: Alamy

The NHS is in the grips of a winter crisis like no other. Friday was the ninth day in a row in which the number of people being treated in hospital for Covid

hit a new high, with 32,975 patients now on wards across [England](#).

Seventeen [NHS](#) trusts are treating more coronavirus patients than non-Covid patients and six have more than 50% of beds taken up by Covid patients. One in five English trusts treated at least twice as many patients on at least one day last week as in their first-wave peak.

All this comes as the health service enters its busiest time of the year as seasonal flu and weather-related accidents peak. These charts outline the scale of the challenge facing the NHS England this winter.

Covid hospitalisations at record high

On the current trajectory, the number of people being treated for Covid in England's hospitals could soon be double the April 2020 peak of 18,974. On Thursday the [figure](#) stood at 32,925, 74% higher.

Every NHS region in England treated more patients in the week to 14 January than in their first-wave peak, with all seven recording their highest figures on Wednesday or Thursday.

Even though hospitals are better equipped to deal with coronavirus in this second wave, demand is putting huge strain on the NHS. Two and a half times as many Covid patients as in the first-wave peak were treated in the south-east and east of England on the worst day last week.

[Beds by region](#)

There had been some [tentative signs](#) this week that admissions may have peaked in London and the south-east, but the subsequent days' data was less encouraging and [admissions in England](#) as a whole continue to increase, albeit at slower pace.

Toughest winter on record

While the NHS does usually see increased demand at Christmas, the scale of demand this year is unprecedented. There are 4,529 adult critical care beds occupied in England – more than 1,000 more than at any point in the past five winters.

critical care beds annual

This is because coronavirus is far more deadly than flu, which is the driver of a lot of NHS demand in a normal winter. Prof Chris Whitty, England's chief medical officer, has previously said seasonal flu kills about 7,000 people annually in the UK, or up to 20,000 in a bad year. The UK has recorded more than 80,000 deaths within 28 days of a positive Covid test, and more than 100,000 when all deaths with Covid listed on death certificates are taken into account.

Six trusts are coronavirus-majority services

Covid patients are taking up more than half of all bed capacity in six English acute trusts, and half in two more. For example, in the week to 12 January, 63% of beds at Whittington Health NHS trust in north London were occupied by Covid patients – an average of 145 beds, compared with 79 for non-Covid patients and seven unoccupied.

majority-covid trusts

A further 34 trusts had a third or more of their beds taken up by Covid patients on average in the past week. These numbers have been improved by the fact that trusts across the country have increased their numbers of beds.

A&E data shows people avoiding hospital – albeit not as many as in first wave

A combination of increased demand and public reluctance to go to hospital due to the pandemic had a huge impact on the delivery of health services during the first wave. Figures released on Thursday indicate that the fall-off in services has not yet reached the first-wave peak, but it is a mixed picture.

More people than ever were waiting for a referral for treatment, at 4.46 million – a figure that has risen every month since June. There are 192,169 who have been waiting a year or more for treatment, the highest on record. On a more positive note, median waiting times have been declining in recent months and stand at 10.4 weeks, down from 19.6 weeks in July.

A&E attendances [fell back again](#) in November and December to the fourth lowest level on record, coinciding with a rise in Covid case numbers and local lockdowns. Attendances were still 61% higher than at the low point last April.

[A&E attendances](#)

Cancer treatments, which were severely affected in the first wave, have now recovered, with most metrics reaching or approaching pre-Covid levels. As an example, 205,182 people got their first cancer consultation within two weeks of an urgent referral from their GP in November, in stark contrast to April and May at 79,573 and 106,535 respectively.

However, Macmillan Cancer Support struck a note of caution. “We must remember that this data reflects the state of our cancer services two months ago, before the current surge in coronavirus cases, which we know has caused further disruption,” said its head of policy, Sara Bainbridge, adding that tens of thousands of people had missed a cancer diagnosis since the start of the pandemic.

Prof Stephen Powis, the NHS national medical director, said: “The NHS has cared for nearly a quarter of a million Covid-positive patients already, who collectively spent more than 2m nights in hospital, while also keeping emergency care running.

“These figures are a stark reminder that the NHS is facing an exceptionally tough challenge, and that while still millions of people are getting care for non-Covid health problems in the NHS in England – indeed, for every Covid patient in hospital, the NHS is treating three people for other conditions – there is no doubt that services will continue to be under additional pressure until and unless this virus is under control, which is why it’s so important that everyone practises social distancing and follows national guidance.”

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[Coronavirus](#)

'It's nice to see the joy': Wiltshire town dresses up for lockdown

The railings of Malmesbury's 12th century abbey festooned with Hope Springs Eternal decorations. Photograph: Sam Frost/The Guardian

The railings of Malmesbury's 12th century abbey festooned with Hope Springs Eternal decorations. Photograph: Sam Frost/The Guardian

Malmesbury displays a riot of colourful decoration to push back against the coronavirus blues

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[Steven Morris](#)

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 12.00 EST

The January skies may be grey and the Covid-19 developments relentlessly grim but the townsfolk of a Wiltshire town are hitting back by turning their community into a riot of colour.

Front doors and windows in Malmesbury – population 5,000 – have been decorated with glorious images of spring and summer: flowers, butterflies and bunnies, vivid green foliage and multi-coloured bunting. Some have let their imaginations run wild, creating other-worldly tableaux of dragons, fairies, unicorns and mermaids.



A fairy garden made by Alison Humphries in front of her home. Photograph: Sam Frost/The Guardian

Even the railings of the venerable 12th-century abbey have been cheered up with woollen pompoms and shells that spell out the name of the project, [Hope Springs Eternal](#), which has been borrowed from Alexander Pope's An Essay on Man.

"Our lovely community are taking it to their hearts," said organiser Jackie Peel, who had the idea as she contemplated the end of the town's Christmas lights trail, which raised spirits over the festive period.

"We thought what else could we do to cheer people up over the next few weeks of lockdown three and put a smile on faces," said Peel, who runs a marketing consultancy business. Suggestions were invited on one of the town's Facebook pages and a resident came up with the name Hope Springs Eternal.



Neighbours Susan Gaultier and Linda Sullivan with their bunnies and bunting display. Photograph: Sam Frost/The Guardian

Peel said: "This encapsulated the theme perfectly and asked people to decorate their doors with spring flower wreaths, windows with flowers, pictures drawn by the children, anything that brings a smile to their faces."

Peel's own display includes flowers using buttons from her grandmother's old sewing box. "She would have loved that. We are all concerned about people's mental health getting through this latest lockdown and judging by the comments and interest shown so far, I think people need something to focus on."



Share your story

Share your stories

If you have been affected or have any information, we'd like to hear from you. You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or contact us [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Only the Guardian can see your contributions and one of our journalists may contact you to discuss further.

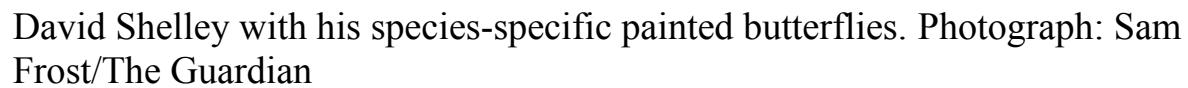
[Tell us](#)

More than 100 homes and businesses are taking part. Young and old, from a brownie group to residents of a care home, are doing their bit.

Local writer Rosalyn English has written a poem rather than produce a work of art concluding: “The universe, the magic, a mystery/Reliant on each other, always will be.”

Wendy Sullivan, 67, who is shielding, said it had been a huge comfort to her to work on Hope Springs Eternal. “I think it’s absolutely brilliant,” she said.

Sullivan has made a display of flowers and butterflies fashioned out of whatever she could find around her home. “I couldn’t be too ambitious because I didn’t have that much material and obviously can’t get out but it’s wonderful we have something to do.”



David Shelley with his species-specific painted butterflies. Photograph: Sam Frost/The Guardian

David Shelley spent hours painting butterflies – specific species rather than generic ones – while someone else has created a sweet fairy garden using real green shoots poking through the chilly ground as a centrepiece.

The town's deputy mayor, Paul Smith, and his wife, Frances, are pleased with the display of their home, a former pub well known in the town as the spot of an 18th-century fatal tiger attack – the animal was from a touring circus.

Paul said his role was to hold the ladders and make cups of tea while his wife decorated their double-fronted sash window with paper roses balanced on antique books and delicate butterflies dancing through foliage made out of an old atlas.

“The town is looking really bright and cheerful,” said Frances. “It’s nice to see the joy in people’s faces as they pass. People usually don’t like it when passers-

by peer in through their windows but nothing pleases us more when they do just that.”

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Books

Can Joe Biden make America great again?

‘An ally of the light, not of the darkness.’ Illustration: Stephan Schmitz
‘An ally of the light, not of the darkness.’ Illustration: Stephan Schmitz

His skills as a fixer are finely honed – but they cannot restore a pre-Trump normality. As president, Biden’s private self, shadowed by loss, must come into its own



Fintan O'Toole

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

Every year after 1975, [Joe Biden](#), his second wife Jill, his sons Beau and Hunter and their growing families, would gather for Thanksgiving on Nantucket island off Cape Cod. Part of the annual ritual was that the Bidens would take a photograph of themselves in front of a quaint old house in the traditional New England style that stood above the dunes on their favourite beach.

In November 2014, when Biden was serving as Barack Obama's vice-president, he found, where the house should have been, an empty space marked out by yellow police tape. The building, he wrote in his memoir [Promise Me, Dad](#) had "finally run out of safe ground and run out of time; it had been swept out into the Atlantic".

This absence haunted him. On his return to Washington, Biden "kept seeing the little ... house, undermined by the powerful indifference of nature and the

inevitability of time, no longer able to hold its ground; I could almost hear the sharp crack as its moorings failed, could envisage the tide as it washed in and out, pulling at it relentlessly and remorselessly until it was adrift on the water, then swallowed up by the sea.”

If Biden were to write this now, it would read as a heavy-handed political metaphor. He is about to fulfil an ambition that has driven him for half a century by assuming the presidency of the United States.

But he arrives to find that great office a ruin, with police tape all around it. Donald Trump’s demented last days have washed away the illusion of the US as a stable, settled democracy. On 6 January, a date that will live long in American infamy, all the entitled rage of the white nativism that Trump has channelled finally burst through the seawalls that protected the illusion of a healthy, functioning republic. The polity escaped complete inundation, but the breach is gaping.

An explosion is caused by a police munition as Trump supporters surround the Capitol in Washington on 6 January. Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

Yet Biden, in 2014, was not thinking of the collapsing house as an image of American politics. It troubled him, rather, as a token of the fragility of human existence. Has there been, at least since Abraham Lincoln, an American president so melancholy? One so inclined to view the world through the lens, not just of history, but of eternity?

The impulse comes with the territory of Biden's Irish Catholicism, its fatalistic view of this earthly existence as, in the words of the rosary, a "valley of tears". This is, as Biden sees it, "the Irishness of life".

This rueful stoicism is, however, primarily shaped by intimate experience: the road crash that killed his first wife, [Neilia, and their daughter, Naomi](#), in December 1972, shortly after Biden was elected to the Senate at the age of 29; Beau's death from cancer in 2015. When he was a young senator, the journalistic in-joke was to refer to him as "Joe Biden (D-Del, TBPT)". Those last four letters stood for "touched by personal tragedy", a label that clung to him like a clammy mist of perpetual mourning.

The odd thing is that this tragic vision just might be what his country needs right now. Perhaps the way that the old house acts as both a political metaphor and a personal memory points to a confluence of the man and the moment. Perhaps the dark shadow of TBPT that walks beside the triumphantly ascendant Potus is not so much a ghost and more a guardian angel.

The culture wars that have racked America, and the flags waved during the assault on the Capitol that said "Jesus is My Savior, Trump is My President", make it too easy to see the Republicans as religious zealots and the Democrats as rational secularists. Too easy, therefore, to miss the most obvious thing about Biden: his religious sense of mission.



Biden, senator for Delaware, at Union Station, Washington, in 1973.
Photograph: Bettmann/Bettmann Archive

In his speech accepting the Democratic party's nomination for the presidency he evoked "a battle for the soul of this nation". He conjured Trump as a malign demiurge who has "cloaked America in darkness", plunged the country into "this season of darkness", and written "this chapter of American darkness". He promised to be "an ally of the light, not of the darkness".

In normal times, this rhetoric would seem ludicrously over the top, all the more so coming from a garrulous, glad-handing old Irish pol, who spent 36 years in the Senate and eight as vice-president. Biden is not obvious casting for the role of apocalyptic warrior.

In fact, however, as 6 January made all too clear, Biden's oratory is understated. The [darkness of Trump's presidency](#) has not been a season or a chapter. Biden's own presidency cannot, therefore, be an American spring that naturally

succeeds the Trumpian winter, or a happy resolution to a grim but temporary twist in America's narrative of democratic progress.

The darkness, as Trump's antics and the violence of his most loyal supporters have demonstrated, is not going to go away at the flick of a switch. Biden's great strength may be that, because of what life has done to him, he knows his way around in the dark.

There are, in effect, two Bidens: the politician and the person. The second is more interesting than the first. The paradox is that the more personal his presidency is, the more politically potent it can become.

The Bidens at St Joseph on the Brandywine Roman Catholic church in Wilmington, Delaware, December 2020. Photograph: Alex Edelman/AFP/Getty Images

Trump abolished the distinction between the private and public selves of the presidency, embodying the principle of personal rule, government by whim,

instinct, gut feelings and above all by self-interest. The logic would seem to be that Biden has been elected to do the opposite. But it is a logic he has to resist.

There are, of course, many basic ways in which Biden must indeed restore the idea of a government of laws, not of men. The rule of law itself has to be re-established after Trump's flagrant delinquency, corruption and treachery. The commitment to competence and expertise, so wilfully trashed by Trump, has to be renewed. The tools of democratic deliberation – truthfulness and evidence-based rationality – have to be refashioned.

As the mob took control of the Capitol, Biden called for "the restoration of democracy, of decency, of honour, of respect, the rule of law. Just plain, simple decency." No doubt in that moment, these words resonated with the majority of Americans.

The danger though, is that this idea of restoration slips too easily into Biden's instinct, forged over five decades of deal-making, for doing business as usual. It dismisses Trump as a wild, one-off deviation, a freakish fever after which the body politic can return to its natural, healthy condition of consensual bargaining.

What makes this temptation so attractive is sheer relief. After the relentless torrent of toxicity that has poured out from Trump, even the sound of silence would be a joy. Biden offers the chance to exhale. But the pleasure, however deep, will be brief. Consensus is not on offer.

Biden the Irish pol is a revenant from a dead era. His skills as an operator, a fixer, a problem-solver, are finely honed – but they are redundant. He is a horse whisperer who has to deal with mad dogs. He is a nifty tango dancer with no possible partners. There is no reasonable, civilised Republican opposition with which he can compromise. There can be no such thing as a unilateral declaration of amity and concord.

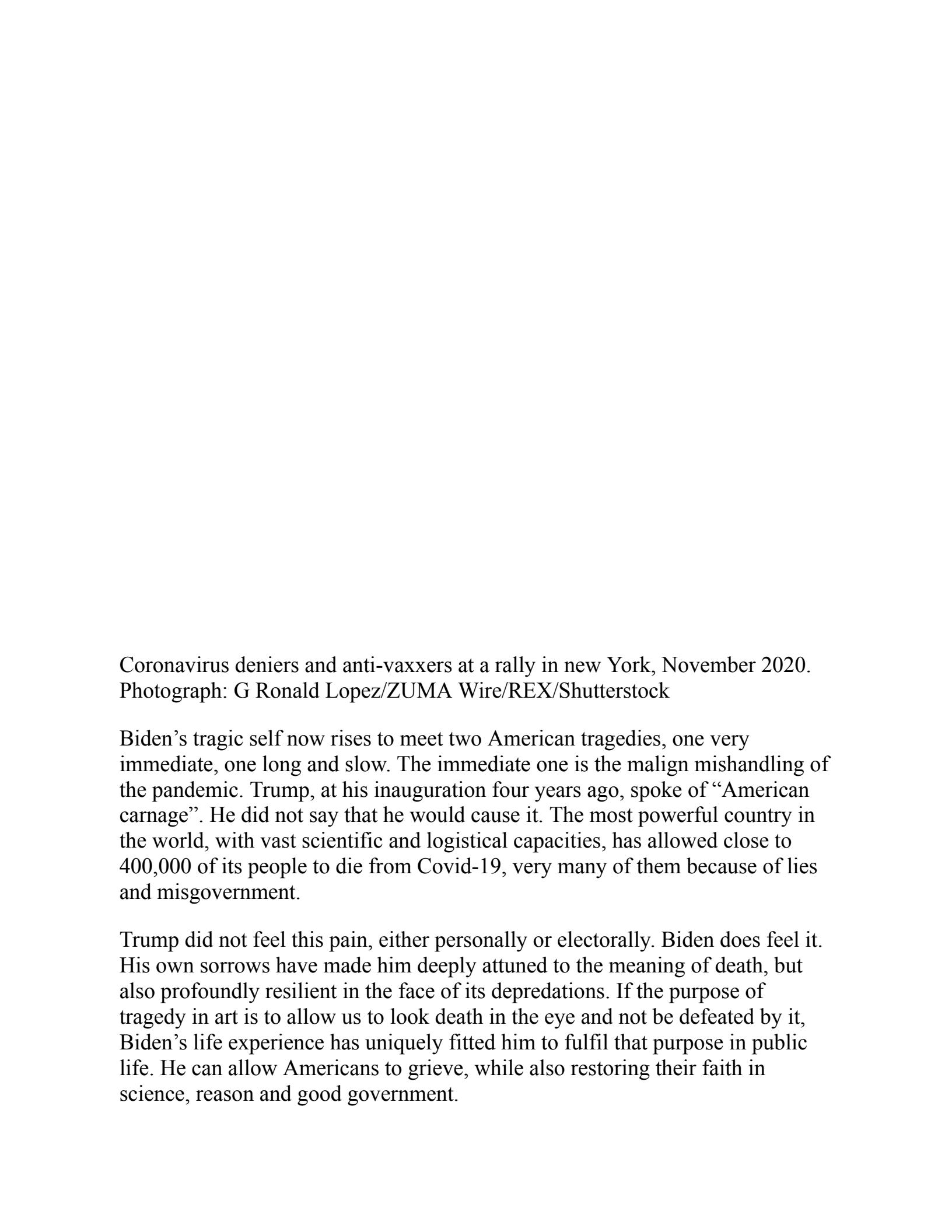
There has been an open attempt to turn the US into an authoritarian regime – what has happened once can happen again

If he did not know this already, the Republicans' support for the nullification of the November election, maintained by its leaders in the House of Representatives even after the storming of their citadel, has surely brought it home to him. The most basic rule of the old order – the acceptance of the result

of an election – can no longer be taken for granted. There has been an open attempt to turn the US into an authoritarian regime in which elections exist merely to endorse the eternal strongman. What has happened once can happen again.

And this is not just about Trump. Nearly 75 million people voted for him knowing (because he repeatedly told them so) that he would never accept defeat. Almost the entire Republican party in Congress either explicitly supported his attempt to subvert democracy or sat silent for months while it unfolded. For Biden to pretend that he can restore a pre-Trump normality would be disastrous. Trump and the Republican base he still owns will simply exploit conciliation to make Biden look weak and foolish.

In that sense, the political Biden is not the man who can change America. It is that other, richer persona, the private self, shadowed by time and loss and a sense of tragedy, that must come into its own. His supporters understood this in November – they voted for him in unprecedented numbers, less because of what he said he would do and more because of who he is: a man of sorrow acquainted with grief.



Coronavirus deniers and anti-vaxxers at a rally in New York, November 2020.
Photograph: G Ronald Lopez/ZUMA Wire/REX/Shutterstock

Biden's tragic self now rises to meet two American tragedies, one very immediate, one long and slow. The immediate one is the malign mishandling of the pandemic. Trump, at his inauguration four years ago, spoke of "American carnage". He did not say that he would cause it. The most powerful country in the world, with vast scientific and logistical capacities, has allowed close to 400,000 of its people to die from Covid-19, very many of them because of lies and misgovernment.

Trump did not feel this pain, either personally or electorally. Biden does feel it. His own sorrows have made him deeply attuned to the meaning of death, but also profoundly resilient in the face of its depredations. If the purpose of tragedy in art is to allow us to look death in the eye and not be defeated by it, Biden's life experience has uniquely fitted him to fulfil that purpose in public life. He can allow Americans to grieve, while also restoring their faith in science, reason and good government.

If he does this successfully, he will also have the authority to address the other, historical American tragedy: the irony of great republican ideals built on foundations of cruelty, oppression and structural inequality. He will have a moment in which he can confront the other truths that are self-evident: that gross racial, social and economic inequity has always disfigured the US. If the tumult of the last two years has made anything clear, it is that the denial of this truth cannot persist.

Protesters mark Juneteenth, 2020, in Atlanta, Georgia; the US marks the end of slavery by celebrating with an annual unofficial holiday. Photograph: Chandan Khanna/AFP/Getty Images

In this, his familiarity with the dark can be Biden's great strength. In his own life, he has been there and come back. He knows that it cannot be denied, but that it can be transcended. He can invite America to encounter its own darknesses – the legacy of slavery, the persistence of official and unofficial white supremacist violence, the failure to provide the access to education and

healthcare necessary for the equal dignity of citizens – while reassuring its people that after such acknowledgement can come real change for the better.

The great problem of American political discourse has always been – strangely for such a Biblical culture – a refusal to accept the idea of original sin. Tragic narratives are driven by some version of this idea: something went wrong at the beginning and, until it is confronted and expiated, it will continue to play itself out in havoc and pain.

Biden has to create a bold departure from the hollow promises of the American dream and towards a new, real equality

The mainstream American narrative has worked in the opposite direction. The foundational acts are sacred. If the present has gone wrong, it is because we have deviated from our origins. We must return to those foundations and we will be great again. Trump repeated exactly this story; Biden must break from it once and for all.

The current conservative image of the American polity is as a solid house unfortunately invaded by a boor, who took possession of it for four years and wrecked the joint. It is time to call in the restorers: Joe Biden & Co.



Biden in St Paul, Minnesota last October. Photograph: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

The truth is closer to that vanished house in Nantucket that so haunted Biden. The Trump years represented the crumbling of a building “no longer able to hold its ground”. His increasingly deluded and destructive ramblings are “the sharp crack as its moorings failed”. The ramparts of law and order that were supposed to protect it failed and it has been flooded by a high tide of proto-fascism.

You don’t try to rebuild on land that has been washed away. You move elsewhere. In his own mad, intuitive way, Trump has already done this for his followers. He no longer even pretends to occupy the terrain of democracy. He has built his own new piece of real estate in which the US is a demagogic despotism, wholly owned by himself and his family. Even after the deadly debacle of 6 January, a huge part of the American polity is content to up sticks and follow him there.

Biden has to create an equal and opposite space, with an equally bold departure, away from the hollow promises of the American dream and towards a new awakening of real equality. He has, after all, little to lose, not just in the political sense of having no second term to win, but in the personal one of having already endured so much loss. He has the paradoxical freedom of knowing that nothing that lies ahead of him is likely to be as bad as what lies behind him. In that freedom lies the possibility of a courage adequate to the fight he has promised to engage in – a relentless struggle for America's soul.

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Health & wellbeing

I thrived on the tension and drama of British politics. Then I had a heart attack

I lived for the nerve-shredding rollercoaster of Westminster. But the stress got under my skin, and into my blood

‘I counted through the whole of last year in heartbeats’: Rafael Behr.
Photograph: Peter Flude/The Guardian

‘I counted through the whole of last year in heartbeats’: Rafael Behr.
Photograph: Peter Flude/The Guardian



Rafael Behr

@rafaelbehr

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

It is a kilometre from my front door in Brighton to the local park, all downhill. A 45-year-old man, jogging not very fast, should be able to complete the journey without stopping; without fighting for breath; without feeling sick. Also, he should not be assailed by dread, feeling that the universe has suddenly turned a shade darker, soured, curled at the edges.

That is how I knew something was very wrong on New Year's Eve 2019. It was around 2pm and I had made it three-quarters of the way when something detonated behind my ribs. The pain was familiar at first. Tediously so. I would often get a tight, burning sensation across my chest when running. It slowed me down but never stopped me in my tracks. I would get home panting too hard for words, my face flashing red and white. "Are you all right?" my wife would ask. "Yeah... just... gimme... a... second." I thought that was normal in a man my age. Exercise was supposed to hurt a bit, and I took the pain in my chest as a

barometer of unfitness. Breathing that doesn't burn was a luxury for the younger man, I thought. But I had angina and called it middle age.

By 3pm on New Year's Eve I was on a hospital trolley, still in my running kit. It wasn't hard for the doctor to diagnose the problem.

Doctor (hurriedly): Have you taken any illegal drugs, Mr Behr?

Me (defensively): What, ever?

Doctor: Today, in the past 24 hours.

Me: Oh, right. No.

Doctor: Do you know of any family history of heart disease?

Me: Yes. Both sides.

Cardiac calamity had been advancing in a pincer movement down the generations towards me. My paternal grandfather had died from a heart attack. My dad had a triple bypass a few years ago. But the case history that felt pressingly relevant that afternoon was a man called Eric Rink, my mother's father. One Sunday morning in Cape Town, 12 years before I was born, Eric had gone to play golf as he often did on the weekend, always returning in time for lunch. But that day lunch waited and waited until it was cold; Eric never came home. His heart had stopped. He was 45. His daughter, my mother, was 14, the same age as my eldest.

I told myself it couldn't be a heart attack. That would be preposterous – and inconvenient. Guests were coming for dinner

There are no safe heart attacks, but the variety I had is notoriously lethal: occlusion to the left anterior descending artery. That is the main power line to the left ventricle, which is the piston in the pump that supplies oxygen to the body. A plaque caused by fatty deposits that have built up over years splits open and obstructs the artery. A clot forms at the site and blocks the blood flow completely. The more old-fashioned cardiologists call it the "widow-maker". I probably could have just about made it to the park, at a walking pace, if I had forced myself to carry on. But it is unlikely I would have made it home.

The decision to turn back took maybe 30 seconds. The pain was much more severe than usual and the nausea was new, as was the shimmering sense of doom. I told myself it couldn't be a heart attack, because that would be

preposterous – and inconvenient. We had guests coming for dinner. Not wanting a heart attack seemed like a good reason why I couldn’t be having one. It was the sort of thing that happened to other people. Then I remembered Eric Rink and lurched crookedly up the hill. By the time I got through the front door, I didn’t have enough breath to call for help.

My wife drove me to the hospital, staying heroically focused at the wheel while I wound down my window, chasing the oxygen that seemed to be fleeing my lungs. The roads were empty, it being New Year’s Eve. I tried to walk into A&E and explain the situation to reception, but found instead that collapsing on the floor communicated the necessary data more efficiently. “Next time, call an ambulance,” I heard someone say. Pro tip, I thought, but I’m not planning on making this a regular gig.

I told myself that everything would be all right; that heart attacks are not always the death sentence they used to be, thanks to advances in medical technology. But it also occurred to me that there is a moment in every parent’s life when we see our children for the last time, and that I might already have passed that moment without knowing to say goodbye.

Behr in hospital in January last year.

Emergency angioplasty is a marvel of science. A catheter is inserted via a small cut to the wrist, up the arm, over the shoulder and into the heart. The obstruction is found and fixed with stents: tiny inflatable tubes that reinforce the artery wall. I was conscious but full of morphine, which does strange things to one's sense of time. It felt as if the whole thing passed in minutes, but some of those minutes took years. The inflation of the stent temporarily reblocks the artery that has been smooshed open by the catheter, so it feels as if you are having a whole new heart attack. Then the balloon inside the stent is withdrawn, and blood can rush through. Every cell of your body gives a little cheer, like a nation of drought-stricken farmers celebrating the first drops of rain on parched fields. When the surgeon loaded up a second stent, I braced myself. I didn't want the nice, cool rain feeling to stop. "Could you just give me a moment?" I asked. He shook his head. "Time is very much of the essence here, Mr Behr."

Once the second stent was in, the pain began to dissipate. My mood overshot relief and landed in a zone of intense conviviality. I was chatty, exuberant. Psychologists call it “survivor elation”. Within hours, I was sending implausibly upbeat messages from my hospital bed, telling friends and family what had happened as if I had just returned from an exotic holiday. I emailed editors at work promising to “resume normal service as soon as possible”.

Photograph: Lol Keegan/The Guardian

My heart was operating at around a fifth of healthy capacity. Some damage would be permanent, but some was just stunned muscle that would wake up over the coming weeks. I was discharged with a regime of pharmaceuticals and mild activity. A cardiac nurse talked me through the rules: slow on stairs, no heavy lifting, build up gradually to exercise, avoid stress. What did I do for a living? Journalism. What did I write about? Politics, mostly. Oh, how interesting. Is that stressful?

By the end of 2019, everyone in the Westminster press pack was wrung out by Brexit. We had been soaked in the referendum, rinsed by the 2017 general election, drenched in venomous rhetoric. That period was marked by an enervating combination of stasis and crisis. There were long periods of tense political deadlock punctuated with moments of frenzy.

The knife-edge parliamentary votes on May's deal were particularly nerve-shredding. There was no time between result and deadline. We watched the cursor blink impatiently on a blank screen, poised to shovel it full of words. We spent the day twitchily texting MPs and advisers, swapping information with colleagues and rivals, scanning MPs' faces from the Commons press gallery, reading body language. What has anyone heard? How are the numbers looking?

Covering the frontline in the Brexit battle was beyond stressful: it was distressing

I enjoyed the intensity of it. The adrenaline took me back to an earlier time in my career, when I had been a foreign correspondent. But I didn't envy my reporter friends and colleagues: as a columnist, I was just dabbling, a tourist in their trenches.

Covering the frontline in the battle between leave and remain, however, had some unique toxicity for me personally. Brexit was not just another competition between rival policy positions. The emotional attachments formed on either side went deeper than standard party loyalties. It was beyond stressful: it was distressing.

In the press gallery we talked about "Brexit derangement syndrome" in those MPs who had lost all sense of perspective. Formerly balanced individuals lapsed into a hysterical lather, especially on social media where they were not bound by the restraining conventions of the Commons chamber and had to compete with a million amateur demagogues for approving clicks and retweets. But none of us was immune.

What upset me as a remain voter was not the fact that Britain was leaving the EU, but the assertion that it was unpatriotic to oppose the idea. I hated the rhetoric of betrayal and treason that leavers used to denounce those of us who thought Brexit was a mistake. We were "citizens of nowhere" to Theresa May. When May called the 2017 election, the Daily Mail urged her to "crush the saboteurs".

Denigration of remainder loyalty was a sequel to the xenophobic element in the 2016 referendum campaign – selling separation from the EU as protection from incoming migrant hordes. That was straight-up nationalism and it stirred a visceral anxiety about the character of Brexit, quite aside from any arguments about economics and trade. It clawed at the seam where I felt connected to the country I called home.

Behr's grandfather, Eric Rink (centre), with his brothers in 1946. Photograph: Courtesy Rafael Behr

My parents had migrated to Britain in 1970 because apartheid South Africa was intolerable. Their grandparents had been part of the mass emigration of Lithuanian Jews in the first decades of the 20th century. Eric Rink had started life as Eliyahu Rinkunsky, the oldest of three brothers. His father saw the rising tide of antisemitic hatred and evacuated the family to a new life in a different hemisphere. He died not long after. The Rinkunkskys got out in time, beating the odds, which for Lithuanian Jews were among the worst in Europe. Less than 5% of a thriving prewar community survived Nazi occupation.

It was comforting to find features that rhymed with mine. Something in the line of the chin, the nose, the heart

There is one photo in which Eric looks like me, taken on the day he and his two brothers were demobilised after the second world war. Their berets are askew, their eyes bright but tired. I only noticed the resemblance when I scoured a digital scan of the picture from my bed in the cardiac recovery ward. It was strangely comforting to find the features that rhymed with mine. Something in the line of the chin, the nose, the heart.

People on both sides of the Brexit divide had intimate reasons for identifying with their cause. I was one of the remainers who admired the European project as the continent's collective repudiation of bloodthirsty nationalism. The Europe that I voted for in 2016 represented the antithesis of forces that had driven my great-grandparents into exile and murdered those of their relatives who stayed behind. It pained me that the argument for Britain's alignment with that ideal was being lost, and it frightened me that the winners were so vindictive in victory.

It pained me, too, that there was no consolation in the party I had always supported. There had been antisemitism on the left before 2015, when Jeremy Corbyn became leader, but under him the party was more hospitable to the prejudice. Corbyn was a magnet for every ultra-left crank and fanatic whose fixation on the evils of "Zionism" shaded into conspiracy theories about Jews plotting behind the scenes, pulling the financial strings of a puppet government.

Observing that trend was grim enough, but the stressful part was [writing about it](#) amid a culture of indifference that permeated the wider British left. To criticise Corbyn in print was to invite a torrent of abuse online. His hardcore supporters said the charge of antisemitism was itself a devious plot against the leader, more evidence of the conspiracy. The more squeamish fellow-travellers agreed that the whole thing stank, but held their noses anyway and campaigned for Labour.

That complicity animated a pungent hereditary fear: no matter how rooted Jews felt in a country, a movement, a culture, one day there will come along a mob carrying tools to dig us up, telling us we don't truly belong. It is the cautionary tale our grandparents told about keeping a suitcase packed and a passport close at hand. "At least we are finding out who would have hidden us in their attic," one Jewish friend said to me. We laughed because it wasn't even a joke.

The combination of Brexit and Corbynism had me in a state of fizzing unease. Even when I looked composed or sounded detached in print, I was inwardly pacing in knotted agitation. I slept too little, ate and drank too much. I was distracted at home, impatient and shouty with my children. In photos from that winter I look puffy and grey. I knew that social media was the main pipeline bringing anger and anxiety into every corner of my waking life. I tried to ration my use during the 2019 election campaign, relying on other sources to find out what was going on. But by then I had already been contaminated. The stress was in the atmosphere of British politics, a fine chemical mist that coated everything. It was absorbed through my skin. It got into my blood, into my heart.

A doctor showed me the aftermath in flesh at one of my outpatient check-ups in March last year. I was recovering well but worried about this new coronavirus that was starting to dominate the news. There were reports that it was merciless with cardiac patients. Did 45 count as young or old in the eyes of this disease, I asked? The consultant paused for some mental arithmetic. “Think of yourself as more like 55 to 60.”

He brought up a video of my recent ultrasound scan on his computer and with a pencil indicated a narrow strip of dead muscle. It moved stiffly, while the rest of the heart pulsed; a notch of scarred tissue, burned up while the oxygen supply had been cut off during the heart attack. I had destroyed a decade’s supply of heart in around three hours. “We still don’t know much about this virus,” the doctor concluded. “Be careful. You could do without it.”

I was taking twice-weekly cardiac rehabilitation classes. We gathered in the middle of the day in a leisure centre. I was the youngest, although there was one patient, not much older, who had also had the “widow-maker” heart attack. He had waited two hours for an ambulance. When he reached the hospital he went into ventricular fibrillation, flatlined, and had to be yanked back from death’s grip with high-voltage paddles. “The lights went out,” was all he remembered of the experience. *Time is very much of the essence, Mr Behr*, I thought.

Junk food was easier to quit than junk news, although the same discipline is involved

The classes reminded me of the driver speed awareness course I had once taken as penance for doing 40 in a 30mph zone. There was the same chastened schoolboy vibe: a room full of people, the overwhelming majority men, who needed reminding about the cardiac highway code. We had lectures on what to eat; how to manage stress. We learned about the various pharmaceuticals we were taking. There was an instructional video in which actors played out medical emergencies. There was a coy film to reassure us that it was safe for heart patients to have sex. “Most people have a rather exaggerated idea of how much physical exertion is involved,” said the on-screen doctor. No one dissented.

My favourite part was the supervised exercise session. We were given monitors to wear and sensible heart rates to maintain. We stepped over things, lifted our knees, trotted up and down, all under the watchful eyes of a nurse armed with a portable defibrillator kit. I learned to feel an accelerated pulse without fear. When I finished the course, I bought my own monitor and started running again, matching my stride to a cardiac beats-per-minute target. The first time I took my monitor for a test run I had to pass the corner where my chest had exploded. When I reached the park, I cried.

I take that running route often now, and award myself a defiant burst of speed. I leap over the ghost of myself lying on the pavement. He is a useful mental companion, the alternative version of me who waited too long in 2019 and missed the escape portal into 2020. He reminds me to take all of my various pills, and to resist the temptations of cake and pastry. (Deliciousness is a tediously reliable indicator of what foods cardiac patients are not supposed to eat.) I can also summon the ghost on the pavement at times of stress, when events in the world look bleak. He reminds me to breathe and not to take it all to heart.

Junk food was easier to quit than junk news, although the same discipline is involved. When a story breaks, I must not binge on instant reaction. I must not serve myself slices of thick, buttery outrage on social media. That was easy in the first weeks back from hospital, when I was off work. I stopped following politics and didn’t miss it. But I knew I would have to reintroduce news to my diet at some point.

In those early weeks, any strong emotion would give me a peculiar sensation, a dull ache rippling across my ribs, radiating out from the solar plexus,

announcing the presence of stress before my conscious mind could compute the cause. I went to watch my younger daughter play football – a big match. But I had to leave the stadium because the tension was pinching the air from my lungs.

Would I get tight-chested when exposed to politics? I sampled Boris Johnson during PMQs. What was once infuriating now looked banal

I wondered how I would cope with a quick print deadline, and whether I would get the tight-chest feeling from exposure to politics. Towards the end of the first month, I sampled a few minutes of Boris Johnson in prime minister's questions, basking in his majority, and was relieved to discover that his bloviation didn't interfere with my breathing. What had once been infuriating now looked banal and ridiculous.

I locked myself out of Twitter. I changed the password to an unmemorable sequence of random characters, which I wrote on a scrap of paper and sealed in an envelope. I still use this technique to police my usage, especially over weekends and on holiday. Sometimes I give the password to my wife for safekeeping. My phone is banished from the bedroom. I rediscovered the BBC World Service as a first port of call for news that lifts your eyes to a more global horizon. It puts parochial Westminster squabbles into perspective.

I have not set foot in parliament for over a year. It had taken me years to learn my way around the labyrinthine Palace of Westminster. Now I have a similarly intricate mental map of where the reliable patches of phone reception are at home, for speaking to contacts. I miss being able to read the mood of the Commons chamber, and the extra bits of gossip and intelligence you glean from chats in corridors and impromptu huddles by gothic stairwells. But there isn't so much of that now anyway, thanks to the pandemic. I followed the final moves of the Brexit endgame last month with numb sadness. The seething anger is still available, and politics is always synthesising new reasons to feel enraged, but I handle the compound differently now. I try to decant it on to the page with less casual spillage into the rest of my life.

The pre-coronavirus world feels remote now anyway, submerged fathoms deep below everything that happened in 2020. I don't know how much of that is the effect of my lucky escape from 2019, and how much is the effect of successive lockdowns. Months seem to have ticked past in minutes, while days have lasted for months. Time has been elastic, arrhythmic. It reminds me of the morphine.

It sometimes feels as if I counted through the whole of last year in heartbeats. I had not previously known what my natural resting pulse was, or how fast it could safely go. Now I can estimate it fairly accurately just by putting a couple of fingers to my neck. I can trace the progress of my recovery by the average beats-per-minute rate on my runs, recorded by the monitor strapped to my chest and plotted on a graph.

For perspective, I try to run to a place where I can see the horizon. I venture along the Brighton seafront, or up into the South Downs, clocking up around 45km a week – way more than I ever managed (or even attempted) in the years of battling through angina. I can fit into the suit I wore at my wedding 15 years ago. I have read a bit about running technique. It turns out I had developed all sorts of bad habits. The worst was my tendency to stare down, hunched, focused on the ground just in front of me. I'm working to correct that now. The trick is to relax the shoulders, don't clench the fists, breathe evenly. Look out, look up.

- Rafael Behr will be running 25km to raise money for his local cardiac care charity. To sponsor him, go to [justgiving.com/fundraising/rafael-behr](https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/rafael-behr).

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Food poverty

Interview

Jack Monroe on food poverty and fury: 'I just wake up, look at the news, and get angry'

[Zoe Williams](#)

Jack Monroe: 'I met children who were so feral and afraid, and I saw with my own eyes that, with three meals on the table and a lot of love, their shoulders went down a bit, their jaws unclenched.' Photograph: Evening Standard/eyevine

Jack Monroe: 'I met children who were so feral and afraid, and I saw with my own eyes that, with three meals on the table and a lot of love, their shoulders went down a bit, their jaws unclenched.' Photograph: Evening Standard/eyevine

The cook and campaigner barely slept last week as the row raged over inadequate food parcels for kids. She discusses austerity, cronyism and why she'll never stop fighting



[@zoesqwilliams](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

I speak to Jack Monroe, cook, author and campaigner, towards the end of a tumultuous week in food poverty. On Monday, a Twitter user, [@roadsidemum](#), posted a photo of a “hamper” she said was intended to replace her child’s free school lunches for two weeks. The provider, Chartwells, claimed it covered one week and was funded at £10.50. The contents wouldn’t have cost you £6 in any supermarket. Parents all over the country shared similar photos, food nothing short of contemptuous: half a red pepper, a quarter of an onion. What kind of company would employ someone to make sure no family gets too much onion? Monroe has been sent similar photos since March – the packages sent to shielding people, outsourced by the government to other companies, were

similarly unimpressive, though “they got a couple of tins of pork as well. Every time I tried to make a noise about it, it was just like shouting in the wind.”

This time, the mood had changed; there was just so much about it that was repulsive – the idea that Chartwells, [part of the giant catering corporation](#) [Compass](#), would skim profit off food meant for a child; the cronyism of how it got the contract in the first place (former Chartwells chairman Paul Walsh is a prominent Tory supporter who donated £10,000 to the party in 2010); the lobbying that led to the policy of hampers rather than vouchers, against the advice of child-poverty groups; the fact that such an incompetent government has the gall not to trust parents with money to feed their own children.

And the context has changed. “At the start of the pandemic,” Monroe says, “a lot of us were so scrambled by everything that was going on that the overwhelming response tended to be: ‘We’re just grateful to have some help.’ Now, it’s been quite a long time. Everybody who’s even smiled at anyone in the Tory party has got a contract in the grand [chumocracy](#). And people are like: ‘What is this shit? How have you had time to sort *that* out, and we’re still getting brown bananas and half a tin of tuna?’”

The photograph, shared on Twitter, that sparked the food row. Photograph: @RoadsideMum/Twitter

By Tuesday, a No 10 spokesperson had called the contents of the hamper “unacceptable”, and claimed to be urgently looking into it; on Wednesday, Boris Johnson was taken apart at PMQs and his best response was to ask Keir Starmer why [Marcus Rashford](#) was so much more effective as a campaigner than the Labour party. (Quite a moment in politics, even in its current dishevelment, for the prime minister’s attack line to be: “Why aren’t you better at pointing out how bad I am?”) It looked like victory, for the most part: vouchers were to be reintroduced so parents could buy their own food. And then, on Thursday, briefed to the Times so that no one on a low income could read it, the news that there would be [no free school meals over February’s half-term](#), with families forced to rely on council provision instead.

So Monroe hasn’t slept for three nights, but it doesn’t show in her eyes or her arguments. She’s talking from her kitchen in Southend-on-Sea, Essex; she got a studio light for her appearances on the BBC’s brilliant Daily Kitchen Live at

the start of the first lockdown, and everything has a charismatic shimmer that makes you want to stand up and cheer when she lands a point. “They surely can’t think that there’s not going to be a noise about [February half-term], because of the maelstrom there has been over feeding children adequately over the last 48 to 72 hours. So my conspiracy brain goes: ‘What are they trying to cover with that outcry?’ But the other part of me says: ‘I don’t think they’re smart enough for that.’” She may not be tired, but she’s at the limit of her patience: this campaign started pre-pandemic. “We all fought so hard for that half-term meal provision this time last year. And then we had to get up and fight again for it in April, and again in the summer. Do we have to do this every time? Can we not just feed the children? Why do we keep on having to come back and beg for it?”

Monroe supplies the answer herself: that the people making these decisions are stratospherically distant from the people having to live them. “They don’t walk among us, they don’t know our stories, and they don’t ask for them. As soon as we start to speak up, they go ‘urgh, angry mob’.” She illustrates this with a story that is quite painful to hear, so God knows what it is like to have lived it. In 2011, she was a single mother to a one-year-old son, on benefits, teaching herself to cook and writing a blog that soon developed to include recipes for people relying on food banks or very small budgets. She did one interview with the Daily Star because they offered her £200 (“They were looking for someone who was about to have a really shit Christmas, and my friend said: ‘That sounds like you’”); from there she got a column in the Echo, an Essex local paper; later she worked for Huffington Post and had a regular recipe column in the Guardian. By 2013 she was doing ambassadorial work with Oxfam about the devastating effects of austerity.

“I’ll still never forget one parliamentary committee meeting. I’d been asked to talk about my experiences as a single mum in poverty. I was sitting directly behind Iain Duncan Smith. And I stood up, and I was shaking, and I’d put a nice blouse on to make them take me seriously. While I was speaking, I cried, I was so ashamed and embarrassed to be in this fancy building talking about using socks as sanitary towels. When I went back to my seat, I was shaking and still crying. Iain Duncan Smith said something to the person next to him, and they both laughed so hard. His shoulders were shaking with laughter. I had to leave, I felt humiliated. None of this is even new. The architects of these cruel policies have proven time and again to be immune to the everyday suffering of people they consider to be at the bottom of the pile.”

It is not at all easy to be the voice of anti-austerity through lived experience: for some people, you are never poor enough, or you were never poor for long enough. Monroe is heavily surveilled by the tabloid press, and constantly battered on social media. She won a court case against Katie Hopkins, [who had libelled her on Twitter](#), having got her mixed up with the journalist Laurie Penny, but such intoxicating moments are diluted by a large number of keyboard warriors just being jerks. She finds it particularly hard since she has ADHD, “part of which is something called rejection sensitive dysphoria, which means that you take criticism very, very badly”.

As a child, she was also diagnosed as being on the autistic spectrum, which she says makes her very straight-talking. “A friend said: ‘The problem is, you’re so honest that people assume you’re being dishonest, almost.’” This leaves her very exposed, and she worries constantly about making a mistake, even a trivial one. “I now live my life through a filter that whatever comes out of my mouth, a thousand people on the internet are going to put the worst possible spin on it and throw it back at me.”

She carries on because she is passionate about [hunger during childhood and its awful impacts](#) – it limits kids’ ability to learn, interferes with their brain development, their ability to retain information, has a permanent effect on neural pathways and hormonal response. She saw all this first-hand as a child, when her parents – her mother was a nurse, her father a firefighter, “We lived in a house, it had a roof, I went to grammar school” – took in foster children. “We looked after a child who, in the middle of the night, would sneak down to the kitchen and basically eat food from the freezer. Everyone was well fed but they were so food insecure that they would be up in the middle of the night stuffing frozen chips in their mouths. I met children who were so feral and afraid, and I saw with my own eyes that with three meals on the table and a lot of love, their shoulders went down a bit, their jaws unclenched, they stopped looking round at where the next threat was coming from. Children who have grown into beautiful adults because they were loved and fed.” Her evolution as a campaigner she describes as the inevitable legacy of a happy upbringing. “It’s just the way I was raised – if there’s space at the table, shove up and make room. If you’ve got spare in your fridge, share it.”

Yet, having known the fear of scarcity herself, Monroe still carries a huge weight of anxiety. She resigned from the fire brigade under a huge amount of stress, finding it impossible to balance childcare with her 15-hour shifts as a

call handler, then tried to rescind her resignation the next morning, only to find her manager wouldn't take her back. This set off a cascade into deep poverty, as casual jobs were scarce and both benefits and services pared back. On benefits, she was barely able to eat, and when in 2013 she got her first major paid writing gig – a book contract with Penguin for *A Girl Called Jack: 100 Delicious Budget Recipes* – it was enough to banjax her housing benefit but not enough to pay the rent, and she got evicted.

‘I’m trying to keep really busy, so when those feelings start to creep in, I’m, like: not now, demons.’ Photograph: Sonja Horsman/The Observer

She still can’t open an envelope if it looks like a bill, and takes me on a Zoom tour of a room where she keeps her post: six years’ worth of unopened brown envelopes, pristine and neatly stacked. She can’t open the front door to strangers, since “a long period in my life where the only people who knocked on the door were bailiffs or debt collectors”; still has a panic response when she puts her pin in a card machine in case it gets rejected. “I’m on the highest possible dose of antidepressants, anti-anxiety medication. I used to drink

myself into a stupor so these thoughts would go away. I'm still in therapy. I've had several breakdowns ... For people who think I wasn't poor enough to warrant this suffering, I think: 'How dare you. How dare you take the few facts you know about my life and try to count my suffering brownie points and tell me when I should get over it?'"

It would go completely against her nature to walk away from the issue of food poverty, but weeks like this one take a toll. "I'm trying to keep really busy, so when those feelings start to creep in, I'm like, 'Not now, demons, I've got to go on LBC and then write something for Vogue.'"

In 2015, Monroe came out as non-binary, having previously identified as a cisgender lesbian; she's happy with either "she" or "they" as a pronoun, but is keen for me to stress that I asked, because she has passionate supporters on social media – 375,000 of them, at the last count – who would be vexed if they thought she had been misgendered. "I want to tell them: 'Jack doesn't give a shit,'" she says, laughing. "We're talking about child hunger, here."

Her plan now is to jettison every interview, every engagement, that doesn't move things closer to eradicating poverty, and she's writing two books at once, one – her seventh – about cooking on a budget, "like a modern day Mrs Beeton, without the parakeet pie", the other about the impact on women of austerity. Jack Monroe is only 32; she has lived her adult life at the sharpest end of Conservative policies. She is the living embodiment of the suffering that fiscal tightening causes, and also the most admirable person you will ever meet. She reminds me of Jack-a-Roe, the folksong heroine – swashbuckling, brave, sensitive, intelligent, kind. Life's tough but she's tougher. No government can kill the spirit, but it's chastening to think how hard they try.

The books she's working on, she says, represent her strategy, which is split in two. "It's helping people who are absolutely on their knees right now, trying to signpost them, answer their questions, give some practical help, just for things to be a little less awful. And then there's: 'Hey you, people who are causing this. Sort your shit out.'" On the second, she feels that this week has galvanised the anti-poverty movement. "I think if the government really do try to implement austerity 2.0, the roar against it will be deafening. People are tired, and they're hungry, and they've had enough."

Self-deprecating to a completely unwarranted degree, Monroe follows every crescendo with the reminder, in some elegant variation, that she's not speaking

for – still less over – the millions of people who are struggling. “I’m letting their voices funnel through my great flapping mouth … I have a platform, so I’m asked again and again to advocate for people who are still in poverty, but I’m just trying to gather their stories.” She doesn’t see herself as the leader of any movement, for all that she might look like it. “It all sounds a lot more organised than it is. Basically I just wake up, look at the news, and get angry. I make it sound like I’ve got a whiteboard somewhere. There is no whiteboard. Not all of us will do everything that’s needed, all the time. It doesn’t matter so long as everyone does something.”

We end the conversation with me chasing her off the line, because I know she has more interviews to do, and seven minutes for a day’s worth of basic self-care, such as having a glass of water. She doesn’t really look after herself, which makes you feel quite protective; but it’s her worldview, as much as her person, you want to protect.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/16/jack-monroe-on-food-poverty-and-fury-i-just-wake-up-look-at-the-news-and-get-angry>.

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Biden inauguration

Biden must find words for a wounded nation in inauguration like no other

National guard soldiers stand guard on the grounds around the US Capitol building in Washington DC ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration as the nation's 46th president. Photograph: Justin Lane/EPA

National guard soldiers stand guard on the grounds around the US Capitol building in Washington DC ahead of Joe Biden's inauguration as the nation's 46th president. Photograph: Justin Lane/EPA

Planners have been forced to be inventive after the deadly pandemic and now last week's Capitol insurrection dictated a pared-down event amid real fears of assassination



*[David Smith](#) in Washington
[@smithinamerica](#)*

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

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With nearly half a century in Washington behind him, [Joe Biden](#) has waited a long time for this moment. But when he places his hand on a Bible, repeats a 35-word oath and is sworn in as the 46th US president at noon on Wednesday, the backdrop will be nothing like he ever imagined.

[Joe Biden poised to inherit Disunited States of America](#)
[Read more](#)

Biden's inauguration on the steps of the US Capitol will be among the strangest in American history because of the one-two punch of a coronavirus pandemic sweeping the nation and heightened security following [deadly mob violence](#) at the Capitol itself.

In this daunting situation he will try to find the words to begin healing a bitterly polarised nation. But quite possibly nothing Biden says will be as important as the symbolism of Vice-President Mike Pence and former presidents Bill Clinton, George W Bush and Barack Obama gathering to witness a peaceful transfer of power.

Many hope that the bipartisan tableau will herald a return to political norms and a turning of the page after four years of turmoil under Trump, who has announced that he will be the first president in 150 years to boycott the ceremonial handover to his successor.

“The most important person there is going to be Vice-President Pence,” said Elaine Kamarck, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution thinktank in Washington. “Between Pence and Bush, that’s a powerful message to at least a portion of the public that not all of the Republican party is the Trump party.”

The pandemic had already guaranteed that this would be a pared-down inauguration, with organisers urging the public to stay away and watch on TV, a far cry from Obama’s star-studded first inauguration when more than a million people filled the national mall. About 2,000 people are expected to attend while wearing masks and physically distancing.

Then came last week’s pro-Trump insurrection in which rioters swarmed the west front of the Capitol, even climbing the scaffolding and bleachers built for the inauguration. Fears of another assault mean that Biden will now become the world’s most powerful man in surroundings that more resemble Baghdad’s green zone than an open city of boulevards and monuments.



A member of the national guard provides security at the US Capitol.
Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

The Secret Service is leading what it calls a “zero fail mission”. Barricades, checkpoints and a 7ft (two-metre) high fence have been erected around the Capitol with [national guard troops stationed](#) at the perimeter. Some 20,000 such troops will be deployed and half of those will be in the city by Saturday in case protests erupt this weekend.

Streets near the Capitol have been closed, the National Park Service has closed the Washington Monument to tours and the home-sharing company Airbnb said it was [cancelling all reservations](#) in the Washington area to discourage demonstrators from staying in the city.

On Wednesday, as he was being impeached for inciting the mob attack, Trump [released a video message](#) urging calm. “I unequivocally condemn the violence that we saw last week,” he said. “Violence and vandalism have absolutely no

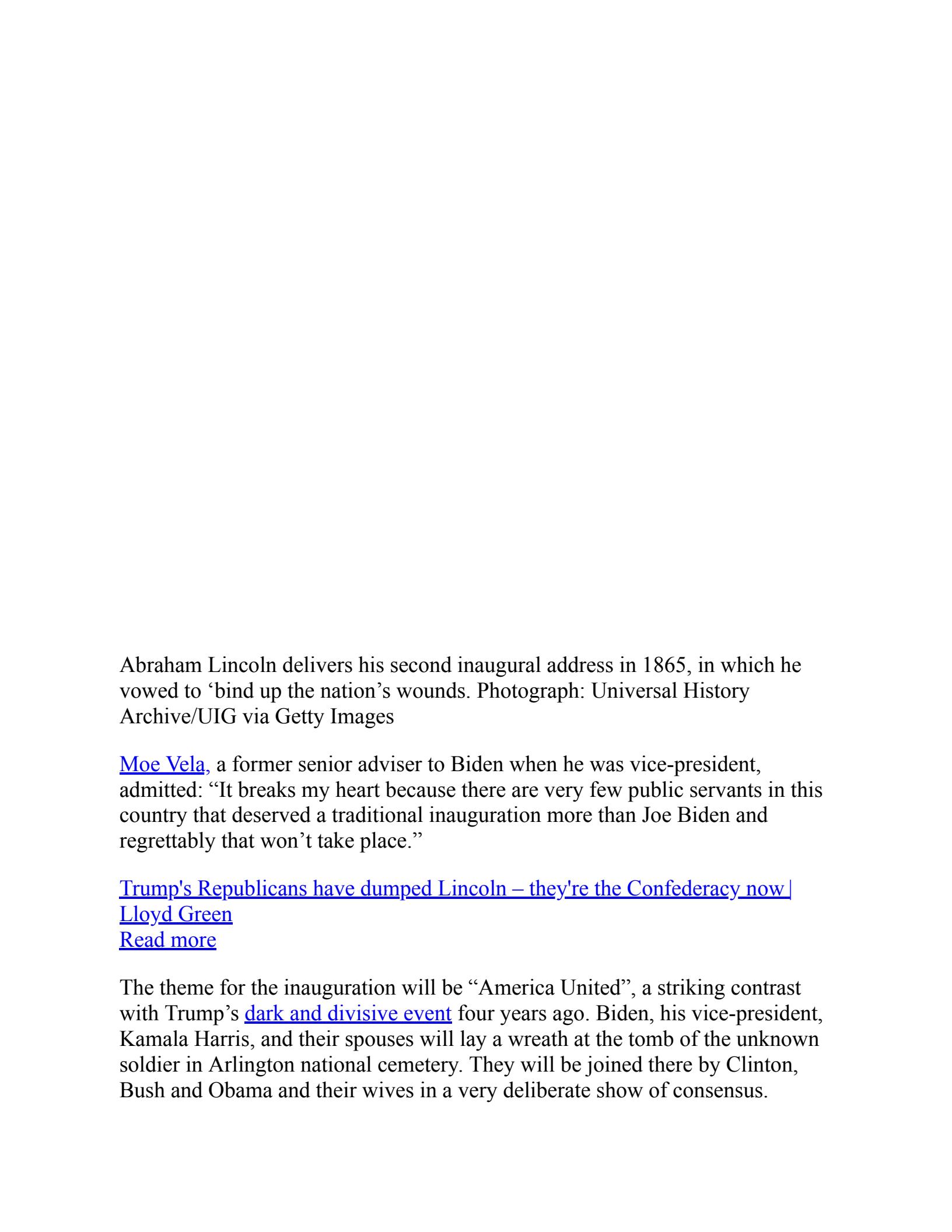
place in our country and no place in our movement. There must be no violence, no lawbreaking and no vandalism of any kind.”

But ominous messages have appeared in far-right chat rooms and forums about potential trouble. The website of Patriot Action for America, which was recently taken down, called for supporters to encircle the White House, Congress and supreme court days before “to, at all costs, prevent Joseph Biden, or any other democrat from being inaugurated”.

The capital is on edge. [Larry Sabato](#), director of the Center for Politics at the University of Virginia, who has attended every inauguration since 1976, said: “We’ve had some strange ones over a couple of hundred years but nothing like this and what’s really sad is people are nervous.

“I would say a fair number of people are hoping they move it inside. You can’t put anything past these people and they clearly have been talking assassination – there’s no other way to put it. These people are crazy and they’ve been legitimised by Trump.”

Biden, who at 78 will be the oldest person ever sworn in as US president, said last Monday: “I am not afraid to take the oath outside.” But security precautions did [force him to cancel plans](#) to make a 90-minute journey from his home in Wilmington, Delaware, to Washington by train, emulating his daily commute during his 36 years as a senator.



Abraham Lincoln delivers his second inaugural address in 1865, in which he vowed to ‘bind up the nation’s wounds. Photograph: Universal History Archive/UIG via Getty Images

[Moe Vela](#), a former senior adviser to Biden when he was vice-president, admitted: “It breaks my heart because there are very few public servants in this country that deserved a traditional inauguration more than Joe Biden and regrettably that won’t take place.”

[Trump's Republicans have dumped Lincoln – they're the Confederacy now | Lloyd Green](#)
[Read more](#)

The theme for the inauguration will be “America United”, a striking contrast with Trump’s [dark and divisive event](#) four years ago. Biden, his vice-president, Kamala Harris, and their spouses will lay a wreath at the tomb of the unknown soldier in Arlington national cemetery. They will be joined there by Clinton, Bush and Obama and their wives in a very deliberate show of consensus.

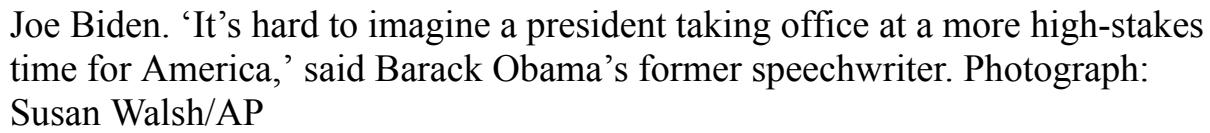
The organising committee has also announced plans for a major public art display spanning multiple blocks of the National Mall that will feature 191,500 US flags and 56 pillars of light to represent every state and territory and “the American people who are unable to travel” to the Capitol.

Traditions such as the inaugural parade and inaugural balls will switch to a virtual format and actor Tom Hanks will [host a 90-minute TV primetime special](#) entitled Celebrating America and featuring various celebrities.

Lara Brown, director of the graduate school of political management at George Washington University in Washington, told a [Foreign Press Centers](#) briefing: “I would not be surprised at all if they actually set up, say in the East Room of the White House, a space where you could see President Biden and First Lady Dr Jill Biden doing a dance in the ballroom. In other words, they would film it as a virtual event.”

But the relative lack of pomp, pageantry and other distractions means that even more than usual will be riding on the inaugural address. Past presidents such as Abraham Lincoln (“bind up the nation’s wounds”), [Franklin Roosevelt](#) (“the only thing we have to fear is fear itself”) and John F Kennedy (“ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country”) have risen to the occasion.

[David Litt](#), a former speechwriter for Obama, said: “If you think about the number of crises that Joe Biden is taking office during, it’s pretty staggering. I have no idea if we will look back on this as a matter of rhetoric and say this was comparable to Lincoln’s second inaugural or FDR’s first, because those are very high bars, but it’s hard to imagine a president taking office at a more high-stakes time for America.”



Joe Biden. ‘It’s hard to imagine a president taking office at a more high-stakes time for America,’ said Barack Obama’s former speechwriter. Photograph: Susan Walsh/AP

Biden’s speeches last year at the Democratic national convention and after [his election victory](#) were well received. He is again likely to emphasise themes of redeeming the soul of America, rebuilding trust in institutions and governing for all citizens, not just those who voted for him.

Aaron Kall, director of debate at the University of Michigan and editor of *I Do Solemnly Swear: Presidential Inaugural Addresses of the Last Fifty Years*, said: “He’s got his own speechwriter and will likely have help from people in his administration, even maybe people outside like [\[historian\] Jon Meacham](#) and others that are really good wordsmiths.

“They likely have gone back to the drawing board. Normally, these drafts are done around the holidays before Christmas but, given everything in the last week or two, it’s almost like starting over.”

But Kamarck, who as a Clinton administration official was on the podium for his second inauguration in 1997, will not be awarding marks for poetry, zingers or soaring rhetoric at this swearing-in like no other.

“With the country at the breaking point on a variety of levels, we need just competence,” she said. “I don’t care whether he’s inspiring or not and I don’t think anybody else does. After the last four years of utter bullshit from Trump, simply straight-on pragmatism is exactly what the moment calls for and I think that’s what he will do. And frankly, that will be inspiring.”

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Biden inauguration

Joe Biden's inauguration: when is it and what can we expect?

Following the US Capitol attack, and also due to the pandemic, Biden and Harris will be sworn in at a scaled-down event

Joe Biden will officially become US president at noon on 20 January.

Photograph: Al Drago/Getty Images

Joe Biden will officially become US president at noon on 20 January.

Photograph: Al Drago/Getty Images

[Kenya Evelyn](#) in Washington

[@LiveFromKenya](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.30 EST

In the aftermath of a [deadly insurrection](#) at the US Capitol that brought about the second impeachment of Donald Trump, the US is set to usher in [Joe Biden's presidency](#) on inauguration day, 20 January.

According to the Presidential Inaugural Committee, this year's theme centers on "America United".

[Lady Gaga and Jennifer Lopez to perform at Biden inauguration](#)
[Read more](#)

"We have witnessed countless heroes this past year step up to the front lines and serve their fellow Americans, so we are telling their stories, spreading their collective light and celebrating the best of our country and its people with this prime-time program," Tony Allen, committee CEO, said in a statement on Thursday, of the planned inaugural events.

The celebrations had already pivoted to be mostly viewed online due to concerns from the coronavirus pandemic, with public health officials requiring masks, temperature checks and social distancing for anyone participating.

The presidential inauguration committee has planned a nationwide Covid memorial the day before, with planners urging cities and towns to light up their buildings and ring church bells on 19 January in a "national moment of unity and remembrance" in respect of the more than 385,000 US deaths resulting from the virus.

Multiple federal and local law enforcement agencies have effectively shut down any semblance of normal life in downtown Washington DC in response to last week's attack. Local officials are urging would-be attendees not to make the trip at all.



Biden-Harris inauguration merchandise is displayed in Washington DC.
Photograph: Stefani Reynolds/Getty Images

With nearly every traditional highlight of inauguration day affected, eager spectators are left to wonder: what will a scaled-down event look like?

The planning committee officially unveiled the lineup late on Tuesday. Here is what to expect.

What is inauguration day exactly?

Even though he won the November presidential election, Biden did not officially become president that day. Instead, the 20th amendment of the US constitution mandates that the terms of the sitting president and vice-president – in this case Donald Trump and Mike Pence, respectively, end at noon on the 20th day of January.

Back in the day, the new president was inaugurated every 4 March. The span between the election and inauguration was shortened to two months with the ratification of the amendment in 1933.

The gap is designed to allow the incumbent president, who is limited to a maximum of two terms, to complete remaining administrative tasks and coordinate a transition of key national security and executive branch information to the incoming administration.

When, where and what time is it?

All presidents-elect must first take an inaugural oath before officially becoming president. In keeping with this tradition, Biden will assume the presidency in a scaled-down ceremony on the US Capitol grounds beginning at 11am ET (4pm GMT).

The inaugural parade is scheduled soon after at 2pm ET (7pm GMT). However, Washington DC and its surrounding metropolitan area remain on high alert as the FBI [confirmed lingering threats](#) of attacks against federal institutions throughout the country.



Workers install razor wire atop fencing outside the US Capitol ahead of Biden's inauguration. Photograph: Michael Reynolds/EPA

Washington DC's mayor, Muriel Bowser, has issued a public emergency declaration until 21 January that allows officials to order businesses and residents indoors, telling reporters: "Trump continues to fan rage and violence by contending that the presidential election was invalid."

The National Mall, where cheering crowds normally stretch from the Capitol towards the Lincoln Memorial to watch the inauguration ceremony, as well as dozens of streets, monuments and federal facilities, will remain closed to the public until well after the event.

Grandstands meant for public audiences have since been taken down in the aftermath of last week's attack.

Airbnb has heeded the calls of local officials not to travel to the city by cancelling all reservations in the metropolitan area – including communities in

surrounding Maryland and Virginia.

As many as 15,000 [national guard troops](#) have descended on the capital for added reinforcements.

So who's showing up?

Not the incumbent president. Breaking a longstanding tradition, Trump confirmed in a 8 January tweet that he will not be attending the inauguration of his successor. That would make him the first president in more than 150 years, and just the fourth in American history.

But he won't be the only former president to miss out. Jimmy Carter and his wife, Rosalynn Carter, announced early in the year that they would not be making the trip. It marks the first time the couple, aged 96 and 93, respectively, will have missed the ceremonies since Carter himself was sworn in as the 39th president in 1977.

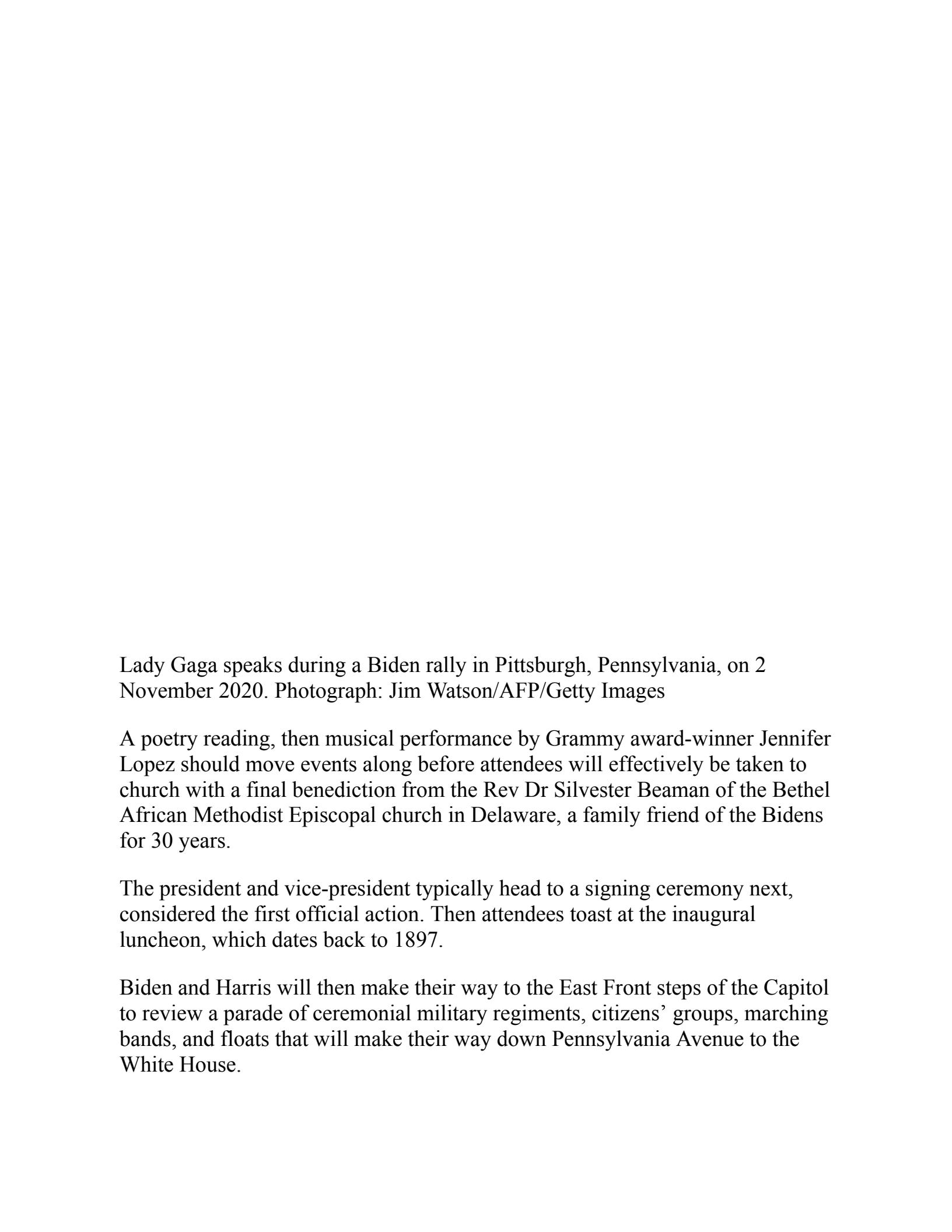
In keeping with tradition, the former presidents Barack Obama and George W Bush will be in attendance accompanied by the former first ladies Michelle Obama and Laura Bush.

Pence has pledged to attend in the spirit of unity, in direct defiance of Trump. The outgoing vice-president narrowly escaped the insurrection in which invaders chanted to hang him for failing to acquiesce to Trump's futile request for him to engineer the overturning of the election result.

What else can we expect this year?

An official inauguration traditionally begins with the president's processional from the White House to the US Capitol. Harris will take her inaugural oath first, officially becoming the nation's first female, Black and Indian American vice-president.

For Biden's swearing in, an invocation will be followed by the pledge of allegiance on the West Front of the Capitol, then the American pop star Lady Gaga is set to perform the national anthem.



Lady Gaga speaks during a Biden rally in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on 2 November 2020. Photograph: Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

A poetry reading, then musical performance by Grammy award-winner Jennifer Lopez should move events along before attendees will effectively be taken to church with a final benediction from the Rev Dr Silvester Beaman of the Bethel African Methodist Episcopal church in Delaware, a family friend of the Bidens for 30 years.

The president and vice-president typically head to a signing ceremony next, considered the first official action. Then attendees toast at the inaugural luncheon, which dates back to 1897.

Biden and Harris will then make their way to the East Front steps of the Capitol to review a parade of ceremonial military regiments, citizens' groups, marching bands, and floats that will make their way down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House.

The actor Tom Hanks and the musician Jon Bon Jovi join the pop stars Demi Lovato and Justin Timberlake to ring Biden's presidency in during a "virtual ball" streamed online later that night. The 90-minute special airs live at 8.30pm ET (1.30am GMT) on US network and cable channels.

The committee will also livestream the event on their social media channels, with streaming providers including Amazon Prime Video, Microsoft Bing, NewsNow from Fox, and AT&T's DirecTV and U-verse joining in.

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Donald Trump

Donald Trump isolated and enraged ahead of Biden inauguration

Donald Trump visits the US-Mexico border wall, in Alamo, Texas. Photograph: Carlos Barria/Reuters

Donald Trump visits the US-Mexico border wall, in Alamo, Texas. Photograph: Carlos Barria/Reuters

A slew of aides have deserted the president and the Pentagon has decided not to hold an armed forces farewell tribute



[Adam Gabbatt](#) in New York

[@adamgabbatt](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

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It was once easy to determine Donald Trump’s mood. All it took was a look at his Twitter account. But with that gone, it has never been so difficult to gain a glimpse into the president’s mindset.

Where frequently a series of all-caps tweets might have suggested an emotional, frustrated Trump, there is silence.

Where posts screeching at fellow Republicans would have indicated a more vindictive bent, or messages with exclamation points a triumphant mood, all that is left of Trump’s Twitter account – which once had 88.7m followers – is [a curt message from Twitter’s admin team](#): “Account suspended. Twitter suspends accounts which violate the Twitter Rules.”

So how has Trump reacted to the events of the past few weeks? By the accounts available, not well. A notoriously excitable president has remained in a state of high alarm.

Mike Pence, Trump's fanatically loyal vice-president, appears to have borne much of Trump's fury. Trump had been badgering Pence to refuse to certify Biden as president – something which is almost certainly illegal.

Pence, having stood by Trump as the president bragged about sexually assaulting women, defended white supremacists, paid off women who said they had had affairs with him, strong-armed a foreign government to interfere with the presidential election and had hundreds of children locked in cages at the US-Mexico border as a result of his hardline immigration policies, defied Trump at the last.

‘Mike Pence, Trump’s fanatically loyal vice-president, appears to have borne much of Trump’s fury.’ Photograph: Michael Reynolds/EPA

Pence's break with Trump has been wildly overplayed – all the vice-president did was not break the law – but to Trump, disloyalty is disloyalty. After Pence told Trump [he would not interfere](#) with the electoral vote count, [the New York Times reported](#) that Trump responded in coarse terms.

“You can either go down in history as a patriot,” Trump is said to have told Pence on Wednesday morning 6 January – before the president, according to the House article of [impeachment](#), incited an [insurrection at the Capitol](#).

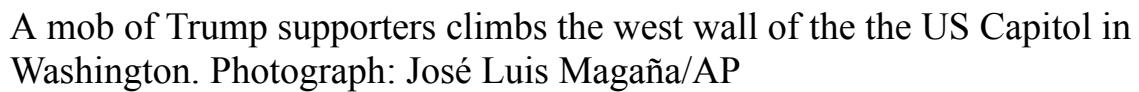
“Or you can go down in history as a pussy.”

As hundreds of Trump supporters broke into the Capitol, some [demanding that Pence be hanged](#) – Trump did not phone his vice-president. In fact, the pair didn't speak for five days, according to the Times, before meeting in the Oval Office on Monday night.

That meeting, aides told the Times, was “non-substantive” and “stilted”.

As Pence was holed up in a secure location in the Capitol on Wednesday, Trump was angry and isolated, [the Wall Street Journal reported](#), citing White House advisers.

At the rally near the White House before the mob attacked Congress, Trump said he would march to the Capitol with them. They set off down Pennsylvania Avenue but he took his motorcade home instead.



A mob of Trump supporters climbs the west wall of the US Capitol in Washington. Photograph: José Luis Magaña/AP

During Trump's previous self-inflicted controversies, he has spent hours on the phone to friends and advisers, but that wasn't the case in the aftermath of the riot.

The Journal reported that Trump ignored phone calls from the former New Jersey governor Chris Christie, an on-again-off-again confidante, and was "in a dark place".

"It's like watching someone self-destruct in front of your very eyes, and you can't do anything," an adviser told the Journal.

Trump has even shunned Rudy Giuliani, the former New York City mayor who led the doomed effort to overturn the results of the election. The president told aides not to pay Giuliani's legal fees, according to reports, and expressed dissatisfaction with Giuliani's energetic, but futile campaign.

In the days after the Capitol attack, [the Washington Post](#) quoted an anonymous senior administration official, who noted: “The president is pretty wound up,” but said Trump was focused more on his life after leaving office – Trump is said to be particularly concerned about the [cancelation of a prestigious golf tournament](#) at one of his courses, and [Deutsche Bank saying](#) it would not finance any of Trump’s future developments.

All this without word from the president on the soaring [coronavirus infections and deaths](#) in the US that are now the highest they have been for the entire pandemic, and are by far the highest in the world, combined with a vaccine administration program that is way behind the government’s own goals.

[US suffers bleak January as Covid rages and vaccination campaign falters](#)
[Read more](#)

Trump is not conducting interviews and aides have been largely absent from the airwaves. The press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, gave a two-minute press briefing a day after the Capitol riots, but scampered away after [reading from a prepared script](#), refusing to answer questions.

Trump has issued a couple of boiler plate written statements through [the White House press office](#), and made some remarks on Tuesday as he prepared to travel to Texas to examine a bit of his border barrier.

“As far as this is concerned,” Trump [said](#), apparently referring to Biden’s inauguration: “We want no violence. Never violence. We want absolutely no violence.” He added, however, that the then-impending impeachment was “causing tremendous anger”, and the subsequent [Senate trial](#) was “causing tremendous danger to our country”.



The West Wing of the White House press area. The press office is reportedly ‘virtually empty’. Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

Late this week, as Joe Biden prepared to assume the presidency, Trump was still raging, [according to CNN](#). A casual discussion about Trump potentially resigning resulted in “an expletive-laden conversation”, CNN reported, while Trump has been in a state of “sullen desolation”.

The president has at least finally accepted that his term is about to end. Trump has begun thinking about how he will leave Washington, and is keen on “a military-style sendoff and a crowd of supporters”, CNN said, either at the White House or at the Mar-a-Lago compound that is [set to become his home](#).

In a blow to Trump’s aspirations, the Pentagon is set to break with tradition and not hold an armed forces farewell tribute to the president.

As a slew of Trump’s aides have deserted him, CNN reported that the White House press office is “virtually empty”. Even the pool of sources who once

leaked to the press almost daily has nearly disappeared, making it harder to discern the president's state of mind.

Trump, known for turning his back on [those who displease him](#), leaves office having discovered that his confidantes, advisers and friends are now doing the same.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/16/donald-trump-biden-inauguration-isolated-enraged>

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Blind dateRelationships

Blind date: ‘I asked if he would sing to me. He refused’

Hannah, 22, marketing executive, and Morgan, 22, customer service representative

Hannah and Morgan: ‘We promised not to score but I’m gonna say 10.’

Photograph: Courtesy Hannah and Morgan

Hannah and Morgan: ‘We promised not to score but I’m gonna say 10.’

Photograph: Courtesy Hannah and Morgan

Sat 16 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Hannah on Morgan

What were you hoping for?

I run planet-friendly singles events in my spare time, setting other people up. I thought it was probably time to go on a date myself.

First impressions?

Friendly, sociable, great smile.

What did you talk about?

Cats, utilities (including water piping and electricity meters), plants, music, politics and sustainability.

Any awkward moments?

Takeaways don't deliver where I am, so I had to watch him eat. He did let me pick what he ate, though.

Good table manners?

I was trying not to focus on how he was eating, to avoid making the me-not-eating thing too awkward.

How long did you stay on the call?

Four and a half hours.

Best thing about Morgan?

He was interested and interesting, super polite and (quite) charming.

Would you introduce him to your friends?

He'd definitely be a fun addition and could (probably) hold his own.

Describe Morgan in three words

Smart, cool, cat-obsessed.

What do you think he made of you?

He probably thought I was a little intense. I did ask him if he would sing to me at one point, and he refused. Fair play – I wouldn't have done it, either.

Any connection issues?

I faked connection issues when it became clear he was a cat person. I'm more of a dog person myself.

And... did you swap numbers?

Apparently he doesn't use WhatsApp (suspicious get-out strategy or genuine – who knows?). I did get some social media handles, though.

How did the call end?

We decided four and a half hours was definitely enough video call bonding for one evening.

If you could change one thing about the evening, what would it be?

A tiny bit of singing from Morgan would have been the cherry on the cake.

Marks out of 10?

It was a really lovely date. I don't want to rank because he doesn't deserve less than a 10.

Would you meet again in person?

Sure, I'm in. He did mention a high-speed train up to London.

► Q&A

Want to be in Blind date?

Show

Morgan on Hannah

What were you hoping for?

I've been single for around four months and I'm really enjoying it, so I wasn't too worried about finding a relationship. I was excited to just enjoy the evening and see what happened.

First impressions?

Very bubbly with really pretty hair.

What did you talk about?

Politics, hobbies, our dreams for the future, the environment, where we've lived.

Any awkward moments?

It was a very smooth-flowing date from start to finish.

Good table manners?

When my takeaway finally arrived, I was four beers down, so I don't think my manners were what they usually are. I had to have my earphones in, so the mic was quite close to my mouth, which couldn't have been pleasant while I was eating.

Blind date: 'First impressions? Wow!'

Read more

How long did you stay on the call?

Four and a half hours, but the time flew by.

Best thing about Hannah?

I loved her enthusiasm for what she does and I really felt that she was interested in what I was saying.

Would you introduce her to your friends?

Yes, I would.

Describe Hannah in three words

Funny, engaging, bubbly.

What do you think she made of you?

I feel like she enjoyed my company. We had a lot of common interests.

Any connection issues?

It froze a couple of times.

And... did you swap numbers?

We didn't, but we took each other's Instagram.

How did the call end?

We thanked each other for a lovely date.

If you could change one thing about the evening, what would it be?

I'd like it to have been in person. Being flirty and having good eye contact is important in a date for me and it was hard to do that online.

Marks out of 10?

We promised not to score but I'm gonna say 10.

Would you meet again in person?

Yes – she seems a really great person.

- Fancy a blind date? Email blind.date@theguardian.com.

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[Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall](#)

'Technophobe' Camilla clicks with Zoom and finds favour under Covid

From reading poetry to Strictly to Woman's Hour, the Duchess of Cornwall is tapping into wider audiences online

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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The Duchess of Cornwall's Reading Room – 'an online resource for literature lovers'. Photograph: Jennifer Pattison for the Duchess of Cornwall's Reading Room/PA

The Duchess of Cornwall's Reading Room – 'an online resource for literature lovers'. Photograph: Jennifer Pattison for the Duchess of Cornwall's Reading

Room/PA

Caroline Davies

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

From her [Reading Room book club](#) to her Strictly Come Dancing cameo, the profile of the [Duchess of Cornwall](#) has never been higher.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Camilla, 73, [has guest-edited BBC 5 live's Emma Barnett Show](#), filmed a [SafeLives video](#) on domestic violence, shared chocolate cake recipes on the Big Virtual Lunch, and [coerced her rescue jack russell, Beth](#), into unveiling a Battersea Dogs & Cats Home plaque by pulling a sausage tied to the cord.

We've seen her dressed down in jeans, and up close and personal with her dog on her lap at home. We've heard her reciting WH Auden on National Poetry Day, and the role of Ship's Captain in a celebrity-studded audio of Roald Dahl's James and the Giant Peach.

"Both Charles and Camilla have been troupers throughout 2020, given the pandemic, and their ages. But in terms of Camilla, she has been more visible and more audible than she has ever been before. This is Camilla on a more personal level," said Joe Little, managing editor of [Majesty Magazine](#).



The Duchess of Cornwall and the author and illustrator Charlie Mackesy on a Zoom call for the Reading Room project. Photograph: Clarence House/PA

Which will be music to the ears of Clarence House aides charged with smoothing the duchess's path to the consort's throne, a journey not without its obstacles. Though the duchess's standing has been transformed to that of one of the Queen's favourites, the Netflix hit *The Crown* recently swung the spotlight back on to Charles's marriage to Diana, serving as a reminder of Camilla's unpopularity in that period as vilified mistress.

Not that her current high profile is part of a palace ploy to promote "Queen Camilla", or "Princess Consort", or whichever title is eventually bestowed. Far from it, sources insist, though her recent successes are likely to make that task easier.

Camilla is not the product of a series of palace advisers. She chooses the things she wants to do, and then aides help to deliver them, said those close to her team. She has never wanted a big PR campaign to promote her, sources said.

What she wanted was to meet people, let them see what she is like, and then make their own minds up.

Zoom and other video conferencing platforms have given her that opportunity to get up close and personal to people, sources said. And she has embraced it – despite previously being a self-confessed technophobe.

Camilla, Duchess of Cornwall, participates in a Zoom call with members of the Pepper Pot Centre, a charity set up to support African and Caribbean older people in London. Photograph: Reuters

She is someone who, while very aware of the need for duty and service, doesn't take the view you can only do that with a straight face, said one who knows her. A laugh, a joke, and a little bit of self-deprecation – one of her most popular approaches – go a long way.

['Reach in' to help victims of domestic violence, urges Duchess of Cornwall](#)
[Read more](#)

“The benefit of all this is people have got to know her, and appreciate her qualities, far more than ever before, though she has been a member of the royal family now coming up for 16 years. She has that little twinkle in her eye, and is completely relatable,” said Little.

She also, it is said, regularly reminds those around her that she had 50 years living a normal life before entering the royal world, and that she knows the difference – but she also knows where the join is.

The royal author and Camilla biographer [Penny Junor](#) said: “The royal family have really come into their own during this pandemic. They are doing the sort of stuff they have been doing on a daily basis, but because they are doing it online, far more people can access it.”

In the real world, Camilla might do a couple of visits in a day, meeting a handful of people. Now we can all “hear her voice and see her charm”, said Junor.

“She’s her own PR. As soon as she was married to Charles, and people met her, they realised she was a warm, friendly, charming, funny, woman. And it then turned out she was rather good at the job, too. So there was no need for a great PR machine to ratchet up. She is her own ambassador.”

The Camilla of the online engagements might have come as a surprise to some of the wider public, said Junor. “To the public that know her, and that have had the opportunity to meet her, they won’t be surprised. But I think to a lot of people who don’t know her, who have never met her, who have nothing to do with the charities where she has been so effective … I think it will be a revelation to them.”

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Music streaming

'Spotify are selling adverts, not music': how to stream ethically

Major services pay musicians as little as £0.004 per stream, a rate it's impossible to live on. What other options are there?

Miri, one of the artists benefiting from the ethical Sonstream platform.
Miri, one of the artists benefiting from the ethical Sonstream platform.

Rhian Jones

@JonesJourno

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

In September, independent singer and songwriter Miri earned £44.30 in one week for 1,772 streams of her music on [Sonstream](#), a new streaming service

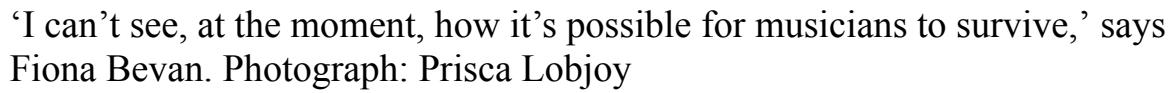
based in Stoke-on-Trent. “Although that doesn’t sound like a lot, for me, that’s money towards food and electricity,” she says. Her equivalent earnings on Spotify would have been less than £5.

“It was such a pleasant surprise and also highlighted to me that if streaming was fixed, then maybe I wouldn’t have had to go through emergency funding when the pandemic hit,” she adds.

Artist compensation was already volatile before Covid-19 made touring impossible, and while streaming is up 20% during the pandemic, that does not mean much for many artists.

In the payment structure used by the big streaming services, the money you spend on a subscription is not paid directly to the artists you are playing. Instead, the money forms a giant overall pool, and is paid out to artists in accordance with the number of streams they accrue, even if you personally never listen to them. You may hate Ed Sheeran’s music, but you are still paying him for it.

A recent poll by the Ivors Academy and Musicians’ Union found 82% of respondents earned less than £200 from streaming across the whole of 2019. The [parliamentary inquiry](#) into streaming prompted more shocking revelations: the Mercury prize nominee Nadine Shah said her streaming revenues do not cover her rent, and the songwriter Fiona Bevan said she earned just £100 from co-writing a song for Kylie Minogue’s No 1 album Disco. The committee subsequently [warned streaming companies not to interfere in its investigation](#) after witnesses expressed fear of reprisals from them.



‘I can’t see, at the moment, how it’s possible for musicians to survive,’ says Fiona Bevan. Photograph: Prisca Lobjoy

In the face of these intractable institutions, several streaming startups are offering more generous propositions than the current average per-stream rate across Spotify, Apple Music and Deezer [of around £0.004](#).

The pay-as-you-go platform Sonstream charges listeners around 3.3p per play of a track, with 2.5p going directly to the rights holder.

The Berlin-based co-operative [Resonate](#) is pioneering a “stream-to-own” model: it charges listeners for the first nine plays of one song, the cost amounting to the average price of a download. After that, users own the track and have unlimited plays.

[Audius](#) in San Francisco is developing a system that allows artists to set a per-stream rate or monthly subscription: 10% would go to the Audius network, and the rights holder would keep the rest.

Fans, as well as musicians, are keen to find an alternative to the current system: in a YouGov survey by the [#BrokenRecord campaign](#), 77% said artists were not paid enough from streaming. The overall potential market of consumers keen to back fairer business models is sizeable. According to Rob Harrison, director at research at the campaign organisation [Ethical Consumer](#), 70% of the population make ethical choices as long as it is not very expensive or inconvenient to do so.

The question is whether these new platforms can offer a financially viable alternative when the industry leader Spotify has famously never generated an annual net profit, despite [boasting 144m premium subscribers](#) as of September 2020, and generating total revenue of £1.76bn in the three months before. The loss comes down to company investment and royalty payouts; so how can significantly smaller platforms such as Sonstream, which has around 1,000 users, survive?

“The problem is that [Spotify](#) don’t treat music as its product – they are selling advertising, not music,” says Sonstream’s founder, Seb Clarke, who is running the platform on a £350,000 investment. “Because we don’t have any middlemen – labels, advertisers and marketing agencies – if we hit over 30k users, we actually start going into cash-in-the-bank status.”

Resonate has 1,500 members but can currently handle 2m monthly users, a figure it hopes to reach within two years, and Audius has raised nearly \$10m (£7.4m) of investment.

One obvious barrier to scale is the size of the catalogue. Spotify has 60m tracks; Resonate has 14,000, Audius 200,000 and Sonstream just over 1m. And none of the smaller platforms have licensing deals with the major labels – which can be prohibitively expensive for startups – meaning they are largely populated with independent music rather than the latest Taylor Swift album, for example.

This is not an issue Deezer faces – the service has around 56m tracks and licensing deals with all the majors. The company is trying to set up a “user-centric” payment system, whereby individual streaming subscriptions go to the bands and artists that each subscriber actually listens to, not the market share model. Yet even this relative behemoth cannot drum up the widespread support that it needs.

“We need all the labels on board,” says Alexander Holland, Deezer’s chief content and strategy officer. “Unfortunately it’s not possible with just a proportion. We continue to have conversations with the labels, but progress takes time.”

YouGov’s survey found 64% of respondents would support a user-centric model. However, it also showed that if it cost more, the results were split – 45% would still be willing, while 45% would not.

[Music streaming makes major labels rich, while musicians like me go broke](#)
[Nadine Shah](#)
[Read more](#)

It leaves consumers in a bind. Fans clearly want their favourites to thrive. But, as Clarke says, there is little incentive for major record labels – whose executives will face the select committee next week – to enact change when they jointly generated [more than £700,000 an hour from streaming in 2019](#). “Small artists are very attracted to what we’re doing but the major labels are quite happy with the current ecosystem,” he says.

Bevan says she gave evidence to the select committee to try to help the next generation of songwriters sustain a living. “I work with a lot of songwriters and when I go and give a lecture at a university, it’s really hard for me to say, ‘Yeah, you should be a songwriter, it’s a great career’ because I can’t see how, at the moment, it’s possible to survive on it.”

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Fit in my 40s**Health & wellbeing**

Fit in my 40s: will intermittent fasting boost my energy levels?

Feeling sluggish? It may be because you're always full

‘We’re just too full, too much of the time.’ Clothes: [My Gym Wardrobe](#). Hair and makeup: Sarah Cherry. Assistant: Harry Brayne. Burger image: Getty. Photograph: Kellie French/The Guardian

‘We’re just too full, too much of the time.’ Clothes: [My Gym Wardrobe](#). Hair and makeup: Sarah Cherry. Assistant: Harry Brayne. Burger image: Getty. Photograph: Kellie French/The Guardian



Zoe Williams

@zoesqwilliams

Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

In my youth, fasting was considered a fantastically bad for you fad. The cod-scientific wisdom was that all you'd do was lower your metabolism, so when you did start eating again, your weight would go roaring back up.

Since [the success of the 5:2 diet](#), in which you eat normally for five days, then restrict calories to 500-800 daily for two days, the thinking on weight loss has shifted. Fasting intermittently is incredibly effective when it comes to losing weight, and in fact giving your digestive system a break may do wonders for your health.

Forget weight loss, or what you look like, says Adam Collins, principal teaching fellow in nutrition at the University of Surrey: many of us are simply too full, too much of the time. “The reality is you’ve got a lot of clinically obese people who are metabolically healthy and a proportion of lean people

who are metabolically unhealthy,” he says. Metabolic ill-health is linked to cardiovascular disease, diabetes and all-round sluggishness, which deters physical activity, which intensifies the problem. “You can almost always root down to the fact that we’re replete and always have a layer of food for our guts to deal with. So your appetite suppression signals stop working,” Collins says. As the nutritionist Alice Mackintosh once told me, “There is basic housekeeping your gut has to do, which it can’t do when it’s full.”

[Prebiotics are hard to stomach, but will your gut thank you for trying? | Zoe Williams](#)
[Read more](#)

Probably the simplest change to make, Collins explains, is to lengthen your overnight fast, which is a fancy way of saying skip breakfast. “Even intermittent breakfast-skipping could have an impact,” he says. You don’t need to restrict your calories after that; just avoid bingeing. If you want to get experimental with the rest of your diet, you could try “[carb cycling](#)”, alternating between high- and low-carb periods. Collins follows a 4:3 diet, restricting calories to 800 daily for three days a week. You have to jettison the idea that you’re aiming to consume less food; it may be a side-effect, but it’s not the important thing.

It is not easy to stick to 500 calories, I found: eating even minuscule amounts of food makes you long for more. It was all fine until my daughter made me taste the boba (tapioca pearls) at the bottom of her bubble tea (this is an 11-year-old girl thing). They were disgusting, but I finished them, her dumplings and her sushi, then ordered it all again for me, like The Tiger Who Came To Tea.

What I can guarantee about intermittent fasting is that, when you do it right, you’ll feel it, immediately. On the days when I was fasting, I often had more energy and slept better. I wonder if there’s something about appetite, that if you thwart it for a day, it comes back as something stronger, like lust for life.

What I learned

This is not a recent discovery: there are studies going back decades, which found that energy-restricted mice live longer.

- People should consult their doctor before embarking on such a diet, particularly those with medical conditions, such as diabetes.
-

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[England in Sri Lanka 2020-21](#)

Sri Lanka v England: first Test, day three – as it happened

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[England in Sri Lanka 2020-21](#)

'I did a lot of talking': Joe Root puts words into deeds with Galle century

- England captain says ton a case of turning words into deeds
- 'It was really important to go out there and do it myself'

Joe Root drives through the off side on the second day of the first Test at Galle.
Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

Joe Root drives through the off side on the second day of the first Test at Galle.
Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

[Ali Martin](#)

[@Cricket_Ali](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.29 EST

Joe Root described his first Test century in 13 months as a case of turning words into deeds and revealed that self-defeating thoughts about his conversion rate were partly to blame for the three-figures drought.

Root had been stressing the need for his players to be ruthless with the bat at the start of a defining 12-month period but also knew the orders would struggle to cut through unless he himself could break a run of 15 innings without three figures on the board.

[Dan Lawrence settles into Test cricket with formidable familiarity | Andy Bull](#)
[Read more](#)

Speaking after the close on day two in Galle, [with an unbeaten 168 to his name](#), the newly-turned 30-year-old cut a relieved figure and now hopes his innings of immaculate footwork against Sri Lanka's spinners is the springboard for a golden run.

Root said: "I'm extremely pleased. I did a lot of talking ahead of this year and I thought it was really important to go out there and do it myself. It felt like a long time coming and I've got to build on this, really make it count.

"I felt I got in a really good mindset throughout this game so far. I'll try and take that forward into the rest of this winter tour and beyond.

"I think the previous couple of hundreds I have got, even though they're a while ago, have come at the end of a series. So to get one at the start of a very long winter is quite exciting and hopefully I can take that forward into the rest of the games."

This was Root's 18th century from 98 Test caps but with 49 fifties currently sitting alongside that number, the right-hander knows a player of his obvious calibre has left a good few more out in the middle.

Asked if this issue weighed on his mind as he approached the milestone, Root replied: "I tried to get away from it. For the last year, two years, I've over-thought it massively. I made too big a deal of it in my own mind. I hyped it up and it's been to my detriment.

"I've always been desperate to try and convert those fifties into big scores. But generally when I get to a hundred I make it really count."

As well as fulsome praise for [Dan Lawrence's 73 on debut](#) – “he showed exactly why he deserved his opportunity” – Root addressed the latest news of a Covid-19 outbreak after two members of staff at the team hotel tested positive for the virus.

The Spin: sign up and get our weekly cricket email.

Moeen Ali’s tour has already been wrecked by a mild case of the virus and the lengthy isolation that has followed. But despite the previous issues in South Africa before Christmas, where the bubble failed and England pulled out of the one-day series citing widespread anxiety, Root’s men appear to be at ease with their current situation.

The captain added: “Our Covid-19 compliance officer Phil Davies has done a brilliant job of making us safe. That’s what he’s here to do, all the lads feel very safe in everything. “Hopefully that continues throughout the trip.”

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[England in Sri Lanka 2020-21](#)

Joe Root hits century before the rain to tighten England's grip on first Test

- [First Test, day two: Sri Lanka 135; England 320-4](#)
- Captain unbeaten after superb ton while Lawrence impresses

Joe Root raises his bat after reaching 150 on the second day of the first Test in Galle. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

Joe Root raises his bat after reaching 150 on the second day of the first Test in Galle. Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

[Ali Martin](#)

[@Cricket_Ali](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 07.25 EST

The second day in Galle was not much fun for Sri Lanka's close fielders. Joe Root swept and swept and swept again, leaving bodies bruised and driving home England's dominance amid a timely reminder of his own enduring class.

When New Zealand's Kane Williamson recently rose to No 1 in the Test batting rankings, Root's name barely cropped up in the resulting chatter following his first year in international cricket without a century and a troubling slide out of the top 10.

[Sri Lanka v England: first Test, day two rain delay – live!](#)

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Expect this to change following the first Test of England's packed 2021, however, after Root turned his overnight score of 66 into 168 not out and with it, more importantly, powered his side to 320 for four at stumps and a lead of 185 runs.

Just the first two sessions were possible due to rain and Root's 18th Test century was not a lone hand. Dan Lawrence met the lofty expectations that followed his call-up for this tour, compiling an encouraging 73 from 150 balls on debut while very much looking the part.

It came amid a stand of 173 from 43 overs with his new captain that left Sri Lanka ruing their meltdown with the bat [on the opening day](#) and further underlined just how far English batsmen have come as regards the art of playing spin on the subcontinent.

The County Championship may have shifted towards the less conducive margins of summer but in the past 20 years a hot-housed approach of specialist coaching, overseas placements and the emergence of the Merlyn bowling machine sees them arrive in Asia well equipped.

Root can probably lay claim to being the cream of the current crop. His reading of length is the key, aiding the swift decision of whether to rock back or push forward. And then there is the sweep, a shot he unfurls so regularly and effectively as to wonder whether he is in fact auditioning for the GB curling team.

That said, the shot was nearly his undoing first thing when, resuming on 66 following a rain-delayed start, he survived a reviewed lbw shout from Dilruwan

Perera second ball thanks to umpire's call on impact. This was one of just a handful he missed all day, however, with the ragged old Kookaburra repeatedly sent fizzing through the leg side – when it hadn't struck poor Kusal Mendis at short leg.

Dan Lawrence on his way to a maiden Test half century on his debut.

Photograph: Sri Lanka Cricket

Root was joined by Lawrence in the second over of the day when Jonny Bairstow pushed forward and edged Lasith Embuldeniya to slip without adding to his overnight 47. And it did not take long for the 23-year-old debutant to settle into a nice tempo as he left the ball judiciously and began to unfurl some of the rubber-wristed magic that has got him this far.

Lawrence pushed his first ball in Test cricket for a single, drove his second for four to take England into the lead and then, after a patient spell and a couple more boundaries along the ground, seemed to fully announce himself to this new global audience with a wonderful slog-swept six over wide long-on;

holding the pose for a few seconds suggested a confident young player who possesses a touch of swagger.

Sri Lanka's spin trio and their stand-in captain, Dinesh Chandimal, began to run out of ideas as Root and Lawrence pushed on from 131 for three to 206 for three at lunch. Perera in particular disappointed. The off-spinner was Sri Lanka's leading wicket-taker in the 2018 series but appears more challenged this time by an England top six that, according to Cricinfo's Andrew McGlashan, is the first since 1994 to consist entirely of right-handers.

Certainly Mickey Arthur, Sri Lanka's demonstrative head coach, cut a frustrated figure after the interval. Root had just brought up his seventh century as captain – dinking the single he needed – when a duffed reverse-sweep saw the ball plop into the hands of short leg off the glove but the appeals turned down.

Sri Lanka's subsequent review was unsuccessful and the decision by third umpire Lyndon Hannibal seemingly clear to understand: the ball had hit the ground in between its contact with bat and then glove. But this did not stop Arthur slamming a water bottle on to the floor and then remonstrating with the off-field officials.

Root by contrast stayed calm, never erring from his methods and cruising to his eighth Test knock north of 150, before surpassing Kevin Pietersen's 151 in Colombo back in 2012 as England's highest Test score on the island.

Before that came Lawrence's maiden Test half-century from 95 balls via a typically whipped single down the ground. The Essex batsman slightly lost his tempo thereafter however – perhaps a result of the heat and vertiginous thoughts of three figures – as a couple of edges burst through the hands of slip and keeper.

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The debutant eventually fell after the second new ball, caught by Mendis at forward short leg as Perera finally got one to rear off the surface and take the glove. After exacting some revenge with another hard sweep that smashed Mendis in the shoulder, Root was still there at tea – with Jos Buttler for company on seven – before heavy rain washed out the final session.

Lawrence had departed for the exact same score as Root made on his debut in Nagpur in 2012. And as was the case back then, the cognoscenti appear to concur that England may well have a gem on their hands.

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[The Observer](#)[Football](#)

Football Index clients' money could be trapped after fall in players' share prices

- Trader abused by users when he raised concerns
- Company is shirt sponsor of Nottingham Forest and QPR

Nottingham Forest and QPR are sponsored by Football Index. Photograph:
Andrew Fosker/BPI/Shutterstock

Nottingham Forest and QPR are sponsored by Football Index. Photograph:
Andrew Fosker/BPI/Shutterstock

Exclusive by [Greg Wood](#)

[@Greg_Wood](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.17 EST

A series of share-price crashes and rule changes on the betting site Football Index has led to increasing concerns that its clients now have millions of pounds trapped in the platform that has no protection if the firm ceases trading.

Football Index, the shirt sponsor of Nottingham Forest and QPR, is a self-styled football stock market where users trade virtual shares in top players. It was launched in 2015 offering “a challenge” to traditional forms of betting on football.

It sells time-limited “shares” in footballers that can then return “dividends” over the course of a three-year contract. Dividends normally range from 1p to 14p per share and are based on the player’s performances on the pitch and their media profile. The shares can be sold to other users to retrieve some or all of a user’s stake from the exchange – but only if the owner can find a buyer.

This has become increasingly difficult in recent months following crashes in the price of shares. A share in the Borussia Dortmund forward Jadon Sancho cost £15.04 in early September. The price fell to £12.33 on 15 September and has since hit a series of lows: £10.31 on 3 October, £5.76 on 19 November and £4.20 on 22 December. A share cost £5.28 on Thursday, a 65% drop from its peak.

[Covid-19 impact leaves major European football clubs with €1bn loss](#)
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The growing desperation among users of the site, including some thought to have five- or even six-figure stakes in the exchange, has been highlighted by the experience of a professional sports trader and YouTuber who raised concerns about Football Index on his channel. Caan Berry has been subjected to a sustained and possibly coordinated campaign of abuse and intimidation by some clients of Football Index after posting the video on 9 December.

Berry described Football Index as a good concept but also listed what he believes are five major risks for users, including: the use of the term shares when users are buying time-limited contracts; the removal of a feature that allowed users to “instant sell” shares back to Football Index to retrieve stakes from the platform; the exchange’s ability to affect prices by “minting” new shares; and its right, written into its terms and conditions, to make significant changes to its dividend structure and rules after shares have been purchased.

The risk of mid-contract rule changes was highlighted as recently as last Friday when Football Index gave notice to users that it will stop paying In-Play dividends – for instance, when a player scores a goal – in four weeks’ time.

The online campaign against Berry was immediate, and culminated in a notice from YouTube on Thursday that his channel is being de-monetised until mid-February at the earliest due to complaints about “misleading information”. The notice was withdrawn a few hours later after the *Observer* asked YouTube to explain its decision.

“I didn’t see it coming, I didn’t know what some people in the [Football Index] community were like,” Berry says. “People ask me different questions [about betting and trading] on the YouTube site and had been asking me a bit more about Football Index since the summer. So I thought I’d have a look.

“After the first video, a lot of people on Twitter and social channels were encouraging people to ‘downvote’ it, to try and stop it being seen. After that, the hounding has been constant, I’ve had to delete hundreds of comments from the YouTube channel. It’s typical football thuggery – ‘you’re a nonce and I’m going to report you’, that sort of stuff – and then a book I’ve got out on Amazon started to get loads of one-star reviews in just a few hours.”

Football Index leans heavily on its claim to offer a trading environment similar to a stock exchange in its extensive marketing campaigns, including stock-market style tickers as pitchside adverts during televised matches. However, the firm is regulated as a betting site by the Gambling Commission and while it offers a medium level of protection for users’ funds if it ceases trading, this applies only to money on deposit and not to any stake that has been put into shares.

As Football Index makes clear in its T&Cs: “Once you have purchased shares, the applicable value of your shares have been ‘wagered’ and are not stored in this segregated account. This means that steps have been taken to protect your funds but that there is no absolute guarantee that all funds will be repaid in the event of insolvency.”

Brian Chappell, the founder of Justiceforpunters.org and a long-standing campaigner on issues affecting gamblers, said on Thursday that “medium” protection “is no guarantee that all funds will be repaid”, adding: “If restrictions are being placed on a customer’s ability to sell shares and/or withdraw funds,

this must be a major worry. Betting consumers are all too aware of previous UK-licensed gambling company insolvencies.”

A spokesperson for Football Index said on Friday the firm is “unable to comment on ongoing complaints that involve our users, however we take any reported abuse extremely seriously and we strongly condemn harassment and online trolling”.

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Regarding withdrawals from the site and recent crashes, the spokesperson added: “Cash balances [not spent on shares] are always free to be withdrawn from the site. Order Books [the firm’s system for buying and selling shares between customers] allow our customers to sell more quickly at a lower price or take longer to achieve a higher price, depending on their strategy and demand for that particular footballer. This is clearly set out in our terms of service.”

The spokesperson added that Football Index “is in regular contact with the Gambling Commission and updates them on changes [to operations] at appropriate junctures. These product enhancements were introduced after appropriate testing for fairness through a UK Gambling Commission approved test house.”

The spokesperson declined to reveal the total net investment in Football Index by its customers since launch, or the proportion of customer deposits being held as a cash balance, saying only: “Football Index is a betting product regulated by the Gambling Commission and customers’ bets are not investments. Customer cash balances are protected under a [quistclose trust](#).”

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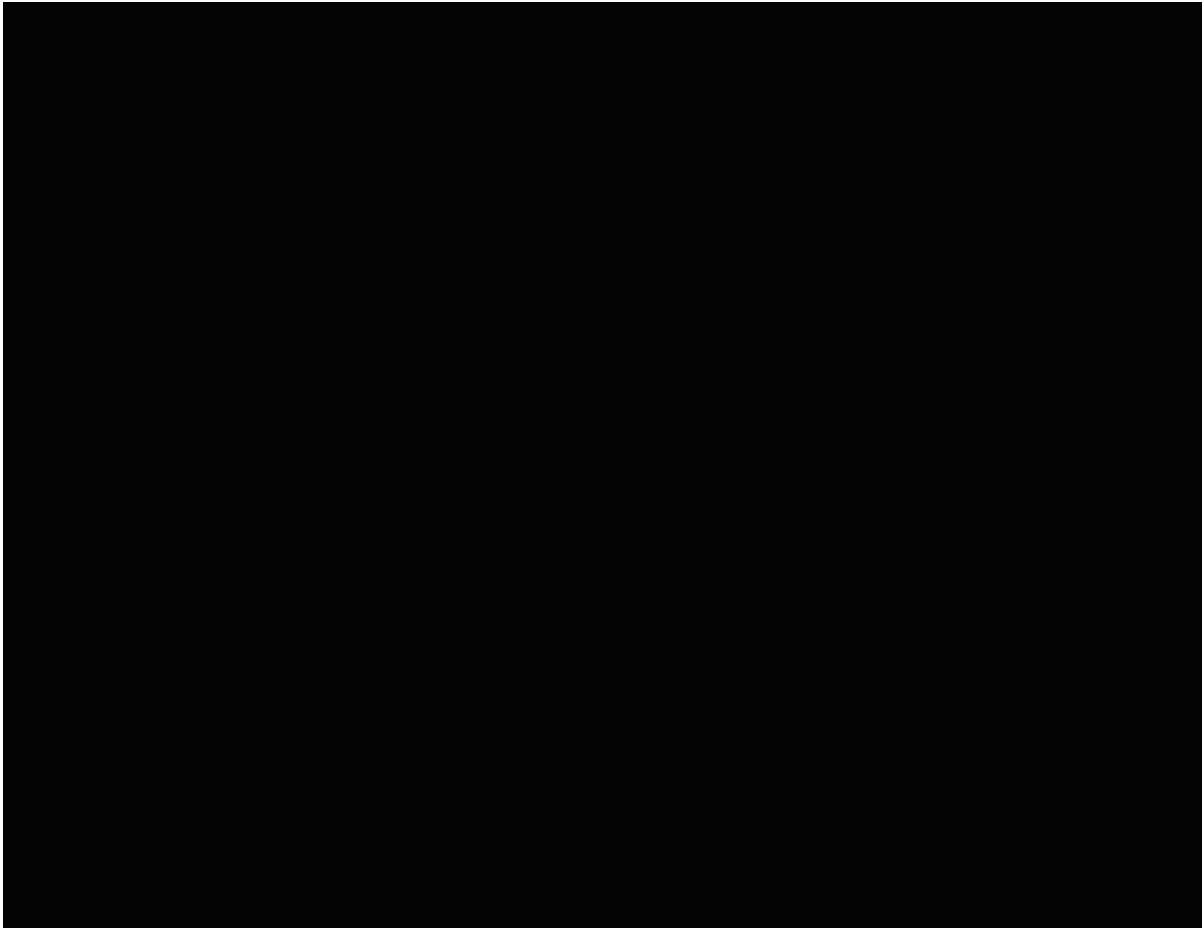
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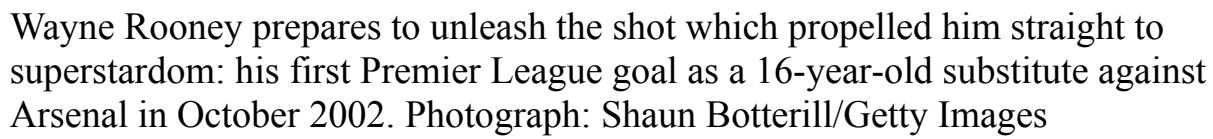
[Wayne Rooney](#)

Rooney-mania had many ages but his defining moment remains the first

[Jonathan Liew](#)



It is the basic paradox of Rooney that a player of such emotional heft will ultimately be judged largely on numbers and records



Wayne Rooney prepares to unleash the shot which propelled him straight to superstardom: his first Premier League goal as a 16-year-old substitute against Arsenal in October 2002. Photograph: Shaun Botterill/Getty Images

Wayne Rooney prepares to unleash the shot which propelled him straight to superstardom: his first Premier League goal as a 16-year-old substitute against Arsenal in October 2002. Photograph: Shaun Botterill/Getty Images

Fri 15 Jan 2021 14.43 EST

In a way, it was the perfect understated ending: with a short, sober statement on the [Derby County](#) website. New manager appointed at struggling Championship club. Signs a two-and-a-half-year deal after a cautiously successful stint in caretaker charge. Liam Rosenior to be his assistant.

Meanwhile – buried in the seventh paragraph, as if an entirely incidental detail – England and Manchester United's all-time leading goalscorer has decided to retire as a footballer.

Wayne Rooney. Remember the name? Perhaps the vague whiff of anticlimax owes itself largely to the fact that Rooney has – on some level – been retiring for most of the last decade. There was the emotional departure from Manchester United in 2017. The following year, he said his goodbyes to the Premier League. There was the first international retirement. The one-off comeback, after which he went back into retirement again. And now, the final curtain. The discussion of his legacy and place in the game will continue to bubble away, and rightly so. It should be possible both to acclaim Rooney for what he achieved in the game and wonder whether he could have done even more.

[Wayne Rooney calls time on playing career to become Derby manager](#)
[Read more](#)

Five Premier League titles and one Champions League triumph – the same as John O’Shea – do not settle the debate on their own. His goal records – 253 for United, 53 for England: gargantuan feats that will one day be broken.

When the dust settles, what does Rooney leave us beyond lists and chunks of metal? This is, perhaps, the basic paradox of Rooney: that a player of such emotional heft will ultimately be judged largely on numbers and records, that a player who seemed purpose-built to generate unforgettable era-defining moments generated surprisingly few of them. What are the defining Rooney moments? The big performances in finals? The reality-bending wonder-goals? What is Rooney’s Istanbul 2005, his Villa Park 1999, his Euro 96, his Hand of God? Of course there was the bicycle kick against Manchester City in 2011, a heartwarming last-minute chase and tackle and assist for DC United in 2018, a couple of eye-catching goals from the halfway line. But really, the defining Rooney moment comes right at the beginning: that scene-setting goal for Everton against Arsenal in 2002 as a 16-year-old child.

Even to watch it back now is to realise how the memory plays tricks on you. The chance was created not by a barrelling run but a neat control and shuffle. The finish itself was not smashed into the top corner, but curled with the utmost guile and precision. But it was too late. Wazza – England’s slaloming, all-conquering comic book hero, a new hero for the WKD age – was born.

And so began the first age of Rooney-mania: the teenage tearaway. It took in that big-money transfer to United, a breakthrough tournament at Euro 2004 and probably ended in 2006 when Chelsea’s Paulo Ferreira fatefully broke his

metatarsal, ushering in the second age: Rooney as national fixation. Yet while English football still expected Rooney to win international tournaments all on his own, and chided him when he failed to supply the required miracles, at club level he was increasingly becoming folded into a different player entirely.

Rooney scores his spectacular overhead kick winner for Manchester United against Manchester City in February 2011. Photograph: Martin Rickett/PA

The emergence of Cristiano Ronaldo at United led Alex Ferguson to wedge him into an unfamiliar wide role. He still scored 38 goals in the 2006-09 seasons, won most of the silverware he was ever going to win. But in retrospect it feels like the great leap not made, the point at which the door to the immortals slowly began to creak shut.

Into the third age, then: the long retreat. The congealment had already begun before Ferguson retired in 2013, but it was around that point when we all collectively realised that Rooney was never quite going to fulfil the white-hot promise of his early years. Successive United and England managers puzzled

over how to incorporate a player who seemed both increasingly influential and increasingly tangential.

His finishing, link play and attitude were as good as ever. But did he actually help your team win? Derby felt like the logical conclusion of this process: a genius midfielder essentially spraying gorgeous passes from his armchair in the centre circle. Meanwhile, his outrun team languish in the bottom three.

It's useful, as a thought exercise, to wonder how he might have fared had he been born Spanish or German: whether his taste for the heroic might have been chiselled into something more collective, more useful, more durable.

And yet, for all the talk of atrophy, right to the very end Rooney remained a fabulous player to watch: intuitive, eloquent and zealous, a player whose pure love of the sport was evident in every nourished touch.

He is unlikely to be as great a manager as he was a player. This is no slight on his coaching ability; simply a bald statement of probability. For every Cruyff there are a dozen Van Bastens; for every Beckenbauer a dozen Maradonas. Genius rarely photocopies itself. Rooney's name and fame may have earned him this chance. But from here on in, he will have to survive on his wits alone.

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[Derby County](#)

Wayne Rooney calls time on playing career to become Derby manager

- Former England striker takes over on permanent basis
- ‘I’ll miss playing but time doesn’t stop for no man’

Wayne Rooney has become the permanent manager at Derby County.

Photograph: Tony Marshall/Getty Images

Wayne Rooney has become the permanent manager at Derby County.

Photograph: Tony Marshall/Getty Images

[Ben Fisher](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 08.48 EST

Wayne Rooney said he recognised his time had come after ending his illustrious playing career to embark on a new chapter and to “write some history” as manager of Derby County.

The record goalscorer of the England national team had been in [interim charge of the Championship club since November](#) and has signed a two-and-a-half-year contract to take the role. The 35-year-old said he had come to terms with retiring from playing over the past two months and was excited to fulfil his potential as a manager.

[Rooney-mania had many ages but his defining moment remains the first](#)
[Jonathan Liew](#)
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Rooney, who continues to work towards his Uefa A licence, had made no secret of his desire to switch to the dugout and the former Manchester United and Everton forward, who joined Derby on an 18-month contract as a player-coach last January, will take charge of his first game as the permanent manager against Rotherham at Pride Park on Saturday.

“Standing on the touchline during a game or when you put a plan in place, which the players execute, it’s a completely different buzz,” he said. “It’s a new chapter for me. Of course I’ll miss playing but time doesn’t stop for no man. I’ve had my time, it’s time for the younger generation to have theirs and for me to try and guide the young players to be better players.”

Rooney made his professional debut for Everton aged 16 and became the Premier League’s youngest scorer with a superb strike against Arsenal in 2002 before his 17th birthday. Across 13 years at Manchester United he won the Premier League five times, the Champions League, the FA Cup and three League Cups as well as becoming the club’s all-time leading scorer. After rejoining Everton and two years in the US with DC United, Rooney joined Derby, scoring seven goals in 35 appearances.

“The last couple of months have helped break that [retirement] in and it’s given me time to sit down and think about that,” he said. “My future is in management. I’ve had a great career, enjoyed every minute, some ups, some downs, but I wouldn’t change anything I’ve done in my career as a player. Hopefully, I can start to write some history and have a successful managerial career.”

[Championship at halfway: miracles at Swansea and a Rooney-led revival](#)

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Rooney has received assurances from Mel Morris, the Derby chairman, and Stephen Pearce, the chief executive, that a protracted £60m takeover by Sheikh Khaled, a cousin of the Manchester City owner Sheikh Mansour, will be completed. Some senior players and coaching staff are still awaiting December wages. Rooney said he had spoken to the Bin Zayed International group, the prospective new owner. “It’s better to take time and make sure it’s done right and hopefully it will get done as soon as possible,” he said.

He initially took charge as part of a four-man coaching team following the sacking of Phillip Cocu but stepped away from playing and training at the end of November after realising it was “impossible” to juggle both roles as player-coach. Rooney, who will be assisted by Liam Rosenior, has won three and drawn four of his nine matches in sole charge. “To manage the team and then go out on to the pitch to try and perform as a player as well, it was too much,” he said. “Probably the most successful one was Kenny Dalglish in doing that [at Liverpool] but I thought I either play the game or manage.”

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United’s Marcus Rashford tweeted: “To one of the greatest. It was a dream come true to play alongside you. Congrats on the most unbelievable career.” Gary Lineker said England would have won Euro 2004 had Rooney not got injured. Rooney cited captaining United to the FA Cup in 2016 as a career highlight and getting sent off against Portugal at the 2006 World Cup “a big disappointment”.

Rooney’s former United and England teammate Rio Ferdinand said: “Once he’s retired now, people will start appreciating him for who he is and what he was as a player, because I don’t think he gets the respect he deserves. What a player – world class. Whenever we flew anywhere as a team, he used to get mad, mad love – more than he got here.”

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Manchester United

How good can Bruno Fernandes make Manchester United? Anfield may tell

Bruno Fernandes (centre) celebrates after scoring for Manchester United at Leicester on Boxing Day. Photograph: Carl Recine/EPA

Bruno Fernandes (centre) celebrates after scoring for Manchester United at Leicester on Boxing Day. Photograph: Carl Recine/EPA

Midfield risk-taker has been a transformative signing but needs to nail it in the big games – starting at Liverpool on Sunday



[Barney Ronay](#)

[@barneyronay](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 15.00 EST

This is not the beginning of the title run-in. This is not the start of the middle, or the beginning of the end. Let's face it, nobody really knows what's going on up there in this jetlagged oddity of a Premier League season, when points have been scattered with luxurious abandon, and none of these teams seem ready to find a sustained higher gear.

Not that it makes much difference. There will, as ever, be an urge to portray Manchester United's trip to Liverpool on Sunday as something more decisive, a make-or-breaker, a full-on Super Sunday Judgment Day-style Showdown.

[Manchester United's Leah Galton: 'Press and Heath have changed our mindset'](#)
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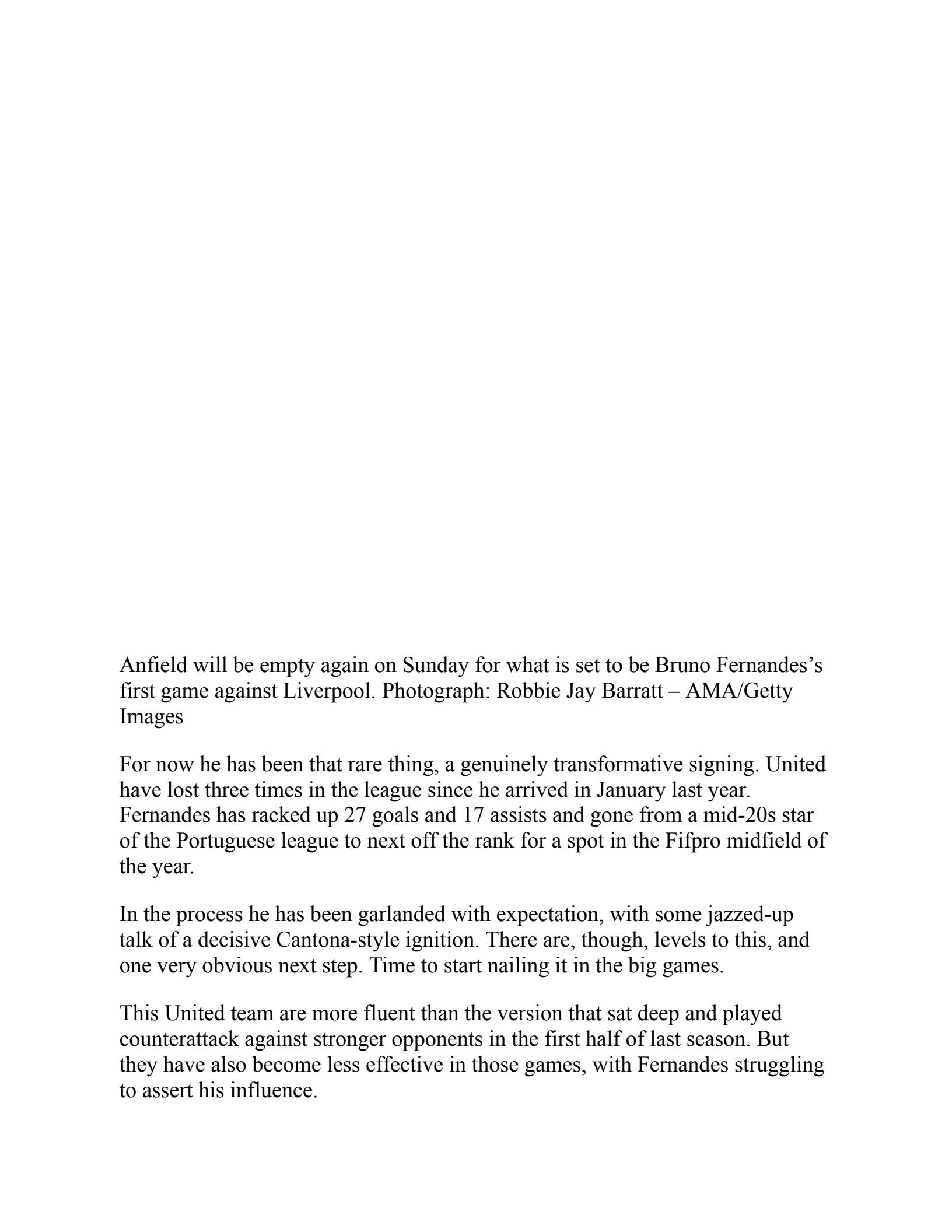
There is some logic to this. Title-winning teams have tended to drop very few points in recent years. In a non-Covid version of the current timeline, a January meeting of champions and league leaders would carry real jeopardy. Last season Liverpool's most decisive league victory came as early as November.

That game was also at Anfield, the day Fabinho scored, the home crowd became an irresistible noise and Pep Guardiola capered about whirling his fists at the sky, King Lear in a grey knitted cardigan. That was pretty much a wrap.

Back in the current hungover version of reality, the top of the Premier League has been a slow bicycle race so far. Nothing will be settled at Anfield, no decisive stage win achieved. And yet Liverpool v Manchester United does still feel like a hugely significant occasion for both of these teams.

For United in particular this is a timely test. That recent fine run of form will face a genuine stress-test. And on a more micro-level Anfield will also offer an examination of the outer limits, right now, of Bruno Fernandes's influence.

It is another small note of regret in a season-long symphony that Fernandes won't get to play in front of an Anfield full house. Aged 26, this will be his first game for United against Liverpool. That strut, that air of command, the badge on the shirt: Fernandes v the Anfield crowd feels, in the best possible sense, like a pantomime waiting to happen.



Anfield will be empty again on Sunday for what is set to be Bruno Fernandes's first game against Liverpool. Photograph: Robbie Jay Barratt – AMA/Getty Images

For now he has been that rare thing, a genuinely transformative signing. United have lost three times in the league since he arrived in January last year. Fernandes has racked up 27 goals and 17 assists and gone from a mid-20s star of the Portuguese league to next off the rank for a spot in the Fifpro midfield of the year.

In the process he has been garlanded with expectation, with some jazzed-up talk of a decisive Cantona-style ignition. There are, though, levels to this, and one very obvious next step. Time to start nailing it in the big games.

This United team are more fluent than the version that sat deep and played counterattack against stronger opponents in the first half of last season. But they have also become less effective in those games, with Fernandes struggling to assert his influence.

Since the summer resumption last June United have played seven matches against the stronger Premier League teams plus two against Paris Saint-Germain, a nine-game run that has brought five defeats, three draws and one win.

In those games Fernandes has scored five goals, all penalties. More recently he has been notably ineffective against PSG, Manchester City, Arsenal and Tottenham.

This being football, it will be tempting for some to see a player reaching the end of his scale of influence, some kind of flat-track, empty-stadium penalty-fraud. The reality is of course something else.

Bruno Fernandes and Paul Pogba at training this week as the team prepare to face Liverpool. Photograph: Matthew Peters/Manchester United/Getty Images

All players are less effective against stronger opponents: this is what makes them stronger opponents. And United are still learning to play around

Fernandes.

Recently there has been a sense this team have found their own way of winning, entering a kind of surge-period either side of half-time, like a 400m runner relaxing into the straight, when the players just seem to settle and find their rhythms. Perhaps there is a lot to be gained at a time like this from having a manager who seems indecently calm, beaming on from the sidelines like a supportive uncle.

But that style might also offer the odd point of weakness. It is often said a key part of Fernandes's impact is his invigorating swagger, a player entirely unbowed by the shirt. And he is fearless, one of those athletes who seems to play on every stage the same way, entirely lost in the moment.

[Bruno Fernandes hits back at Jürgen Klopp over Manchester United penalties](#)
[Read more](#)

But his real impact is tactical. His key skill is an obsession with finding space between the lines, taking the ball from any angle and passing it forwards with one or two touches. In those moments Fernandes is a kind of footballing WD40, greasing every attacking phase with his touch and movement, and wanting constantly to be involved.

Five minutes before half-time [against Burnley on Tuesday](#) he could be seen haring off into the six-yard box in pursuit of an overhit cross. Sixty seconds later he was at right-back stifling a break. In the second half he played deeper, spreading the ball wide as United found their surge. His instant pass to Marcus Rashford made the time that made the cross that made Paul Pogba's volleyed winner.



Bruno Fernandes's influence was apparent during the win at Burnley that took Manchester United top. Photograph: Clive Brunskill/Reuters

This urge to play with the brakes off, a free element in an otherwise stodgy midfield, has been like a miracle ingredient in this United team. It turns out a “split”, linear team is a perfect fit for a player who was born on the half-turn, who lurks like a zealot in those in-between spaces. This is the presence the entire setup – midfield block; pacy, head-down attackers – was thirsting for.

Even his 15 goals from penalties – a startling number in a single calendar year – are evidence of his influence rather than a way to undercut it. United aren't being given these spot-kicks because of a lizard-referee illuminati conspiracy. They get them because of a style of play: quick, accurate passes to the feet of attackers who like to weave and dribble at a time when defending is systemically difficult. This isn't luck. It's a smart tactic well executed.

But there is also a looseness that comes with this Bruno-led style. There is a reason Fernandes took seven years and five clubs to reach this level. For all his

talent he was seen as a headstrong creative midfielder, prone to overplaying his hand, taking too many risks, giving the ball away.

Again, this is all part of the current chemistry. United needed a risk-taker. Fernandes often has a 70% pass completion rate, but this isn't giving the ball away or making mistakes, it's pressing forward, offering edge and threat, allowing the midfielders behind him to remain within their own statelier comfort zone.

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It is no surprise this high-throttle style – the risky passing, the constant motion from a deep No 10 or inside-left position – has led to more mixed results against opponents better equipped to punish the opportunities it presents. Going toe-to-toe on these occasions rather than hiding behind their guard is the next stage for an evolving team, and Sunday a good place to start.

It is an oddity of this toxic old Lancashire derby that it has rarely been a title-chasing double-header. These two teams may have won a third of all English league titles, but this has been an alternating dominance, with distinct eras of supremacy.

More often this game has been a decoration, a matter of scores settled and personal legends forged. After a year of fearless, fast-forward progress, Fernandes has a chance to burnish his own.

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[Australia cricket team](#)

Rain frustrates Australia after bowlers put India under pressure

- India 62-2; Australia 369
- No play after Tea due to rain

Tim Paine could not convince officials to restart play following a downpour at the Gabba. Photograph: Darren England/AAP

Tim Paine could not convince officials to restart play following a downpour at the Gabba. Photograph: Darren England/AAP

Australian Associated Press

Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.16 EST

Rain has stalled Australia's push for victory in their series-deciding fourth Test at the Gabba, washing out day two's final session after milestone man Nathan Lyon delivered with bat and ball.

[Bouncers, sledging and mischief: why Australia v India is series for these times](#)
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Lyon scored 24 as part of a wagging tail that dragged Australia from 315-8 to a first-innings total of 369 in Saturday's morning session. The off-spinner then snared the key scalp of Rohit Sharma, who had looked increasingly dangerous prior to giving Mitchell Starc some catching practice in the deep while on 44, as India reached 62-2 at Tea.

A thunderstorm then ruined Saturday's final session, meaning play will start at 9.30am (local time) on Sunday. Umpires, worried about a damp outfield, informed an eager Tim Paine that it would be stumps after conducting a final pitch inspection at 4.45pm (local time).

India will retain the Border-Gavaskar trophy with either a draw or win in Brisbane, where further showers are forecast during the rest of the series finale.

Lyon, who was given a standing ovation when he walked out to bat, requires a further three wickets to celebrate 400 Test scalps in what is his 100th Test. He took the second wicket to fall after Pat Cummins' second delivery found the edge of Shubman Gill's bat and flew to Steve Smith at second slip.

Cheteshwar Pujara and Ajinkya Rahane are unbeaten, on eight and two respectively, after helping trim Australia's lead to 307 runs. Pujara and Rahane are India's two best batsmen but also their only players who took part in both the first and fourth Tests, underlining how much of a toll this summer has taken on the injury-riddled touring party.

They look likely to be a bowler down for the rest of the series finale in Brisbane, with paceman Navdeep Saini yet to bowl after suffering a groin injury on day one.

Australia coach Justin Langer will lament his side's collapse of 3-4, which included the wickets of well-set batsmen Paine (50) and Cameron Green (47), as well as their inability to post a more imposing total. But Langer will take

heart in the fact that Australia have never lost a Test at the Gabba after scoring 350-plus in the first innings.

Starc finished 20 not out after stretching Australia's innings into a 116th over, testing the resolve of an unheralded attack that never gave up. Thangarasu Natarajan, Shardul Thakur and Washington Sundar, having bowled a combined 10 deliveries prior to being called up for this Test, captured nine wickets between them at the Gabba.

Lyon stroked four boundaries, while Starc clattered a six off Sundar in their 39-run partnership.

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[Golf](#)

Ralph Lauren ends sponsorship of Justin Thomas after homophobic slur

- Clothing brand says ‘actions conflict with inclusive culture’
- Thomas has apologised but is expected to be fined by PGA Tour

‘It’s terrible. I’m extremely embarrassed,’ said Justin Thomas in an apology for using the derogatory word towards himself at the Sentry Tournament of Champions. Photograph: Matthew Thayer/AP

‘It’s terrible. I’m extremely embarrassed,’ said Justin Thomas in an apology for using the derogatory word towards himself at the Sentry Tournament of Champions. Photograph: Matthew Thayer/AP

PA Media

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.44 EST

The clothing company Ralph Lauren has terminated its sponsorship of Justin Thomas as a result of the American golfer's use of a homophobic slur during the third round of the Sentry Tournament of Champions.

Thomas, the world No 3, was heard using the derogatory word towards himself after missing a par putt on the fourth hole at Kapalua last weekend. The 27-year-old later apologised for the remark. He told the [Golf](#) Channel: "There's just no excuse. I'm an adult, I'm a grown man. There's absolutely no reason for me to say anything like that. It's terrible. I'm extremely embarrassed."

['It's inexcusable': Justin Thomas apologises for using homophobic slur](#)
[Read more](#)

But Ralph Lauren has announced it has severed ties with the golfer. In a statement, the American clothing brand said: "We are disheartened by Mr Thomas's recent language, which is entirely inconsistent with our values.

"While we acknowledge that he has apologised and recognises the severity of his words, he is a paid ambassador of our brand and his actions conflict with the inclusive culture that we strive to uphold. In reflecting on the responsibility we have to all of our stakeholders, we have decided to discontinue our sponsorship of Mr Thomas at this time."

Thomas is expected to be fined for by the [PGA Tour](#) for the incident. The [PGA Tour](#) said in a statement: "As he expressed after his round, we agree that Justin's comment was unacceptable."

In March last year, the PGA Tour player Scott Piercy was dropped by his sponsors after sharing a homophobic meme on Instagram about Pete Buttigieg, the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, and a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate.

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2021.01.16 - Opinion

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Why was the Isle of Wight left so vulnerable to Covid catastrophe?

[Hannah Ewens](#)

Our island has an ageing population and one small hospital. Allowing people to travel from tier 4 areas has had tragic results

Newport high street, Isle of Wight. Photograph: Simon Czapp/Solent News & Photo Agency/Solent News

Newport high street, Isle of Wight. Photograph: Simon Czapp/Solent News & Photo Agency/Solent News

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

For brief moments, life in tier 1 could be blissful ignorance. Throughout last year, a handful of small, secluded pockets of [England](#) were able to continue with barely any Covid restrictions. It was something few people experienced in 2020 – you might have lived in Cornwall, on the Isles of Scilly, or my childhood home, the Isle of Wight – and I was lucky enough to be one of them.

I'd spent the first lockdown in London living with multiple other people in a small rented flat, with all of us working from home, and my bedroom essentially a communal space. Soon after the first lockdown ended I came back to stay with my dad; it was only supposed to be for a month, but I stayed until mid-December. Unsurprisingly, the perfect tonic for an anxious nervous system and “unprecedented times” was a break from the pandemic altogether. The Isle of Wight's transformation from Covid sanctuary to [Covid disaster zone](#) this week has been as devastating as it has been rapid – only a few months ago, it was unimaginable.

Walking down the pier from the ferry terminal last summer felt like entering another world. It was truly unnerving to emerge from months inside to a proverbial Neverland. Groups of people sat drinking pints of cider, eating takeaway burgers, or sunbathing on the sea wall. It was a glimpse of the island in bloom: the one that festival-goers from the mainland know, the place everyone who went on a school trip to the Isle of Wight remembers, the one second-home owners come for.

Life went on in 2020 as normal for islanders, which is to say slowly, quietly, contentedly – and unbearably for anyone of working age or younger without a car. Cafes were open and half empty as usual. Gyms were open. Outdoor bars were running along the various seafronts. Pandemic fatigue just didn't exist. By early December, I knew nearly as many people who claimed they would refuse to take the vaccine as those who were willing and eager – such was the perceived absence of threat to people's lives from Covid.

But the island's year of innocence could never last. In a matter of a week at the end of December, we went from tier 1 to tier 4. Things have got so bad, so fast, that military helicopters may need to be sent in to evacuate people to mainland hospitals. The wider national narrative about Britain's second wave has been that people travelling home and then mixing at Christmas has been responsible. Yet on the Isle of Wight, locals have been mixing with abandon all year, with little problem – so what went wrong?

As soon as the second lockdown was over in early December, mainlanders swarmed over the sea, desperate for a night out or a weekend away. On Friday and Saturday nights in December, groups of people were coming over from Portsmouth – already a tier 4 area – to the island’s pubs and bars to get drunk. This was common knowledge in the lead-up to Christmas. Memes were circulating – viral among Facebook mums and dads – about mainlanders coming over to do just that (one in my family WhatsApp group depicted The Simpsons’ pitchfork mob with the caption, “Seeing someone from another tier visiting the Isle of Wight”). One local told the County Press that he saw “coaches of people piling into local hotels and evening lights ablaze in the many second homes”. It’s a tiny insular place, and when change occurs, it will not go unnoticed.

It won’t all have been boozy daytrippers, of course – mainlanders with links to the island also rushed home to their families for Christmas. In a never-ending pandemic, people will make questionable decisions to support their mental health and resilience (my own to return to the island was exactly that). But whatever the reason, there seemed to be little to no policing of the transport links to the island, no attempt to stop people coming over in groups.

The very reason the island was a tier 1 sanctuary was the same reason that it had to stay that way. There is only one hospital on the whole island and it’s one of the smallest in the country. The Isle of Wight’s population is ageing and at risk. Allowing people to travel across the water for any reason was like dropping a brick in a puddle and not expecting to get splashed.

Now that crisis has hit, islanders are acting like the rest of the country did in the first half of 2020. It is often said that the island is a good decade behind the rest of the UK, and once again this feels true. My family are now terrified, where before they couldn’t understand my worry. Whole social circles I know have contracted the virus and many of my mum’s friends and colleagues have it – a close friend has lost her husband. Thousands of cases aren’t just abstract numbers when you recognise nearly every face in your town.

The island and its residents were sentenced to this fate by being placed in tier 1 before Christmas. The government has utterly failed to address the spread of the virus via unnecessary travel; with such high rates of the virus along the south coast of England in December, people should never have been allowed to escape to our vulnerable island, simply for a fleeting moment of bliss. It’s grim

to contemplate – and who can stomach any more moralising about people's pandemic behaviour? – but in some cases, the cost of a pint has been a life.

- Hannah Ewens is features editor at Vice UK and author of Fangirls: Scenes From Modern Music Culture

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Give families cash to feed their children – there's overwhelming evidence it works

Arthur Potts Dawson

Vouchers and money to buy food bring families the dignity everyone deserves, as the World Food Programme has shown

The free school meal pack that was shared by parents on Twitter in the UK this week. Photograph: @RoadsideMum/Twitter

The free school meal pack that was shared by parents on Twitter in the UK this week. Photograph: @RoadsideMum/Twitter

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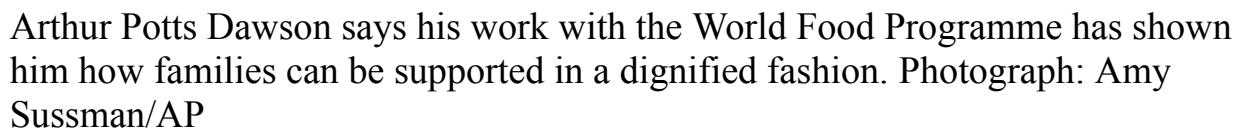
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Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Dignity is not a word that you would normally associate with your weekly supermarket shop, or with planning how you might be going to feed your children each night.

But right now, when families are under intense pressure to find enough money to keep food on the table and ensure their children have access to a healthy and nutritious diet, dignity is something we should all be demanding for those who depend on others for the means to feed their loved ones.

If you have seen any of the [images circulating on social media](#) over the past few days showing the contents of meal packages provided to children whose parents are unable to feed them, you cannot but have been struck by the lack of dignity involved in receiving this support.



Arthur Potts Dawson says his work with the World Food Programme has shown him how families can be supported in a dignified fashion. Photograph: Amy Sussman/AP

The sad array of vegetables and processed food being delivered in limited rations to families living on the breadline are an affront to every charitable instinct we hold dearly with regard to helping those who need a hand.

I have seen what a lack of food and nutrition can do in some of the poorest countries of the world and I have also witnessed the impact of programmes that provide cash or vouchers to support communities of hungry families in a dignified and empowering fashion.

The [UN World Food Programme](#) provides school meals for around 17 million children a year. It recognises the importance of effective food systems, and is launching a School Health Research Consortium at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine to help the UK learn more from international experience and vice versa.

What is so striking now is that the British government has been a global leader in driving change within the international aid sector to deliver food to hungry children and families in a more efficient and dignified way.

As an advocate for more cash payments to hungry families in developing countries, the UK has revolutionised the delivery of food assistance, empowering those who need to provide for their families, supporting local economies and streamlining the aid delivery system to make it more efficient and cost effective.

The World [Food](#) Programme (WFP) is just one example of an agency that has moved from delivering almost zero food assistance in cash in the early 2000s to a point where close to 40% of its aid is distributed as cash or vouchers. That's close to £1.5bn for families to buy their own food, and it's being spent in more than 60 countries.

If the government understands the value of empowering hungry families in Malawi, why is it missing that point in Britain?

What has this to do with a poor family living under coronavirus lockdown in Bradford? In my mind, quite a lot: if the government understands the value of empowering and giving self-respect to hungry families in Malawi, why is it missing that point in Britain?

Instead of paying companies to provide substandard food for children locked out of school, why can't we give families the cash or the vouchers to make their own decisions about what to buy and how to stretch their budgets? We know doing so works, is more efficient, and gives those families dignity, rather than stripping them of it.

['What am I supposed to make with this!' Parents on schools' meagre food parcels](#)
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Sceptics might say that families cannot be trusted to spend money on food, that it might be wasted on alcohol or cigarettes. But from what I have seen in developing countries, the evidence is that families are responsible and make the right choices for their children. No mother wants to see her child go hungry.

The WFP has found that [cash or voucher payments](#) only fail to make an important contribution when a country is at war, markets have collapsed and access to food is limited – even for those with money.

Much as we are suffering from the impact of the pandemic and the latest lockdown, shops remain open here and the one big impediment to accessing fresh, nutritious food is a lack of money.

It could not be more simple: increased cash payments will empower families struggling to feed their children, and restore their dignity, something that everyone deserves.

Arthur Potts Dawson is a chef advocate for the World Food Programme

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Nobody expects the Spanish inquisition – least of all mumfluencer Hilaria Baldwin

[Hadley Freeman](#)



I never questioned Hilaria’s Spanish-ness, but it turns out her parents are more American than mine

Hilaria Baldwin: ‘the story scorched across the internet, which is partly down to the fact we’re all stuck at home and have exhausted Netflix’ Photograph: Gary Gershoff/WireImage

Hilaria Baldwin: ‘the story scorched across the internet, which is partly down to the fact we’re all stuck at home and have exhausted Netflix’ Photograph: Gary Gershoff/WireImage

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

For a long time, I thought of Hilaria Baldwin as my private obsession, emphasis on that last word. I must have first heard about her because she’s married to [Alec Baldwin](#), but that’s not why she fascinated me (I like Alec Baldwin, but, c’mom, I don’t *love* him). No, this began five years ago, after my twins were born, because Hilaria is – or was – best known as a “mommy influencer”, as they say in the US, where she lives (and we’ll return to Hilaria’s relationship with geography shortly), with five young children and 900k Instagram followers. I would stare at the photos and [videos she posted](#) of herself in her lingerie – [doing yoga](#), being pregnant, [often both](#) – looking as tiny and hardbodied as a nutcracker figurine, and I’d feel that almost comfortingly

familiar wave of self-loathing. And then I'd look at her photos of her children [in which she promoted clothing companies, or toys](#), or [baby cream brands](#), and I'd think, "Well, at least I don't use my kids to shill crap." Self-loathing followed by self-vindication: it's an irresistible combination, like sugar and salt, and Hilaria delivered it to me in its purest essence.

So yes, I became obsessed with her – I admit it. "Did you see that Hilaria posted a picture of herself in her lingerie to announce she was having a miscarriage?" I'd ask my friends. "Who?" they'd reply. Well, no one's asking "who" any more, are they, Hilaria?

Over the Christmas break, [an anonymous Twitter account suggested](#) that Hilaria is not – contrary to [what she has always implied](#) – Spanish. Hilaria's Spanishness was one of the few things I never questioned: she insisted her name was pronounced "Ee-LAIR-ia"; she and Alec had a [Spanish-themed wedding, in which she clutched a flamenco fan](#); they gave their five kids Spanish names and referred to them as "the Baldwinitos"; she said on a recent podcast that she "moved [to the US] when I was 19 to go to NYU, from Mallorca". Fine, she's Spanish, whatever.

Or – whirls to camera! – maybe not. People who had grown up with her in Massachusetts piped up with their memories of the all-American Hillary Hayward-Thomas, as she was then. How strange that someone raised in the US would forget the word for cucumber, as [Hilaria appeared to do on TV in 2015](#) ("How do you say in English?"). Despite her frequent references to her Spanish family, her parents, it turns out, [are more American than mine](#), and the extent of their Spanishness is that they occasionally went on holiday to Mallorca, before retiring there when Hillary/Hilaria was 28. By that rubric, I'm French: please call me Hadlé.

This story scorched across the internet, which is partly down to the fact we're all stuck at home and have exhausted Netflix, and partly to the vicarious thrill of watching women who boast about their perfect lives unspool before our eyes. Baldwin attempted to shut the story down, first by posting a video on – of course – [her Instagram](#), in which she said, "I am a white girl... Europe has a lot of white people", which sounds like something someone who had never lived in Europe would say.

I'm fascinated by people who give themselves public makeovers, when they know people around them have the receipts, like Rebel Wilson [shaving several](#)

years off her age, or Frankie Boyle scolding his colleagues for gratuitous cruelty, when he used to make jokes about disabled children. Did Hilaria never worry about old friends popping up? What did her parents make of her Spanish accent, and did Alec know the truth or what? So many questions, so few reliable answers.

I've enjoyed talking to celebrities from my bed. Will I want to do it in person again? | Hadley Freeman

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This is my final word on my specialist subject, Hilaria Baldwin, who is now everyone's specialist subject. First, a lot of Americans give themselves dubious European roots. Seriously, have you ever been in New York on Saint Patrick's Day? Has everyone forgotten Madonna's English accent? We glam up our boring Americanness with some cosmopolitan European touches. Just take the compliment.

Hilaria's misfortune was to be caught playing with her identity at a time when identity is such a controversial subject. Some have asked if she's the new Rachel Dolezal, or maybe worse. After all Dolezal, in her deranged way, tried to further education about black history in her work as an academic and activist; all Hilaria did was hog space on *Hola!* covers and "Best-dressed Latina stars" lists.

Despite having spent the best part of five years being outraged by Hilaria Baldwin, I cannot be outraged about her almost endearing desire to be Spanish. I will die on this hill: her lingerie selfies and the way she uses her kids to advertise stuff are greater crimes than cos-playing Penélope Cruz. For this, of all things, to be the thing that brings her down – well, now I know how police chiefs felt when Al Capone was put away for tax evasion instead of for being a mobster. Enjoy your break from social media, Hilaria: I'll miss the self-vindication you gave me, if not the self-loathing. And since you gave me so much, allow me, at last, to give you something in return: the word is "cucumber".

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[Opinion](#)[Coronavirus](#)

How many waves will it take for Britain's lockdown sceptics to finally call it a day?

[Marina Hyde](#)



You'd have thought the crisis would give them pause. But then, like the government, they have a hard time learning from their mistakes

Toby Young on Good Morning Britain, 6 May 2020. Photograph:
ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

Toby Young on Good Morning Britain, 6 May 2020. Photograph:
ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.13 EST

I am agonised to learn that the Daily Telegraph has been censured for a column published last July, in which Toby Young declared that having had a common cold could give people immunity from Covid-19, and that London was “probably approaching” herd immunity. You really can’t say anything these days – and then they go and tell you that you can’t say the things you have said, albeit many months later. Toby’s the journalistic equivalent of an Only God Can Judge Me tattoo, the Galileo of doing opinions for coins, and history will take a very dim view of all the doctors and nurses now lying about their hospitals breaking under the weight of the “second” “wave”, and all the ordinary Britons now lying about having their surgeries “cancelled”. Shame on them. They don’t know the meaning of cancelled.

There are different variants of being cancelled doing the rounds, of course, but I think the one where you still get to dispense virological advice in a high-profile column and on TV is definitely the one to catch. It seems to give you complete immunity from meaningful consequences. I very much enjoyed Toby's [recent Newsnight appearance](#), where he was confronted by Emily Maitlis with his grimly debunked claims that there was never going to be a second spike – and proceeded to deal with this massive, cosmic bollock-drop only parenthetically. Let's see it in action. "Well – hands up, I got that wrong, Emily – but let's not forget that was during the summer ..." What's not to love about that split-second concession, the sort of "hands up" that counter-terrorism police will tell you is usually the prelude to some nutter reaching for his next concealed explosive.

I now read that Toby has deleted all his tweets from 2020, perhaps because his policy of appeasement of the coronavirus has not worked. This, incidentally, was the precise rearguard action tried by Neville Chamberlain, who is only remembered unfavourably because it turned out there was this one screenshot of him holding this one piece of paper. The subsequent witch-hunt got him cancelled from being prime minister.

If I do have one question for the provisional wing of the lockdown sceptics – other than "Have you suffered a recent head trauma?" – it would only be a tiny one. But I can't help wondering: how do they think the coronavirus is transmitted? Given that its transmission is not affected by lockdown measures (even though it patently and [evidentially is](#)), do they believe it spreads by some means other than respiratory droplets and contact? Do you catch it from self-reflection, perhaps, or not having a media platform? If not, could a sympathetic someone try to get the salient facts on Covid transmission inside Toby one way or another, even if they have to be written in crayons on sandpaper and administered as a suppository?

Anyway, that's the freedom of speech news. Now, on to the other great freedoms on which our nation was built: the freedom to control our waters and our borders, and the freedom to carry round a cup of coffee at all times like a security blanket. We'll deal with the latter first, with the puzzling news that the government is reportedly planning an advertising blitz to warn people that "grabbing a coffee can kill". In which case, why have they left the coffee shops open? You can't permit people to do something and then shame them for doing it – though naturally that is what Johnson's administration has spent all week

doing, as part of its drive to blame a tiny minority of rule-breaking individuals for the avoidable scale of the current deaths, as opposed to its own policies from several weeks ago.

Then again, why are we even looking for consistency? A government whose most senior personnel have spent years banging on about having control of our borders have been supremely relaxed about letting anyone arrive via airports for many of the most dangerous and significant months of the pandemic. Meanwhile, this morning found [Grant Shapps](#) addressing people wondering if they could book a summer holiday: “I’m the last person you should take this advice from … don’t take travel advice from me.” Thanking you, transport secretary.

As for the government’s other much-vaunted obsession, control of our waters, the post-Brexit red tape that is currently confining many boats to harbour and leaving [unsold fish](#) rotting on the docks suggests Johnson’s triumphant deal for fishermen may be beginning to stink. Indeed, the National Federation of Fishermen’s Organisations has written furiously to the prime minister and accused him of sacrificing the industry, then lying to both them and the public as to what he had negotiated.

“You have tried to present the agreement as a major success,” [runs this letter](#), quoted in the Times, “when it is patently clear that it is not.” I guess “landing a whopper” meant something different to Boris Johnson than it did to your average fisherman, and they couldn’t both be right. Or, as Jacob Rees-Mogg [put it to the Commons](#) on Thursday, of the wasted seafood and the claims the industry is now losing a million quid a day: “The key thing is, we’ve got our fish back. They’re now British fish, and they’re better and happier fish for it.” The fishermen seem less so. “It would be much better,” thunders their letter to Johnson, “if you, with humility and honesty, conceded that you tried but failed – rather than implying that you had handed us the keys of our liberation, when you have not.”

It WOULD be much better, wouldn’t it? Just as it would be much better if all the Covid grifters took the scale and horror of the second wave crisis we’re currently in the middle of as their cue to stop making entirely debunked claims that they can’t back up. I must admit I did think that the sheer numbers of current deaths, and the overwhelming of the health service by any reasonable

yardstick, might give them at least momentary pause. But – how to put this? – hands up, I got that wrong.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
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Parents find all-day Zoom less captivating than they expected

[Laura McInerney](#)



Scrambling for devices and dashing naked from the shower: lockdown 2 has created new hurdles for families – and schools

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Some schools still require pupils to wear uniform at home to reduce the pressure to own lots of clothes; others allow pupils to leave cameras off to protect their privacy. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

Some schools still require pupils to wear uniform at home to reduce the pressure to own lots of clothes; others allow pupils to leave cameras off to protect their privacy. Photograph: Peter Byrne/PA

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

In lockdown 1 last year, social media was alive with parents complaining that they were being forced to homeschool with little more than an unfathomable worksheet and the occasional email from school. “British teachers are barely trying,” [moaned the Economist](#) magazine. So the education secretary, Gavin Williamson, must have thought he was pulling a blinder when he [announced that in big lockdown 2](#) all children would be entitled to at least “three to five hours of teaching per day”.

Unfortunately, as has so often been the case in this pandemic, the reality has not quite turned out as parents perhaps hoped.

First, when people hear their child will receive “teaching” while at home, it leads to an expectation of Ms or Sir beamed into their house, delivering the same lessons via Zoom that might otherwise have been delivered in school. Some of the problems with that should have been predictable. Lord Andrew Adonis would know. He spent the start of lockdown 1 [whipping parents up into a frenzy](#) over the lack of streamed video lessons in state schools, urging them to complain to Ofsted. Two months later, when the House of Lords switched online, Lord [Adonis moaned](#) that only one in four speeches could be heard properly. Oh, the irony.

Schools and families have the same online issues, exacerbated by the fact that some people taking part are five years old, find it hard to concentrate and would like a nap. Well, yes, OK, like some members of the Lords.

Having every child simultaneously learning online each day has left more families scrambling for devices, as it is now harder for siblings to share. The latest research on the digital divide, by the [Sutton Trust, shows](#) that even though the government brags about delivering 700,000 laptops to schools, inequalities have worsened, especially in primary schools.

Some organisations have stepped in to help, with mobile providers now offering [free data deals for families in need](#), and the BBC broadcasting [educational television shows](#) each day for those without internet access.

['I've nothing left to give': parents on home schooling in lockdown](#)
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The schools inspectorate, Ofsted, [nominated by Williamson](#) to police his expectations, has [clearly stated](#) that “live lessons are not always best”. Pre-recorded lessons, live chat with teachers, and the ability to upload work for marking, can be equally effective. Textbooks and worksheets are also fine.

Meanwhile, as politicians issue their edicts and then change their minds, schools are just getting on with balancing needs. They know, for example, that being able to see pupils in their home environment is important, even just occasionally. One teacher told the sad tale of a student who had taken part in online learning for months, without turning on her video. When she returned to school in September she was plainly suffering from an eating disorder, and the school had been unable to step in.

Rules of “cameras always on”, however, as [some schools are doing](#), can leave children vulnerable too. It is embarrassing enough if your parents are hoarders, let alone having your classmates stare at piles of junk while you try to learn maths. There are tales of naked parents streaking past in the background, as they dash from shower to bedroom. And good luck if you were hoping to have a serious work call at the time when your child is expected to perform a live music lesson.

So schools are being inventive. Some have adopted “cameras on” for a short morning registration period followed by pre-recorded lessons in the day, balancing privacy and device-sharing. Virtual backgrounds can also help. Some schools still require pupils to wear uniform when at home to reduce the pressure to own lots of clothes.

Under big lockdown 2, children are much more likely to have a healthy diet of home learning. Not because of the government, but despite it. Hurray, please, for the school leaders, teachers – and parents – who are making it happen.

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[Opinion](#)[Donald Trump](#)

Trump may be gone, but his big lie will linger. Here's how we can fight it

[Jonathan Freedland](#)



The most obvious corrective to conspiracy theories is the facts that people can see with their own eyes

‘The fiction that propelled those crowds to break into the halls of Congress is the big lie of the stolen election.’ Photograph: Julio Cortez/AP

‘The fiction that propelled those crowds to break into the halls of Congress is the big lie of the stolen election.’ Photograph: Julio Cortez/AP

Fri 15 Jan 2021 12.26 EST

The truth hurts, but lies kill. The past 12 months have demonstrated that with a terrifying clarity. Lies about Covid, insisting that it was a hoax cooked up by the deep state, led millions of people to drop their guard and get infected. And one big lie about the US election – claiming that Donald Trump had won, when he’d lost – led to the storming of the US Capitol and an eruption of violence that left five dead.

The impact has been so swift, events rushing by in a blur, that it’s easy to miss the significance. On Wednesday, Donald Trump – already only the third US president in history to be impeached – was impeached again. In the first 222 years of the country’s existence, impeachment happened only once. Now that most severe, vanishingly rare of sanctions has struck twice in a single year.

In the past, the impeachment process unfolded at a slow crawl: 11 months separated the day Bill Clinton vowed he'd never had "sexual relations" with Monica Lewinsky and the vote in the House of Representatives to try him for high crimes and misdemeanours. This time it happened in a week, the speed a function of two unusual circumstances: first, the accused has only days left in office; second, those House members were witnesses, Congress the scene of the crime.

Unusual too is that this decision was not taken on wholly partisan lines. Ten Republicans broke ranks to put Trump in the dock. Though that only emphasises that [197 Republicans did not](#): they apparently find it acceptable for a president to incite a violent insurrection against the nation's democratically elected assembly.

Next comes a trial in the Senate. The conventional wisdom says that it will fail – that most Republican senators, terrified of their party's Trump-worshipping base, will follow the lead of the 197 rather than the 10 – especially once Joe Biden is sworn in at noon on Wednesday and the urgent need to remove Trump from power has faded.

Still, it's possible that the cannier Senate Republicans will adopt the icy cynicism of Mitch McConnell – who briefed that he is [open to convicting](#) the president – and seize the chance to be rid of the Trump incubus once and for all. If enough of them vote guilty, then in a second vote the Senate can bar him from holding public office ever again. Ambitious Republicans, eyeing the 2024 contest, are already gaming out that scenario – some of them perhaps within Trump's own family. Has [Ivanka pulled out](#) of attending Biden's inauguration because she wants to remain viable with the base? If so, she'll first have to contend with her brother, Donald Jr.

And yet, even if Republican leaders manage both to banish Trump and prevent a dynastic succession, they will not be rid of him. It's become a truism to say that [Trumpism will linger](#), but there is an even more direct legacy that will hang around like a foul stench. That is the fiction that propelled those crowds to break into the halls of Congress: the big lie of the stolen election.

"[The lie outlasts the liar](#)," wrote the eminent historian of Nazism Timothy Snyder. If Trump's supporters continue to believe that their man won big last November – and even now only [22% of Republicans](#) consider the election free and fair – there is no reason why their anger at that theft should abate over the

next four years. On the contrary, it will grow and fester, demanding payback in 2024, by force if necessary. Snyder notes darkly that 15 years separated the invention of the big lie that Germany lost the first world war thanks to a Jewish “stab in the back” and Adolf Hitler’s ascendancy to power. Myths endure.

All of which raises a much bigger question than what to do with Donald Trump: what to do about the big lie and, more deeply, about the climate in which millions have come to believe it’s true. There has been much diagnosis of the post-truth phenomenon that Trump came to embody, but what about a remedy?

A first requirement is to tailor the treatment. The philosopher Prof Quassim Cassam, author of [a study of conspiracy theories](#) and their appeal, distinguishes between the producers and consumers of such fictions. The pedlars of lies may have a casual, smirking insouciance towards the truth, but that’s not true of their audience. Those who stormed Congress were not dismissive of truth’s importance; on the contrary, they were prompted to act because of what they believed to have been a vital, hidden truth.

The task, then, is not to restore public regard for veracity so much as to equip citizens to distinguish between what’s factually true and what is false. To that end, the philosopher has an unexpected suggestion. Get those who swallow conspiracy theories to ask of those supplying them the very questions they usually direct at the supposedly lying establishment: *cui bono?* Who benefits from this version of events? What’s their agenda? Except now they won’t be interrogating the BBC or the New York Times but the likes of Alex Jones and the disseminators of the QAnon fantasy. What exactly are they getting out of spinning these tales? [A tidy profit](#), for one thing.

Similarly, one might also ask the believers, what’s in it for *you*? How does believing the [QAnon](#) story that a Satan-worshipping ring of paedophiles controls the US government help you? How does it address any of the underlying problems in your life? If you feel life and opportunity have passed you by, how does subscribing to [QAnon](#) help? Perhaps it provides a spurious kind of explanation, but it doesn’t make your lot any better. Admittedly, a university professor is not perhaps the ideal carrier of that message. Better, says Cassam, might be a former conspiracy theorist, someone who has broken free.

The most obvious corrective to lies are the facts that people can see with their own eyes. Few people still insist Covid is a hoax when they or a loved one are

in intensive care. But the next best thing is verifiable information about your immediate community. It's no accident that the rise of conspiracy thinking and post-truth has coincided with the decline of local news: [265 local titles have closed](#) in the UK since 2005. Into that vacuum have rushed unverifiable, often abstract assertions about the state of the country or the world, spread by social media. With no full account of the reality around you to check against, those assertions can take root.

[Republicans must repudiate Trump - or live with the consequences forever | Geoffrey Kabaservice](#)
[Read more](#)

The media is clearly central in all this. In the US, two separate epistemic universes now exist side by side – an MSNBC realm, in which Biden won fair and square; and a Fox News (and now Newsmax and One America News Network) one, in which Trump was robbed. In the US, it's easy to succumb to nostalgia for the old “fairness doctrine” that demanded balance from the broadcast networks until it was [scrapped under Ronald Reagan](#) in 1987. If that were revived, and extended to cable, it might break down the divide, restoring at least a shared basis of agreed facts. Dream on, say the experts: that genie will not return to its bottle. Others suggest a more immediate fix: lobby advertisers to boycott fact-deniers such as Fox, starving them of funds.

Still, cable news is only part of the story. Separate silos of knowledge exist and are entrenched just as much on Facebook and Twitter. A more realistic demand might be for external audits of those platforms, opening their algorithms in particular to public view, says the specialist in digital journalism Prof Emily Bell. Why not make transparent the process that ensures [falsehoods spread six times faster](#) than the truth on Twitter? While we're at it, Bell suggests serious investment in the “civic infrastructure of knowledge”, from libraries to new forms of local reporting that might hold power to account.

None of these ideas represents a perfect answer. The point is, the twin crises of Covid and Trump have exposed the mortal threat posed by lies and the long war on truth. Now the truth must defend itself – and fight back.

- Jonathan Freedland is a Guardian columnist

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[Priti Patel](#)

Over 400,000 crime records could be affected by police computer error

Fingerprint, DNA and arrest history records deleted and visa system thrown into disarray

Priti Patel faces questions after ‘an extraordinarily serious security breach’.

Photograph: Reuters

Priti Patel faces questions after ‘an extraordinarily serious security breach’.

Photograph: Reuters

[Vikram Dodd, Sarah Marsh and Jamie Grierson](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 17.30 EST

More than 400,000 crime records could have been affected by a data blunder, with records for serious offences supposed to be kept forever accidentally deleted and police fearing criminals may not be caught, a letter from a senior officer reveals.

The records were accidentally deleted due to a coding error on 10 January, and the incident affects fingerprints, DNA, and arrest records on the police national computer (PNC).

The Guardian has learned that records related to serious offences, meant to be kept “indefinitely”, have been affected and police have already suffered what they term as “near misses” for serious crimes.

Police leaders are also concerned that the chaos may cause them to hold data they should have legally deleted.

Pressure is mounting on the home secretary, [Priti Patel](#), to give a full account of the blunder affecting the PNC, which is run by the Home Office.

A letter sent to senior officers on the National Police Chiefs’ Council (NPCC) on Friday from deputy chief constable Naveed Malik, lead for the organisation on the PNC, outlines the scale of records affected: “In PNC approximately 213,000 offence records, 175,000 arrest records and 15,000 person records have potentially been deleted in error. In terms of understanding the potential linkage between records, a one-person record can have multiple arrest records and one arrest record can have multiple offences linked to it.”

The DNA database is connected to the PNC and has also been hit, the police chief’s letter reveals. It says: “Approximately 26,000 DNA records corresponding to 21,710 subjects have potentially been deleted in error, including records that have previously been marked for indefinite retention following conviction of serious offences.”

Technicians are also scrambling to recover tens of thousands of fingerprint records, according to the deputy chief constable’s letter, which says that “30,000 fingerprint records and 600 subject records have potentially been deleted in error”.

Police fear offenders may be missed. Malik wrote in the letter to police chiefs: “As the National DNA Database and the National Fingerprint Collection

currently contain incomplete sets of biometric records, there is the possibility that biometric matches between crime scenes and offenders may not be identified.”

The letter reveals cases where some people police suspect nearly got away because of the blunder: “We are aware of a couple of instances of ‘near misses’ for serious crimes where a biometric match to an offender was not generated as expected but the offender was identified through matches between scenes. However, in these circumstances, without a direct match report to the subject, it may be more challenging for police to progress to an interview or arrest.

“We are also aware of at least one instance where the DNA profile from a suspect in custody did not generate a match to a crime scene as expected, potentially impeding the investigation of the individual’s involvement in the crime.”

The [Home Office](#) said it was working with police to assess the impact of the error, which reportedly occurred by accident during a weekly “weeding” session to expunge data.

The policing minister, [Kit Malthouse](#), said the PNC was a large database of information that requires maintenance, adding: “Unfortunately down to human error, some defective code was introduced as part of that routine maintenance earlier this week and that’s resulted in a deletion of some records and that’s currently under investigation.

“We are now working very quickly with policing partners and within the Home Office to try and recover the data and assess the full extent of the problem.”

Although officials are “not entirely sure as yet” whether the problem has had an operational impact on the police, Malthouse said, contingency plans have been put in place to ensure investigations can continue.

The shadow home secretary, [Nick Thomas-Symonds](#), called on Patel to make an urgent statement: “It’s not good enough for the home secretary to hide behind her junior minister on this when there has been such a major security breach on her watch.

“It’s now vital that she makes an urgent statement outlining the true scale of the issue, when ministers were informed and what the plan is to provide public

reassurance. Yet again, Conservative incompetence is putting people's safety at risk."

He added: "This is an extraordinarily serious security breach that presents huge dangers for public safety. The incompetence of this shambolic government cannot be allowed to put people at risk, let criminals go free and deny victims justice."

On Friday night Thomas-Symonds wrote to Patel, urging her to show "personal responsibility and leadership" and asking when ministers were first made aware of the breach, if local forces had been informed of potential impacts in their area, and what steps were being taken to retrieve the data.

The PNC allows real-time checks on people and vehicles. Millions of records are kept on it, and they are removed automatically after certain periods depending on the nature of the offence, the suspect's history and other factors.

[What the loss of records from the Police National Computer means](#)
[Read more](#)

The deletion also caused chaos with the visa process. Applications, which are checked against the PNC, were suspended for two days but have now resumed.

A spokesperson for the NPCC said: "We are aware of an issue with the PNC and are working closely with the government to understand the potential operational impacts."

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[Police](#)

What the loss of records from the Police National Computer means

The kind of data that was accidentally deleted and what it could have been used for

The PNC is a system that stores and shares criminal records information across the UK. Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

The PNC is a system that stores and shares criminal records information across the UK. Photograph: Joe Giddens/PA

[Jamie Grierson](#) Home affairs correspondent

[@JamieGrierson](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 06.32 EST

Fingerprint, DNA and arrest history records have been [accidentally deleted](#) from databases linked to the Police National Computer (PNC).

Here we take a look at what the PNC is used for and the implications of the technical blunder.

What is the Police National Computer?

The PNC is a system that stores and shares criminal records information across the UK, [according to the criminal records office Acro](#).

Law enforcement agencies use it to access information that will support national, regional and local investigations, Acro says.

A person's PNC record contains their name, date of birth, sex and ethnic appearance and an arrest summons number, as well as details of successful convictions. Information about DNA and fingerprints is also held on the PNC.

How is the information used?

According to the College of Policing, the PNC provides "real-time checks" on people, vehicles, crimes and property.

In addition, other "non-police organisations", have limited access to information held on the PNC in order to help them fulfil their statutory functions. Organisations such as the Charity Commission for England and Wales, government departments, the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA), the Prison Service, the NHS and UK border operations.

How long is information kept?

An individual's record on the PNC is retained until their 100th birthday, including if they were released with no further action after an arrest.

DNA and fingerprints are held indefinitely for those convicted of a crime, except for first-time offenders who are children.

If a person is not convicted and released without further action, the DNA and fingerprints could be held for three years before deletion.

What has been lost?

[Priti Patel under fire as 150,000 police records accidentally lost](#)
[Read more](#)

According to a letter sent to the National [Police](#) Chiefs' Council, more than 400,000 offence records, arrest records and person records may have been deleted, as well as tens of thousands of fingerprint records and DNA records, some of which had been marked for "indefinite retention".

What is the impact?

The impact is significant because some offenders are ultimately charged and convicted because their fingerprints and DNA, accessed via the PNC, are kept and cross-checked against material found at other crime scenes.

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A-levels

'Cruelly cast aside': A-level victims say summer debacle must never happen again

Thousands of 2020 students are still campaigning for justice after losing university offers and apprenticeships when their grades were wrongly reduced

Harry-James Brioche of Cheshire lost his degree apprenticeship with PwC, that would have paid his tuition fees and a salary, when his grades were reduced based on Ofqual guidance that has since been withdrawn.

Harry-James Brioche of Cheshire lost his degree apprenticeship with PwC, that would have paid his tuition fees and a salary, when his grades were reduced based on Ofqual guidance that has since been withdrawn.

[Liz Lightfoot](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.15 EST

The flawed advice to schools last May on how to grade students when exams were cancelled because of the pandemic has been withdrawn from the government's website and the [damage](#) it did consigned to history. But out in the real world there is no such magic wand for thousands of students still seeking justice after their grades were wrongly reduced.

One is Harry-James Brioche, who lost a hard-won degree apprenticeship with PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) that would have paid his university fees for four years, plus a salary to cover his living costs, and work placements and the chance of a job on graduation.

Another is Helen Prior*, whose teachers at her Oxfordshire school thought she would achieve AAB based on her end-of-term tests and mock exams, but who lost her place to study pharmacy when her grades were unaccountably reduced to BDD.

They are just two of 1,500 teenagers whose families have joined a Facebook [group](#) to campaign for justice for students whose schools closely followed the guidance of the exams regulator Ofqual, which then used a computer algorithm that wrongly graded about 40% of A-level candidates.

[GCSE, A-level and Sats exams to be scrapped in England this year](#)
[Read more](#)

The affected students attended schools and colleges that followed the advice of bodies, including ASCL, the headteachers' union, that to comply with Ofqual's guidance, they needed to alter their teacher-assessed grades to [bring them in line](#) with what students had achieved over the previous three years. Ofqual feared that teacher-assessed grades alone would be too optimistic, and designed an algorithm that took a [school's historic results](#) into account in order to avoid national grade inflation.

But while some schools lowered their teachers' assessments – often against their better judgment – to bring them in line with previous years before submitting them as Cags (centre assessment grades) to [Ofqual](#), other schools did not alter grades when they submitted their Cags, and instead left [Ofqual](#) to number-crunch. In the end this meant that some students suffered even more because their school had already lowered their grades before submitting them.

Wind forward to August 2020 and, when it emerged that [Ofqual's algorithm to standardise the grades had not worked](#), the government ordered that students be given the choice of accepting the grades they were awarded by Ofqual's system or using their schools' Cags instead.

Prior, who was downgraded from AAB to ABC when her school submitted its Cags, was horrified to find her grades further reduced by Ofqual's algorithm to BDD. She believes its algorithm failed to pick up that the school had been rapidly improving under a new headteacher, attracting stronger students to its sixth form. When the government announced in August that students could choose their Cags instead, hers went up to ABC – still short of the ABB she needed to study pharmacy.

On Friday, launching a consultation, Williamson confirmed that teacher assessment will be the prime method of setting grades this year and proposed that results be published in [early July](#), allowing more time for appeals. But students let down last year say a better system is needed where students themselves can appeal, not have to rely on their school.

Ofqual kept insisting last year its system had to be fair, yet its unfairness is still not acknowledged or resolved

Dennis Sherwood, an independent assessment consultant who has worked with Ofqual, says: “Ofqual kept insisting last year that its system had to be fair – the word was used 14 times in one of its statements – yet unfairness to individual students is still not being acknowledged or resolved. Trusting teachers is a good thing, but last year has shown that advice given to them can be unclear and subject to change, so it’s very important that this year’s candidates have a fair and timely appeals system.”

Brioche’s school, St Ambrose College in Altrincham, Cheshire, appealed to the exam board OCR for his computer science grade to be increased from the A submitted by the school to the A* they had originally assessed, sending a copy of the form filled in by his teacher, an OCR examiner in the subject, saying he would get an A*.

It argued that it had entered only five candidates for the subject, and Ofqual admitted in August that its standardisation historical method had broken down and did not work at all with [cohorts of five](#) or fewer. But although Brioche’s grade was therefore based on faulty data, the appeal to OCR failed. “The

centre's approach to determining Cags is consistent with Ofqual's guidance," it ruled – referring to the same guidance that has since been withdrawn by the Department for Education.

Brioche's school decided against appealing the B grade it had submitted for his physics A-level because the number of students sitting the subject was larger, making it harder to prove that the historic data was misleading.

Geoff Barton, of the ASCL, called for 2020 candidates to be able to use their teacher-assessed grades if higher than their Cags, but Gavin Williamson refused. Photograph: Jason Senior/ASCL/PA

"I'm very grateful for the school's support," says Brioche.

OCR said it was following the [advice](#) of the Joint Council for Qualifications, which represents examining bodies, which had advised that the fact a school had taken account previous years' grades when calculating its Cags was not grounds for appeal.

St Ambrose's headteacher, Dermot Rainey, said he did not think it appropriate to comment.

Geoff Barton, the ASCL's general secretary, has called for candidates to be able to use their teacher assessed grades if higher than their Cags. Williamson, however, has refused, telling the Commons education select committee last September that he feared "every school would decide that it had been too strict on their centre assessment grades and that you would have every school submitting again".

Barton says many schools and colleges were placed in a very difficult position last year. "They worked extremely hard to apply Ofqual's methodology, only to find that the algorithm then proved a disaster and had to be abandoned. They then faced irate parents who felt their children's grades had been pulled down unfairly and Ofqual turned down our requests to open up an avenue of appeal. We also requested that the government commission an independent review of exactly what went wrong with last year's system, but that didn't happen either.

['Another year wasted': A-level and GCSE students react to cancelled exams](#)
[Read more](#)

"We will look closely at details of how the teacher assessment system announced by the education secretary will operate this year, but it is obviously imperative in the light of last year's disaster that the guidance to schools and colleges, and the system for moderation and appeals, is clear, logical, and demonstrably fair."

All this will come too late for Brioche, who was accepted on the same computer science degree – but without the PwC apprenticeship for which he had been selected from more than 900 applicants. A spokeswoman for PwC said more students than expected had met its entry requirements. "Across the four tech degree programmes we have there were 110 places available. Due to the unusual circumstances and changes in grades, that meant more students were eligible compared to a normal year, so we extended this to accept 132. Unfortunately, some candidates didn't achieve grades in either scenario," she said.

Brioche says he lost his place through no fault of his own. "I feel cheated. I worked so hard to make sure all my marks were A or A* in all my subjects throughout the year and then the grades were taken away and all the safety nets

have failed me. It's too late to change what happened to me and many other students, and it's hard for me to speak publicly about it, but I just don't want to see more students suffer from the same mistakes this year," he says.

His mother, Catherine Brioche, says: "My son and others like him worked hard and have done everything asked of them, and now they have lost trust in the system that let them down so badly. They have been cruelly cast aside. It must not happen again this year."

**The student's name has been changed at her request*

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Architecture

Coventry v the wrecking ball: 'We need gentle repair – not wholesale demolition'

Futuristic ... the dome and shoppers in the Bull Yard in 1967. Photograph: Mirrorpix/Getty Images

Futuristic ... the dome and shoppers in the Bull Yard in 1967. Photograph: Mirrorpix/Getty Images

From the rubble of war, Coventry rebuilt a town centre hailed as a radical urban vision. Yet, even as it salutes this heritage as UK city of culture, planners are plotting its destruction



[Oliver Wainwright](#)

[@ollywainwright](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 14.32 EST

‘The town of the future’ is how Coventry was described in [Our Land in the Making](#), a popular Ladybird book from 1966, heralding the Midlands city as a model of the brave new postwar world. It depicted a radical vision where shoppers roamed in novel “pedestrian precincts”, beautifully landscaped with gushing fountains and blossoming cherry trees, while cars were banished to ring roads and futuristic rooftop car parks, connected by aerial bridges. It may have been Britain’s motor city, but Coventry also knew how to make the town centre a pleasant place for people. The new shopping streets were human in scale: built with fine materials, boasting carefully integrated public art, signage, seating and planting – the new picturesquely planned to frame views of the old.

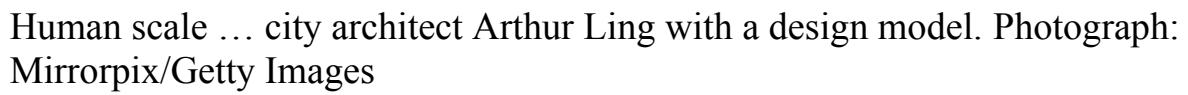
Fifty-five years on, Coventry is toasting its status as the [2021 UK city of culture](#) with a “brutalist blue” ad campaign that celebrates the gritty concrete city in all its glory. The cathedral is shown [emerging from a blazing inferno](#),

dancers blend with the city's modernist theatre, while basketball players merge with the startling elephantine sports centre, in a thrilling montage of speed and industry. Yet this great festival of Coventry culture comes at a time when much of the city's pioneering postwar urban fabric is under threat. A gargantuan planning application has been submitted to demolish half of the town centre and replace it with a shopping mall with flats on top, in what has been condemned as a violent assault on the city's modernist heritage, just when it should be being celebrated.

Visual identity ... [Coventry's City of Culture video](#)

"It's shocking to see the lack of consideration our own council has for the heritage of our city," says Vincent Hammersley, chair of [The Coventry Society](#), which has been battling the plans. "I played in the rubble of the second world war bombsites as a kid. To see the city being rebuilt was something we were incredibly proud of. Now, to see it going under the wrecking ball, simply to please London developers, is a total disgrace. It's absolute vandalism."

The Twentieth Century Society, which fights for buildings from that era, has also lodged fierce objections to [the £360m scheme](#), designed by Chapman Taylor architects for the Shearer Property Group, describing the proposals as "totally unacceptable". Case worker Coco Whittaker explains: "We believe the site is an important example of the replanning and building of Coventry in the postwar period, home to low-rise retail blocks with connected rooftop carparks. Such buildings could be sympathetically refurbished and reused as part of an effort to invest in and improve the area."



Human scale ... city architect Arthur Ling with a design model. Photograph: Mirrorpix/Getty Images

The 15-acre site of the City Centre South plan, a joint venture with the council, encompasses a substantial chunk of the pedestrianised town centre, designed by city architect and planning officer Arthur Ling from 1955, and later Terence Gregory from 1963. Inspired by visits to Rotterdam to see [the pioneering Lijnbaan shopping street](#), the architects created a low-rise network of streets, arcades and squares, on a scale that referenced the “cosy streets” of prewar Coventry, as Ling put it, “meeting the demand for enclosure of space on a human scale”.

The city is home to some of [the finest examples of postwar architecture](#) in the UK, from Sir Basil Spence’s stirring transformation of the war-bombed cathedral, to the Belgrave Theatre by Ling, and the circular, car park-crowned central market, all protected by listing. But the modest background structure of the town centre – including the threatened Bull Yard, Shelton Square, Market Way, City Arcade and Hertford Street – is often overlooked.

“It tends to go under the radar,” says Louise Campbell, professor of architectural history at nearby University of Warwick, “because it’s not showy. It doesn’t scream at you. But the precinct offers a really interesting variety of vistas, with curved streets and ramps, and details that give interest to the experience of moving through the town centre, like the sculptural bronzed-fibreglass relief panels above the shops. By contrast, what is being proposed by the developers bears no relation to Coventry. It could be Milton Keynes, or Minneapolis, or [Magnitogorsk](#).”

Concern ... the two-sided concrete mural by William Mitchell. Photograph: Heritage Images/Getty Images

Campbell and the Twentieth Century Society are also concerned for the fate of a number of public art works, including a wild Aztec-style concrete relief mural created by William Mitchell in 1966 for [the former Three Tuns pub](#), as well as a relief of [Sir Guy and the Dun Cow by Alma Ramsey](#). The developers say they plan to relocate Mitchell’s grade II-listed relief, but quite how they will recreate

the effect of the two-sided sculpture, which is carved on the inside and the outside of the building's concrete walls, remains to be seen.

"It's a real tragedy," says Jeremy Gould, author of [Coventry: The Making of a Modern City](#), the definitive book on the city's postwar development. "The whole thing is an appalling waste of time and money, and entirely misses the point about the city centre's special qualities. It shows such a lack of imagination – all the ideas seem to be reboiled from the 1980s. We need gentle repair, not wholesale demolition."

Visiting Coventry today, it can be difficult to fully appreciate the quality of the city architects' original vision after decades of neglect

Visiting [Coventry](#) today, it can be difficult to fully appreciate the quality of the city architects' original vision. After decades of neglect and misguided intervention, the part of the town centre in question is in a tatty state and suffers from practical problems with servicing and circulation. It can feel tired and dreary, lacking the visual drama of other now-beloved landmarks of the period, making it a hard sell for those who have yet to be convinced by the subtle charms of postwar planning.

"It hasn't aged well," says Labour councillor Jim O'Boyle, Coventry's cabinet member for regeneration, who is leading the redevelopment plans for the council. "There's not much architectural merit to a lot of it. You can't just pick on one bit and say it's nice and ignore the rest of the concrete monstrosities. That's nonsense. The point of shopping precincts is not to look the same as when they were first built – they have to be living, breathing things that respond to how the city is evolving. We're trying to make Coventry fit for the 21st century."

Experience ... an illustration of the proposed Coventry City Centre South (CCS) proposals by Shearer Property Group.

O'Boyle says the initial plans were for around 70% retail space and 30% housing, but the scheme struggled to find a major anchor tenant, so it's been rejigged to 70% residential, 30% retail and entertainment. "City centres are now for meeting friends, eating out and having what they call 'experiences,'" he says. "It's a very millennial thing. After Covid, I think everyone will want a few experiences. Coventry can be at the vanguard of that."

Taking inspiration from London's Covent Garden market, the designs feature a central "pavilion" that will host "a dynamic variety of pop-up retail and leisure providers". This will be surrounded by bulky blocks of flats, along with a hotel and cinema, with shops and restaurants on the ground floor. But, despite the development benefiting from almost £100m of council funding, not a single one of the 1,300 homes will be classed as affordable. Questions also remain over whether local shopkeepers in the existing precinct will be priced out.

“The scale of the shops along Hertford Street and City Arcade was very well considered,” says Louise Campbell, “not just to experience as a pedestrian shopper, but from a rental perspective too. There’s a very real fear that these businesses won’t be able to afford space in the new blocks.”

Motor city ... the listed City Arcade car park in 1985. Photograph: Mirrorpix/Getty Images

It is not the first time that Coventry town centre has been in the council’s sights. In 2009, it unveiled [a £1bn plan by Jon Jerde](#), the Californian guru of themed shopping malls, [to flatten the entire centre](#) and replace it with a park-topped mall radiating from an “iconic” egg-shaped library. It reeked of a desperation to keep up with the novelty blobs of Birmingham and inevitably floundered. But it let the bulldozing genie out of the bottle and set a damaging precedent, in that the current proposals seem positively modest in comparison.

“The whole saga feels like watching a slow-motion car crash,” says architectural historian Otto Saumarez Smith, author of [Boom Cities](#), a book

about radical urban renewal in 1960s Britain. “The town centre has been subject to a process of attrition, and it takes a bit of imagination to see past the 1990s attempts to pretend it was something else. But the precinct could easily be refurbished and renovated.”

Many suspect the dilapidation is no accident. “What they’ve got is worn out and tacky,” says author Jeremy Gould. “But of course that’s a deliberate ploy. You make something look awful and then you consult: ‘Would you like this brand new glitzy retail centre, or this tacky old thing to remain?’ Of course, the answer is the new one.”

Up in the air ... the astonishing Coventry Sports and Leisure Centre, likened to the shape of an elephant. Photograph: lovethephoto/Alamy

The council has frequently clashed with the heritage lobby over its desire for shiny new baubles. [In a 2018 post on his Piledriver blog](#), Councillor O’Boyle described Historic England as “an unaccountable quango made up of non Coventrians dressed in tweeds and Rupert trousers” who “lay down the law

according to Tarquin and his friends at the grouse shooting club”. Around the same time, the council’s only heritage officer left, having opposed some of the steroidal student tower blocks that now hem the city, leaving a void of expertise.

At least 10 of the noted buildings featured in Gould’s 2016 book have since been demolished, and others remain threatened. The listed 1950s architects’ department itself is being engulfed by a big new complex for the university, while the fate of the listed 1960s swimming pool and the elephant-like sports centre is also up in the air, after the construction of the new Wave pool, a metallic blue tornado that swirls clumsily next to [a medieval church spire](#). O’Boyle promises “exciting plans” with a developer are in the works to repurpose both.

Clumsy ... the Wave building and clashing spire. Photograph: Colin Underhill/Alamy

As its year as city of culture gets under way, this would be the perfect time for Coventry to show the world how differently regeneration could be done. This ailing 1960s “town of the future” could be repaired and upgraded as a model of mid-century restoration, with civic new uses found for empty shops, not more identikit retail dropped here in the hope tenants will come.

O’Boyle says improvements have already begun in the Upper Precinct, the earlier part of the town centre, where a clunky 1980s escalator has been removed and sight-lines restored. But these small tweaks do little to compensate for the destruction next door.

“There is a real opportunity to showcase Coventry as the international success that it was,” says Saumarez Smith. “There is something about the optimism of that early moment that makes what is happening now even more painful. It is the city to tell the history of postwar British planning and the role of the car. It’s not impossible that it will become a world heritage site.” If it survives the wrecking ball, that is.

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Megrahi family to appeal to UK supreme court over Lockerbie conviction

Scottish court of appeal rules Libyan was properly convicted of 1988 bombing of passenger plane

Abdelbaset al-Megrahi (centre) was convicted at a special trial held without a jury. Photograph: Manoocher Deghati/AFP/Getty Images

Abdelbaset al-Megrahi (centre) was convicted at a special trial held without a jury. Photograph: Manoocher Deghati/AFP/Getty Images

[Severin Carrell](#)

[@severincarrell](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 07.06 EST

The family of the Libyan convicted for the Lockerbie bombing, [Abdelbaset al-Megrahi](#), are lodging an appeal to the UK supreme court after Scottish judges threw out a miscarriage of justice case.

The court of appeal in Edinburgh ruled on Friday that Megrahi was properly convicted of bombing Pan Am flight 103 over Lockerbie in 1988, killing 270 passengers, crew and townspeople.

The court, chaired by Lord Carloway, Scotland's most senior judge, rejected both grounds of appeal from Megrahi's family, lodged after the Scottish criminal cases review commission, an official body which investigates suspected miscarriages of justice, returned the case to court.

"On the evidence at trial, a reasonable jury, properly directed, would have been entitled to return a guilty verdict," its ruling said.

Megrahi died [at home in Tripoli in 2012](#) after being diagnosed with terminal cancer.

Aamer Anwar, the family's lawyer, said they would now take their case to the supreme court in London and would continue pressing for the UK government to release a secret document thought to implicate Iran and a Palestinian terror group.

It emerged in November that the foreign secretary, Dominic Raab, had upheld a public interest immunity certificate withholding documents, thought to have been sent by the then king of Jordan, which [alleged a Jordanian intelligence agent](#) within the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine-General Command (PFLP-GC), called Marwan Khreesat, made the bomb.

Anwar said: "Ali al-Megrahi, the son of the only man convicted of the Lockerbie bombing, said his family were left heartbroken by the decision of the Scottish courts. He maintained his father's innocence and is determined to fulfil the promise he made to clear his name and that of Libya."

The significance of the Megrahi appeal [increased in December](#) after William Barr, the outgoing US attorney general, announced he was indicting another Libyan, Mohammed Abouagela Masud, for allegedly building the bomb used against Pan Am 103. Masud is thought to be in a Libyan jail, and had been

named as an associate of Megrahi's on the original indictment against Megrahi but never formally implicated in the bombing.

Lord Wolffe, the lord advocate and head of Scotland's prosecution service, welcomed the appeal court decision. He did not refer directly to the US decision to indict Masud but confirmed that other suspects were under "active investigation".

He said the Lockerbie remained "the deadliest terrorist attack on UK soil and the largest homicide case Scotland's prosecutors have ever encountered in terms of scale and of complexity".

So far no other suspects have been formally identified by Scottish police or prosecutors but it is understood Masud is also very high on the Scottish list of names. Wolffe said a pledge to the Scottish parliament by the then lord advocate, Lord Boyd, to continue searching for other culprits after Megrahi's conviction in 2001 was being honoured.

"For almost 20 years since that date, Scottish police and prosecutors have continued the search for evidence. This work will continue; and there remain suspects under active investigation," Wolffe said.

The latest appeal centred on two grounds. The first was that no reasonable jury would have convicted Megrahi on the evidence offered in court, particularly on the circumstantial evidence of Tony Gauci, a Maltese shopkeeper who claimed he sold clothes to Megrahi which were placed in the suitcase bomb.

It also said the conviction was unsafe because the prosecution had failed to disclose evidence which raised strong doubts about reliability of Gauci's evidence and information contained in CIA cables.

On the opening day of the appeal, heard in November, Megrahi's legal team accused the judges who convicted Megrahi at a special trial held without a jury 20 years ago of "cherrypicking" evidence.

"The court has read into a mass of conflicting evidence a pattern or conclusion which is not really justified," Claire Mitchell QC told the five appeal judges.

But that was rebutted in the appeal court's 64-page ruling. In a passage rejecting allegations that the possibility of Gauci getting a reward for his

evidence should have been disclosed, the judges said the court had been very careful in how it reached its verdict.

“When the whole evidence, and the circumstances of the trial in general, are taken into account, the content of these documents [referring to a reward] would have been of no significance relative to the undermining of the careful reasoning of the court on the credibility and reliability of Mr Gauci,” the ruling said.

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[Crime](#)

Grime artist who raped four women has jail sentence increased

Appeal court adds six years to prison term of Andy Anokye, 33, who performed under the name Solo 45

Andy Anokye will serve a 30-year jail term plus five years extended licence.
Photograph: Avon and Somerset police/PA

Andy Anokye will serve a 30-year jail term plus five years extended licence.
Photograph: Avon and Somerset police/PA

[Steven Morris](#)

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 10.29 EST

A man [who held four women against their will](#) and repeatedly raped them has had his sentence increased by the court of appeal.

Victims of Andy Anokye, 33, who performed as a grime artist under the stage name Solo 45, told how he beat and threatened them with weapons, held a cloth with bleach over their faces and waterboarded them, recording much of the abuse on his mobile phone.

Anokye was convicted of 30 charges at Bristol crown court last year and handed a 29-year extended sentence, [made up of a 24-year jail term](#) and an extended licence period of five years.

But after a hearing on Friday three senior judges concluded the sentence was “unduly lenient” and increased it to 35 years – with a 30-year jail term and five years extended licence.

Lady Justice Macur, sitting with two other judges, said the original sentence did not reflect the fact that Anokye had committed multiple offences of rape against four separate victims. The court refused an attempt by Anokye to appeal against the length of his original sentence.

His sentence was referred to the court by the Attorney General’s Office (AGO) under the unduly lenient sentencing scheme.

Speaking after the ruling, the solicitor general, Michael Ellis QC, said: “Anokye’s crimes were truly shocking. The court of appeal’s decision to increase his sentence recognises the severity of the abuse he inflicted upon his victims and the danger he poses to the public.”

The musician, who was part of the collective [Boy Better Know](#), admitted in court that he liked to “terrorise” women but claimed they always consented to his “rape game”.

However, when asked during cross-examination whether he ever continued to have sex when a woman had asked him to stop, Anokye initially said he “usually” did stop, before swiftly correcting himself to say “always”.

The videos he made of his crimes were so extreme and intimate that the public gallery was cleared when they were shown and, unusually, only two members of the media were allowed to view them.

Anokye [grew up in Tottenham, north London](#), but was living in a Bristol apartment at the time of his arrest. Giving evidence, Anokye told the court he had dacryphilia – a sexual arousal from tears or sobbing.

He will only be released from prison after serving at least 20 years of his 30-year jail term behind bars and when the Parole Board is satisfied he no longer poses a danger to the public.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/15/grime-artist-raped-four-women-jail-sentence-increased-andy-anokye>

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Social care

Children's social care: 'wide-ranging' review launched in England

Government calls review 'once in generation opportunity' to change system failing young people

The review will examine early years help, child protection, fostering and care homes. Photograph: Simon Dack Archive/Alamy

The review will examine early years help, child protection, fostering and care homes. Photograph: Simon Dack Archive/Alamy

[Patrick Butler](#) Social policy editor

Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.54 EST

The government has launched a [review](#) of children's social care in England, calling it a "once-in-a-generation opportunity" to overhaul a system it says is failing vulnerable young people and creaking under the strain of rising numbers of children entering care.

The review, promised in the Conservative party's 2019 general election manifesto, will examine early years help, child protection, fostering and kinship care, and care homes, as well as the family support measures needed to prevent children having to enter care.

"This review will be bold, wide-ranging and will not shy away from exposing problems where they exist," said the education secretary, [Gavin Williamson](#). "It is part of the golden thread that runs through everything we are doing to level up society, especially for those who are too often forgotten or marginalised."

The review was broadly welcomed by social work leaders and charities, although there was concern over its independence, and fears that it will seek to water down longstanding rights and safeguards introduced by the [1989 Children's Act](#), and extend the [role of private firms](#) in child protection.

Children's services have been under intense pressure for more than a decade as a result of rising numbers of children being taken into care, [huge austerity cuts](#) to local authority budgets, and [deepening levels of poverty](#) that have left many families struggling to cope.

Children who have been into care are more likely to become homeless or go to prison. More than a third of care leavers (39%) are not in education, employment or training compared with 13% of all 19- to 21-year-olds. While 43% of all pupils go on to higher education by age 19, only 13% of care leavers do.

The review has promised to prioritise the views of children with first-hand experience of the care system, and is setting up an Experts by Experience advisory group to ensure the voices of people who have been in care, or had a social worker, are heard.

['I have survived, literally': a teenager's experience of unregulated housing](#)
[Read more](#)

The appointment of [Josh MacAlister](#), a social entrepreneur and chief executive of Frontline – a version of [Teach First](#) that seeks to fast-track graduates into social work – to chair the review was criticised by some who regard him as inexperienced and too close to government.

MacAlister launched Frontline in 2013 with the help of a £1m government startup grant approved by the then education secretary, Michael Gove. It is chaired by Camilla Cavendish, a former head of the No 10 policy unit under David Cameron. MacAlister is stepping down from Frontline to lead the review.

Carolyne Willow, the director of Article 39, a children's rights charity, questioned the independence of the review and said the chair role should have gone to a respected retired judge or academic. She said: "Today's announcement sounds like the government already knows what it wants to happen next in children's social care."

MacAlister, a former teacher whose work has put him at odds with social work academics who are largely responsible for training social workers, said: "Deep down I think many of those working in the children's social care system, and certainly many of those who have experience of it, know that radical change is needed.

"My commitment is that this review will deliver a wide-ranging plan to extend the joy, growth and safety of childhood and the esteem, love and security of family life to all children."

Iryna Pona, policy manager at the Children's Society, said the review must deliver a radical overhaul of a children's social care. "The system is creaking under the strain of rising demand and funding cuts and too often failing to ensure vulnerable children get the help they need to stay safe and thrive."

The National Children's Bureau chief executive, Anna Feuchtwang, said: "The review has the power to create meaningful and lasting change if it delivers on its promise to put the lived experience of children and families at its heart and if it addresses the chronic, long-term underfunding of children's social care."

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Charities

Politicians and media getting more hostile towards charities, poll finds

Exclusive: 90% of UK campaigners surveyed say their freedom to speak out or protest is under threat

Jacob Rees-Mogg accused Unicef of a ‘political stunt’ after it funded food for children in south London. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Jacob Rees-Mogg accused Unicef of a ‘political stunt’ after it funded food for children in south London. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Patrick Butler](#) and [Haroon Siddique](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Charities are facing increased hostility from politicians and the media, with some in danger of being reduced to “fodder for phoney culture wars,” according to a leading campaigning group.

The [Sheila McKechnie Foundation](#) said its annual survey of campaigners showed that nearly two-thirds thought politicians were becoming increasingly negative and less tolerant towards charities which actively fight for social justice.

It said the hostile political environment felt by many included politicians “shutting down channels of communication, and attacking campaigners and their allies as a threat to the common good”.

Examples included the bitter criticism of the National Trust by the so-called Common Sense group of Tory MPs for publishing a report into [historical slavery links](#) at some of its country house properties. The MPs [accused the trust](#) of pursing a Marxist, “woke” agenda.

Also cited was Priti Patel’s [targeting of “do-gooders” and “lefty” lawyers](#) in a speech at Tory party conference in October, despite Law Society complaints that the home secretary’s earlier comments about “activist lawyers” had led to [a racist assault](#) on an immigration lawyer.

The UN aid charity Unicef was [accused last month of a “political stunt”](#) by Jacob Rees-Mogg after it funded food support for deprived children in south London, while Tory MPs [reported Barnardo’s to the charities regulator](#) after it published a blog discussing racial inequality and white privilege.

The foundation said the findings came after years of ever-tightening restrictions on charity campaigning, including [lobbying restrictions](#), and the use of “gagging clauses” in grants and contracts to prevent charities openly criticising government policy.

Nine out of 10 campaigners said they thought the freedom to organise, speak out or protest was under threat. Over half (56%) felt conditions had got worse over the past year, while 72% said negative media coverage was a threat to their freedom to campaign.

The survey suggests that politicians and the media are out of touch with public attitudes to campaigning. Over half of respondents felt the public was

increasingly positive about social justice issues, citing widespread support for the Black Lives Matter campaign, and the [footballer Marcus Rashford](#)'s action over food poverty.

Halima Begum, the director of the race equality charity Runnymede Trust, was criticised in parliament on Wednesday [by the women and equalities minister, Liz Truss](#), after saying the government sought to divisively prioritise the white working class at the expense of ethnic minorities.

Truss called Begum's comments "appalling", adding that they reflected "an attitude on the left of politics that says: 'If you're not from an oppressed group, you're not entitled to an opinion', and I think that is fundamentally wrong".

Begum told the Guardian: "It is a grave concern to see charity leaders being attacked at a time when charities' funding is drying up. Increasingly, the government appears to engage with independent charities in a one-way process, making clear that it's their way or the highway if you dare disagree with policy."

Sue Tibballs, the chief executive of the Sheila McKechnie Foundation, said: "Civil society will keep working to defend rights and build a better world out of the pandemic. It's time for politicians to work with us, even where we don't always agree, not make us fodder in phoney culture wars."

The foundation was set up in memory of the late Dame Sheila McKechnie, a legendary campaigner who ran Shelter, and subsequently Which?, where her work on food quality led to the creation of the Food Standards Agency.

The government has been approached for comment.

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Maternal mortality

Black women in the UK four times more likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth

Disparity with white women shows need for action, doctors say, despite slight improvement in mortality rate

‘We know from hearing black women’s stories that for every person who unfortunately dies there is a whole group of women behind them who are suffering from poorer outcomes.’ Photograph: Steve Prezant/Getty

‘We know from hearing black women’s stories that for every person who unfortunately dies there is a whole group of women behind them who are suffering from poorer outcomes.’ Photograph: Steve Prezant/Getty

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[Hannah Summers](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.30 EST

Black women are still four times more likely than white women to die in pregnancy or childbirth in the UK, and women from Asian ethnic backgrounds face twice the risk, according to a new [report](#).

The data shows a slight narrowing of the divide – [last year's report](#) found black women were five times more likely to die – but experts say that is statistically insignificant and not a sign of progress.

The lead author of the [MBRRACE-UK report](#), Prof Marian Knight, said: “The drop to a fourfold difference should not be a reason to lessen our efforts at a time when addressing these inequalities among pregnant women and new mothers should be a priority.”

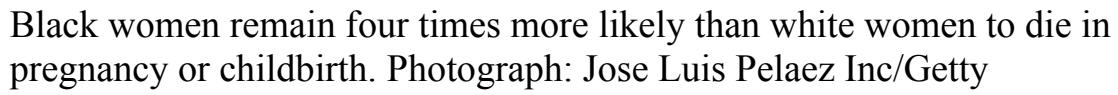
“The rate of deaths among white women has gone up by a tiny amount and the rate of black women has come down a little but neither of these are statistically significant changes because the overall rates are low.”

Prof Maggie Rae, president of the Faculty of Public [Health](#), said: “This year’s coronavirus pandemic has brought this disparity even more starkly to the fore, and we must not lose sight of the actions that are required to address systemic biases that impact on the care we provide for ethnic minority women.”

The latest figures on maternal deaths and morbidity cover the period between 2016 and 2018, showing 217 women died during or up to six weeks after pregnancy out of 2,235,159 women giving birth in the UK. A further 349 women died up to a year after pregnancy.

“Maternal mortality is uncommon so while there is an unacceptable racial disparity, even for black women the rate is low,” said Knight. “But what is significant is the statistics are likely to be a marker of similar disparities in severe pregnancy complications and what we call ‘near misses’.

“What needs to happen now is more comprehensive research looking at maternal morbidity. Only then can we start to monitor the variations in outcome between different groups living in different areas of the UK.”



Black women remain four times more likely than white women to die in pregnancy or childbirth. Photograph: Jose Luis Pelaez Inc/Getty

A [report](#) published in December by the joint committee on human rights highlighted the lack of an NHS target to end the disparity and urged the government to introduce one.

Tinuke Awe, co-founder of campaign group [Fivexmore](#), supports such a target. She said: “Urgent research is required to understand those statistics but also what is going on behind the data.

“We know from hearing black women’s stories that for every person who unfortunately dies there is a whole group of women behind them who are suffering from poorer outcomes. Yet currently those near misses aren’t recorded anywhere.”

Almost all of those who died during or after pregnancy had multiple issues such as mental or physical health problems, were victims of domestic abuse, or were

living in a deprived area. More than half of those who died were overweight or obese. Cardiac disease represents the largest single cause of indirect maternal deaths.

Also highlighted in the report was a twofold increase in the number of maternal deaths linked to epilepsy. Sudden unexpected death in epilepsy (Sudep) is uncommon but it occurred almost twice as often among women pregnant during 2016–2018 than in the previous three years.

Knight said changes from 2018 onwards to the types of medication prescribed to manage a pregnant women's epilepsy may account for the rise.

Importantly, the report highlighted that preventive action is not just vital within maternity services. Public health actions are equally important.

Women living in the most deprived areas were [three times more likely](#) to die than those in more affluent areas. Social services were also involved in the lives of [20% of the women who died](#) compared with 12% in 2012–2014, suggesting greater coordination is needed between social services and maternity care.

Kirsty Kitchen, head of policy at [Birth Companions](#), said: “While the number of deaths remains low, inequalities are widening. These figures relate to a period pre-Covid-19 and we know those inequalities will become even more profound as women’s lives continue to be adversely impacted by the pandemic.”

Interventions to address poverty, bad housing, domestic abuse and racism were vital, she said. “While the ethnic disparities are shocking and stark we should be equally shocked by the disparities that are widening along the lines of deprivation and disadvantage.”

The Royal College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists said it would continue working to address inequality through the [Race Equality Taskforce](#). Its president, Dr Edward Morris, also urged the government to commit to a target of a 50% reduction in maternal mortality for black, Asian and minority ethnic women over the next five years.

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Family finances

Covid crisis prompts financial fears for those organising funerals

Fivefold increase in direct cremations with no service or loved ones present, says SunLife

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A worker assembles a coffin. Direct cremations accounted for 14% of all funerals in 2020, up from 3% in 2019. Photograph: Getty

A worker assembles a coffin. Direct cremations accounted for 14% of all funerals in 2020, up from 3% in 2019. Photograph: Getty

Rupert Jones

Fri 15 Jan 2021 08.03 EST

A third of people organising a funeral in the UK because of Covid-19 found meeting the costs caused them financial worries, [according to the insurer SunLife.](#)

The pandemic also contributed to a fivefold surge in no-frills direct cremations, where there is no funeral service and no family or friends present, the annual report on the cost of dying found.

This type of simple, low-cost funeral is typically cheaper than ever, the report says, costing an average of £1,554, down from £1,712 in 2018.

By contrast, the cost of a standard cremation and a standard burial have risen once again, to £3,885 and £5,033 respectively, SunLife said.

SunLife found that once all fees and sendoff costs were taken into account, families spent an average of £9,263 in 2020, up from £9,192 the previous year.

Of those who organised a funeral between February and June last year, 82% said it was affected “a lot” by Covid-19, 71% said that not everyone who wanted to attend could, and 34% said paying for the funeral caused them “notable financial concerns”.

SunLife said: “With social distancing, lockdowns and quarantine restrictions in force throughout most of 2020, a direct cremation [has been the most practical option](#) for many.”

With this form of funeral, the deceased goes straight to the crematorium. Typically, there is no service – so no mourners, flowers, limos or hymns – leaving families free to organise a more personal sendoff later.

Direct cremations accounted for 14% of all funerals in 2020, up from 3% in 2019.

As with standard funerals, prices for direct cremations vary greatly and it is possible to pay quite a lot less than the quoted £1,554 average. Pure Cremation charges £1,195, which includes a pine eco-coffin and hand delivery of the ashes. Simplicity Cremations charges £995, which includes a simple wood-effect coffin, although returning the ashes to the family costs extra.

Some in the industry say [there are a lot of misconceptions](#) about direct cremation – for example, that it is for “poor people” or those who “no one cares about” – but the SunLife report says many funeral directors believe it is “starting to lose its stigma as the ‘cheap choice’ and instead be seen as a legitimate option for those who want a simpler funeral”.

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Coronavirus

Grant Shapps indicates lorry drivers can enter France with rapid Covid test

Transport secretary plays down reports that France will demand PCR test, which can take days

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Freight lorries queueing at Dover on Thursday. Photograph: GarethFuller/PA
Freight lorries queueing at Dover on Thursday. Photograph: GarethFuller/PA

[Sarah Marsh](#)
[@sloumarsh](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 05.11 EST

British lorry drivers crossing the Channel to [France](#) will be exempt from requiring a PCR coronavirus test, the transport secretary has indicated.

Grant Shapps said PCR tests would be required for passengers but hauliers could use the lateral flow system. Concern had been raised that chaos could be caused by France demanding truck drivers have the PCR tests, which can take 72 hours to give a result, before entering.

When asked about reports France would not recognise the “red circle” antigen test for people trying to enter the country from Monday, Shapps told BBC Breakfast: “I think this is in reference to the French requiring what they call the PCR test.

“First of all, no one should be going to France. No one should be travelling. Secondly, we have a particular arrangement with the French regarding the hauliers, this is the lorry drivers, with tests which are called the lateral flow tests. And that remains in place at the moment.”

The French government [banned HGV drivers from crossing the Channel](#) last month, in an effort to prevent the spread of the mutant coronavirus detected in the UK.

Asked whether the new [Brazilian coronavirus variant](#) was in the UK now, Shapps told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme: “Not as far as we are aware, I think, at this stage. There haven’t been any flights that I can see from the last week from Brazil, for example.”

He added: “I cannot say with certainty which mutations are here … but it is important to know that the UK leads the world in terms of genome sequencing of coronavirus. We have done nearly half of the entire world’s genome sequencing, which is how we know what is going on with the Kent variant.”

[UK edges towards double-dip recession as GDP falls 2.6%](#)

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Pressed on whether it was wise for pensioners who had had the vaccine to book summer holidays, Shapps said: “I am the last person you should take travel advice on this from.

“I remember about this time last year, or a little bit later, being asked whether I would book a summer holiday. We then had the travel corridors and I did a book, I went to Spain with my family.

“And, within an hour of getting there, I, myself, put Spain ... took them out of the travel corridor, meaning that I needed to come home and start my quarantine, leaving my family there.

“So, don’t take any travel advice from me.”

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Waste

Toxic waste lies beneath schools in England and Wales, map shows

Experts say council funding shortfalls mean many old landfills not being dealt with appropriately

Old landfill rubbish revealed in sea cliffs by coastal erosion. Photograph:
Ashley Cooper/Global Warming Images/Alamy

Old landfill rubbish revealed in sea cliffs by coastal erosion. Photograph:
Ashley Cooper/Global Warming Images/Alamy

Rachel Salvage

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Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Hundreds of landfills around England and Wales containing hazardous waste are located beneath green spaces, schools and housing, analysis of official data has found.

Experts say authorities are “setting themselves up for a large sequence of nasty surprises” if the toxic substances were to escape, with council funding shortfalls meaning many sites are not being dealt with appropriately. The contents of hundreds of sites remain unknown even to the [Environment Agency](#) (EA).

According to agency data [mapped by the Ends Report](#), there are more than 21,000 old landfills scattered across England and Wales. Of these, 1,287 are categorised as containing hazardous waste, which could pose a health risk to people and the environment it escapes into the surrounding air, water, soil and vegetation.

Some 7,265 of the old landfills harbour industrial waste, with many containing “industrial liquid sludge”. At 413 further sites the waste has been categorised by the EA as unknown.

Landfills whose contents are recorded as unknown tend to be older sites, explaining the lack of information. One environmental professional who deals with remediating sites for development told the Ends Report and the Guardian that landfills from the 1950s and 60s were “a complete mess” and that “you can find anything in there”.

The EA said its record of the former landfill locations was “not detailed” and had been compiled as part of an environment department project in the 1990s. Sites are added to the data when they close but cleaned-up sites are not removed as councils are legally responsible for them, according to the agency.

Given the age of the data, it is likely that a number of the landfills have been removed or contained where the sites have been redeveloped, but the kinds of techniques used will depend on when the developments took place, as rules on remediation and acceptable levels of certain chemicals have changed over time.

Experts say the definition of hazardous waste has also changed, meaning some sites categorised as not containing toxic waste may contain substances now considered to be hazardous.

Ends Report has mapped the sites, revealing that 35% of the hazardous sites – 449 – lie under green spaces. A further 21% lie beneath farmland, 15% are below industrial sites, 10% are under parkland, 9% under housing and 4% under commercial sites containing shops and restaurants – assuming none were removed on development.

About 746 toxic dumps are located within 500 metres of water bodies, 13 are beneath golf courses and four below school grounds. Another four are situated under racing tracks, and three lie below cricket pitches.

Of the 413 landfills where the contents are unknown to the Environment Agency, six lie beneath schools and 10 beneath playing fields, 75 are under housing and 26 under parkland.

Dr Paul Johnston, from Greenpeace's research laboratory at the University of Exeter, said old tips contained “all sorts of horrors and rubbish ... it's another one of these problems that is waiting to creep up on us and bite us in a very big way.”

Unlike modern landfills, older ones tend not to have been lined before the waste was deposited, meaning the chemicals within can leach out, potentially contaminating rivers, groundwater, soils, plants and harming wildlife. Even modern lined landfills with leachate management systems will eventually leak, according to [some studies](#).

Old dumps can contain substances now banned or [restricted](#) such as asbestos, polychlorinated biphenyls ([PCBs](#)), [PFOA](#) and [PFOS](#), all of which are extremely toxic to human health and the environment.

“There’s a huge variety of problems out there, ranging from asbestos to PCBs to radioactive material, to more recent chemicals like PFOA and pesticide waste that has been dumped in a large number of locations,” said Johnston. “Liquid sludge could be anything from oily sludge to cyanide waste from metal plating operations.”

In the US, old landfills containing toxic substances have made local [communities sick](#), leading to class-action lawsuits and multimillion-dollar payouts. In the UK, sick cattle and deformed calves have been linked to a [landfill](#) that [leaked chemicals](#) including Agent Orange derivatives, vinyl chlorides, dioxins and PCBs into groundwater and soils in south Wales.

The risks associated with old sites are exacerbated by their position: 1,364 old dumps are in zones at risk of tidal flooding, many near protected conservation areas.

A recent EA assessment revealed that every English river [failed to meet legal health standards](#) as a result of what it called the “ubiquitous” presence of chemicals such as PFOS, PFOA and brominated flame retardants. Old unlined landfills are not the only source of these substances but it is likely they make a contribution.

[How clean are England's rivers? The latest report makes for uncomfortable reading | Rachel Salvidge](#)
[Read more](#)

Part of the problem lies in the lack of funds for cleaning up old toxic sites. It is the responsibility of local authorities to identify them and organise the cleanup, and to bring the worst cases to the attention of the Environment Agency or Natural Resources Wales, neither of which are funded to undertake any investigative work in this area. Councils do not have adequate money, leaving the sites in limbo unless a developer chooses to buy, remediate and develop them.

But developers “don’t tend to pick on landfills to remediate,” said Johnston. “They tend to pick on gasworks or old railway shunting yards where the contamination is relatively easy to deal with” and they have a better idea what they will encounter.

David Renard, the environment spokesperson for the Local Government Association, said councils had a “responsibility to monitor and manage historic landfills in their area where the operator was either the local authority or is unknown”, but said councils often lacked the necessary funds. He urged the government to provide more support.

Johnston said this was the “story of environmental surveillance generally, as the EA has retracted so the funding base for any sort of investigation or surveillance work has been pulled back. They’re setting themselves up for a large sequence of nasty surprises at the end of the day.”

- This article was amended on 16 January 2021. The report covers England and Wales, not the UK as stated in the headline and text of an earlier version.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/15/toxic-waste-lies-beneath-schools-and-homes-uk-landfill-map-shows>

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[US news](#)

Dustin Higgs becomes 13th and final federal prisoner executed under Trump

- Higgs, 48, executed on Friday in Indiana
- [Podcast: Trump, the death penalty and America's racist history](#)

The United States penitentiary and federal correctional complex in Terre Haute, Indiana. Trump ended a 17-year hiatus on the federal death penalty in July. Photograph: Bryan Woolston/Reuters

The United States penitentiary and federal correctional complex in Terre Haute, Indiana. Trump ended a 17-year hiatus on the federal death penalty in July. Photograph: Bryan Woolston/Reuters

Associated Press in Washington

Sat 16 Jan 2021 01.36 EST

The [13th and last execution of a federal inmate](#) under Donald Trump's presidency has taken place in Terre Haute, Indiana.

[US executes Corey Johnson for 1992 Virginia murders](#)

[Read more](#)

Dustin Higgs, 48, had been sentenced to death for the killings of three women in a Maryland wildlife refuge. His lawyers argued it was "arbitrary and inequitable" to execute him while Willis Haynes, the man who shot the women in 1996, was spared a death sentence.

The federal judge who presided over Higgs's trial said he "merits little compassion".

"He received a fair trial and was convicted and sentenced to death by a unanimous jury for a despicable crime," US District Judge Peter Messitte wrote on 29 December.

Trump ended a 17-year hiatus on the federal death penalty in July.

Shawn Nolan, one of Higgs's attorneys, saw a clear political agenda in the unprecedented string of federal executions. Higgs was executed a few days before Joe Biden becomes president. A spokesman for Biden has said the Democrat is against the death penalty and will work to end its use.

"In the midst of the pandemic and everything that's going on right now in the country, it seems just insane to move forward with these executions," Nolan said. "And particularly for Dustin, who didn't shoot anybody. He didn't kill anybody."

Defense attorneys had won temporary stays of execution for Higgs and another inmate, Corey Johnson, after arguing recent Covid-19 infections put them at greater risk of unnecessary suffering during lethal injections. But higher courts overruled those decisions. [Johnson was killed on Thursday night](#).

Higgs's petition for clemency says he has been a model prisoner and dedicated father to a son born after his arrest. Higgs had a traumatic childhood and lost his mother to cancer when he was 10, the petition says.

“Mr Higgs’s difficult upbringing was not meaningfully presented to the jury at trial,” his attorneys wrote.

In October 2000 a federal jury in Maryland convicted Higgs of first-degree murder and kidnapping in the killings of Tamika Black, 19; Mishann Chinn, 23; and Tanji Jackson, 21. His death sentence was the first imposed in the modern era of the federal system in Maryland, which abolished the death penalty in 2013.

Higgs was 23 on the evening of 26 January 1996 when he, Haynes and a third man, Victor Gloria, picked up the three women in Washington DC and drove them to Higgs’s apartment in Laurel, Maryland, to drink alcohol and listen to music. Before dawn an argument between Higgs and Jackson prompted her to grab a knife before Haynes persuaded her to drop it.

Gloria said Jackson made threats as she left the apartment with the other women and appeared to write down the number of Higgs’s van. The men chased the women in the van and Haynes persuaded them to get in. Higgs drove them to a secluded spot in the Patuxent national wildlife refuge, federal land in Laurel.

“Aware at that point that something was amiss, one of the women asked if they were going to have to ‘walk from here’ and Higgs responded ‘something like that’,” said an appeals court ruling upholding Higgs’s death sentence.

Higgs handed his pistol to Haynes, who shot all three women, Gloria testified.

“Gloria turned to ask Higgs what he was doing, but saw Higgs holding the steering wheel and watching the shootings from the rearview mirror,” said the 2013 ruling by a three-judge panel of the 4th US circuit court of appeals.

Chinn worked with the children’s choir at a church, Jackson worked in the office at a high school and Black was a teacher’s aide at National Presbyterian school in Washington, according to the Washington Post.

Investigators found Jackson’s day planner at the scene. It contained Higgs’s nickname, “Bones”, his telephone number, his address and the tag number for his van.

The jurors who convicted Haynes failed to reach a unanimous verdict on a death sentence. A different jury convicted Higgs and returned a death sentence. Gloria pleaded guilty to being an accessory after the fact and was sentenced to seven years.

[Trump administration condemned over Lisa Montgomery execution](#)
[Read more](#)

Higgs argued his death sentence should be thrown out because jurors failed to consider it as a “mitigating factor” that Haynes was convicted of identical charges but sentenced to life. The appeals court concluded that rational jurors could find that Higgs had the dominant role in the murders even though Haynes fired the gun.

In a clemency petition Higgs’s lawyers said Gloria received a “substantial deal” in exchange for his cooperation

“Moreover,” they wrote, “significant questions remain as to whether Mr Gloria received the additional undisclosed benefit of having an unrelated state murder investigation against him dropped at the urging of federal officers to protect his credibility as the star witness. A federal death verdict should not rest on such a flimsy basis.”

On the day in 2001 when the judge sentenced Higgs to death, Black’s mother, Joyce Gaston, said it brought her little solace, the Post reported. “It’s not going to ever be right in my mind,” Gaston said, “That was my daughter. I don’t know how I’m going to deal with it.”

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US news

Washington and state capitols brace for violence from armed Trump supporters

- Security beefed up across US following attack on Capitol
- FBI monitoring threats of violence against Biden and Harris
- [US politics live – follow all the latest](#)

US national guard soldiers staff a checkpoint a few blocks from the Capitol. Security measures have been dramatically strengthened. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

US national guard soldiers staff a checkpoint a few blocks from the Capitol. Security measures have been dramatically strengthened. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

[Victoria Bekiempis](#) in New York and agencies

Fri 15 Jan 2021 13.26 EST

Washington DC and capitols across the US are bracing for violence this weekend after law enforcement officials warned that armed pro-Trump insurrectionists are [planning](#) to swarm the cities in the days before President-elect Joe Biden's inauguration

[Donald Trump will fly to Florida hours before Biden inauguration, reports say.](#)
[Read more](#)

Security measures have been dramatically strengthened following the 6 January [attack](#) on the Capitol by supporters of Donald Trump and members of far-right groups that left five people dead, including a police officer.

The planned demonstrations and threat of violence, which come as the country still battles the coronavirus pandemic, have had a chilling effect on plans for Biden and Kamala Harris's inauguration on 20 January. Trump is expected to leave the White House for the final time that morning.

An inauguration rehearsal ceremony that was set for Sunday was postponed until Monday over security concerns, Politico [reported](#). The National Mall is expected to be closed to the public on inauguration day.

Following a briefing from Secret Service and FBI authorities, Biden also canceled his plans to ride the Amtrak train from his home town of Wilmington, Delaware, to Washington for the inauguration.

The House oversight committee sent letters to 27 prominent travel companies on Friday, urging them to use “screening measures” to prevent their services from being used to facilitate plots ahead of Biden’s inauguration. The companies included car rental giants Avis and Hertz and hotel chains Marriott and Hyatt.

In an internal FBI memo first reported by [ABC](#) earlier this week, officials warned: “Armed protests are being planned at all 50 state capitols.”

“The FBI received information about an identified armed group intending to travel to Washington, DC on [Saturday] 16 January … They have warned that if Congress attempts to remove Potus via the 25th amendment, a huge uprising will occur,” the document noted.

The memo also said the group planned “to ‘storm’ government offices including in the District of Columbia and in every state” on 20 January.

Efforts to remove the president from office faltered, but on Wednesday, Trump became the first US president to be impeached twice, after the [House of Representatives](#) condemned him for inciting a violent insurrection and encouraging a mob of his supporters to storm the US Capitol.

Organizers of the planned unrest are believed to have moved their activities from mainstream social media websites to more secretive online forums to avoid detection, but some details about plans have emerged. In an online advert for a “Million Militia March” scheduled for inauguration day in Washington, [a caption read](#): “The Trumpists will be keeping DC and the military busy on the 20th as you can see.”

The FBI is also reported to be monitoring “various threats to harm President-Elect Biden ahead of the presidential inauguration” and “additional reports indicate threats against VP-Elect Harris and Speaker Pelosi”.

Security measures to stave off violence in Washington and across the country have been extensive. Federal and local authorities have already set up a security zone downtown and 20,000 national guard members will deploy to Washington. Federal security authorities have also asked officials in Virginia to close all crossings into downtown Washington between 6am Saturday and 6am on 21 January, the Washington Post reported.

State capitols, some of which have already seen the resumption of legislative sessions, started ramping up security this week. The New York police department is sending 200 officers to the state Capitol to assist with security, a top NYPD official said on Thursday. And national guard members were sent to Olympia, Washington, to support security efforts this week — arresting two protesters who tried to enter the capitol building without authorization, [NPR reported](#).

Safety concerns have spurred Michigan officials to erect a 6ft fence around the state’s capitol building. The last time authorities used fencing at the capital was in 1994 – when the Klu Klux Klan held a demonstration there, [Mlive.com reported](#).

Michigan capitol authorities have also banned the open carry of guns inside the building following an armed anti-lockdown protest this spring. Several participants in that demonstration were later [accused](#) of plotting to kidnap Michigan's Democratic governor, Gretchen Whitmer.

In Austin, Texas, national guard members and state troopers secured the capitol building when the legislature met on Tuesday. One man, a member of a group named Patriots for America, was removed from Capitol grounds for toting an AR-15 rifle.

New details about the Capitol riot emerged on Friday, demonstrating just how close the violent mob got to the vice-president, who was overseeing the electoral vote certification of Biden's victory when the building was breached.

Pence was not evacuated from the Senate chamber for about 14 minutes after rioters entered the Capitol. Many shouted that Pence was a "traitor" as they made their way towards his location, according to [the Washington Post](#). Pence was moved to a room off the chamber just moments before rioters entered the chamber.

[Billionaires backed Republicans who sought to reverse US election results](#)
[Read more](#)

Federal prosecutors in Arizona this week described how the rioters involved in the 6 January attack on the Capitol had intended "to capture and assassinate elected officials".

The disclosure in a court filing came as prosecutors pushed for the detention of Jacob Chansley, the [QAnon conspiracy theorist](#) who was photographed wearing horns in the US Senate chamber and standing at Pence's desk.

"Strong evidence, including Chansley's own words and actions at the Capitol, supports that the intent of the Capitol rioters was to capture and assassinate elected officials in the United States government," prosecutors alleged.

The charges against Chansley "involve active participation in an insurrection attempting to violently overthrow the United States government"; prosecutors also warned in their detention memo that "the insurrection is still in progress".

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[US news](#)

Dear America: writer, thinkers and activists on how to build a better country

It's our hope that 2021 will offer a fresh start – but what should America address first? Illustration: Agata Nowicka/The Guardian

It's our hope that 2021 will offer a fresh start – but what should America address first? Illustration: Agata Nowicka/The Guardian

We've asked a group of experts to share concrete ideas to address some of America's deepest problems

- Guardian readers shared their own ideas for creating a better America.
[Read them here](#)

Rebecca Solnit, Dedrick Asante-Muhammad, Robert Reich, Darren Walker, Bill McKibben, Alejandra Gomez, Catherine Coleman Flowers, Kim Cobb and Rachel Garcia

Fri 15 Jan 2021 12.29 EST

America has some big problems that need fixing.

The last year laid bare hard truths: about existing inequalities made unbearably worse by the Covid-19 pandemic, about a democratic system dangerously vulnerable to its own institutional weaknesses, about the proliferating catastrophes heading our way if we don't act with urgency to stop the climate crisis.

It's our hope that the coming year will offer a fresh start. It's certainly an opportunity for fresh ideas. We've asked nine experts to share one, concrete way to address some of America's most intractable challenges. Their answers are below.

How to fix America's misinformation crisis

Teach our children critical thinking

By *Rebecca Solnit*

There is hardly a thing in the US that couldn't benefit from change right now, but something I think about a lot is public education, from preschool to high school. If it were up to me, we'd throw out a lot of the existing curriculum and start over. The conspiracy theories and delusions across the political spectrum – from anti-vaxxers to QAnon devotees to climate deniers to Confederacy cosplayers – prove that we desperately need a citizenship equipped with critical thinking skills.

By this I mean the capacity to evaluate and factcheck information and sources, and to analyze them to decide what makes sense and who and what can be trusted. Over and over, I run into statements from people who don't understand that the conclusion they're brandishing can't be reached from the data they've glommed on to or that their information is itself corrupt or simply wrong. I dream of a curriculum emphasizing research skills, analytical skills, practice in exercising judgment and using language with accuracy.

These things are vital for a functioning democracy and a society inoculated against conspiracy theories, hucksters and delusions. The current pandemic has shown us how dangerous is this capacity to believe things that don't make sense, but are ideologically convenient, and Donald J Trump's whole political career was about reaping the benefits of this incapacity.

- *Rebecca Solnit is a Guardian US columnist. She is also the author of Men Explain Things to Me and The Mother of All Questions. Her most recent book is Whose Story Is This? Old Conflicts, New Chapters*

How to bridge the racial wealth gap

With reparations for slavery
By Dedrick Asante-Muhammad

The United States – and its economy – is based on a white supremacist concentration of wealth and resources. To end this disparity, which rears its head in everything from the racial wealth divide to police brutality and mass incarceration, a massive redistribution of wealth and resources is required.

Today, African Americans collectively own just 4% of the nation's total wealth. To own a share of wealth proportionate to their 13% of the population, African Americans would require another \$10tn.

A long-term and consistent cash infusion will make a world of difference for wealth development, particularly for a community whose median household income is only \$40,000. A 20-year injection of \$20,000 annually to every African American who can identify an enslaved ancestor in the United States is the type of radical reform needed to build an American economy and society that gets us past the divisions and inequality of the past. [Read more](#).

- *Dedrick Asante-Muhammad is the chief of race, wealth and community at the National Community Reinvestment Coalition and an associate fellow of the Institute for Policy Studies*

How to fix inequality

Tax the wealth of the dead

By Robert Reich

Already, 60% of America's personal wealth is inherited. If present trends continue, it will be close to 80% in a few decades. So much for the myth of the "self-made man" or woman, and for America's traditional disdain of aristocracy.

What to do? Joe Biden has rejected a tax on great wealth but he's open to getting rid of the "[stepped-up-basis on death](#)" rule. This obscure tax provision allows heirs to avoid paying capital gains taxes on the increased value of assets accumulated during the life of the deceased.

Such untaxed gains account for [more than half of the value of estates over \\$100m](#). If these capital gains were taxed at death, they would generate [in excess of \\$400bn over the next decade](#).

It won't solve economic inequality on its own, but it's a good place to start.

- *Robert Reich, a former US secretary of labor, is professor of public policy at the University of California at Berkeley*

How to fix America's economy

Put workers at the center

By Darren Walker

Time magazine just recognized frontline workers as 2020 “[Guardians of the Year](#)” – rightly so. For nine months, working people have toiled to keep us all afloat through unprecedented disaster.

And yet, even as they’re hailed as heroes, frontline workers have been treated as expendable. Already, America’s workers – especially Black and brown workers – have suffered extreme levels of infection, job loss and poverty.

If we want to honor these heroes, we can offer immediate relief by prioritizing them for vaccines and financial support. We can protect them and aid the recovery by adopting paid leave and sick days, ensuring personal protective equipment and enforcing and improving health and safety policies. And we must push for permanent reform – such as a comprehensive workers’ bill of rights – that addresses systemic inequalities and gives them access to well-paid employment, healthcare and affordable housing.

No one should be forced to choose between their lives and their livelihoods. We must reimagine our world with workers at the center.

- *Darren Walker is president of the Ford Foundation*

How to tackle the climate emergency

For starters, cut the money pipeline

By Bill McKibben

There's no one way to fix climate change, of course – it's the biggest problem humans have ever encountered. But convincing banks and asset managers to cut their ties with the fossil fuel industry would go a long way.

New York state recently decided to divest its \$226bn pension fund from oil and gas – if Citibank and Barclays and Bank of America and BlackRock and the rest would follow suit, the crimp in the money pipeline that feeds the fires of global warming would make a huge difference.

JP Morgan Chase alone has [poured a quarter-trillion dollars](#) into fossil fuel since the Paris climate agreement – Donald Trump was not its only saboteur. It's time for that kind of vandalism to end.

- *Bill McKibben is an author and Schumann distinguished scholar in environmental studies at Middlebury College, Vermont*

How to create a more inclusive democracy

Build grassroots movements

By Alejandra Gomez

In 2020, Lucha's grassroots effort helped turn Arizona blue. Ours wasn't just the largest progressive field campaign in Arizona – it was the *only* progressive field campaign in Arizona.

We started to organize ourselves in 2010 because we felt abandoned by the Democratic party, which did nothing to protect us from anti-immigrant policies threatening our communities.

We built a larger, diverse coalition that reflected the community. We created grassroots infrastructure and developed the leadership capacity of immigrant women in our communities. In 2016, alongside our coalition partners, we passed a higher minimum wage and defeated America's toughest sheriff. We continued organizing our *tías, abuelas y comadres* across Arizona. By 2020, our coalition was able to energize a large coalition of Latinx, Black and Indigenous women and immigrant voters.

Arizona organizers showed what's possible when you put resources into expanding the electorate and developing the next generation of leaders – *mujeres*, immigrants, and people of color. Now it's up to the Democratic party to follow our lead if they truly want to win up and down the ballot. La Lucha sigue.

- *Alejandra Gomez, co-executive director of Lucha, has dedicated her life to a commitment to social, racial and economic justice by building power alongside community through grassroots organizing and mobilization*

How to fix America's water crisis

Start with rural America

By Catherine Coleman Flowers

In the wealthiest country in the world, at least 2 million people lack access to basic water and sanitation, and, too often, sustainable wastewater infrastructure

becomes the burden of the homeowner. As a result, throughout rural America, straight-piping, failing septic systems, and treatment systems that pour sewage into yards and homes are common.

Who is affected? Mainly Black, Indigenous, migrant and poor white communities. Climate change is making things worse in areas where there are rising water tables, melting permafrost and failing infrastructure. The health impact is devastating; in 2017, I partnered with tropical disease experts at Baylor College of Medicine on a [study](#) that found rampant hookworm in rural Alabama. My fear is that the next pandemic will emerge from right here in Lowndes county.

There is no simple solution, but to start, we need to change the engineering paradigm by including affected residents in the process of designing effective and affordable sanitation systems. Collaborative action – between communities, engineers, governments and NGOs – is crucial to ensuring that all Americans have access to clean water and soil.

- *Catherine Coleman Flowers is an environmental activist bringing attention to the problem of inadequate waste and water sanitation infrastructure in rural communities. A 2020 MacArthur fellow, she is the author of Waste: One Woman's Fight Against America's Dirty Secret*

How to break our addiction to air travel

Look to the lessons of 2020

By Kim Cobb

What insights does 2020 provide about our long overdue transition away from fossil-fueled air travel? First, let's be clear – this is not the future that #flyingless advocates hoped for. In the low-carbon future of our dreams, we can zip across wide distances via high-speed trains and run straight into the arms of our loved ones upon arrival. We can crowd into packed conference halls with colleagues from our region, while we connect with farther-flung colleagues via virtual platforms.

We'll look back on 2020 as a screen-filled dystopia that placed new value on in-person connections. By the same token, it will be nice to know that going forward, we have a viable, remote alternative for those trips where the climate costs, and associated injustices, outweigh the value for us as an individual. For me, that would be almost all flights. But going forward, it's an urgent question for everyone to ask themselves.

- *Kim Cobb is the Georgia Power chair and professor in the School of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences and director of the global change program at*

the Georgia Institute of Technology

How to reduce the plastic choking our planet

'Strive for consistency, not perfection'

By Rachel Garcia

Many people think that recycling is the answer to America's plastic problem, but the truth is that only 9% of plastic waste gets remade into something new. The rest is sitting in a landfill or the oceans, polluting our planet and even breaking down into microplastics that enter our bodies.

Many people assume that to make a difference, you need to change everything about your lifestyle, but smaller actions do add up. Put a canvas or reusable tote filled with fabric produce bags in your trunk or near your door. Try to buy loose produce instead of produce wrapped or boxed in plastic packaging. Instead of buying new Tupperware, take a look at your own pantry for the glass jars right

at your fingertips! Empty tomato sauce, pickle or jelly jars can easily become clear, organized storage if you soak off the labels with baking soda and vinegar.

To create lasting habits, don't make drastic changes overnight. The key to reducing your plastic waste is to strive for consistency, not perfection.

- *Rachel Garcia is the owner of Dry Goods Refillery, a plastic and package-free pantry in Maplewood, New Jersey*

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Michael Cohen

New York prosecutors interview Michael Cohen about Trump finances

- Manhattan DA Cyrus Vance Jr is seeking tax records
- Former Trump lawyer serving out sentence at home
- [US politics – live coverage](#)

Michael Cohen listens during a hearing on Capitol Hill in February 2019. The interview comes amid a long-running grand jury investigation into Trump's business dealings. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Michael Cohen listens during a hearing on Capitol Hill in February 2019. The interview comes amid a long-running grand jury investigation into Trump's business dealings. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Associated Press in New York

Fri 15 Jan 2021 17.04 EST

New York prosecutors conducted an hours-long interview on Thursday with [Michael Cohen](#), Donald Trump's former attorney, asking a range of questions about the president's business dealings, according to three people familiar with the meeting.

[Nancy Pelosi says lawmakers who aided in Capitol attack may be prosecuted](#)
[Read more](#)

The interview focused in part on Trump's relationship with Deutsche Bank, his biggest and longest-standing creditor, according to the people, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The interview, at least the second with Cohen by the Manhattan district attorney, comes amid a long-running grand jury investigation into Trump's business dealings.

The district attorney, Cyrus Vance Jr, has been waging a protracted legal battle to get access to the president's tax records. The US supreme court is expected to rule on Trump's request for a stay and a further appeal after he leaves office on 20 January.

The [New York](#) investigation is one of several legal entanglements likely to intensify as Trump loses power – and any immunity from prosecution he might have as a sitting president.

The Manhattan-based grand jury has been continuing work despite the coronavirus pandemic, which has curtailed many court operations.

The Republican president also faces a civil investigation, led by the New York attorney general, Letitia James, a Democrat, into whether his company lied about the value of its assets to get loans or tax benefits.

Cohen is cooperating with that inquiry too. He previously told Congress Trump often inflated the value of his assets when dealing with lenders or potential partners, but deflated them when it benefited him for tax purposes.

The White House declined to comment. A message seeking comment was sent to Cohen's attorney.

Trump has repeatedly called the investigations by Vance and James baseless political “witch-hunts”.

Vance, a Democrat, has declined to provide details about the investigation. But court filings have pointed to news reports of what prosecutors described as “extensive and protracted criminal conduct at the Trump Organization”.

Among the reports Vance’s office referenced in court filings was a 2017 article about Ladder Capital, a commercial mortgage lender that made more than \$250m in loans to the Trump Organization, secured by Trump properties.

Jack Weisselberg, the son of the Trump Organization’s chief financial officer, Allen Weisselberg, is a director of Ladder Capital.

Subpoenas issued in the investigation cover 11 entities engaged in business dealings as far away as Europe and Dubai, according to an appeals court judge speaking at a hearing.

Cohen, serving the remainder of a federal prison sentence on home confinement, has been asked by investigators to examine Trump Organization documents and provide other details about its corporate structure, the people familiar with the matter said.

Cohen pleaded guilty to evading taxes, lying to Congress and facilitating campaign finance crimes.

Deutsche Bank continued to do business with Trump even after he defaulted in 2008 on a loan for his Chicago hotel and condo development and sued the bank and others he blamed for his inability to repay.

But Deutsche Bank’s private banking division continued to lend to Trump, including \$125m to finance the purchase and renovation of his Doral golf resort in 2012, according to previous disclosures.

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NRA

NRA files for bankruptcy and seeks to incorporate in Texas

- Gun rights group claims to be in strong financial condition
- New York state sued over executive expenditures
- [US politics – live coverage](#)

The NRA headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia. The gun-rights group has about 5 million members. Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

The NRA headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia. The gun-rights group has about 5 million members. Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

Associated Press in New York

Fri 15 Jan 2021 17.14 EST

The National Rifle Association announced on Friday it has filed for bankruptcy. The nation's most politically influential gun-rights group will now seek to incorporate in Texas instead of [New York](#).

[New York prosecutors interview Michael Cohen about Trump finances](#)
[Read more](#)

The announcement made on the NRA's website came months after the New York state attorney general sued the organization over claims top executives illegally diverted tens of millions of dollars for lavish personal trips, no-show contracts for associates and other questionable expenditures.

The coronavirus pandemic has also upended the NRA, which last year laid off dozens of employees, canceled its national convention and scuttled fundraising.

The NRA claimed in announcing the move that it was “in its strongest financial condition in years”, as it filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy in a Dallas federal court.

“The move will enable long-term, sustainable growth and ensure the NRA’s continued success as the nation’s leading advocate for constitutional freedom – free from the toxic political environment of New York,” a statement said.

The gun-rights group has about 5 million members. Headquartered in Virginia, it was chartered as a non-profit in New York in 1871 and is incorporated in the state.

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[The Pacific project](#)[World news](#)

Left stranded: US military sonar linked to whale beachings in Pacific, say scientists

Islands surrounded by US military study area, including Guam and Saipan, call for activity that harms the whales to stop

A Cuvier's beaked whale breaching. The mammals may be acutely vulnerable to sonar and there have been 13 documented strandings since 2010, possibly linked to sonar use. Photograph: Nature Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo

A Cuvier's beaked whale breaching. The mammals may be acutely vulnerable to sonar and there have been 13 documented strandings since 2010, possibly linked to sonar use. Photograph: Nature Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo

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[Jon Letman](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 15.00 EST

In the midst of the western Pacific, flanked by the [world's deepest ocean trench](#), the waters off the Mariana Islands are home and habitat to whales, dolphins, and countless other marine mammals as they [breed and feed](#).

It's also where they encounter the might of the [US military](#).

The US territory of Guam and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI), which includes Saipan, Tinian, and 12 other islands, are surrounded by the US military's [Mariana Islands Training and Testing \(MITT\)](#) study area.

[Stop blowing up bombs on sea floor, say whale campaigners](#)

[Read more](#)

Almost the size of India, the MITT is strategically important to the Department of Defence as a proving ground for new weapons systems and for [live-fire training](#).

But some on the neighbouring islands, including [indigenous Chamoru people](#), hold grave concerns for the military's impact on their environment, especially the use of sonar for anti-submarine warfare training, which may be causing whales to beach themselves and die.

Map of the Mariana Islands Training and Testing Study Area Photograph:
Mariana Islands Training and Testing

In particular, [Cuvier's beaked whales](#), known for deep dives documented to [last for hours](#), may be acutely vulnerable to sonar.

Able to [dive to nearly 3,000 meters](#), Cuvier's beaked whales can feed beyond the reach of competitors and predators, but not out of range of navy sonar.

Since 1998, fisheries biologist with Guam's department of agriculture, Brent Tibbatts, has documented 30 marine mammal strandings – 13 of them since 2010. The timing of the strandings, and their proximity to sonar, have led him to believe they are related.

When strandings occur, Tibbatts is the first called. If the animal can be saved, it's pushed back into the water. If it washes up dead – over 80% of the time, Tibbatts told the Guardian – or dies while stranded, Tibbatts performs a necropsy , taking tissue samples, measurements, and photos.

Tibbatts recalled a 2015 live stranding of a Cuvier's beaked whale which later died. Initially, the military denied it was using sonar, only [to later admit it](#) had after divers presented video in which sonar could be heard.

Listening to the inaudible

In February, a team of researchers from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) and Scripps Institution of Oceanography [published a study](#) examining how the navy's use of mid-frequency active sonar may contribute to whale strandings in the Marianas.

The study reported eight stranding events between 2006-2019 involving at least 10 whales.

An adult males Cuvier's beaked whale stranded. There are growing concerns US military activity – including sonar – off Guam and the Mariana Islands is contributing to whale strandings. Photograph: FLPA/Alamy Stock Photo

The lead author, acoustic ecologist Dr Anne Simonis, said the team recorded in waters between 600 and 1000 meters off Saipan and Tinian islands at timed intervals for up to 12 months, analysing recordings of the whales' distinctive echolocation clicks, which fall beyond the range of human hearing but are easily identified using a spectrogram to [visually represent sounds](#).

The team detected three beaked whale species and examined eight Cuvier's beaked whale strandings, of which three were confirmed to have occurred within six days of sonar use in the area, similar to [other beaked whale strandings](#) in other parts the world after anti-submarine activity.

A leading hypothesis suggested sonar may cause the whales to surface too quickly, forming bubbles in their blood or vital organs similar to decompression sickness, known as the bends.

“The number of animals that actually show up dead on the beaches may only be a fraction of the animals that are dying at sea,” said Simonis, saying that far fewer animals in pelagic [open ocean] waters are recovered compared to coastal species, no matter the cause of death.

“It does seem to be clear that beaked whales are more sensitive to navy sonar than other species,” Simonis said.

“There’s still a need to answer some basic questions about beaked whale populations and behaviour before we can understand the impact of sonar-associated strandings.”

Level ‘B’ Harassment

The US Navy declined an interview but in an email, Pacific Fleet spokesperson Lieutenant James Adams said: “Whales strand for a wide variety of reasons, including due to natural causes”.

The Center for Naval Analysis analysed complete data, including classified information, Adams said, determining there was “insufficient evidence to claim a relationship between sonar use and beaked whale strandings in the Mariana Islands”.

None of this can be understood without understanding indigenous dispossession and US imperialism

Isa Arriola

The navy would not release the number of anti-submarine warfare exercises it has conducted in the Marianas over the last 24 months, but Adams said, “the navy has not exceeded [authorised] [sonar and explosive levels](#),” adding “the navy has trained with active sonar in the region for over 70 years with negligible effects to the marine environment”.

The navy follows strict guidelines, employing [protective measures](#) to avoid impacts from at-sea training and testing, Adams said.

Kate Goggin, NOAA fisheries spokeswoman, said the [Marine Mammal Protection Act](#) allowed the navy to use sonar and conduct in-water detonations

inside the MITT, “which are likely to result in ... behavioural disruption, temporary hearing impairment or, in limited cases, permanent hearing impairment [of marine mammals].”

NOAA Fisheries has authorised “[Level B harassment](#)” of beaked whales which includes “interruption of feeding behaviours or displacement from areas where and when navy activities are occurring”.

Goggin said low to moderate severity of effects was not expected to impact the survival of beaked whales.

In January 2019, the navy released a 1,400-page MITT draft supplemental overseas [environmental impact statement](#) followed by its [record of decision](#), selecting the option that allows for the most activity in the MITT.

The island of Guam seen from the deck of the USS Theodore Roosevelt. The relationship between the US navy and the islands of Guam and the Northern Marianas are generally strong, but have been strained over the issue of

environmental damage. Photograph: Zachary Wheeler/US NAVY/AFP/Getty Images

In response, eight Guamanian senators – led by Senator Kelly Marsh-Taitano – introduced a resolution calling on the navy to “cease its use of active sonar that harms marine mammals; use passive sonar to detect the presence of marine mammals; and provide all information as declared necessary by the government of Guam in order to determine boundaries of habitat areas of beaked whales and other cetaceans”.

In a virtual public hearing in September, Senator Régine Bisco Lee noted protective agreements already exist for Hawaii and California: “We’re just asking that our land and our resources be protected in the same way”.

One ocean, two governments

While both US territories, Guam and CNMI’s distinct governance structures (larger Guam is an unincorporated territory, while CNMI is a commonwealth with its own governor and legislature) complicates protection of the beaked whale habitats.

Edwin Reyes, a government of Guam coastal management program administrator, says co-operation between Guam and CNMI is important in pursuing the common goal of ensuring the navy’s use of sonar is consistent with local policies.

Guam’s size, even small compared to Hawaii, Reyes said, means the impact of human activity is even greater and “puts a lot of strain on our resources”.

On neighbouring Saipan, part of the Marianas, Isa Arriola, chair of the group Our Common Wealth 670, said militarisation was about more than sonar and whales.

“None of this can be understood without understanding indigenous dispossession and US imperialism.”

[More than 120 whales die in mass stranding on Chatham Islands](#)
[Read more](#)

She argued current levels of military activity were “totally unsustainable” and said co-operation between Guam and the CNMI was imperative because “whales and dolphins aren’t restricted by red dotted lines on a map”.

Also on Saipan, CNMI representative Sheila J. Babauta said that while the military has generally been welcome in the commonwealth, the relationship is complex. She has introduced a [house joint resolution](#) calling for a halt to all destructive military training.

“If this is happening now and the training and testing is not in full force yet ... imagine what’s going to happen in the future.”

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[WeatherwatchDrought](#)

China plays rainmaker with modified drone flights

Ganlin-1 could provide solid statistics on whether cloud seeding really works

The Laohugou No 12 glacier in China's Qilian mountains. The region suffers from repeated droughts. Photograph: Carlos García Rawlins/Reuters

The Laohugou No 12 glacier in China's Qilian mountains. The region suffers from repeated droughts. Photograph: Carlos García Rawlins/Reuters

[David Hambling](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

While most countries have backed away from weather modification, China has [embraced the concept](#) and is [stepping up efforts](#) to create rain on demand. The

China Meteorological Administration's first purpose-built weather modification drone, the Ganlin-1, made its first [flight last week](#).

Ganlin, which means “sweet rain”, is part of a project launched in March 2019 to increase rain and snow in the Qilian mountains region, which has suffered from repeated droughts. Ganlin is a modified version of the Wing Loong II flown by China’s military and has a wingspan of about 20 metres and a flight endurance of more than 14 hours. Its 5,000-kilometre (3,000) range is enough to traverse the entire region and it is much less expensive to operate than crewed aircraft. Previously the Chinese have used aircraft and rockets to launch rainmaking payloads – usually powdered silver iodide – into the clouds.

Ganlin carries a variety of weather sensors as well as a payload of rain-seeding catalyst. The developers claim it can identify the optimal area for cloud seeding, release the catalyst and measure the effects afterwards.

Previous rain-making programmes have suffered from lack of statistical evidence: it is difficult to tell whether it would have rained anyway. China’s cloud seeding operations with Ganlin drones may provide more data and settle the debate for good.

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[Netherlands](#)

Dutch government resigns over child benefits scandal

PM Mark Rutte will stay on in caretaker capacity until general elections scheduled for 17 March

Mark Rutte appears at a press conference in The Hague after the resignation of the coalition. Photograph: Bart Maat/EPA

Mark Rutte appears at a press conference in The Hague after the resignation of the coalition. Photograph: Bart Maat/EPA

[Jon Henley](#) Europe correspondent

[@jonhenley](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 09.32 EST

The Dutch government has resigned amid an [escalating scandal over child benefits](#) in which more than 20,000 families were wrongly accused of fraud by the tax authority.

The move came less than a month before parliament was due to break up ahead of general elections scheduled for 17 March. Prime minister Mark Rutte's cabinet is to stay on in a caretaker capacity until a new coalition is formed after that vote.

"The government was not up to standard throughout this whole affair," Rutte told a press conference. "Mistakes were made at every level of the state, with the result that terrible injustice was done to thousands of parents."

Political responsibility for the scandal lay with the current cabinet, he said, which had decided collectively that it had no option but to resign. "Things cannot ever be allowed to go so terribly wrong again," Rutte said.

The prime minister, who has headed three coalition governments since 2010, said the government would continue to actively manage the country's response to the coronavirus crisis. A strict lockdown will remain in place in the [Netherlands](#) until at least 9 February and a curfew is under consideration.

Polls suggest Rutte's People's party for Freedom and Democracy will win a fourth term in the election, with public opinion still largely backing him. The centre-right party is on course for just under 30% of the vote, more than twice that forecast for the second-placed party, Geert Wilders' anti-Islam Freedom party.

"This won't have a huge effect on the governing parties' polling," said Rem Korteweg of the Clingendael thinktank. "The minister who was in charge of the child benefits scheme is now in opposition and has resigned; civil servants are being blamed for the predatory tax office. The government is taking 'political responsibility' but with little 'political cost'."

As many as 26,000 parents were wrongly accused by the Dutch tax authorities of fraudulently claiming child allowance over several years from 2012, with as many as 10,000 families forced to repay tens of thousands of euros, in some cases leading to unemployment, bankruptcies and divorces.

The tax authority admitted last year that at least 11,000 were singled out for special scrutiny because of their ethnic origin or dual nationality, fuelling longstanding allegations of systemic racism in the Netherlands.

Orlando Kadir, an attorney representing about 600 families, said people had been targeted “as a result of ethnic profiling by bureaucrats who picked out their foreign-looking names”. The government has apologised for the tax office’s methods and set aside more than €500m (£450m) in compensation, about €30,000 for each family.

The cabinet’s resignation came after a damning parliamentary report, Unprecedented Injustice, was published last month, which concluded that “fundamental principles of the rule of law had been violated”.

The investigating committee chairman, Chris van Dam, denounced the system as “a mass process with no scope for nuance”. Ministers, MPs, civil servants and court judges all bore a share of responsibility, said the report, which also strongly criticised the government for the way it provided information to parliament.

The opposition Labour party leader, Lodewijk Asscher, who was social affairs minister in the previous government, resigned over the affair on Thursday, conceding that a failed system had “made the government an enemy of its people”.

Twenty of the families involved this week took legal action against Asscher and ministers from three of the parties in the outgoing coalition, alleging criminal negligence through a failure of good governance, racial discrimination and violation of children’s rights.

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Nicolas Sarkozy

France investigates Sarkozy over contract with Russian insurer

Detectives seek to establish if former president was employed to lobby on behalf of the firm

Nicolas Sarkozy has repeatedly said he has never engaged in any wrongdoing.
Photograph: Martin Bureau/AFP/Getty Images

Nicolas Sarkozy has repeatedly said he has never engaged in any wrongdoing.
Photograph: Martin Bureau/AFP/Getty Images

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Fri 15 Jan 2021 14.36 EST

The former French president [Nicolas Sarkozy](#) is facing a preliminary investigation for influence peddling in connection with a €3m (£2.7) contract he signed with a Russian insurance company.

The rightwing politician reportedly received a first payment of €500,000 last year after being hired as a “special adviser” to the Reso-Garantia group, owned by two Russian-Armenian billionaire brothers.

Anti-corruption detectives want to establish whether Sarkozy was employed as a consultant or to lobby on behalf of the company. The latter could lead to a charge of influence peddling and covering up a crime or misdemeanour.

The new investigation is the latest of Sarkozy’s ongoing legal woes. A verdict on last year’s [trial for corruption and influence peddling](#), during which prosecutors called for a four-year jail sentence and which marked the first time a former French president had appeared in the dock, is expected on 1 March.

Sarkozy is also expected in court this year in relation to alleged illegal overspending on his unsuccessful 2012 re-election bid and is under ongoing investigation over allegations he received illicit campaign funding from the late Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi.

A member of Sarkozy’s entourage told the Guardian the former president was “perfectly calm” about the new investigation and that his “consulting activities are framed in strict compliance with legal and ethical rules”.

The investigation was revealed by the website Mediapart just hours after the satirical newspaper Le Canard enchainé claimed Sarkozy’s ex-wife Cécilia Attias was paid as a part-time parliamentary assistant in 2002 when there was no evidence she did any work to justify her [€3,100-a-month salary](#).

Sarkozy has repeatedly said he has never engaged in any wrongdoing and at times suggested the multiple accusations against him were a political smear attempt. He told the court last December he had “never committed the slightest act of corruption”.

According to Mediapart, France’s national fraud unit, Tracfin, raised concerns last year over why Sarkozy, who led [France](#) between 2007 and 2012, had been given the €3m contract with Reso-Garantia and what his role was. The company’s owners, Sergei and Nikolai Sarkisov, told Mediapart they had paid

the former president as a “special adviser” and chairman of the company management board’s strategic council committee.

Reso-Garantia, founded in 1991, is one of Russia’s biggest insurance companies, specialising in vehicle insurance, with about 11 million customers. In 2007, the French insurer Axa acquired 36.7% of the company. Axa is a major client of the legal firm Realyze, co-founded by Sarkozy in 1987.

The national financial prosecutor confirmed Sarkozy had been placed under “preliminary investigation”. This is the first stage of a legal inquiry to establish whether there are any charges to answer. If the investigation concludes there are, the former president could be *mis en examen*, put under formal investigation.

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[Uganda](#)

Bobi Wine says soldiers have stormed his home as Uganda counts vote

Opposition leader tweets ‘we are under siege’, while President Yoweri Museveni takes early lead in election

[Emmanuel Akinwotu](#) and [Samuel Okiror](#) in Kampala

Fri 15 Jan 2021 09.53 EST First published on Fri 15 Jan 2021 06.02 EST

Soldiers have stormed the home of [Bobi Wine](#), the Ugandan opposition leader has said, as votes continued to be counted in the country’s election.

“We are under siege,” the pop star turned politician [tweeted](#). “The military has jumped over the fence and has now taken control of our home.”

President Yoweri Museveni has taken an early lead as votes are counted in Uganda’s [most keenly watched election in years](#), while opposition figures said the vote had been marred by fraud and violence.

With a third of the votes counted, Museveni had more than 65% of the tallied ballots and was ahead of Wine in almost every region. Wine, one of 10 opposition challengers, had gained about a quarter of the vote, according to Uganda’s electoral body.

Lt Col Deo Akiiki, Uganda’s deputy military spokesperson, said the soldiers were at Wine’s house to protect him. “As presidential candidate, do you want his security to be compromised? It’s not a deployment to arrest him. Its a deployment to keep his security like any other presidential candidate has. It’s a simple as that.”

Wine, who has galvanised a mass movement of young people challenging the president’s 34-year rule, said at a press conference on Friday morning that Ugandans should reject the results.

“I am very confident that we defeated the dictator by far,” he said. “The people of [Uganda](#) voted massively for change of leadership from a dictatorship to a democratic government. But Mr Museveni is trying to paint a picture that he is in the lead.”

Results are expected to be announced by Saturday. A candidate must win more than 50% to avoid a runoff vote.

Helicopters and tanks were on patrol as millions went to the polls on Thursday following one of the most turbulent and violent election campaigns. Wine’s rejection of the results could prolong heightened tensions in the east African country.

Election officials count the ballots after polls closed in Kampala on Thursday.
Photograph: Jérôme Delay/AP

Security forces loyal to Museveni [violently suppressed opposition supporters](#) during the campaign. Museveni’s bid for a sixth term in power was only made

possible when MPs changed the constitution to remove age limits. He has repeatedly accused Wine of being a foreign-backed “traitor”, while Wine has branded him a “dictator”.

Many in [Africa](#) see the challenge to Museveni, who at 76 is twice as old as Wine, as emblematic of a continent-wide generational struggle between ageing leaders who refuse to relinquish power and younger voters mobilising against them.

The charismatic Wine has the backing of many young people in Uganda – where the median age is 15.7 – who are drawn to his anti-establishment message.

Many observers have expressed fears of state-backed moves to prevent transparency during the polls. On Wednesday night internet access was cut off for most users in the east African country, though some have used VPNs to communicate online. Uganda’s electoral commission said the lack of internet access had not affected the tallying of the count from around the country.

After polls closed on Thursday, hundreds of Wine supporters in Kampala returned to their polling stations to heed his call to “protect the vote” by watching the count. At the station where Wine had voted, security forces chased his supporters away.

Isabella Akiteng, a civil society activist, said late on Thursday that she and 29 others who were observing the polls had been arrested at a hotel in Kampala and were being interrogated by police.

On Wednesday, the US and EU said they would not observe the elections, after several officials were denied accreditation.

Peter Mwesigye, director of the Africa Media Centre of Excellence, said it would take time to determine the extent of voter fraud and violence at the polls.

“We know definitely there have been credible reports of fraud, but it’s going to be much harder and it will take many more days for us to begin to get the sense and scope of it,” he said. “The shutdown of the internet robbed the process of transparency that is required of an election. It has basically been an environment that doesn’t qualify for one to call it a free and fair election.”

Lina Zedriga, deputy president of Wine's National Unity Platform for northern Uganda, said it would use all non-violent means to challenge the result. "It's a mess. We have witnessed yet another false and great sham election [...] They are just alleging and creating their own results.

"We are calling upon our supporters to be calm. They want us to provoke and make us violent. We are non-violent people. We will definitely use all non-violent means possible that is going to be discussed by our legal teams."

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[France](#)

Two French police linked to violent arrest of black man may only get reprimands

Officers were involved in 2017 arrest of Théo Luhaka, who was left permanently disabled

File photo of the police station of Aulnay-sous-Bois near Paris. Photograph: Stéphane de Sakutin/AFP/Getty Images

File photo of the police station of Aulnay-sous-Bois near Paris. Photograph: Stéphane de Sakutin/AFP/Getty Images

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Fri 15 Jan 2021 09.11 EST

A police disciplinary board in [France](#) is reported to have recommended that two officers involved in the violent arrest of a young black man, who was allegedly sexually assaulted with a truncheon, be let off with a reprimand.

Théo Luhaka, who was 22 at the time of the attack, was left permanently disabled after suffering severe anal injuries from a police telescopic baton during a stop-and-search operation in a Paris suburb.

The police disciplinary committee met this week and is said to have ignored an official report accusing the officers of “disproportionate actions”. Le Parisien newspaper claimed the city’s police prefect, Didier Lallement, considered the recommendation that the officers escape with a reprimand “a bit light”.

The suggested disciplinary action has been sent to the director of the national police, who will make the final decision.

The case has become symbolic in the ongoing debate in France about police violence. A lengthy investigation carried out separately to the police internal disciplinary procedure made the unusual decision to send three officers to criminal trial.

One officer was initially accused of aggravated rape but will be tried on a lesser charge of “assault with a weapon leading to permanent injury or mutilation”.

He denies the allegations, saying he aimed his baton at Luhaka’s legs. Two other officers are accused of “deliberate group violence”. Charges against a fourth police officer who witnessed the arrest have been dropped.

In February 2017, four officers turned up at a housing estate in Aulnay-sous-Bois, north of Paris, and began stopping youths and asking to see their identity papers. CCTV footage showed police forcing Luhaka, who had no criminal record, to the ground and beating him.

One officer reportedly forced an extendible baton into the young man’s anus, causing such serious injuries that he needed emergency surgery and has been left with a permanent, life-changing disability.

The incident led to riots, demonstrations, looting and torching of cars in Paris, several city suburbs and elsewhere in France.

Éric Dupond-Moretti, the Luhaka family's lawyer at the time and now France's justice minister – said then that it was “an exceptionally serious case”. “There was blood everywhere,” he told France Inter radio.

At the time, Bruno Beschizza, the rightwing mayor of Aulnay-sous-bois, said it was an “unbearable and unacceptable” incident.

“The police are there to protect and not to humiliate our fellow citizens,” said Beschizza, a former police officer. He described Luhaka as a respectable young man from a respectable family who had been “psychologically destroyed” by what happened.

Months earlier, in July 2016, another young black man, Adama Traoré, died in police custody, sparking accusations of police violence.

In November last year, France’s national defender of rights, Claire Hédon, published a report on Luhaka’s arrest and called for the four officers involved to be punished. Her report highlighted “a number of disproportionate actions” and pointed out the young man had been arrested “without any clearly established motive”.

“Once the police had control of the victim, he was on the ground, handcuffed behind his back and he was seriously injured, there were no legal grounds to justify the use of force towards him,” Hédon wrote.

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[Hong Kong](#)

British QC prosecuting activists in Hong Kong fought to be allowed to take case

David Perry faces accusations of ‘making the wrong choice’ after applying despite local objections

David Perry QC had to go to court to gain permission to fly out to Hong Kong in order to prosecute pro-democracy activists. Photograph: South China Morning Post/Getty Images

David Perry QC had to go to court to gain permission to fly out to Hong Kong in order to prosecute pro-democracy activists. Photograph: South China Morning Post/Getty Images

[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor

Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.04 EST

David Perry, the British QC under fire for agreeing to prosecute pro-democracy activists in [Hong Kong](#), had to go to court himself to win permission to take the controversial case.

The nine activists facing a potential seven-year jail sentence for alleged unlawful assembly in 2019 include Jimmy Lai, the independently minded newspaper proprietor, and Martin Lee, the so-called father of Hong Kong democracy.

Perry has so far refused to comment on why he took the case.

If the defendants lose, the courts have already declared that the Hong Kong commissioner of police would have greater powers to restrict freedom of peaceful assembly.

Perry's defenders are claiming he is acting under the "cab rank" principle that requires him as a part-time member of the Hong Kong bar to take cases if so required. He has previously acted in a number of high-profile cases in Hong Kong.

But Perry had himself to go to court in the first instance to gain permission to fly out to take the case after the local Hong Kong bar association protested against the justice department's decision to hire the QC at considerable expense, saying no attempt was made to hire local barristers.

Charlie Falconer, the British shadow attorney general, said: "David Perry is a very respected practitioner, but the cab rank principle does not apply to foreign cases. He had to apply to take this case in Hong Kong over the objections of the Hong Kong bar. It's his choice and he has made the wrong choice."

The Labour peer and human rights lawyer Lady Helena Kennedy said: "The truth is that we are not hired guns. We are not mercenaries that take a brief that might involve the erosion of the rule of law. The purpose of that rule [the cab rank rule] is to make sure no one goes unrepresented, that we make sure that justice to the best of all possibilities is represented in the court. That is not the situation here."

She added: "A member of the English bar should be very careful about going to China and acting on behalf of the state in order to prosecute people under really questionable law that was produced at the behest of China and when the

consequences could be very serious in terms of individual liberty of those involved.”

The UK barrister’s code of conduct disregards the cab rank principle for foreign work, but Perry is registered with the Hong Kong Bar Association so it is arguable the cab rank principle applies to him as used by the Hong Kong bar.

The nine are not being prosecuted under the new security act imposed by the Chinese government last summer but under pre-existing legislation that eight of the defendants claim is being abused to prevent lawful assemblies. The defendants had permission to hold an assembly in August 2019, but the police commissioner claims they breached the order by allowing the demonstration to leave Victoria Park. The defendants claim the commissioner overstepped his powers to restrict demonstrations.

In a bid to block Perry’s application to appear in the case, Jonathan Chang, counsel for the Hong Kong bar, told the court: “No effort has been made to engage local leading counsel at all. The legal issues said to be involved in the trial are not of unusual difficulty or complexity. The applicant is unlikely to add significant dimension to the trial or the resolution of the legal issues said to be involved.”

The court ruled Perry’s involvement was justifiable since great constitutional issues would be resolved concerning the right of the commissioner of the police to restrict freedom of assembly.

The Labour MP Barry Sheerman expressed disbelief that a British barrister should seek to prosecute pro-democracy demonstrators.

Other critics include Oliver Lewis, a barrister at Doughty Street Chambers, who accused Perry of “bringing the bar into disrepute” by prosecuting offences “under a law that has been condemned by international human rights bodies”.

However, Marc Beaumont, a barrister who specialises in disciplinary proceedings, said counsel did not and could not judge morality.

“It is not for a barrister to judge the moral values of his own client,” he said. “If it was open to a barrister to do that, he would never act for a serial criminal, someone accused of a particularly horrific murder or series of murders, or even

a clearly guilty and notorious war criminal such as one of the defendants at the Nuremberg trials.”

A fierce debate at the highest level of the UK government has been raging for months about the wisdom of British judges continuing to serve on a non-permanent basis on the Hong Kong court of final appeal. There are 14 overseas non-permanent judges working in Hong Kong, including 10 from the UK led by Lady Hale and Lord Sumption. Some have expressed their own misgivings about serving on the Hong Kong bench.

Some in the government, including senior figures in the Foreign Office, argue such judges are now fatally compromised owing to changes in the law. Others, particularly among law officers, say that the law, including the involvement of British lawyers, provides one last source of British influence over liberty in Hong Kong. There is increasing pressure from Beijing on the legal system, with pro-China legislators demanding that prosecutors be allowed to tell judges what level of punishment should be imposed. They are also calling for a review of the sentencing guidelines.

The new security law allows judges to be removed from their post if they make “any statement or behave in any manner endangering national security during the term in office”.

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[Italy](#)

Footprints of crocodile-like prehistoric reptile found in Italian Alps

Fossilised track dates back to period immediately following mass extinction
252m years ago

The reptile was hypothetically similar to a four-metre long crocodile.
Photograph: Trento Science Museum (MUSE).

The reptile was hypothetically similar to a four-metre long crocodile.
Photograph: Trento Science Museum (MUSE).

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.06 EST

Footprints believed to have belonged to a crocodile-like prehistoric reptile have been found in the Italian Alps in an extraordinary discovery that scientists say proves there were survivors of a mass extinction 252m years ago.

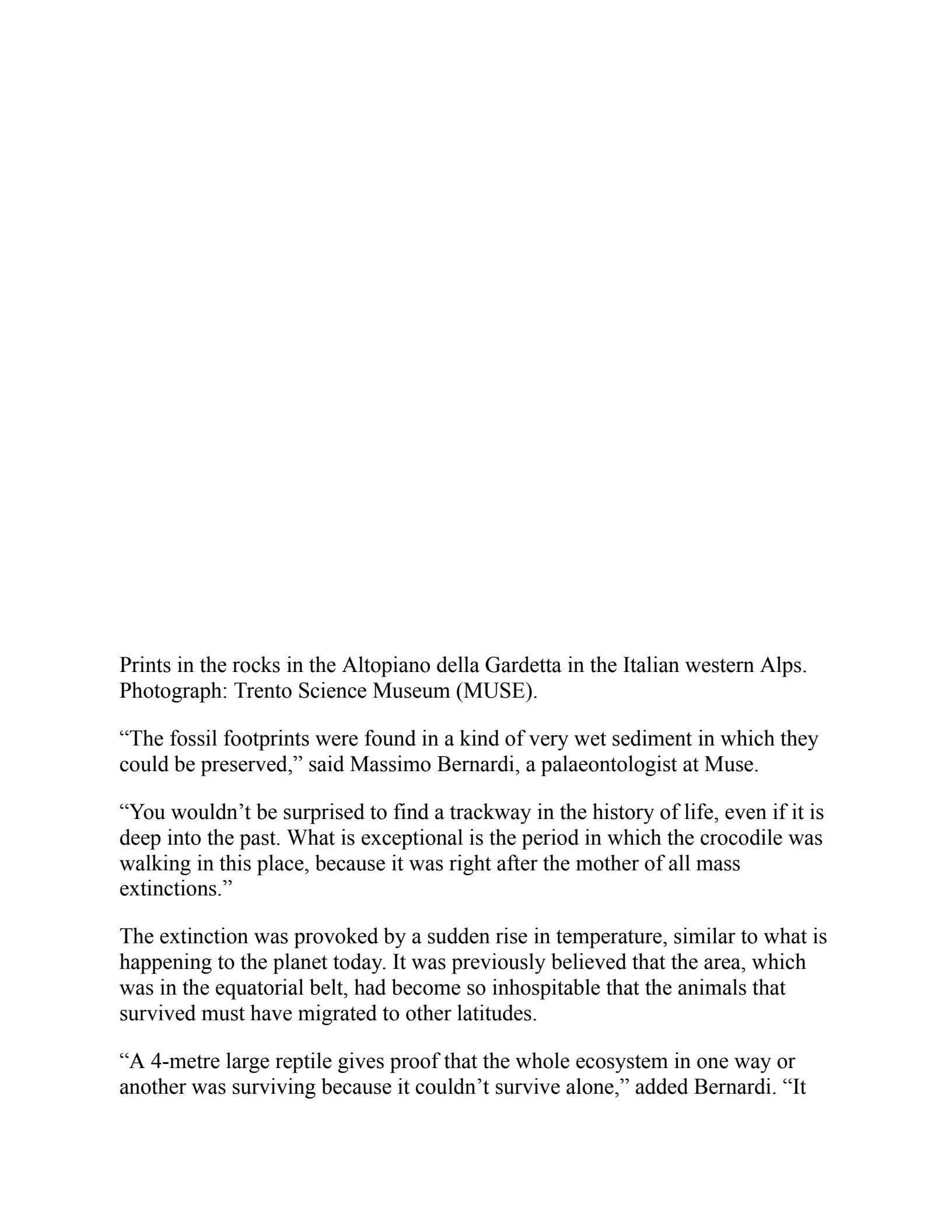
The well-preserved fossilised track, made up of about 10 footprints, was found at an altitude of 2,200-metres in Altopiano della Gardetta, in the province of Cuneo in the western Alps.

The traces of front and rear claws, about 30cm in length, date back to about 250m years ago, after the area was rendered inhospitable by the mass extinction at the end of Permian geological period.

A team of palaeontologists and geologists at the Trento Science Museum (Muse), Zurich University's Palaeontology Museum and the universities of Turin, Rome La Sapienza and Genoa were behind the discovery. Their study was published in [Peer J](#), the biological, medical and environmental sciences journal.

From the size of the prints and distance between each one, the scientists concluded that they probably belonged to a reptile similar to a crocodile, at least 4 metre long, that had been walking along an ancient coastline near a river delta.

The first footprints were found in rocks in the area in 2008, with the scientists continuing their exploration over the following years until they had the complete set of prints needed to identify the animal.



Prints in the rocks in the Altopiano della Gardetta in the Italian western Alps.
Photograph: Trento Science Museum (MUSE).

“The fossil footprints were found in a kind of very wet sediment in which they could be preserved,” said Massimo Bernardi, a palaeontologist at Muse.

“You wouldn’t be surprised to find a trackway in the history of life, even if it is deep into the past. What is exceptional is the period in which the crocodile was walking in this place, because it was right after the mother of all mass extinctions.”

The extinction was provoked by a sudden rise in temperature, similar to what is happening to the planet today. It was previously believed that the area, which was in the equatorial belt, had become so inhospitable that the animals that survived must have migrated to other latitudes.

“A 4-metre large reptile gives proof that the whole ecosystem in one way or another was surviving because it couldn’t survive alone,” added Bernardi. “It

wasn't just walking around in the desert – it needed prey, and this prey needed plants, etc.”

Scientists can also use the variables to understand what the effects of the current climate crisis may be, Bernardi said.

“We are in a time of rapid climate change – of global warming, the aridisation of the equatorial belt and so on. And the fact we get surprised after finding evidence that someone survived, I think underlines how dramatic the impact of climate change is.”

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2021.01.16 - Climate crisis

- [Air pollution Issue will lead to mass migration, say experts after landmark ruling](#)
- ['Neptune balls' Seagrass sieve millions of plastic particles from water, study finds](#)
- [Climate crisis Pope's adviser says Covid has highlighted 'existential' climate risk](#)

Environment

Air pollution will lead to mass migration, say experts after landmark ruling

Call for world leaders to act in wake of French extradition case that turned on environmental concerns

People wearing facemasks to protect themselves against air pollution in Beijing, China, in 2018. Photograph: Wu Hong/EPA-EFE

People wearing facemasks to protect themselves against air pollution in Beijing, China, in 2018. Photograph: Wu Hong/EPA-EFE

[Diane Taylor](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 06.28 EST

Air pollution does not respect national boundaries and environmental degradation will lead to mass migration in the future, said a leading barrister in the wake of a landmark migration ruling, as experts warned that government action must be taken as a matter of urgency.

Sailesh Mehta, a barrister specialising in environmental cases, said: “The link between migration and environmental degradation is clear. As global warming makes parts of our planet uninhabitable, mass migration will become the norm. Air and water pollution do not respect national boundaries. We can stop a humanitarian and political crisis from becoming an existential one. But our leaders must act now.”

He added: “We have a right to breathe clean air. Governments and courts are beginning to recognise this fundamental human right. The problem is not just that of [Bangladesh](#) and the developing world. Air pollution contributes to around 200,000 deaths a year in the UK. One in four deaths worldwide can be linked to pollution.”

The comments follow a [decision](#) by a French court this week, which is believed to be the first time environment was cited by a court in an extradition hearing. The case involved a Bangladeshi man with asthma who avoided deportation from France after his lawyer argued that he risked a severe deterioration in his condition, and possibly premature death, due to the dangerous levels of pollution in his homeland.

The appeals court in Bordeaux overturned an expulsion order against the 40-year-old man because he would face “a worsening of his respiratory pathology due to air pollution” in his country of origin.

Yale and Columbia universities’ environmental performance index [ranks Bangladesh 179th in the world](#) for air quality in 2020, while the concentration of fine particles in the air is six times the World Health Organization’s recommended maximum.

Dr David R Boyd, [UN special rapporteur on human rights and environment](#), agreed with Mehta’s analysis, telling the Guardian: “Air pollution causes 7 million premature deaths annually, so it is understandable if people feel compelled to migrate in search of clean air to safeguard their health. Air pollution is a global public health disaster that does not get the attention it deserves because most of the people who die are poor or otherwise vulnerable.”

He explained: “My work is really focused on increasing recognition and implementation of everyone’s right to live in a healthy environment, which surely includes [clean air](#). I’m involved in a couple of really important lawsuits on this issue in South Africa and Indonesia. The good news is that we have solutions that simultaneously address air pollution and climate change primarily by rapidly phasing out fossil fuel use.”

► Q&A

Why is air pollution so bad in Bangladesh?

Show

Alex Randall, coordinator at the Climate & [Migration](#) Coalition, said safe and legal routes to allow people to migrate needed to be established.

“Cases such as this, where air quality or other pollution become a reason for preventing deportation, are certainly important steps forward. They may potentially lay the foundations for other future cases in which the impacts of climate change provide grounds for allowing people to stay. In fact, several other cases mostly relating to people from climate vulnerable Pacific island nations have started to do this.

“However, these cases do not usually set legal precedents and people moving across borders due to climate change impacts remain in a legal grey area.”

According to the [Environmental Justice Foundation](#), one person every 1.3 seconds is forced to leave their homes and communities due to the climate crisis but millions lack legal protection. It has called on all countries to rapidly and fully implement the Paris climate agreement.

A [ruling](#) by the [United Nations](#) human rights committee a year ago found it is unlawful for governments to return people to countries where their lives might be threatened by the climate crisis.

Tens of millions of people are expected to be [displaced by global heating](#) in the next decade.

[migration-say-experts-after-landmark-ruling](#)

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Plastics

Seagrass 'Neptune balls' sieve millions of plastic particles from water, study finds

Researchers counted particles in seaballs that washed up on beaches in Spain

An underwater view of a *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass meadow in the Mediterranean sea that may help catch plastic pollution in the water.

Photograph: Jordi Regas/University of Barcelona/AFP/Getty

An underwater view of a *Posidonia oceanica* seagrass meadow in the Mediterranean sea that may help catch plastic pollution in the water.

Photograph: Jordi Regas/University of Barcelona/AFP/Getty

Agence France-Presse

Thu 14 Jan 2021 20.15 EST

Underwater seagrass in coastal areas appear to trap plastic pollution in natural bundles of fibre known as “Neptune balls”, researchers have found.

With no help from humans, the swaying plants – anchored to shallow seabeds – may collect nearly 900m plastic items in the Mediterranean alone every year, a study reported in the journal Scientific Reports said.

“We show that plastic debris in the seafloor can be trapped in seagrass remains, eventually leaving the marine environment through beaching,” lead author Anna Sanchez-Vidal, a marine biologist at the University of Barcelona, told AFP.

This clean-up “represents a continuous purge of plastic debris out of the sea,” she added.

The study adds to the long list of services that seagrass provides – for ocean ecosystems, and the humans who live near the water’s edge. They play a vital role in improving water quality, absorb CO₂ and exude oxygen, and are a natural nursery and refuge for hundreds of species of fish. They are also the foundation of coastal food webs.

[Clothes washing linked to ‘pervasive’ plastic pollution in the Arctic](#)
[Read more](#)

By anchoring in shallow waters, they help prevent beach erosion, and dampen the impact of destructive storm surges.

There are 70 species of marine seagrass, grouped in several families of flowering plants that – originally on land – recolonised the ocean 80m to 100m years ago.

Growing from the Arctic to the tropics, most species have long, grass-like leaves that can form vast underwater meadows.

It is unclear if collecting the plastic damages the seagrass itself.

The plastic-riddle ‘Neptune balls’.

Photograph: Marta Veny/UNIVERSITY OF BARCELONA/AFP/Getty Images

To better understand the plastic bundling capabilities of seagrass, Sanchez-Vidal and her team studied a species found only in the Mediterranean sea, *Posidonia oceanica*.

In 2018 and 2019, they counted the number of plastic particles found in seaballs that had washed up on four beaches in Mallorca, [Spain](#), which has large seagrass meadows offshore.

There was plastic debris in half of the loose seagrass leaf samples, up to 600 bits per kilogram of leaves.

Only 17% of the tighter bundled seagrass fibre known as Neptune balls contained plastic, but at a much higher density – nearly 1,500 pieces per kilogram of seaball.

Using estimates of seagrass fibre production in the Mediterranean, the researchers worked up an estimate of how much plastic might be filtered in the entire basin.

The oval orbs – the shape of a rugby ball – form from the base of leaves that have been shredded by the action of ocean currents but remain attached to stems, called rhizomes.

As they are slowly buried by sedimentation, the damaged leaf sheaths form stiff fibres that intertwine into a ball, collecting plastic in the process.

“We don’t know where they travel,” said Sanchez-Vidal. “We only know that some of them are beached during storms.”

In 2018 WWF estimated that in a matter of weeks over the holiday season in the Mediterranean, the rise in plastic marine pollution contributed to around 150m tonnes of plastic in the ocean.

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Global development

Pope's adviser says Covid has highlighted 'existential' climate risk

Focus must be on justice for those fleeing impact of extreme weather events, says new scientific adviser to Vatican

Flames from a wildfire advance on a church in California. Photograph: Noah Berger/AP

Flames from a wildfire advance on a church in California. Photograph: Noah Berger/AP

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[Karen McVeigh](#)

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Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

The pope's newly appointed scientific adviser said the coronavirus pandemic has forced world leaders to face up to the "existential risk" of the climate crisis.

Prof Ottmar Edenhofer said rich countries now had a moral duty to compensate poor countries already suffering the impacts.

Edenhofer, director of the climate research institute MCC in Berlin and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, was appointed to provide scientific advice to the Vatican agency focusing on justice for refugees, the poor and the stateless.

His appointment follows Pope Francis's 2019 [declaration of a climate emergency](#) in which he said failing to act would be a "brutal act of injustice"

towards the poor and future generations. Edenhofer told the Guardian he hoped his input would help drive action by governments.

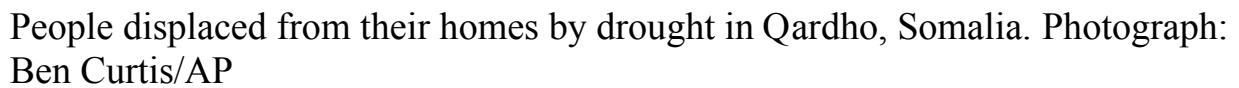
[Nigeria cattle crisis: how drought and urbanisation led to deadly land grabs](#)

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“Weather extremes triggered by the destabilisation of our climate are already driving migration movements worldwide,” he said. “Droughts can cause simmering conflicts to flare up violently, and crop failures can drive up food prices. Unfortunately, if the planet continues to warm, migration and conflicts are likely to increase further.

“The climate issue is fundamentally also a justice issue. It is therefore both a great honour and responsibility to provide scientific advice to the Holy See on these important issues.”

Asked how climate deniers such as Donald Trump and Brazil’s Jair Bolsonaro could be persuaded to change, Edenhofer said: “I think it’s impossible to convince Donald Trump. But other leaders like Joe Biden, and also in China leaders are convinced. China is fully aware it will suffer from the impacts of climate change on water supply, which will cause huge problems.



People displaced from their homes by drought in Qardho, Somalia. Photograph: Ben Curtis/AP

“Protecting citizens is one of the main works of governments and governments cannot ignore existential risks. Because of Covid, international leaders are more aware of ‘fat tail’ risks, those of low probability but with the potential for huge damage. And in poor countries, the impact of climate change is not about a possibility in the future but is being felt today.”

Edenhofer said the pope’s stark message on the crisis was important not only for Roman Catholics, but for evangelical Christians.

“We cannot underestimate the pope is basically speaking for 1.3 billion people. I would even argue the message the pope sends to the world is also important for evangelical Christians, who have a huge problem so far in recognising climate change as an important issue. Because most of them see this as a kind of western European leftwing agenda. The pope makes very clear this is

something which is not a partisan issue but it is something which is important for the whole world.

"I'm very happy that the pope and the Catholic church as a global player have taken on responsibility to care about this issue. The Catholic church represents a socially conservative people and it is important the church can speak to these people."

The economist, who served as co-chair on the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change working group on mitigation from 2008 to 2015, has also worked with Cardinal Peter Turkson of Ghana, the man behind the [radical call to action](#) on climate change.

A farmer irrigates a parched field in Sichuan. China faces water shortages caused by the climate crisis. Photograph: TPG/Getty Images

His role, he said, was to update the Vatican on the scientific impacts of such changes on human development.

“Justice and peace for migration was always an issue of the Catholic church. But now, the care of the global commons, including biodiversity laws, climate change, land degradation, they are an integral part of human development and I see this as a very, very important step.”

Among the topics for papal discussion, he said, will be climate refugees and compensation for poorer countries from richer countries more responsible for toxic emissions.

“They [richer countries] have a moral obligation to reduce emissions and achieve carbon neutralisation and at the same time, they have to compensate people in the developing countries for climate damages. There’s no doubt about this.”

The Vatican, which Edelhofer said was responsible for persuading Poland to sign up to the Paris climate agreement, is expected to play an important role at the climate summit in Glasgow later this year.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/15/popes-adviser-says-covid-has-highlighted-existential-climate-risk>

2021.01.16 - Culture

- [Call My Agent Get au fait with the smash hit French comedy-drama](#)
- [The Octopus Man by Jasper Gibson review Mental illness and disrupted lives](#)
- [Olivia Rodrigo Disney star's No 1 debut single beats Ed Sheeran's streaming record](#)
- [Book of the day All the Young Men by Ruth Coker Burks review – an uplifting memoir](#)
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[TV comedy](#)

Call My Agent: get au fait with the smash hit French comedy-drama

As the celeb-stuffed show returns for a final season, we look at what makes it such a hit on both sides of the Channel

Agents provocateurs ... Call My Agent. Photograph: Christophe Brachet
Agents provocateurs ... Call My Agent. Photograph: Christophe Brachet



[Dale Berning Sawa](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Celebs might have failed at 2020 (see: [Gal Gadot's Imagine](#), Kim K's island bash, every influencer everywhere) but the return to Netflix of the French comedy Call My Agent! should ensure that their reputation improves in 2021.

[The Guide: Staying In – sign up for our home entertainment tips](#)

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Following the shenanigans of a fictitious Parisian talent agency, the acclaimed comedy-drama is packed to the rafters with stars knowingly playing themselves. Here are five reasons to tune in ...

The cameos

With an A-list address book at the ready (that of the former agent and co-creator Dominique Besnehard), each episode of Call My Agent! features a

famous person sending themselves up in believable ways: Juliette Binoche flailing on the Cannes stage in bent ostrich feathers; Isabelle Huppert losing her voice through superhuman overwork; grand dame Béatrice Dalle going to war over gratuitous nudity. How will Charlotte Gainsbourg, Jean Reno and Sigourney Weaver make spectacles of themselves in season four?

The drama

The stars may bring their fair share of it (tax evasion, marital spats, existential meltdowns), but it's the agents cleaning up the mess who shine. Take the scene in the pilot when a beleaguered assistant unintentionally hangs up on one of the agency's biggest clients, and his boss erupts in a volley of "Oh putain, putain, putain" – like *The Wire*'s famous "Fuck" scene, but deliciously devoid of composure.

Representing ... Camille Cottin with Jean Reno in Season 4 of *Call My Agent*.
Photograph: Christophe Brachet

The putdowns

Call My Agent! is nothing if not catty. See Andréa raging at 87-year-old Nouvelle Vague icon Françoise Fabian for being flaky: “No, but, for real, at what age do these tantrums stop?” Or Fabian’s response when the agency’s director dies after swallowing a wasp: “Just goes to show, you can have a dashing life and a shitty death.”

The style

It’s in the opening credits: an actress glides from a Marie-Antoinette-style costume fitting to tight jeans and Converse to an LBD on the red carpet. And it’s in the agents’ wardrobes as much as their clients’: witness the show’s breakout star [Camille Cottin](#) as Andréa, dressed in red stiletto boots and a crumpled button-down. Glamming up for a big premiere? No, she’s on maternity leave.

The parodies

For an industry not given to self-deprecation, Call My Agent!’s send-ups of *le cinema* push the show into greatness. For example, an auteur spitting: “A script is there to be destroyed,” as he throws it at the crew. Then there’s François Hollande’s partner Julie Gayet and rapper JoeyStarr getting it on as a period set literally catches fire around them, but no one shouts “cut” because the visual is so beautiful. And, in fairness, it is.

Season 4 of Call My Agent! starts Thursday 21 January on Netflix

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/jan/16/call-my-agent-get-au-fait-with-the-smash-hit-french-comedy-drama>

Fiction

The Octopus Man by Jasper Gibson review – mental illness and disrupted lives

This engaging novel evokes the radical politics of the anti-psychiatry movement

Gallows humour and bathos ... Jasper Gibson. Photograph: Effie Gibson
Gallows humour and bathos ... Jasper Gibson. Photograph: Effie Gibson

Houman Barekat

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

Set in a leafy parish town in East Sussex, Jasper Gibson's second novel tells the story of Tom Tuplow, a former lawyer who has endured two decades of mental ill health as a result of heavy psychedelic drug use in his youth. He hears voices

– or rather, one voice: that of the “Octopus God” Malamock, an overbearing presence that taunts and rebukes him in mannered language. (It says things such as: “The caprice of experience … shall silver the death chamber.”) On the advice of his long-suffering sister, Tom participates in a trial for a new anti-psychotic drug, and tries to rebuild his life.

Gibson’s narrator-protagonist is an affable and engaging companion. Tom is lippy with doctors and huggy with strangers; one minute he’s officially articulate, the next a jabbering wreck. Somewhat surprisingly for a novel about mental health, there is relatively little interiority here – it’s mostly action and dialogue, delivered in brisk and lively prose. Sprinklings of gallows humour and dry bathos riff on the absurd human comedy of mental illness. (“I stand up and headbutt the television. It is crunchier than expected.”) The novel’s portrayal of mental health facilities is pointedly unflattering: during a stint in a psychiatric unit in north London, Tom witnesses staff using excessive force to subdue patients, and being trigger-happy with sedative injections; one of the nurses is secretly sleeping with a patient.

Tom likens his treatment to the persecution of heretics in the middle ages: “It’s about getting rid of my faith, the fundamental essence of who I am.” Sure enough, when the drug does its job and the voice is temporarily banished, Tom is left rudderless. The reader is invited to wonder if Malamock had actually been a benign influence all along – the voice of Tom’s better self. This is a brave position to take insofar as it pushes against received wisdom on mental health, evoking the radical politics of the anti-psychiatry movement. *The Octopus Man* trades heavily on the easy emotive pull of its subject matter – the poignant melodrama of disrupted lives and frayed friendships – but its allegorical point is well made: perhaps, as a society, we are too quick to medicalise madness, and overly wedded to psychiatric interventions whose long-term effects can be even more harmful than the conditions they are meant to cure.

- *The Octopus Man* is published by Weidenfeld & Nicholson (RRP £14.99). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

Music

Olivia Rodrigo: Disney star's No 1 debut single beats Ed Sheeran's record

A familiar sound and rumoured real-life relationship drama created a ‘perfect storm’ for the 17-year-old’s pop breakout

‘A perfect storm’ ... Rodrigo in Los Angeles in 2019. Photograph: Étienne Laurent/EPA

‘A perfect storm’ ... Rodrigo in Los Angeles in 2019. Photograph: Étienne Laurent/EPA

[Laura Snaps](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 13.00 EST

The [Disney Channel](#) star Olivia Rodrigo has smashed UK chart records and global [Spotify](#) streaming records with her debut single. Drivers License is the UK's official No 1, breaking the Official Charts Company's record for the highest number of single-day streams ever for a non-Christmas song.

On 12 January, 17-year-old Rodrigo's heartbroken epic was streamed 2.407m times in 24 hours, beating [Ed Sheeran](#)'s record for Shape of You, which received 2.274m streams in 24 hours in January 2017.

Rodrigo with her UK No 1 trophy. Photograph: OfficialCharts.com/PA

Rodrigo also repeatedly broke Spotify's global one-day streaming records for non-holiday songs. On 11 January, Drivers License was streamed 15.17m times. A day later, it broke that record with 17.01m streams. [Mariah Carey](#)'s classic All I Want for Christmas Is You currently holds Spotify's one-day streaming record, with more than 17.2m plays.

Hailed by Rolling Stone as [an early “song of the year”](#), Drivers License is the UK’s biggest first-week chart debut since former [One Direction](#) band member [Zayn Malik](#) released his debut single, Pillowtalk, in 2016.

Like Malik, Rodrigo’s success hasn’t come out of the blue. She has been a staple of [Disney Channel](#) programming since 2016, and has been leading the cast of mockumentary High School Musical: The Musical: The Series for two years and writing songs for its soundtrack.

Co-written by Rodrigo and producer Dan Nigro, Drivers License is rumoured to reference behind-the-scenes activity on the show. The song documents Rodrigo getting her driver’s licence, a moment that she intended to celebrate with a boyfriend who has now moved on to another girl.

Olivia Rodrigo: Drivers License – video

Fans have assumed it addresses Rodrigo’s co-star and rumoured ex-boyfriend Joshua Bassett, interpreting lyrics about a “blonde girl” who is “everything I’m insecure about” as a reference to another cast member. Rodrigo [told Apple Music’s Zane Lowe](#) that she wrote the song while “literally crying in my living room”. On Thursday, Bassett released a single, Lie, Lie, Lie, that has been interpreted as a riposte.

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Signed to Interscope and Geffen Records, Rodrigo was born in Temecula, California and has named [Taylor Swift](#) and [Lorde](#) as her biggest inspirations. She is the latest pop star to break out of the Disney stable, following the likes of Selena Gomez, Demi Lovato and [Miley Cyrus](#). She is also massive on the platform TikTok, [with 3.5m followers](#).

In an interview with Billboard, Spotify’s Becky Bass, leader of its global hits playlist, described the conditions of Rodrigo’s success as [a perfect storm](#). “You have fans hearing Lorde in it, you have fans hearing Taylor [Swift] in it, you have fans hearing Kesha in it. Most of the world can relate to a breakup – so it’s a relatable song, as well. But you layer in the drama, you layer in a really active fanbase and you get this snowball effect.”

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<https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/jan/15/olivia-rodrigo-disney-stars-no-1-debut-single-beats-ed-sheerans-record>

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Book of the dayAutobiography and memoir

All the Young Men by Ruth Coker Burks review – an uplifting memoir

A renegade Florence Nightingale cares for the ill in a remarkable tale of compassion and combating prejudice

Ruth Coker Burks at a Broadway Sings For Pride event in New York.
Photograph: Santiago Felipe/Getty Images

Ruth Coker Burks at a Broadway Sings For Pride event in New York.
Photograph: Santiago Felipe/Getty Images

Olivia Laing

Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.30 EST

In the spring of 1986, Ruth Coker Burks was in the medical centre in Little Rock, Arkansas, visiting a friend with cancer, when she noticed three nurses drawing straws to see which one would have to enter a patient's room. Curious, she snuck down the corridor to take a look. The door was hung with a scarlet tarp and a biohazard sign. Food trays were piled on the floor outside, along with a cart of isolation suits and masks. Inside, she found an emaciated young man calling for his mother.

When Coker Burks challenged the nurses, one of them told her she was crazy to go in. "He's got that gay disease," she said. "They all die." They refused to contact the patient's mother, and so Coker Burks made the call from a payphone herself. "My son is already dead," the woman told her. "My son died when he went gay." Appalled, she went back to the room and sat with the young man, holding his hand until he died a few hours later. But when she told the nurses he was dead, they insisted that she was now responsible for the body. It took hours of phone calls before she found a funeral home willing to perform the cremation. As for the ashes, she buried them herself in a cookie jar at Files Cemetery in Hot Springs, where her family owned some land.

This was Coker Burks's introduction to Aids, the disease that would come to shape her life. In 1986, Aids was a death sentence. Five years after the New York Times had reported the first cases under the famous headline "Rare Cancer Seen in 41 Homosexuals", there was still no reliable treatment, let alone a cure. The fear, ignorance and stigma were so great that hospitals regularly refused to treat patients. Informal networks of care were predominantly urban, centred in the gay capitals of New York City and San Francisco. The pressure group Act Up would not be founded for another year. In the south, people were coming home sick and terrified, hoping for refuge with their families, only to be rejected and die alone.

Coker Burks was 26 that year, a bottle-blonde Methodist and divorced single mother in a hyper-conservative town where divorce meant "social death". In Arkansas, consensual sex between two men was punishable by up to a year in prison. She knew that helping people with Aids put her at risk of losing custody of her four-year-old daughter, never mind being shunned by other parents, co-workers or members of her church. But, as she explains, there was literally no one else. Within weeks of her first deathbed encounter, she was rung up by a nun who told her a patient had been dumped on the doors of the Catholic

hospital and they were “not equipped” to treat him and anyway didn’t “want the reputation”. Once again, she sat by his bed, holding his hand until he died.

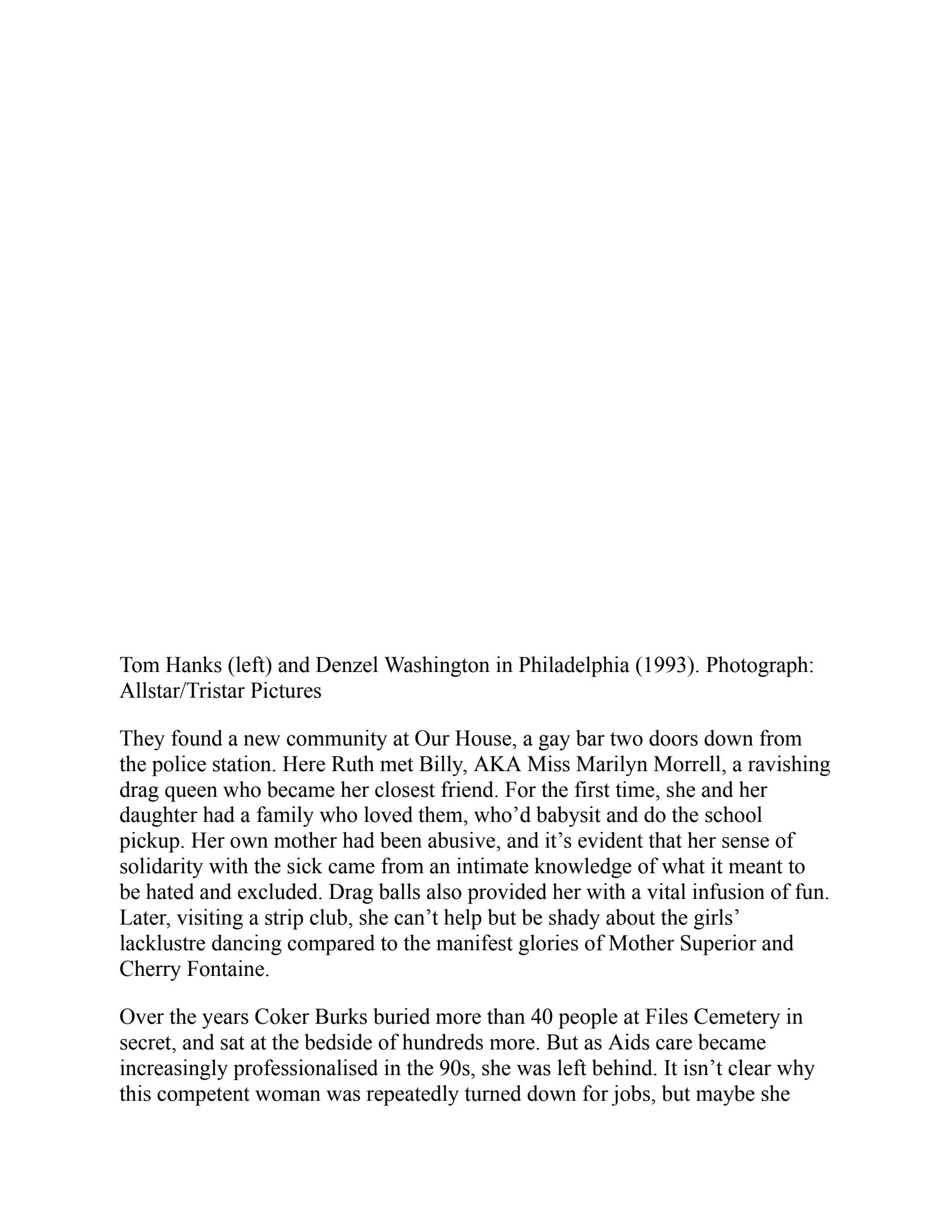
Hollywoodising the crisis ... Jared Leto and Matthew McConaughey in the 2013 film Dallas Buyers Club. Photograph: Allstar/Focus features/Sportsphoto Ltd

The calls kept coming, first from hospitals, and then from the men themselves. With no treatment, people were dying with terrifying rapidity, a life expectancy counted in weeks, not months. She educated herself about the virus by sneaking into the library at the local teaching hospital. She helped people get on disability benefit and found them places to live. In between her job at a sawmill, she cooked nutritious meals for her patients, begging for vegetables from neighbours and bone marrow from local deer-hunters. When the antiretroviral drug AZT was approved in 1987, she set up an ad hoc home pharmacy in her pantry, filled with stockpiled pills left behind when people died. Realising early diagnosis meant a longer lifespan, she got a friend to teach her to take blood, stole needles from nurses’ stations and took the samples in a

minnow box to the state health department, getting them tested anonymously under names like Ronald Reagan and Minnie Mouse.

I admit I was sceptical of a narrative about an angelic straight woman saving helpless gay victims, the Hollywoodisation of the Aids crisis that runs all the way from 1993's *Philadelphia* to 2013's *Dallas Buyers Club*. But it's hard not to be disarmed by Coker Burks (ably ventriloquised by her ghostwriter Kevin Carr O'Leary). She dresses prettily in floral frocks to charm doctors, whom she then browbeats with statistics about cytomegalovirus and pneumocystis – anything to improve the treatment of her “guys”. If she needs to feed them, she has no compunction about climbing into the dumpster at the Piggly Wiggly and helping herself.

Although her pastor did not agree, she believed she was doing God's work and she refused to stop, even though she and her daughter Alison were systematically isolated by their community. A sample incident: after Alison's father was killed in a car crash, the pastor refused to let them participate in the family advent service, explaining to Ruth: “You're not a family. You don't have a husband.” Later, after she started appearing on TV, people burned crosses on their lawn.



Tom Hanks (left) and Denzel Washington in Philadelphia (1993). Photograph: Allstar/Tristar Pictures

They found a new community at Our House, a gay bar two doors down from the police station. Here Ruth met Billy, AKA Miss Marilyn Morrell, a ravishing drag queen who became her closest friend. For the first time, she and her daughter had a family who loved them, who'd babysit and do the school pickup. Her own mother had been abusive, and it's evident that her sense of solidarity with the sick came from an intimate knowledge of what it meant to be hated and excluded. Drag balls also provided her with a vital infusion of fun. Later, visiting a strip club, she can't help but be shady about the girls' lacklustre dancing compared to the manifest glories of Mother Superior and Cherry Fontaine.

Over the years Coker Burks buried more than 40 people at Files Cemetery in secret, and sat at the bedside of hundreds more. But as Aids care became increasingly professionalised in the 90s, she was left behind. It isn't clear why this competent woman was repeatedly turned down for jobs, but maybe she

functioned best as a renegade, doling out condoms at the cruising ground, a sex-positive Florence Nightingale.

It is not to diminish her story to say that heterosexual angels weren't the dominant narrative of the Aids crisis, but a vanishingly rare exception to a rule of homophobia, cruelty and prejudice. That said, there's something immensely uplifting about her decision to involve herself in the travails of a community not her own, simply because she could see that there was a need. It's a brighter story of human nature, an analogue to this winter's tale of good Samaritan Sikhs bringing curry to stranded Bulgarian lorry drivers in Kent. There are other stories of the Aids crisis that foreground activism and community (look out for Sarah Schulman's forthcoming history of Act Up, *Let the Record Show*), but this is a paean to making friendships across boundaries, to being kind even when the cost is nearly unbearable.

- *Olivia Laing's Funny Weather: Art in an Emergency is published by Picador. All the Young Men: A Memoir of Love, Aids and Chosen Family in the American South is published by Trapeze (£16.99). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.*

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[Guy Lodge's streaming and DVDs](#)[Film](#)

Patricia Highsmith at 100: the best film adaptations

‘Cast-iron classics’: Patricia Highsmith film adaptations The Talented Mr Ripley (1999), Plein Soleil (1960) and Strangers on a Train (1951) Photograph: Allstar; Alamy; Shutterstock

‘Cast-iron classics’: Patricia Highsmith film adaptations The Talented Mr Ripley (1999), Plein Soleil (1960) and Strangers on a Train (1951) Photograph: Allstar; Alamy; Shutterstock

Shape-shifting Tom Ripley, ill-met strangers on a train... cinema’s love affair with Highsmith’s thrillers was immediate, and shows no signs of cooling off



Guy Lodge

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Graham Greene famously declared Patricia Highsmith “the poet of apprehension” in the foreword to her 1970 short story collection *Eleven*. There’s no better way to describe the American writer, whose psychological thrillers meld gliding literary cool with a jangling morass of nerves – a combination, in turn, that film-makers have been trying to translate since the middle of the last century. This coming Tuesday marks the centenary of Highsmith’s birth, and her allure to screenwriters remains undimmed in 2021. A [glossy new Ben Affleck-starring film](#) of her novel *Deep Water*, the first film from Adrian Lyne in 19 years, is scheduled for August, while a TV version of *Ripley*, starring Andrew Scott as her most adaptable character, is in the pipeline.

They’ll join a large and variable roster of Highsmith screen adaptations, ranging from cast-iron classics to mouldering B-movies. It’s no easy subgenre to enter, the bar having been set impossibly high right off the bat – by Alfred Hitchcock, no less, whose perfectly sinuous film of Highsmith’s debut novel,

Strangers on a Train (on [Amazon Prime](#)), released just a year after the book's 1950 publication, surely played some part in cementing her own elegantly nasty reputation. A murder-swapping mystery shot in woodcut-sharp monochrome, it still finds room in its skin-tight plotting for hovering waves of queer energy.

Hollywood wouldn't attempt Highsmith again for some time, but in the 1960s, European cinema entered a long-term love affair with her work – beginning with René Clément's pristinely chic **Plein Soleil** ([Amazon](#)), an adaptation of *The Talented Mr Ripley* that kicked off an ongoing, international tangle of further Ripley tales and interpretations. Clément's oblique, sun-bleached introduction to identity-thieving serial killer Tom Ripley (played, never more beautifully, by Alain Delon) has little in common stylistically with Wim Wenders' Germanic, foggily atmospheric **The American Friend** ([BFI Player](#)), which bathes Ripley's subterfuge in a coffee-stained 1970s palette, nor with Anthony Minghella's marvellous **The Talented Mr Ripley** (1999; [Chili](#)), the starry, glamorous classicism of which only briefly disguises its perverse, inky heart. Less celebrated but fascinating, Liliana Cavani's 2002 film **Ripley's Game** ([iTunes](#)) revisited the turf of Wenders' film with less wintry ambience and more slithery, Malkovich-headed madness. That these films are so disparate only feels right: Ripley's screen legacy is as shape-shifting as he is.

Ray Winstone and John Malkovich in Liliana Cavani's Ripley's Game.
Photograph: Sergio Strizzi/New Line Productions

Other, non-Ripley European spins on Highsmith are thin on the ground in the streaming realm – or were, until I stumbled upon [Church of Film](#), a Vimeo streaming service set up by a Portland-based repertory cinema project of the same name, dedicated to the rare and the little-screened. There, you can find a Highsmith mini-festival including Claude Chabrol's slinky nightmare of male obsession [The Cry of the Owl](#) (1987); a chilly earlier dip into [Deep Water](#) (1981), ideally cast with Isabelle Huppert and Jean-Louis Trintignant; Claude Miller's unfussy but satisfying [This Sweet Sickness](#) (1977), starring a young Gérard Depardieu; and, heading back to Germany, a brisk, stern, Oscar-nominated adaptation of her wrongful-imprisonment story [The Glass Cell](#) (1978) that Highsmith herself rather approved of.

More recently, as highlighted [last month](#) in this very column, Todd Haynes's swoon-worthy [Carol](#) (2015; [Amazon Prime](#)), adapted from Highsmith's one outright lesbian-themed novel, holds the gold standard. It's not quite rivalled by

such honourable attempts as Hossein Amini's sexy, gorgeously dressed period runaround **The Two Faces of January** (2014; [Google Play](#)), nor by the diverting but low-impact **A Kind of Murder** (2016; [Microsoft](#)), nobly led by Patrick Wilson. But in cinema, even medium Highsmith has its pleasures. Expect many more variations over the next hundred years.

Also new on streaming and DVD

Filles de joie, AKA Working Girls (2020). Photograph: © Versus production; Les Films du Poisson

My French film festival

([Curzon Home Cinema](#))

The [annual online festival](#) dedicated to new voices in French cinema is under way until mid-February, and should find a larger audience than usual in lockdown times. This year's lineup mingles shorts and features, youthful comedies with oddball ghost stories and more: the names are largely unfamiliar,

so taking chances and diving in is the way to go here. *Working Girls*, a study of border-crossing sex workers that Belgium has entered into the Oscar race, merits a second glance. If you want guaranteed greatness, meanwhile, a classic slot has been reserved for Jean Cocteau's dreamy *Orpheus*.

Archive

(*Amazon/iTunes, 15*)

British director Gavin Rothery has a background in graphic design and visual effects, which is plain to see in the gorgeous, steely surfaces of his debut feature, well-led by Theo James as an isolated AI scientist trying to digitally resurrect his wife. There's much promise here, but the shadow of *Ex Machina* looms too large over it.

Away

(*iTunes, U*)

Now available digitally after its cinema release in August, Latvian animator Gints Zilbalodis's beautiful, thoughtful long-journey-home adventure is a rare children's film with a healthy dose of surrealism and melancholy: consistently endearing, never too cute.

Relic

(*Signature, 15*)

Australian writer-director Natalie Erika James's debut is one of a run of recent films to address the trauma of dementia, though its approach is bracingly original and moving. A sharp, tingling horror film that fashions fading memory as its own kind of haunted house, it walks a tricky line with tact and style to spare.

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2021.01.16 - Lifestyle

- [**Yotam Ottolenghi Recipes for tinned tuna, chickpeas and apples**](#)
- [**Waste not Tom Hunt's nut and seed pulp granola recipe**](#)
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[Yotam Ottolenghi recipes](#)[Food](#)

Yotam Ottolenghi's recipes for tinned tuna, chickpeas and apples

Yotam Ottolenghi's miso and peanut butter chickpea salad. Photograph: Louise Hagger/The Guardian. Food styling: Emily Kydd. Prop styling: Jennifer Kay.
Yotam Ottolenghi's miso and peanut butter chickpea salad. Photograph: Louise Hagger/The Guardian. Food styling: Emily Kydd. Prop styling: Jennifer Kay.

January is a fitting time to get inventive with those tins you have in the kitchen cupboard: knock together a tonnato dip or an umami-rich chickpea salad, and some fried apple dumplings for afters

[Yotam Ottolenghi](#)

[@ottolenghi](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.30 EST

New year, new recipes, but a bit skint after Christmas ... Time to raid the pantry! A dish based on the tins in your kitchen cupboard – tuna, chickpeas, anchovies, coconut milk, apples – doesn't have to be overly basic, however. If we take “tinned” to include all those half-empty jars and bottles – the capers, mustards, oils and maple syrup – our aspirations for the new year (and the two-week-old new UK) can, perhaps, be embodied in our food. Making do with what we've got, reaching for those trusted tins, seeing them in a bit of a new light and, if we can, going on a few little local micro-adventures to seek out one or two specialist extras. 2021: alone, but together. Let's do this thing!

Miso and peanut butter chickpea salad (pictured above)

This makes a great standalone lunch, but it also works as a side dish. I use unsweetened and unsalted peanut butter, but if your brand has added sugar and salt, just reduce the amount of maple syrup and salt with the chickpeas. The fried onions are a great final layer of crunch, but don't worry if you don't have any: just increase the amount of peanuts to 200g and sprinkle the extra 50g on top before serving.

Prep 15 min

Cook 20 min

Serves 4-6

For the roast chickpeas

4 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed

15g piece fresh ginger, peeled and finely grated

2 tbsp white miso

2 tbsp smooth peanut butter (ideally one with no added sugar or salt)

1 tbsp maple syrup

2 tbsp lime juice

75ml olive oil

1 tsp chilli flakes

1 tbsp cumin seeds

Salt and black pepper

2 x 400g tins chickpeas, drained (480g net weight)

For the dressing

75ml olive oil

75ml fresh lime juice (ie, from 4-5 limes)

3 tbsp maple syrup

1 garlic clove, peeled and crushed

For the salad

1 tbsp olive oil

150g salted and roasted peanuts

200g radishes, thinly sliced

1 cucumber, deseeded and cut into ½cm-thick slices (200g)

8 spring onions, thinly sliced on an angle (100g)

70g coriander, roughly chopped

100g crispy fried shallots or onions (homemade or shop-bought, optional)

Heat the oven to 240C (220C fan)/475F/gas 9. In a medium bowl, mix the garlic, ginger, miso, peanut butter, maple syrup, lime juice, olive oil, chilli, cumin and a half-teaspoon of salt. Add the chickpeas, toss to coat, then spread out on an oven tray lined with greaseproof paper. Roast for 20 minutes, stirring once halfway, then remove and leave to cool.

Mix all the dressing ingredients with a teaspoon of salt and a good grind of pepper.

For the salad, put the oil in a small pan on a medium heat, then fry the peanuts, stirring regularly, for five minutes, until lightly browned all over. Leave to cool, then roughly chop.

To assemble the salad, mix the radishes, cucumber, spring onions and coriander with the dressing, then arrange half this salad on a large plate. Scatter half the chickpeas and half the peanuts on top, then repeat with the remaining salad, chickpeas and peanuts. Scattering over a few crispy shallots/onions, and serve with the remaining shallots in a bowl alongside.

Kohlrabi with tonnato, herbs, fried capers and aleppo chilli

Yotam Ottolenghi's kohlrabi with tonnato, herbs, fried capers and aleppo chilli.

This makes more tonnato than you need, but it keeps in the fridge for up to three days and is delicious as a dip (for bread or raw veg) or in sandwiches. You can prepare everything in advance, but don't mix it all together until just before serving, because the kohlrabi will get watery if it's left sitting around in the dressing for too long.

Prep 5 min

Cook 20 min

Serves 4 as a starter or side

150ml sunflower oil

2 tbsp capers, drained and patted dry

6 small to medium kohlrabi, leaves and stalks discarded

1 tbsp lemon juice

3 tbsp olive oil

Salt and black pepper

¼ tsp aleppo chilli (or 1 small pinch regular chilli flakes)

10g tarragon leaves, roughly chopped

10g mint leaves, roughly chopped

For the tonnato

1 egg yolk

1 tsp dijon mustard

2 anchovies in olive oil, drained

60ml lemon juice

85ml sunflower oil

30ml olive oil

1 x 160g tin tuna in olive oil, drained

1½ tsp capers, plus 1 tbsp brine

First, make the tonnato. Put the egg yolk, mustard, anchovies and two tablespoons of the lemon juice in a blender and process on a low speed. With the motor running, very slowly pour in both oils, then carry on blending for about a minute, until the mix is the consistency of mayonnaise. Add the tuna, capers, brine and remaining two tablespoons of lemon juice, and blend for another minute, until smooth and the consistency of a pourable mayonnaise, then refrigerate until needed.

Put the sunflower oil in a small saucepan on a medium-high heat. Test the oil is the right temperature by dropping in a caper: it should sizzle as it hits the oil and bursts open. Carefully add the remaining capers to the oil and fry for about a minute, or until they have burst and crisped up. Use a small sieve or slotted spoon to scoop out the capers and drain on a plate lined with kitchen towel.

Peel away the outer green layer from the kohlrabi, to reveal the white bulb inside, then chop this into roughly 2cm cubes. In a bowl, toss the kohlrabi with a third of the tonnato, the lemon juice and two tablespoons of olive oil, and season with three-quarters of teaspoon of salt and a generous grind of black pepper.

Transfer the kohlrabi to a large platter (or individual plates). Top with the fried capers, aleppo chilli, herbs and the remaining tablespoon of olive oil, and serve with the rest of the tonnato sauce alongside.

Fried apple dumplings with coconut caramel

Yotam Ottolenghi's fried apple dumplings with coconut caramel.

Gyoza wrappers are readily available in the freezer aisle of supermarkets and in most Asian grocery stores. If you can't find any, use wonton wrappers instead.

Prep 10 min

Cook 35 min

Makes 20

1 x 385g tin sliced apples, drained (reserve the liquid) and roughly chopped into 1cm pieces

½ tsp ground cinnamon

1 fresh or dry makrut lime leaf, finely chopped

1 tsp vanilla bean paste (or vanilla extract)

45g dark muscovado sugar

2 tbsp dark rum (or any other booze you happen to have)

Flaked salt

20 gyoza wrappers (defrosted, if frozen)

150ml coconut oil

For the coconut milk caramel

1 x 400ml tin full-fat coconut milk (minimum 70% coconut extract)

3 tbsp dark muscovado sugar

1 makrut lime leaf, finely chopped

Put the apples and their reserved juices in a small saute pan with the cinnamon, lime leaf, vanilla, sugar, rum and half a teaspoon of flaked salt, then set it over a medium heat and cook for 15 minutes, until the liquid evaporates. Set aside to cool.

Meanwhile, put the coconut milk, sugar, lime leaf and a pinch of salt in a medium saucepan on a medium-high heat, and cook, stirring often, for about 15 minutes, until you have a smooth, dark brown caramel the consistency of single cream.

Keeping the gyoza wrappers under a damp cloth and working with them one at a time, moisten the edge of a gyoza wrapper with a little water and put a tablespoon of the cooled filling in the middle. Fold into a half-moon and firmly press the edges together. Repeat with the remaining wrappers and filling.

Heat the coconut oil in a large frying pan on a medium heat, then fry the dumplings for a minute or two on each side, spooning the hot oil over them to ensure they colour evenly. When the dumplings are crisp and golden brown all over, drain on a plate lined with kitchen towel. Serve hot, sprinkled with flaked salt and with the warmed caramel alongside.

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Waste notFood

Tom Hunt's no-waste nut and seed pulp granola – recipe

Tom Hunt's plant-milk-pulp granola. Photograph: Tom Hunt/The Guardian
Tom Hunt's plant-milk-pulp granola. Photograph: Tom Hunt/The Guardian

Don't bin that pulp left over from making 'milk' and juice – it's super-nutritious, and can be used up in baking or in a thrifty granola

[Tom Hunt](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

I love making [my own “milk” drinks out of oat, hemp, rice and nuts](#). Yes, a little patience is required, but only while waiting for the ingredients to soak, but the making itself takes but a few minutes, because it involves only blending and

straining the pulp. Hemp milk is my favourite, because it has a unique, nutty flavour and is reassuringly nutritious, as well as being rich in omega-3 and -6 fatty acids. That said, after straining the liquid, you're left with a gunky, fibrous pulp that usually ends up in the bin, and I've long wanted to come up with a way to use it up.

Oats, cashews and coconuts produce very little pulp, and this can be easily stored in the fridge for stirring into pancakes, porridge or smoothies. The pulp from other nuts and seeds, such as hemp and almonds, meanwhile, can be dried to make flour, or used in combination with ground almonds in cookies, pastry and cakes. To make flour, squeeze all the liquid out of the pulp, spread it out in a thin layer on a baking tray, then leave somewhere warm, stirring occasionally, to dry out completely (or put it in a just-turned-off oven, to save energy).

Nut and seed pulp granola

This is my go-to granola, based on a recipe I developed for [my first cookbook, The Natural Cook](#), which I have since updated to include surplus nut and seed pulp left over from making your own plant milk, though it works without the pulp, too. Collect nut and seed pulp in the freezer until you have enough, or dry it out as outlined above.

Makes About 10 servings

150g rolled oats

100g mixed seeds (eg, sunflower, sesame, pumpkin)

100g mixed nuts (eg, walnuts, almonds, hazelnuts)

½ tsp sea salt

50g nut and/or seed pulp (ie, leftover from a large batch of plant milk; or 50g ground almonds)

2 tsp vanilla extract

6 tbsp honey or maple syrup

3 tbsp extra-virgin olive oil

150g roughly chopped dried fruit (eg. goji berries, raisins, dates, etc.)

In a bowl, mix the oats, mixed seeds, mixed nuts and sea salt. In a second bowl, mix the pulp, vanilla extract, honey and olive oil, until you have a paste, then rub this into the nut and seed mixture.

Scatter evenly over a baking tray and put into a 200C (180C fan)/390F/gas 6 oven for 20-25 minutes. Halfway through, stir in the mixed chopped dried fruits, then return to the oven. The granola is ready when it starts to colour a little and firm up. Remove, leave to cool, then jar.

To serve, fill a breakfast bowl with a few spoons of nice thick yoghurt and a couple of spoons of chopped fruit and/or berries. Scatter over a decent helping of the granola and, if you have a sweet tooth, finish with a drizzle of maple syrup.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Indian food and drink](#)

Spicy rolls and a winter salad: Ravinder Bhogal's kale recipes

Spicy, Gujarati stuffed-leaf rolls and a salad of bold, spicy, nutty flavours

Ravinder Bhogul's kale, lime leaf and pineapple salad with peanut dressing.
Photograph: Laura Edwards/The Guardian. Food styling: Kitty Coles. Prop styling: Louie Waller. Food assistant: Clare Cole.

Ravinder Bhogul's kale, lime leaf and pineapple salad with peanut dressing.
Photograph: Laura Edwards/The Guardian. Food styling: Kitty Coles. Prop styling: Louie Waller. Food assistant: Clare Cole.

[Ravinder Bhogal](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Step aside, soft, speckled lettuces and wilting greens – hardy kale has invaded our shopping trolleys, and for good reason, too. It has snuck into everything from our snacks (hello, kale chips) to salads, and is even characterful enough to have internet memes and T-shirt slogans dedicated to it. Its varietals, from curly kale to Italian cavolo nero, are reliable, cheap and versatile, while its unique, bittersweet flavour means it is robust enough to stand up to any other flavours you throw at it.

Kale, pineapple and red cabbage salad with lime leaf peanut dressing (pictured above)

This salad is a riot of bold colour and flavour that, in the midst of grey winter, is nothing short of life-enhancing. The sweet pineapple counters the mildly bitter brassicas, while the spicy peanut dressing lends a rounded, nutty note.

Prep 25 min

Cook 5 min

Serves 4-6

1 small pineapple, peeled and cut into thin wedges

4 handfuls kale, tough stalks removed and discarded, the rest roughly torn

200g red cabbage, finely shredded

1 bunch coriander, leaves picked

For the dressing

1 tbsp coriander stalks, very finely chopped

1 red chilli, finely chopped

4 lime leaves, stalks removed, finely shredded

2 garlic cloves, peeled and crushed

1 tsp fresh grated root ginger

1 tbsp palm sugar or light brown sugar

2 tbsp rice vinegar

200ml coconut milk

4 heaped tbsp natural unsweetened smooth peanut butter

2 tbsp light soy sauce

1 tbsp fish sauce

Juice of 1 lime

To garnish

50g roasted peanuts, crushed

1 red chilli, thinly sliced on the diagonal

First make the dressing. Combine the coriander stalks, chilli, lime leaves, garlic, ginger, sugar and vinegar in a saucepan and stir until the sugar dissolves. Stir in the coconut milk and peanut butter, then gently warm through. Stir in the soy, fish sauce and lime juice, so the sauce has a loose pouring consistency – if it feels too thick, thin it down with a little water.

In a large bowl, toss the pineapple, kale and red cabbage with half the dressing, then transfer to a platter. Scatter over the coriander leaves, top with the peanuts and red chilli, and serve with the remaining dressing on the side.

Gujarati-style cavolo nero and chickpea flour rotolo

Ravinder Bhogul's Gujarati style steamed cavolo nero, coconut and chickpea flour rotolo with fried curry leaves

This takes kale out of the predictable realm of salads, soups and stews. It is my inauthentic take on a favourite Gujarati snack known as *patra*, which is normally made from rolled [colcasia leaves](#). Those are not the easiest ingredient to come by in the UK, so instead I've used cavolo nero, which has a similarly earthy flavour. The secret to making this is that, once you've mastered the rolling technique, it's actually not very hard at all.

Prep 45 min

Chill 1 hr

Cook 30 min

Serves 4-6

16 large cavolo nero leaves

For the paste

60ml tamarind concentrate
1 heaped tbsp Greek yoghurt
100g chickpea flour
½ tsp red chilli powder
¼ tsp turmeric
¼ tsp asafoetida
1 tbsp jaggery or soft brown sugar
Sea salt, to taste

For the spice tempering

1 tbsp rapeseed oil
1 tsp mustard seeds
1 pinch [asafoetida](#)
1 tsp cumin seeds
15 fresh curry leaves
3 tsp sesame seeds

To garnish

2 tbsp freshly grated coconut, or defrosted and grated frozen coconut
1 tbsp finely chopped coriander

Using a sharp knife or scissors, cut off the tougher part of the cavolo nero stalks, but leave the delicate bit intact, so the leaf holds together at the top.

Mix all the paste ingredients with 80ml water to form a thick, spreadable mixture – if it's too dry, add a little more water, to loosen.

Flatten out one of the leaves on a work surface and spread a thin layer of the paste over the back of it. Put another leaf on top and coat that, too, with the paste. Repeat until you have four layers. With the final layer of paste on top, fold in the edges and, starting from the base and rolling towards the tips, roll the leaves together. Make sure the roll is quite tight, then cover the roll with more paste, so it is sealed. Repeat with the remaining leaves and paste, leaving you with four rolls.

Line a steamer with baking paper and steam over boiling water for 15 minutes. Leave to cool, then refrigerate for an hour, or until firm and set, then cut the rolls into 1cm slices.

Put the rapeseed oil in a large frying pan over a medium-high heat and add the mustard seeds. As soon as they crackle, stir in the asafoetida, cumin and curry leaves, tossing the mixture so the curry leaves are coated in oil. Lower the heat and sprinkle in the sesame seeds, then gently put the cavolo nero rolls in the pan in a single layer, and fry on both sides until lightly browned.

Transfer to a plate, spoon over the spices and oil, then sprinkle with the coconut and coriander, and serve.

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Sali Hughes on beauty**Makeup**

The makeup and scents that lifted my 2020

The best eyeshadow, primer, infinity powder, mascara and fragrances for the year of Zoom and social distancing

‘My favourite makeup pics mostly reside above mask level.’ Photograph: Alex Lake/The Guardian

‘My favourite makeup pics mostly reside above mask level.’ Photograph: Alex Lake/The Guardian



[Sali Hughes](#)

[@salihughes](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

My favourite makeup picks of 2020 inevitably reside mostly above mask level. My thoughts on my favourite luxury eye palette, [Vieve's The Essentials](#) (£43 for 10 x 3.1g), were well-documented [in a recent column](#), but it bears repeating that this was the year's best bumper eyeshadow lineup.

For lower-maintenance days, which in 2020 outnumbered my more effortful ones so many times over, I've been wowed by the unfeasibly cheap and useful [elf Putty Eye Primer](#) (£5 for 5.3g). These, though indeed useful as an underlay, are way more impressive as the easiest, longest-lasting, neither-thought-nor-much-dexterity-required single cream shadows, available for less than a bargain bottle of merlot. There have been countless forgotten Zooms when I've hastily smeared on the Clay or Sand colourway with my middle finger and felt instantly more presentable. I've said it before and haven't wavered a bit: they are little marvels.

I hesitate to rave again about [**Hourglass's Ambient Lighting Infinity Powder**](#) (£45 for 9.5g), as it really should come in a black skin version by now; but I've worn it most days, to set other makeup without chalkiness and to impart a soft pearlescence to (white or brown) skin. But for goodness sake, roll out a darker shade please and allow the love to be shared fairly.

[Sali Hughes' favourite skincare products of 2020](#)

[Read more](#)

My most worn mascara? Easy. [**Trish McEvoy's High Volume**](#) (£22.50 for 5g) dropped through my letterbox a week after [my column on the best tubing mascara](#) and forced me to kick myself daily thereafter over the omission. It pushes lashes skywards, manages to add bulk at the roots without making clumps at the tips and sits perfectly still until bedtime. I wore it most often in 2020 with [**Rimmel's Wonder'Full 24HR Brow Mascara**](#) (£7.99 for 5ml).

Perfume was my greatest cheerer-upper during a downbeat year, and I've been sure always to smell good even when feeling bad. My two most worn fragrances (by some distance) have been the not-new [**Glossier You**](#) (£45 for 50ml) and the quite-new [**Sunspel Oak Wood**](#) (at £90, it's twice the price, but double the volume at 100ml). Both are elegant, soft and make for natural social distancers: they don't invade anyone's personal space and go as well with indoor tracksuits as with dog-walking jeans and jumpers.

What a year. When the country is finally vaccinated, I plan to roll naked in No5 and red lipstick.

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Self-assessment tax

Self-assessment tax return: top tips to help you with the process

As the 31 January deadline looms, use lockdown to file your return on time

- [How you can avoid falling into the child benefit trap](#)

It is thought that more than 4 million people still have not sent their tax return.

Photograph: Alamy

It is thought that more than 4 million people still have not sent their tax return.

Photograph: Alamy



Rupert Jones

Sat 16 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

As we head into the final two weeks of the self-assessment season, the millions of people who still have not done their tax return are being urged to use the coronavirus lockdown as an opportunity to get it finished and out of the way.

HM Revenue & Customs expects 12.1m tax returns to be filed this time around and it is thought that more than 4 million people still have not sent theirs, even though the 31 January deadline is approaching. The number who had filed stood at 7.2 million at the beginning of this week.

Taxpayers have the right to appeal against the £100 penalty charged when a tax return is filed late. HMRC [recently revealed](#) it would accept pandemic-related personal or business disruption as a reasonable excuse for missing the deadline, provided you explain how you were affected in your grounds for appeal and submit your return as soon as possible.

[How UK taxpayers can avoid falling into the child benefit trap](#)

[Read more](#)

But it is a much better idea to file on time. If in doubt, there is [a tool on the HMRC website](#) where you can find out if you need to complete a tax return for 2019-20.

Here are Guardian Money's 10 tips aimed at taking some of the pain out of the process.

Do your tax return even if you can't afford the bill

Taxpayers have the right to appeal against the £100 penalty charged when a tax return is filed late. Photograph: Susan Norwood/Alamy

If the pandemic and its effects have caused carnage for your finances, there is help available. Once you have done your 2019-20 return and know how much

tax you owe, you can set up a payment plan to spread the cost over up to 12 monthly instalments (provided you owe less than £30,000).

You can use HMRC's time to pay facility to set up monthly direct debits and this can all be done online. However, interest will be applied to any outstanding balance from 1 February 2021.

"Do it sooner rather than later. If you leave it more than 60 days past the [31 January] deadline, you can't set up instalments," says Sarah Coles, a personal finance analyst at the investment firm Hargreaves Lansdown.

To find out more, go to [gov.uk/pay-self-assessment-tax-bill/pay-in-instalments](https://www.gov.uk/pay-self-assessment-tax-bill/pay-in-instalments).

Get the most from your charity donations

Donating via gift aid means charities can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you give. If you are a higher-rate taxpayer you can claim the difference between the basic rate and the rate you pay via your tax return. Less than one in four higher-rate taxpayers do this "but it can really add up", Coles says.

Quite often, people forget about donations they made to charity

Tax specialist Chas Roy-Chowdhury

Let's say you donated £100 to a charity and it claimed gift aid to make your donation £125. You pay 40% tax, so you can personally claim back £25 (20% of £125).

Quite often, people forget about donations they made to charity, says the tax specialist Chas Roy-Chowdhury. So go through your emails and other records to check.

When filling in your tax form, you do not need to calculate the amount of relief due – simply enter the total amount of payments made via gift aid (it is boxes five and six under "charitable giving" on page TR4 of the tax return). So, using the above example, if you had donated £100, that is what you would write in the box.

If you made any gift aid donations to non-UK charities, enter the total sum in box 12. If you give to charity using a payroll giving scheme, you will already

have received tax relief at source.

Make a charity donation now to reduce your tax bill for last year

With self-assessment, you normally only report things on your tax return that relate to the previous tax year. But with gift aid, you can also claim tax relief on donations you make in the current tax year – right up to the date that you file your return.

So you can make a donation now – perhaps to a charity close to your heart that has been hit hard by the pandemic – and use it to reduce your tax bill for 2019-20.

If you want a donation made after 5 April 2020 to be treated as if it was made in 2019-20, you should enter the amount of these payments in box eight on page TR4.

You cannot declare the same donation when you fill in next year's form, so make sure you keep a record of what you have claimed for.

Don't miss out on pension tax relief

This is a key area of confusion and could be costing some people hundreds or even thousands of pounds, Coles says.

The way it works [depends on what scheme you are in](#). Net-pay arrangements are used by many traditional workplace pension schemes and don't require you to do anything to get tax relief. With these, your pension contributions are deducted from your salary by your employer before income tax is calculated, so you get relief on the amount immediately at your highest rate of tax.

However, the rules are different if you are in a “relief at source” arrangement – used by personal pension plans as well as some automatic enrolment workplace schemes. If you are a 20% taxpayer, no further adjustment needs to be made. But higher-rate taxpayers must make a claim via their tax return to receive the extra relief due to them (it is box one under “tax reliefs” on page TR4).

Some big pension schemes operate on a relief at source basis, [including Nest](#) (National Employment Savings Trust), which was set up by the government as part of the automatic enrolment revolution and has more than 9.5 million members.

If you are not sure which kind of scheme you are in, ask your HR department or whoever does the payroll for your employer.

Avoid tax penalties on child benefit

Do you claim child benefit? Photograph: ChristinLola/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Lots of families have been dragged into self-assessment because one or both parents have an income of [more than £50,000](#). Under the government's [high-income child benefit charge](#) (page TR5), these people have their benefit clawed back on a sliding scale.

Sean McCann at NFU Mutual says: “You can become subject to the charge if you moved in with someone who is claiming child benefit, even if they’re not your children.”

It may be too late for this year but there are ways you can reduce the tax hit and, in some cases, escape the charge completely – most notably by paying more into your pension. Contributions made into a company or personal pension scheme will reduce your adjusted net income (your total taxable income, minus things such as pension contributions), which is what the tax charge is based on. For example, you could pay additional voluntary contributions (AVCs) into an occupational scheme.

Be aware of capital gains tax changes

Anyone who sold a UK second home during the 2019-20 financial year has until 31 January to declare any profits made on their tax return and pay the capital gains tax due. The 2019-20 year is the last for which UK residents are required to pay CGT on the sale of properties via the self-assessment system – new rules came in on 6 April 2020 requiring people to use an [online service](#) and pay the tax due within 30 days of completion.

You may be able to claim for working from home

If you are one of the millions told by their employer not to come into the office, you may be able to claim something for working from home. However, you will only be able to claim expenses for up to and including 5 April 2020 on the 2019-20 return (the first lockdown officially began on 23 March).

For an employee, [working-from-home costs](#) for that period might include items you needed to do your job that your employer didn’t supply, such as a laptop or office chair, and additional household costs such as heating, business phone calls or a new broadband connection. These costs should be included in box 20, “other expenses and capital allowances”, on the employment page of the form.

If you do a tax return, you will have to wait for the 2020-21 form to claim for working from home after 5 April 2020.

Claim tax relief for other job expenses

If you are an employee and have to pay fees or annual subscriptions to one or more professional bodies to carry out your job, you can claim tax relief. Put the fees in box 19 on the employment page. There is a list of [approved professional organisations](#) – they include well-known names such as the Law Society, plus lots of others, from the European Association for Potato Research to the Friedrich Nietzsche Society.

Being married can mean a lower tax bill

The marriage allowance is a government scheme. Photograph: David Sanger

The marriage allowance (page TR five) is a tax break that lets someone transfer £1,250 of their [personal allowance](#) to their husband, wife or civil partner. This reduces the recipient's tax by up to £250 a year currently. But all three of the following must apply: the couple must be married or in a civil partnership; one partner does not pay income tax or their income is below the personal allowance (usually £12,500); and the other partner pays income tax at the basic

rate, which usually means they earn between £12,500 and £50,000. To find out more, go to [gov.uk/marriage-allowance](https://www.gov.uk/marriage-allowance).

Don't forget about or leave out additional income

You can check whether you need to declare, or possibly pay tax on, any casual income you receive. HMRC says its new interactive tool – at [gov.uk/check-additional-income-tax](https://www.gov.uk/check-additional-income-tax) – explains what, if anything, individuals need to do if they receive non-PAYE income from – for example – selling items online, doing casual jobs or renting out property. The good news is that you get a £1,000-a-year [tax-free allowance for property income and trading income](#) (if you have both, you will get a £1,000 allowance for each).

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[Rest and relaxation](#)

I got cabin fever in lockdown ... so I built my own beach hut

The writer building his cabin. Photograph: Kevin Rushby/The Guardian
The writer building his cabin. Photograph: Kevin Rushby/The Guardian

Few things say escape like a beach hut. After checking out some classic coastal designs – and remembering boyhood dens – I'm making one in the garden

[Kevin Rushby](#)

Sat 16 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

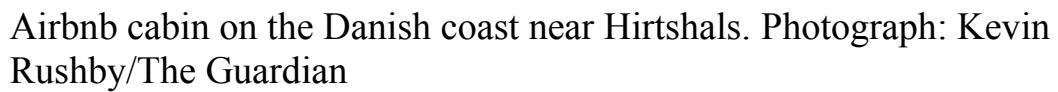
It started with a chance comment from [York hotelier Simon Cowton](#) during an interview. “I was getting depressed in lockdown,” he said. “I realised I had to have a project.” Simon’s solution was to start a building project. He set about

redesigning his hotel garden as a magical support bubble-friendly outdoor restaurant.

When I got off the phone, Simon's words were still in my head. His enthusiasm and energy had fired me up. I, too, needed a project and knew what I wanted for my lockdown sanity ... I wanted to build a beach hut.

I live nowhere near the sea. And I have never built any freestanding living quarters since I bodged together a treehouse when I was 12. But why let unsuitable geography and lack of experience hold me back? To me, a beach hut means escape. It means travel, in wide-open spaces, without restrictions. It was precisely what I needed.

Only then did I pause and consider. What makes the ideal beach hut? Thinking back, I recalled a few classics: the bar on the beach at Ao Nang in Thailand that had been constructed from driftwood tied together with broken nets (an architectural triumph long since bulldozed to make way for larger, less imaginative, establishments). There was my friend Sean's hut on the North Yorkshire coast with its collection of fishing rods, fossils and driftwood. There were the wooden huts on stilts built by the inhabitants of the Bismarck Islands [in Papua New Guinea](#). And there was the boatbuilder's cabin on [Chesterman Beach, Vancouver Island](#).



Airbnb cabin on the Danish coast near Hirtshals. Photograph: Kevin Rushby/The Guardian

But best of all was a [hut I had come across on Airbnb](#) near Hirtshals in Denmark: a single-storey cabin on the dunes with a hot tub out front. Despite being a sturdy and well-built home, it had that feeling of a place flung together on a whimsical weekend, furnished with an ad hoc assembly of the scrounged, swapped and swiped, decorated with beach treasures, and a yard of well-thumbed paperbacks.

Beach huts, I reckon, should avoid contact with architects. They wither when drawings are made, but thrive on opportunistic discoveries. A giant whale bone or part of a shipwreck might suggest a starting point, and then the project grows, swelling as other finds trigger ideas. A beach hut is a serendipitous creation and, at its best, a work of primitive art, as well as a shelter. However, I needed an object to start me off. I examined my collection of animal skulls, many recovered from the high tide line, but no inspiration came. Then I remembered the brass lizard.

I'd found it in a box of objects sitting outside a metalwork shop in Kathmandu. Since then it had sat, unremarked and dusty, on a shelf in my living room. Now I picked it up and saw how it might become the handle on a door – the door to my beach hut. I had my beginning.

Of course, a commercially let beach cabin does require more professionalism than I had to offer. Out on the Isle of Harris, I found that Rob English started his build by quickly throwing up a “department croft house” to accommodate himself and a joiner.

“It was just to live in while we built the cabin,” he said. But he liked the temporary hut so much he discarded his architect-drawn plans and adopted the traditional croft design for his [two award-winning beach cabins](#) (both sleep 2). The original “temporary” croft is now home to Rob’s tweed-weaving business.

“All the furniture in the cabins is reclaimed vintage pieces that we restored. There’s driftwood, too,” he says. “I tell people it’s mangrove that floated over from the Caribbean.”

The Beach House at Shellbeach, Kent

At the other end of the British Isles are [two fine examples of beach building](#): [The Beach House](#) (sleeps 4) and [Sandy Toes](#) (sleeps 5) – both on Shellbeach in Kent – are impressive pieces of construction, full of that essential wind-worn woodwork, plus salty hanks of hemp and sweeping coastal vistas.

Frances Lea and John Bramble, owners of Sandy Toes, have the kind of attitude I love, hauling an eight-metre length of driftwood up to their cabin. “It now proudly spans the complete front timber deck of Sandy Toes,” says Frances.

For some, the entire cabin is what was found: Janet Lamb discovered a 1905 London & South Western Railway [sleeper carriage](#) (sleeps 5) that had somehow, in 1936, ended its travelling days on a very attractive section of the Ceredigion coast path near Aberporth. When Janet bought it, the essential element for any self-respecting beach cabin – namely a beach – was already in position. All that was required was the addition of period furniture and some serious polishing of the oak panelling.

Carole Short at the Coastal Carriage, Aberdeenshire

A similar, but more rustic, alternative is Matthew and Carole Short's off-grid railway carriage, the [Coastal Carriage](#) (sleeps 2), on their large coastal farm near Fraserburgh in Aberdeenshire. Carole's ideas about beach huts chime with my own: "It has to be quirky and nothing like what you're used to at home." Everything in their reclaimed freight wagon has had a previous life. "My granda's comfy chair is in there," says Matthew, who built the sea-view outdoor shower out of a giant cable reel. Guests can beachcomb on pebble strands that few people ever see.

Almost immediately, I reconnect with the boyhood excitement of den building

Jason Clark, who runs the website [Cool Cottages Scotland](#), spends his time looking for perfect beach accommodation. "An all-time favourite is the [Blue Cabin by the Sea](#) (sleeps 4) on the east coast an hour from Edinburgh, where access is through a smugglers' cave and across a beach," he says.

Looking at Jason's website, I'm jealous. My own cabin will never match any of these. Weeks of assiduous beachcombing (actually skip-surfing) and scrounging has resulted in about 10 wooden packing pallets, a fine Victorian glass door and sheets of antique corrugated roofing. I realise I will wait forever before I stumble across any decent timber, so buy several lengths of two-by-four, bolt them together as corner posts and begin construction. Almost immediately I reconnect with the excitement of boyhood den-building. Maybe I'll make it large enough to sleep in, or turn it into a bird hide, or a sauna. Maybe I'll grow a long beard and live here as a hermit.

One thing the construction process soon reveals is that my hut will never be perfect: there will be gaps, and mess. I seem incapable of cutting a piece of wood along a straight line or hammering a nail without bending it and bruising my thumb. Some of the tools I'm using belonged to my dad, a carpenter, and my grandfather's best friend, a clockmaker. Their names, Rushby and Brewin, are stamped into the chisel handles. I feel their presence. I start to wish I was working in metal and glass, anything but wood.

Greg Stevenson's Donegal shipping container

Greg Stevenson, owner of the booking site Under the Thatch, must have had similar thoughts. He got hold of a [shipping container](#) (sleeps 2), spliced in several sections of glass, then cantilevered it over the water in a bold, modernistic statement. “You certainly never miss any of the wildlife,” he says.

Beach huts should avoid contact with architects. They wither when drawings are made

Despite my clunky woodworking skills, I yearn for those natural materials. Greg’s shipping container is incredible, but I hammer on. The truth is that awkward, ill-fitting wood-based clutter is what I am. There is no escape. I rip the old nails from yet another wooden pallet. Greg’s other project is much more my kind of thing. He rescued a derelict cottage – [Teach Mhicí](#) (Mickey’s Cottage, sleeps 4) – by the Donegal coast, whitewashed its knobbly stone walls and added some old religious pictures and restored furniture.

Old gnarly cottages built by hand are the [stock in trade of mountain bothies](#), some of which can provide inspiration for a beach cabin. Straithchailleach Bothy, near Sandwood Bay in the far north-west of Scotland, is still haunted by the spirit of its erstwhile eremitic inhabitant, James McRory Smith, who furnished the place with flotsam and painted frescoes on the walls during the 32 years he squatted in this lonely spot.

Taking shape ... ‘scrounging has resulted in a fine Victorian glass door’ for the author’s hut

On the Isle of Jura, two more bothies, Cruib and Ruantallain, have communal rooms filled with old books, bottles and rug, and exemplify the style that every beach hut should aspire to: cosy, cluttered and filled with memory objects. (For more info, see [Scottish Bothy Walks](#) by Geoff Allan.)

I’ve got the roof on mine now, and although I’ve been told by experts that I’ve done it wrong and it will leak, at least the sound of dripping will evoke the sea. As for that serendipitous creative input, the grain in one section of timber suggests the face of a mandrill staring at me, and I think some McRory Smith-style fresco painting will begin soon. Finally, there will be the task of dragging the coast up to the front door. When the builders’ merchant is open, I’m going to buy a bag of sand. Then my illusion of escape will be ready.

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WhatsApp

Should you keep using WhatsApp? Plus five tips to start the year with your digital privacy intact

We spoke to convicted hacker turned security consultant Kevin Mitnick to find out how to maintain your security online

Security expert Kevin Mitnick's top tip for protecting your privacy online is use a password manager. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA
Security expert Kevin Mitnick's top tip for protecting your privacy online is use a password manager. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA



[Shelley Hepworth](#)
[@shelleymiranda](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 14.00 EST

If you use the popular messaging service [WhatsApp](#) you may have noticed a pop-up message in recent days asking you to accept the service's new terms and conditions by 8 February in order to continue using it.

The update has prompted [calls for users to leave the popular messaging service in favour of alternatives such as Signal](#) and Telegram. And on Friday a [legal challenge on privacy grounds was filed against WhatsApp in India](#), the service's biggest market. Telegram CEO Pavel Durov has reported an influx of 25 million global users to the rival service since the announcement was made.

Use Signal

— Elon Musk (@elonmusk) [January 7, 2021](#)

But what do the new terms and conditions mean for you? We asked [former most-wanted hacker turned security consultant Kevin Mitnick](#) which messaging app he prefers – and to share his tips to set yourself up for a cyber-safe 2021.

“I prefer Signal because I know the developer behind the original project, and I know that Signal has been tested in the security community,” Mitnick says. “I believe Telegram has too, and I use Telegram, but not for secure messages.”

You can read WhatsApp’s Q&A about the changes [here](#), but the main thing to know is that messages remain end-to-end encrypted and WhatsApp maintains that neither it, nor anyone else, has access to the content of messages between friends, family and groups. WhatsApp also says it doesn’t keep records of your call logs, share your contacts with Facebook and can’t see your shared location.

[Now WhatsApp users are really Facebook customers now – it's getting harder to forget that | Alex Hern](#)
[Read more](#)

What has changed is privacy around the content of communication between individuals and businesses that use Facebook hosting services, which will now be accessible to those businesses for their own marketing purposes. As the Guardian’s UK technology editor, Alex Hern, points out the changes aren’t huge, but they do mark a step down the road of a long-term plan to [integrate the chat app with Facebook](#).

At the end of the day choosing a messaging app is a personal preference and Mitnick says as long as the service uses end-to-end encryption and its policies protect your privacy you should be OK. Nevertheless, Mitnick says he has “never communicated a secure message over WhatsApp”.

While choosing a messaging service is an important choice, there are other ways you can ensure your digital security. Here are Mitnick’s top five tips for protecting your privacy online.

1. Use a password manager

Mitnick says the future of security is password-free, with solutions such as [Trusona](#) doing away with usernames and passwords in favour of QR codes and

two-factor authentication. But until that technology is widespread, a password manager is the number one tool Mitnick recommends.

Make your master password a full sentence with all the spaces and correct capitalisation, such as “I went to Byron Bay today”. The password manager will do the heavy lifting from there. Every time you visit a site, it will either autofill your existing password or, if it’s a new site, create a strong password for you. Password managers can also scan your current passwords for weaknesses and recommend stronger versions that conform with randomness.

When choosing a password manager, go for Australian, UK or US companies and avoid those based out of Russia or China, Mitnick says. It’s also better to choose a product that has lots of users, like LastPass and One Password, because it’s more likely any vulnerabilities will be picked up quickly.

2. Implement two-factor authentication

Two-factor authentication or multi-factor authentication is a sign-in method that requires two or more pieces of evidence of your identity to enable login. The first piece is usually a username and password and the second might be an SMS or an app, such as Google authenticator or Authy. You might find SMS more convenient, but an authenticator app is much more secure.

If you need even more security, you can use a YUBIkey – a USB authentication device you plug into your computer. A YUBIkey is highly secure, but you do have to carry it around with you.

3. Use a VPN

Mitnick says whenever you’re not on your home or work network you should be using a VPN – a virtual private network – which keeps your browsing safe from spying.

[Facebook faces biggest legal battle in years as US officials launch lawsuits](#)
[Read more](#)

You can find a service online that will cost you around \$60 a year, but, again, you want to make sure you’re using a service that has a good reputation, such as HMA or ExpressVPN. There’s always a risk with VPNs and using an

untrustworthy service goes against the purpose, since it will have access to all your browsing data.

Things to consider when choosing a service include how many people use it (more is better), and where the company and its servers are located (aim for Five Eyes countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the UK and the US).

4. Do security awareness training

Mitnick says everyone should undertake good security awareness training, which will help you understand how you, as a consumer, could be compromised. There are security courses available for free online that walk you through different areas of consumer-based security, including passwords, online banking, avoiding malware, keeping your personal information confidential, protecting your kids online, and securing your home network, email and attachments.

5. Keep your financial transactions separate

Not everyone will be able to implement this last tip and Mitnick acknowledges it's a pain, however it's a good idea to use a separate device for financial transactions. When you're surfing the internet, opening files people send you, playing games, the computer you're using has a high risk of being compromised without you realising it – even if you're using antivirus software. Mitnick suggests buying an iPad or cheap tablet to use exclusively for financial transactions. He also suggests creating a separate account in your password manager with a distinct master password to store your financial passwords.

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My life in sexSex

My life in sex: the 32 year-old man who only fancies older women

‘To me, young women all look the same; but older women are distinctive and uniquely beautiful – they have become the people they are meant to be’

‘I’d been through the motions with women my own age, but the sex felt mechanical. ‘ Illustration: Lo Cole/The Guardian

‘I’d been through the motions with women my own age, but the sex felt mechanical. ‘ Illustration: Lo Cole/The Guardian

Anonymous

Fri 15 Jan 2021 05.00 EST

“Some day, you’ll make an older woman very happy,” said one sixtysomething woman I was seeing. As much as she yearned for a relationship, she said it would be “wrong” to develop feelings for someone younger than her own kids. I’ve heard this unwritten rule again and again.

I am 32 and have always been exclusively attracted to mature women. Growing up, my lack of interest in women my age made my family and co-workers think I was gay. I was embarrassed by my feelings, so never acted upon them. However, as an eligible bachelor who spent his time in the company of older women, it was only a matter of time before someone acted upon their feelings with me.

The sex I’ve had since then has been wonderful, and made me realise who I truly am. I’d been through the motions with women my own age, but the sex felt mechanical. To me, young women all look the same; but older women are distinctive and uniquely beautiful – they have become the people they are meant to be.

[My life in sex: ‘Sex with my husband bores me stiff’](#)

[Read more](#)

Still, sex isn’t enough. I want an older partner to love and support. Sadly, most women I meet want only no-strings-attached sex, or are too embarrassed by what their families would think to start a relationship. Older men don’t realise what they’re missing. I just hope I don’t have to wait 30 years before I can find someone to love.

- Each week, a reader tells us about their sex life. Want to share yours? Email sex@theguardian.com. All submissions are published anonymously, and subject to [our terms and conditions](#).

Comments on this piece are premoderated to ensure the discussion remains on the topics raised by the article. Please be aware that there may be a short delay in comments appearing on the site.

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2021.01.16 - Take part

- [**Coronavirus Has your care home been badly affected?**](#)
- [**Brexit and Northern Ireland Have your food supplies been disrupted?**](#)
- [**UK teachers Tell us about your school experiences**](#)
- [**Older people in the UK Share your experience of the second wave of Covid**](#)

Coronavirus

Has your care home been badly affected by coronavirus?

We'd like to hear from staff and families of residents in UK care homes and nursing homes

Local GP staff prepare coronavirus vaccines, to be delivered to care home residents at Andrew Cohen House in Birmingham. Photograph: Jacob King/PA
Local GP staff prepare coronavirus vaccines, to be delivered to care home residents at Andrew Cohen House in Birmingham. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

[Guardian community team](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 05.05 EST

UK care homes have been badly affected by Covid-19 and we'd like to hear from managers and workers about how they're dealing with the situation. What are conditions like for staff and residents, how are you coping? What are staffing levels like and how many infections have there been in the latest wave?

We'd also like families to get in touch whose relatives are living in homes that are hardest hit by the virus. Are you managing to stay in contact with residents and what are your main concerns? If you're a resident in a home, we'd like to hear from you too.

Share your experiences

You can get in contact with us by filling in the form below. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. One of our journalists will be in contact with you before we publish any contributions, so please do leave contact details.

If you're having trouble using the form, [click here](#). Read terms of service [here](#).

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Northern Ireland

Brexit and Northern Ireland: have your food supplies been disrupted?

We would like to hear from those who live and work in Northern Ireland about their experiences around food supplies and Brexit

People inspect lorries which arrived at the Port of Larne in Northern Ireland.

Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

People inspect lorries which arrived at the Port of Larne in Northern Ireland.

Photograph: Phil Noble/Reuters

[Guardian community team](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 05.32 EST

Due to incorrect or absent Brexit-related paperwork, [Northern Ireland is facing disruption to its food supplies](#). Business leaders have said freight in GB is unprepared for the new rules resulting in cancellations and delays in shipments across the Irish Sea.

We would like to hear from people who live and work in [Northern Ireland](#) about their experiences.

How to get in touch

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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Schools

UK teachers: tell us about your school experiences

We'd like to hear from teachers about their experiences during the pandemic, especially those working in SEN schools and nurseries

Two 10-year-old school friends chatting to each other next to a wooden fence and wearing face masks. Photograph: Richard Newton/Alamy

Two 10-year-old school friends chatting to each other next to a wooden fence and wearing face masks. Photograph: Richard Newton/Alamy

[Guardian community team](#)

Mon 11 Jan 2021 07.11 EST

According to a survey, teachers in England are being forced to prioritise class places among vulnerable students and the children of key workers because of a [huge increase in demand](#).

In SEN (special education needs) schools some children are missing out due to [problems with infection control, timetables and transport](#).

We'd like to hear from teachers in England and Wales about their experiences during the pandemic. We are especially interested in hearing from those working in SEN schools and nurseries.

Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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Coronavirus

Older people in the UK: share your experience of the second wave of coronavirus

We'd like to hear from older people, or family members who could put us in touch, about how they've been impacted by the second wave of coronavirus

An elderly couple arrives at a mass vaccination center in Epsom, Britain, 11 January 2021. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

An elderly couple arrives at a mass vaccination center in Epsom, Britain, 11 January 2021. Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

[Guardian community team](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 09.15 EST

With older people at much higher risk of suffering serious symptoms of, or losing their lives to, coronavirus, many have been forced to shield for long periods of time.

This has impacted both mental and physical health, with many people becoming less mobile and independent, alongside dealing with isolation.

We'd like to speak to older people about their experiences, or family members who might be able to put us in touch.

Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or via WhatsApp by clicking here or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

One of our journalists will be in contact for publication before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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2021.01.16 - Explore

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Katharine Whitehorn

Success, social life and serenity: Katharine Whitehorn's guide to happiness at every age

Katharine Whitehorn, pictured in 2011 and 1956. Composite: Antonio Olmos/The Observer; Bert Hardy/Getty Images

Katharine Whitehorn, pictured in 2011 and 1956. Composite: Antonio Olmos/The Observer; Bert Hardy/Getty Images

The pioneering journalist and broadcaster died last week at 92. In 2003, in a series for the Guardian, she shared what she had learnt in each decade of her life



Katharine Whitehorn

Fri 15 Jan 2021 10.27 EST

Things I wish I'd known at 20

I wish I had known that my choices weren't restricted just to what I had at that moment. I wish I had known, for example, that I wasn't resigning myself to eternal spinsterhood by breaking off my suffocating engagement to a man who wanted me to give up my hard-won place at Cambridge and get married. When I said timidly, "But what about my career?", he said, "Many good jobs don't require degrees."

"Such as?"

"Well, receptionist."

I wish I had known, too – this was the 50s – that wearing a ghastly sort of rubberised corset known as a Two-Way Stretch was totally unnecessary. I

would have breathed easier without it, in every sense.

But most of all I wish I had known that the most appalling social embarrassments would not blight me and be sneered at for years to come. Yes, I spilled red wine all over someone else's carpet, and helpfully put salt on it – and then we all spent weeks trying to expunge the salt. Yes, the only time I ever heard a Frenchman say "Ooh-la-la!" in real life was when the front of my homemade swimsuit came clean away from my bosom.

Such things hardly blighted my life, but at the time I was mortified. I wanted to sink beneath the waves. And I practically gave up social life for good – decided to go away and live in a cave – after my first cringe-making attempt at smart London, when I was asked to a party in a restaurant by a rich girl I had known at school. Big thrill.

Trying to make conversation, I asked a beautiful young man wearing a tie that looked like my brother's: "Ah, you're an Old Rugbean?"

"Old Etonian, ectually," said the demigod.

Abashed, I turned to another who had a stripe down his trousers, like someone I knew in the marines: "Royal Marines?"

"Brigade of Guards, ectually."

So realising that the high life was not for me, I groped my way to one of two identical cloakroom stairways – and ended up in the gents.

Things I wish I'd known at 30

I wish I had realised, when I was sacked from Woman's Own, that being fired can be a new beginning. Back then women's mags weren't sexy as they are now, just cosy to a fault.

I had to do a feature called Undiscovered British Beauties which involved touring round the country looking for pretty girls in offices and factories. This was easy – you simply picked out the only two who didn't have a ghastly frizzy permanent wave. It was making their very similar lives sound different and

fascinating that was the headache, and even worse was trying to write gooey captions for mother-and-baby pictures.

In the end my copy was deemed insufficiently warm and sincere. In those days firms could – and did – boot one out with five hours’ notice and a week’s pay, and at that age I had nothing to fall back on. The loss of the weekly pay cheque seemed devastating.

It didn’t occur to me that I wouldn’t have wanted to spend my working life trying to sound excited about knitting patterns and babyfood, that freelancing and looking round for other jobs was what I ought to have been doing anyway.

It wasn’t helped by the fact that my husband was getting fired from the BBC at about the same time – at least, they were trying to find him in the labyrinthine TV corridors of Shepherd’s Bush, and he was trying to find someone to resign to – “not me, old boy, try next door”.

Later I realised that all the best people on Fleet Street had been fired from either Woman’s Own or the Daily Express; it was practically a rite of passage. Anyway, sticking in a job for ever and ever, just because you are afraid to leave, is surely a recipe for disaster.

It’s a lesson my children learned from a man in our shoe shop, who said he had never really worked out what he wanted to do with his life; when he was demobbed in 1945 he had just gone into his father’s shoe firm, from which he was now sadly retiring.

Things I wish I’d known at 40

When I was 40, I was working myself into a lather over my children. I wish I’d known how little any of the things about which I was frantic would matter in the end. Were they getting the right food? Imbued with Dr Spock, the things I thought they ought to eat were far too elaborate. Nowadays they are supposed to eat baked beans and pasta and peanut butter. If only I had known.

Were they reading the right books? I have since been told that I gave them a copy of Antoine de St Exupéry’s The Little Prince three times, though I am still not sure if they liked it. And as for the anguish about getting them into this

school or that, about whether they passed their exams well or not, well, neither of them got to college, but they are both doing fine.

On the other hand, I still wish I had realised what their schools couldn't do.

I assumed, for example, that they would have decent art classes – they didn't; or that they would succeed in giving them a taste for classical music, yet one son who actually had his own clarinet at one point had forgotten how to read music by the time he was 20.

I thought they would be inspired with a love of Shakespeare and Milton and Yeats; they weren't.

I wish I had known how much, later on, I would regret the records I didn't play them, the microscope I bought for one boy but never tried out with him, the trips I didn't take them on – why not take them round a stately home? Serious time in the science museum?

Some parents hauled their children off to concerts and plays, my husband played war games with the eldest son; they even wrote a book about it together – which effectively turned said son into a pacifist – but I had no hand in that.

Not, though, that they probably regret any such thing. That is another thing I wish I had known – that whatever you are reproaching yourself for having done wrong with your kids, whatever you remember cringeingly at 3am, they will have forgotten.

They, of course, will remember, with disgust and fury, something utterly different.

So there is not much point in worrying.

Things I wish I'd known at 50

I wish, when middle-age spread finally got me in its grip, that I had kept up with the only two forms of exercise I had ever really enjoyed – swimming and skating. As it was, I tried to go back to skating after too many years and instantly fell over and broke a wrist.

Also, I wish I had known what a nutritionist taught me years later – that half the time when I thought I was hungry or needed a gin, I was really just dehydrated. So I should have just reached for a glass of water.

I didn't know, either, that the time of day you eat makes a big difference. I used to starve all day and pig out all evening, which meant that I was taking food in just as I had stopped working it off – no wonder it got stored as fat.

I know we shouldn't worry too much about size, but we all do. Why, even when I was young and slim, I could worry simultaneously that my bosom wasn't big enough and also that it was swelling so – oh, God – I must be pregnant. But I wish I had realised that going from a size 10 to a size 14 in 30 years is not bad going, after all.

And I might have been better dressed and better looking if I had realised a few home truths: that the thing you bought most recently is not necessarily the thing you will shine in tonight; that all those things in which you once used to look smashing will not come in handy sometime; that it is pointless to have a uniquely attractive collection of belts once the waistline is no longer something to which one wishes to draw attention.

And that the reason you are always so much better dressed on holiday is not because you have got all your best things with you – it is because you haven't got all those other ones.

I once unwisely put most of the clothes I'd had on a boating holiday into a black dustbin bag to take home, won the row about who was to take the rubbish over to the skip, and only the next day realised my husband had unknowingly thrown them all away.

I retrieved them the next day and thought I was lucky; but it might have been better if I had decided it was the hand of fate and left them there.

Things I wish I'd known at 60

When I turned 60 I thought that was the end: bus pass, I gloomed, sagging contours, nobody will want to employ me; downhill all the way from now on. A totally outdated notion, as it turned out; I wish I had realised that I was beginning one of the happiest decades of my life. My husband started taking

me on his research trips, he stopped worrying about money and I stopped worrying about our sons, and there were years of leaping about on a boat with a rope still ahead of me (all right, only a river boat, but it was great). We sold the boat last year – it's all right when you're young and agile, we said sadly – but I was actually 54 when we started.

I didn't realise – perhaps few did – just how out of date one's perceptions of older people are. Time was that most people didn't get the chance to draw more than a few years of their pensions, if they had them; now it's 20 or 30 or more, and those extra years can be marvellous.

Small wonder I hadn't understood, when television, for example, simply hasn't caught up with the reality. Almost every time they have to show a pensioner on the news they show someone who reminds you of the PG Wodehouse character, about whom they couldn't decide if she was a well-preserved 120-year-old or a 90-year-old who had been aged by grief. But, gradually, even the 34-year-old marketing managers are beginning to classify 60-year-olds – the more fortunate ones, anyway – as Golden Pleasure-Seekers. With kids off your hands, mortgages paid and problems that seemed appalling receding into the past, you find a new freedom.

You're much as you were in your 50s in many ways, but with an important difference: you realise that friends in their 50s are still ambitious, still anxious about the next step, but you're not. You no longer think: "Is this all?" You feel you've done it, you cheerfully say "No" to things you would once have felt obliged to do.

Could we, I wondered to my husband, have always been as serene as this? No, we decided; you can only come to it after the turbulence of earlier years. A sunlit haven is fine after a life on the high seas, but if you had never ventured, never set sail, you would just be rotting on the beach. It was good.

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100 days of warning: inside the Boogaloo killings of US security personnel

A surveillance photo provided by the FBI shows a van with the passenger side door open as someone fires at a security kiosk at the Ronald V Dellums Federal Building in Oakland, California. Photograph: AP

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[Wikipedia](#)

Wikipedia at 20: last gasp of an internet vision, or a beacon to a better future?

The naysayers said the user-written encyclopedia would never work. Now it boasts 55m articles and 1.7bn visitors a month

Wikipedia began as a tech startup with 21 articles in its first year, before deciding to allow users to write and edit. Photograph: Sascha Steinbach/EPA
Wikipedia began as a tech startup with 21 articles in its first year, before deciding to allow users to write and edit. Photograph: Sascha Steinbach/EPA



Alex Hern UK technology editor

[@alexhern](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 10.34 EST

Twenty years ago today, a tech startup called Nupedia launched a side project. The company had been hard at work producing a free online encyclopaedia, but it was slow going: its strict editing process, comprehensive peer review and focus on expert authors meant it finished only 21 articles in its first year.

The side project would do away with all of that. Instead, anyone would be able to write and edit articles. Nupedia's founders were split over whether the trade-off – more content with a lower barrier to entry – was worth it, but by the end of its first year, the side project had amassed articles on more than 18,000 topics. Nupedia, by the time it shut in 2003, had finished just 25.

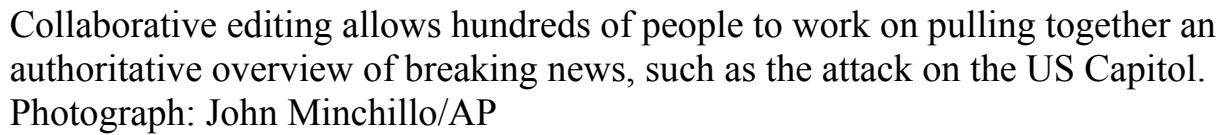
[Shock an aw: US teenager wrote huge slice of Scots Wikipedia](#)

[Read more](#)

That side project, Wikipedia, now has more than 55m articles across 300 languages. With 1.7bn unique visitors a month, it is the [13th most popular website](#) on the internet, according to Amazon's monitoring site, Alexa Internet, and the only one in the top 50 to be run on an entirely non-commercial basis (bbc.co.uk just outranks it among UK users).

The encyclopaedia's foundational model attracted criticism from day one. Without experts writers or professional editors, many wondered, how could it ensure accuracy? By 2006, as the site celebrated its fifth anniversary, it was the subject of mockery in the mainstream press. [One article](#) cited the encyclopaedia's claim that "David Beckham was a Chinese goalkeeper in the 18th century" to highlight a "comedy of errors".

Even in 2006, that particular piece of vandalism was fixed within 11 minutes. These days, [Wikipedia](#) has a few more tools to prevent such abuse. The article about Beckham is one of many that is "semi-protected", a status that prevents unregistered users from editing it – a concession to the reality that not everyone on the internet is interested in contributing to a collective endeavour.



Collaborative editing allows hundreds of people to work on pulling together an authoritative overview of breaking news, such as the attack on the US Capitol.
Photograph: John Minchillo/AP

But as the site continues to flourish even as the online environment has transformed, it raises a different set of questions from those of its early doubters. Wikipedia, as one joke goes, works in practice, which is good, because it definitely doesn't work in theory. Why has the site succeeded in building a positive online community where so many others have failed?

Jimmy Wales, its co-founder, cites two things as making the key difference. “First, everyone knows what an encyclopedia is. If I say ‘encyclopedia article about the Eiffel Tower’, we all know what that should be, so if we set out to write that, we know where we are going and what it should be like. Second, we never regarded Wikipedia as a wide-open free speech forum, it’s a project to build an encyclopedia. So we try to avoid (as much as we can, we are humans) the typical round and round flame wars of social media.”

“Wikipedia has issues in the same way that any large institution has issues, but it’s undoubtedly a remarkable achievement,” says Abigail Brady, a long-term editor on the site. “In some ways it’s a relic – it dates from a pre-social media era of the web where idealistic attempts to create large collaborative works were just starting.

“I think the key to its long-term success has been its lack of commercialisation. [Jimmy Wales](#) made a decision that Wikipedia should be non-profit very early on, and stuck to it. There are no ads (beyond the odd pledge drive), and no sense that your labour is being farmed by a company too cheapskate to actually pay people to do data entry. It is a genuine collaborative project.”

The Wikipedia co-founder Jimmy Wales poses for a portrait in London this month. Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

As Wikipedia has grown, it has moved beyond simple encyclopaedia-style articles. The community’s best points are now visible at times of great upheaval, when collaborative editing allows hundreds of people to work on

pulling together an authoritative overview of breaking news events before the events have even finished.

At 6.34pm UK time on 6 January this year, one Wikipedia editor, with the username Another Believer, decided that events in Washington looked important enough to warrant an article. Tentatively titled “January 2021 Donald Trump rally”, the initial entry was brief: “On 6 January 2021, thousands of Donald Trump supporters gathered in Washington DC to reject results of the November 2020 presidential election.”

[In a hysterical world, Wikipedia is a ray of light – and that’s the truth | John Naughton](#)
[Read more](#)

One minute later, [the Guardian’s live blog reported](#): “House offices evacuated as Trump supporters storm Capitol barriers.” Over the next half-hour, Another Believer continued to update their article alone. Slowly, other administrators began to join in, and [the article became the site’s key focus](#) for those documenting the rapidly evolving events in Washington. By midnight UK time, the article was 3,000 words long, with a further 3,000 words of footnotes, and a debate was raging over whether to rename it from its latest title, “2021 United States Capitol protests”, to its current headline, “2021 storming of the United States Capitol”.

The collaborative encyclopaedia still has many barriers to overcome, from an ever-present funding crisis, only partially solved by its donation-driven revenue model, to its undesired role as a silent battlefield for professionally run influence campaigns to rehabilitate reputations, or excise controversy from the internet. And it still faces the same pressures that more conventional reference sources do, as it struggles to represent the history of the world with less of a focus on the white, male wealthy figures who make up so much of recorded history.

But 20 years on, it is difficult to deny that Wikipedia has proved the naysayers wrong. Whether it is the last gasp of a vision of the internet that has all but died out, or a shining beacon lighting the way to a better future, remains to be seen.

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Insurance industry

Covid insurance ruling: the business owners who will now get paid

The supreme court has ruled insurers must pay out on business interruption policies for the pandemic

- [Small businesses win Covid insurance payout ruling](#)

Gary Lovatt and his wife, Sue, outside their Laurel Bank guesthouse in Keswick in the Lake District. Photograph: Federation of Small Businesses
Rupert Jones and Hilary Osborne

Fri 15 Jan 2021 09.32 EST

The guesthouse owner

Gary Lovatt, who runs the five-bedroom Laurel Bank guesthouse in Keswick in the Lake District, said he was “very happy” with the supreme court verdict, and “reasonably confident” he would now get a payout from his insurer.

Lovatt had tried to claim between £10,000 and £15,000 on his insurance policy after he was forced to close, but said he did not get very far because of his insurer’s “computer says no” approach.

Gary Lovatt. Photograph: FSB

Asked how much income he had lost, the 61-year-old said it was more than 50%.

He said that for a lot of small businesses, the loss of cashflow is a huge issue. “They haven’t got the resources that the large companies [have].”

Lovatt added: “The amounts, to the insurance companies, are quite small – they’re small beer... With a £5,000 claim, that could [pay] someone’s mortgage for six to eight months.”

With these policies generally, Lovatt said the maximum amount someone could claim over a period of perhaps 24 months was about £20,000.

A member of the board of directors of the Federation of Small Businesses, Lovatt said that after being told by his insurer, Argenta, that the policy’s business interruption wording did not cover him, he started “gathering the evidence. Then the FCA decided to take it up.” **Rupert Jones**

The marketing agency owner

Simon Young, the founder and managing director of the marketing agency Institution. Photograph: Institution

Simon Young made a claim with insurer Hiscox in March 2020 for his marketing agency Institution. His firm has stayed open during the pandemic, but some of the 12 staff have been furloughed, and the Doncaster office is out of use.

Responding to the supreme court judgment, Young said: “That’s fantastic. The cynic in me says how does this now play out, and when will we actually get paid?”

He added: “When I took out the policy I never envisaged this would happen – it was more for if there was a fire at our building, or something like that. I thought it would pay out for not being able to use the office, and to provide a level of income while we were closed due to unforeseen circumstances.”

The pandemic seemed to be just that, and in the early days of the crisis Young contacted Hiscox and was told it was investigating what would happen to policies. Later he was told that his claim was on hold while the court case was heard. Since then there have been occasional updates from the insurer, but nothing more.

Young said a successful claim would be worth “tens of thousands of pounds” to his business, and help support jobs.

“I am lucky – I’m not reliant on the claim coming through, but I think of the people who have lost their businesses over the past year, or need this to keep going.” **Hilary Osborne**

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Republicans

'Kind of unbelievable': US Republicans in Britain mull over Trump impact

Diaspora of expats voice loyalty, but also withering disgust over Capitol storming – and fatigue

Molly Kiniry says she has watched the rise of Trump with ‘increasing amounts of horror’. Photograph: Molly Kiniry

Molly Kiniry says she has watched the rise of Trump with ‘increasing amounts of horror’. Photograph: Molly Kiniry



[Ben Quinn](#)

[@BenQuinn75](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Watching history unfold in Washington DC from her home in London, Jan Halper-Hayes admitted to being slightly incredulous about the images of [Donald Trump](#) supporters storming the US Capitol.

“It was kind of in some ways unbelievable,” says the long-term activist in the Republican party and former vice-president of its UK branch. She claims she has received “good information” to indicate that “Antifa people” were present at the riot.

The unsubstantiated claim that Antifa – a catch-all term used by the president and others to describe anti-Trump protest movements – had infiltrated the mob is one that some of his most die-hard supporters have clung to.

That the idea has made the leap across the Atlantic underlines how the Republican diaspora have not been immune to some of the bitter controversies splitting the party in its homeland.

In the UK, the Trump presidency has taken something of a toll on the local branch of [Republicans](#) Overseas, which largely operates as a social circle for expatriate supporters who organise a 4th July party each year and carry out voter registration.

Some members, and particularly young women, previously involved with the group have stepped away since the president's 2016 election and, in some cases, even voted for Joe Biden.

Jan Halper-Hayes, activist in the US Republican party, poses with Trump
Photograph: Jan Halper-Hayes

Halper-Hayes, a former member of Trump's White House transition team and visitor to his Mar-a-Lago resort, remains loyal nevertheless, insisting that it has

never been hard to square support for Trump with traditional Republican values.

“I knew him when I lived in New York, so I have known him through all his iterations. I was on his transition team, and from encounters and observations I can tell you that he is so friendly and funny. It’s a shame that he used Twitter for a nasty side because that’s not who he really is.

“Whether I am in an Uber car or in a supermarket, people love Trump here in the UK. It’s the BBC and the Guardian that take on a different mainstream media narrative.”

Molly Kiniry has a very different take on Trump. She watched his rise both within the party and in national [US politics](#) with what she says was “increasing amounts of horror”. She views his most recent conduct as “a manifestation of the mental instability that has been there all along”.

Not that being a Republican supporter in an often left-leaning city like London was ever without complexities. “What I normally say when people express surprise that I’m a Republican is something to the effect of ‘I am, I just hide the horns very well’.”

Casting her US presidential vote for Joe Biden this time came easily, says Kiniry, a former spokesperson for Republicans Overseas UK and now a graduate student at Cambridge who acknowledges that the president and his loyalists would likely regard her as a Rino [Republican in name only].

Like others, she says she is looking forward to her party regaining its traditional identity. She remains optimistic. “I don’t think I would still be a registered Republican after the last five or six years if that was not the case.”

She is withering about those who have stood by the president in the US seat of power and, as a native Washingtonian, admits that the destructive events in DC had cut deep. “I think the members who did not vote to impeach the president will have to answer to voters, and to history as well, quite frankly.”



Greg Swenson, member of Republicans Overseas, liked the US tax deregulation, but says Trump ‘finally overdid it’ Photograph: PA

A third view of sorts is espoused by Greg Swenson, a spokesperson for Republicans Overseas, who insists that Trump managed to win over him and others who had originally wanted someone else to be the party’s 2016 candidate. It was notable today that the majority of the UK branch’s board were women, he says. “I criticised him, but I can say that I have been very happy with what he did.”

As an investment banker, he was attracted in particular to Trump’s stewardship of the US economy. “I became more of a supporter as we saw the results, for example, of tax deregulation, but it was also the massive pushback against him from Democrats and the left. As they became more unhinged, the more dug in Trump supporters have become.”

That said, Swenson confesses that he is relishing a spell “in opposition” after four years defending a president who, he concedes, “finally overdid it”. He

adds: “Trump fatigue is exhausting for every one, whether they are supporters or opponents – so I’m kind of looking forward to it.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/15/kind-of-unbelievable-us-republicans-in-britain-mull-over-trump-impact>

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London

How the New Cross fire became a rallying cry for political action

1981 blaze in London killed 13 black youngsters and sparked protest at poor response from police and government

New Cross Massacre Action Committee demonstrators outside County Hall, London, where an inquest into the deaths of 13 young people in a New Cross house fire was due to begin. Photograph: PA

New Cross Massacre Action Committee demonstrators outside County Hall, London, where an inquest into the deaths of 13 young people in a New Cross house fire was due to begin. Photograph: PA



[Aamna Mohdin](#)

[@aamnamohdin](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 05.18 EST

Yvonne Ruddock's 16th birthday party was the first her mother had allowed her to host in the family home in New Cross, south-east [London](#). But the joint celebration that started with much excitement ended in a devastating blaze that killed Yvonne, her brother and 11 others on 18 January 1981.

The victims were nearly all teenagers, and all black. Twenty-seven others were seriously injured. One of the survivors was so horrified by what he saw that he killed himself two years later.

The tragedy became a hugely politicising moment for the black community, due largely to the lack of response from the police, public, and government. The slogan "13 dead, nothing said" became a rallying cry for political action.

On the 40th anniversary of the blaze, and in the wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, the hurt remains for many. Community organisers have warned that lessons have still not been learned, pointing to the painful process that victims of recent deaths in custody and the Grenfell Tower fire have had to undergo to get justice.

“I remember somebody asked me how do we go about moving forward and, to be quite honest, there isn’t a way of moving forward,” said Richard Gooding, who lost his 14-year-old brother Andrew in the fire.

Firefighters and police in front of the fire-ravaged house in New Cross Road, Deptford, south London. Photograph: PA

Richard recalled dropping off his three siblings at the party and leaving before the fire started. His 11-year-old sister Denise and 17-year-old brother David were injured, David seriously.

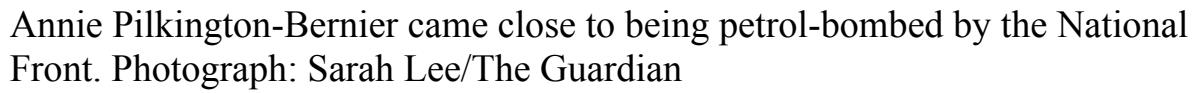
Shortly after the fire, his parents received a letter that stated: “How glad I was when 13 [n-words] went up in smoke.”

“We were devastated because we’d just lost our brother, but that was the sort of thing that was going on,” Gooding, who was 19 at the time, added. “When we went to the police station, a lot of the times they were questioning us like we were the criminals rather than the victims.”

Yvonne Field, the chief executive of the Ubele Initiative, was studying in Birmingham in 1981 when she heard the news of the fire. “I can remember exactly where I stood. There was a sense of dread and sadness. I was beside myself.”

The fire occurred during a time when the black community was “under siege” by the far right and controversial policing tactics, according to community organiser Lee Jasper.

A year earlier, Annie Pilkington-Bernier, who worked at Union Place, a leftwing printing press, remembers how close she came to being attacked. “Somebody in the workplace picked up the telephone and it was a cross-line. And who was on that cross-line? The National Front, plotting to petrol bomb the building that I worked in.”



Annie Pilkington-Bernier came close to being petrol-bombed by the National Front. Photograph: Sarah Lee/The Guardian

In the aftermath of the blaze, John La Rose, Darcus Howe, and Roxy Harris, all members of the Black Parents Movement, visited Yvonne's mother Armza Ruddock at a home near the gutted New Cross house.

A meeting was then held on 20 January, which 300 people attended, according to an interview with La Rose published in the book *The New Cross Massacre Story*. Present were anti-racist groups known as “the Alliance”, which as well as the Black Parents Movement, included the Black Youth Movement, [Race](#) Today Collective and Bogle L’Ouverture Publications.

The meeting established the New Cross Massacre Committee and a fact-finding commission, which interviewed witnesses and ensured survivors had legal support.

Police initially thought the New Cross fire was caused by a firebomb thrown through a downstairs window. But, after studying forensic evidence, later stated that the fire had started inside the house. Further advances in science led the police to conclude the fire broke out at 5.40am by an armchair in the front room. (Two inquests into the fire gave an open verdict.)

Aggrey Burke, a retired British psychiatrist and academic who provided psychotherapeutic support to bereaved families, said they remained in a deep state of shock. “Mrs Thatcher didn’t provide any leadership. A month after New Cross there was a fire in Dublin, which killed nearly 50 people at the club. The Queen and the prime minister expressed condolences pretty quickly, but that didn’t happen for New Cross.”

Velvetina Francis, whose 17-year-old son, Gerry, died in the fire, said in a BBC interview aired in 1981: “Had it been white kids, she would have been on the television, on the radio, and sent her sympathy.”

Six weeks after the fire, an estimated 20,000 people marched for eight hours through London in what was known as the Black People’s Day of Action. The protest, organised by the New Cross massacre committee, was then the largest demonstration by the black community in the UK.

Ros Griffiths, a community organiser in London, said that when teachers in her school in Camberwell found out there was going to be a march that Monday, they decided to lock the gates to prevent students leaving to attend. Griffiths, who was 15, added: “We just climbed out the gate and went. It was amazing, it was my first experience of participating in a black-led demonstration.”

The dub poet Linton Kwesi Johnson, who was active with Race Today Collective and the Alliance, described the march as a watershed moment. “It made the British establishment sit up and take note of the fact that we weren’t powerless. We were able to mobilise that power in defence of our human rights.”

When Pilkington-Bernier read about the march in a Guardian article a few days later, she was surprised to find a picture of herself wearing her favourite hat. “I met black people that day who’d never been on a march before. It was a very powerful day.”

Forty years on, she looks back with pride at the day they declared that the victims of the New Cross fire mattered, that their lives mattered, that black lives matter.

Those who died in the fire were: Humphrey Brown, 18; Peter Campbell, 18; Steve Collins, 17; Patrick Cummings, 16; Gerry Francis, 17; Andrew Gooding, 14; Lloyd Richard Hall, 20; Patricia Denise Johnston, 15; Rosalind Henry, 16; Glenton Powell, 15; Paul Ruddock, 22; Yvonne Ruddock, 16; Owen Thompson, 16.

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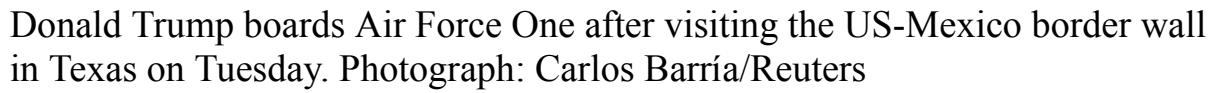
- [**Donald Trump will fly to Florida hours before Biden inauguration, reports say**](#)



[Donald Trump](#)

Donald Trump will fly to Florida hours before Biden inauguration, reports say

Outgoing president expected to use Air Force One to travel to Mar-a-Lago, where he intends to live



Donald Trump boards Air Force One after visiting the US-Mexico border wall in Texas on Tuesday. Photograph: Carlos Barria/Reuters

Donald Trump boards Air Force One after visiting the US-Mexico border wall in Texas on Tuesday. Photograph: Carlos Barria/Reuters

Luke Harding

Fri 15 Jan 2021 13.19 EST

Donald Trump is expected to leave the White House as president on Wednesday morning, just hours before Joe Biden's inauguration, flying off on Air Force One to his beachside home in Florida.

Trump's post-presidential plans have been clouded in uncertainty. But several US news organisations reported on Friday that Trump intends to live at Mar-a-Lago, his Palm Beach resort. His daughter Ivanka Trump and son-in-law Jared Kushner are expected to join him there, at least for some of the time.

Trump has said he will not attend Biden's inauguration, following last week's deadly invasion of the US Capitol. He is expected to leave Washington on the

morning of 20 January, [Bloomberg reported](#), citing two people familiar with the matter.

The Associated Press, citing a person familiar with the planning, said there would be a departure ceremony at Andrews air force base, with a military band, red carpet and 21-gun salute under discussion.

Several White House staff are likely to work for Trump and his family from their new Florida base. According to [the Palm Beach Post](#), Melania Trump recently visited a private school in Boca Raton that the couple's teenage son Barron is due to attend.

Donald Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate. Photograph: Wilfredo Lee/AP

Adjusting to life outside the White House may be tough. When the president arrives at Palm Beach on Wednesday roads will be shut as his motorcade threads its way to Mar-a-Lago. Once Biden is sworn in, however, they will

reopen. Commercial flights from the nearby international airport that pass directly over his estate will resume.

It is unclear what exactly Trump intends to do next. It seems inevitable he will spend some of the weeks and months ahead closeted with his lawyers – and, as per his presidency, on the golf course. He faces a second impeachment trial in the Senate and a slew of other legal cases, federal and civil. As an ex-president he loses his immunity from prosecution.

In Washington Trump's staff are busy packing up. On Wednesday, a photographer for Reuters snapped the president's trade adviser, Peter Navarro, [carrying a large, framed photograph](#) of one of Trump's meetings with the Chinese president, Xi Jinping. Other items on their way out of the building included a stuffed pheasant and [an Abraham Lincoln bust](#).

Abraham Lincoln bust ... White House ... 2:09pm
pic.twitter.com/V56sPU81Yy

— Howard Mortman (@HowardMortman) [January 14, 2021](#)

The removals and piles of boxes have prompted a rash of puns on Twitter, with several calling on the president to “stop the steal”.

In September 2019 the Trumps filed court papers declaring Mar-a-Lago their permanent residence. Renovations are reportedly going on inside the family's private quarters. Melania Trump has been shipping items for almost two months, ahead of her return next week, with [one source telling CNN](#): “She just wants to go home.”

Not everyone is thrilled by the prospect of having the former first family move in. Late last year neighbours sent a letter to the town of Palm Beach saying Trump would violate an agreement made in 1993 that allowed him to convert Mar-a-Lago into a private club. It stipulated that no one could reside at the property, the DeMoss family [who live next door complained](#).

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Headlines friday 15 january 2021

- [Economy UK edges towards double-dip recession as GDP falls 2.6%](#)
- [Live Business: UK economy shrank 2.6% during November lockdown](#)
- [Exclusive Regulator refuses to approve daily mass Covid testing in English schools](#)
- [Live UK Covid: PM's plans for school testing in disarray after MHRA refuses to approve scheme](#)
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- [Testing times How government fell short, again and again](#)
- ['No time to waste' Biden unveils \\$1.9tn coronavirus stimulus package](#)
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- [New York Bus dangling from expressway after Bronx crash](#)
- [Politics Johnson represents ‘boys’ club’ approach to Commons, says Rudd](#)
- [Brexit Government rejects report it will use freedom from EU to slash workers' rights](#)

Economic growth (GDP)

UK edges towards double-dip recession as GDP falls 2.6%

Second national Covid lockdown in November ends six months of growth but decline not as bad as feared

England's second Covid lockdown in November ended six months of GDP growth, figures show. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

England's second Covid lockdown in November ended six months of GDP growth, figures show. Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

[Richard Partington](#) Economics correspondent

[@RJPartington](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 02.11 EST

The UK economy has edged towards a double-dip recession after official figures confirmed a renewed slump in November fuelled by the second national coronavirus lockdown in England.

[UK economy shrank 2.6% during November lockdown – business live](#)
[Read more](#)

The [Office for National Statistics](#) said gross domestic product (GDP) had fallen by 2.6% month-on-month in November, when the government forced the closure of non-essential shops and the hospitality sector in England to combat rapid growth in Covid infections, and as tougher controls in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland weighed on growth. Reflecting the renewed controls amid the second wave of the pandemic, the latest official figures end six consecutive months of growth over the summer, when the UK economy was recovering from the first wave of the crisis.

The impact of renewed restrictions took GDP in November down to 8.5% below its pre-pandemic level, in a setback for Britain's economic recovery from the first wave of the crisis.

GDP fell by 3% in the first three months of 2020 and plunged by 19% in the second quarter during the first lockdown – the biggest decline in history and plunging the UK into recession, which economists regard as two consecutive quarters of falling GDP. Growth returned in the summer with a record 16% rise in the third quarter.

After the decline in November, some economists believe GDP could fall in the final quarter of 2020 and expect a further decline in the first three months of 2021 amid tougher lockdown restrictions, which would put the UK back in recession.

James Smith, research director of the Resolution Foundation, said: “The sharp GDP fall in November as England entered its second national lockdown suggests that the UK is in the midst of a double dip recession as it starts the year with even stricter restrictions.

“But while the economic story today is of only the second-ever double-dip recession on record, the story of the year will be a vaccine-driven bounceback in economic activity for sectors like hospitality and leisure.”

However, the November drop in GDP was not as bad as feared, after economists polled by Reuters had predicted a 5.7% fall, which could mean Britain ultimately avoids the first double-dip recession since the 1970s.

Philip Shaw of the City bank Investec said: “It would take a monthly drop in GDP of 1.0% or more in December to cause a contraction in the fourth quarter. The much awaited double-dip recession may not happen and our inclination right now is that it will not.”

According to the latest figures from the economy, pubs and hairdressers suffered the biggest impact during the [second English lockdown](#) in November, as the hospitality sector was forced to close or operate as takeaway-only. The service sector – which includes activities such as retail, hospitality and finance, and is typically the growth engine of the British economy – shrank by 3.4%, leaving output about 10% below pre-pandemic levels.

However, the ONS said many firms adjusted to the new working conditions during the pandemic, schools stayed open, and manufacturing and construction generally continued to operate, meaning the economic damage was significantly smaller in November than during the first lockdown. Industrial production – which includes manufacturing, as well as energy production – fell marginally, by 0.1%, while keeping building sites open boosted the construction sector with 1.9% growth on the month, taking output back above pre-pandemic levels.

Analysts said many companies had adapted well to the November lockdown in England. After Boris Johnson gave a lengthy notice period for the lockdown, which started on 5 November and lasted until 2 December, the first few days of the month were also been among the busiest days of the year for some companies, as [consumers rushed to shops, pubs and restaurants](#) before they closed.

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, is [under renewed pressure to provide additional financial support](#) to businesses and workers struggling at the start of 2021 during the third national lockdown in England, as the cumulative impact of almost a year living through the pandemic takes its toll.

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Anneliese Dodds, the shadow chancellor, said the UK had already had the worst recession of any major economy earlier in 2020 and was in danger of a “devastating double dip”.

“That’s the cost of this Conservative government’s incompetence and indecision. Instead of securing our economy, the chancellor is winding down economic support and hitting families with a triple hammer blow of pay freezes, a cut to universal credit and a hike in council tax,” she said.

Sunak said it was clear that “things will get harder before they get better” and that the latest official figures underscored the challenge facing the country.

He added: “But there are reasons to be hopeful – our vaccine rollout is well under way and through our ‘plan for jobs’ we’re creating new opportunities for those most in need. With this support, and the resilience and enterprise of the British people, we will get through this.”

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UK economy shrank 2.6% in November; firms win Covid-19 insurance case – as it happened

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[Coronavirus](#)

Regulator refuses to approve mass daily Covid testing at English schools

Exclusive: Boris Johnson's plan to test millions of pupils a week in disarray after concerns raised

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

[Josh Halliday](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.19 EST Last modified on Thu 14 Jan 2021 23.37 EST

A coronavirus sign displayed outside a primary school in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

Boris Johnson's plans to test millions of schoolchildren for coronavirus every week appear to be in disarray after the UK regulator refused to formally approve the daily testing of pupils in England, the Guardian has learned.

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) told the government on Tuesday it had not authorised the daily use of 30-minute tests due to concerns that they give people false reassurance if they test negative.

This could lead to pupils staying in school and potentially spreading the virus when they should be self-isolating.

The regulator's decision undermines a key element of the government's strategy to bring the pandemic under control – and is bound to raise fresh questions about the tests, and the safety of the schools that have been asked to use them.

Ministers have repeatedly said the [use of daily Covid-19 tests](#) is critical to keeping children in education because it means those who test negative can remain in classrooms, instead of whole year-groups having to self-isolate.

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, described the government's £78m testing plan as a "[major milestone](#)" and said it would mean testing "literally millions of children every single week".

The initiative is at the centre of the prime minister's [£100bn "Operation Moonshot"](#) mass-testing plan and is already under way in some secondary schools.

It was due to expand to primary schools and was then expected to widen to universities and workplaces by the end of January but that now looks highly unlikely.

The government has spent at least £1.5bn on the "lateral flow" devices and they have been used by universities, care homes and hospitals. Ministers [announced](#) this week that they would be distributed to all 317 local authorities in England.

However, experts have repeatedly [raised concerns](#) about the accuracy of the devices made by Innova.

The tests are specifically designed for use on people with Covid-19 symptoms and are most effective at identifying those with high viral loads, who are the most infectious. They are supposed to be administered only by trained professionals.

The government is mainly using the tests on people without symptoms and they are carried out by school staff, meaning their accuracy drops. Official figures from a [trial in Liverpool](#) found they missed 30% of people with a high viral load and half of the positive cases detected using a standard nasal swab.

The quick turnaround time means the tests can find positive cases that would not otherwise have come to light. However, many experts are concerned that people who test negative will presume they are safe to get involved in activities with others, or visit vulnerable and elderly people, with some saying this week that they may cause serious harm.

The MHRA is understood to have expressed similar concerns to officials in Matt Hancock's Department of [Health](#) and Social Care (DHSC) on Tuesday, a week after the rollout began in secondary schools.

Sources said the regulator made clear that it had not given the green light to the daily use of these tests on pupils who would otherwise have to self-isolate.

Prof Jon Deeks, a biostatistician of the University of Birmingham and Royal Statistical Society, described the use of rapid tests in this context as “ridiculous and dangerous” and welcomed the MHRA’s stance.

He said: “It is really important that we have confidence in the safety and effectiveness of tests for Covid-19 and all other diseases - this is the responsibility of our regulator.

“This clarification of the unsuitability of lateral flow tests for saying people are not infected with SARS-CoV-2 from the MHRA demonstrates that they are taking their responsibility seriously to ensure that tests are used in a safe way.

“The government needs to take greater care in ensuring they evaluate the potential harms as well as the benefit of all their mass testing proposals.”

The decision is another setback for the prime minister's mass-testing plan and raises questions about the proposed full return of schools after the February half-term, which is partly dependent on the availability of serial testing.

The government could apply for an exceptional use authorisation from the MHRA but this would take time and it is far from clear that it would be approved.

Any further distribution of the daily tests may also be on the condition that people are warned more explicitly about the risks, instead of a negative result being presented as a "green light" that they are Covid-free.

Williamson stressed the importance of repeat testing when he appeared before MPs on the Commons education select committee on Wednesday. He also said parents of primary school children would be expected to carry out the tests on their child at home – a suggestion likely to raise alarm bells at the MHRA, which has not approved self-administered tests in this way.

Williamson said: "Testing is a really important part of bringing people back into school. It's an important part of fighting Covid-19 right across the community.

"If we're testing a child, in essence we're in a position where we're also testing a household as well. We're extending staff testing as of next week to primary schools and I would like to see it rolled out to all pupils, that's my ambition – that's where I want us to get to."

A spokesperson for the DHSC said: "Lateral flow devices are a vital tool to finding more asymptomatic cases and the government's approach to testing in schools will reduce transmission.

"We are testing teachers and students weekly on site to find positive cases and break the chains of transmission. In addition, as part of an ongoing evaluation, we are doing daily contact testing in schools using an assisted testing model.

"The evidence and lessons from these and other evaluations will be used to inform our review of the effect of daily contact testing on breaking chains of transmission and any future plans."

The MHRA has also been approached for comment but had not responded by the time of publication.

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UK Covid: Boris Johnson says all travellers to UK must show negative coronavirus test from Monday - as it happened

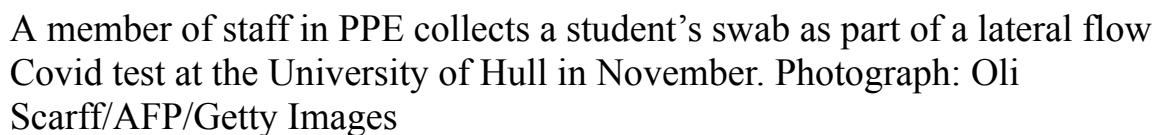
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Coronavirus

Experts remain divided over merits of mass Covid tests in schools

Analysis: some say lateral flow tests could help cut outbreaks, but others argue they offer false reassurance

- [Regulator refuses to approve mass Covid testing at schools in England](#)
- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)



A member of staff in PPE collects a student's swab as part of a lateral flow Covid test at the University of Hull in November. Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

The education secretary, Gavin Williamson, has put mass testing for coronavirus [at the heart of his strategy](#) to reopen schools after the lockdown. It is a controversial strategy that has divided scientists. Some believe mass testing can help reduce outbreaks at schools, while others argue it could make matters worse by giving teachers and pupils false reassurance.

Mass testing relies on lateral flow tests, or LFTs, which contain antibodies that bind to the virus. When a nasal swab is tested in an LFT, any virus present in the sample sticks to the antibodies and produces a dark band, a bit like a pregnancy test's indicator. LFTs are not as accurate as the standard NHS lab-based PCR tests, but they are cheap and produce results fast – within 30 minutes.

The downside of LFTs is their performance. [In a pilot trial in Liverpool](#), mass testing failed to spot more than half the people who were infected but had no symptoms. The tests missed nearly a third of asymptomatic people who had high viral loads and were at highest risk of spreading the disease.

Another issue with LFTs is that their accuracy falls in the hands of amateurs. Given that teachers and parents will be administering the tests, this could reduce their value further. In an interim evaluation of the kits, researchers at the University of Oxford and Public [Health](#) England's Porton Down lab found the tests picked up 79% of cases when used by skilled lab scientists, but only 58% when used by self-trained members of the public.

Jon Deeks, a professor of biostatistics at the University of Birmingham, argues that LFTs are not fit for many of the purposes the UK government has in mind, mass testing in schools included. Because the tests miss so many infections, a negative test would not mean a teacher or pupil is virus-free. The danger is that teachers and pupils are falsely reassured and, thinking they are safe, put others at risk. The problem is compounded by letters to parents and guidance for teachers that claim the tests are “very accurate”, he adds. It is not the only concern. Deeks believes that repeated, ineffective testing is a harmful diversion of resources, and risks traumatising children, particularly those with learning difficulties and mental health problems.

Not all scientists are opposed to the testing, however. The Independent Sage committee – not to be confused with the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies – concedes that mass testing is not a panacea and will not, on its own, make schools safe. But they back mass testing as a means to

find cases of coronavirus, rather than deciding whether or not people are infected. “A negative test should not be taken as an indication that someone is not infected or to relax other mitigations at either an individual or collective level,” the group said in its [“safe schools policy” report](#).

Adam Finn, a professor of paediatrics at the University of Bristol, has made a similar point, saying LFTs are “red light tests” not “green light tests”, meaning that testing negative does not mean a person can behave as if they are virus-free.

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Coronavirus

Testing times: how UK government fell short, again and again

A timeline of what was promised and what has been delivered so far

Matt Hancock pledged 100,000 tests a day by the end of April 2020.

Photograph: Pippa Fowles/10 Downing Street/AFP via Getty Images

Matt Hancock pledged 100,000 tests a day by the end of April 2020.

Photograph: Pippa Fowles/10 Downing Street/AFP via Getty Images

[Lucy Campbell](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 15.57 EST

In mid-March, the World Health Organization had a simple message to countries on how to tackle the spread of coronavirus: [test](#), [test](#), [test](#). In the

chaotic months of mixed messaging and policy U-turns that followed, the UK government developed a chronic habit of over-promising and under-delivering, not least when it came to testing.

We look back at the major events in the buildup of the UK's testing regime, what was promised and what has happened since.

March: ‘Gamechanger’

The health and social care secretary, [Matt Hancock](#), insists the government is “rolling out a big expansion of testing” but declines to give a specific timetable.

Boris Johnson announces the ambition of carrying out 25,000 tests a day and says [mass testing](#) will be a gamechanger. Hancock repeats that general testing will be ramped up, but does so without a timeframe for deployment.

Johnson says the UK is aiming to go “up from 5,000 to 10,000 tests per day, to 25,000, hopefully very soon up to 250,000 per day”.

By 31 March, only 8,240 tests had been performed.

April: ‘100,000 tests a day’

On 1 April, Downing Street admits that only 2,000 out of 500,000 (or 0.4% of) frontline NHS workers have been tested.

Testing passes 10,000 a day for the first time and Matt Hancock [pledges](#) 100,000 tests a day by the end of the month.

Hancock announces the new NHS app for contact tracing.

[None of the 3.5m tests bought](#) by the government – and announced on 24 March – have been found to work so far.

Hancock says the prime minister’s 25 March commitment to get to 250,000 tests a day “still stands”, but that he wants to “put a very clear timeline” on the goal to get to 100,000 by the end of the month.

May: ‘World-beating’

Hancock says the government has met its target to “carry out” 100,000 tests a day by the end of April, after conducting 122,347 tests on 30 April. But recent changes to how tests are being counted mean that newer home-testing kits and kits sent to “satellite testing locations” have been counted as they are dispatched.

Johnson promises a “world-beating” test-and-trace system will be up and running by 1 June.

NHS test and trace officially launches across England, but the accompanying app is delayed by several more weeks.

June

Data reveals that a third of people who tested positive for Covid-19 either couldn’t be traced by the £10bn test-and-trace programme in its first week of operation or failed to provide details of their contacts.

The government is forced to abandon its own app, after spending three months and millions of pounds on technology that experts had repeatedly warned would not work.

August

There are growing concerns about Serco’s role in test and trace amid reports of contact tracers “sitting around doing nothing” and being “paid to watch Netflix”. Serco had been directly awarded a contact-tracing contract worth £108m. Labour says the service is nowhere near world-beating and can’t tackle local outbreaks.

September: ‘Operation Moonshot’

Project “Operation Moonshot”, a rapid at-home mass testing programme, is intended to deliver 10m tests a day, and could cost £100bn.

The £10n test-and-trace system is condemned as “[barely functional](#)”, with demand up to four times its capacity and 90% of tests failing to hit the 24-hour turnaround target.

October

Contact tracing in England [falls to a new low](#), with fewer than 60% of contacts being reached. Waiting times for test results soar to almost double the target at nearly 48 hours. One expert says the system is “struggling to make any difference” to the epidemic.

January

After months of questions over why border testing and quarantine policy is significantly more lax than other countries, the transport secretary, Grant Shapps, announces that travellers to England will be required to have a negative coronavirus test and will still need to quarantine for 10 days.

The next day, the government says the new rule will come into force on Monday at 4am instead of Friday as planned, to soften the impact on businesses and give them more time to prepare. In reality, it is because the Department for Transport failed to update its guidance in time.

Plans to deploy daily coronavirus tests in schools across England are thrown into disarray after the UK regulator [refuses to formally approve](#) the programme.

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Joe Biden

'No time to waste': Biden unveils \$1.9tn coronavirus stimulus package

Plan includes \$160bn in vaccination funds and \$1tn in relief to families, including \$1,400 stimulus checks

Joe Biden has unveiled a \$1.9tn coronavirus relief proposal, aimed at urgently combating the pandemic and the economic crisis it has triggered. As the US faces its deadliest stage of the pandemic, Biden described the moment as “a crisis of deep human suffering”.

The ambitious, wide-ranging plan includes \$160bn to bolster vaccination and testing efforts, and other health programs and \$350bn for state and local governments, as well as \$1tn in relief to families, via direct payments and unemployment insurance.

“There’s no time to waste,” Biden said. “We have to act and we have to act now.”

Details of the aid package had been released by Biden’s transition team earlier on Thursday.

If adopted, the proposal would tack on \$1,400 to the \$600 in direct payments for individuals that Congress approved most recently. “We will finish the job of getting a total of \$2,000 in relief to people who need it the most,” Biden said.

Supplemental unemployment insurance would also increase to \$400 a week from \$300 a week and would be extended to September.

“During this pandemic, millions of Americans, through no fault of their own, have lost the dignity and respect that comes with a job and a paycheck,” Biden said on Thursday, speaking from Wilmington, Delaware. “There is real pain overwhelming the real economy.”

Biden ran on the promise that he would deliver Americans through the coronavirus crisis, and more recently has pledged to ramp up vaccination

efforts, and oversee the administering of 100m Covid-19 jabs during his first 100 days.



People wait in line in a Disneyland parking lot in California to receive Covid-19 vaccines. Photograph: Valérie Macon/AFP/Getty Images

Ahead of the president-elect's inauguration next week, a deeply divided US is also facing an unmitigated public health crisis. More than 385,000 people have died of Covid-19. Meanwhile, weekly unemployment claims have jumped to 965,000. Before the pandemic, the figure was typically about 225,000.

With Democrats having gained an edge over Republicans in the Senate, the Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer, has said Biden's Covid-19 relief package will be his top priority, even as the legislative body contends with the impeachment trial of Donald Trump.

In passing the proposal, Biden has an ally in Bernie Sanders, the Vermont senator and former presidential contender, who will soon be at the helm of the

powerful Senate budget committee. As chair of the committee, Sanders will have control of budget reconciliation, a process that allows Congress to expedite some legislation.

The “rescue plan will begin to provide our people with much-needed support”, Sanders said.

Biden has also called on lawmakers to extend a national eviction moratorium, which expires on 31 January.

Housing advocates have been pressing Biden to extend and bolster a federal ban on evictions in recent weeks and months, and they have asked him to additionally include funds for rental assistance in relief proposals. His current plan includes \$30bn in rental and utility assistance for those struggling to pay bills. Advocates are also asking Congress to cancel any rent or mortgage debt incurred during the pandemic.

The president-elect said that while “these plans won’t come cheaply”, a failure to act “will cost us dearly”.

Still, several provisions in the president-elect’s plan could face resistance, including his push to have Congress raise the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour. As a candidate, Biden signaled that raising the minimum wage would be a top priority. But Republicans have long opposed such a move. The Republican Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, blocked a minimum wage increase in 2019, and Republicans filibustered a minimum wage increase effort in 2014.

So far the plan has, however, united two diametrically opposed forces – Democratic socialist Sanders and big business. The US Chamber of Commerce, an influential lobbying organization that represents business interests, praised Biden’s proposal.

“We applaud the president-elect’s focus on vaccinations and on economic sectors and families that continue to suffer as the pandemic rages on,” the group said in a statement. “We must defeat Covid before we can restore our economy.”

The proposal will be Biden’s first test of his ability to work with a divided Congress and make good on his promise to pull the country out of the coronavirus crisis.

“Come Wednesday, we begin a new chapter,” Biden said.

Trump’s leadership during the pandemic has been erratic. He backed “Operation Warp Speed” to quickly develop vaccines and treatments, but also picked fights with leading government scientists like Dr Anthony Fauci and his own appointees at the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Biden has pledged to take his lead from science, and has named Fauci, head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, as his top medical adviser. He has tapped businessman Jeff Zients, who has a reputation for successfully tackling complex missions, to coordinate the government’s coronavirus response. He has also selected the Yale medicine professor Dr Marcella Nunez-Smith, to head an effort to ensure equity and fairness for racial and ethnic minorities in access to vaccines and treatments.

But he will need more than top-résumé talent, experts say. It is still unclear how the new administration will address the issue of vaccine hesitancy, with many Americans, including a worryingly high percentage [of healthcare workers](#), saying they are wary of getting a shot.

Next Wednesday, when Biden will be sworn in as president, marks the first anniversary of the first confirmed case of Covid-19 in the United States.

The Associated Press contributed reporting

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Trump impeachment (2021)

Trump impeachment risks bogging down early days of Biden presidency

- Trial could tie up Senate, slowing president-elect's agenda
- Republicans who backed impeachment fear for their safety

National guard troops stand outside the US Capitol on Wednesday as the House considers impeachment. Photograph: Kent Nishimura/Los Angeles Times/REX/Shutterstock

National guard troops stand outside the US Capitol on Wednesday as the House considers impeachment. Photograph: Kent Nishimura/Los Angeles Times/REX/Shutterstock

[Joan E Greve](#) in Washington, [Joanna Walters](#) in New York and agencies

Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.17 EST

The prospect of [Donald Trump](#) facing a bitter impeachment trial in the US Senate threatens to cast a shadow over the earliest days of Joe Biden's presidency, as Washington on Thursday headed into a militarized virtual lockdown ahead of next week's inauguration.

With warnings of more violent protests being planned following the pro-Trump mob's deadly attack on the US Capitol last week, some Republican members of Congress who voted for the unprecedented second impeachment of the president fear they are in personal danger.

Peter Meijer, a Michigan Republican who voted along with the Democratic majority in the House on Wednesday to [impeach Trump](#), on the charge of incitement of insurrection — after he encouraged the riot in a futile attempt to overturn his election defeat by force — said some of his colleagues were hiring armed escorts and acquiring body armor out of fear for their safety.

"When it comes to my family's safety, that's something that we've been planning for, preparing for, taking appropriate measures," Meijer told MSNBC.

"Our expectation is that somebody may try to kill us," he said.

"Our expectation is that somebody may try to kill us." — Rep. Peter Meijer (R-MI), who voted to impeach Trump, says he and other lawmakers believe their lives are in danger following yesterday's impeachment.

He also says they are altering their routines and buying body armor.
pic.twitter.com/stOO00OKYD

— The Recount (@therecount) [January 14, 2021](#)

There is no schedule yet for when the House may present the article of impeachment — essentially the charge against Trump — to the Senate for trial.

Trump was acquitted at his first impeachment trial in the Senate early last year after being charged with abuse of power and obstruction of Congress, stemming from his request that Ukraine investigate [Joe Biden](#) and his son Hunter ahead of the 2020 election.

The Senate resumes full session on the eve of the inauguration events on 20 January to install Biden as the 46th US president and Kamala Harris as his vice-president.

A swift impeachment trial would entangle Biden's urgent efforts to have his cabinet choices confirmed by the Senate and fire up his agenda to tackle the raging coronavirus pandemic as well as the related economic crisis and vaccination chaos.

There is no real prospect of Trump being ousted before Biden takes office next Wednesday, after the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, rejected Democratic calls for a quick trial in the Republican-led chamber, saying there was no way to finish it before Trump leaves office.

03:25

How Trump reacted to two very different impeachments – video report

Biden, meanwhile, has urged Senate leaders to avoid an all-consuming trial during his first days in the White House so that they can focus on the crises facing his incoming administration.

“I hope that the Senate leadership will find a way to deal with their constitutional responsibilities on impeachment while also working on the other urgent business of this nation,” Biden said in a statement on Wednesday night.

[Second impeachment puts Trump in first place among lords of misrule](#)
[Read more](#)

Biden’s inauguration events have already been scaled back due to security concerns and the risks of spreading infection during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The west front of the Capitol building, where the swearing-in occurs and which was overrun by marauding rioters invading the [US Congress](#) last week, is now fortified by fencing, barriers and thousands of national guard troops. Soldiers have been sleeping sprawled in the marble corridors of the complex.

Trump himself is increasingly isolated at the White House and “in self-pity mode”, [according to several reports](#).

Under the US constitution, a two-thirds majority is needed in the Senate to convict Trump, before or after he leaves office, meaning at least 17 [Republicans](#) in the 100-member chamber would have to join the Democrats.

McConnell's vote would be crucial. At Trump's first impeachment, no House Republicans voted in favor of charging him and all Republicans in the Senate voted to acquit him except for Utah's Mitt Romney.

If McConnell signaled to his caucus that he would vote to convict Trump this time, that could give other senators the cover they needed to follow suit if they believed privately that Trump deserved it but feared a backlash from voters.

On Wednesday, [McConnell released a note to Republican senators](#) in which he did not deny that he backed the impeachment push, the New York Times reported. The leader said that he had "not made a final decision on how I will vote, and I intend to listen to the legal arguments when they are presented to the Senate".

McConnell and some other senior Republicans may see conviction as a way to prevent Trump being a liability to the party in the future, and therefore an opportunity.

If Trump is already out of office by the time of the trial, historical precedent suggests the Senate could disqualify him from holding office in the future with only a simple majority vote.

But the legal details and what would happen, including if Trump attempted to pardon himself in his last days in the White House, are far from resolved.

The Senate Democratic leader, Chuck Schumer, set to become majority leader when Biden takes office, said that no matter the timing, "there will be an impeachment trial in the United States Senate, there will be a vote on convicting the president for high crimes and misdemeanors, and if the president is convicted, there will be a vote on barring him from running again."

The Florida Republican senator Marco Rubio has warned, meanwhile, that the impeachment process risks making Trump a martyr to his diehard supporters.

Rubio told NBC he thought Trump bore some responsibility for the attack on the Capitol, which happened on the day both chambers of Congress were

meeting in order to certify Joe Biden's victory, but that putting Trump on trial could make things worse.

"It's like pouring gasoline on fire," he said, noting that some who were displeased with Trump "after seeing what happened last week, sort of reckoning with the last four years – now all of a sudden they're circling the wagons and it threatens to make him a martyr."

No US president has ever been removed from office via impeachment. Three – Trump in 2019, Bill Clinton in 1998 and Andrew Johnson in 1868 – were impeached by the House but acquitted by the Senate. Richard Nixon resigned in 1974 rather than face impeachment.

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New York

New York bus dangling from expressway after Bronx crash

Seven reported injured in Thursday night collision which left rear half of articulated bus on overpass with front end touching ground below

A New York City bus was left hanging suspended from an overpass after crashing off the Cross Bronx expressway, [New York](#) Emergency Management reported on Thursday night.

Seven people sustained minor injuries in the crash, a police spokesperson told NBC New York. The fire department confirmed there were several units on scene. All of the injured were bus passengers. They have since been transported to hospital.

New York council member Mark D Levine wrote on Twitter that emergency services had sealed off the area in response to the incident. The NYEM agency [reported](#) that a bus collision had occurred in the area of the Cross Bronx expressway and University Avenue and urged people to avoid the area.

Mark D. Levine (@MarkLevineNYC)

Horrible accident on Washington Bridge (Which connects 181st in Manhattan to the Bronx. This is not the GWB.)

Tandem bus dangling off edge. Emergency services have closed off the entire area. <https://t.co/nOCK9VpNvL>

[January 15, 2021](#)

Footage of the articulated bus posted on social media showed the bus split along the articulation joint, with the front of the bus balancing on the road

below while the back of the bus remained on the overpass above. It was unclear how many people were on the bus, or how many were injured.

Adelle (@AdelleNaz)

BREAKING: A city bus crashed on the Alexander Hamilton bridge in the Bronx and is hanging off the overpass. 12 people have been reported as Injured [#Bronx #AlexanderHamiltonBridge](#)
pic.twitter.com/9hZGGjsPOG

[January 15, 2021](#)

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/15/new-york-bus-dangling-from-expressway-after-bronx-crash>

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[**Politics**](#)

Johnson represents ‘boys’ club’ approach to Commons, says Rudd

PM’s style means prospects for women are diminishing, according to former cabinet colleague

Amber Rudd said she had left Boris Johnson’s cabinet amid a purge of Tory MPs over Brexit because of the way he treated people. Photograph: Jonathan Hordle/Rex/Shutterstock

Amber Rudd said she had left Boris Johnson’s cabinet amid a purge of Tory MPs over Brexit because of the way he treated people. Photograph: Jonathan Hordle/Rex/Shutterstock

[Peter Walker](#) Political correspondent

[@peterwalker99](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Boris Johnson is emblematic of a “boys’ club” approach to the [House of Commons](#) which makes it harder for women to win promotion, his former cabinet colleague Amber Rudd has said as part of a project in which former ministers reflected on their time in power.

Rudd, who was home secretary under Theresa May, and then [quit as work and pensions secretary](#) when Johnson was prime minister, said he was part of an “establishment group” whose style meant the political prospects for women were actually diminishing.

“There is a kind of boys’ club-type behaviour in parliament because it is still more like a public school or a university club than anywhere else you’ll ever go,” Rudd told the Institute for Government (IFG).

“I fear that it’s going backwards a bit at the moment because unless you have the leadership really making an effort to ensure that women are promoted as equals, all the time – not just because, ‘oh, let’s promote the women, we forgot about the women’ – it’s going to be a problem,” she said.

“I see that in [Boris Johnson](#), I’m afraid. Even though I don’t dislike him at all. He’s come from that establishment group. And also, he has that sort of language, which he’s – quite rightly – nervous of using in front of women.”

Rudd said she had left Johnson’s cabinet amid a purge of Tory MPs over Brexit because of the way he treated people.

“It was Boris Johnson’s style of government, really,” she said. “It was the way he treated other people and his determination to deliver Brexit, whatever the cost in terms of the economy and, I thought, the consequences to people’s lives.”

Another former minister, [Andrea Leadsom](#), said that when she was the Commons leader, her relations with John Bercow, the then Speaker, were so bad that eventually they could not have their scheduled weekly meetings alone.

“It reached a point where I had to take someone with me, because of the level of vitriol in those meetings,” Leadsom said. “And he, likewise, said he needed to have someone there, because apparently I was extraordinarily difficult.”

The two clashed repeatedly over how the Commons should operate amid a chaotic period when May was trying to get a Brexit deal through parliament. At one point Bercow was accused of calling Leadsom a “stupid woman” in parliament, which he denied.

In another interview, Jeremy Wright, the former attorney general, who was a cabinet minister under both May and [David Cameron](#), said the latter “let his irritation show more often and more visibly than Theresa ever did”.

He also expressed regret at not having pushed back more against newspaper headlines condemning judges over their handling of high-profile Brexit cases.

At its peak, a Daily Mail headline from November 2016 [called three high court judges](#), who ruled that parliamentary consent was needed for the government to trigger the Brexit process, “Enemies of the People”.

Wright told the IFG: “Where I think we were going wrong … was to allow the sort of abuse to play out in the newspapers, of those who were doing their job as judges and as lawyers.”

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<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/15/johnson-represents-boys-club-approach-to-commons-says-rudd>

Brexit

Government rejects report it will lower workers' rights post-Brexit

Business secretary has denied claims EU-based employment laws such as 48-hour week will be axed

Kwasi Kwarteng, the new business secretary, has rejected the claims made in the FT report. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/Barcroft Media/Getty Images
Kwasi Kwarteng, the new business secretary, has rejected the claims made in the FT report. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/Barcroft Media/Getty Images

[Peter Walker](#) Political correspondent

[@peterwalker99](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 17.57 EST

The government has rejected a report that following [Brexit](#), it plans to tear up employment protections based in EU law – a strategy that Labour has called “a disgrace”.

Proposals include an end to the 48-hour maximum working week, changes to rules about breaks at work, and removing overtime pay when calculating certain holiday pay entitlements, the [Financial Times said](#).

Another proposal would be to get rid of the current requirement for businesses to log information about daily working hours, to save on administration costs.

The package is being drawn up within the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, the newspaper said, and while it has not been put to other ministers, the department has consulted some business leaders.

[Brexit deal threatens UK labour and climate standards, thinktank warns](#)
[Read more](#)

Such a move would prompt fierce opposition from unions and from Labour, with Boris Johnson’s government having pledged that the ability to diverge from EU rules post-Brexit would not involve watering down employment rights.

But Kwasi Kwarteng, the business secretary – who [took the job last week](#) after his predecessor, Alok Sharma, was given a full-time role leading preparations for the Cop26 climate conference in Glasgow in November – rejected the claims.

“We are not going to lower the standards of workers’ rights,” [he tweeted](#). “The UK has one of the best workers’ rights records in the world – going further than the EU in many areas. We want to protect and enhance workers’ rights going forward, not row back on them.”

But his Labour shadow, [Ed Miliband](#), said the FT report “exposes the truth about the government’s priorities, which are way out of step with the needs of workers and their families”.

Miliband said: “In the midst of the worst economic crisis in three centuries, ministers are preparing to tear up their promises to the British people and taking a sledgehammer to workers’ rights.

“These proposals are not about cutting red tape for businesses but ripping up vital rights for workers. They should not even be up for discussion. People are already deeply worried about their jobs and health. It’s a disgrace the government is considering forcing them to work longer hours or lose paid holidays.”

Any deviation from EU standards could trigger retaliatory measures such as tariffs by Brussels, as permitted under [the trade deal with the UK sealed on Christmas Eve](#). However, this would be gauged against the impact of any UK changes on competition.

Under the European working time directive, weekly working hours should not exceed 48 hours on average, along with other stipulations such as a guaranteed rest break for work periods over six hours, and at least 11 consecutive hours of rest every 24.

The UK, like some EU members, allows people to opt out of the 48-hour maximum. But the government stresses that some UK provisions go beyond the working time directive, such as a minimum full-time holiday entitlement of more than five weeks a year, against the EU’s four.

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2021.01.15 - Coronavirus

- [**Live Coronavirus: UK ban on South America flights comes into force as global deaths near 2m**](#)
- [**Travel corridors UK bans arrivals from South America and Portugal**](#)
- [**US Officials warn of ‘full resurgence’**](#)
- [**Health policy Migrant healthcare workers on Covid frontline angry about deportation risk**](#)
- [**Business Sunak under renewed pressure to give firms more Covid support**](#)
- [**‘The eye of the storm’ How 76 Days captured Wuhan’s Covid lockdown up close**](#)

[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Pandemic death toll exceeds 2 million people worldwide – as it happened

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[Transport policy](#)

UK bans arrivals from South America over Brazilian Covid strain

Travellers from Portugal also barred but government criticised over testing regime

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

[Heather Stewart](#) and [Matthew Weaver](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.56 EST First published on Thu 14 Jan 2021 11.11 EST

Arrivals from more than a dozen countries will be halted. Photograph: Ben Fathers/AFP/Getty Images

The UK government has been accused of putting lives at risk with a botched border policy after it banned arrivals from South America and [Portugal](#) several days after concerns emerged about a new Brazilian variant of Covid.

The transport secretary, [Grant Shapps](#), announced that arrivals from more than a dozen countries including Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia and Peru would be halted. He said Portugal had also been included because of its close travel links with Brazil.

It is unclear as yet whether the Brazilian strain may be vaccine-resistant. UK citizens and permanent residents will be exempt from the travel ban but they and their families will have to self-isolate for 10 days on arrival.

The shadow home secretary, Nick Thomas-Symonds, welcomed the measures as necessary but criticised the government's failure to implement more systematic checks on arrivals.

“This is yet another example of government incompetence, lurching from one crisis and rushed announcement to another. The failure to put in place an effective policy on testing before entry and a quarantine system that is checking only one in 100 people is putting lives at risk,” he said.

The new measures came 24 hours after Boris Johnson was pressed by Labour’s Yvette Cooper about why he had not taken more urgent action in response to reports about the Brazilian strain of the virus.

Cooper welcomed the travel ban on Thursday but warned: “We know from the first wave of the Covid crisis that focusing just on direct flights isn’t sufficient. We still need a proper testing and quarantine system for airports and ports as other countries have.”

She called the government “irresponsible” for delaying its new testing regime for all arrivals to the UK at the last minute, pointing out that the Brazilian strain had been identified in Japan by testing of passengers in airport quarantine.

The new testing system, which will require travellers to have a negative Covid test before coming to the UK, has been pushed back from Friday morning to

Monday after a backlash from travel companies and tourists who complained the government had failed to provide enough guidance to operate the scheme effectively.

The prime minister's spokesperson defended the last-minute delay, calling it a "grace period". "We always said we would introduce the regulations on Friday, and the laws still come into force on Friday, but we've implemented a grace period over the weekend so that passengers can have a little bit more time to get access to the tests they need that meet our requirements," he said.

The safeguarding minister, Victoria Atkins, had earlier suggested the delay had been made for business reasons. Speaking to Sky News, she said: "There's a very delicate balancing act here between controlling the virus but also ensuring that we are not putting too much of a burden on the economy."

Travellers will need to present proof of a negative test result to their carrier upon boarding, and UK Border Force will conduct spot checks on arrivals. Arrivals who flout the rules will face a minimum £500 fine, and the operator who transported them will also be fined. Passengers will still have to quarantine for 10 days regardless of their test results.

The guidance specifying the type of tests and documentation that would be required was not published on the government's website until late on Wednesday, making it almost impossible for potential inbound travellers abroad to arrange tests in time for the original deadline.

The decision on the travel ban was made at a meeting of the ministerial Covid-O committee on Thursday morning on the basis of evidence from experts on the New and Emerging Respiratory Virus Threats Advisory Group (Nervtag) on new viruses.

Government sources said devolved administrations supported Shapps's decision, with Wales and Scotland poised to announce similar action.

Johnson had hinted at fresh restrictions on Wednesday when he was grilled by MPs about the issue, telling Cooper: "We're putting in extra measures to ensure that people coming from Brazil are checked: and indeed stopping people coming from [Brazil](#)."

Direct flights between Brazil and the UK were banned last month as the Brazilian government tried to prevent the highly transmissible English variant of the virus arriving on its shores.

The UK government has been criticised throughout the pandemic for failing to act rapidly enough to control the borders.

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Coronavirus

US officials warn ‘full resurgence’ of Covid in major population centers

White House coronavirus taskforce reports advocate for ‘aggressive action’ amid 23m confirmed cases in US

Healthcare workers at Arrowhead Regional medical center in Colton, California. The striking Covid surge comes on the heels of holiday travel.

Photograph: Irfan Khan/Los Angeles Times/Rex/Shutterstock

Healthcare workers at Arrowhead Regional medical center in Colton, California. The striking Covid surge comes on the heels of holiday travel.

Photograph: Irfan Khan/Los Angeles Times/Rex/Shutterstock

Victoria Bekiempis in New York

Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.38 EST

As [coronavirus](#) continues to tear across the US without any sign of slowing down, officials have warned there is a “full resurgence” in most major population centers – and that the country could see an additional 92,000 deaths in less than a month.

There have been more than 23m confirmed Covid-19 cases in the US and 385,503 deaths, Johns Hopkins University’s most recent data [revealed](#).

['It's like we didn't count': when Covid deaths are omitted, families pay the price](#)
[Read more](#)

White House coronavirus taskforce reports from 10 January, obtained by [CNN](#), said they were seeing a “full resurgence” of the virus in “nearly all metro areas” and advocated for “aggressive action”.

The report, which is sent to states, suggested measures such as using “two or three-ply and well-fitting” masks, enforcing “strict” social distancing” and more aggressively testing young adults.

Officials worried that there was “significant, continued deterioration from [California](#) across the sun belt and up into the south-east, mid-Atlantic and north-east”. These regions effectively comprise all of the continental US.

The reports were quoted as stating that there was a “clear continuation of the pre-holiday high rate of spread as measured by rising test positivity, increased cases, increased hospitalization rates and rising fatalities”.

Additional data compiled by the [New York](#) Times indicate that a record number of deaths almost daily in the US largely stems from soaring cases in California and Arizona. In Los Angeles county, there is a Covid-19 death every eight minutes.

Health officials in Arizona said hospitals are poised to become overwhelmed unless authorities acted fast to combat coronavirus. The Republican governor has pushed back against a statewide mask mandate, the Times [noted](#).

The striking surge comes on the heels of holiday travel. Although US health officials repeatedly warned that travel and gatherings would fan the flames of Covid-19, millions of Americans [ignored](#) their entreaties.

The Centers for Disease Control made the dire prediction that there could be an increase of 90,000 deaths by February. This means that there could be up to 477,000 total coronavirus fatalities by 6 February, Forbes [said](#) of the data.

It does not appear there will be relief anytime soon, with officials voicing concern that some strains are making the surge even worse.

“This fall/winter surge has been at nearly twice the rate of rise of cases as the spring and summer surges.

“This acceleration and the epidemiologic data suggest the possibility that some strains of the US Covid-19 virus may have evolved into a more transmissible virus,” the White House taskforce reports said.

“Given that possibility, and the presence of the UK variant that is already spreading in our communities and may be 50% more transmissible, we must be ready for and mitigate a much more rapid transmission,” CNN also quoted the report as saying.

Meanwhile, US efforts to vaccinate the population against coronavirus have [lagged](#) due to low supplies and confusing eligibility requirements; the logjam started from the inception of vaccination efforts.

Federal authorities did not release all available doses of the vaccine to states, keeping about 50% in reserve so people could get their second jabs. The Pfizer and Moderna vaccines require two doses.

The Trump administration on Tuesday said that it would make all available coronavirus vaccines available to states, and urged officials to inoculate anyone aged 65 or older.

The health secretary, Alex Azar, said the doses would be released according to states’ orders, to provide second doses, and then cover more initial vaccinations.

The policy shift, however, presents a new set of potential problems. States who fall behind in administering the vaccine could lose doses to areas that move more quickly. Azar also reportedly said that in two weeks, doses would be “redirected” to states based upon their population of seniors – rather than overall population.

Public health experts previously told the Guardian that they supported getting as many people the first dose as quickly as possible. Some believe that it's better to at least receive the first dose rather than none at all.

"I think the UK approach in getting a single dose out there is the right approach," Ashish Jha, dean of Brown University's school of public health, previously told the Guardian. "In my mind, it is far more reasonable given the state of play that we are in, that we've got to move on this."

Meanwhile, a fourth member of the House of Representatives has tested positive for coronavirus after sheltering in place with colleagues during the deadly mob attack on the US Capitol last week.

Adriano Espaillat, a Democrat of New York, said he was quarantining at home after receiving a positive test result. Espaillat spoke in favor of Donald Trump's impeachment on the House floor yesterday.

Three members had [previously reported](#) testing positive and pointed out that they were forced to shelter in place during the Capitol attack with Republican members who refused to wear face masks.

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[Health policy](#)

Migrant healthcare workers on Covid frontline angry about deportation risk

Doctors and other NHS staff with non-permanent visas despair over stalling of ‘right to remain’ bill

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Doctors by a Covid intensive care unit in Edinburgh, May 2020. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Doctors by a Covid intensive care unit in Edinburgh, May 2020. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

[Diane Taylor](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Migrant doctors and other healthcare professionals who have contracted Covid-19 while caring for [NHS](#) patients sick with the virus say they are devastated that a parliamentary bill that would have given them the right to remain in the UK has been postponed.

The healthcare workers said they were holding out hope that the second reading of the [private members' bill](#) – which had been scheduled for 15 January and is now cancelled – could give them immigration security if passed.

The immigration (health and social care staff) bill 2019-21 calls for migrant healthcare workers to be granted indefinite leave to remain. It is similar to the citizenship being granted in France to [frontline migrant workers](#).

The Liberal Democrat MP Christine Jardine, who sponsored the bill, has called on the government to consider debating bills such as this one remotely; private members' bills were cancelled for several months due to the pandemic.

“I make no bones about the fact that I would like the government to recognise the contribution made by the NHS workers – the foreign nationals – who have done so much for this country in this crisis,” she said in a [blog post](#) on Wednesday.

The Royal College of Physicians, Royal College of Nursing, [Doctors](#) Association UK, Independent Age and Unison are all backing the bill along with organisations supporting migrants such as the Joint Council for Welfare of Immigrants. MPs have received 7,400 letters in support of the bill.

Dr Femi Osunlusi, a senior house officer in general surgery at Walsall Manor hospital, said migrant healthcare workers were shattered by the cancellation of a bill they had hoped would provide them with a lifeline.

Osunlusi contracted Covid-19 over Christmas, as did his wife, who is a physiotherapist. Both are now back at work. “If I didn’t go back to work, there would be gaps in the rota,” he said. He added that many migrant healthcare professionals were putting their lives on the line caring for Covid patients but faced immigration insecurity, having to apply every year for five years to renew their work visas.

“If my employer chooses to stop my certificate of sponsorship, I can be deported at any time, despite the contributions I have made to this country,” he added.

[Doctors raise alarm as Covid strikes down NHS workforce](#)

[Read more](#)

Another doctor, Hassan Malik, currently off sick with Covid, said: “Migrant NHS workers have made an unquantifiable contribution to the treatment of the UK population during the coronavirus pandemic. Despite risking their lives during this crisis, these NHS workers on non-permanent visas have had to work knowing they and their families could be deported if they are struck by Covid.

“The uncertainty of our immigration status hangs over us like the sword of Damocles. Without the assistance of these hardworking foreign nationals, our NHS would be in dire straits. I was working on a Covid ward and managed to avoid getting [the virus then]. But the new strain is much more transmissible, and I caught it.”

There are 84,316 non-EEA internationally educated nurses working in health and care across the UK.

The Royal College of Physicians’ annual 2018-19 census of consultant and higher specialty trainee physicians revealed that 43% of advertised consultant posts with an advisory appointments committee went unfilled due to a lack of suitable applicants. There are about 112,000 vacancies in adult social care in England on any given day.

The immigration minister, Kevin Foster, said: “We are hugely grateful for the vital contributions all NHS staff have made during the pandemic, which is why we have introduced a range of unprecedented measures to ensure the health and care sector are supported fully.

“Last year, we launched the health and care visa for eligible professionals and their families, which provides fast-track entry, reduced fees and dedicated support. This includes exempting health and care workers from payment of the immigration health surcharge, and extending the visas of more than 6,000 frontline health workers and their dependants for free.”

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Recession

Sunak under renewed pressure to give firms more Covid support

Lobby group calls for a new package of financial help as figures expected to confirm a double-dip recession

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The British Chambers of Commerce says the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, needs to act immediately. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK Parliament/EPA

The British Chambers of Commerce says the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, needs to act immediately. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK Parliament/EPA

[Richard Partington](#) Economics correspondent

[@RJPartington](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Rishi Sunak is coming under renewed pressure to provide more financial support to businesses across the UK, as official figures confirmed the UK is [heading for a double-dip recession](#).

The British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) said the chancellor needed to launch a new package of cash grants, and extend and expand a range of tax cuts to help businesses struggling to stay afloat while tougher coronavirus restrictions were in place.

Calling for immediate action, the business lobby group said firms could not afford to wait until the budget on 3 March, which Sunak has [indicated will be the next date](#) when he refreshes the government's pandemic response.

Figures from the [Office for National Statistics](#) on Friday showed the UK economy contracted again in November, when Boris Johnson staged a [last-minute decision to impose a second English lockdown](#) to contain rapid growth in Covid infections.

The economy shrank by 2.6% in November compared with October, ending six successive months of growth in the summer as rising infections and tougher restrictions across the UK pushed the economy into a [double-dip recession](#). Economists had forecast a bigger fall in GDP of 5.7% in November.

GDP fell by 19% in the second quarter during the first national lockdown – the biggest decline in history.

The impact this time is expected to be felt most by the embattled hospitality sector. Pubs, restaurants and cafes were forced to close or operate as takeaway-only during the second lockdown in England, while more non-essential shops remained open than during the first, and manufacturing and construction activity continued.

Britain's biggest pub and restaurant groups recorded a 72.6% drop in sales over the pivotal Christmas period, according to figures published on Friday by the Coffer Peach business tracker, in what should have been the sector's most profitable time of year.

Trading figures for the five weeks to 3 January showed drink-led pubs and bars were worst hit, with total sales down by more than 80% on the same period a year ago. London, which had been largely open at the beginning of December, fared slightly better than the rest of the country as tougher restrictions were in place in the north of England under the tiering system. However, sales in the capital were still down 66.8% on a year ago, compared with a 73.9% decline outside the M25.

Paul Newman, the head of leisure and hospitality at the accountancy firm RSM, which produces the tracker alongside the data provider CGA and Coffer Group, a leisure industry specialist, urged the chancellor to step in quickly.

“Urgent clarity on substantial, additional government support is needed now as the 3 March budget may simply be too late. The chancellor’s latest grant package does not go far enough, barely touching the fixed monthly site costs that businesses face,” Newman said.

Tighter since Christmas restrictions are expected to trigger an even bigger drop in economic output in January, as stay-at-home orders and school closures further weight on growth.

The interventions come after Sunak announced [£4.6bn in new grants](#) for firms in the hardest-hit sectors of the economy last week. The [furlough scheme](#) – which has been used to subsidise the wages of more than 9m jobs at more than 1m companies since its launch, at a cost of more than £46bn so far – has also been extended until the end of April.

However, business leaders said companies needed a further year of business rates relief and an extension of the 5% reduced VAT rate for hospitality firms owing to the cumulative hit from multiple lockdowns.

Guardian business email sign-up

Adam Marshall, the director general of the BCC, said government support schemes had saved many firms and jobs, but they had not gone far enough to help many survive a tough start to 2021.

“The drip-feed approach to business support measures has meant many firms simply cannot plan for the future,” he said.

“We are urging the government to urgently adopt a package of measures that covers the whole of 2021, and that takes away the cliff-edges firms face in a few weeks’ time when reliefs, forbearance and furlough are set to end. Many companies simply can’t wait until the March budget. Action is needed now.”

A Treasury spokesperson said more than £280bn had been spent by government to support jobs and businesses during the pandemic, adding: “As the chancellor set out this week, the budget is the most appropriate interval to consider what further interventions may be necessary, given these schemes now extend through to the spring.”

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Documentary films

‘The eye of the storm’: how *76 Days* captured Wuhan’s Covid lockdown up close

The co-director of the haunting documentary, filmed inside the city’s hospitals during the first outbreak, explains why it is so important

‘It is ironic China is now trying to claim this film’ ... a scene from *76 Days*.
‘It is ironic China is now trying to claim this film’ ... a scene from *76 Days*.



[Patrick Wintour](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

In the opening scene of 76 Days, [the extraordinary inside story of how Wuhan's hospitals coped with the initial wave of Covid](#), a sobbing daughter in full PPE begs to see her dying father. The staff refuse and restrain her. Soon after, she pursues her father's body bag on to the street, only to watch as it is driven away. The woman crumples in the road, distraught and bereft.

Such harrowing partings have since been replicated hundreds of thousands of times the world over. Yet 76 Days derives incredible strength from being a chronicle of the first outbreak. It is a journey into the unknown. The intensive care unit is full of people infected with an unidentified plague. Overwhelmed nurses bolt the doors to a ward as scores of older patients shuffle in the cold on the landing, begging to be admitted.

The sense of chaos is all the more powerful because we are also offered a glimpse inside the secretive Chinese state. As [China](#) approaches the anniversary

of the start of its first lockdown, on 23 January, the precise source of the outbreak and the degree of subsequent cover-up remain contested. The country is determined to celebrate its resilience and relative success at returning to something approaching normal life.

But 76 Days is not an overtly political film. While the co-director Hao Wu has trenchant views on why Chinese officials lied about the spread of the pandemic, this is not a film that takes its audience backstage on decision-making or fallout management.

Such a film could not be made, says Wu. Instead, 76 Days is a memory of a trauma. It is stripped of music, commentary, news clips, talking heads and almost all footage outside the hospital. “I want to take the viewers to the eye of the storm and let them experience it, rather than manipulate their feelings,” he says. “The reality is horrific enough.”

The reality is horrific ... watch the trailer for 76 Days.

The footage was taken by two local cameramen: one, a photojournalist who remains unidentified for his own safety; the other, Weixi Chen, a video reporter for Esquire China. Wu, who is based in New York, has made two revelatory films about China, focusing on its soulless consumerism. He chose his colleagues for their craftsmanship, their ability to capture emotion by letting the camera linger.

[The virus had been spreading in Wuhan since November](#) and was openly discussed on social media. But it wasn’t until 20 January that one of the country’s most prominent infectious disease experts, Zhong Nanshan, [acknowledged person-to-person transmission on TV](#). Three days later, [the 11 million residents of Wuhan went into complete lockdown for 76 days](#).

Wu says the start of the lockdown was a rare moment when a lot of hard-hitting Chinese investigative journalism was allowed, leading to key political and health leaders in the chaotic provincial and Wuhan governments being removed by Beijing. Wu’s fellow film-makers were among those who capitalised on the moment of openness. Two of the worst-affected Wuhan hospitals kept their doors closed to the media in February, but Wu’s colleagues gained unrestricted access to four ICUs, filming for more than 200 hours. He thinks the hospital directors gave access in part to persuade the Chinese government to ship in more equipment.

By mid-March, [when Donald Trump's attacks on the “China virus” began](#) and the pandemic started to spread through Europe, the government's censors took back control of the narrative. Filming was banned. Wu's China-based collaborators got cold feet; only when he sent them an initial cut, which focused on the human struggle, did they give him permission to continue.

Wu remains mystified by China's handling of the crisis. “When I started researching this film, one of the key questions I could not answer was: ‘Why was it covered up?’ Because China really suffered from Sars and lied about it for six months. Why would they lie again? They should have known about the effect of lying.

‘Our goal is to provide a historical record’ ... Weixi Chen (*left*) and Hao Wu, two of the film’s three directors. Composite: AP

“You cannot wish these outbreaks away; not even Trump could do that. They had this elaborate test and tracking system. I spoke to an ex-senior CCP [Chinese Communist party] official and she could not understand it. The first

conclusion was that Sars had been 10 years previously and people had stopped being vigilant.

[76 Days review – haunting Covid-19 documentary leaves its mark](#)

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“The other issue was the level at which the decision was made not to broadcast what was happening. At the time, the finger was pointed at the provincial and municipal governments. Wuhan is trying to promote itself as one of the top-tier cities, on the level of Beijing and Shanghai; managing the city’s image was of the first importance. It was also the Chinese new year and if people were sent into a panic it might disrupt the economy. The People’s Congress was meeting in January at municipal level, so there was a need for stability. But we don’t know if the buck stops there, or if central government knew what was going on in December. The way Chinese politics operates, it is almost impossible to know, so I did not want to point fingers.”

Wu hopes his film may be especially helpful in countries where Covid deniers still abound and where previous pandemics are less familiar.

He tried unsuccessfully to shoot in New York hospitals, he says. “Because of privacy laws and liability issues, there has been very little raw, harrowing footage of what has been happening. There have been interviews with the families of the dead, but we need to see more of it, so people realise it is real.”

Although the film was first shown in the US in September, word about it is only now reaching China. Wu has avoided any interviews with the Chinese press.

“Although our film is nonpolitical – our goal is to provide a historical record so no one ever forgets the trauma and the pain – we were not sure whether it was too negative at the beginning, showing too much chaos, or the ending was not triumphant enough. There was a risk that the increasingly nationalistic and patriotic internet users would be spun. That is why my co-director wanted to remain anonymous.”

[From Trump's failures to frustration in Wuhan: the rise of Covid documentaries](#)

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But this week on Weibo, China’s equivalent of Twitter, an influencer with 19 million followers who focuses on film reported that 76 Days was being spoken about as a possible Oscar winner and posted [the English-language trailer](#).

Within 24 hours, it had 160,000 likes. “Then, every newspaper started referring to it very positively,” says Wu, “and now my Chinese friends have been in touch saying: ‘We did not know you were even making this film.’ Only five people knew about it, because we did not want to get our co-directors in trouble.

“I suppose, in normal circumstances, I should be really happy, but it is ironic China is now trying to claim this film. I do not know if the board of censors have seen the whole thing.

“Most Chinese people I know, including me, my family and friends, were so angry and confused when Wuhan was put under lockdown. It was when western countries started to fall, one by one, and America really screwed up its response, that people started thinking about China’s early response. Now thousands are dying every day and it is the new normal.”

76 Days will be available in the UK on [Dogwoof On Demand](#) and other digital platforms from 22 January

- This article was amended on 15 January 2021. An earlier version incorrectly stated that the mother of a woman in the opening scene of 76 Days was dying from Covid-19. In fact it was her father.

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2021.01.15 - Coronavirus uk

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- [**Conservatives Boris Johnson could face challenge if lockdown lasts through spring**](#)
- [**Help-to-buy scheme Calls for deadline in England to be extended after Covid building delays**](#)

Hospitals

Struggling London hospitals sending Covid patients to Newcastle

Exclusive: Other patients transferred to Sheffield and Birmingham as capital's ICUs overwhelmed

Sarah Marsh and Denis Campbell

Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.41 EST Last modified on Thu 14 Jan 2021 23.37 EST

Ambulances parked outside the Royal London hospital on Thursday.
Photograph: Facundo Arrizabalaga/EPA

Seriously ill Covid patients are being transferred from overstretched London hospitals to intensive care units almost 300 miles away in [Newcastle](#), the Guardian can reveal.

The crisis engulfing the capital's hospitals is so severe that in recent days patients have also been moved 67 miles to Northampton, 125 miles to [Birmingham](#) and 167 miles to Sheffield.

NHS England has told hospitals in the north of England, the Midlands and other areas to open up hundreds of extra ICU beds to take patients from [London](#), the south-east and east, where the new variant has pushed Covid hospital admissions to new levels.

It is the latest dramatic illustration of the increasingly difficult situation confronting the health service. [Hospitals](#) across the UK are battling to provide care for 36,489 people with Covid, an increase of 5,872 in seven days. There were a further 48,682 confirmed cases reported on Thursday but Public Health England said that UK deaths data had been delayed due to a “processing issue”. Late on Thursday it said there had been 1,248 deaths recorded in the previous 24 hours.

Dr Claudia Paoloni, president of the Hospital Consultants and Specialists Association, said the long-distance transfers put patients at risk, and the huge number planned showed that the [NHS](#) was “on the ropes” after years of underfunding and staff shortages.

“Hospitals have already spread intensive care teams more thinly, with nurses juggling three or four seriously ill patients at a time instead of the usual one. They have expanded intensive care departments into every available space and redeployed specialist staff to cope,” she said.

“The fact that all this is not enough and they are still having to take the extraordinary step of transferring critically ill patients hundreds of miles reflects the unprecedented gravity of the situation facing our NHS. No one would consider doing this unless the situation was exceptionally bad, usually because specialist treatment is unavailable or staffed critical care beds had run out.”

On Monday Boris Johnson said the health service was in “a race against time, because we can all see the threat that our NHS faces, the pressure it’s under, the

demand in intensive care units, the pressure on ventilated beds, even the shortage of oxygen in some places”.

Critical care doctors in Newcastle are concerned that the ICUs at the city’s Royal Victoria and Freeman hospitals will not be able to cope with the influx of patients from London because their units are already so full of local people. Hospitals in the north-east and Yorkshire are treating 3,476 Covid patients, more than at any other time in the pandemic, according to the [Health Service Journal](#).

NHS bosses are also considering transferring London Covid patients receiving potentially life-saving care to hospitals in Coventry, Wolverhampton, Leicester, Nottingham and Derby, all of which have large ICUs.

In addition, some Covid patients in intensive care in Birmingham have been taken to Newcastle to free up beds for patients transferred from the capital.

All transfers are understood to be taking place in ambulances that are specially equipped to deal with patients who are medically vulnerable. But Paoloni, an NHS anaesthetist, said such transfers could put patients in danger.

“It means skilled staff being taken away from hospitals for a prolonged period and is very risky for patients. It risks dislodging drug lines and ventilation supplies, and if something goes wrong on the road, there is no backup. Medically, it is truly a last resort. It also means that patients will be left hundreds of miles away from families in a lockdown.”

She added: “We have to be blunt. Our NHS is on the ropes because of years of understaffing, under-resourcing and the failure to call a full lockdown earlier. The lessons from the heartbreaking crisis now facing the NHS, its staff, patients and their families must be learned. Never again can we allow ourselves to be placed in this unforgivable position.”

Hospitals that run short of ICU beds usually transfer patients to another hospital nearby, which is usually in their own critical care network. They can transfer patients outside their network or even their region of England, but before the pandemic struck, that was rare.

One intensive care consultant said: “Hospitals have been practising mutual aid recently, especially since new year. We’ve been transferring patients longer

distances, and that's been working well. The number of out-of-network transfers is going up.”

Last week the UK’s four chief medical officers said many parts of the health system in the four nations were under immense pressure and there was a “material risk of the NHS in several areas being overwhelmed over the next 21 days”. They said the large number of people becoming infected and needing hospital treatment, including in intensive care, was to blame.

Several hospitals in London have come close to falling over in recent weeks. The number of Covid arrivals forced the Royal London hospital to go into [“disaster medicine mode”](#) just before the new year, which it admitted led to a drop in standards of care.

International research has shown that before the pandemic, the UK had one of the smallest numbers of ICU beds per 100,000 people among developed nations. Germany had 29 such beds per 100,000 population and the US had 25, while Britain had just 6.6.

Lucy Watson, chair of the Patients’ Association, said: “Moving intensive care patients long distances across country is a clear indicator that the NHS in London has been overwhelmed by Covid-19. Family members of people whose life is saved by intensive care services far from home will no doubt be grateful, but at such a worrying and frightening time, the role of family liaison workers maintaining contact between patients, their families and clinicians will be all the more important.

“This will be particularly so for those whose loved ones die far away, which will make a hard situation even harder.”

The Department of [Health](#) and Social Care has been approached for comment.

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Travel & leisure

The Gym Group reports 48% revenue fall under Covid lockdowns

Firm says it is in discussions with banks as membership plunges by 200,000

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The Gym Group, with 184 venues in the UK, lost almost half its trading days in the past year. Photograph: Paula Solloway/Alamy

The Gym Group, with 184 venues in the UK, lost almost half its trading days in the past year. Photograph: Paula Solloway/Alamy

[Mark Sweeney](#)

[@marksweney](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.37 EST

The Gym Group, one of [Britain's largest operators of low-cost gyms](#), has opened talks with lenders after reporting that revenues almost halved last year and member numbers plunged by more than 200,000 due to the pandemic.

The company, which runs 184 gyms across the UK, said revenues fell by 48% year on year from £153m to £80.5m as pandemic restrictions across the UK cost it 45% of trading days last year.



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The company, which on Friday announced that former footballer and TV pundit Rio Ferdinand was to join its board as a non-executive director, has opened talks with its lenders as the latest national lockdown stretches its finances.

The company said that while it has “significant liquidity” with its £100m banking facility, it needed to extend the financial covenants. Net debt stood at £47m at the end of last year.

“Given the ongoing impact from the latest lockdown and its implications for the operational reopening of our gyms, we have started discussions with our lending banks, who continue to be supportive, to review the future covenant tests relating to this facility,” the company said.

The Gym Group said that as of the end of 2020 membership numbers had fallen by more than a quarter year on year, from 794,000 to 578,000. The company, which froze gym subscriptions during the national lockdown so members don’t

pay while sites are closed, added that it had no students members remaining from its 2019 sign ups. The average monthly headline price for a membership was £18.81 in December.

[Better leisure centres being bailed out across UK, says GLL chief](#) [Read more](#)

“2020 has been a challenging year for our business, our members and our colleagues,” said Richard Darwin, the chief executive. “Our cash management during the pandemic has ensured we ended 2020 with manageable levels of debt and significant liquidity. At a time when health and fitness has never been more important to the nation, we are ready to emerge from the pandemic and take advantage of the many opportunities available to us.”

The company said the monthly cash burn during the current lockdown was running at £5m, lower than the £6m during the November lockdown due to the recent government grant support.

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Despite the pandemic the company recently opened its 184th site, and a total eight new venues last year and is progressing on three more.

The group said the pandemic had also provided opportunities to snap up locations with cheap rentals as the pressure mounted on high street landlords.

“The company continues to see an opportunity to access excellent new sites at attractive rents,” it said. “We are building a strong pipeline for 2021 and beyond, and we will continue to progress new leases during this current period of lockdown. We will determine the timing of the rollout programme once there is greater visibility about a reopening date for gyms.”

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Conservatives

Boris Johnson could face Tory challenge if lockdown lasts through spring

Backbencher Steve Baker urges colleagues to press for clear plan to restore full freedoms

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Steve Baker said the government's Covid strategy was 'devoid of any commitment to liberty'. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

Steve Baker said the government's Covid strategy was 'devoid of any commitment to liberty'. Photograph: Victoria Jones/PA

[*Peter Walker*](#)

[@peterwalker99](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.14 EST

Boris Johnson's position as prime minister could be under threat if the coronavirus lockdown in England lasts into late spring, a backbench Conservative MP has warned.

In a message to fellow Tories in the [Covid Recovery Group \(CRG\)](#), which comprises around 70 MPs who are wary of lockdown measures, Steve Baker urged colleagues to stress their concerns.

He told fellow MPs it was “imperative you equip the chief whip today with your opinion that debate will become about the PM’s leadership if the government does not set out a clear plan for when our full freedoms will be restored, with a guarantee that this strategy will not be used again next winter.”

Baker, the deputy chair of the CRG, wrote: “Certain government scientists have said that the current lockdown could last until late spring. There is no reason to think there will be any real resistance in cabinet to the argument for greater and longer and more draconian restrictions on the public.

“This could be a disaster. Nothing seems more certain to break the public than giving hope before taking it away, and doing it repeatedly.”

He said the government “has adopted a strategy devoid of any commitment to liberty without any clarification about when our most basic freedoms will be restored and with no guarantee that they will never be taken away again”.

He added: “People are telling me they are losing faith in our Conservative party leadership because they are not standing up for our values as a party. If we continue forward with a strategy that hammers freedom, hammers the private sector, hammers small business owners and hammers the poor, inevitably the prime minister’s leadership will be on the table: we strongly do not want that after all we have been through as a country.”

The CRG was formed to coalesce opinion on the Tory backbenches connected to emphasising the negative effects of lockdown, with a number of members voting against previous restrictions for England.

The CRG was broadly supportive of the current lockdown, given the emergence of the new, more transmissible Covid variant and the extreme pressures on NHS hospitals. However, the issue is felt extremely keenly by some Tories, with reports last week that two MPs had submitted letters to the 1922 Committee, which represents backbench Tories, seeking Johnson's departure.

Triggering a leadership contest would require at least 15% of Tory MPs – around 55 – to send in letters.

In a CRG statement following the imposition of the current lockdown, the group's chair, the former chief whip Mark Harper, praised the Covid vaccination programme but said the government should set out how this "begins to translate into a return to normal life for us all and show a clear exit strategy – a route back to freedom".

Despite the message, [Baker later tweeted](#) his complete support for Johnson to remain as prime minister. He wrote: "What this country needs is the complete success of Boris Johnson, with his excellent EU deal, a successful vaccination programme and a [#Road2Recovery](#) back to freedom. I am clear Boris is the only person to lead us out of these difficulties and I support him in that endeavour."

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Help-to-buy scheme

Calls for help-to-buy deadline in England to be extended after Covid building delays

Buyers face losing thousands of pounds after paying fees for homes that will not be ready in time

Greg Saunders (left) and David Leith outside their partly built new home in Eccles. The couple had originally hoped to move in during December but building has been delayed during the pandemic. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Greg Saunders (left) and David Leith outside their partly built new home in Eccles. The couple had originally hoped to move in during December but building has been delayed during the pandemic. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

[Maya Wolfe-Robinson](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Ministers face calls to extend the deadline for purchasing a house in England using the help-to-buy loan scheme, as buyers face losing thousands of pounds because of Covid-related delays in construction.

The government's help-to-buy equity loan scheme, launched in 2013, allows people to buy a new-build home with a 5% deposit. The scheme was extended in July due to the pandemic, but ministers have refused to postpone the deadline any further.

Delays on building sites will mean that many developers are unable to build homes on time to meet the deadline at the end of March, leaving prospective buyers unable to take advantage of the loan scheme despite having paid out for legal and broker fees.

The scheme allows buyers to borrow a five-year interest-free equity loan that is 20% of a new-build property's value, or 40% in London, and must be bought from a home-builder registered from a government-approved list.

Although construction has continued throughout lockdowns, building has been hampered by difficulties getting hold of materials such as timber, plaster and insulation, staffing problems on sites with workers off sick or self-isolating, and delays caused by social distancing restrictions in properties. This has been a particular problem in areas that have faced higher tighter restrictions for months longer than the rest of the country, such as the north-west.

Greg Saunders said he and his partner, David Leith, were devastated when their dreams of buying their first home fell apart.

Saunders, 31 and Leith, 36, were accepted on to the scheme in September after they found a four-bedroom townhouse on a small development in Salford, Greater Manchester. However, they were told two months later it would not be built in time to qualify for the scheme, leaving them unable to afford it. They had already spent about £2,000 on fees for their solicitor and mortgage broker.

"I was gutted, because you start to picture your whole life there, and we'd been accepted for everything," Saunders told the Guardian. "All the funds were in place, the paperwork was in place, and then to have the dream taken away from

you – the dream of owning your first home and not having to live in expensive rented accommodation any more.”

When the Guardian spoke to Jamie McInerney, 33, his partner was due to be induced with their first baby the following day, but he said they had already had several sleepless nights. They are first-time buyers who reserved a family home on a plot in Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, in May 2020.

Covid-related delays meant that the sale has already fallen through once, but the developer confirmed the house would be ready in February once the government extended the scheme deadline. They are now worried again that the house will not be ready in time.

McInerney said his new family were “stuck between a rock and a hard place” as they would have to move out of their rented accommodation by March but did not know whether they would have a home to move into.

He said it was cruel to punish his family for an issue that was not their fault. “The developers can always sell the property on to someone else. So they don’t lose out, really; the only ones losing out are people like myself”.

Saunders would like the government to extend the deadline for those who have already had their applications accepted and are in the middle of a sale. “The government need to safeguard those that are already in the help-to-buy scheme, and those who have had applications and mortgages approved, because there’s so many in the situation.”

A spokesperson from the Ministry of [Housing](#) said it was aware of the concerns raised and was continuing to monitor the situation. “While construction can continue during the national lockdown, we recognise there have been delays caused by the pandemic,” they said.

“That’s why we extended the help-to-buy build deadline by two months to 28 February 2021 and provided extra flexibility on the purchase deadline until 31 May 2021 to protect existing reservations made before 30 June 2020.”

A [report from the government](#) on the impact of the pandemic on home-building showed an average delay of three to eight months on build times.

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2021.01.15 - Spotlight

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Marianne Faithfull: 'I was in a dark place. Presumably it was death'

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Rest and relaxation

‘I don’t know what I’d have done without it’: the hobbies helping people through lockdown

Stile counsel ... a drystone wall and crossing with view of Windermere in the Lake District. Photograph: Adam Burton/Getty Images

Stile counsel ... a drystone wall and crossing with view of Windermere in the Lake District. Photograph: Adam Burton/Getty Images

From stiles to greetings cards, map-making to whittling, niche interests have become a lifeline for people struggling through successive lockdowns

Fri 15 Jan 2021 01.30 EST

The stile world cup started as a joke, but now has 120 contenders

It all started three years ago as an antidote to the angry, inflamed opinions on Twitter. I just thought, let's make something nice here so I started posting photos of stiles that I'd taken on my daily fell runs in the Lake District. I chose stiles simply because I have to stop at them when I run. They make you pause and look around and I like that. Once I'd started posting the pictures, it grew into something. People started sharing their own photos, locally but also in the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand and more. It's a small, low key-thing to do, but heartening too.

When the third lockdown was announced, my son joked that I should hold the "stile world cup". I've now got about 120 photos and today I'm starting a [series of Twitter polls](#) to find a winner.

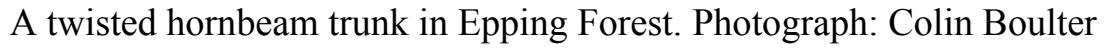
Mark Squires by a wall-less stile in Troutbeck valley, Cumbria

All sorts of people have their little interests: there is a farmer and Guardian Country Diary writer in this area, [Andrea Meanwell](#), who takes photos of postboxes. There are people taking photos of bridges, and windows. Usually they are people with some knowledge of their subject. I just wanted to show that you can be kind and share things with other people. I can't believe how excited people have got about it – I guess they have the time and energy right now. It's something they can do locally, within the confines of lockdown. I have a mate on the local community radio station who's going to mention the Twitter polls.

When we're not in lockdown I run for hours, usually early in the morning. The great thing about fell running is that you can cover a lot of ground and be back by 9am. During lockdown I can't go as far but I can still run out of my garden gate and up a hill, Benson Knott, to views of Pennines and Morecambe Bay. It's just the local hill – but it's quiet and feels remote.

Mark Squires (on [Twitter](#))

Hornbeam trees are gnarly old weirdos and I love them



A twisted hornbeam trunk in Epping Forest. Photograph: Colin Boulter

People rave about oaks and beeches, but as lockdowns restricted our outings to walks in the woods near our home, I became fascinated with a more eccentric species: the hornbeam.

While most tree trunks stick unimaginatively to growing vertically, hornbeams in Epping Forest adopt all kinds of exuberant angles: 45 degrees to the forest floor is not unusual; some – still green and growing – lie prostrate on the ground or even across a stream, like a diva in mid-tantrum. On poor soil, I learned, hornbeams put down deep roots and remain upstanding, but in south-east England's rich clay – OK, sticky mud in winter – there's no need for such efforts and their roots descend barely 35cm, leaving an unsure footing, and crazy leans.

Hornbeams are often mistaken for beeches, but to me they're more elegant, with grey fluted bark spiralling up into the canopy. When Covid hit last March, we walked among hornbeams heavy with catkins. In summer their dense,

serrated leaves provided welcome shade. But autumn is magical in a hornbeam wood: leaves are turning yellow, and tiny nuts have ripened in three-lobed leafy bracts. Every gust of wind loosens a snow-globe whirl of tiny golden helicopters. Now, in mid-January, reddish leaf buds are already reappearing.

In hitherto unknown (to me) corners of the forest, I notched up favourite specimens. Older hornbeams are the real weirdos – trunks a writhing mass of grooves and sinews, like something artist [Roger Dean](#) might have dreamed up for a 1970s album inspired by Lord of the Rings. Others are more [Stranger Things](#) – one with a 90-degree bend in its trunk seems an alien beast stalking the bank of the Ching brook.

With their hard wood being valued for axles, cogwheels and chopping blocks as well as fuel, hornbeams were planted across southern England and the Midlands. Look out for them in mixed woodlands, and in parks and cemeteries, where extra space allows them to form mighty broad-oval crowns.

And if lockdown desperation has you reaching for old films, check out the [Black Knight scene from Monty Python and the Holy Grail](#). It was shot in Epping Forest, in a spot encircled by guess what sort of gnarled old trees.

[Liz Boulter](#)

I drew a map of Dorset – but it's too big for my house



One quarter of Catherine's map. Photograph: Catherine Speakman

A few years ago, I started walking, like, every day – and I don't even have a dog. For me, living in the depths of Dorset and a single mum of three young boys, it became an easy pastime and an escape from the daily screams. I loved it, still do. My academic history includes a Master's in Landscape Archaeology and my career, before children, was in cartography. I combined it all and wrote about my walks. I'd investigate the area, and discover legends, mysteries, true stories and the evidence for them in the landscape.

I drew maps of my walks, and loved the different perspective they created. Displaying only roads, railways, buildings, trees, rivers and earthworks, they showed the present day, but they also echoed history. I imagined a bigger map, of the whole of Dorset, and what better time to do it than in lockdown?

Using careful maths, a metre rule, patience, space and strict rules for the boys to keep their distance, I began, starting with a grid covering the whole of Dorset, in four quarters. Using a combination of Google and Ordnance Survey

maps and my own knowledge, [the hand drawn map](#) grew, every metre of the landscape carefully marked out. Hillforts appeared, Roman roads cut through countryside and river paths marked out the valleys. Tracks hinted at the old medieval droves, now little more than muddy lanes connecting ancient villages. The whole process has encouraged me to explore more, to go and find that lump, bump or hump in real life. If a picture tells 1,000 words, this map speaks millions, even if it's just to me. Its future I am yet to learn – I have no wall big enough. Maybe a pub, somewhere in Dorset?

Catherine Speakman (on [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#)). Read more on her website tessofthevale.com

Spoon carving is meditative – though there may be blood

Sophie Yeo's carved wooden spoons

I decided that spoon carving would be the perfect hobby last autumn, just as the nights were drawing in and Newcastle was plunged into lockdown again.

I had recently started my own online journal, [Inkcap](#), about nature in the UK, and the project had awakened an old tendency to work until bedtime. I was feeling constantly stressed, and though I was regularly writing about nature's calm effects, I was reluctant to spend the cold evenings in city parks. Spoon carving seemed like the perfect compromise: it would force me from my computer and bring nature into my cosy home.

For Christmas, I got a special whittling tool called a [sloyd knife](#). Since then, I have carved almost every day, learning about trees and getting a feel for the wood. I signed up to [Spoon Club](#), which has a library of video tutorials that guided me through the knife grips and axe wielding. It's unusually meditative for an activity that carries a real risk of drawing blood.

It has also inspired me to get out of the house. If you're going to carve a spoon, you ideally need greenwood, which is fresh and soft with sap.

My first spoon – a teaspoon – was carved from the fresh trimmings of a hedge in Whitley Bay, a coastal town close to home. The hunt for material was interrupted by seals bobbing in the waves by Saint Mary's Lighthouse.

But I wanted something bigger. The following weekend, I went on a quest to the [deer park](#) in Bishop Auckland (not far from the now-famous Barnard Castle). This 150-acre wood pasture was created by County Durham's prince bishops over 800 years ago, when it would have provided them with charcoal and animals to hunt. In future, I'm going to source my wood from local tree surgeons, but I didn't think they would begrudge me a small, storm-felled branch.

[Sophie Yeo](#), environmental journalist

My card hobby cleans up plastic, gets me out – and is now a business

Flora Blathwayt card made from plastic found along the Thames

On World Rivers Day in September 2019, I joined a Southwark beach clean and was astounded by the amount of micro-plastic, sequins and beads we collected in a short time. I didn't know that that day would inspire a new hobby – crafting cards using my finds – and turn out to be a lifesaver during lockdown.

I had made a card for my sister's wedding with things I found on that first trip (she's lived plastic-free for two years so it was apt) and when lockdown struck, although I couldn't go out with a group, I decided to go out again on my own.



Flora on a Thames beach clean. Photograph: McGivern Photography

I would wander along the Thames with gloves and a bag, collecting tiny pieces of plastic and rubbish from the banks – and then take it home to turn into works of art. I could always see shapes I would turn into illustrations with relevant captions.

It gave me something to do when I was furloughed: doodling and playing was really positive – a kind of therapy really. Being outside by this huge river, smelling the water and spotting wildlife had a calming effect. And hunting for plastics is meditative – you have to pay attention and look carefully at your surroundings.

It actually helped me connect with a new community too. I'd just gone through a break-up, had moved into a new area and was feeling quite alone, so I made cards with positive messages and sent them to everyone in my block. It helped break the ice – and actually led to some great new friendships.

Later in the summer, I put some of my cards on an Etsy online shop and set up a business, [Washed-up Cards](#). I regularly collect plastic on my walks – and am currently working on a Valentine's Day collection.

This hobby has been positive in so many ways: it helps clear up plastic, gets me outside and is now even a little business. I don't know what I'd have done without it.

Flora Blathwayt

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No power, no water, no hope: inside Europe's largest shanty town

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Games

The greatest handheld games consoles – ranked!

During lockdowns, handhelds have come into their own: here's our Top 20, from Gizmondo to Nintendo

Indispensable ... Sony PSP. Photograph: Sony Computer Entertainment
Indispensable ... Sony PSP. Photograph: Sony Computer Entertainment



Keith Stuart

[@keefstuart](https://twitter.com/keefstuart)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

20. Gizmondo (2005)

OK, it's here more for the amazing backstory than the qualities of the handheld itself, but Gizmondo did momentarily look like a contender back in 2004, offering text messaging, web browsing and video playback as well as mobile gaming. But then the founders burned through millions of investor funds on Regent Street stores and extravagant launch parties, and the whole thing collapsed [in spectacular fashion](#), symbolised by one exec's (non-fatal) 200mph Ferrari crash on the Pacific Coast Highway.

19. Sega Dreamcast VMU (1998)

Admittedly, there was not a huge amount of developer support for Dreamcast's amazingly idiosyncratic memory card/handheld console hybrid, but the fact that it even exists warrants it a place on the list. Despite its teeny 48×32 dot LCD screen, the VMU did support a range of mini games including a Chao pet sim in Sonic Adventure and Zombie Revenge's surreal Zombie Fishing.

18. Tapwave Zodiac (2003)

With a name that sounded like a character from The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, the Tapwave Zodiac was another ambitious attempt to combine a games console with a mobile multimedia platform. Founded by ex-Palm executives and using the Palm OS, the device attracted critical acclaim, but was crushed by the arrival of the Sony PSP.

17. Nokia N-Gage (2003)

Nokia's attempt to build a phone with true gaming credentials was a brave step back in 2003, when the mobile market was still terribly fragmented and 3G was in its infancy. The device was also expensive and poorly designed with its taco-shaped chassis and a gaming slot hidden beneath the battery compartment. But there were good games such as Ashen, Pathway to Glory and Sonic Advance and it also ran an impressive array of retro games emulators. A follow-up, the N-Gage QD, arrived in 2004 but the world had moved on.

Taco-shaped chassis ... Nokia N-Gage, 2003. Photograph: Eckehard Schulz/AP

16. Genesis Nomad (1995)

This handheld version of the Sega Mega Drive/Genesis console was only released in North America, but with its excellent screen resolution and 16-bit processor it was an impressive piece of tech. Sadly, the chunky build, shocking battery life and lack of compatibility with Mega CD or 32X games limited its appeal even among its target market.

15. Game Park GP32 (2001)

Officially released only in South Korea, the Game Park GP32 is the most obscure handheld here – but with its 32bit CPU, open source OS and PC connection cable, it became a cult machine for homebrew coders and retro game fans looking to run emulators. Although it was considered a commercial

failure, it inspired a whole sub-culture of programmable handhelds including hits such as Bittboy, Pandora and the modern day Anbernic RG351P.

14. MB Microvision (1979)

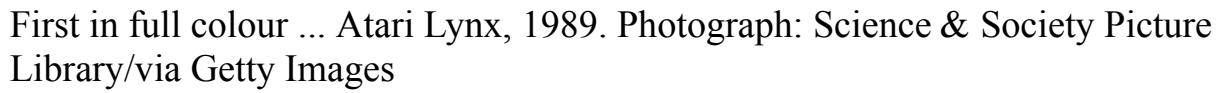
The first handheld system with interchangeable game cartridges, the Milton Bradley Co's Microvision was a revelation at a time when single-game devices, such as Mattel's Auto Race and Football were still a novelty. Designed by Jay Smith, who later created the Vectrex console, it featured a 16x16 monochrome LCD display and a paddle controller. [Games](#) were scarce though and the device itself was prone to faults such as LCD leakage – a phenomenon delightfully known as “screen rot”.

13. Bandai Wonderswan (1999)

Created by Game Boy inventor Gunpei Yokoi, the Wonderswan was a powerful rival to the Game Boy series, with its 16-bit NEC V20 chip, excellent monochrome screen and 40-hour battery life. Players could also rotate the device and play it vertically to get the best out of scrolling shooters. There was decent software support from Namco, Capcom and Squaresoft, and a colour version arrived a year later, but Bandai never garnered international interest in the console and the Game Boy Advance demolished it.

12. Atari Lynx (1989)

The world's first full-colour handheld console – a joint venture between Atari and veteran game developer Epyx – thrilled gamers with its 3.5-inch LCD display, twin 16bit processors and eight-player connectivity via the dedicated Comlynx cable. Titles such as STUN Runner and Blue Lightning showed off all that graphical power beautifully. As with the later Game Gear and TurboExpress, however, the big problem was battery life – or lack of it. Releasing in the same year as the mighty Game Boy didn't help either.

A black and white photograph of the Atari Lynx portable game console. It features a flip-up screen and two shoulder buttons.

First in full colour ... Atari Lynx, 1989. Photograph: Science & Society Picture Library/via Getty Images

11. NEC TurboExpress (1990)

The portable version of the cult TurboGrafx-16 home console (known as the PC Engine in Japan) was – like its big brother – an expensive but extremely slick, high-spec device. It could play the same game carts as the home machine on a screen identical in size to the Game Boy’s – but with a 512 colour palette and incredible sprite-handling capabilities. There was even a TV tuner add-on named the TurboVision. Playing cutting-edge TurboGrafx titles such as Raiden and Super Star Soldier on the bus felt like science fiction – until your six AA batteries ran out in less than an hour.

10. Neo Geo Pocket Color (1998)

One of the most beautifully designed handhelds of its era, the Neo Geo Pocket Color featured a lush TFT colour screen, 40-hour battery life, and an arcade-style microswitched thumb controller, which felt very pleasing to use. Its game carts also had gorgeous packaging, with kawaii-influenced illustrations, which have made the system and its software line-up incredibly collectible. Titles such as SNK vs. Capcom: Card Fighters Clash and Gals' Fighters perfectly ported the fighting game experience beloved of SNK fans to the handheld form factor (they now exchange hands for hundreds of pounds). Sadly though, SNK was in financial trouble and the Game Boy Color was just too dominant for this characterful little system to survive.

9. Sega Game Gear (1990)

Sega's rival to the Game Boy added a large, back-lit colour screen and made the most of the company's most beloved franchises with wonderful Sonic, Streets of Rage and Shinobi translations. But software support was limited compared to Nintendo's machines, and it ate batteries with an unquenchable appetite.



Feasted on batteries ... Sega Game Gear, 1990. Photograph: Finnbarr Webster/Alamy Stock Photo

8. Game Boy Color (1998)

With a 256×256 pixel TFT display capable of displaying 56 colours and a processor twice as powerful as the original Game Boy, the GBC was a significant upgrade for the series, while still retaining the slim, light form factor and long battery life – and compatibility with original Game Boy titles. It'll perhaps be best known for bringing colour to the booming Pokémon series via the critically acclaimed Gold/Silver instalment which sold 23m units, singlehandedly lifting GBC into the higher echelons of the handheld market.

7. PlayStation Portable (2004)

For its handheld gaming debut, Sony went for consumer electronics cool over Game Boy's chunky styling, with a large 4.3-inch colour display, powerful

graphics processor and glossy black chassis. Boasting internet connectivity, video playback and its own proprietary disc format, it was a formidable machine, and games such as Gran Turismo and God of War: Chains of Olympus provided console-style experiences unimaginable on Nintendo's contemporary devices. Hardware hacks also turned it into a hugely popular platform for the homebrew community.

6. PlayStation Vita (2011)

Continuing the design philosophy of the PSP, the Vita was another sleek, grownup device with wide functionality. Sporting a quad-core processor, 5-inch AMOLED touchscreen and two analogue sticks for intricate controls, it was effectively a [PlayStation](#) 3 in handheld form, and its best games – WipEout, Persona 4: Golden, Tearaway – felt like perfectly miniaturised console experiences. But Sony's support for the console wavered very quickly and despite strong support from the indie development community, it faded faster than it should have.

5. Game Boy (1989)

The original and, some would argue, greatest Nintendo handheld, designed by the company's hardware genius Gunpei Yokoi and accompanied by the best version of Tetris, the greatest puzzle game ever made. The greeny-yellow monochrome display and dated 8bit CPU made it look old-fashioned, even in 1989, but it was cheap, the batteries lasted ages and the games were beautifully designed to take advantage of the limited display. Technologically superior rivals followed, but they all failed to make a dent. As Yokoi [put it](#): “After we released the Game Boy, one of my staff came to me with a grim expression on his face: ‘There’s a new handheld on the market similar to ours ...’ The first thing I asked was, ‘Is it a colour screen, or monochrome?’ He told me it was colour, and I reassured him, ‘Then we’re fine.’”



Video game developer Shigeru Miyamoto holds up the new Nintendo Game Boy Advance, 2001. Photograph: John Barr/AP

4. Game Boy Advance/SP (2001)

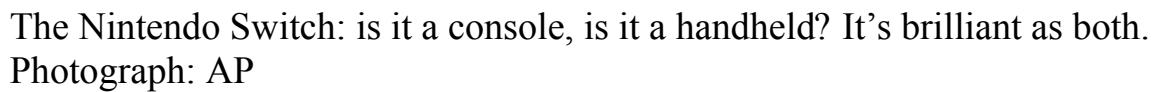
Boasting an advanced 32bit Arm processor, 2.9-inch display, and 15-hour battery life, the GBA was a huge leap forward for the series, selling 80m units across its lifetime. The strong tech specs and addition of shoulder buttons allowed more varied and intricate games, reducing the gap between handheld and console experiences. Advance Wars is one of the greatest turn-based strategy sims of all time regardless of platform, and there were excellent Zelda, Super Metroid, Castlevania and Super Mario adventures. The later SP model, with its lit screen and clamshell design, made the GBA a truly indispensable travel companion.

3. Nintendo 3DS/2DS (2011)

Updating the Nintendo DS with a stereoscopic 3D display and a gyroscope for motion controls seemed like a gimmick at the time, but then games such as Super Mario 3D Land, Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time 3D and Outrun 3D began to show the delightful possibilities of the hardware, while the onboard cameras allowed a range of interesting augmented reality experiences. Street Pass, which automatically connected nearby 3DS owners, letting them swap items and messages, was another lovely feature bringing a sense of community to the machine in a way only Nintendo could envisage.

2. Nintendo DS (2004)

Combining the form factor of the old dual-screen Game & Watch titles with the wireless connectivity and touchscreen technology of a modern smartphone, the DS promised new ways for players to interact with favourite games, characters and friends. While there was plenty for hardcore fans (Legend of Zelda: The Phantom Hourglass, Phoenix Wright, GTA: Chinatown Wars, Elite Beat Agents) Nintendo brought in whole new audiences, both through clever celebrity-filled advertising, and titles that pushed the device as a health and lifestyle accessory – most famously, Dr Kawashima’s Brain Training. Asked about the console in 2007, Shigeru Miyamoto stated, “With Nintendo DS, I try to create games that are simple, with a new theme – something that can be played by five-year-olds to 95-year-olds.” In this, he certainly succeeded.



The Nintendo Switch: is it a console, is it a handheld? It's brilliant as both.
Photograph: AP

1. Nintendo Switch (2017)

The Switch is essentially the culmination of [everything Nintendo has tried to do](#) with gaming since 1989. It is convenient, intuitive and beautifully designed as a handheld device, but it also plugs into your TV and becomes a proper home console – in this way it combines the Game Boy, DS and Wii lineages into one wonderful product. At first it was Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild that astonished and delighted players, as well as the ability to take it out anywhere and indulge in two- and four-player Mario Kart and Splatoon sessions. But last year, the ability to curl up on the sofa, or park bench, and play Animal Crossing New Horizons, surrendering to its graceful and fulfilling simulation of social contact, was genuinely therapeutic for millions. The Switch is more than a piece of technology – at times it has felt like a friend.

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[San Francisco](#)

'Heresy': historic art college's fate could hang on a Diego Rivera mural

Facing a financial bind, the San Francisco Art Institute has considered selling the 1931 work, a testament to the power of labor

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, at San Francisco Art Institute. Photograph: Courtesy San Francisco Art Institute

The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City, at San Francisco Art Institute. Photograph: Courtesy San Francisco Art Institute

[Peter-Astrid Kane](#) in San Francisco

Fri 15 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

[The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City](#) has occupied an entire wall at the San Francisco Art Institute since Diego Rivera painted it there in 1931. A remarkable depiction of labor power in San Francisco's industrial heyday, it is valued at roughly \$50m – an enticing windfall for a school in serious jeopardy.

SFAI trustees have floated the idea of selling it as a last-ditch effort to keep one of the US's oldest art colleges open after a years-long financial crisis. (George Lucas was [reportedly](#) an interested buyer.)

Facing a sharply diminished student body, SFAI begins the spring semester with an enormous hole in its operating budget. To plug it, the trustees have publicly mulled a once unthinkable divestment of the school's most significant cultural patrimony, the mural by the Mexican modernist.

The move immediately proved controversial. The city's board of supervisors convened a hearing, with one supervisor [calling](#) the potential sale "heresy" and a "crime against art". Now, the city has initiated the process to grant the mural landmark status, joining SFAI's campus itself. Removing it would need the assent of San Francisco's powerful Historic Preservation Commission.

As an alternative, SFAI hopes to endow the mural in situ. Pam Rorke Levy, chair of SFAI's board of trustees, was unable to comment on specifics but said by email that the school was in talks with other institutions over its future.

[A crisis of invisibility: inside San Francisco's planned Native American cultural center](#)
[Read more](#)

"As a non-collecting institution ... several potential paths to financial stability could include endowing the mural in place ... or major donor/s joining current contributors to create a well-funded endowment," Levy wrote. "Regarding the Rivera, our first choice would be to endow the mural in place, attracting patrons or a partner organization who would create a substantial fund that would enable us to preserve, protect and present the mural to the public."

Overlooking the city's famed Fisherman's Wharf, SFAI is unique in the US: a private institution of higher learning focused on pure art at the expense of more commercial degrees. You don't matriculate at the [San Francisco](#) Art Institute to

learn animation with the hope of getting a job at Pixar, you go there to be radical and make radical art.

Alumni include the film directors Spike Jonze and Kathryn Bigelow; the performance artist Karen Finley; and Kehinde Wiley, who painted Barack Obama's official White House portrait. But if SFAI's history is illustrious, its finances have long been a mess. Amid an edifice complex, the Board of Trustees opened a 67,000-sq-ft satellite campus in a nearby former military installation, Fort Mason, in 2013, taking on millions in debt. Meanwhile, enrollment has dropped precipitously, owing as much to the perhaps questionable utility of a quarter-million-dollar art degree as to how inhospitable cities have become to young artists.

The San Francisco Art Institute in April. Photograph: Eric Risberg/AP

Before the budget woes of the last few years, SFAI had been known for mounting ambitious exhibitions in its Brutalist gallery spaces. In Jill Magid's [The Proposal](#), she turned the cremains of the celebrated Mexican architect Luis

Barragán into a diamond. For the underwater still-life photography in Alejandro Almanza Pereda's 2015 show [Everything But the Kitchen Sink](#), curators engineered supports for a 3,000-gallon water tank that weighed 12 tons, so it wouldn't crush the classrooms below.

That turned out to be a prescient metaphor. At just shy of [\\$70,000 a year](#), SFAI's steep tuition demonstrates how cozy radical art-making has always been with economic privilege.

As Elizabeth Travelslight, a former adjunct union president, observed in reference to the near-total inability of creative twentysomethings to find cheap studio space in San Francisco: "Having the freedom to experiment comes at a much higher price than it used to."

SFAI is also the last independent American arts school of its kind, its peers all either affiliated with museums or folded into larger universities. In light of its grim financial outlook, this refusal to change with the times by offering more marketable programs like graphic design or architecture seems less romantic and more quixotic – outright exploitative, even.

"The challenges that SFAI is experiencing are simply a kind of concentrated version of the challenges that other schools are facing and that have forced other schools to close," says Hesse McGraw, SFAI's former vice-president for exhibitions and public programs. "We're witnessing a kind of extraordinary belief in the spirit of this school and what it's represented over time – which is a place where magic happens, where students go and discover something about their peers and the world, what it means to be an artist, and to have impact on society."



A detail from the mural. Photograph: Courtesy San Francisco Art Institute

The pandemic certainly didn't help. After a brush with academic de-accreditation, SFAI asked the University of California to intervene, and since October its leadership has in effect been the school's landlord. But the financial picture is far from settled, with SFAI required to repay \$19.7m in debt to UC by 2026 or vacate the campus.

Many faculty members blame the trustees for this state of affairs.

['Rich people leave, artists and queerdos return': is San Francisco's tech exodus real or a fantasy?](#)

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They "tried to raise the money for Fort Mason and they failed to do that – spectacularly failed", says [Art](#) Hazelwood, a former adjunct faculty member who remains the union president. "When Covid came along, we already knew

the school wasn't going to survive. They were projecting that in March or April. They closed and reopened, and fired all of us."

While SFAI has emphasized that it had 300 students at the beginning of the 2020-21 school year, a former faculty member shared an email with the Guardian that specified a total of a mere seven undergrads and nine graduate students. Consequently, fewer instructors are needed.

"We had 75 or so adjuncts in our unit who were teaching, and now we have four," says Hazelwood, who was among those terminated. "They have a full-time faculty that are still employed there, around 15 people, so they're all still being paid. And four adjuncts, to teach 16 students. That's a great ratio for an advertisement."

Hazelwood estimates that the school needs roughly 400 tuition-paying students to remain solvent, and that selling the Rivera mural "would only have paid for two and a half years of operation.

"This is an institution that respects art and sells its most precious cultural legacy? It's not a solution. It's a hole that can't be filled," he says.

For now, the college is pushing ahead with a new public art piece, a three-night series of video projections against the campus's neo-Italianate tower in late January.

In the meantime, upper-tier San Francisco real estate is in freefall. Around the corner from the school's main campus – and one block downhill from the memorably curvy stretch of Lombard Street – a six-bedroom compound that once claimed to be San Francisco's priciest dwelling sold last year for \$27m, a 40% reduction from its 2018 listing price of \$45m. In photos of the home, prospective buyers could clearly see SFAI's tower, a visual selling point for not one overvalued property, but two.

- This article was amended on 15 January 2021. An earlier version said Kehinde Wiley had painted the official White House portraits of Barack and Michelle Obama. In fact, Amy Sherald painted Michelle Obama's image.

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[New Zealand](#)

The true story behind the viral TikTok sea shanty hit

Rediscovered song, which has a ‘cheerful energy’, was likely written by a teenage sailor or shore whaler in New Zealand in the 1830s

Sea shanty TikTok has gone viral because young people in Covid lockdown are in a similar situation to 19th century whalers, says John Archer Photograph:

Bildagentur-online/Universal Images Group via Getty Images

Sea shanty TikTok has gone viral because young people in Covid lockdown are in a similar situation to 19th century whalers, says John Archer Photograph:

Bildagentur-online/Universal Images Group via Getty Images



[Elle Hunt](#) in Whangārei

Fri 15 Jan 2021 01.29 EST

Even from “the back of nowhere, far from any city” – not to mention the sea – John Archer caught wind of the sea shanty revival before anyone else.

From his home in landlocked Ōhakune, Archer had noticed a sharp uptick in visitors to the [New Zealand](#) Folk Song website he set up in 1998. One 19th-century seafaring epic was of particular interest: Soon May The Wellerman Come.

Views of Archer’s highly-detailed, lovingly-compiled entry for the shanty unexpectedly spiked in late September, with most coming from the US. “I thought, ‘that’s strange’,” says Archer, a former schoolteacher who first set up NZ Folk Song as a teaching resource. “I knew nothing about [TikTok](#)

From “no visits at all” for most of last year, Archer’s [Wellerman writeup](#) has now drawn nearly 10,000 views in seven days, driven by the sudden resurgence

of sea shanties on TikTok – widely reported on this week with a tone of faint surprise.

[Not just for drunken sailors: how sea shanties took over TikTok](#)
[Read more](#)

Nathan Evans, a 26-year-old postman and aspiring musician from outside Glasgow, is credited with having started the “ShantyTok” trend with [his rousing rendition](#) of Wellerman, posted in late December.

In the US and UK, Wellerman’s surprise popularity is [being held up](#) as evidence of the mental toll of months-long lockdown – but the shanty itself originates from the Antipodes, and tells of a pivotal point in Australia and [New Zealand](#)’s history.

A “Wellerman” was an employee of the Sydney-based Weller Brothers’ shipping company, which from 1833 was the major supplier of provisions – such as the “sugar and tea and rum” of the shanty’s refrain – to whaling stations on New Zealand shores.

The whalers’ wistful eye on a future date “when the tonguin’ is done/We’ll take our leave and go” refers to the practice of stripping blubber from beached whales.

ShantyTok is taking the wellerman to increasingly more amazing levels!
[pic.twitter.com/9Bouf1IEN3](#)

— Sly lil’ Vix ~□ Foxxie (@EidolonFox) [January 12, 2021](#)

The brothers Joseph Brooks, George and Edward Weller emigrated from Folkestone, Kent, to Sydney in 1823 and within 10 years had established themselves as the region’s preeminent merchant traders.

At the time, whaling was a prime export industry of New South Wales while, in New Zealand, the Wellers’ whaling station base at Ōtākou on the Otago Peninsula was the first enduring European settlement of what is now Dunedin city. (Their ship, the Lucy Ann, also [went on to be crewed](#) by one Herman Melville.)

But by 1841 the Wellers' business had collapsed. As Ronald Jones [writes](#) in Te Ara national encyclopaedia, that period of seafaring industry “slipped unobtrusively out of the pages of New Zealand history” – preserved only through song.

Wellerman's six verses tell the epic tale of a ship, the Billy of Tea, and its crew's battle – “for 40 days, or even more” – to land a defiant whale. With the struggle ongoing at the shanty's end, “the Wellerman makes his regular call, to encourage the Captain, crew and all”.

Archer suggests that it is the shanty's “cheerful energy and hopeful outlook” – in contrast to other more “dreary” whaling songs – that has led to Wellerman's rediscovery on social media.

“My guess is that the Covid lockdowns have put millions of young [people] into a similar situation that young whalers were in 200 years ago: confined for the foreseeable future, often far from home, running out of necessities, always in risk of sudden death, and spending long hours with no communal activities to cheer them up.”

mentally i'm here pic.twitter.com/IlinXkqcTH

— - , ` Hayley DeRoche , ' - (@hayleyderoche) [January 13, 2021](#)

Its embrace by TikTok is an unexpected 21st-century twist in a folkloric tradition that can be traced through New Zealand's past.

Neil Colquhoun – a [New Zealand](#) folk music pioneer, who died in 2014 – first documented Wellerman in 1966, from a man then in his 80s who said he had been taught it by his uncle. Researching that link led Archer to shanties published in The Bulletin paper in Sydney in 1904.

His Google “guesswork” suggests Wellerman's composer was a teenage sailor or shore whaler around New Zealand in the late 1830s, who penned the ditty on settling in Australia then passed it down within his family around the turn of the century.

From there, the shanty is believed to have spread around the world by its inclusion in Colquhoun's book Songs of a Young Country, published in

England in 1972. “I was singing it with others in folk clubs 40 years ago,” says Archer.

And now Wellerman is being circulated further by Spotify by way of [its new “sea shanty season” playlist](#), celebrating “centuries-old songs gone viral”. That recording, by Bristol group The Longest Johns, is showing 8.5m recent plays.

The rising tide of ShantyTok has reached New Zealand shores, too. The Wellington Sea Shanty Society recorded Soon May The Wellerman Come on their 2013 [album](#), Now That’s What I Call Sea Shanties Vol 1, and again in 2018. It is now receiving 30,000 streams a day on Spotify.

The Wellerman by Croche Dedans and the Wellington Sea Shanty Society

Guitarist and vocalist Lake Davineer says it has long been a floor-filler – second only to Drunken Sailor – at their shows. “Before all this happened, it was still the big banger that ended our set... It’s just a great tune.”

But, Davineer adds, their Wellerman is “more of a party version” than the traditional styles favoured by TikTok. “We do a big psychedelic intro.”

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Global development

'Preserve my son's name': families of Tunisia's Arab spring martyrs fight on

Delays in publication of official list of those killed and wounded provokes anger and claims of government indifference

A protester who was injured during the revolution shouts anti-government slogans in Tunis 10 years after the revolution. Photograph: Fethi Belaid/AFP/Getty

A protester who was injured during the revolution shouts anti-government slogans in Tunis 10 years after the revolution. Photograph: Fethi Belaid/AFP/Getty

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Simon Speakman Cordall in Tunis

Fri 15 Jan 2021 02.15 EST

Moslem Kasdallah rests on his crutches, the stump of his amputated leg on display. His voice hoarse, he yells the demands that, after years of delay, have brought him and the other wounded and bereaved of the Tunisian revolution to the steps of the government building they have been occupying since December.

Some are on hunger strike, others have sewn their lips shut. Kasdallah carries a bottle of fuel and a lighter, ready to self-immolate.

Yesterday marked 10 years since Tunisia's autocrat Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali and his family [fled the country](#) for Saudi Arabia, drawing to a close the month of unrest that began with the [death of Mohamed Bouazizi](#), a street vendor who set himself on fire. Compared with the carnage that would follow in Syria and across much of the Arab world, Tunisians escaped relatively lightly.

However, recognition for those killed and wounded during the volatile days and weeks between 2010 and 2011 remains disputed. After 10 years of pressure, the government has promised a [provisional list](#), with final publication promised at some point before 20 March, to allow for appeals from those omitted.

It's a proposal rejected by the wounded and the families of the deceased, who insist publication should have coincided with the revolution's official anniversary.

09:50

Tunisia and the Arab spring 10 years on: 'We tried to rise'

"They shot six of us and wounded 13," Kasdallah tells an interpreter, describing how police fired into the crowd in the coastal city of Monastir without warning. "I was with my father and my brother. The police wanted to kill us," he says. "I was shot twice. At first I didn't realise I'd been shot. It was only with the second shot that I realised what had happened."

Recognising the dead and wounded of the revolution and including them in the official gazette is not a new idea. It was first suggested in 2011. Last October the [Commission of Martyrs and the Wounded of the Revolution](#) published an initial list of 129 dead and 634 wounded, but it carried no legal significance. Only with inclusion in the gazette does their involvement become legal fact.

In Tunis, the wounded and the families of the dead feel pushed almost to breaking point. Their initial protest in [Kasbah Square](#), at the heart of government, was violently broken up by police in mid-December. Protesters moved to occupy the offices of Abderrazak Kilani, president of the General Authority of Resistance Fighters and Martyrs and Wounded of the Revolution and of Terrorist Attacks, whom many hold responsible for the delay. Some are convinced that other forces have been at play.

"The government is afraid of the public response to the list," Lamia Farhani, a lawyer and president of the Association of Families of Martyrs and Wounded of the Revolution ([Awfia](#)), says.

Some would be angered by omission, says Farhani, whose brother, Anis, was shot by the police on 13 January 2011.

The security services have proved less than cooperative, with the ministry of the interior dragging its feet in sharing records, while the country's powerful police unions lobbied for the inclusion of their own members.

['He ruined us': 10 years on, Tunisians curse man who sparked Arab spring](#)
[Read more](#)

There was little appetite among the demonstrators in Tunis for sharing space with those who had shot and tortured them 10 years ago. Like many relatives of those killed, Farhani and her family know the name of the officer who pulled the trigger. Many officers involved are still serving. Some have been promoted. Those who have been jailed have frequently seen their sentences quietly reduced after conviction.

“There is also resistance from the state and those who were active within the old regime who are keen to keep events blurry,” Farhani says. “The list will make things official.”

It will preserve their names in Tunisia’s collective memory, she says. “It will be clear.”

The list’s final publication, whenever that may be, will mark a notable victory for most families, a further step in a battle towards justice. For some it is already too late.

Slightly distant from the rest of the crowd in central Tunis, a quiet group of women sit holding pictures of sons killed during the events of 2010 and 2011.

Among them is Om Saed Gharbi, 67, from Ariana, near Tunis. She has cancer and her husband died some time ago. She describes how her son Majdi died. He had been passing a protest on his way home from visiting neighbours following a tragedy of their own.

Just as he reached his family house, he was seized by the police and shot.

She has no doubts over her reasons for demanding the list be published. “In every country in the world the names of the martyrs are recognised. I want the same in Tunisia. I want history books to record my son’s name and for future generations to know it.”

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[**Opinion**](#)[**Private healthcare**](#)

While Covid pushes the NHS to breaking point, private healthcare is thriving

[**Polly Toynbee**](#)



NHS England is trying to negotiate the use of beds to cope with a waiting list crisis – it's time the private sector stepped up

‘The private sector relies on high NHS waiting lists to attract customers. And when the NHS buys private work to cope, high waiting lists give private hospitals a double win.’ Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

‘The private sector relies on high NHS waiting lists to attract customers. And when the NHS buys private work to cope, high waiting lists give private hospitals a double win.’ Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Thu 14 Jan 2021 12.20 EST

Back in that long-ago first wave of Covid-19, there really was an “all in this together” mood. People clapped on a Thursday and children painted rainbows; public trust that the government would do its best was still riding high. In those innocent days before [Dominic Cummings’ eyesight test](#), there was goodwill towards the government. One or two early actions struck exactly the right public note.

Especially this one: the NHS took over all the [capacity of private hospitals](#), its 8,000 beds, 680 operating theatres and 20,000 staff, to carry out non-Covid

emergency treatments for cancer, stroke and heart patients. In a gesture of wartime necessity, the well-off could not commandeer special treatment.

But the beds were not requisitioned as they might be in wartime; they were officially bought at “cost price” and the sum has been [estimated to be £1bn](#), steep according to many. Though other deals continue elsewhere, the contract with London’s hospitals [ended in August](#) and NHS England has since been locked in a dispute over the price of private beds. The Treasury [balks at the cost](#), while private hospitals spy new opportunities in the spike in private demand as the NHS overflows. Private healthcare companies have seen what the Telegraph describes as a “[boom](#)” in demand; William Laing, of LaingBuisson, a private health market monitor, predicts “pent up demand” will lead to a sharp increase in NHS patients opting for “self-pay” [private treatment](#).

As deaths rise above original worst-case predictions and NHS capacity is [stretched to bursting](#), regional clinical leaders have written to NHS England and to all the medical directors of London’s acute hospital trusts asking them [not to support](#) any of their staff who are performing non-urgent treatments in the private sector, for the next month.

The [Health](#) Service Journal (HSJ) obtained their emotional letter: in conditions that only a year ago “would have been unthinkable”, they write, “it feels profoundly uncomfortable to us that some elective work that is not time critical is continuing in the independent sector. We are asking colleagues … not to support delivery of such work in the independent sector for a period of time”, until pressure on NHS services eases.

The HSJ has revealed that NHS England is trying to negotiate use of private beds, especially for some [500 London cancer patients](#) in urgent need of operations within four weeks, but currently only small, spot contracts are in place. Under the old deal, only high medical priority patients could be treated in the private sector, but now private consultants can treat any patients they wish.

One signatory to the letter is Sir Sam Everington, the chair of Tower Hamlets clinical commissioning group, a GP and one of the founders of the highly regarded [Bromley-by-Bow community centre](#), known for its pioneering [social prescribing](#). He worries that ultimately deaths caused by failing to treat cancer, heart disease and strokes may rival Covid deaths. ”We need every bed we can get or many will significantly deteriorate,” he says.

Progress is stymied in a three-way tussle: NHS England wants the beds, but the Treasury says in the summer block-booked beds went unused, while the private sector has a strong arm-twisting financial position. One of the key companies negotiating is Spire Healthcare, which was [fined £1.2m](#) last year for illegal price fixing. It is one of many private providers that have [signed](#) a £10bn deal with the NHS to clear the Covid backlog.

Here's the circularity: the private sector relies on high NHS waiting lists to attract customers. And when the NHS buys private work to cope, high waiting lists give private hospitals a double win. When the last Labour government dramatically reduced waiting times, their business dropped enormously. And let no one pretend Covid caused the present waiting list crisis, now at a [historic 4.46m people](#) in England: the number waiting in November 2019 was [barely less](#), at 4.42m.

Everington points to the weak state services pre-Covid that have made coping so difficult; not just the 100,000 doctor and nurse vacancies, but a 30% cut in school nurses leaving just one for 10 schools, threadbare health visiting and community nursing, and 112,000 care worker vacancies.

[This is what an 'overwhelmed NHS' looks like. We must not look away | Christina Pagel](#)
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The relationship between private health and the [NHS](#) has always been an awkward grey area. “Almost all their staff were trained in the [NHS](#),” says Everington, “But there’s no payback.” He says the private sector should pay back the cost of training the nurses and doctors it uses. “I could never live with myself if I went to work in the private sector after the [NHS](#) spent well over £250,000 training me.”

The other great “all in it together” symbolic gesture from the start was the pledge that all vaccines would only be available through the NHS, no paying to queue-jump. But because this is a wicked world, some will always pay their way out of queuing. Knightsbridge Circle, a private concierge club for the super rich, has [already flown](#) members out to the UAE and India on private jets for three week “vaccination holidays”.

The answer to the private health dilemma has always been to build a firewall so nothing leaks, no one queue-jumps, and the true cost of everything it gains from

the NHS is repaid, especially the training. The abuse of the NHS logo by private “partners” blurs the line, so patients don’t know who is treating them. The immediate answer in the greatest national emergency since the second world war is to commandeer whatever beds are needed at a take-it-or-leave-it price.

- Polly Toynbee is a Guardian columnist
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What Tories fear about Marcus Rashford: he's made the case for decent welfare

[Gaby Hinsliff](#)



It's not just about free school meals. The poverty campaigner has shown that our entire benefits system is inadequate

A mural of Marcus Rashford by graffiti artist Akse P19 in Withington, Manchester. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

A mural of Marcus Rashford by graffiti artist Akse P19 in Withington, Manchester. Photograph: Paul Ellis/AFP/Getty Images

Fri 15 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Do you have your very own natural swimming lake in the garden? Funnily enough, me neither. But along with hot tubs and garden offices, they've supposedly become lockdown must-haves for people with money to burn and nothing else to spend it on, what with never leaving home any more. The [Beckhams had one dug](#) during the first lockdown, which means it's probably only a matter of time before they're two-a-penny in the Cotswolds.

The paradox of lockdown is that the more comfortably off Britons were at the beginning of it, the more likely they are to emerge with an unexpected bonus: savings racked up by months of not commuting, eating out, buying clothes or going on holiday. In parliament this week, the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, described the resulting record levels of household savings as [a hopeful sign of](#)

[economic resilience](#). Yet for those most in need of a windfall, as research from Resolution Foundation spelled out this week, [the opposite is true](#).

It found that lower-earning families whose wages are eaten up almost entirely by the basics were twice as likely to see their outgoings rise over summer and autumn than to see them fall. With everyone home and raiding the fridge, they spent more on food, heating, or mobile data for kids trying to follow lessons on a phone. Meanwhile, lockdown cut them off from survival strategies, such as buying clothes from charity shops. (Higher earners also spent more on food and heating, but that was far outweighed by what they saved on pleasures suddenly denied them.)

Half of adults with less than £1,000 savings also raided them, which is hardly surprising given [nearly a third of lower earners lost their jobs](#) or were furloughed in the first wave, compared with just a tenth of higher earners. But it leaves them with less to fall back on this time. And that's the context against which Sunak ducked subsequent questions from MPs about whether he still plans to go ahead with [cutting the incomes](#) of struggling households – many of them working – by more than £1,000 a year, from April.

The planned cut stems from a Treasury deadline set last spring for clawing back the emergency £20 a week added to universal credit and working tax credit during the first lockdown. Back then, Boris Johnson was claiming Britain could “[send coronavirus packing](#)” in 12 weeks. Now, 10 months on, it's not even clear whether schools will be open again by Easter.

But timing isn't the only problem here. The footballer and food poverty campaigner Marcus Rashford is among those [calling for the April](#) cut to be reversed, a recognition that food parcels are merely sticking plasters over the deeper and more enduring problem of not having enough money to live on. Given Rashford's campaign record, the Treasury might as well give up now. But if it doesn't, it's likely to come under increasing pressure from some of the newer Tory MPs sitting on relatively fragile majorities, worrying about how to explain this income cut to many of their constituents.

So perhaps Sunak is merely holding back – cruel as the uncertainty is for families whose money worries keep them awake at night – because he wants to announce a reprieve as part of a balanced spring budget. But until he says otherwise, the suspicion remains that the government is digging in for the same reason it's been so unwilling to raise statutory sick pay, even though ensuring

people can afford to self-isolate is critical to controlling Covid: it doesn't want more generous welfare to become the norm.

It doesn't want the widespread understanding that benefits don't cover living costs in a pandemic to grow into a realisation that they're not enough in normal life either. It doesn't want to own the legacy of a five-year benefit freeze pre-Covid, nor perhaps to admit how long a post-Covid recovery may take.

Economists are speculating about the risk of a recovery shaped not like a V or W but a rotated K, with higher earners roaring back to where they were, while lower earners flatline. Imagine the post-crash decade all over again, but this time with the lingering effects of "long Covid" hampering some people's ability to work, and the virus stubbornly taking hold in neighbourhoods where endemic poverty gives it greater opportunities to spread. It would be a recipe not just for individual distress, but social unrest and the politics of desperation.

For Sunak, who likes to see himself as a pragmatist willing to do whatever it takes, waiving the April cut should be the easy bit. But it's not enough to be a chancellor who, in extremis, proves willing to spend money. It's what, and who, you spend it on in the long term that counts.

- Gaby Hinsliff is a Guardian columnist

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The \$2,000 stimulus cheques alone won't work – the US needs better infrastructure

[Barry Eichengreen](#)

Only Joe Biden's \$2tn infrastructure plan can create the long-term demand the US economy so badly needs

The Hoover Dam in Boulder, Nevada, was part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's jobs plan of the 1930s, which greatly helped boost the US economy by creating thousands of jobs, giving farmers a dependable water supply and sending cheap electricity to growing cities in California. Photograph: Edwin Verin/Alamy Stock Photo

The Hoover Dam in Boulder, Nevada, was part of Franklin Delano Roosevelt's jobs plan of the 1930s, which greatly helped boost the US economy by creating

thousands of jobs, giving farmers a dependable water supply and sending cheap electricity to growing cities in California. Photograph: Edwin Verin/Alamy Stock Photo

Fri 15 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

With the Democrats' stunning sweep of Georgia's two Senate run-off elections giving them control of both houses of Congress as of 20 January, the idea of \$2,000 stimulus cheques for every household is sure to be back on the agenda in the US. But although targeted relief for the unemployed should unquestionably be a priority, it is not clear that \$2,000 cheques for all would in fact help to sustain the US economic recovery.

One post-pandemic scenario is a vigorous demand-driven recovery as people gorge on restaurant meals and other pleasures they've missed for the past year. Many Americans have ample funds to finance a splurge. Personal savings rates soared following the disbursement of \$1,200 cheques last spring. Many recipients now expect to save their recent \$600 relief payments, either because they have been spared the worst of the recession or because spending opportunities remain locked down.

[The US is the new focus of global instability\]](#) Nouriel Roubini
[Read more](#)

So, when it's safe to go out again, the spending floodgates will open, supercharging the recovery. The Fed has already promised to "look through" – that is, to disregard – any temporary inflation resulting from this euphoria.

But we shouldn't dismiss the possibility of an alternative scenario in which consumers instead display continued restraint, causing last year's high savings rates to persist. Prior to the Covid-19 crisis, some two-thirds of US households lacked the savings to replace six weeks of take-home pay. Having reminded Americans of the precariousness of their world, the pandemic is precisely the type of searing experience that induces fundamental changes in behaviour.

We know that living through a large economic shock, especially in young adulthood, can have an enduring impact on people's beliefs, including those about the prevalence of future shocks. Such changes in outlook are consistent with psychological research showing that people rely on "availability heuristics" – intellectual shortcuts based on recalled experience – when assessing the likelihood of an event. For those parents unable to put food on the

table during the pandemic, the experience will establish a heuristic that will be hard to forget.

Moreover, neurological research [shows](#) that economic stress, including from large shocks, increases anabolic steroid hormone levels in the blood, which renders individuals [more risk-averse](#). Neuroscientists have also [documented](#) that traumatic stress can cause permanent synaptic changes in the brain that further shape attitudes and behaviour, in this case plausibly in the direction of greater risk aversion.

Though the pandemic is in some ways more akin to a natural disaster than an economic shock, natural disasters also can affect saving patterns: savings rates [tend to be higher](#) in countries with a greater incidence of earthquakes and hurricanes.

This behavioural response is largest in developing countries, where weak construction standards amplify the impact of such disasters. One [study of Indonesia](#), for example, found large increases in both the perceived risk of a future disaster and risk-averse behaviour among people who had recently experienced an earthquake or flood. While the response to natural disasters may be more moderate in advanced economies – where individuals expect that their government will compensate them – some lasting impact will almost certainly remain.

The upshot is that we can't count on a burst of US consumer spending to fuel the recovery once the rollout of Covid-19 vaccines is complete. And if private spending remains subdued, continued support from public spending will be necessary to sustain the recovery.

But putting \$2,000 cheques in people's bank accounts won't solve this problem because unspent money doesn't stimulate demand. With interest rates already near zero, the availability of additional funding won't even encourage investment. Sending out \$2,000 cheques to everyone thus would be the fiscal equivalent of pushing on a string.

Fortunately, there is an alternative: the president-elect Joe Biden's [\\$2tn infrastructure plan](#) would mean additional jobs and spending, which is what the post-pandemic economy really needs. Better still, under the prevailing low interest rates, this option would stimulate job creation without crowding out private investment.

Guardian business email sign-up

Although Biden's plan will require more government borrowing, infrastructure spending that has a rate of return of 2% will more than pay for itself when the yield on 10-year US treasury bonds is 1.15%. By raising output, such expenditure reduces rather than increases the burden on future generations. The International Monetary Fund [estimates](#) that, under current circumstances, well-targeted infrastructure investment pays for itself in just two years.

Obviously, the “well targeted” part is important. President Donald Trump was right that the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act was loaded with pork, not least his own “three-martini lunch” [tax deduction](#) for businesses. There’s every reason to question whether Congress can do better when crafting an infrastructure bill.

In response to this problem, countries such as New Zealand have established [independent commissions](#) to design and monitor infrastructure spending initiatives. If Covid-19 changes everything, then maybe it can change the way the US government organises infrastructure spending. Creating an independent infrastructure commission with real powers would go a long way toward reassuring the sceptics and insuring the recovery against the risks posed by the pandemic’s lingering behavioural effects.

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OpinionDrugs

For 50 years, zero tolerance to drugs has failed – yet Britain refuses to change

[Simon Jenkins](#)



The 1971 Misuse of Drugs Act has needlessly criminalised thousands of people, and done nothing to tackle abuse

Marijuana grows at an indoor cannabis farm in Gardena, California.

Photograph: Richard Vogel/AP

Marijuana grows at an indoor cannabis farm in Gardena, California.

Photograph: Richard Vogel/AP

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

A pandemic is gripping Europe with its centre in Great Britain. More than [3 million](#) Britons caught it in 2019-20, of whom 5,657 died – a number that has quadrupled since 2013. Scotland's death rate has [soared](#) to three and a half times that of the whole UK, and is the worst in Europe. Multiple cures are being tested round the world, but the British government opposes every one of them.

This year is the 50th anniversary of Westminster telling the world that its [Misuse of Drugs Act \(1971\)](#) would stamp out illegal drugs for ever. The act failed utterly, but it has never been repealed. Among other horrors, the industry it created now enslaves an estimated [27,000 children and teenagers](#), some as

young as eight, in “county lines” drug gangs. The government has no answer but to throw a few of them in jail.

During any crisis, radical ideas tend to come from troops at the front, rather than from the centre. Drugs are no exception. The Home Office in Whitehall is terrified not of the facts, but of the tabloid press. It is now 20 years since the Runciman committee on reforming the drug laws [advised](#) that cannabis be reduced to a class C drug, which Tony Blair’s government reluctantly did before reversing the decision. As a pro-legalisation member of the committee, I will never forget the fury of the well-dressed Stepney dealer who told us we wanted to “do me out of living”. He was a great fan of the anti-reform home secretary Jack Straw.

Since then, evidence of new ways of handling narcotics, soft and hard, has poured in from around the world. The Netherlands, Switzerland and Portugal have been in the lead, with the US and Canada across the Atlantic. For marijuana, the salient point has been its medicinal use. Medicinal cannabis is now legal in most countries.

In Britain, the Home Office was implacable until a media campaign in 2018 for two epileptic children forced it to license the drug for serious pain relief. Figures last month revealed that [not a single NHS prescription for cannabis](#) has yet been allowed. British sufferers must still seek relief abroad. The health ministry says fatuously that it wants more research.

Thirty US states have legalised medicinal cannabis, with Donald Trump “[100% in favour](#)”. This puts him way ahead of the British home secretary, Priti Patel, and health secretary, Matt Hancock. Nor are they any more sympathetic on hard drugs. The UK government [banned](#) Glasgow from [opening a safe drug-user centre](#) to help combat the city’s now desperate hard drug crisis. Apparently London retains this power over Scotland.

Meanwhile 15 US states as well as Canada have licensed recreational cannabis, fuelling what is now a booming \$16bn industry. Marijuana in California is so commonplace that Napa Valley is growing it, and serving staff go on its sommelier courses. It is commonplace in Britain too. Every city and town, every university and rural backwater, has its gangs and county lines, servicing an industry put by Carol Black for the Home Office at a staggering [£9.4bn](#). People who would not buy clothes from sweatshops in Bangladesh patronise an

industry whose Dickensian child labour was detailed in Henry Blake's grim movie [County Lines](#) last month.

For two years local pilot schemes have been using rehabilitation classes, rather than arrests, for drug possession – and without any admissions of guilt or a criminal record. West Yorkshire and London have followed in the steps of Durham, Thames Valley and the West Midlands. In some of these areas a fifth of all crimes and a half of property crime are said to be drug-related, as is most knife crime. This is the measure of the disease.

This week the North Wales police commissioner, Arfon Jones, highlighted the scandal that the government's own jails are the worst nurseries of drug abuse. Prison drug busts [soared](#) 18% last year to 21,575. Jones suggested that, with thousands of prisoners now drug addicts, it would make sense, and be safer, to let them have cannabis legally. Whitehall rebutted this with the cliche that it had a “zero tolerance approach to drugs”.

Zero tolerance would bankrupt every police force in Britain. That is why de facto decriminalisation has resulted in a 75% slump in possession cases over the past decade. The 1971 act is unworkable. But this is only one half of the law. As foreign experience shows, it is only when an illegal market is replaced by proper regulation and control of supply that the dangers of drug abuse can begin to be tackled. As the US has [found](#), danger can merely shift to hard drugs and opioids: Oregon is now decriminalising heroin and cocaine in an effort to control that.

There is no longer any debate. Fifty years of British failure and years of foreign efforts at reform show only one thing: that the criminal law is counterproductive. It is game, set and match to reform. Yet terror of any change seems to grip politicians in power. The can is carried by those on the frontline – the police, prison officers, doctors and social workers.

Modern democracy is driven not by evidence but by fear. We all know that, sooner or later, the dangers of drug abuse must be tamed, as we try to tame the dangers of alcohol and gambling. But in Britain we must wait for foreigners to show us the way. This is not about facts but about courage.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist

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[The joy of small things](#)[Life and style](#)

As the days get longer, the return of colour and beauty lifts the spirits

Thank God the winter solstice has passed; the return of light means the coming of spring

‘The days are beginning to get lighter, longer.’ Photograph: Getty Images
‘The days are beginning to get lighter, longer.’ Photograph: Getty Images



[Hannah Jane Parkinson](#)

[@ladyhaja](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

It's that time of year when the sun slacks. Clocking in late, clocking off early. The sun's out there having an affair with the other side of the world and the UK is plunged into darkness and depression at 4pm. You start reading in the early afternoon, get to the end of a chapter and realise you can barely see the pages. You idly check the weather app and discover there are precisely seven minutes to get your walk in before the sun sets and the hum of the street lights starts. You basically live in a cave.

Thank God then, or rather science, that the winter solstice has passed and the days are beginning to get lighter, longer. The seasonal affective disorder that hamstrings many people starts to ease; LED lamps are returned to cupboards. Vitamin D supplements begin to be replaced with the real thing. You'll stop yawning at 7pm, believing it is midnight.

Back in the Before Times, the days getting longer meant the joyous return of weekday socialising. Leaving the office late and still having a shot at a beer outside – wearing sunglasses! Or getting up, shaking down the picnic blanket and saying goodbye to friends – all of you with deep grassy imprints on your legs – finally, at 10pm. Coming out of the cinema or theatre and finding the sky still blue. Lolling about on a Kent beach for hours and hours, even if you arrived at lunchtime. Witnessing the gorgeous violet gloaming during a walk in the park.

[Is your browser window full of open tabs? Time for a digital declutter](#) | [Hannah Jane Parkinson](#)
[Read more](#)

As the country is once more locked down, one of the few entertainments to sustain us outside the bricks and mortar of our homes is nature. It's hard to drag yourself outside for fresh air when the ambience is equivalent to stumbling from the bedroom into the bathroom for a wee in the middle of the night.

The return of light, however, means the return of colour, the return of beauty and a lifting of the spirits. You can say hi to your neighbours on their front steps again, now that they are actually visible and not just a silhouette against a porch. The return of light means the coming of spring; I don't live near any leaping lambs but it's nice to know they'll be out there, somewhere, causing havoc and looking adorable. It's good to see daffodils doing their thing again and staying out late.

It's not that cosy nights in with Netflix aren't nice (other streaming services are available). They are. It's just time for them to be pushed a little later on in the schedule. Let there be light!

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[The politics sketchBBC](#)

No more metropolitan elite dominance, vows new BBC chair, himself excepted

[John Crace](#)



Richard Sharp appeared before a blunt Commons committee for what all knew was a mere rubber-stamping exercise

‘For the most part, Sharp was the epitome of smoothness. Years at the top of the corporate ladder have taught him how to deflect hostile questions.’ Photograph: Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport/AFP/Getty Images

‘For the most part, Sharp was the epitome of smoothness. Years at the top of the corporate ladder have taught him how to deflect hostile questions.’ Photograph: Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 14 Jan 2021 15.03 EST

What do you call Rishi Sunak’s former boss at Goldman Sachs, Boris Johnson’s former economic adviser when he was London mayor, a former member of the Bank of England financial policy committee, an unpaid adviser to the chancellor during the coronavirus crisis and a man who has donated more than £400,000 to the Conservative party over the past 20 years? As of April, you will be calling him the [new chair of the BBC](#).

So it was understandable that these connections dominated the early exchanges of Richard Sharp’s pre-appointment appearance before the digital, culture, media and sport select committee. The ever urbane Sharp professed himself to

be rather nonplussed by all the attention. He was sorry news of his appointment had been leaked early, but what could you do when your new job was overtly political and you were surrounded by gabby government ministers?

[Richard Sharp's arrival at the BBC will entrench conservative influence | Tom Mills](#)
[Read more](#)

All he had done was spot an advert for “BBC chair” in his local jobcentre and fill in the online application. Just as he had done once before, when he had received a thanks-but-no-thanks automatic email reply. No one had been more surprised than him when he had been invited in for an interview and then offered the job. And yes, it was true that he and the [new director general, Tim Davie](#), were both natural Conservatives – though Sharp observed he had never actually joined the party – but that only evened things up from when Labour installed its own favourites. And no, it was of no concern that neither of them had any editorial experience. Rather it should be seen as a positive as they would bring fresh pairs of eyes to some of the Beeb’s long-running problems. In any case he was donating his £150,000 salary to charity.

“You’re a Brexiteer,” observed the Tory chair of the committee, Julian Knight. “People say I’m a Brexiteer,” Sharp corrected him. Whether this reticence for full disclosure was a desire to appear apolitical or buyer’s remorse was never made clear. But Knight persevered regardless. What had he thought of the [BBC’s coverage of the Brexit debate?](#) Sharp had known this question was coming ever since his appointment had been announced and eased himself into a pre-cooked answer. There had been confirmation bias on both sides. Brexiters had thought the [Beeb too remainy](#), and remainers had thought it had been too Brexit. So it had probably got the balance about right. Apart from on Question Time, which had been packed with remoaners.

Questions over the rigour of the [BBC](#) recruitment process continued with the SNP’s John Nicolson, who couldn’t help wondering if it hadn’t all been just a little too cosy and unrepresentative. There had been someone senior on the board of Tesco on the panel, Sharp reminded him. It had been extremely thorough, and he had felt rigorously challenged throughout. And it wasn’t true that he only gave to Conservative charities: he also donated to a couple set up by Labour MPs.

For the most part, Sharp was the epitome of smoothness. Years at the very top of the corporate ladder have taught him how to deflect most hostile questions and the only time he looked slightly rattled was when pressed on the depth of his involvement with the right-of-centre thinktank the Centre for Policy Studies (CPS), founded by Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph. Still, sometimes the art of a job interview lies in not answering the difficult question, and we never did learn just how close his ties to the CPS were. Other than they were probably closer than he cared to admit.

Other than that, the committee proceeded much along the lines for which he had prepared. In fact he made it look a doddle. He went out of his way to say how much he had always loved the BBC – [Andy Pandy](#), [Tomorrow's World](#) and [Fleabag](#) all got name checked – and how he was committed to diversity (no more dominance of the metropolitan elite, himself excepted), transparency, equality of pay, local and community broadcasting and dealing with the threats posed by online streaming services. “Do you know what Dude Perfect is?” asked the down-with-the-kids Steve Brine.

“Er, no,” said Sharp.

“Well that’s what you’re up against,” Brine added triumphantly, leaving even his fellow committee members confused.

Except it wasn’t really. What he was really up against was a committee going through the motions of rubber-stamping his appointment. He knew that and so did the MPs, who were mostly relieved not to be having to approve George Osborne [or Charles Moore](#), who had previously been tipped for the job. By the end Sharp did allow himself to say he thought the licence fee was the least worst funding model, which was the closest he came to committing news. Meet the new boss. Much the same as the old boss.

It was all a great deal chummier than the hour George Eustice, the environment secretary, had spent earlier in the day answering an urgent question on the [post-Brexit fishing arrangements](#) in the Commons. It wasn’t just the SNP MPs who were on his back about the amount of red tape, low quotas, unsaleable fish and boats tied up in ports. Eustice was also facing a full-on rebellion from Tory MPs with coastal constituencies in Great Britain. They were so angry they didn’t even resort to the fish puns that had punctuated previous debate. Time and plaice and all that.

This wasn't his finest hour. First he tried to claim that when the fisheries minister, Victoria Prentis, had said she hadn't bothered to read the trade agreement on fish because she had been busy preparing a nativity trail, what she had really meant was that she was so across all the detail she hadn't needed to read it. Mmm. Then he kept referring to every concern as just five-year "teething problems" while spending the £100m Boris Johnson had promised to fishing fleets several times over.

No one believed him. Not even himself. By the time the urgent question was over, Eustice was prepared to throw himself overboard. Along with anyone else who got in his way.

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Sri Lanka v England: first Test, day two – as it happened

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[Cricket](#)

Marnus Labuschagne century revives Australia against injury-hit India

- Australia 274-5 after day one of fourth Test at the Gabba
- Debutant all-rounder Sundar dismisses Smith for 36

Marnus Labuschagne celebrates a ton that rescued Australia's brittle top order on day one of the decisive fourth Test against India at the Gabba. Photograph: Darren England/AAP

Marnus Labuschagne celebrates a ton that rescued Australia's brittle top order on day one of the decisive fourth Test against India at the Gabba. Photograph: Darren England/AAP

Australian Associated Press

Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.21 EST

Marnus Labuschagne's century has piloted his side to 274-5 at stumps on day one of the series-deciding fourth Test in Brisbane, where India's unheralded attack exposed Australia's early lack of ruthlessness.

India's bowlers, boasting a combined 13 Test wickets at the toss, are believed to be the most inexperienced attack Australia have confronted since 1880.

[Australia v India: fourth Test, day one – live!](#)

[Read more](#)

The tourists' injury crisis became bleaker with confirmation that spearhead Jasprit Bumrah (abdominal) and offspinner Ravichandran Ashwin (back) would be two of four enforced omissions.

India could have been excused for dropping their bundle when Navdeep Saini limped off during his eighth over, having suffered a groin injury that would prevent him from bowling again on Friday.

Likewise when fellow paceman Shardul Thakur left the field in obvious discomfort late in the day, having fumbled a return catch offered by Cameron Green on 19.

But the depleted visitors, as they have done throughout a four-Test series locked at 1-1, showed plenty of character in front of a sold-out and socially distant crowd of 12,998.

David Warner and Marcus Harris both departed in the opening nine overs as Australia crashed to 17-2, while Steve Smith (36) and Matthew Wade (45) both failed to convert starts.

Labuschagne, who was dropped on 37 and 48, shook his head in disbelief after a mistimed pull shot resulted in a skied edge and his dismissal on 108.

It had been a textbook Gabba hundred from the leading run-scorer of the series, who worked hard early then cashed in as bowlers started to tire.

Green and Tim Paine, unbeaten on 28 and 38 respectively, may yet fashion an imposing first-innings total.

But Paine, who opted to bat first on what he expected to be a “pretty good batting wicket for the first few days”, would have loved nothing more than to sit in the dressing room throughout the day.

Such a scenario looked likely during the Labuschagne-Smith and Labuschagne-Wade stands, worth 70 and 113 runs respectively.

An all-run four in the first over after lunch signalled Labuschagne’s intent, while another all-run four helped him reach three figures after a superb cover drive.

Washington Sundar and India celebrate the wicket of Steve Smith. Photograph: Darren England/AAP

Labuschagne brought up his half-century in 145 balls, barely acknowledging the milestone, then only needed a further 50 deliveries to race to his first Test ton since last year’s SCG Test.

Captain Ajinkya Rahane, having a grassed a regulation chance at gully offered by Labuschagne when Australia were 3-93, will wonder what might have happened if India held onto one of three dropped catches.

Smith is also likely to be cursing himself.

The batsman, who otherwise scored freely and looked fluent at the crease, became offspinning allrounder and former IPL teammate Washington Sundar's maiden Test scalp.

Harris handed Thakur his first wicket at the highest level, while Wade was Thangarasu Natarajan's first Test victim.

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[esports](#)

'Like Disney and Real Madrid': the man taking esports to another level

G2 Esports founder Carlos Rodríguez has a partnership with Adidas and intends to attract the eyeballs of new generations

Carlos ‘ocelote’ Rodríguez has ambitious plans for his G2 Esports team.
Photograph: G2 Esports

Carlos ‘ocelote’ Rodríguez has ambitious plans for his G2 Esports team.
Photograph: G2 Esports



[Paul MacInnes](#)

[@PaulMac](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

“I cannot tell you whether we are more like a football team or more like a media company”, says Carlos “ocelote” Rodríguez. “Whether we are more like a Disney or a Real Madrid, I think we are a perfect combination of both. We look up to these teams, we look up to Real Madrid. But I’m sure, maybe not publicly, that they look up to us too.”

Speaking down the Zoom line from his home studio, with a fridge full of Red Bull in the background, Rodríguez describes himself as “ambitious, maybe blindly ambitious”. But as the CEO of one of Europe’s biggest [esports](#) teams, and certainly the only one to have his face on a range of Adidas apparel, he has reason to be confident.

[David Beckham's esports team to float on London Stock Exchange](#)

[Read more](#)

The German sportswear giant announced on Thursday that it would become the “proud” partner of G2 Esports in a multi-year arrangement. The first step will see Adidas design the kits G2 players wear when in competition, with an emphasis on fabric that is light and absorbent enough to stop the athletes getting sticky during lengthy sessions. Each shirt will also include a “subtle” hologram of Rodríguez.

Ocelote is the handle the Spaniard used when he was himself a successful – if controversial – player of one of the biggest esports, League of Legends. After his retirement he founded G2 (then Gamers2) in 2014 and has since made them a force in LoL, with a podium finish in the last two world championships. Estimates put the total amount of prize money G2 has earned in six years at just under \$8m. Based in Berlin, their copious list of sponsors includes BMW and Mastercard.

As for Adidas, this is not their first foray into the billion-dollar esports industry. They made their first kit for the [gaming spinoff of FC Copenhagen](#) three years ago and designed some trainers for G2’s French rivals Vitality in 2019. The relationship with G2 is broader, however, with official kits to be followed by a range of clothing and other merchandise that would be more comparable to Adidas’s “originals” collaborations with Pharrell Williams or Beyoncé’s Ivy Park range. It’s a shift that acknowledges esports is more than just competitive gaming, even if the question of what that more amounts to remains a little vague.

“At the end of the day we are a media company, a digital media company focused on video games”, says Rodríguez. “Many of those video games we are focused on happen to have a lot of competition involved with it. But some of the games we play we play for fun and for entertainment purposes only. So there is a portion of our business that is purely focused on media properties and content formats, reality TV shows and things of that nature.

“More and more as we keep growing you see that it becomes an overall entertainment prospect. More and more professional players take part in podcasts and other forms of content that are just beyond what they do in competition. Our job in all of this is ultimately to get the eyeballs and the support from the new generations.”

The Breakdown: sign up and get our weekly rugby union email.

G2 estimates they have a fanbase of 25 million people around the world and 80% of those are under 35. While the connection between competitive success and online popularity is not direct, an ability to attract the next generation of consumers is clear. More importantly, perhaps, esports entrepreneurs like Rodríguez are not reluctant to talk in terms of marketing and of “eyeballs” in a way more long-established sports might quail at.

What esports is remains malleable, and maybe it’s the case that a team like G2 are more like a pop band, that goes in and out of fashion, than a gold standard organisation like Real Madrid. But the willingness of esports teams to go where the viewers are, and the willingness of sponsors to follow, should make traditional sports organisation pay close attention.

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Ten things to look out for this weekend
Premier League

Premier League: 10 things to look out for this weekend

Clockwise from top left: Southampton defenders Jan Bednarek and Jannik Vestergaard, Michail Antonio, Manchester City's Phil Foden, Sheffield United manager Chris Wilder and Marcus Rashford. Composite:

AFP/Getty/EPA/Reuters/Shutterstock

Clockwise from top left: Southampton defenders Jan Bednarek and Jannik Vestergaard, Michail Antonio, Manchester City's Phil Foden, Sheffield United manager Chris Wilder and Marcus Rashford. Composite:

AFP/Getty/EPA/Reuters/Shutterstock

Manchester United's away form gives them edge at Anfield, Phil Foden keeps improving and the Black Country derby returns

[Nick Ames, Barry Glendenning and Simon Burnton](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 19.05 EST

1) Rashford and United are stronger on the road

The team with the league's best home record (seven wins and a draw) host the team with the league's best away record (also seven wins and a draw) at Anfield on Sunday. It is hard to work out why Liverpool, who have been so good at home (and in recent years, magnificent everywhere), suddenly look relatively humdrum away, or why Manchester United, who in recent years have been humdrum everywhere, should suddenly be magnificent away. The impact of venue on the performances of certain individuals is more puzzling still.

Before this season Marcus Rashford had scored 27 home goals and 17 away; last season there were 12 at home and five away. Yet in nine starting appearances at Old Trafford he has scored once and not claimed an assist, while he has six goals and five assists in eight away games. In this time, most of his appearances at centre-forward have been at home. No doubt Liverpool have a dedicated performance dichotomy analyst beavering away at precisely this issue; we will have to wait to see what bespoke Rashford-neutering tweak they come up with. **SB**

- *Liverpool v Manchester United, Sunday 4.30pm*

[Marcus Rashford says Manchester United will settle only for the title](#)

[Read more](#)

2) Black Country derby returns after nine-year gap

The Black Country derby may not be of huge interest to the wider footballing public, but it's an exceedingly big deal to supporters of Wolves and West Brom, who meet for the first time in almost nine years on Saturday. The absence of fans will hugely detract from what would otherwise be a frighteningly intense Molineux occasion and with both teams struggling for form, quality seems unlikely to be at a premium. West Brom are in dire need of all three points if they are to kick-start a push for survival that has thus far shown few signs of materialising under Sam Allardyce. As commendable as [their draw at Anfield](#) may have been, the Baggies have generally produced their best performances

against leading sides this season. Finding goals hard to come by as they slide down the table, Wolves no longer resemble a team in that category. **BG**

- *Wolves v West Brom, Saturday 12.30pm*

A particularly feisty edition of the Black Country derby, won by West Brom in 2001. Photograph: Mike Finn-Kelcey/Getty Images

3) Saints owe much of improvement to steely defence

Though Southampton laid some ghosts to rest in [winning 2-1 at the King Power Stadium](#) just over a year ago, it will be a while before they play Leicester without [last season's 0-9 shellacking](#) cropping up. Their improvement since then is as obvious as it is remarkable, but their current defensive solidity is particularly astonishing. The last team to score more than once against Southampton in the league [was Manchester United](#) in November. The Saints have conceded just twice in their last five games – most recently in the 16th

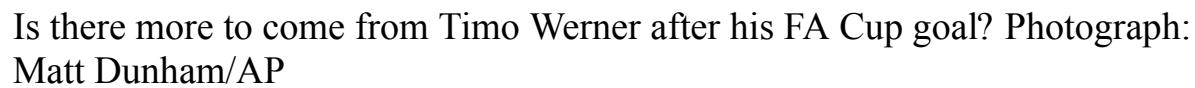
minute of their home game against Manchester City on 19 December, 344 minutes ago. No team has more than their eight clean sheets this season – one away from their entire tally from last season. Away from home they are surprisingly reliant on set pieces: they have scored six times from open play, and six times from restarts, including a penalty. **SB**

- *Leicester v Southampton, Saturday 8pm*

4) Werner hoping to play central role against Fulham

It was, of course, [only Morecambe](#), but Timo Werner will hope his FA Cup tap-in holds rather more significance than that. It put to bed a 12-game goal drought for the £47.5m signing that had brought questions – touched on last month by the player himself – about his adaptation to the intensity of the Premier League. That goal came from his favoured centre-forward position and he might hope for a third consecutive run-out in that role, rather than out wide, against a compact and well-drilled Fulham. Werner has struggled to expose teams with his speed and directness, largely because his own possession-based side face so many teams that are fixated primarily on sitting deep. Perhaps the way to ease him back into form is to keep fielding him closer to goal, as Arsenal have attempted with Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang, although Fulham's sturdy back three will take no prisoners with their physicality.. **NA**

- *Fulham v Chelsea, Saturday 5.30pm*



Is there more to come from Timo Werner after his FA Cup goal? Photograph:
Matt Dunham/AP

5) Porous Leeds buoyed by Brighton's injury list

Managed by single-minded, commendably principled men with very fixed ideas of how the game of football should be played, two of the Premier League's more aesthetically pleasing sides meet at Elland Road. Ongoing toothlessness up front and a chronic inability to defend set pieces has Brighton near the foot of the table, but they might have fancied their chances against a Leeds team that has conceded more goals than every other team in the division except West Brom. That is, if they weren't missing Tariq Lamptey, Aaron Connolly, Danny Welbeck, Adam Lallana and Alireza Jahanbakhsh through injury. Marcelo Bielsa must plan without his most influential player, Kalvin Phillips, who is suspended and will miss an intriguing contest that may be diminished by the absence of so many key personnel. **BG**

- *Leeds v Brighton, Saturday 3pm*

Football Weekly Extra

Pogba, Wolves, Celtic and imaginary children

00:00:00
00:00:00

6) Blades face Spurs in a match of high stakes

Do Sheffield United have a chance against Tottenham? If José Mourinho's side go a goal up then yes, [maybe](#). Spurs have not won any of their last four away league games and badly need to start inflicting greater damage on opponents if they are to stay among the title contenders. The league table would suggest the Blades are ripe for a hiding, but it would be wise to remember when Spurs were [blown apart at Bramall Lane](#) back in July, a performance that epitomised the verve and energy the hosts showed last season. There were passages of play against Newcastle that suggested Chris Wilder's men are getting that back and it would be unwise to discount the surge in confidence that Tuesday's long-awaited win will have given them. Sunday feels like a high-stakes afternoon, given Tottenham's need to convince and the desperation United must feel to build on what momentum they now have. NA

- *Sheffield United v Tottenham, Sunday 2.05pm*

7) Foden taking centre stage at improving City

With two goals and an assist, Phil Foden has contributed to as many goals in City's last two league games as in the rest of their season combined, while also scoring in the FA Cup last weekend. Three of his four most impressive passing success percentages this season have come in his last three appearances. When he said after scoring the winner against Brighton on Wednesday that "I have never enjoyed my football as much as I am now", it will have surprised nobody, and Pep Guardiola also reported that "when you see his face he is happy at training sessions and playing games". He has already played 75% of the minutes he was given in the Premier League last season and it is starting to look like Guardiola's assertion in July 2019 that Foden was "the most, most, most

talented player I have ever seen in my career as a manager” might not have been wild hyperbole. City have now played 16 games; after half of those they were 13th, a point behind Palace in the table. Now they are 10 places and 10 points above them, and with a game in hand to boot. SB

- *Manchester City v Crystal Palace, Sunday 7.15pm*

02:05

'A special instinct': Guardiola praises Phil Foden after Man City victory – video

8) Antonio all the sharper for FA Cup run-out

Following [the sale of Sébastien Haller to Ajax](#), West Ham will be completely reliant on the superior, industrious Michail Antonio to lead their line until such time as they can replace their recently-departed sullen striker. Antonio returned from a hamstring injury on Monday night, huffing and puffing his way around the Edgeley Park swamp to little great effect as West Ham advanced to the FA Cup fourth round [at the expense of Stockport](#). The importance of Antonio getting almost the full 90 gruelling minutes into his legs cannot be overstated. We can expect to see a much more fit and firing version of the striker when he lines up for his first league outing in six weeks. BG

- *West Ham v Burnley, Saturday 3pm*

[Five strikers who could replace Sébastien Haller at West Ham](#)
[Read more](#)

9) Newcastle must find cup spirit in trip to Arsenal

The most damning conclusion about [Newcastle's defeat to Sheffield United](#) is that it was no shock. The Magpies have long been exactly the team you want to face when on a horrible run and they turned in the kind of no-show that leaves you wondering where the next point is coming from. Their last six games have actually yielded two, including [a gutsy draw with Liverpool](#), but they look like a team on the slide and need to halt that suspicion when they visit the Emirates on Monday. Part of the frustration around the reverse at Bramall Lane was that, three days previously, Newcastle played well and could have won [at Arsenal in the FA Cup](#). They need to channel that spirit on their return to north London.

Newcastle are a team that wait for things to happen to them and, while that will occasionally earn them a creditable result, they need to start shaping events themselves to avoid a relegation battle. **NA**

- *Arsenal v Newcastle, Monday 8pm GMT*

10) Liverpool favourites but United look better side

Since the end of October, Manchester United have won 12 more points than Liverpool (playing one game more), a long enough period for us to say with some certainty they are currently a better side. Despite that, the bookmakers think Liverpool are significantly more likely to win the league (though still not as likely as Manchester City). Presumably, the sustained excellence of Jürgen Klopp's side over the last two full seasons continues to outweigh more recent evidence. Inevitably this match will either change that opinion or reinforce it. Regardless, United currently enjoy a level of superiority over their bitter rivals they last achieved more than five years ago, during a run across the 2014-15 and 2015-16 campaigns that included a 3-1 win over Liverpool. **SB**

01:06

'Great test': Manchester United ready for crunch clash with Liverpool – video

Pos	Team	P	GD	Pts
1	Man Utd	17	10	36
2	Liverpool	17	16	33
3	Man City	16	12	32
4	Leicester	17	10	32
5	Everton	17	7	32
6	Tottenham Hotspur	17	14	30
7	Southampton	17	7	29
8	Aston Villa	15	13	26
9	Chelsea	17	11	26
10	West Ham	17	3	26
11	Arsenal	17	1	23
12	Leeds	17	-3	23
13	Crystal Palace	17	-7	22
14	Wolverhampton	18	-7	22

Pos	Team	P	GD	Pts
15	Newcastle	17	-9	19
16	Burnley	16	-12	16
17	Brighton	18	-8	14
18	Fulham	16	-10	12
19	West Brom	17	-28	8
20	Sheff Utd	18	-20	5

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Marcus Rashford

Marcus Rashford says Mourinho taught Manchester United how to win penalties

- Striker says pep talk showed players how to be more ‘savvy’
- Klopp’s comment about United’s penalties annoyed United

Marcus Rashford has revealed a pep talk from the former [Manchester United](#) manager José Mourinho helped him become more “savvy” in the penalty area.

Rashford received the Football Writers’ Association 2021 tribute award on Thursday and in a wide-ranging interview was asked why United might be perceived to be getting more than their fair share of penalties. The question came in the wake of

Jürgen Klopp’s recent comment that United had been given “more penalties in two years than I had in five and a half years” as Liverpool manager, which sparked some irritation at Old Trafford.

“As a forward line, we want to go and score goals,” Rashford said in an interview with the FWA. “When you are making runs in behind or you are dribbling with the ball and if you see a challenge coming, you don’t want to get tackled because you are looking at an opportunity to score a goal. There is no way you are going to let somebody take the ball off you, so for me it is just a case of us wanting to score goals and the teams wanting to defend goals – and you know, penalties can happen.”

Rashford continued: “But there have been times when we have probably not got penalties. I remember when José was manager, there were five or six times I can remember where I should have had a penalty. José ended up saying to me: ‘If you are not savvy about the way you do it, then you are not going to [get] give[n] it.’

“After that, we started to get a few penalties. It was something that in terms of development you have to learn that and understand it.”

Rashford believes the connection he has established with fellow frontmen Anthony Martial and Bruno Fernandes make United “more dangerous” as they go in search of silverware this season.

The trio have been at the forefront of the club’s rise up the Premier League in recent weeks, with United leapfrogging defending champions Liverpool to the top of the table after Tuesday’s 1-0 victory at Burnley.

Rashford feels there is even more to come from himself, Martial and Fernandes as an attacking force.

“Ultimately we are more dangerous, we can score goals at any time, but we can do much better,” the 23-year-old said on <http://www.footballwriters.co.uk>. “I believe it is still the start of something which can go on to be an unbelievable connection. The forward line in general which we have - we can play in so many different ways, in different positions with different personnel.

“We can just be so strong and for us, that is what is key because if we want to win trophies and win the leagues, then you need versatility. I believe that we have one of the most versatile squads probably in the Premier League, especially going forwards. It is exciting, but it is the beginning of something, we want to keep progressing and keep improving.

“We are a team which is still improving, we are in a good run of form, so we have to just try to keep focusing on ourselves and do the best we can do. As long as we do that, you walk off the pitch with no regrets.

Rashford was in United’s youth setup when the senior side won their most recent league title under Alex Ferguson in 2012-13. But he believes anything other than silverware would be deemed a failure. “The main aim is to win trophies, as it always has been at this club.”

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Manchester United Women

Interview

Manchester United's Leah Galton: 'Press and Heath have changed our mindset'

[Louise Taylor](#)

Leah Galton says that she ‘came out of her shell’ when she moved to the United States. Photograph: Ash Donelon/Manchester United/Getty Images

Leah Galton says that she ‘came out of her shell’ when she moved to the United States. Photograph: Ash Donelon/Manchester United/Getty Images

Forward opens up on how a six-month sabbatical got her career back on track, working with Casey Stoney and taking on Chelsea



Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

Leah Galton suspected her love affair with football was over. After a highly promising stint playing professionally in North America, the left winger hit an unexpected wall at Bayern Munich and, suddenly, craved a different life.

She remained in fantastic physical shape but Galton was mentally jaded, low on confidence and in urgent need of a fix of “normality”. A restorative six-month sabbatical spent reconnecting with friends and family in Harrogate beckoned.

[Fallout from Dubai trips threatens civil war within WSL](#)

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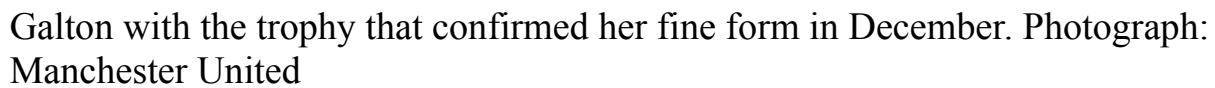
“I did normal things; seeing old friends, going out for meals, the stuff I’d never been able to do before,” says Galton, as she explains how a meeting with Casey Stoney and subsequent move to Manchester United reawakened her passion for the game. “It did me good. I was 23 and football was all I’d known since I was five.”

Less than three years on from that brave decision to take a break, Galton and Stoney are preparing for Sunday's Women's Super League summit meeting at Chelsea as the newly crowned Barclays WSL player of the month and Barclays WSL manager of the month.

"I'm absolutely back in love with football," Galton says as Stoney plots ways of extending United's three-point lead at the top of the table. Given that Emma Hayes's second-placed defending champions hold a game in hand and are fresh from last Sunday's 5-0 demolition of Reading, it will not be easy but this is precisely the sort of game Galton signed up for when she joined the then newly formed United in 2018.

Stoney's team quickly celebrated promotion from the Championship and, after swiftly establishing themselves in the top tier, have morphed into genuine title contenders. "It's not just about this season, we intend to be challenging for trophies for many years to come," says Galton, who five months into that sabbatical became "bored" and started craving not merely "routine" but football itself.

Manchester United may not be the most obvious place for a lifelong Leeds fan to find contentment but, within minutes of first meeting Stoney in an Old Trafford office in 2018, she felt completely at home. "I thought: 'Wow, this is the team and the coach I want to play for.'"



Galton with the trophy that confirmed her fine form in December. Photograph: Manchester United

It is hard to overstate the impact the former England captain's coaching has exerted on the 26-year-old. "I've never had a manager that believes in me as much as Casey," says Galton. "She's made me so much more confident on the pitch. And because she's so recently been a player she knows how you feel. Sometimes in training she'll join in and help us to figure out situations, she's even marked me occasionally! If you need extra help, she'll stay on and keep working with you after training."

While Galton's devastating change of pace, repertoire of tricks and capacity to score as well as create goals have played a significant part in United's progress, their upward trajectory was further accelerated by Stoney's recruitment of [two United States World Cup winners](#) last summer.

"Christen Press and Tobin Heath have changed minds and our mindset," says Galton who, despite her stellar crossing ability, has sometimes been moved

more centrally to accommodate the American duo. “They’ve brought a different, much more positive, mentality. They’ve given us belief and the confidence to keep pushing forward, to create and to take more chances. They’ve given me the confidence to shoot from outside the area.”

United consequently seem set to push Chelsea, Arsenal and Manchester City all the way in a title race likely to be complicated by fixture congestion following a rash of [Covid induced midwinter postponements](#).

Much depends on how the title rivals handle the onerous schedule ahead. “Our squad’s got the necessary depth to keep challenging,” says Galton. “Even if we end up having to play three times a week, we can cope; we’ve got an incredibly strong togetherness.”

This “can do” mantra swiftly became part of her student life in New York State during a physically and emotionally demanding football scholarship at Hofstra University on Long Island. “Going to America was tough but, apart from joining United, it was the best decision of my career,” she says. “It was an experience that I know is going to influence my whole life. I learned so much, I got a degree, I got to know New York; America brought me out of my shell. It made me a more confident person.”

After Hofstra, Galton was drafted to play for the New Jersey side Sky Blue but everything changed with that subsequent move to Munich where the language barrier only exacerbated her burnout.

[Families of former football and rugby players launch dementia charity](#)
[Read more](#)

Three years on she is not only back at the top but, most importantly, feels fully at home there. While the pandemic brings its unique frustrations, her partner Sheridan – the woman responsible for the winger’s invariably eye catching hairstyles – their dog Rhubarb and a renewed ability to relax in front of the television (the BBC drama Our Girl is a favourite) help maintain Galton’s equilibrium.

She likes to tell a story about walking into Stoney’s office “as one person and leaving as another”. The process of turning her back on self doubt and taking the first step on the road towards challenging for the WSL title had begun.

“I’ve played with a few of the Chelsea girls in the past,” she says. “But we’re obviously enemies for the day on Sunday.”

Leah Galton is the Barclays WSL player of the month for December Read our interview with October’s player of the month, Vivianne Miedema, [here](#)

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[Arsenal Women](#)

Joe Montemurro admits Arsenal knew about WSL players' Dubai trip plans

- Club insist future trips during lockdown will not be tolerated
- Players must 'understand they are role models', says manager

The Arsenal manager, Joe Montemurro, said the players who had travelled to Dubai now 'understood the effect of their actions'. Photograph: David Price/Arsenal FC/Getty Images

The Arsenal manager, Joe Montemurro, said the players who had travelled to Dubai now 'understood the effect of their actions'. Photograph: David Price/Arsenal FC/Getty Images

[Simon Burnton](#)

[@Simon_Burnton](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 11.39 EST

Joe Montemurro has admitted Arsenal were aware that some of their players were planning a winter break in Dubai before the trip that ended with one of them testing positive for coronavirus and [last week's visit to Aston Villa postponed](#), but that such trips will not be tolerated in future either “from a sporting perspective [or] a global morality perspective”.

It had previously been reported that the club had not been informed of the players’ plans, but in the run-up to this weekend’s WSL game against Reading the Arsenal manager said they “had some official scenarios of players going to Dubai” before the government imposed tier 4 restrictions shortly before Christmas.

[Women's transfer window January 2021 – every deal in Europe's top five leagues](#)
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“There’s obviously disappointment at the situation, the way it panned out,” Montemurro said. “From my perspective it’s about the moral compass and the consequences of these situations. The players have apologised, we have dealt with it internally and for me the really important thing is it doesn’t happen again. It’s all about making sure the players understand they are role models, they are in the public eye and we won’t be able to tolerate these sorts of decisions, not just from a sporting perspective but from a global morality perspective.”

The players’ actions had potentially disastrous consequences for vulnerable teammates, including Jen Beattie, who is recovering from breast cancer. “In the moment they probably didn’t think of that,” Montemurro said. “But I can guarantee going forward from now they have understood the effect of their actions, they have understood the repercussions that could have happened.”

The incident brought to a controversial close a difficult 2020, in which Arsenal failed to win a major trophy as well as having to cope with the pandemic. “It’s been a tough time for us, pretty much all of 2020,” Montemurro said. “I’m not saying from a football perspective but from the mental health and wellbeing of the players. That for me is the paramount issue and it’s been tough for a lot of them. We just want to get them excited and get them happy, take care of their welfare and then the football will take care of itself.”

With Covid still increasing in prevalence and the Women's FA Cup paused for the foreseeable future, the concern is that the WSL will be forced to shut down once again. "It's a definite possibility," Montemurro said. "The importance of what's happening out there and the safety of other people is paramount [and] I wouldn't be surprised if the league has to look at alternatives.

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"It's been very difficult from day one to navigate. Every day brings a different challenge, whether it's a protocol, a training exercise, or players struggling with wellbeing and mental health issues. It's been very tiring and very difficult and we'll just have to wait and see how it pans out."

Montemurro played down rumours that top scorer Vivianne Miedema is in talks with Lyon over a potential transfer. "Viv's smiling at the moment, we're in constant contact with her and her agent, and as far as I know she has 18 months on her contract and she's an Arsenal player," he said.

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Football

Lampard vows to stop hugs as Allardyce hits out at government 'nonsense'

- Clubs given stern warning to stop hugging after scoring
- Allardyce tells government not to intervene in football

Chelsea's players are being coached to resist the urge to celebrate after scoring a goal. Photograph: Paul Childs/Action Images/Reuters

Chelsea's players are being coached to resist the urge to celebrate after scoring a goal. Photograph: Paul Childs/Action Images/Reuters

[Paul MacInnes](#)

[@PaulMac](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 17.30 EST

Frank Lampard has admitted he is trying to coach his players out of the urge to celebrate, as teams received their sternest warning yet that they should stop hugging after scoring a goal. But Sam Allardyce, while endorsing the regulations, hit back at what he saw as the “absolute nonsense” of the Conservatives focusing on football.

[Footballers criticised as 'brainless' for hugging in goal celebrations amid Covid](#)
[Read more](#)

The FA, EFL and Premier League issued a joint statement on Thursday evening calling on their clubs to adhere to reinforced Covid guidelines and government rules, both off and on the pitch, after continuing [public criticism from politicians](#).

The governing bodies insisted that the season will be able to continue smoothly if players comply but Lampard admitted that getting players to change behaviour that is normally central to the game, is not altogether easy.

“We practise social distancing as much as we can in the training ground,” Lampard said as he prepared for Chelsea’s match against Fulham on Saturday, already a victim of Covid rescheduling. “On the pitch it can be difficult at times, but in training I suppose the instinct shouldn’t grab you as much as it would when you’re scoring in the [Premier League](#) to win a game. For sure it’s something I will pass on to the players and you see a lot of these group hugs now when they win a five-a-side so that will be something we’ll look at.”

The English football authorities’ statement said: “The game has a responsibility and during this next critical period it is down to everyone involved to ensure they follow government rules and our protocols.

“We have seen the huge contribution players have made to the national effort and they must continue to use their influence in demonstrating the importance of following the rules. With full compliance to our Covid-19 protocols – alongside effective testing regimes – we are confident at the halfway point of the season that, with the support of all, the 2020-21 campaign will continue to its conclusion in May.”

► Quick Guide

[Stoke suspend McClean for Covid-19 breach](#)

Show

The response came after the sports minister, Nigel Huddleston, had called for “strict” enforcement of Covid protocols in football and the Conservative chair of the digital, culture, media and sport select committee, Julian Knight, suggested players should be booked for hugging.

Allardyce, after stressing the need to follow the rules, said: “But I get a little peeved with players called for being irresponsible. Why the government want to intervene is an absolute nonsense with the mess they’re making of it at the moment.

“Their care has not been the greatest and it’s irresponsible the government wants to intervene in football, they need to look at their own house before they look at ours.”

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Motor sport

French rider Pierre Cherpin dies from injuries sustained in Dakar crash

- 52-year-old dies five days after accident on seventh stage
- Cherpin had ‘no other ambitions than to live an adventure’

Pierre Cherpin, above, said he rode in the Dakar rally to see ‘landscapes that I would never have had the opportunity to see otherwise’. Photograph:

ASO/AFP/Getty Images

Pierre Cherpin, above, said he rode in the Dakar rally to see ‘landscapes that I would never have had the opportunity to see otherwise’. Photograph:

ASO/AFP/Getty Images

Reuters and [Guardian sport](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.44 EST

French motorcycle rider Pierre Cherpin has died five days after crashing during the seventh stage of the Dakar rally, organisers said on Friday.

The 52-year-old, who was taking part in his fourth Dakar rally, had undergone neurosurgery and was placed in a medically-induced coma after the crash in Saudi Arabia.

“During his transfer by medical plane from Jeddah to France, Pierre Cherpin died from the injuries caused by his fall during the seventh stage from Ha'il to Sakaka on 10 January,” organisers said in a statement.

“This 52-year-old entrepreneur and sailing enthusiast had no other ambitions than to live an adventure, without really worrying about the podium: ‘I am an amateur, I don’t want to win but to discover landscapes that I would never have had the opportunity to see otherwise. Everything is exciting: riding the bike, living your passion, getting to know yourself’.

“The entire Dakar caravan would like to extend its sincere condolences to his family, relatives and friends.”

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Athletics

Brianna McNeal, Olympic 100m hurdles champion, could face eight-year ban

- Charge is for ‘tampering with the results management process’
- American had previous one-year ban for whereabouts violation

Brianna McNeal at the 2019 world championships in Doha. Photograph: Dylan Martinez/Reuters

Brianna McNeal at the 2019 world championships in Doha. Photograph: Dylan Martinez/Reuters

[Sean Ingle](#)
[@seaningle](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.08 EST

The Olympic 100m hurdles champion, Brianna McNeal, could face an eight-year ban after becoming the latest big-name athlete to be charged with an anti-doping violation.

In a statement, the [Athletics](#) Integrity Unit said the 29-year-old American had been provisionally suspended after being charged with “tampering within the results management process”, but did not give any more details.

[Athletics mourns legendary Team GB coach Lloyd Cowan after death aged 58](#)
[Read more](#)

Under anti-doping rules, the standard sanction for a tampering charge is a four-year ban. However, in 2017 McNeal was banned for a year by the United States Anti-Doping Agency after three whereabouts failures in 2016 – two of them after she forgot to update her whereabouts details when she was attending a fete of honour in her hometown and travelling to the White House to meet the then president, Barack Obama.

McNeal who led a historic [USA sweep of the medals](#) in her event in Rio, with Nia Ali and Kristi Castlin finishing second and third, was punished under the World Anti-Doping Agency’s code for failing to properly file whereabouts information on three occasions in a 12-month period.

The American Arbitration Association, which ruled on the case, described it as “a difficult case because it involves the imposition of a serious penalty on a brilliant athlete who is not charged or suspected of using banned substances of any kind”.

At that time, McNeal posted a statement to her Instagram account, which read in part: “I’ve always competed clean, and I am always happy to be tested to prove it. This is one of the most difficult times in my career, especially after having such a great 2016 season – all I wanted to do was capitalise on that but God has other plans.” Competing under her maiden name of Rollins, also claimed the world 100m hurdles title in Moscow in 2013.

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Last week it was revealed that the London 2017 men’s world long jump champion, Luvo Manyonga – who made worldwide headlines when he [recovered from a crystal meth addiction](#) to become one of the faces of track and

field – [could face a four-year ban](#) after being provisionally suspended for whereabouts failures. The current men's 100m world champion, Christian Coleman, was hit with a two-year ban in October for missing tests.

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[Talking Horses](#)[Horse racing tips](#)

Talking Horses: financial blow for racing as early Levy review hopes fade

The government appears to have stalled on plans for Betting Levy reform that could generate millions in extra revenue

Ben Godfrey guides Swincombe Fleat to victory at Fontwell Park on Thursday. Racing is continuing despite empty stands and weather disruption. Photograph: Alan Crowhurst/PA

Ben Godfrey guides Swincombe Fleat to victory at Fontwell Park on Thursday. Racing is continuing despite empty stands and weather disruption. Photograph: Alan Crowhurst/PA



[Greg Wood](#)

[@Greg_Wood](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 05.49 EST

Hopes of an imminent boost to racing's finances as it struggles to recover from the effects of the coronavirus pandemic appeared to recede on Thursday, after an apparent step back by the government from an early review of the sport's funding system via the Betting Levy.

The sport is plotting a recovery from what seems sure to be well over a year with no spectators in attendance. Changes to the sport's legal and financial frameworks are never swift or easy, but reform of the Levy – for instance, to include bets placed on races overseas – has been suggested as a potential source of between £30m and £40m a year in revenue.

[Talking Horses: Blackmore building strong Cheltenham book of rides](#)

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The prospect seemed within reach when Nigel Huddleston, the minister for sport, told the House of Commons in December that the department of culture, media and sport would examine reform of the Levy in 2021, three years earlier than necessary under legislation. Now, however, the Racing Post [reports that Huddleston](#) wrote to Anna-Marie Phelps, the British Horseracing Authority (BHA) chair, this week to say – in what sounds like classic Yes, Minister-ese – his department will only examine “whether there was a case for bringing forward the timetable” for review.

The BHA insisted on Thursday that little has changed, and that it will “look forward to continuing our dialogue with government, and providing further evidence which highlights the need for urgent reform of the Levy to ensure that it is sustainable and fit for the digital age.” However, a sense that racing has already started to slide down the government’s list of priorities – having not been unduly prominent in the first place – is hard to escape.

The betting industry, which faces issues of its own with a review of the gambling laws underway, is also likely to resist an extension of the Levy to bets on overseas racing for as long as it possibly can. This aspect of the BHA’s plans is an attempt to reach straight into the bookmakers’ balance sheets and remove tens of millions of pounds from their gross profits,. While there is certainly an argument that British racing has as much right to it as the betting firms do, that is not quite the same thing as earning or deserving it.

Levy income will be the sport’s principal source of revenue until crowds return, and it seems likely to dwindle further over the next few days as the weather intervenes to disrupt the racing programme.

Friday’s main meeting – the Huntingdon card which was due to feature the Sidney Banks Memorial Hurdle, won [12 months ago](#) by Shishkin – was abandoned on Thursday after a nearby brook burst its banks, while the scheduled card at Sedgefield was abandoned on Wednesday.

Jumping at Lingfield next Monday has also been lost to waterlogging, although the card has been re-arranged as a “Jumpers Bumpers” fixture on the all-weather track. No problems are currently reported at Warwick, where the 13-runner Classic Chase is due to be the feature race of Saturday’s action.

Friday’s best bets

Another day without jumping could see many punters keeping their powder dry before some excellent action on Saturday, but there are a couple of potential nuggets to be sifted from the cards at Newcastle and Southwell with **Star Of St James (5.00)** the most obvious candidate on the Fibresand.

Richard Fahey's is a 5-4 shot and so hardly the most original selection, but he improved so significantly to win by six-and-a-half lengths over this track and trip eight days ago that it is a slight surprise to see him at odds-against under a 5lb penalty.

The veteran **First Excel (6.00)** is more of a working person's price an hour later and while he is on a long losing run, his mark has now dropped to just 49 and three of his four career victories were over this course and distance, including wins off 64 and 61.

► Quick Guide

Greg Wood's Friday tips

Show

At Newcastle, **Utopian Lad (1.10)** must go close after a narrow defeat off this mark at Wolverhampton last time, while Liverpool fans will take it as a promising omen before a big weekend if the prolific **Klopp (4.10)** can register another win.

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Economic growth (GDP)

Why the GDP hit from UK lockdown 2.0 was smaller than expected

More of the economy stayed open, Brexit talks boosted stockpiling and firms are developing some immunity to lockdowns

- [Business live updates - GDP falls 2.6%](#)
- [UK heads for double-dip recession](#)

Pubs and bars were closed again in the England's November lockdown.

Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

Pubs and bars were closed again in the England's November lockdown.

Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

[Larry Elliott](#) Economics editor

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.27 EST

When the UK first went into lockdown last spring the impact on the economy was swift and profound. National output dropped by almost a fifth in April.

There was an echo of that decline in activity in the November figures for [gross domestic product](#) released by the Office for National Statistics but a relatively faint one. The [2.6% monthly contraction](#) was bad – especially for consumer-facing businesses – but not nearly as bad as it might have been. Britain's economy was 8.9% smaller in November than in the same month of 2019, but analysts were braced for an annual decline of more than 12%.

[UK economy shrank 2.6% during November lockdown – business live](#)
[Read more](#)

Why was the drop smaller than expected? For a start, more of the economy remained open in November than it did during the first lockdown. Factories kept turning out goods, construction work was allowed, children continued to go to school.

In addition, a couple of one-off factors supported activity. One was that the knife-edge state of trade negotiations between the UK and the EU encouraged firms to stockpile as insurance against a no-deal outcome. A second was that there was a delay between England's lockdown being announced and the restrictions coming into force, which allowed people to do some early Christmas shopping or have a meal out.

But as Paul Dales, the UK economist at Capital [Economics](#) has noted, the UK has built up some immunity to lockdowns. Firms have found ways of doing business despite the restrictions, such as providing click-and-collect services. Consumers don't stop spending when the shops are shut: they simply shop online.

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The current lockdown will cause more damage to the economy than that in November because the restrictions are tougher and will be in place for longer. As Rishi Sunak noted, the news will get worse before it gets better, but the vaccination programme means the likelihood is that restrictions will be

gradually eased from next month onwards. The expectation in the financial markets is that a solid recovery will be under way by the spring.

In the meantime, there is the question of whether the UK will have a double-dip recession, defined as two consecutive quarters of falling output. GDP will almost certainly contract in the current quarter, but the better than feared figures for November suggest growth might just have remained positive in the fourth quarter of 2020.

According to Dales, GDP would need to fall by 1% in December for the economy to shrink in the fourth quarter as a whole. It is touch and go, but a double dip might just be avoided.

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School meals

Headteacher of Marcus Rashford's old school: 'Fed well, children thrive'

Emma Roberts says star is an inspiration to pupils at Button Lane primary and hails his efforts on free school meals

Marcus Rashford when a pupil at Button Lane primary school. Photograph:
Courtesy of Button Lane primary school

Marcus Rashford when a pupil at Button Lane primary school. Photograph:
Courtesy of Button Lane primary school

[Maya Wolfe-Robinson](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 13.57 EST

To the headteacher of Marcus Rashford's old primary school – where, not much more than a decade ago, he received the lifeline of free school meals himself – the furore over meagre food parcels this week came as little surprise.

She had considered giving the hampers to nearly 300 pupils in her care, but swiftly decided against it. Instead, Emma Roberts' school opted to give parents vouchers and the “freedom of choice” that comes with them. “It wasn’t for us to say what families should, and will want, to eat,” Roberts said.

Speaking to the Guardian from Button Lane primary school in Wythenshawe, [Manchester](#), Roberts described the difficulties of feeding disadvantaged children as a familiar one. Six in 10 of her pupils receive free school meals. Life expectancy in Wythenshawe is seven years below neighbouring Trafford. “We know that if children are fed, and are fed well, then they’re going to thrive,” she said.

The school’s most famous former pupil has yet again been pivotal in holding the government to account by forcing a third U-turn this week. His [tweets](#) to 4 million followers amplifying pictures of woefully inadequate free school meals ultimately forced ministers to [abandon the “food parcel first” approach](#) and allow schools to choose to issue vouchers instead.



Emma Roberts, headteacher at Button Lane primary school in Manchester.
Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

In his spare time, Rashford, 23, played a match for Manchester United – who now sit at the [top of the Premier League](#) – and taught thousands of children a PE lesson through the BBC's lockdown learning series.

He keeps in touch with Button Lane primary. Roberts said that in pre-Covid times he would frequently pop in to sign autographs, pose for photos and give out hugs. Last year he came in and cooked meatballs, which some of the children tried. A success? “Well, nobody screwed up their face,” she laughed.

Roberts said Rashford was not looking for glory on those visits. “It feels like he belongs to the school, and to the children, when they see him. They feel like he’s one of them.”

She described him as a role model, not just to the children but to the teachers, too. “We talk to our children about being the best they could be. That’s our

school motto: only the best is good enough. And we're a rights respecting school so we talk about being able to stand up for what you believe in and children's rights, which this fits perfectly into."

The teachers, including some who taught Rashford when he was a boy, tell pupils to look to the footballer and food poverty campaigner as an example of how to get points across in a way that is respectful.

Marcus Rashford, who has gone on to star for Manchester United and England.
Photograph: Courtesy of Button Lane primary school

Rashford apparently has not changed much over the past decade: his former teachers describe a quiet, conscientious pupil with lots of friends who didn't let his clear talent for football go to his head.

"He's managed to make such a positive difference to the lives of families. And he's done it admirably, he's done it with respect. He hasn't raised his voice. He's spoken eloquently and managed to make a change," Roberts said.

She credits him for the attention he has brought to the issue of food poverty in the area, describing how she received cards with cheques inside when the pandemic began.

Roberts has been amazed at the way the tight-knit community has pulled together during the crisis that unfolded, with one local business donating £1,000 towards devices. “We’ve had some older residents in the community who’ve knocked on the door and said: ‘I don’t need this iPad as much as a child who’s trying to do their learning.’”

[Rashford has Johnson grovelling again – but this time is different](#)
[Read more](#)

[Access to laptops](#) and internet data was a “massive problem” for children learning remotely, Roberts said. Button Lane has three times the national average of children who receive free school meals and, based on that, was allocated 116 laptops by the Department for Education. Up until December, they had received 23.



Marcus Rashford while in Button Lane primary school Photograph: Courtesy of Button Lane Primary School

Now, finally, they have the full allocation and the headteacher has managed to source wifi dongles and sim cards for parents who have to use mobile data to get online.

Roberts would like to explore the option of cash payments made directly to parents for free school meals instead of vouchers, firmly believing that families know best. In the meantime, she is keen to help parents with nutritious [recipe ideas](#) and tips on how to best make the most out of food bought with the vouchers.

From next week, school cooks will be sending “how to” videos. There will be family favourites, Roberts said, such as ragu and a cheese sauce, and, of course, how to cook Marcus Rashford’s favourite meal.

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School meals

Schools in England told not to provide free meals at half-term

DfE guidance sets government on course for fresh dispute over children going hungry during holidays

- [Head of Marcus Rashford's old school: 'Fed well, children thrive'](#)
- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

Food parcels for families await delivery in Milton Keynes. Photograph:
Andrew Boyers/Reuters

Food parcels for families await delivery in Milton Keynes. Photograph:
Andrew Boyers/Reuters

Sally Weale, Heather Stewart and Patrick Butler

Thu 14 Jan 2021 11.45 EST

The government has once again become mired in a row over free school meals after it emerged that headteachers in England have been told not to supply vouchers and food parcels to disadvantaged children over the February half-term holiday.

With the dust barely settled following a furious row this week over substandard food parcels, council leaders and teaching unions expressed frustration at continuing confusion over free school meals and warned that children could go hungry.

Fresh [guidance](#) from the Department for Education (DfE) published this week states: “Schools do not need to provide lunch parcels or vouchers during the February half-term.” Instead, it says, there is already wider government support available for families and children outside term-time through [the Covid winter grant scheme](#).

[Marcus Rashford calls for urgent review of free school meals system](#)
[Read more](#)

The government set up the £170m winter package last November, following an earlier intervention by the footballer and anti-poverty campaigner Marcus Rashford, who has already forced the government into a series of U-turns over free school meals.

On Thursday night, Rashford wrote to Boris Johnson to demand that the government undertake an urgent cross-party review of the free school meals system. The letter, also signed by celebrity chef and school meals campaigner Jamie Oliver, said: “We are ready and willing to support your government in whatever way we can to make this review a reality and to help develop a set of recommendations that everyone can support. It is only by working together that we end child food poverty.” Other signatories include chefs Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall and Tom Kerridge, actor Emma Thompson, and more than 30 charities and businesses.

Labour has also called for the current system of term-time school food parcels and vouchers to be scrapped and replaced by direct cash payments of £15 a week paid via the benefits system to the parents of pupils on free meals.

“The government should put its trust in parents by giving them the money for free school meals to ensure their children are not going hungry,” said Kate Green, the shadow education secretary.

The National Education Union (NEU) warned of a “logistical nightmare” for holiday provision and said disadvantaged families could end up missing out under the winter grant scheme as a result of the switch in provision via schools to councils.

Kevin Courtney, NEU joint general secretary, said: “It is simply astonishing that the government has, once again, revealed its total disregard for those hardest hit by the ongoing health pandemic … The ugly spectre of holiday hunger is now looming yet again.”

The Local Government Association (LGA) said the winter grant was never intended to replace free school meals and urged ministers to continue to provide food vouchers to eligible families during half-term.

Richard Watts, chair of the LGA’s resources board, said: “During the last full national lockdown, government recognised the significant extra pressures on low-income families and extended free school meal provision into the school holidays.

“Government was explicit that the Covid winter grant scheme [CWGS] was not intended to replicate or replace free school meals, but was to enable councils to support low-income households, particularly those at risk of food poverty as we moved towards economic recovery.

“Government should provide food vouchers to eligible families during February half-term as it did last summer, with councils using CWGS funding to provide additional support with partners where necessary.”

Courtney warned that transmission rates of Covid-19 were higher than ever and that chopping and changing between services increased the risk of children going hungry, with additional public health risks if parents had to venture out of the house.

“Suggesting that local councils will be able to recreate a brand-new system of supplying free school meals for the week of half-term using the Covid winter grant scheme is an unnecessary logistical nightmare, and the confusion and

chaos this could cause will put millions of children at risk ... Ministers should hang their heads in shame and unless they reverse this decision never again speak of their concern for disadvantaged children,” he said.

The row, so soon after an eruption of public outrage over miserly food parcels being distributed to children on free school meals, appeared to have caught No 10 off guard. Asked whether the voucher scheme would continue through half-term, the prime minister’s press secretary, Allegra Stratton, said: “That’s my understanding.”

A government spokesperson later clarified, however: “As was the case over Christmas, vulnerable families will continue to receive meals and other essentials over February half-term via councils through the £170m Covid winter grant scheme launched last year.

“Our guidance is clear: schools provide free school meals for eligible pupils during term time. Beyond that, there is wider government support in place to support families and children via the billions of pounds in welfare support we’ve made available.”

Tulip Siddiq, the shadow apprenticeships and lifelong learning minister, said: “Time and time again this government has had to be shamed into providing food for hungry children over school holidays. Stopping free school meals support over half-term will be devastating for many families who are living on the breadline in this pandemic.”

Paul Whiteman, general secretary of the National Association of Head Teachers, said: “The government must urgently clarify for families how they will be helped during the upcoming half-term holiday so they can be assured that they will not go hungry. It is shameful that this is even something we are having to worry about in this country.”

Prof Greta Defeyter of Northumbria University, an expert on school food, also called for the national free school meal voucher system to be extended over half-term. “We are in an emergency situation. Vouchers are a safe and easy option and schools are best placed to know their families.”

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Brexit

Tory MPs from fishing areas criticise government over Brexit red tape

Minister concedes there are ‘teething issues’ as No 10 says affected businesses will be compensated

Fishing boats at Tarbert, Scotland. The fishing row is seen as particularly damaging for the Tories ahead of Scottish elections. Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

Fishing boats at Tarbert, Scotland. The fishing row is seen as particularly damaging for the Tories ahead of Scottish elections. Photograph: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

[Peter Walker](#) and [Severin Carrell](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 11.04 EST

The government has faced sustained criticism in parliament from Conservative MPs representing fishing areas, including in [Scotland](#), over red tape and delays caused by the introduction of the post-Brexit fishing regime.

With some Scottish seafood exporters warning they face possible bankruptcy amid a [suspension of road deliveries](#) due to border delays, the environment secretary, George Eustice, conceded the sector faced “teething issues” and “some additional administration”.

However, when asked several times by MPs about Boris Johnson’s promise during an appearance before the Commons liaison committee to compensate businesses affected by the new regime, Eustice ignored the questions.

Instead, Eustice indicated many of the delays were due to seafood firms exporting to the EU not correctly filling in paperwork, saying this had been less of an issue for firms with experience of selling goods outside the bloc.

“The key thing is to get this process working more smoothly, and that requires traders to familiarise themselves with that,” he said, adding that the paperwork had been designed by the EU and could be improved.

Jacob Rees-Mogg, the Commons leader, later went on to argue that the fish were now happier being British. “The key is that we’ve got our fish back. They’re British fish and they’re better and happier fish for it,” he told parliament.

00:34

Jacob Rees-Mogg says fish are British and 'happier' because of Brexit – video

However, Downing Street later confirmed there would be compensation for affected businesses, and said it did not believe the companies were to blame for delays or losses.

“We have said that we are looking to compensate the fishing industry given they face temporary issues, and we accept that this may have been through no fault of their own,” Johnson’s spokesman said. “That’s why the prime minister said what he said yesterday.”

It is understood officials in the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs are looking at a compensation scheme whereby seafood exporters who

can prove they lost business because of delays can apply for compensation.

It is not expected to be an industry-wide scheme, said one source. “It’ll be a mechanism for providing support for individual firms who lost out in specific circumstances,” the source said.

During an urgent question on fishing, Eustice heard sustained criticism and concern over the situation from a number of Tories, including Douglas Ross, the leader of the Scottish Conservatives. Ross said he had been contacted by fishing workers in his Moray constituency and around Scotland, “raising their serious concerns and frustrations about the current situation”.

More than half a dozen English Conservative MPs representing coastal areas also expressed worries, with Steve Double, the MP for St Austell and Newquay in [Cornwall](#), saying his local fleets “benefit little from this deal”.

Sheryll Murray, the South East Cornwall MP, quoted a local fishing business owner who said border red tape was “posing a real threat to his business”.

The row is seen as particularly damaging for the Conservatives in Scotland, amid predictions it could erode support for the party in previously pro-Brexit fishing areas at May’s Scottish parliament election.

An opinion poll by Savanta ComRes for [the Scotsman](#) on Thursday morning showed a five-point fall for the Tories since December, suggesting they could lose 14 of their 31 seats.

Speaking on BBC Radio Scotland on Thursday, the Scotland Office minister, David Duguid, the MP for the fishing area of Banff and Buchan, said: “I do not underestimate the problems and the struggles that the industry is going through right now.” He promised urgent action.

One seafood exporter, Jamie McMillan, of Loch Fyne Langoustines, speaking on the same programme, said his firm and many others were on the brink of bankruptcy because of the extra costs and delays, including inspections by vets taking up to five hours, which meant his live seafood was dying before it reached the wholesale market in Boulogne, France.

On Wednesday, DFDS, which manages Scottish seafood and salmon exports by road, said it was suspending all deliveries of live seafood from small firms such

as McMillan's until Monday 18 January to see if the problems could be resolved or reduced.

McMillan said his customers in Europe were switching to other suppliers in Denmark. "This is a very, very serious situation," he said. "We've been screaming for the last six months that we have to get our produce to market within 12 to 24 hours. Any delays in that process, our shellfish will arrive in France dead. It is now harder to export to France than it is to the far east. That can't be right."

The urgent question was asked by the Scottish Liberal Democrat MP Alistair Carmichael, who complained of fishing boats "tied up in harbour, their propellers fouled with red tape manufactured in Whitehall".

Carmichael also condemned Victoria Prentis, the fisheries minister, for seemingly saying she had not read the full post-Brexit trade deal when it was agreed on Christmas Eve as she was busy organising a nativity trail.

Eustice said Prentis was only saying "that her jaw did not drop" when she read what was in the agreement, as she knew what it was going to contain.

Nathalie Loiseau, France's former Europe minister, tweeted on Thursday afternoon: "An MP who says the fish are happier because they are now British, a fisheries minister who admits she hasn't read the agreement with the EU in her field: happily in Europe, we at least took fishermen seriously."

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Music

Brexit touring row: UK proposals not fit for purpose, says EU

UK and EU in blame game which may leave British musicians forced to pay for expensive and laborious country-specific visas and equipment carnets when touring the continent

Have you got a work permit? ... Shabaka Hutchings of Sons of Kemet performing at the Roskilde festival in Denmark. Photograph: Gonzales Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

Have you got a work permit? ... Shabaka Hutchings of Sons of Kemet performing at the Roskilde festival in Denmark. Photograph: Gonzales Photo/Alamy Stock Photo

[Laura Snakes](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 09.26 EST

The government's proposals to enable British musicians to tour the EU without having to negotiate individual visa requirements for each member state were not fit for purpose, according to an EU spokesperson.

As it stands, British musicians may be forced to pay for country-specific visas and equipment carnets when touring the continent – a situation that has been decried by the British music industry as prohibitively expensive and laborious, potentially limiting its £5.8bn contribution to the economy.

The government and the EU have been blaming one another for the breakdown of negotiations regarding visa-free touring on the continent since [the Independent reported on Sunday](#) that the UK has refused to allow European acts 90 days of visa-free travel, prompting widespread condemnation, [including from Radiohead's Thom Yorke](#), who called the government “spineless”.

On Wednesday, culture secretary Oliver Dowden [sought to blame the EU](#) for the red tape facing British touring musicians, telling NME that it had “repeatedly” turned down the government’s proposal for a “mutually beneficial agreement that would have allowed performers to continue working and perform across the continent without the need for work permits”.

But the government’s proposal would not have solved the problem of British musicians having to negotiate individual visa requirements with each member state, according to a spokesperson from the EU.

Having refused to include a chapter on mobility in the [Brexit](#) agreement, the UK government rejected the EU’s standard offer of visa-free short stays – working up to 90 days in a 180-day period – and a list of paid activity exemptions that could exclude musicians, artists, sportspeople and journalists from the requirement to seek visas to work in individual member states. This offer was incompatible with the Conservative manifesto commitment to taking back control of Britain’s borders, the government claimed.



‘Spineless’ ... Thom Yorke on the UK government’s handling of the EU touring situation. Photograph: Matteo Nardone/Pacific Press/Rex/Shutterstock

Instead, the UK attempted to negotiate the issue via the short-term business visitor category and the category for contractual service suppliers and independent professionals known as Mode 4. The [World Trade Organization](#) says Mode 4 “does not concern persons seeking access to the employment market in the host member”.

Neither category covers musicians, said the EU spokesperson. It would also be ineffective: Mode 4 discussions are neutral on the matter of visas, meaning that requirements regarding entry and temporary stay continue to apply. Even if the EU had agreed to the UK’s proposal, British musicians would still be left facing the same red tape.

DCMS said the EU’s statement was misleading. The government claimed that its proposals would have allowed musicians to travel and perform in the UK and the EU without needing work permits, and that the EU’s offer only covered

ad-hoc performances and did not address technical staff or the issue of work-permits.

A DCMS spokesperson told the Guardian it stood by Dowden's earlier comments. "I'm afraid it was the EU letting down music on both sides of the Channel – not us," Dowden had told NME.

The EU declined the UK's offer of 30 days' visa-free work for EU musicians on the grounds that this is the UK's existing standard policy and offered no added value to its members, and because it offered significantly less than the EU proposal at the mobility negotiation.

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Jamie Njoku-Goodwin, chief executive of UK Music, said the industry had "no interest in playing a blame game. We just want to understand what has happened and then take steps to resolve this situation. We need both sides to work with the music industry to find a solution that benefits everyone. It is vital that all sides now get around the table and agree a way forward that avoids needless red tape and bureaucracy that could put some tours in jeopardy."

Speaking to the liaison committee on Wednesday, prime minister Boris Johnson [did not appear to grasp the situation](#) facing British touring acts, incorrectly stating that British musicians have "the right to go play in any EU country for 90 out of 180 days" – the EU proposal that the government turned down.

A [petition seeking a Europe-wide, visa-free working permit](#) for music touring professionals, bands, musicians, artists, TV and sports celebrities has reached in excess of 257,600 signatures, with backing from musicians including Dua Lipa, Biffy Clyro and Laura Marling. The lack of a resolution could [rule out or severely limit EU touring](#), according to musicians.

Speaking at Prime Minister's Questions on Wednesday, Johnson said he would meet with MPs to address their concerns on the matter. "I know that our friends in the EU will be wanting to go further to improve things for not just musicians, but business travellers of all kinds," he said. "There is a mutual benefit."

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Kwasi Kwarteng

Revealed: business secretary accepted donations from fossil fuel investors

Exclusive: Kwasi Kwarteng accepted funding as part of 2019 election bid despite Tories' green pledges

Kwasi Kwarteng received £16,000 from companies and individuals with a direct interest in fossil fuels during the 2019 general election campaign.

Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Kwasi Kwarteng received £16,000 from companies and individuals with a direct interest in fossil fuels during the 2019 general election campaign.

Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Fiona Harvey Environment correspondent

Thu 14 Jan 2021 11.35 EST

The UK's new business secretary, [Kwasi Kwarteng](#), accepted substantial donations from fossil fuel investors and advisers as part of his 2019 general election campaign, despite the government's commitment to net zero greenhouse gas emissions.

Kwarteng was energy minister until earlier this month, when he was promoted to secretary of state for business, energy and industrial strategy. He replaced Alok Sharma, who has now taken [full-time responsibility](#) for the UK's hosting of this year's [UN climate talks, Cop26](#).

In the 2019 election campaign, Kwarteng received £16,000 from companies and individuals with a direct interest in fossil fuels, and a further £4,500 from companies that advise on or facilitate trading in fossil fuels.

The donations, according to the MPs' register of interests, included £7,500 from IPGL, a holding company with a 40% stake in Cluff [Energy](#) Africa, a London-based company that prospects for oil in west Africa. IPGL is owned by the former Conservative party treasurer Michael Spencer, and donated £48,000 to Conservative MPs, of whom Kwarteng received the highest single amount.

[The Paris agreement five years on: is it strong enough to avert climate catastrophe?](#)

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He also received £4,000 from Majid Jafar, chief executive of Crescent Petroleum, a privately held company with oil and gas operations in the Middle East, and a board member of Dana Gas. A further £4,500 came from Helios Investment Partners, whose portfolio includes Eland Oil and Gas, Impact Oil and Gas, Vivo Energy and Africa Oil Corp.

In addition to these donations, Kwarteng accepted £2,500 from Capital Generation Partners, which advises on investments including fossil fuels, and £2,000 from CQS, an asset management firm that facilitates trades in fossil fuel interests among other commodities.

Labour has called on Kwarteng to give back the donations. Alan Whitehead, the shadow energy and green new deal minister, said: "Ministers should not accept money from donors where there is a clear conflict of interest, and I hope he will pay it back. Our democracy should never be up for sale to Tory donors."

A spokesperson for Kwarteng said there was no conflict of interest and that all donations were in line with the ministerial code. “For the past 18 months, as energy minister, Mr Kwarteng led work to develop the [energy white paper](#) – this government’s plan to fully decarbonise our energy system, phase out fossil fuels and end the UK’s contribution to climate change. Any suggestion Mr Kwarteng is somehow not committed to the green agenda is manifestly false,” they said.

A spokesperson for Helios said: “The donation was not made by Helios Investment Partners. It was made by Babatunde Soyoye, co-managing partner at Helios in his personal capacity when Kwasi Kwarteng was running for re-election at the last parliamentary elections in 2019. It was inadvertently recorded as Helios as this is also the same postal address for Mr Soyoye. We are in the process of requesting this to be corrected.”

A spokesperson for Capital Generation Partners said: “Capital Generation Partners has not made a donation to him or to any other political figure. One of our partners made a personal contribution but this comprised his own funds, paid from his personal UK account and was explicitly made in his own name. The partner concerned has asked Mr Kwarteng to correct the record.”

Kwarteng will bear much of the responsibility for putting the UK on track to meet the government’s target of reaching net zero emissions by 2050. Last autumn, Boris Johnson [set out a 10-point plan](#), including massive investment in [offshore wind](#), [new nuclear power](#) and an overhaul of infrastructure, and the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, has set out plans for a new [emissions trading scheme](#), of which the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy will take charge.

The UK is [not on track](#) to meet its carbon budget targets, and experts have said much more [interventionist policy](#) from government and higher investment will be required to put the UK on a path to net zero. Kwarteng belonged to the Free Enterprise Group of Tory MPs, which takes a strongly free-market stance, calling for drastic reductions in the regulation of business. He was co-author of [Britannia Unchained](#), a 2012 manifesto alleging that Britain, whose people were “among the worst idlers in the world”, suffered from a “bloated state, high taxes and excessive regulation” and needed a bonfire of red tape.

Green campaigners also raised concerns over the business secretary’s links to fossil fuel interests. Connor Schwartz, climate lead at Friends of the Earth, said:

“It’s clearly a concern that the new business secretary, [in] one of the most important roles in government for responding to the climate emergency, has received money from fossil fuel interests. It’s essential ministers take bold decisions to bring down emissions and create good, green jobs across the country, but how can people be sure they will do that if they’ve been aided in getting elected by money from oil and gas?”

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[Universal credit](#)

Labour to force Commons vote over £20 cut to universal credit

Party hopes opposition day motion will increase pressure on government to retain benefits rise during Covid

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

[Heather Stewart](#) Political editor

Thu 14 Jan 2021 13.30 EST Last modified on Thu 14 Jan 2021 13.39 EST

People walk past a jobcentre in Stoke-on-Trent. Charities have urged the government not to go ahead with cutting benefits. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

Labour will force a House of Commons vote on the looming £20-a-week cut to universal credit in an attempt to increase the pressure on the government to cancel it.

The chancellor, Rishi Sunak, increased two key benefits, universal credit and the basic element of working tax credit, by £20 a week during the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic last spring.

The uplift was only expected to last 12 months, but charities and anti-poverty campaigners have urged the government not to go ahead with cutting the benefits while the virus is still raging.

Boris Johnson appeared to hint that he was minded to go ahead with the reduction on Wednesday. When asked about the issue at the cross-party liaison committee of senior MPs, he said: “I think that what we want to see is jobs, we want people in employment and we want to see the economy bouncing back.

“And I think most people in this country want to see a focus on jobs and growth in wages than on welfare, but clearly we have to keep all of these things under review.”

Labour has been granted two opposition day debates on Monday, and has said it will use them to hold votes on the benefit cut and on free school meals provision.

Votes on opposition day debates are non-binding but can cause embarrassment for the government.

The shadow work and pensions secretary, Jonathan Reynolds, said: “Under the Conservatives, families come last. The government’s mishandling of the coronavirus pandemic means Britain is facing one of the worst recessions of any major economy. Boris Johnson’s decision to cut universal credit will hit millions of families who are already struggling to get by.

“There cannot be another repeat of the government’s indecision and mismanagement of the free school meals scandal. The government must put

families first during this lockdown and act now instead of waiting until the last minute. If ministers refuse, Conservative MPs have the opportunity to vote with Labour and give families the support they need to get through this pandemic.”

A recent [report by the Resolution Foundation](#) thinktank found that more than a third of the UK’s poorest families had their already meagre incomes squeezed during the pandemic because they had had to spend more on food, energy and home schooling.

The chancellor is due to deliver his budget on 3 March. He has stressed the need for “hard choices” to deal with the dramatic deterioration in public finances as a result of the pandemic.

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[Wales](#)

Man offers Newport council £50m if it helps find bitcoins in landfill

James Howells offers to share 25% of the £200m he claims is on hard drive he accidentally threw out in 2013

James Howells pictured in 2015 outside the rubbish tip in Newport. He believes the hard drive will still be in working order. Photograph: Dimitris Legakis/Athena Pictures

James Howells pictured in 2015 outside the rubbish tip in Newport. He believes the hard drive will still be in working order. Photograph: Dimitris Legakis/Athena Pictures

[Steven Morris](#) and agency

[@stevenmorris20](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 12.15 EST

A computer engineer who claims [he accidentally threw away a hard drive](#) containing a virtual currency worth tens of millions of pounds has promised to give a local council a quarter of the fortune if they help him dig it out of a rubbish tip.

James Howells, 35, says the hard drive of his old laptop contains bitcoins worth about £200m but is languishing in a landfill site in [Newport](#), south Wales.

Howells says both he and the council will benefit if they allow him to dig for it but the local authority is refusing, claiming an excavation would break licensing regulations and cause environmental damage.

“The attitude of the council does not compute, it just does not make sense,” said Howells.

Howells says he threw out the hard drive in summer 2013 when he was clearing out his desk. “I had two identical hard drives and I threw out the wrong one,” he said. “I have to laugh about it now.”

He has repeatedly appealed to Newport city council for help in recovering the machine – and has now offered it a 25% share if workers can pluck it out.

He believes that even after all this time the hard drive would still be in good enough working order. “The outside case might be rusted. But the inside disk, where the data is stored – there should be a good chance that it still works.”

Howells said he had financial backing from a hedge fund to pay for the search so the council would not be out of pocket. And he has a plan.

“The way the landfill operated in 2013 was when a general waste bin was full, it was given a serial number, it was dragged off to the open pit and it was buried. It was also given a grid reference number.

“So if I could access the landfill records I could identify the week that I threw the hard drive away, I could identify the serial number of the bin that it was in, and then I could identify where the grid reference is located.”

A spokeswoman for the council said: “Newport city council has been contacted a number of times since 2014 about the possibility of retrieving a piece of IT hardware said to contain bitcoins.

“The cost of digging up the landfill, storing and treating the waste could run into millions of pounds – without any guarantee of either finding it or it still being in working order.

“The council has also told Mr Howells on a number of occasions that excavation is not possible under our licensing permit and excavation itself would have a huge environmental impact on the surrounding area. We have, therefore, been clear that we cannot assist him in this matter.”

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Immigration and asylum

Asylum seeker housing conditions under scrutiny at third ex-military site

Allegations of poor conditions, poor food quality and mental health crises at RAF Coltishall in Norfolk

RAF Coltishall in Norfolk. The former base was taken over by the Home Office for use as accommodation for asylum seekers. Photograph: Reuters/Alamy
RAF Coltishall in Norfolk. The former base was taken over by the Home Office for use as accommodation for asylum seekers. Photograph: Reuters/Alamy

Jamie Grierson Home affairs correspondent
[@JamieGrierson](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 12.56 EST

A third former military site being used as temporary housing for asylum seekers is facing allegations of poor conditions, poor food quality and mental health crises, it has emerged.

The Home Office has been housing asylum seekers in a former officers' mess at RAF Coltishall, north of Norwich, since April last year. The Norfolk site has not received as much scrutiny as two similar facilities, [Napier Barracks in Kent](#) and Penally Barracks in Pembrokeshire, which have been dogged by allegations of [cover-ups](#), [poor access to healthcare](#) and [legal advice](#), and crowded conditions.

[Asylum seekers on hunger strike over conditions at Kent barracks site](#)
[Read more](#)

But it has emerged that there have been similar concerns over the set-up at RAF Coltishall, with people familiar with the site claiming there have been issues with lack of information, food quality, access to medical care including dentistry, as well as suicide attempts and hunger strikes.

The Grade II-listed building, on Jaguar Drive, was left derelict for 15 years before refurbishment began in May 2019.

A spokesperson for Care4Calais, speaking on behalf of volunteers on the ground, said: “The main overarching issue is some [asylum seekers] have been there as long as eight months with no information, no knowledge as to what is going to happen to them. This is compounded by this being a remote location, miles from the nearest town, facing a bus fare to Norwich. They have nowhere to go, nothing to do. For traumatised people it is incredibly bad for their mental health. They have nothing to do but ruminate.”

“It makes it a hard place to be. That’s exacerbated because it’s a former military site. The people running the site are using Covid to say no volunteers can go in, but they’ve been saying that a long time before the recent peak started. It’s not been a welcoming community. [Refugees](#) have been on the receiving end of racism and hostility – as well as volunteers, because of the work they’re doing.”

Last week, the Conservative MP for Broadland, Jerome Mayhew, spoke out against the use of the former RAF base. “The rural location of the asylum centre in the Jaguar Buildings is widely recognised as being unsuitable for

anything other than a short-term emergency stopgap to keep asylum seekers off the streets during the Covid pandemic,” he was reported as saying.

The issues at Coltishall emerged as dozens of men at the Napier barracks site were placed in isolation after residents developed Covid-19 symptoms. The Guardian understands that the men are being isolated from the rest of the site until coronavirus test results are returned.

Meanwhile, Liz Saville Roberts, the Westminster leader of Plaid Cymru, has written to David Bolt, the chief inspector of borders and immigration, urging him to inspect the site in Penally.

In her letter, she said: “We are now not only in the middle of winter, but cases of Covid-19 in Wales are alarmingly high. I am extremely worried that the conditions at these old military barracks are wholly unsuitable to deal with the cold weather and to facilitate effective social distancing.

“The establishment and continued use of the camp under these conditions shows a clear disregard for the health and wellbeing of those housed inside.”

The immigration minister, Chris Philp, said: “As required by law, we provide asylum seekers who would otherwise be destitute with accommodation, paid for by the taxpayer.

“During the pandemic we have acted quickly to source contingency accommodation to create additional capacity to ensure that our obligations can be met in full.

“We take the wellbeing of asylum seekers extremely seriously and those at Coltishall are staying in safe, Covid-compliant conditions, in line with the law and social distancing requirements.

“All their basic needs are met, those on the site have access to appropriate medical care, they are provided with three meals a day, and have access to the 24/7 Migrant Help helpline to raise any issues.”

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Uighurs

UK government faces battle over giving courts power to rule on genocide

High court could rule on whether Uighur people are suffering genocide in China if amendment passes

Dominic Raab believes measure will lead to vexatious court claims.

Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

Dominic Raab believes measure will lead to vexatious court claims.

Photograph: Frank Augstein/AP

[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor

Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.26 EST

The Foreign Office was facing a battle to stave off a parliamentary defeat after the Board of Deputies of British Jews said it was backing calls for the British courts to be given a new role in determining if the Uighur people are suffering genocide in [China](#).

Dominic Raab, the foreign secretary, is seeking to overturn an all party amendment passed in the Lords giving victims of genocide the power to ask the UK high court to determine if genocide is taking place. Such a determination would require the government to consider pulling out of any free trade agreement.

The amendment, being presented as a test of the importance of human rights in post Brexit-trade agreements, will be considered by MPs when the trade bill returns to the Commons on Tuesday. But the Board of Deputies revealed they were writing to all MPs to back the measure.

Phil Rosenberg from the Board of Deputies said: “This should not be a partisan issue, but an issue of natural conscience. I cannot underscore enough the importance we place on this issue and this amendment.”

He reported the president of the Board, Marie van der Zyl, had written to the Chinese ambassador to the UK. Her letter said: “Nobody can fail to notice the similarities between what is alleged to be happening in the People’s Republic of China today and what happened in Nazi Germany – people being forcibly loaded on to trains, beards of religious men being trimmed, women being sterilised and the grim spectre of concentration camps.”

The amendment, passed by the Lords with a majority of 129, has the backing of all the opposition parties, including the Labour frontbench, so Raab is working to keep the Conservative rebellion below 40 of his own MPs to see off the measure. The rebellion is said to be gaining support, but is thought to be a handful shy of the numbers needed to defeat the government.

The foreign secretary believes the measure will lead to vexatious court claims and may prove counterproductive since the threshold to prove genocide is so high. Genocide is defined as a deliberate attempt to destroy a race on the basis of their ethnicity or religion.

But the Tory leader of the rebellion, Iain Duncan Smith, said: “If we do not speak for those who are benighted and trashed by authorities then we do not

deserve to be in the mother of parliaments.”

Nusrat Ghani, the Conservative MP for Wealden, said the amendment was appropriate for a country starting off on a new phase in its history, adding the UN system for determining genocide, such as the international criminal court, was broken due to China’s use of its veto. “We are consuming goods made by the Uighur people in prison camp circumstances,” she said.

Lisa Nandy, the shadow foreign secretary, insisted she would not allow the treatment of the Uighur people to become a partisan issue saying it is “a scar on the conscience of the world”. But she insisted the government needed to back its tough words with more specific action.

Rahima Mahmut, the Uighur activist said she accepted rebellion is difficult, but anyone that votes against the amendment could not count themselves as friends of the Uighur people.

Tom Tugendhat, the chair of the foreign affairs select committee, said the UK needed to make a stand adding “the UK was having to fight slavery again for the first time in hundreds of years, but this is a battle that has come to people’s homes and shops”.

Raab this week tried to stave off the rebellion by announcing measures to tighten up supply chains of companies operating from Xinjiang province, but critics say his measures are tame in comparison with steps announced this week by the US state department.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/14/uk-government-faces-defeat-over-giving-courts-power-to-rule-on-genocide>

[Coronavirus](#)

Scotland Covid vaccine plan that included exact numbers taken offline

UK government reportedly angered by release of data, with concerns it could put suppliers under pressure

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Libby Brooks](#) and [Heather Stewart](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 12.55 EST First published on Thu 14 Jan 2021 11.51 EST

Nicola Sturgeon said: ‘What we’ve tried to do is put [the figures] out there so people can judge.’ Photograph: Reuters

Scotland’s plan for the distribution of coronavirus vaccinations has been taken offline after the UK government raised concerns that the document included sensitive details about vaccine supply.

The plan, which was published on Wednesday evening but removed by Thursday morning, set out the exact numbers of vaccines from Pfizer, AstraZeneca and Moderna the Scottish government expected to receive on a weekly basis up to the end of May, revealing two weeks when no AstraZeneca vaccine would be available.

The UK government is reportedly furious at the publication of such detailed figures, amid anxieties it could lead to suppliers coming under pressure from other countries.

Boris Johnson’s official spokesperson refused to give any details of how many doses the UK has, or how they will be allocated. “It’s obviously the case that vaccines are in high demand throughout the world, and it’s been the case throughout that we haven’t provided a detailed commentary on the size of our supplies or the detailed logistics around them. That will remain the case.”

► Quick guide

Who in the UK will get the new Covid-19 vaccine first?

Show Hide

But Scotland’s first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, responded to the row at her lunchtime briefing by arguing that her government was acting with transparency: “At the weekend I was reading UK government sources criticising the Scottish government for not going fast enough, saying: ‘Oh, they’ve got more supply than they are letting on.’ What we’ve tried to do is put it out there so people can judge.”

Sturgeon told her daily briefing on Thursday that the plan had been taken down “temporarily” because of concerns raised by UK ministers around “commercial confidentiality”.

Asked if she agreed that vaccine suppliers could be put under pressure, she said: “The UK government have been talking for a long time about the supplies that they have managed to secure so, you know, these are estimates of the supplies that have been secured. So I’m not convinced, but I think it would be for UK government ministers to talk more about the basis of their concern.”

The Scottish government has been accused of a “sluggish” initial deployment of the vaccine by opposition parties and a lack of clarity around how Scotland’s allocation was being used. It has set a target of vaccinating 400,000 people a week from the end of February.

The Scottish health secretary, Jeane Freeman, confirmed on Wednesday that the total Scottish vaccine allocation so far was 562,125 doses. Of those, 365,000 doses have arrived in Scottish vaccination centres or are with health boards or general practitioners, while the rest are “either in transit or in storage”.

Questions have been raised about why so many vaccines remain unavailable for immediate use and whether the infrastructure is in place to meet the latest targets. All over-80s are due to be vaccinated by the first week in February and all over-65s plus the clinically extremely vulnerable by the beginning of March, a total of about 1.4m people.

As of Wednesday morning, 191,965 people in [Scotland](#) had received their first dose of the vaccine and 2,990 their second dose, including just over 80% of residents and more than half of staff in “older adult” care homes and about half of frontline NHS and social care staff.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/14/scotland-covid-vaccine-plan-that-included-exact-numbers-taken-offline>

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[North Korea](#)

North Korea rolls out submarine-launched missiles at military parade

Kim Jong-un smiles and waves at huge parade in Kim Il-sung Square, Pyongyang, designed to show military progress

Image provided by the North Korean government shows missiles during a military parade marking the ruling party congress, at Kim Il-sung Square in Pyongyang on Thursday. Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

Image provided by the North Korean government shows missiles during a military parade marking the ruling party congress, at Kim Il-sung Square in Pyongyang on Thursday. Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

Associated Press

Thu 14 Jan 2021 20.58 EST

North Korea has included a developmental ballistic missile designed for launch from submarines in the military hardware put on show at a parade that punctuated leader Kim Jong-un's calls to expand his nuclear weapons program.

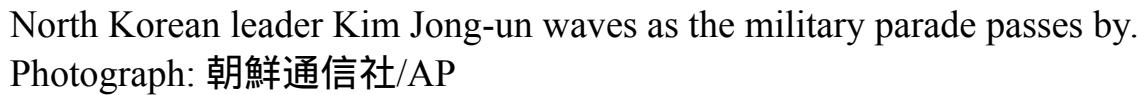
Thursday night's parade celebrated a major ruling party meeting at which Kim vowed maximum efforts to bolster his nuclear and missile program to counter what he described as US hostility.

[Kim Jong-un puts on show of force after Workers party congress – in pictures](#)
[Read more](#)

The Korean Central News Agency on Friday released photos of Kim wearing a black fur hat and leather trench coat, smiling and gesturing from a podium as thousands of troops and civilian spectators filled Kim Il-sung Square, named after his grandfather and North Korea's founder.

The agency said spectators roared as troops rolled out the country's most advanced strategic weapons, including submarine-launched ballistic missiles it described as the "world's mightiest".

Photos released by state media showed trucks transporting missiles that appeared to be either newly developed submarine-launched ballistic missiles or modified versions of previously tested systems.



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un waves as the military parade passes by.
Photograph: 朝鮮通信社/AP

The agency also said the parade featured other missiles that could “pre-emptively and completely destroy any enemy outside of our territory”. But it wasn’t immediately clear whether the description was referring to intercontinental ballistic missiles.

North Korea’s eight-day Workers’ party congress ended this week, at which Kim spoke of plans to salvage the nation’s economy amid US-led sanctions over his nuclear ambitions, pandemic-related border closures and natural disasters that wiped out crops.

Kim’s comments are likely intended to [pressure the incoming US government of Joe Biden](#), who has previously called the North Korean leader a “thug” and accused Trump of chasing spectacle rather than meaningful curbs on the North’s nuclear capabilities. Kim has not ruled out talks, but he said the fate of

bilateral relations would depend on whether Washington abandons its hostile policy toward Pyongyang.

[North Korea set for collision course with US as Kim Jong-un solidifies one-man rule](#)

[Read more](#)

The economic setbacks have left Kim nothing to show for his ambitious diplomacy with President Donald Trump, which derailed over disagreements in exchanging sanctions relief and the North's denuclearisation steps.

During its previous military parade in October, the North unveiled what appeared to be its biggest-yet ICBM. The country's previous long-range missiles demonstrated a potential ability to reach deep into the US mainland during flight tests in 2017.

It wasn't immediately clear whether Kim delivered a speech during the parade. North Korean state TV has not released footage of the event, and the South Korean and US militaries have not yet provided assessments of the weapons displayed by the North.

During the party congress, Kim unveiled plans to pursue more sophisticated military assets, including longer-range ICBMs that could potentially target the US mainland more reliably, new tactical nuclear weapons and warheads, nuclear-powered submarines, spy satellites and hypersonic weapons.

It is unclear whether the North is fully capable of acquiring such systems. While the country is believed to have accumulated at least dozens of nuclear weapons, outside estimates on the exact status of its nuclear and missiles programs vary widely.

The North has been developing submarine-launched ballistic missile systems for years. Acquiring an operational system would alarm its rivals and neighbours because missiles fired from submerged vessels are harder to detect in advance.

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Kim Jong-un puts on show of force after Workers party congress – in pictures

Troops march during a military parade to commemorate the 8th Congress of the Workers' Party in Pyongyang, North Korea January 14, 2021 in this photo supplied by North Korea's Central News Agency (KCNA).

Photograph: KCNA/Reuters

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Beirut explosion

Businessmen with ties to Assad linked to Beirut port blast cargo

Revelations about London company reinforce suspicions that Beirut, and not Mozambique, was intended destination of ammonium nitrate

The 2,750 tonnes of nitrate was thought to be destined for Mozambique – but there are suspicions Beirut was always the intended destination. Photograph: Hussein Malla/AP

The 2,750 tonnes of nitrate was thought to be destined for Mozambique – but there are suspicions Beirut was always the intended destination. Photograph: Hussein Malla/AP

[Martin Chulov](#) in Beirut

Thu 14 Jan 2021 22.00 EST

The company used to ship a huge stockpile of ammonium nitrate to Beirut port, where it caused [a devastating explosion last August](#), has been linked to three influential businessmen with ties to the Syrian president, Bashar al-Assad, a new investigation has found.

The revelations about Savaro Ltd – a London shelf company that was deregistered at Companies House on Tuesday – have amplified suspicions that Beirut had always been the cargo’s intended destination, and not Mozambique, its official endpoint.

They also for the first time raise the possibility that the detonation of 2,750 tonnes of nitrate in Beirut may have been a byproduct of Syrian officials’ attempts to source nitrate to use in weapons.

An investigation by the Lebanese film-maker Firas Hatoum, which aired this week on local television network Al-Jadeed, drew links between Savaro and three figures who had been central to efforts to bolster Assad since the earliest months of the Syrian war.

George Haswani, Mudalal Khuri and his brother Imad are joint Russian-Syrian citizens who have all been sanctioned by the United States for supporting the Syrian leader’s war effort. Companies linked to Haswani and Imad Khuri shared a London address with Savaro, which bought the nitrate in 2013. The official destination of the cargo was Mozambique, but it was diverted to and unloaded in Beirut, where it was stored unsafely until [the catastrophic blast](#).

Mudalal Khuri was accused by the US Treasury of attempting to source ammonium nitrate months before the Russian freighter Rhosus docked in the Lebanese capital midway through a winding voyage from Georgia. The ship’s change of route, its opaque ownership and the mysterious provenance of the cargo’s suppliers had fuelled suspicion that Beirut had been the intended destination of a sophisticated smuggling operation from the outset.

The Savaro address – 10 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BQ – was also the registered address of Hesco Engineering and Construction, which was directed by Haswani, a go-to businessman for Assad who was also sanctioned by the US in 2015 for allegedly buying oil from the Islamic State (Isis) terror group on behalf of the Syrian government.

According to documents supplied by Hatoum, another of Savaro's London addresses is linked to a second company tied to Haswani's Hesco now defunct company, IK Petroleum, which was directed by Imad Khuri until 2016.

The apparent connections have rippled through Beirut, where the ruling class is staring down a judge-led investigation into the blast. Caretaker prime minister Hassan Diab, three former ministers and more than 30 low-level officials [have so far been charged](#) in relation to the disaster, which killed more than 200 people and devastated the city's port-side suburbs.

The spectre of a link between the explosion and both the Syrian regime and Russia, which has heavily backed Assad on the battlefield, has been met with fury in some quarters and disdain in others. "Of course the nitrate was meant for Assad," said Raad Ayoubi, an insurance broker. "Another question needs to be asked, though: how did it get from Beirut to Bashar?"

A second man, Hatem Mansour, was dismissive. "Who cares who blew us up? Just tell them to keep us far from this corona curse and we'll forgive them."

04:36

What we know about the Beirut explosion – video explainer

There are growing concerns that any local investigation would be stymied by domestic power bases, who all took a stake in the operations of Beirut port and a cut of its revenues. Beirut's port has long been [a microcosm of Lebanon's political system](#), which runs ministries as fiefdoms, siphoning off massive revenues from state coffers and apportioning them to leaders who retained power after the country's civil war.

Complicating any local probe is the international dimension of the cargo's journey as well as the shadowy world of global shipping, a baffling array of [shelf companies](#) used along the way, and witnesses who are likely to remain elusive without a global effort to track them down.

Interpol this week issued red notices for three figures thought to be relevant to the probe: a Russian national, Igor Grechushkin, who is believed to be the owner of the MV Rhosus; another Russian, Borys Prokoshew, who was the ship's captain at the time; and Jorge Moreira, who is Portuguese. He allegedly sourced the ammonium nitrate from a Georgian factory, Rustavi Azot. Why a shelf company was used to broker the deal with the Mozambique firm Fábrica

de Explosivos de Mocambique is central to inquiries. The firm is linked to the Assads.

“I doubt that [Lebanon can resolve an investigation] for many reasons, looking at the way that things were handled in previous months,” said Hatoum. “And I don’t trust any foreign or international investigation either because we have had such a bad experience in the past and politics always gets in the way.”

Last week the Lebanese power broker Walid Jumblatt said: “I call for the continuation of the investigation to uncover the purpose of the nitrate. It’s important to establish whether it could be destined for the Syrian regime. It must keep going and not be waylaid.”

Additional reporting by Leena Saidi

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US Capitol breach

Capitol rioters planned to capture and kill politicians, say prosecutors

Charges so far include hurling fire extinguisher at officer and beating another with flagpole

Jacob Chansley, wearing horns, at the Capitol on 6 January. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

Jacob Chansley, wearing horns, at the Capitol on 6 January. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

Reuters

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.50 EST

Federal prosecutors have offered an ominous new assessment of last week's [siege of the US Capitol by Donald Trump's supporters](#), saying in a court filing that rioters intended "to capture and assassinate elected officials".

Prosecutors offered that view in a filing asking a judge to detain Jacob Chansley, the Arizona man and QAnon conspiracy theorist who was photographed wearing horns as he stood at the desk of the vice-president, Mike Pence, in the chamber of the US Senate.

[Olympic swimming champion Klete Keller charged over US Capitol invasion](#)
[Read more](#)

The detention memo, written by justice department lawyers in Arizona, goes into greater detail about the FBI's investigation into Chansley, revealing that he left a note for Pence warning that "it's only a matter of time, justice is coming".

"Strong evidence, including Chansley's own words and actions at the Capitol, supports that the intent of the Capitol rioters was to capture and assassinate elected officials in the United States government," prosecutors wrote.

A public defender representing Chansley could not be immediately reached for comment. Chansley is due to appear in federal court on Friday.

Prosecutors and federal agents have begun bringing more serious charges tied to violence at the Capitol, including against a retired firefighter, Robert Sanford, that he hurled a fire extinguisher at the head of one police officer and another, Peter Stager, accused of beating a different officer with a pole bearing an American flag.

In Chansley's case, prosecutors said the charges "involve active participation in an insurrection attempting to violently overthrow the United States government", and warned that "the insurrection is still in progress" as [law enforcement prepares for more demonstrations in Washington and state capitals](#).

They also suggested he suffered from drug abuse and mental illness, and told the judge he posed a serious flight risk.

"Chansley has spoken openly about his belief that he is an alien, a higher being, and he is here on Earth to ascend to another reality," they wrote.

The justice department has brought more than 80 criminal cases in connection with the violent riots at the US Capitol last week, in which Trump's supporters stormed the building, ransacked offices, and in some cases attacked police.

01:13

Pro-Trump mob chases lone Black police officer up stairs in Capitol – video

Many of the people charged so far were [easily tracked down by the FBI](#), which has more than 200 suspects, thanks in large part to videos and photos posted on social media.

Michael Sherwin, the acting US attorney for the District of Columbia, has said that while many of the initial charges may seem minor, he expects much more serious charges to be filed as the justice department continues its investigation.

04:34

Pro-Trump rioters storm US Capitol during vote on Biden election victory – video report

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/15/capitol-rioters-planned-capture-kill-officials-say-prosecutors>

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[Christianity](#)

US set for flurry of ‘Christian nationalist’ bills advanced by religious right

Legislation that would erode LGBTQ and reproductive rights expected to be introduced in states across America, experts warn

An Amy Coney Barrett supporter holds aloft a poster outside the supreme court in October. The Christian right could be further emboldened after her controversial appointment. Photograph: Roberto Schmidt/AFP/Getty Images

An Amy Coney Barrett supporter holds aloft a poster outside the supreme court in October. The Christian right could be further emboldened after her controversial appointment. Photograph: Roberto Schmidt/AFP/Getty Images

[Adam Gabbatt](#)

[@adamgabbatt](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.30 EST

Donald Trump is set to leave the White House and Republicans are about to relinquish [control of the Senate](#), but experts are warning the US is facing a wave of rightwing ‘Christian nationalist’ legislation in 2021, as the religious right aims to thrust Christianity into everyday American life.

[The Democrats owe their new control of the senate to Black voters in Georgia | Theodore R Johnson](#)

[Read more](#)

With the supreme court now dominated by Trump-appointed conservative justices, elected officials in states across the country are set to introduce bills which would hack away at LGBTQ rights, reproductive rights, challenge the ability of couples to adopt children, and see religion forced into classrooms, according to a report by the [American Atheists](#) organization.

In recent years Republicans have sought to infuse religion into state politics across the country, many of the bills lifted from model legislation drafted by well-funded Christian lobbying organizations [under an effort known as “Project Blitz”](#).

As the coronavirus pandemic hit the US 2020 proved a relatively quiet year for religious bills, but in 2021, the US could see Republicans make up for lost time.

“Very few bills managed to be pushed forward last year due to the pandemic,” said Alison Gill, vice-president for legal and policy at American Atheists, which seeks to protect the separation of church and state. “Those issues that are contentious in the culture war will continue to move forward this year, and will affect LGBTQ people, religious minorities, and non-religious people and women and reproductive access.”

Over the past five years a wave of discriminatory laws have been introduced in state legislatures, frequently in the name of [Christianity](#). LGBTQ people, in particular, have been targeted, including efforts to prevent trans people using certain bathrooms, and to prevent LGBTQ couples from adopting children.

The danger isn’t just to people in individual states. With the supreme court now dominated 6-3 by conservatives, challenges to federal law could work their way

to the highest court in the US, where decisions could enshrine discriminatory laws.

Gill said that after Brett Kavanaugh [was appointed](#) to the court in 2018, some states [pushed a flurry](#) of reproductive rights laws which would limit women's access to abortion. The Christian right could be further emboldened after Amy Coney Barrett's [controversial appointment](#) to the supreme court in October.

"In a lot of ways, and I think the reproductive bills are a good example of this, they're not just passing laws that do negative things, they're trying to set up future cases that will then go before the court, that can be used to advance an agenda," Gill said.

"It's not just about the negative law itself."

There have been multiple efforts to blend the separation of church and state in recent years, driven by [Christian nationalists](#) who believe America was established as, and should remain, a Christian country.

In 2019, Christian hardliners [introduced bills](#) in several American states which would see the phrase "In God we trust" displayed on public buildings, in schools and on public vehicles, including police cars. Six states – Louisiana, Arkansas, Tennessee, Florida, Alabama and Arizona – [approved versions of this legislation](#), and it became law for every public school in those states to display the phrase.

A year earlier, Oklahoma [passed an adoption law](#) which allows private adoption agencies to turn away LGBTQ couples on religious grounds. It became the 10th state since 2015 to pass some form of the law, which allows child placement agencies to deny anyone who does not match their religious or moral beliefs, an investigation [by the Center for Public Integrity](#) found.

In most of these states, parts of the legislation had almost identical wording. That's a result of [Project Blitz](#), an effort by rightwing Christian organizations to push through bills furthering their aims.

Project Blitz provides draft legislation to lawmakers across the country. Frequently, that legislation is copied, pasted and presented in state capitols. In 2018, state lawmakers introduced 74 bills similar to Project Blitz draft legislation, according to America Atheists. The bills ranged "from measures

designed to restrict same-sex marriage to allowing adoption agencies to deny placements because of religion”, American Atheists said.

The aim is also to stuff up state houses with legislation, drawing mostly Democratic legislators’ time and attention away from other issues.

“It’s kind of like whack-a-mole for the other side,” David Barton, founder of the Christian-right organization WallBuilders and one of four members of Project Blitz’s steering team, [told state legislators](#) in a call which was made public.

“It’ll drive ‘em crazy that they’ll have to divide their resources out in opposing this.”

Project Blitz, and much of the Christian nationalist legislation, has broader aims than just drawing time and serving as an irritant, however. Christian nationalists hope to pave the way for further attacks.

[Are Republicans really ready to unhitch their wagon from Donald Trump?](#)
[Read more](#)

Katherine Stewart, a journalist and author of [The Power Worshippers: Inside the Dangerous Rise of Religious Nationalism](#), said leaders behind Christian nationalists efforts “are playing a long and ambitious game”.

The people behind Christianity-based legislative efforts grouped their various efforts into three categories, according to how difficult they would be to pass, Stewart said, and each is part of a larger picture.

“The first category consisted of largely symbolic gestures, like resolutions to emblazon the motto ‘In God We Trust’ in public school classrooms,” Stewart said.

“But the point of phase one was to prepare the ground for phases two and three, which aimed to entangle government with their version of religion in deeper ways.

“Considered individually, these bills making their ways through state legislatures appear to have a scattershot quality. In reality, they are very often components of a coordinated, overarching strategy.”

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Indonesia

Indonesia earthquake: dozens dead after tremors and landslides hit Sulawesi

Thousands flee for safety and higher ground after island's second quake in 24 hours

[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) in Bangkok, and [Febriana Firdaus](#) in Kalimantan

Fri 15 Jan 2021 07.25 EST First published on Thu 14 Jan 2021 20.42 EST

At least 37 people have been killed and hundreds injured following a strong earthquake that shook the island of Sulawesi in [Indonesia](#) early on Friday morning, prompting landslides and destroying houses.

Thousands of people fled their homes to seek safety when the 6.2-magnitude earthquake hit just after 1am local time on Friday morning. The epicentre was 6km north-east of Majene city in West Sulawesi.

Hundreds of buildings were destroyed or damaged, including a hospital, which collapsed with more than a dozen patients and staff trapped beneath it.

“The hospital is flattened,” said Arianto, who like many Indonesians goes by one name, from the rescue agency in Mamuju city, near Majene. Rescuers were also trying to reach a family of eight buried beneath the rubble of their destroyed home, he told AFP.

At least 37 people have been killed in Majene and Mamuju, and rescue workers fear the death toll will rise further. “Many of the dead are buried under rubble,” said Ali Rahman, the head of the local disaster mitigation agency in Mamuju. In Majene, 637 people were said to be injured.

[The epicentre of the 6.2-magnitude earthquake was 6km north-east of Majene on Sulawesi](#)

The epicentre of the 6.2-magnitude earthquake was 6km north-east of Majene on Sulawesi

The full extent of the damage caused by the quake, which was 10km deep, is still emerging. Accessing affected areas is a challenge: roads are blocked, bridges have fallen and the local airport in Mamuju has also been damaged. Electricity is cut and phone lines are down.

Videos shared on social media showed panicked residents rushing to safety and collapsed homes brought down by the quake. In one video, a father could be heard asking people to help rescue his children buried under rubble. “My children there ... they are trapped inside, please help,” he said.

Footage released by the national disaster agency showed a girl trapped in the wreckage of a house crying out for help. Her mother was alive but unable to move out, she said. “Please help me, it hurts,” the girl told rescuers.

Rescuers search for survivors at Mitra Manakarra hospital in Mamuju.
Photograph: Firdaus/AFP/Getty Images

Busrah Basir Maras, 36, a teacher, was sleeping at home in Malunda, Majene, when the earthquake struck. His family woke him and they fled on a motorbike.

“It took six hours for me to drive my motorcycle [away from] the epicentre. But it was hard because there were many landslides. I was crying and I am still crying,” he told the Guardian.

His family were safe but the head of his village was killed by a collapsing building. Many people had died, he said. “They were sleeping and then buried in the collapsed building.”

Survivors who were still stuck in rubble at the epicentre needed medical attention, he said.

People look at the damaged office of governor of West Sulawesi in Mamuju.
Photograph: Antara Foto/Reuters

The earthquake was felt strongly for about seven seconds. It did not trigger a tsunami warning, but people along coastal areas fled to higher ground as a precaution.

The head of Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology, and Geophysical Agency (BMKG), Dwikorita Karnawati, told a news conference that strong aftershocks could follow, and that another powerful quake could still trigger a tsunami.

In 2018, the city of Palu in Sulawesi was struck by a [devastating 6.2-magnitude quake](#) and tsunami that killed thousands of people.

At least 26 aftershocks have been recorded in the area over the past day. The same district was hit by a 5.9-magnitude quake on Thursday afternoon, which damaged several homes.

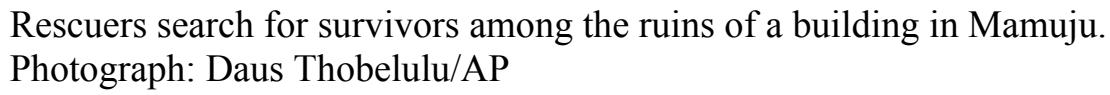
Indonesia is a nation of high tectonic activity. It is often struck by earthquakes, volcanic eruptions and tsunamis because it lies on the Ring of Fire, an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

The response to latest quake will be complicated further by the coronavirus, which Indonesia has struggled to contain. It recorded its biggest daily increase in coronavirus cases on Friday with 12,818 new infections. So far there have been 25,484 confirmed deaths from Covid-19.

“One of our biggest fears is exactly what’s going on right now – what happens when there’s a major event during a pandemic? It’s a perfect storm,” said Jan Gelfand of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

“If you have people who are evacuated, the risk [of infection] for those people goes up tremendously,” said Gelfand. “You don’t want to put people in more danger than they are already in.”

More than 15,000 people have been displaced as a result of the earthquake, according to the national disaster agency.



Rescuers search for survivors among the ruins of a building in Mamuju.
Photograph: Daus Thobelulu/AP

Agence France-Presse and Associated Press contributed to this story

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[Australian media](#)

Google refuses to answer questions about removing Australian news sites from search results

Google's 'experiments' prompt treasurer to call on tech giants to pay for news instead of blocking them

Google blindsided consumers and news companies by removing Australian media outlets from search results. Photograph: Arnd Wiegmann/Reuters
Google blindsided consumers and news companies by removing Australian media outlets from search results. Photograph: Arnd Wiegmann/Reuters

[Josh Taylor](#)
[@joshgnosis](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 19.48 EST

Google has refused to answer questions on its secret trial of removing news sites from search results in Australia, with the treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, saying the company should focus on paying for news, not blocking it.

Google blindsided news consumers and media outlets this week with [a trial that removed Australian media](#) outlets such as the ABC, Nine, the Guardian and others from its search results.

Users were not informed of the change, or advised how to find news articles when searching, with some reporting they initially believed it was an issue only affecting them.

People affected by the trial can get around the block by searching in a private browser window, such as in incognito mode in Google Chrome.

[Google's 'experiment' hiding Australian news just shows its inordinate power | Belinda Barnet](#)
[Read more](#)

The move by Google came as a Senate committee is reviewing legislation that would [force Google and Facebook to negotiate](#) with Australian news media companies for a fair price for displaying local news content.

Google has argued strongly against the code since it was first announced last year, by alerting users to the proposed changes in search and in Google Chrome.

Guardian Australia put a list of questions to Google, which the company has refused to answer. Here is what we know, based on anecdotal reports from people affected and previous statements the company issued.

How long was the trial running for?

We don't know for sure but this particular trial appears to have been running this week.

How many news outlets were affected?

According to reports, outlets affected include the Guardian, the Australian, the ABC, the Australian Financial Review, the Age and the Sydney Morning Herald at least.

Searches for content from these websites served up links to other websites.

Google has refused to provide a comprehensive list of which news outlets were affected.

What is the total number of users (not expressed as a percentage) in Australia who were unable to find news in search results?

A Google spokesman said on Wednesday night that the company was “running a few experiments that will each reach about 1% of Google Search users in Australia to measure the impacts of news businesses and Google Search on each other”.

Is Google planning to alert users affected about their involvement in the trial?

Google has not provided a response to this question but no person affected to whom Guardian Australia spoke was informed they were part of the trial.

What was the purpose of the trial?

A Google spokesman previously said it was one of tens of thousands of such trials the company has run on search results in the past year but gave no further details.

We have no further information on the next five questions put to Google by Guardian Australia, which include:

- Is this the only trial of its sort Google has run since the news media bargaining code was announced?
- If not, what other trials has Google undertaken?

- Are any more trials planned?
- Did Google inform the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission or the government about its plans to trial this as part of the negotiations for the news bargaining code?
- Why weren't news outlets informed about the trial in advance?

The communications minister, Paul Fletcher, said the action highlighted issues with the market power of tech companies.

"This conduct by Google ... I think goes very much to the kind of market power issues which this news media bargaining code is designed to deal with, and I think underlines the public policy importance of the government engaging on this," he told ABC RN on Thursday.

Frydenberg said on Thursday tech giants should pay for news content.

"The digital giants should focus on paying for original content not blocking it. That's my message to those digital giants," the treasurer said.

While it is not unusual for Google to not answer specific questions, the company has not yet issued any additional statement on the trial.

If Google were to implement such a wide-ranging ban under the proposed code, it could be in violation of the code, and could face fines of up to \$10m. The code would require Google not to differentiate between news businesses signed up to the code and those not, as a means of avoiding entering into negotiations with the news outlets signed up to the code.

So unless all news was removed from search results entirely, Google would likely be in violation of the code.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jan/15/google-refuses-to-answer-questions-about-removing-australian-news-sites-from-search-results>

[Italy](#)

'Now is not the time': Italians angry and perplexed as government teeters

Administration on brink of collapse as Matteo Renzi pulls his party from ruling coalition

Matteo Renzi, the leader of Italia Viva, has withdrawn his party from the coalition after disagreements, including on plans for economic recovery after Covid. Photograph: Antonio Masiello/Getty

Matteo Renzi, the leader of Italia Viva, has withdrawn his party from the coalition after disagreements, including on plans for economic recovery after Covid. Photograph: Antonio Masiello/Getty

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Thu 14 Jan 2021 12.59 EST

Italians have responded with a mix of anger, perplexity and calls for the entire government to be sent packing after the country was plunged into political mayhem once again.

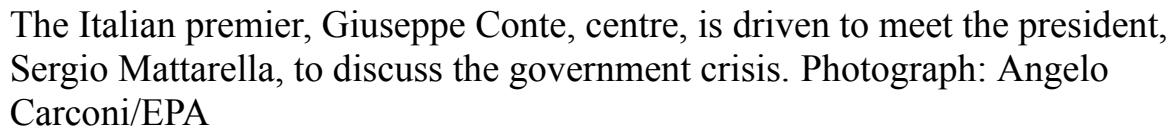
The Giuseppe Conte-led administration is teetering on the brink of collapse after the former prime minister, Matteo Renzi, pulled his small Italia Viva party from the ruling coalition. Renzi said his party was not to blame for triggering the crisis, but that it had been going on for months. He argued that his ministers had shown courage in leaving their posts, and blamed their departure on the government's handling of the coronavirus pandemic and weak strategy in rebuilding the tattered economy.

But many Italians do not see things the same way. In an Ipsos survey on Wednesday, 73% said it was not the time for a political crisis and believed Renzi was merely pursuing his own interests.

"We're in the middle of a pandemic. Now is not the time to be adding to problems," said Carlo Gerardi, manager of a hospitality company. "This will block everything – so many businesses are struggling without financial support and people are losing their salaries."

Renzi's move leaves Conte's coalition, made up of the Five Star Movement (M5S) and Democratic party (PD), without a parliamentary majority. As of Thursday afternoon, the premier had not indicated his next step. He could either offer his resignation to the president, Sergio Mattarella, who could give him a mandate to try to forge a new alliance, or go to parliament for a vote of confidence. But if he opts for the latter, it is not clear whether he will secure enough support to fill the gap left by Italia Viva's 18 senators. Other possible outcomes include Mattarella putting together a broad-based government of national unity or, failing that, calling elections.

Gerardi believes the government should carry on with Conte. "Then, once the pandemic is over and we see signs of economic recovery, they can do whatever they want."



The Italian premier, Giuseppe Conte, centre, is driven to meet the president, Sergio Mattarella, to discuss the government crisis. Photograph: Angelo Carconi/EPA

Tiziana Nicolisi, a bar owner in Rome, said: “Renzi has made a mistake and a lot of people think so, especially with hundreds of coronavirus deaths a day.”

But some support the manoeuvre. Renzi’s main complaint was about Conte’s spending plans for the €223bn (£198bn) that [Italy](#) is likely to receive in loans and grants from the EU to reboot its economy, arguing that the money risked being squandered on handouts rather than wisely invested. His suggestions were accepted and the recovery plan was changed and approved by the cabinet late on Tuesday night.

Even though Renzi said the new plan was a “step forward”, it was not enough to change his mind. He also reiterated his grievance over Italy not tapping the EU’s bailout fund – the European stability mechanism (ESM) – to shore up the

health service. M5S, the largest ruling party, has always resisted this for fear that it would leave Italy beholden to strict EU austerity rules.

“In the original plan, there were no investments in the economy, just money being given away,” said Arianna Bocchino, an Italia Viva supporter. “Renzi had to push and push to make it better. This coalition is incapable of managing money well and they don’t want to listen.”

Since the Italian republic was founded in 1946, Italy has had 67 governments. Renzi, who led Italy between 2014 and 2016, in effect orchestrated the Conte-led coalition between the PD and M5S after the collapse of the coalition government of M5S and Matteo Salvini’s far-right League in August 2019. He then left the PD to establish Italia Viva, a centrist force which, he said, would “do politics differently”.

Italia Viva, M5S and PD would likely be trampled upon if a national ballot was held any time soon. The opposition, which is made up of the League, its fellow far-right partner, Brothers of Italy, and Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, could potentially secure more than 50% of the vote.

For Alessandro Urlandi, a shop owner in Rome, a new government is what is needed. “I’m completely sick of it. This lot have no idea.”

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[US immigration](#)

Trump official admits family separation policy 'should never have been implemented'

Rod Rosenstein publicly denounces ‘zero-tolerance’ policy for first time, following report showing US didn’t effectively coordinate care for children

In July 2020, the Guardian reported Rod Rosenstein had made comments in a conference call with US attorneys charged with implementing the policy that in effect meant that no child was too young to be separated from their parents.

Photograph: Greg Nash/AP

In July 2020, the Guardian reported Rod Rosenstein had made comments in a conference call with US attorneys charged with implementing the policy that in

effect meant that no child was too young to be separated from their parents.

Photograph: Greg Nash/AP

Amanda Holpuch in New York and Stephanie Kirchgaessner in Washington

Thu 14 Jan 2021 15.43 EST

For the first time, a senior [Trump administration](#) official who helped implement family separation has condemned the hardline immigration policy, which made it possible for the government to take more than 3,000 children, including infants, from their parents at the US-Mexico border in 2018.

In response to a damning report published on Thursday by the US justice department's internal watchdog on the "zero-tolerance" policy, which made family separation possible, the former deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein said the policy "should have never been proposed or implemented".

The justice department's Office of Inspector General's (OIG) long-awaited [report](#) said department leadership knew the policy would result in children being separated from their families and that the former US attorney general Jeff Sessions "demonstrated a deficient understanding of the legal requirements related to the care and custody of separated children".

"We concluded that the Department's single-minded focus on increasing immigration prosecutions came at the expense of careful and appropriate consideration of the impact of family unit prosecutions and child separations," the report said.

The OIG said justice department leadership "did not effectively coordinate" with the relevant agencies before implementing zero-tolerance, despite being aware of the challenges created by increasing prosecutions of adult asylum seekers under the policy.

In a conference call in May 2018, Sessions told prosecutors: "We need to take away children," according to notes taken by people on the call and provided to the OIG.

Rosenstein, who publicly denounced the policy for the first time on Thursday, told the OIG he had known the zero-tolerance policy would result in family separations. He also told investigators he had not been involved with the formulation of the policy and had received reassurances about it that he now believed were wrong.

[Revealed: Rod Rosenstein advised there was no age limit on child separations](#)
[Read more](#)

[In July 2020](#), the Guardian reported that Rosenstein had made comments in a conference call with US attorneys charged with implementing the policy that in effect meant that no child was too young to be separated from their parents.

The call came after US attorneys on the south-west border had repeatedly raised concerns about how zero-tolerance was supposed to be operated. A month after the policy had been in place, to help attorneys, a list of questions was drafted for DHS and HHS, which included: “How does DHS deal with infants?”

At that point, it was clear no agency had a master list of separated children.

In a statement provide to the Guardian on Thursday, Rosenstein said he and his colleagues at the justice department “faced unprecedented challenges” compared with work he had done as a US attorney under previous presidential administrations.

“Since leaving the Department, I have often asked myself what we should have done differently, and no issue has dominated my thinking more than the zero-tolerance immigration policy,” Rosenstein said. “It was a failed policy that never should have been proposed or implemented. I wish we all had done better.”

Sessions, who resigned in November 2018, announced the zero-tolerance policy in April 2018. Facing intense pressure nationally and abroad, the Trump administration stopped mass family separations in June 2018, though asylum-seeking families continue to be separated today at a smaller scale.

Family separation, which legal experts and doctors said [constituted torture](#), was supported by multiple federal agencies.

The homeland security department (DHS) separated families at the border and detained the parents, the health department eventually took custody of children separated from their parents and [the justice department leadership](#) provided the legal framework that made separations possible.

The justice department OIG report confirms [earlier watchdog reports](#) from the other agencies' monitors, which found inadequate tracking systems were in place.

A [January 2019](#) report from the health department OIG found the Trump administration might have separated thousands of migrant children from their parents at the border for up to a year before family separation was a publicly known practice.

The lead attorney on an ongoing family separation lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union, Lee Gelernt, said: "This new report shows just how far the Trump administration was willing to go to destroy these families. Just when you think the Trump administration can't sink any lower, it does.

"The Biden-Harris administration will inherit the legacy of family separation, and we don't doubt that more horrific details will continue to emerge," Gelernt said. "We need them to act with urgency – every day without action makes it harder to find and reunite families."

Dick Durbin, a Democratic US senator from Illinois, said he would hold the justice department officials responsible to account as the incoming chair of the US Senate judiciary committee. "Those who planned and executed the zero-tolerance policy will have to live with the knowledge that their cruelty and cowardice are responsible for the scars these children will carry for the rest of their lives," Durbin said.

Despite being the driving force behind the zero-tolerance policy, Sessions refused to be interviewed by OIG investigators.

The report said Sessions told US attorneys on the south-west border that families would be quickly prosecuted and reunited, even though doing so was, "in most cases, a practical and legal impossibility".

The former homeland security secretary Kirstjen Nielsen has [repeatedly](#) defended her decision to enforce the zero-tolerance policy, which was announced in April 2018.

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Second world war

Life of Indian princess who fought Nazis to be told in TV series

Spy Princess is based on Noor Inayat Khan, killed in France while working as a British spy in second world war

Noor Inayat Khan, the daughter of a Sufi mystic, was captured by the Gestapo and executed in Dachau in 1944. Photograph: Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)/PA

Noor Inayat Khan, the daughter of a Sufi mystic, was captured by the Gestapo and executed in Dachau in 1944. Photograph: Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC)/PA

Dalya Alberge

Thu 14 Jan 2021 16.00 EST

The story of the daughter of an Indian Sufi mystic, who was killed while a British secret agent fighting with the French resistance in the second world war, is to be told in a TV drama series.

Noor Inayat Khan, who was captured by the Gestapo and executed in Dachau concentration camp, will be portrayed by Freida Pinto, star of the Oscar-winning film *Slumdog Millionaire*.

The series, *Spy Princess*, is described as an emotional thriller. It will be directed by Anand Tucker and produced by Andy Paterson, known for the films *Girl with a Pearl Earring* and *Hilary and Jackie*. The project is also being produced by Claire Ingham, founder of Red Room Films, who initiated the project.

Khan became the first female radio operator to be sent to Nazi-occupied [France](#). Sending vital messages back to London from behind enemy lines, she significantly aided the success of the allied landing on D-day.

Codenamed Madeleine, she became a significant target for the Gestapo and was aged 29 when captured in 1943. She was tortured before being shot in the head the following year, having revealed nothing to her captors.

Pinto, who is also executive producer of the series, described Khan as “a fierce and amazing woman, the most unlikely heroine of the second world war”.

She said that as a wireless operator in occupied France Khan had a life expectancy of just six weeks. “Sending women to the frontline is controversial even now ... Sending a Sufi mystic, who won’t use a gun, daughter of a long-haired Indian guru who preaches love and peace – ridiculous! But Noor thrives, not in spite of her differences, but because of them. Her struggle to reconcile her values with the desire to find her own path and with her complex sense of duty is something I am so excited to explore.”

Paterson said: “It’s fabulous, in terms of diversity, to find proper, wonderful stories that take you there without contrivance. She was an amazing character. I can’t believe her story’s never been told by film-makers.”

The series, written by Olivia Hetreed, is based on *Spy Princess: The Life of Noor Inayat Khan* by Shrabani Basu, who is also consultant to the series.

Hetreed said: “At a time when conflicts about race, identity and patriotism have a new and frightening energy, Noor’s character and her nail-biting story of hair’s-breadth escapes and life and death choices offer us the picture of a heroine who defies every prejudice and stereotype.”

Pinto added: “Noor has a quiet strength that she’s not entirely aware of. Alone in Paris, she lives and loves more intensely in a few months than most of us do in a lifetime, helping establish the ‘secret armies’ of the resistance who will rise up on D-day, astonishing the men who said she should never have been sent to the frontline.”

Tucker said: “Olivia has created a spy thriller, a love story and a search for identity, the true story of a remarkable and complex woman doing the most dangerous job imaginable. Our series challenges ideas of heroism and the portrayal of Asian women on screen – often victims, sometimes terrorists – never the hero.”

Last year, [the Guardian reported](#) that the biographer Arthur Magida had acquired an account by Pierre Viénot, Khan’s fellow resistance fighter, written as a private memoir for his family. It revealed that, in autumn 1943, with the Gestapo closing in on Khan, they sought to disguise her appearance by taking her to a hair salon and getting her a whole new wardrobe.

The problem was that everything she picked was blue, just as before, and the Gestapo knew it was her favourite. “That was a key factor that helped give her away,” Magida said.

He published his research in his book, *Code Name Madeleine: A Sufi Spy in Nazi-Occupied Paris*, which was nominated for a Pulitzer in the biography category.

Hearing of the new series, Magida said: “Noor’s story is extraordinary. She’s not an historical artefact, frozen in time. She’s immensely relevant to our time, just as she was to hers.”

The makers of the series are in discussions with broadcasters.

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Global development

Argentina legalizing abortion will spur reform in Latin America, minister says

‘I am very confident there will be a change,’ Elizabeth Gómez Alcorta says as new law goes into effect

People celebrate after Argentina approves a bill to legalize abortion, in Cordoba, 30 December 2020. Photograph: Daniel Bustos/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

People celebrate after Argentina approves a bill to legalize abortion, in Cordoba, 30 December 2020. Photograph: Daniel Bustos/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

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Uki Goñi in Buenos Aires

Thu 14 Jan 2021 15.39 EST

Argentina's historic decision to [legalize abortion](#) will help spur reform across Latin America, the country's gender minister has told the Guardian, as a new law allowing the practice goes into effect.

The bill passed by congress on 30 December made [Argentina](#) the first major Latin American country to legalize abortion. It will be signed into law on Thursday evening by the president, Alberto Fernández, marking a turning point for a region where the Catholic church has been a major cultural and political influence for centuries.

“We know there will be a lot of resistance in the rest of Latin America, especially from the Catholic church and other churches,” said the gender minister, Elizabeth Gómez Alcorta, in a Zoom interview.

“The regional conquest will take some time, but I have been getting calls from officials in Mexico, Bolivia, Chile, Ecuador and Peru. Progressive governments are returning to power in some countries, I am very confident there will be a change.”

Gómez Alcorta wore a green wristband in reference to the green scarf adopted as a symbol of Argentina’s women’s movement. “The legalization of abortion in Argentina will have an effect across the whole region,” Gómez Alcorta said. “We will paint Latin America green”.

Elective abortions are currently legal only in Uruguay, Guyana, Mexico City and the Mexican state of Oaxaca. But pro-choice activists have become increasingly outspoken and there are signs that attitudes are starting to shift.

A recent poll in Mexico showed that [support for access to abortion rose dramatically in 2020](#), from 29% in March to 48% in November.

Argentina’s government has [pledged to ensure that criminal charges are dropped and judicial sentences suspended](#) for more than 1,500 women and doctors accused of violating the ban.

[Victory for Argentina’s women as abortion charges are dropped](#)
[Read more](#)

“We have reports of 1,530 people who have either been sentenced or charged and we will be working to make sure those sentences are commuted and those charges are dropped,” Gómez Alcorta said. The actual number of women who have had to face the law over clandestine abortions is probably far higher, she said, as data has only been provided for 15 of the country’s 24 provinces.

The new law is likely to face legal challenges but the minister said she was confident that the country’s supreme court would uphold it.

Plans are also being put in place to overcome other kinds of resistance. “We know there will be resistance in the more conservative provinces where they might try to restrict access, so we are going to work to make sure that women are informed of where they can go to get an abortion.”

The ministry will also ensure legal abortion is available free of charge at clinics nationwide, as the law stipulates. “There is certain to be resistance from private

medical insurance plans against providing interventions free of charge, so we will be keeping an eye on that as well.”

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2021.01.15 - Climate crisis

- [**Environment 2020 was hottest year on record by narrow margin, Nasa says**](#)
- [**Climate crisis Countries adapting too slowly to climate breakdown, UN warns**](#)
- [**'Ghastly future' Top scientists warn of mass extinction and climate disruption**](#)

Climate change

2020 was hottest year on record by narrow margin, Nasa says

Due to different methods, US Noaa judged year as fractionally cooler than 2016 while UK Met Office put 2020 in close second place

Firefighters look out over a burning hillside in Yorba Linda, California, on 27 October 2020. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

Firefighters look out over a burning hillside in Yorba Linda, California, on 27 October 2020. Photograph: Robyn Beck/AFP/Getty Images

[Oliver Milman](#)

[@olliemilman](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 13.15 EST

Last year was by a narrow margin the hottest ever on record, according to [Nasa](#), with the climate crisis stamping its mark on 2020 through soaring temperatures, enormous hurricanes and unprecedented wildfires.

The average global land and ocean temperature in 2020 was the highest ever measured, [Nasa announced on Thursday](#), edging out the previous record set in 2016 by less than a tenth of a degree.

[Countries adapting too slowly to climate breakdown, UN warns](#)

[Read more](#)

Due to slightly different methods used, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (Noaa) [judged](#) 2020 as fractionally cooler than 2016, while the [UK Met Office](#) also put 2020 in a close second place. The European Union's climate observation program [puts the two years in a dead heat](#).

Regardless of these minor differences, all the datasets again underlined the long-term heating up of the planet due to the burning of fossil fuels, deforestation and other human activities.

The world's seven hottest years on record have now all occurred since 2014, with the 10 warmest all taking place in the last 15 years. There have now been 44 consecutive years where global temperatures have been above the 20th-century average.

Scientists said average temperatures will keep edging upwards due to the huge amount of greenhouse gases we are expelling into the atmosphere. "This isn't the new normal," said Gavin Schmidt, director of Nasa's Goddard Institute for Space Studies. "This is a precursor of more to come."

The record, or near-record, heat came despite the moderately cooling influence of La Niña, a periodic climate event. "While the current La Niña event will likely end up affecting 2021 temperature more than 2020, it definitely had a cooling effect on the last quarter of the year," said Zeke Hausfather, a climate scientist at Berkeley Earth, which found 2020 was narrowly the second hottest year on record.

"It suggests that we've added an equivalent of a permanent El Niño event worth of global warming in just the last five years," Hausfather added, in reference to

the counterpart climate event that typically raises temperatures. “Records like this further reinforce the need to reduce our emissions sooner rather than later.”

The climate crisis is drastically altering environmental processes across the globe, as the scientific analyses of 2020 show.

The annual average sea ice extent in the Arctic was, at 3.93m sq miles, the joint smallest on record, tied with 2016, while oceans were “exceptionally warm”, Noaa said, with just two previous years recording hotter marine temperatures. Average annual snow cover for the northern hemisphere was the fourth lowest on record.

Rising heat in the atmosphere and water is causing glaciers to melt, rising sea levels, as well as helping fuel larger and more destructive storms. The US, buffeted by an unprecedented Atlantic hurricane season in 2020, was [hit with a record number of major disasters last year](#), costing tens of billions of dollars and resulting in several hundred deaths.

“Global warming won’t necessarily increase overall tropical storm formation, but when we do get a storm it’s more likely to become stronger,” said Jim Kossin, an atmospheric scientist at Noaa. “And it’s the strong ones that really matter.”

Wildfires, fueled by vegetation parched by prolonged heat, ravaged huge areas of California and Australia last year, while the Arctic experienced astonishing temperatures well above average.

“This year has been a very striking example of what it’s like to live under some of the most severe effects of climate change that we’ve been predicting,” said Lesley Ott, a research meteorologist at Nasa.

The UK Met Office has already predicted that 2021 will also be among the hottest ever recorded, with the world now “one step closer to the limits stipulated by the Paris agreement”, said Colin Morice, senior scientist at the Met Office. Governments will meet later this year in Scotland for crucial UN talks aimed at building upon the Paris deal, which committed countries to avoiding a disastrous global temperature rise of 1.5C from pre-industrial levels.

“We are headed for a catastrophic temperature rise of 3-5C this century,” warned António Guterres, secretary general of the UN. “Making peace with

nature is the defining task of the 21st century. It must be the top priority for everyone, everywhere.”

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[Climate change](#)

Countries adapting too slowly to climate breakdown, UN warns

Report says not enough funding is being made available to deal with effects of extreme weather

A flooded road after heavy rains hit Turkey's north-western province of Edirne earlier this week. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

A flooded road after heavy rains hit Turkey's north-western province of Edirne earlier this week. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Fiona Harvey](#) Environment correspondent

Thu 14 Jan 2021 05.00 EST

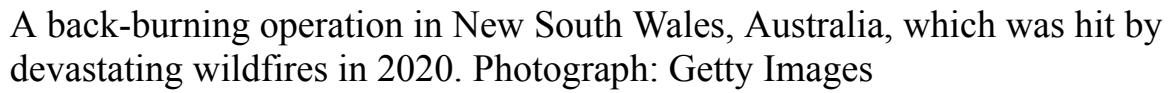
Millions of people around the world are facing disaster from flood, droughts, heatwaves and other extreme weather, as governments fail to take the measures needed to adapt to the impacts of climate breakdown, the UN has warned.

Nearly three-quarters of countries around the world have recognised the need to plan for the effects of global heating, but few of those plans are adequate to the rising threat, and little funding has been made available to put them into force, according to the [UN environment programme's Adaptation report 2020](#), published on Thursday.

Last year was the [joint hottest on record](#), with a [heatwave in Siberia](#), wildfires in [Australia](#) and [the US](#), a destructive Atlantic hurricane season and storms and floods in many parts of Asia.

But spending on measures to adapt to extreme weather has failed to keep pace with the rising need, according to UNEP. Only about \$30bn (£22bn) is provided each year in development aid, to help poor countries cope with the effects of the climate crisis, which is less than half of the \$70bn currently estimated to be needed. Those costs are set to increase further, to between \$140bn and \$300bn by the end of the decade.

About half of global [climate finance](#) should be devoted to adaptation, the UN secretary-general, António Guterres, has said, with the rest going to [efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions](#). However, while private companies are often willing to provide funding for some projects to reduce emissions, such as profitable renewable energy generation schemes in rapidly emerging economies, projects that help people adapt to the impact of climate change, such as early warning systems, flood barriers or storm drains, are often [more difficult to finance](#).



A back-burning operation in New South Wales, Australia, which was hit by devastating wildfires in 2020. Photograph: Getty Images

Many countries will also struggle to find the resources for climate adaptation because of the coronavirus pandemic, the UN warned. The economic impacts of Covid-19 have pushed adaptation further down the political agenda across the world, while in the longer term the consequences of the pandemic are likely to put additional pressures on public finances, and “might change national and donor priorities in support of climate action”.

The UK government recently [slashed its overseas aid budget](#), though the climate spending portion has been maintained.

Yet if countries were to prioritise a “[green recovery](#)” in their Covid-19 economic stimulus packages, they could help to solve many of these problems, UNEP noted. [Economic studies](#) have shown that measures to increase resilience to the impacts of the climate crisis – including planting trees, building flood barriers, restoring natural landscapes and protecting and updating infrastructure

such as transport and communications networks – can all provide “shovel-ready” jobs of the kind needed to lift economies out of recession.

That opportunity will be missed if countries stick to the economic rescue packages announced to date, which [so far have failed to focus on a green recovery](#), according to the report.

The report also found that [nature-based solutions should be prioritised](#). These include planting trees to act as carbon sinks, and as natural flood barriers; restoring mangrove swamps as buffers against coastal storms and sea level rises; halting the destruction of coral reefs; re-wetting bogs and wetlands; and [allowing areas of degraded land to regenerate naturally](#). These tend to be among the most cost-effective ways to adapt to extreme weather, and many also help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, as healthy soils, vegetation, seas and landscapes store more carbon than degraded land and [seas](#).

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions, while an important priority, will not be enough to erase the need to adapt to increasing extreme weather. The report found that the world would face a rising toll from climate impacts, even if the goals of the Paris agreement – limiting temperature rises to well below 2C, with an aspiration of holding heating to 1.5C above pre-industrial levels – are met. Temperatures have already risen by [1C above the historic norm](#).

Inger Andersen, the executive director of UNEP, said: “We are not saying we can adapt our way out of climate change, but the impacts of failing to invest in adaptation to climate change will be very severe, and it is the poorest in wealthy countries and the poorest in the world who will pay the highest price, and who are most exposed to these impacts.”

She said extreme weather events were already taking a toll, so governments should see adaptation as an urgent issue. “The more we can expedite adaption investments, the lower the human costs and the economic costs will be,” she said. “It makes good sense for society.”

While governments are struggling with the impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, they should plan to use stimulus money with a view to making their countries more resilient to the impact of the climate crisis.

“There is a massive injection of the next generation’s money into the Covid recovery – are we going to leave the next generation with a massive debt as

well as a broken planet?” She said the first wave of stimulus spending had not prioritised green investment, but that further waves of spending should do so. “There are opportunities here,” she added.

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The age of extinctionEnvironment

Top scientists warn of 'ghastly future of mass extinction' and climate disruption

Sobering new report says world is failing to grasp the extent of threats posed by biodiversity loss and the climate crisis

Smoke and flames rise from an illegal fire in the Amazon rainforest reserve, south of Novo Progresso in Para state, Brazil. Photograph: Carl de Souza/AFP/Getty

Smoke and flames rise from an illegal fire in the Amazon rainforest reserve, south of Novo Progresso in Para state, Brazil. Photograph: Carl de Souza/AFP/Getty

The age of extinction is supported by



Band Foundation and Wyss Foundation

[About this content](#)

[Phoebe Weston](#)

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Wed 13 Jan 2021 00.01 EST

The planet is facing a “ghastly future of mass extinction, declining health and climate-disruption upheavals” that threaten human survival because of ignorance and inaction, according to an international group of scientists, who warn people still haven’t grasped the urgency of the biodiversity and climate crises.

The 17 experts, including Prof Paul Ehrlich from Stanford University, author of The Population Bomb, and scientists from Mexico, Australia and the US, say the planet is in a much worse state than most people – even scientists – understood.

“The scale of the threats to the biosphere and all its lifeforms – including humanity – is in fact so great that it is difficult to grasp for even well-informed experts,” they write in a report in [Frontiers in Conservation Science](#) which references more than 150 studies detailing the world’s major environmental challenges.

The delay between destruction of the natural world and the impacts of these actions means people do not recognise how vast the problem is, the paper argues. “[The] mainstream is having difficulty grasping the magnitude of this loss, despite the steady erosion of the fabric of human civilisation.”

The report warns that climate-induced mass migrations, more pandemics and conflicts over resources will be inevitable unless urgent action is taken.

“Ours is not a call to surrender – we aim to provide leaders with a realistic ‘cold shower’ of the state of the planet that is essential for planning to avoid a ghastly future,” it adds.

Dealing with the enormity of the problem requires far-reaching changes to global capitalism, education and equality, the paper says. These include abolishing the idea of perpetual economic growth, properly pricing environmental externalities, stopping the use of fossil fuels, reining in corporate lobbying, and empowering women, the researchers argue.

The report comes months after the world [failed to meet](#) a single UN Aichi biodiversity target, created to stem the destruction of the natural world, the [second consecutive time](#) governments have failed to meet their 10-year biodiversity goals. This week a coalition of more than 50 countries [pledged](#) to protect almost a third of the planet by 2030.

A coral reef dominated by algae in Seychelles ... the climate crisis is changing the composition of ecosystems. Photograph: Nick Graham/Lancaster University/PA

An estimated one million species are at risk of extinction, many within decades, according to a recent [UN report](#).

“Environmental deterioration is infinitely more threatening to civilisation than Trumpism or Covid-19,” Ehrlich told the Guardian.

In *The Population Bomb*, published in 1968, Ehrlich warned of imminent population explosion and hundreds of millions of people starving to death.

Although he has acknowledged some timings were wrong, [he has said he stands by](#) its fundamental message that population growth and high levels of consumption by wealthy nations is driving destruction.

He told the Guardian: “Growthmania is the fatal disease of civilisation - it must be replaced by campaigns that make equity and well-being society’s goals - not consuming more junk.”

Large populations and their continued growth drive soil degradation and biodiversity loss, the new paper warns. “More people means that more synthetic compounds and dangerous throwaway plastics are manufactured, many of which add to the growing toxification of the Earth. It also increases the chances of pandemics that fuel ever-more desperate hunts for scarce resources.”

[Mass die-off of birds in south-western US 'caused by starvation'](#)
[Read more](#)

The effects of the climate emergency are more evident than biodiversity loss, but still, society is failing to cut emissions, the paper argues. If people understood the magnitude of the crises, changes in politics and policies could match the gravity of the threat.

“Our main point is that once you realise the scale and imminence of the problem, it becomes clear that we need much more than individual actions like using less plastic, eating less meat, or flying less. Our point is that we need big systematic changes and fast,” Professor Daniel Blumstein from the University of California Los Angeles, who helped write the paper, told the Guardian.

The paper cites a number of key reports published in the past few years including:

- [The World Economic Forum](#) report in 2020, which named biodiversity loss as one of the top threats to the global economy.
- The 2019 [IPBES Global Assessment report](#) which said 70% of the planet had been altered by humans.
- The 2020 [WWF Living Planet report](#), which said the average population size of vertebrates had declined by 68% in the past five decades.

- A 2018 [Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report](#) which said that humanity had already exceeded global warming of 1C above pre-industrial levels and is set to reach 1.5C warming between 2030 and 2052.

Australia saw a devastating bushfire season in 2020. Photograph: Tracey Nearmy/Reuters

The report follows years of stark warnings about the state of the planet from the world's leading scientists, including a statement [by 11,000 scientists](#) in 2019 that people will face "untold suffering due to the climate crisis" unless major changes are made. In 2016, more than 150 of Australia's climate scientists wrote an open letter to the then prime minister, Malcolm Turnbull, [demanding immediate action](#) on reducing emissions. In the same year, 375 scientists – including 30 Nobel prize winners – wrote [an open letter](#) to the world about their frustrations over political inaction on climate change.

Prof Tom Oliver, an ecologist at the University of Reading, who was not involved in the report, said it was a frightening but credible summary of the

grave threats society faces under a “business as usual” scenario. “Scientists now need to go beyond simply documenting environmental decline, and instead find the most effective ways to catalyse action,” he said.

Prof Rob Brooker, head of ecological sciences at the James Hutton Institute, who was not involved in the study, said it clearly emphasised the pressing nature of the challenges.

“We certainly should not be in any doubt about the huge scale of the challenges we are facing and the changes we will need to make to deal with them,” he said.

Find more [age of extinction coverage here](#), and follow biodiversity reporters [Phoebe Weston](#) and [Patrick Greenfield](#) on Twitter for all the latest news and features

- This article was corrected on 14 January 2021. The WWF Living Planet report said the average population size of vertebrates had declined by 68% in the past five decades, not the past five years as stated in an earlier version.

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2021.01.15 - Culture

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10 of the best ...Music

From Donna Summer to LCD SoundSystem: 10 of the best remixes

Disco inferno ... Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder. Photograph:
Echoes/Redferns

Disco inferno ... Donna Summer and Giorgio Moroder. Photograph:
Echoes/Redferns

The clubs are shut, but there's always your living room: here we've got techno reveries, Balearic bliss and unlikely club divas



[Dorian Lynskey](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

I Feel Love (Mega Mix) – 1982 Donna Summer

The only criticism you can make of Giorgio Moroder's motor-disco landmark is that it is too short. Enter like-minded New Yorker Patrick Cowley, five years later, who exploited that Escher-staircase bassline to create a dizzying 3D labyrinth with shades of dub, jazz and psychedelia, and premonitions of techno. Sixteen minutes that hint at infinity.

[The Guide: Staying In – sign up for our home entertainment tips](#)
[Read more](#)

Flava in Ya Ear (Remix) – 1994

Craig Mack

Sean “Puffy” Combs was a whiz at using the remix as a marketing device. This version of his Bad Boy label’s first single kept Easy Mo Bee’s loping beat but passed the mic between Busta Rhymes, LL Cool J, Rampage and the Notorious BIG. Poor Craig Mack became the bridesmaid on his own track.

No Big Love lost ... Tango in the Night-era Fleetwood Mac. Photograph:
Alamy

Big Love (Extended Remix) – 1987

Fleetwood Mac

Despite the ingenious efforts of Shep Pettibone and François Kevorkian, the 80s craze for extended 12-inch remixes spawned a lot of dutiful space-filling,

but by 1987 the influence of house music was expanding horizons. Arthur Baker used piano breaks and ricocheting voices to turn Lindsey Buckingham's arena-rock angst into Balearic bliss. How Ibiza learned to love the Mac.

Flowers (Sunship Radio Edit) – 2000 Sweet Female Attitude

Only the people who made it remember the original mix of Flowers, a generic piece of post-All Saints R&B. Former Brand New Heavy Ceri Evans turned lead into gold with the application of a perky two-step rhythm, giddy vocal cut-ups and an Erik Satie chord sequence. Heard recently in I May Destroy You, UK garage's perfect pop song remains fresh as a daisy.

Tiergarten (Supermayer Lost in Tiergarten Remix) – 2007

Rufus Wainwright

Any decent remix that exceeds 10 minutes is a trip, and Wainwright's baroque ballad about a walk through Berlin provides a useful road map. Germany's own Michael Mayer and Superpitcher let a dreamy, beatless version of the song run for a couple of minutes before wandering off into a techno reverie and never coming back.

Professional Widow (Armand's Star Trunk Funkin' Mix) – 1996

Tori Amos

In the 1990s, labels splashed fortunes on remixing songs that didn't really need remixing. In the same year that his Sneaker Pimps remix invented speed garage, Armand Van Helden took a couple of lines from Amos's unnerving dirge and accelerated and looped them over a colossal thug-disco bassline, making her an unlikely club diva.

Daft Punk Is Playing at My House (Soulwax Shibuya Re-Remix) – 2005 LCD Soundsystem

In the fan-fiction spirit of James Murphy's song, the Dewaele brothers interpolate sound effects (police sirens, conversation, bleeping robots) and snippets of Daft Punk's own records to create a meta-remix that sounds exactly like the out-of-control house party described in the lyrics. When the bassline drops, it's bananas.

Get ready to Rock ... Primal Scream. Photograph: Tim Roney/Getty

Come Together (Andrew Weatherall Remix) – 1990 Primal Scream

A master remixer for 30 years, Weatherall could gently guide a song towards the dancefloor or rebuild it from the ground up. Retaining nothing but chords, brass and backing vocals, he replaces Bobby Gillespie with Rev Jesse Jackson's famous speech at 1972's Wattstax concert to yoke the radical idealism of black power to the ecstasy of rave.

Yeke Yeke (Hardfloor Mix) – 1994 Mory Kante

In their remixing heyday, German acid-house fetishists Hardfloor only had one trick, but it was foolproof: build-up > breakdown > heads explode. Kudos to the A&R who figured that a 1987 Euro-smash by Guinean star Mory Kante would be a prime candidate for the brain-scouring oscillations of the Roland TB-303.

I Wanna Be Your Lover (Dimitri from Paris Re-Edit) – 2011 Prince

DJ re-edits are remixing's purest form, tweaking tunes for maximum dancefloor impact without seeking official permission. Dimitri combines live and studio versions to create an imaginary space between club and gig, ramping up excitement with the sound of the crowd.

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Music

Sylvain Sylvain, showboating guitarist of New York Dolls, dies aged 69

Billy Idol among those to pay tribute to ‘all-time great’ whose flamboyance paved the way for New York’s punk rock scene

Punk pioneer ... Sylvain Sylvain in 2015. Photograph: Bobby Bank/WireImage
Punk pioneer ... Sylvain Sylvain in 2015. Photograph: Bobby Bank/WireImage

[Ben Beaumont-Thomas](#)

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Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.56 EST

Sylvain Sylvain, the guitarist who blended punk aggression with glam rock peacocking as part of the band New York Dolls, has died of cancer aged 69.

The news was announced [on his Facebook page](#), with a statement saying that he had the disease for two and a half years. “While we grieve his loss, we know that he is finally at peace and out of pain,” it adds. “Please crank up his music, light a candle, say a prayer and let’s send this beautiful doll on his way.”

Sylvain was born in Cairo in 1951, emigrating with his family to France and then New York state. After moving to New York City, he ran a clothing company and formed the group Actress, who – after adding frontman David Johansen – became the New York Dolls in 1971.

New York Dolls, with Sylvain second from right. Photograph: RB/Redferns

Although they only released two albums in the 1970s, neither of which were crossover successes, the New York Dolls had a huge influence on the city’s music. By linking the nihilist cool of the Velvet Underground to the androgynous showmanship of the glam rock set and a pop sensibility with cult hits like *Personality Crisis*, they presaged the punk that would flourish later that decade.

Sylvain described his style in a 2018 interview: “You took your life in your hands just getting to the gig … One time I had this knitted pink women’s suit. It was nice. I turned the skirt into gaucho pants. I wore them with my boots. I put on the makeup. I’m going to make my \$15. I’ll never forget all the catcalls.”

Amid chaotic gigs and hedonistic behaviour, the New York Dolls’ lineup shifted, with Sylvain and Johansen the only two constants until the band’s eventual breakup in 1977. Sylvain started a new band, the Criminals, with ex-New York Dolls member Tony Machine and later fitfully released solo albums during the 80s and 90s. He later formed the band the Batusis and also toured with Glen Matlock of the Sex Pistols for the “Sex Doll” tour in 2013.

In 2004, three of the original New York Dolls members including Sylvain reformed at the request of Morrissey, who was curating that year’s Meltdown music festival in London. They ended up releasing three further albums, and undertook the 2011 Glam-a-Geddon tour alongside Mötley Crüe and Poison. Sylvain published a memoir, *There’s No Bones in Ice Cream*, in 2018.

Sylvain Sylvain and David Johansen performing in 2010. Photograph: Barney Britton/Redferns

The musician and writer Lenny Kaye paid lengthy tribute alongside the announcement of Sylvain's death, saying: "His role in the band was as linchpin, keeping the revolving satellites of his bandmates in precision ... The New York Dolls heralded the future, made it easy to dance to."

Other tributes came from Billy Idol and from Waterboys songwriter Mike Scott, who called him an "all-time great rock and roller".

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WandaVision review – Marvel's sitcom superheroes are a retro joy

In a loving parody of classic sitcoms, Elizabeth Olsen and Paul Bettany shine in the MCU's first Disney+ series

Fantastic fun ... Elizabeth Olsen and Paul Bettany in Wandavision. Photograph:
Marvel Studios

Fantastic fun ... Elizabeth Olsen and Paul Bettany in Wandavision. Photograph:
Marvel Studios



[Lucy Mangan](#)

[@LucyMangan](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

For those of you not entirely au fait with the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Wanda Maximoff (AKA Scarlet Witch in the original comics) and Vision are a romantically entwined couple of superhero-ish characters played by [Elizabeth Olsen](#) and Paul Bettany in the films and now given their own television spin-off, Wandavision (Disney+). It sees the telekinetic and reality-warping Wanda and her enhanced android husband settled in the white-picket-fenced apparent idyll of Westview, trying to live an ordinary suburban life without giving their secrets away to their nosy neighbour, Agnes (Katherine Hahn, who may or may not be more than she appears as the self-referential but never smug episodes of the series play out) and the rest of the world.

Each episode is a pitch-perfect – from script, to delivery, to lighting, to cinematography, to aspect ratio – but loving parody of classic sitcoms. The first is set in the 50s and channels the likes of The Dick Van Dyke Show and I Love

Lucy, while the second moves them into the 60s and a Bewitched and I Dream of Jeannie vibe. After that we're into the 70s and the Brady Bunch and beyond.

Given that Vision was very much dead when we left him in the cinematic realm, we know – even without the fun but deliberately unexplained and discombobulating race through the decades – that not all can be quite what it seems in the couple's domestic paradise. But Wandavision doles out its hints and clues about a deeper mystery and likely malevolence at work in tantalisingly spare fashion. It's like watching The Truman Show spun out over a dozen instalments, as pennies half-drop and occasional dots join up – with the added obstacle that Wanda does her best to remake reality whenever she sees unsettling things.

But still, there is surely only so long you can keep a man made of bees at bay, gloss over strange messages transmitted over the radio playing at the neighbourhood planning committee, or the birth of twins less than 48 hours after you apparently become pregnant by your metal 'n' Mind Stone husband.

The neighbours themselves seem quietly but increasingly desperate to unburden themselves of a secret truth while others, such as Geraldine (Teyonah Parris, who will also pop up in the next Captain [Marvel](#) film), occasionally let slip knowledge that they should have kept to themselves – like the fact that Wanda had a twin brother who was killed by Ultron (in the second Avengers film).

It's all deliciously, confidently, stylishly done. The parodies are fantastic fun, the jokes are great, the performances (especially from Olsen and Bettany, whose chemistry is a joy in itself) are wonderful, and it has the glorious air of something shaped by people who know exactly what they're doing, where they want to go and how they're going to get there.

The grimmer undertones give it heft and texture and invite you deeper in with every episode. The light and the dark are woven seamlessly together, and the parodic element is never just a gimmick. Instead, all sorts of established television tropes are deployed to thicken the plot – the traditional unrelenting perkiness of the neighbour designed as extra-comic relief becomes the desperate brittleness of a woman with something awful to hide, and the mean-girl vibe of the neighbourhood's apex housewife Dotty (Emma Caulfield) becomes the fearful hostility of the genuinely rather than merely socially threatened.

The most welcome quality, however, is perhaps that there is not a trace of cynicism to be found in it. Knowingness, yes, nods and winks to our shared screen language and understanding of its conventions, sure, plus a generous scattering of Easter eggs for MCU devotees but on which lesser fans' pleasure does not rest – but the series has a generous heart animating everything. As well as a delight, Wandavision feels like a gift.

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[Week in geekFilm](#)

Can Marvel's Kevin Feige make the Star Wars movies soar again?

Now the Marvel head honcho has been brought into the fold, the Star Wars saga needs to try something more thrilling than its current cosy, reactive approach

Disappointing ... Adam Driver and Daisy Ridley in the 2019 Rise of Skywalker film. Photograph: Allstar/Lucasfilm/Walt Disney Pictures
Disappointing ... Adam Driver and Daisy Ridley in the 2019 Rise of Skywalker film. Photograph: Allstar/Lucasfilm/Walt Disney Pictures

[Ben Child](#)

[@BenChildGeek](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

When it comes to TV, [Star Wars](#) is sitting very pretty after the enormous success of Jon Favreau's The Mandalorian, a space opera tour de force that has completely re-routed Disney's vision for its long running saga. All of a sudden, we are due to see multiple enticing spin-offs centred on characters including Boba Fett, Ahsoka Tano and Cara Dune, which will eventually culminate in a grand crossover event involving the soft-hearted bounty hunter. Star Wars' number one rule – that members of the Skywalker clan must be at the heart of all major events – has been Death Starred in less time than you can say: "Great shot kid, that's one in a million!"

But how about the big screen, where Star Wars began, and where – until very recently – it was always imagined the saga's most vital moments would play out? Here, we find ourselves in a very different place, with the once promising sequel trilogy having ultimately disappointed due to a lack of fresh thinking and an approach to macro-storytelling more chaotic than a box of angry [Krykna](#).

This week we got the titbit of news that [Marvel supremo Kevin Feige's long-mooted Star Wars movie is still moving ahead](#), with Rick & Morty producer Michael Waldron now on board to write the screenplay. Waldron is also writing Doctor Strange in the Multiverse of Madness, and is head writer on the upcoming Disney+ series Loki, starring Tom Hiddleston's prince of mischief. In short, he's being trusted with a whole heap of Disney-owned properties.

Then there's Rogue Squadron, the starfighter spin-off that Wonder Woman's Patty Jenkins was recently tapped to direct, about which little is known other than it looks like another off-centre project. Finally, of the movies still thought to be on Lucasfilm's current slate, there's another untitled film from Jojo Rabbit's Taika Waititi, about which very little is yet known.

Enormous success ... The Mandalorian, season 2

We do have – back on TV – [upcoming shows based on the early lives of Obi-Wan Kenobi and Lando Calrissian](#). So it is not as if the Skywalker clan and their pals have been completely scrubbed from galactic history. But it would be a shock to see any of these films continuing where the messy and disappointing Rise of Skywalker left off. There was a sense, watching that movie, that Disney-era directors of Star Wars had become trapped by the overwhelming legacy of 40-plus years of space opera shenanigans, to the point that it made

more sense to wipe the slate clean and start again with fresh story arcs, free of the terrible pressure inspired by legions of fans watching one's every move.

That's precisely what [Rian Johnson's proposed new Star Wars trilogy](#) was once intended to do, prior to The Mandalorian changing everything. The Last Jedi film-maker was announced in November 2017 as the director of a new triptych set in an as-yet-undiscovered corner of a galaxy far, far away. But very little has been heard about these movies since October 2019, [when Johnson cryptically told Entertainment Tonight](#) he would still be "thrilled if it happens". That's a pity, for divisive as The Last Jedi turned out to be, it was still the only film in the sequel trilogy to really try to shake up the saga.

The worry is that Johnson's ideas might no longer sit in the sweet spot where Lucasfilm president Kathleen Kennedy currently sees the saga going, which seems to be centred on either the Mandalorian-verse or fan-friendly nods to supporting characters from the original trilogy.

[Why can't the stormtroopers in Star Wars shoot straight?](#)

[Read more](#)

The basic plan seems to be a shift into what we can only refer to as a kind of Hollywood populism: taking anything that has worked in previous Star Wars ventures and expanding on it. This is why Donald Glover is returning as cocky smuggler Calrissian (as pretty much the only character in Solo: A Star Wars Story that fans really took to), and Rogue One's Diego Luna is back as Cassian Andor for his own Disney+ spin-off. And yet, if the future of Star Wars is to match its glorious past, we need something more than this cosy, reactive creativity. We know nothing about the grand plan for the big screen – will all these new movies exist within the same timeline, so that their major players can be brought together Marvel-style for another grand space opera smackdown? Or will Star Wars remain content to play out in the margins for the time being?

For those of us who witnessed the mess Lucasfilm made of the over-ambitious sequel trilogy, such short-term thinking might seem a safer bet than the alternative. And yet at some point the Disney-owned studio will need to find a way to mirror the success of the original trilogy by telling a multiple-episode tale that transports us once again to the whirling, mesmeric cosmic playground of our dreams, to a galaxy that seemed creatively limitless. It doesn't seem like too much to ask – just don't bring back Emperor Palpatine yet again or we'll have to feed you to the krayt dragon.

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[Contemporary album of the month](#)[Music](#)

Yvette Janine Jackson: Freedom review – vivid voyage through hate

(Fridman Gallery)

The composer's two new works, exploring slavery and homophobia, are like immersive non-visual films

Give this composer and film soundtrack ... Yvette Janine Jackson. Photograph: Catherine Koch

Give this composer and film soundtrack ... Yvette Janine Jackson. Photograph: Catherine Koch

[John Lewis](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

On paper, the latest album by electro-acoustic composer and installation artist Yvette Janine Jackson isn't the most inviting of propositions for these miserable days. It features two lengthy soundscapes: the 23-minute *Destination Freedom* is a sonic representation of a slave ship crossing the Atlantic; the 20-minute *Invisible People* is an aural collage that confronts homophobia within African American communities.

The cover of Jackson's new album. Photograph: Georgia Malone

Yet both pieces are subtle and compelling. The first is an immersive aural soundtrack that conjures up images more vivid than anything a motion picture could provide: a harrowing babble of ocean sounds, heartbeats, distorted screams, Bernard Herrmann strings and slow-motion explosions, which seems to obey an almost symphonic structure. The second is described by Jackson as a "radio opera" and it's quite similar to one of those Archive on 4 documentaries on BBC Radio 4: a restless, cut-and-clip montage of (frequently shocking) quotes from street preachers, politicians, TV evangelists and excerpts from essays by homophobic Afrocentric academics (including Frances Cress

Welsing). Despite the subject matter, it is a witty piece, punctuated by a musical backing that lurches from minimalist chamber jazz arrangements to gospel pastiches and free-jazz freakouts.

There is a shared resonance between the two pieces: certain sonically horrifying motifs appear in both, and something surprising and new emerges with each listen. Any smart Hollywood producer would immediately snap up Jackson to provide film soundtracks, but her work requires no visual explanation.

Also out this month

AER (Fuga Libera) is an album by [**Peltomaa Fraanje Perkola**](#), an unorthodox Dutch/Finnish trio for voice, piano and viola da gamba, which takes medieval hymns and transforms them into quizzical, drone-based experimental miniatures. In a jazzier vein is [**Aries Point**](#) (22 January, Outnote), where Renaissance music specialists the [**Hathor Consort**](#) play austere, sometimes atonal arrangements alongside trumpeter [**Bastian Stein**](#), as if Don Cherry sat in with an Elizabethan string ensemble. A distinctly American variation of this retro-minimalism is [**Narrow Sea**](#) (22 January, Nonesuch), by Pulitzer prize-winning composer [**Caroline Shaw**](#), which takes folksy, 19th-century Sacred Harp hymns and places them in a disorientating environment.

- This article was corrected on 15 January 2021: Yvette Janine Jackson's album is released on Fridman Gallery, not Phantom Limb Music as previously stated.

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[TV tonight](#)[Television](#)

TV tonight: Monty Burns turns Undercover Boss at the power plant

Springfield's first family, the Simpsons, return with their 32nd series. Plus: Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast. Here's what to watch this evening

Mr Burns AKA Fred, with Homer, Lenny and Carl. Photograph: NBC
Mr Burns AKA Fred, with Homer, Lenny and Carl. Photograph: NBC
[Ammar Kalia](#), [Ellen E Jones](#), [Phil Harrison](#), [Ali Catterall](#) and [Paul Howlett](#)
Fri 15 Jan 2021 01.20 EST

The Simpsons

8pm, Sky One

Will [The Simpsons](#) ever end? With the arrival of its 32nd season, it seems the answer may be no. Our favourite yellow family return in their crisp, HD glory for this opening episode, focused on the exploits of crinkly arch-capitalist Mr Burns. Taking his cue from Undercover Boss, Burns decides to see, in disguise, what life is really like for his plant's workers. He might just be radicalised by what he finds out and sets to change things for the better; until, that is, Smithers vows to bring the old Burns back. *Excellent.* Ammar Kalia

Jamie and Jimmy's Friday Night Feast

8pm, Channel 4

It's back to a pre-Covid Southend pier for this latest instalment of Oliver and Doherty's show. Their guest is the [boxer Amir Khan](#), who tries his hand at Muhammad Ali's favourite meal: a rack of lamb. Elsewhere, Jamie and Jimmy make ricotta from the waste ingredients from cheddar production. AK

Susan Calman's Grand Day Out in the Lakes

8pm, Channel 5



A grand day out ... Susan Calman. Helen Mirren just out of shot. Photograph: IWC Media

Susan Calman and Helen Mirren are back on the road. That's "Helen Mirren", the vintage camper van named after Calman's favourite actor. This time, they are enjoying the breathtaking views of the Lake District, with stop-offs including the "haunted" Muncaster Castle. **Ellen E Jones**

Olympic Pride, American Prejudice

8.05pm, PBS America

While Jesse Owens's victories at the 1936 Olympics in Berlin may be well known, this documentary delves into the lives of the 17 other black athletes representing a segregated US. What emerges is an account of how their prowess ignited the civil rights movement back home. **AK**

The Last Leg

9pm, Channel 4

It's the 21st series of the satirical chatshow and Adam Hills, Josh Widdicombe and Alex Brooker show no signs of running out of steam. As we rejoin them, they are socially distanced, but their chemistry remains as they discuss the issues of the moment. Expect wry takes on the usual Brexit and Covid misery.

Phil Harrison

Not Going Out

9.30pm, BBC One

Ah, pub quizzes: those serene affairs, not at all characterised by a steely-eyed wish to decimate the next table, as when Lee and Anna, and Sally and Toby find themselves on opposing teams in this unnervingly realistic setup. As Lee tells Anna: "It's my wedding anniversary; please help me to crush my wife."

Ali Catterall

Film choice

Blade Runner 2049 (Denis Villeneuve, 2017), 9pm, Sony Movies

OK K ... Ryan Gosling in Blade Runner 2049. Photograph: Allstar/Warner Bros

Villeneuve's mindbending sequel to Ridley Scott's 1982 Blade Runner is set in a desolate world 30 years on from the original. Ryan Gosling's replicant LAPD officer K is given a mission that leads to a poignant meeting with Harrison Ford's now reclusive Deckard. It's a haunting, visually stunning work. **Paul Howlett**

Live sport

Test cricket: Sri Lanka v England 6am, Sky Sports Cricket. The second day of the match from Galle.

Snooker: The Masters 1pm, Eurosport 1/BBC Sports online. Coverage of the third quarter-final at Alexandra Palace, played over the best of 11 frames.

Premier League football: Fulham v Chelsea 7.30pm, Sky Sports Main Event. Live from Craven Cottage.

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2021.01.15 - Lifestyle

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- [Fantasy house hunt Homes for sale to escape to the country](#)
- [This week's fashion trends From morning candles to pavement scooters](#)
- [Cold as ice? How to stay warm without whacking up the heating](#)
- [Yes, I'm a food writer – and that qualifies me to write about everything](#)
- [In pictures How to buy glasses online](#)

Your problems, with Anna TimsConsumer affairs

I was sure a call from Currys was a scam ... but it wasn't what it seemed

Store staff confirmed it was a fraud, but then it turned out to be a genuine Currys offer

When buying an appliance from Currys, sales tactics include selling care plans.
Photograph: David Martyn Hughes/Alamy

When buying an appliance from Currys, sales tactics include selling care plans.
Photograph: David Martyn Hughes/Alamy

Anna Tims

Fri 15 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

I almost fell for what I believe is a scam when I was contacted by someone saying they were from Currys offering an insurance policy for a cooker that I had ordered in January 2019, but which I cancelled to buy elsewhere. The caller asked my details for “security”, then offered me an extended five-year warranty for £115 or £4 a month. They told me I had to pay by direct debit and asked for my account number and sort code.

I Googled and discovered your [article](#) mentioning a huge Currys data breach. I fear the caller was using a stolen list of orders to obtain bank details and Currys confirmed it was a scam.

JF, London

Believe it or not, this was not a scam, although Currys’s sales tactics are so concerning it’s unsurprising you, and its own staff, assumed it was.

Last year, I reported on a customer who was called hours after ordering a Currys TV from a number flagged as “dangerous” on number-checker forums.

Again, customer service staff agreed it was fraudulent, before Currys told me it was a genuine call to offer new customers what it calls a “care plan”. This is despite the fact that these pricey plans are offered at the point of purchase online and in store. Now, it seems, customers are called again, a year or more after purchase, with yet another offer of a warranty. Currys blames “human error” for not realising that you never went through with the purchase in the first place.

But it is unapologetic about its tactics to sell warranties which, any follower of this column knows, can open up a whole new can of worms and are often not worth the outlay.

Currys said: “Our aim is to help everyone enjoy amazing technology and for our customers to come away feeling fully supported. To help, we offer follow-up services in store, online and over the phone.”

If you need help email your.problems@observer.co.uk. Include an address and phone number. Submission and publication are subject to our [terms and conditions](#)

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[Fantasy house hunt](#)

Homes for sale to escape to the country – in pictures

A property surrounded by open farmland in Little Sutton, Lincolnshire.

Photograph: Fine & Country

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from
<https://www.theguardian.com/money/gallery/2021/jan/15/homes-for-sale-to-escape-to-the-country-in-pictures>

The measureFashion

From morning candles to pavement scooters: this week's fashion trends

What's hot and what's not in fashion this week

Josephine Baker, circa 1927. Photograph: Getty Images

Josephine Baker, circa 1927. Photograph: Getty Images

Fri 15 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Going up

The Blob Ugly trainers were due an upgrade. May we introduce the hilariously GQ-coined Blob, so-named because, well – [look at it](#).



Light up. Photograph: Getty Images

Morning candles If the only thing that got you through December was putting the Christmas tree lights on at 7am, try a breakfast candle.

Fashioned podcast From monks as fashion critics to stupendous [Josephine Baker](#), this is ideal for style history buffs' daily walks.

Post-sales sales They rumble on, online at least. If you must, at least buy something heavily reduced before it ends up in a landfill.

Gaga unguents The prospect of [Ms Gaga](#) launching a beauty line and usurping [Ms Goop](#) is the best news of 2021 so far.

Going down

Impossible plaits Specifically [Taylor Swift's](#) on the cover of Evermore. Mainly because it reminds us of being touched by someone else (a hairdresser, or

mate).

The Queen's Gambit Sure, the fashions were monochrome and lush, but try 2013's wry [Computer Chess](#), also featuring a brilliant female player.

DIY dental treatments Anyone else being chased by a terrifying array of self-bleach packs? Crikey.

Scoot! Photograph: Getty Images

Pavement scooters To quote Tina Wilcox in Jaws 2: “Please make it go away.”

Beersteria We thought the worst thing about Tier 4 was pubs closing. Turns out we miss galleries more. Roll on [Turner at the Tate](#).

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How to live now**Life and style**

Cold as ice? How to stay warm without whacking up the heating

Trapped at home all day means heating bills are likely to mount up. Try these simple – and ingenious – ways to keep yourself toasty

Draught excluders can be fancy, or simply a rolled up towel. Photograph:
Clandy-Images/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Draught excluders can be fancy, or simply a rolled up towel. Photograph:
Clandy-Images/Getty Images/iStockphoto



[Emine Saner](#)

[@eminesaner](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 06.30 EST

With many of us working from home, shielding or just following the requirement to stay in our houses, it's going to be an expensive winter if we have the heating running all day. Last week, the writer and Guardian columnist Frances Ryan, [who has been shielding since last spring](#), asked people on Twitter to share tips on [how to keep warm and keep the bills down](#), and the hundreds of replies were ingenious and helpful. In 2020, National Energy Action, the charity that campaigns to end fuel poverty, which is linked to 12,000 deaths in a “normal” year, said that a second wave of [Covid-19 over winter could be “catastrophic”](#). So write to your MP about that, and check to see if you are eligible for any [schemes to help pay bills](#). In the meantime, here are a few ways you can keep warmer, cut down on fossil fuel consumption and keep costs down.

Get to know your central heating system

With a bit of free time, you may as well busy yourself with the intricacies of your boiler and thermostat. “If you are taking advantage of not having to commute by getting up later, set your heating to come on later in the morning,” says Laura McGadie, group head of energy at the [Energy Saving Trust](#). “If possible, get a smart meter installed, which is estimated to help reduce a household’s electricity use by 2.8% and gas use by 2%.”

Stop draughts

“Draught-proofing windows and doors, and blocking cracks in floor and skirting boards, can save around £20 a year on energy bills,” says McGadie. “You can seal the gaps between floors and skirting boards to reduce draughts with a tube of sealant bought from any DIY store.” Other simple fixes include getting a cover for your letterbox and keyholes, fitting self-adhesive foam strips to draughty windows or using a chimney balloon in unused open fireplaces. As noted by some of those replying to Ryan’s Twitter post, a draught excluder for the door could simply be a rolled-up towel or made from an old pair of tights stuffed with fabric.



Fill gaps in your floorboards. Photograph: Powerofflowers/Alamy

Layer up

You're probably not wearing enough clothes. Instead of thinking about putting on another pair of socks or wearing fingerless gloves at your desk, you're "far better putting on a sweatshirt", says JohnEric Smith, assistant professor in the department of kinesiology at [Mississippi State University](#). "If you can keep the core – the chest and all – warm, you will keep the peripheries warm." When your body gets colder, blood is diverted from the extremities, which then feel colder. Smith likes clothing such as fleeces, "because it creates this really thick area without much weight", but several layers of any kind of top can create the same effect. Some people swear by thermal undergarments, and a hat will also help, but not if you're sitting topless at your desk. "Any time you're looking at reducing the skin's contact with the environment, it is going to be beneficial. The idea that most of your heat is lost through your head is an old wives' tale." People with a lot of hair will benefit less, he adds.

Get curtains

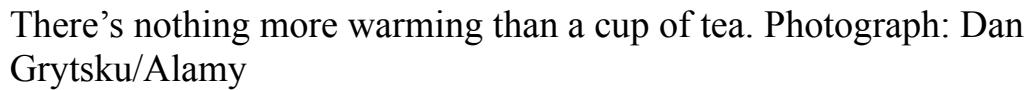
“Close your curtains at dusk to stop heat escaping through the windows,” says McGadie. The ideal would be to install heavy, lined curtains but these can be hugely expensive. (Look for secondhand ones.) A curtain across the front door can be improvised with an old blanket.

Avoid cold feet

If you are in the mood and able to undertake a bigger DIY job, insulating wooden floors can be fairly straightforward. “Timber floors can be insulated from below if you have access or by lifting the floorboards and laying mineral wool insulation supported by netting between the joists,” says McGadie. Otherwise, she says, “rugs and carpets are a quick fix that will help your feet feel warmer”. Socks and slippers are a given. One Twitter user suggested changing your socks: “You might think you’ve got them warmed up by being on your feet, but in fact they hold the moisture you sweat, and that cools you instead.”

Go DIY

If moving all the furniture and lifting floorboards isn’t an option – likewise, insulating the loft – there are smaller jobs that could help. “Installing radiator reflector panels are a low-cost option that reflect heat from the radiator back into the room, instead of letting the heat out through an external wall,” says McGadie. The Energy Saving Trust says it can’t comment on individual products, such as installing plastic film on leaky windows, but others swear by it – one of the replies to Ryan’s Twitter post said it “genuinely has made a difference”.



There's nothing more warming than a cup of tea. Photograph: Dan Grytsku/Alamy

Eat and drink yourself warm

"If you're eating harder-to-digest foods – that are higher in fat and have more protein – the body is going to have to work harder, which is going to increase the body's temperature to [fuel] those metabolic processes," says Smith. And there's nothing much more warming than a cup of tea. Avoid alcohol, though – the "warming" effect of a nip of whisky is temporary and counterproductive. Alcohol causes the blood vessels to dilate, resulting in the rosy-cheeked look, which makes the skin feel warm while also causing you to lose that heat, and cool your core. So you'll end up colder. It is also, points out Smith, "in the depressant family of drugs, so it's going to make you more inactive and just kind of in that restful state, you may actually lose more heat from being stationary and not having as much metabolic activity".

Move around

If you're physically able, doing a bit of exercise will warm the body and pump blood around. Don't do too much, though. "One thing that you have to be careful of is that, if you start sweating, you're going to be losing your body heat faster and it will make you cold faster," says Smith. "So you need to find that happy balance between being physically active enough that you're generating heat to stay warm, but not to the point that you're going to sweat to try to cool down."

Blankets are about adding more layers. Photograph: Marx Bamala/Alamy

Embrace blankets

Again, this is about layers. "You're just adding more layers between you and the environment, so it's helping keep the heat that your body generates close to you, not having it lost into the room," says Smith. Several people, replying to

Ryan, praised their electric heated blankets or mattress covers, but they can be expensive.

Focus warmth

Maybe you need the radiator where you work to be whacked up, or a hot-water bottle or heating pad and extra blankets in bed, or a spare duvet on the sofa. Many of the replies to Ryan's Twitter thread recommended heating only one room (keep the door closed and eliminate other draughts as best you can).

Steal heat

If it's sunny, make sure your curtains are open, particularly in south-facing rooms, to warm the room. At least one person on Twitter said they left the oven door open after cooking to allow heat into the kitchen (be careful if you have small children, obviously). Finally, train the cat to sit on you at all times.

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Happy eaterFood

Yes, I'm a food writer – and that qualifies me to write about everything

Health, schools, overseas aid... food is integral to them all. So I'll carry on having opinions about anything I choose

A protest in London in October 2020 against lowering of food standards in a UK-US trade deal. Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock

A protest in London in October 2020 against lowering of food standards in a UK-US trade deal. Photograph: Guy Bell/Rex/Shutterstock



[Jay Rayner](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 07.00 EST

Like many people I have spent the past few years in a roaring, frothing rage at the incompetence and mendacity of the charmless, greasy-palmed hucksters who have somehow blagged their way into governing us. Occasionally, by which I mean most days, I have expressed this rage via a scalpel-sharp, profound and witty political tweet. Weirdly, not everybody is as impressed by these contributions as I am. Indeed, at least one person usually replies: “Stick to tweeting about food, Rayner.”

If I’m feeling magnanimous, I reply with just two letters: “No.” Sometimes, if I’m feeling less sanguine, I point out that I’ve been [covering politics in one form or another](#) for more than three decades, and that I have an extremely important degree in political studies. I am literally qualified to tweet about it. Often, I delete these replies because they make me look like a sad, chippy apologist for myself which is unnecessary when so many others are happy to do that job for me.

It struck me that instead, it would be more constructive if I were to list the ways in which food affects politics and decision-making. This would enable me to compile a list of subjects that it would be OK for me to tweet about. So here goes. The production and selling of food are obviously a massive part of the economy in general and retailing in particular. Many of our foods are now, for good or ill, commodities, traded on global financial markets both influenced by and impactful upon inflation and interest rates. So anything about economics or financial matters is completely fair game.

What we eat and how we eat has a direct effect on both our physical and mental health. Whether we have a healthy or poor diet generally depends upon income, and access to the kind of jobs paying the kind of wages which will either support the right diet or fail to do so. It's therefore fair for me to have an opinion on the NHS, our benefits system, our deformed taxation system – there I go, editorialising again – and anything to do with access to careers and opportunities.

Likewise, we know that kids do less well at school if they have a poor diet, that schools which intervene in the care of their pupils produce better outcomes, and that information about food and diet during school years can be transformative. That's the whole of the education system covered. Anyone with a passing interest in overseas aid will know that the vast majority of famines are caused by governmental incompetence, generally involving military action. Indeed, there's a compelling argument that all foreign relations are essentially arguments over resources, prime among them food. I could mention Brexit here but that would be provocative, which is not my style. Still, that clears me to have an opinion on anything to do with defence spending, foreign affairs and military aid.

Food is what keeps us alive, which enables us to wonder about the meaning of existence, while engaging in the practice of art, perhaps through literature, music, theatre or dance. Hurrah! I'm good to go on all culture and philosophy. And of course, the clincher: food specifically keeps me alive. It nourishes me. That enables me to go to the ballot box and cast my vote. In turn that entitles me to have an opinion on literally anything I bloody well please. I trust my critics can now see that everything I say is, in one way or another, about food. In a deliciously meta move I shall now post this column to Twitter. I'm certain no one will argue with me. But just in case I'll get a cup of coffee and a biscuit to keep me going.

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Specs appeal: how to buy glasses online – in pictures

Glasses from Ollie Quinn, Peep Eyewear and Ace & Tate

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2021.01.15 - Take part

- [Notes and queries Did people make paper aeroplanes before the invention of aeroplanes?](#)

[Notes and queries](#)[Life and style](#)

Did people make paper aeroplanes before the invention of aeroplanes?

The long-running series in which readers answer other readers' questions on subjects ranging from trivial flights of fancy to profound scientific and philosophical concepts

Plane sailing. Photograph: Tim Gaineys/Alamy
Plane sailing. Photograph: Tim Gaineys/Alamy
Wed 13 Jan 2021 06.33 EST

Did people make paper aeroplanes before the invention of aeroplanes? And if so, what were they called?

Peter Jackson

Post your answers below. Email new questions to **nq@theguardian.com**

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- '[The last days of Pompeo Secretary of state lashes out as reign comes to an end](#)
- '['Devastating' Nurse's family try to recover after losing her to Covid](#)
- '[Carbon neutrality is a fairy tale' How the race for renewables is burning Europe's forests](#)
- '[Obituary Canadian academic Leo Panitch](#)
- '['Hard graft' UK influencers scramble to justify exotic getaways in pandemic](#)

US education

'Kids can handle hard truths': teachers and their students reckon with capitol attack

‘We have to be clear-eyed in the history of our country to make sense of the events for kids.’ Photograph: John Moore/Getty Images

‘We have to be clear-eyed in the history of our country to make sense of the events for kids.’ Photograph: John Moore/Getty Images

The mob violence in Washington has sparked discussions in schools across the country but for many students of color the scenes were not shocking

[Mario Koran](#) in Milwaukee

Fri 15 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Fifteen-year-old Sevan Minassian-Godner's brain struggled to process the images of violent, pro-Trump insurrectionists defacing the Capitol.

The scene reminded the Berkeley high school sophomore of a movie, maybe the Hunger Games. Not the unbreakable idea of American democracy he's grown up learning about from pop culture, books and Hollywood.

"One thing I remember going through my mind was, how could people do this? How is it possible?" he said. "To see on live television this revolt to a fair election really opened my eyes to how just awful right now our world is getting."

[Captain America creator's son hits out at Capitol mob's use of superhero imagery](#)

[Read more](#)

From Berkeley to Milwaukee to Maryland, young people are coming to terms with last week's violence that left five dead and a president impeached for the second time. And right alongside, teachers are having to answer thorny questions about democracy, race, policing and where the country goes from here.

Many teachers say kids have been remarkably resilient and curious about the events at the Capitol. They have also noticed that many of their students of color, sadly, did not find the scene shocking.

The violence has taught students some tough lessons about the America they are coming of age in – one that has normalized political division and proved time and again that all citizens are not treated equally under the law. It's important not to shy away from these conversations in the classroom, and to place events in context, educators say.

"Reactionary violence is a thread in our nation's history," says Oscar Ramos, a ninth-grade history and government teacher in Maryland. "When people say they don't understand how it could happen, that's not true. We have to be clear-eyed in the history of our country to make sense of the events for kids. I believe they can handle being entrusted with hard truths."

A lesson in inequality

Few schools may be better positioned to help students unpack the conversation than Berkeley High, located in Berkeley, California, a cradle of progressive activism where discussions about white supremacy, voter suppression and toxic masculinity are woven into the ninth-grade curriculum.

Hasmig Minassian teaches her Berkeley High School class virtually.
Photograph: Courtesy of Hasmig Minassia

As events unfolded at the Capitol, Sevan's mom, Hasmig Minassian, who teaches the freshmen seminar, said she and co-teachers quickly pivoted from a planned lesson on gender.

After starting by defining terms like coup, sedition, insurrection, domestic terrorist and treason, teachers framed the day's class by reminding students that what they had just seen was unprecedented.

Then teachers presented contrasting images: photos of Black Lives Matter protesters doused with pepper-spray by militarized police forces, juxtaposed

with images of a Capitol police officer taking a selfie with a rioter, or [peacefully escorting](#) an older intruder out of the building.

In the images, students took note of the fact that unlike other political movements they have studied, this one seemed mostly devoid of young people, made up instead of older white males – people who students described as being baited into violence by the very president they trusted, Minassian said.

“Kids are really attuned to the fairness of things,” she said. “Forget left or right – they’re all about sniffing out what’s fair or unfair. And I think they saw a group of people being taken advantage of by Trump, and were really curious about the punishment for breaking into the building, or Nancy Pelosi’s office, then posting photos of it.”

But to Minassian, what stands out most was how most students found the events troubling, but not unexpected.

An American flag in a school house. Young people are coming to terms with last week's violence that left five dead and a president impeached for the second time. Photograph: Marcia Straub/Getty Images

"It made me a little sad to hear how unsurprised the students were. I had to pick up more adults from the floor than kids that day," Minassian said.

For students of color, she added, the differential treatment by police was a reality they already understood. "Seeing burly white men assaulting the halls of government, with representatives hiding under their desks in fear, it didn't feel that different from what they feel just walking down the street and passing a cop. It was like: welcome to my world."

'Don't shy away from hard conversations'

Across the country in Montgomery county, Maryland, not far from the Capitol attack, Oscar Ramos started Thursday's discussion with historical context, reminding students that democracy wasn't meant for people of color when the country was first founded by white men, some of them slave owners, and how racialized violence is a recurring theme in US history.

That day, in fact, the class had been scheduled to discuss Black Wall Street, a thriving center of Black culture and commerce that in 1921 was looted and destroyed by a white mob in what became known as the Tulsa Race Massacre, one of the [deadliest racist attacks](#) in US history.

Ramos recalls pausing frequently as he led an open discussion about the Capitol attack, choosing words carefully so as not to alienate students whose narratives conflicted with those he presented. As a Latino teacher, Ramos worries about accusations of bias in the content he teaches. But, he said, choosing not to talk about racial violence is a form of bias, too.

Janine Domingues, a clinical psychologist at the [Child Mind Institute](#) who specializes in helping children and families who have been affected by trauma, said it was important to be truthful when talking with children about the events at the Capitol, even if it means leaving out graphic details and keeping explanations simple.

“For children, it’s important to check in on what they’re feeling and offer reassurance. ‘I know what you’re seeing is scary, but we’re safe right now,’” Domingues said. Children of color and those from marginalized communities may feel particularly vulnerable and targeted in the wake of racialized events, she added.

Older children and teenagers may be ready for an open dialogue about what the events mean for the country, she said, though adults will still want to filter information and guide the conversation.

“I think it’s a tremendous growth opportunity and a chance to give students skills for how to process what’s happening,” Domingues said. “As long as we don’t shy away from these hard conversations.”

‘For children, it’s important to check in on what they’re feeling and offer reassurance.’ Photograph: John Moore/Getty Images

‘You have control over your actions’

Those hard conversations were under way last week in the midwestern city of Milwaukee, as David Castillo, a planning assistant with the school district's office of Black and Latino male achievement, helped lead a dialogue with the students he mentors.

Castillo said students keyed in on how differently police had handled Black Lives Matter protests over the summer.

"I could see the wheels turning in their heads, the cognitive dissonance that comes from recognizing the hypocrisy of that the same group that shouted 'Blue Lives Matter' are now attacking police," Castillo said.

"As Black and brown kids from inner-city Milwaukee, they know how law enforcement responds. It's like: I already believed this, and now I have tangible evidence,' he said.

First-grade teacher Angela Harris says her students have had engaging discussions about the Capitol attack. Photograph: Courtesy of Angela Harris.

One fifth-grade teacher in Milwaukee, who asked not to be identified, said she was “blown away” by the level of engagement and sophistication with which her students discussed last week’s events.

Part of the morning was dedicated to helping students recognize misinformation by comparing sources, a skill that she says educators have a moral obligation to equip students with. But most of the time was devoted to open discussion – one that lasted three hours.

One student connected the apparent complicity by some of the Capitol police to the lack of Latino representation in textbooks. Others expressed fear, she said, asking whether the politicians in the Capitol were safe or if they had been kidnapped, or what could happen during Joe Biden’s inauguration.

“I had to be honest that I shared those concerns about further conflict,” she said “I thought it would be more powerful if I was real with them.”

Across town, on the city’s north side, first-grade teacher Angela Harris focused Thursday’s class on empathy and emotional regulation, using rioters’ actions as an example on how not to react.

To make the discussion concrete, she tied it to the mock elections held previously in class – which Joe Biden won – and asked how they would feel if someone was so upset by the results they tore up the classroom. Students were indignant, she said. They immediately wanted to know what consequences such a person would face.

[Jamie Raskin: grieving congressman leads push to impeach Trump](#)
[Read more](#)

Every student in Harris’s class is Black. Even at six years old, students noticed that police seemed to respond differently to the white mob than the ways they have seen cops behave in their community. Milwaukee has one of the highest incarceration rates in the US for Black men. [More than half](#) of all Black men living in Milwaukee county have been incarcerated before they reach 40, according to a 2013 study by UW-Milwaukee.

“They have a fear of police even at five or six years old. It’s part of their everyday life,” Harris said. “For some of them that was the first time they might have seen white people interact with police,” she said.

Harris said she didn't dive deeply into this thread – they've already seen enough disparities just living in Milwaukee, she said, one of the nation's most segregated cities – choosing instead to focus on the skills they could grow.

"I want them to understand that at any moment, you have to be the one who has control over your actions. And what happened at the Capitol is a perfect example of folks not being able to control their emotions."

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<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/14/students-teachers-grapple-with-capitol-attack>

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Mike Pompeo

The last days of Pompeo: secretary of state lashes out as reign comes to an end

Trump's foreign policy chief has pursued confrontation with Iran and other perceived enemies, but his efforts to disrupt diplomacy will end in failure

US secretary of state Mike Pompeo is ending his reign with a blizzard of self-congratulatory tweets, some of them incorrect. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

US secretary of state Mike Pompeo is ending his reign with a blizzard of self-congratulatory tweets, some of them incorrect. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

[Julian Borger](#) in Washington

Thu 14 Jan 2021 10.27 EST

The finale of Mike Pompeo's reign at the state department has been as controversial and clamorous as the rest of his 32-month tenure, but it is unclear what traces will remain after he has gone.

The last days of Pompeo have been played out in a blizzard of self-congratulatory tweets, at the rate of two dozen a day, as he seeks to write his own first draft of history.

[Mike Pompeo claims without evidence that Iran is al-Qaida's new 'home base'](#)
[Read more](#)

The former Kansas congressman, with evident ambitions for a presidential run in 2024, has accented his claims of success by frequent derogatory references to the previous administration, portrayed as hapless appeasers. The political point-scoring and aggrandizement have made the use of the megaphone provided by a government Twitter account, with 3 million followers.

It is not the first time Pompeo has used government resources for personal ends. The state department inspector general was investigating him for using state department staff to run private errands, like picking up dry cleaning and walking the dog, when Pompeo had him [fired last May](#).

Some of the tweets have been factually incorrect, for example blaming Barack Obama for an arms control treaty that was signed by Ronald Reagan.

Other claims are contradictory, like his insistence the US has restored deterrence against Iran, alongside his allegation that Tehran is a greater threat than ever. On Tuesday, he [called Iran "the new Afghanistan"](#), alleging – without evidence – that it has become al-Qaida's hub of operations.

While Iran's economy has been successfully pummelled by sanctions, as Pompeo points out, its stockpile of low-enriched uranium is now more than [12 times greater](#) than it was when Pompeo took up the job of US secretary of state in 2018.

"If the real economic duress US sanctions put on Tehran has increased or least failed to stop the very activities that policy was meant to reverse, it's a matter of having made an impact without delivering a favourable outcome," Naysan Rafati, senior [Iran](#) analyst at the International Crisis Group, said.

Similarly, Pompeo argues that Donald Trump's summits with Kim Jong-un led to a lull in nuclear warhead and long-range missile testing. But he does not mention that Kim has declared an end to that moratorium, and is now set to have a substantially bigger arsenal than when he began meeting Trump.

The portrait Pompeo has painted of Trump's America has been in dramatic contrast to recent events. Two days after Congress came under an unprecedented violent attack by a mob egged on by Trump, Pompeo [blithely tweeted](#): "Being the greatest country on earth is not just about our incredible economy & our strong military; it's about the values we project out into the world."

He also boasted his state department team "did more than any other to build alliances that secured American interests" days before [having to cancel](#) his swan song trip to Europe because his counterparts did not want to see him.

The Luxembourg foreign minister signalled he would be unavailable to meet America's top diplomat, and described Trump's behaviour as "criminal". The Belgian foreign minister, Sophie Wilmès, who Pompeo was also supposed to have met on the trip, [made clear on Twitter](#) that her government was counting on Joe Biden to restore US unity and stability.

"It is unprecedeted for an American secretary of state to be unwelcome at any time, especially at the end of their tenure, in the foreign ministries of our closest allies," Brett Bruen, who was director of Global Engagement in the Obama White House, said. "It just goes to show how far he has ostracised himself."

In his would-be victory lap, Pompeo – known for being thin-skinned – has restricted his media interviews to admiring conservative talkshow hosts and has not taken questions after his speeches.

At the headquarters of the state-funded Voice of America (VOA) station on Monday, he berated its journalists for being insufficiently patriotic, even "demeaning America". [He told them](#) "to broadcast that this is the greatest nation the world has ever known".

[Forget Putin, it's meddling by America's evangelical enforcer that should scare us](#) | Simon Tisdall

[Read more](#)

When a VOA journalist, Patsy Widakuswara, tried to ask him questions after his address, he walked away, ignoring her. Hours later Widakuswara was demoted from her position covering the White House, to other duties.

Michael Pack, the man installed by Trump and Pompeo at the head of the US Agency for Global Media, which oversees VOA and other federally funded broadcasters, is seeking to entrench his position by making it harder for the incoming administration to sack him, turning the agency's statutory independence to his advantage. But it is unclear Pack will succeed, having alienated both Democrats and Republicans in Congress with his purges of journalistic and managerial staff.

"I don't see the new administration having great difficulty in helping him find the exit," Bruen said.

There are other ways in which Pompeo has sought to impart a final, dramatic yank on the wheel of [US foreign policy](#), with the intention of making it hard for the next administration to change course.

Within his last 10 days, Pompeo has designated Houthi forces in Yemen and Cuba as a terrorist group and a state sponsor of terrorism respectively, although neither poses a direct threat to the US.

[The Houthi designation](#), which aid agencies warn might cause widespread deaths in Yemen by complicating humanitarian aid deliveries, was made without consulting lawmakers or their staff.

[UN predicts 'famine not seen in 40 years' due to Pompeo's Yemen policy](#)
[Read more](#)

"You need to stop fucking lying to Congress," one staffer told a state department official in a briefing call reported by Foreign Policy, and confirmed to the Guardian by a source familiar with the conversation.

"Like so many other similar briefings we've had from this administration, they send these poor people out to defend these ridiculous policies, and they just can't," a senior Democratic congressional staffer said.

While at the state department, Pompeo has expended most energy on attempting to drive nails into the coffin of the nuclear agreement major world

powers made with Iran in 2015, and from which Trump withdrew in 2018.

That effort has so far been a failure. In response to waves of US sanctions Iran has stopped observing some of the agreed constraints on its nuclear activities, but has signalled it is ready to negotiate re-entry into the agreement with the new administration.

The sanctions and terrorist designations are intended to impose political costs on the Biden team in trying to return to the pre-Trump status quo, based on the assumption that it will be unpopular to be seen to reward America's adversaries, but it is far from clear whether it will work.

“What he’s doing is creating tough news days for the next administration, but it’s manageable,” the senior Democratic staffer said, predicting the traps that Pompeo has been setting can be cleared away without expending too much political capital. “So much of the damage Trump and Pompeo have done has been through executive actions, so it can be reversed through executive action.”

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[NHS](#)

Care home nurse's family try to recover after losing her to Covid

Support from the Healthcare Workers' Foundation's Family Fund initiative has been a lifeline for families left behind

‘Losing Elsie has been devastating and something words cannot explain,’ says Ken Sazuze. Photograph: Anthony Shintai/The Guardian

‘Losing Elsie has been devastating and something words cannot explain,’ says Ken Sazuze. Photograph: Anthony Shintai/The Guardian

[Lucy Campbell](#)

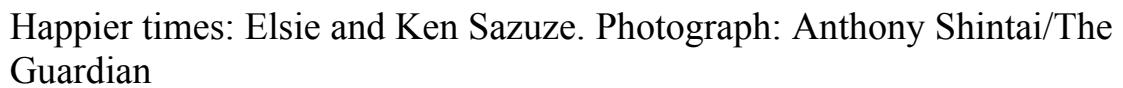
Thu 14 Jan 2021 13.01 EST

For Ken Sazuze and his two children, Andrew and Anna, their house is no longer a home. They did not put up Christmas decorations, and each day they struggle with the pain of a loss that has broken their family. Nine months ago, Ken lost his wife of 24 years to Covid-19.

Elsie Sazuze died aged 44 on 9 April at the Good Hope hospital in Sutton Coldfield, Birmingham. She had been working as a care home nurse for three years when she and Ken contracted the virus in April. While he recovered from a mild illness, Elsie deteriorated quickly.

Ken says she called everybody when she was told she had to be put on a ventilator. “It was like she knew she had to make last calls and say goodbyes. Four days later, she grew her wings.” He remains unsure how they caught the virus, but believes it could have been at work – he says Elsie was never given proper PPE, only a flimsy plastic apron and gloves.

“Losing Elsie has been devastating and something words cannot explain. She was an amazing woman, and really missed,” Ken says of his high school sweetheart, who lived two doors away from him in their home city of Blantyre, Malawi.



Happier times: Elsie and Ken Sazuze. Photograph: Anthony Shintai/The Guardian

“She was a very peaceful woman. She spoke with her eyes and her smile. She loved her peace, her family, and she loved having fun. She was the best gift God ever gave us.”

As a family, they were always very close. They have fond memories of camping holidays in Wales, barbecues and Monopoly at Christmas, and parties at their home in Birmingham. Anna, 16, loved going to concerts with her mother, and Ken recalls the couple taking Andrew, 22, clubbing with them several times. His wife was a quiet, church-going person, who loved her family, her soaps and her R&B.

The way she died was sudden, leaving the family financially as well as emotionally broken. Elsie had been the main breadwinner while Ken completed his own nursing studies, so on top of their immeasurable loss and trying to

process their grief, he is constantly anxious and worried about money and providing for the family.

“I’m broke. We’ve been struggling to pay for food and bills,” he says. “I can’t afford to pay the bills. When I can, I’d rather pay my daughter’s phone than my own. I know many families who have lost their breadwinners and are going through hardship at this time.”

The risk from coronavirus remains highest for healthcare workers, who are [seven times more likely](#) to develop severe Covid-19. Since the start of the pandemic, more than 600 healthcare workers have died. A lifeline for families left behind has been support through the NHS-founded charity [Healthcare Workers’ Foundation](#) (HWF), which launched its Family Fund initiative after healthcare workers expressed fear and anxiety about the impact their duties might have on their lives and their loved ones.

The fund has raised more than £47,000 for bereaved families, providing access to counselling, legal and financial advice, respite breaks, and mentoring services on careers and education for children.

Ken says support from the HWF has been “overwhelming” in helping to ease their pain. “They have supported us in ways we couldn’t have imagined. It’s a rough journey, but they are helping us deal with it,” he says. As well providing access to bereavement counselling and therapy, checking on them regularly and getting Anna and Andrew out of the house, HWF helped Andrew secure a four-week accounting internship and is supporting Anna in her A-level studies.

“My children have gone through a lot this year. It has weakened our world, but I’m discovering how strong my kids are. I’ve never lost a parent at the age of 16, so when I’m looking at my daughter, I know there are things I can’t understand,” says Ken.

“All of these things HWF is doing are keeping us going and giving us faith. My children continue to fight through their education. I’m proud of them and I’m so grateful for the miracle the charity is doing for us.”

- To donate to HWF’s Family Fund Campaign, [click here](#).
- Families of healthcare workers who have lost a loved one due to Covid and would like to inquire about the support available through the Family

Fund should email familyfund@healthcareworkersfoundation.org

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[This is Europe](#)

'Carbon-neutrality is a fairy tale': how the race for renewables is burning Europe's forests

A drone image of forest in the Haanja nature reserve where a section has been 'clear-cut', November 2020. Photograph: Liis Treimann/Äripäev

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Socialism

Leo Panitch obituary

Canadian academic whose work on democratic socialism had an impact across the globe

Leo Panitch's research on the problems faced by Jeremy Corbyn led to two analytical books. Photograph: Schuster Gindin/Creative Commons
Leo Panitch's research on the problems faced by Jeremy Corbyn led to two analytical books. Photograph: Schuster Gindin/Creative Commons

Colin Leys

Thu 14 Jan 2021 18.09 EST

Leo Panitch, who has died aged 75 from Covid-19, shortly after being diagnosed with cancer, was a Canadian researcher, teacher and public intellectual whose work had a profound impact on the thinking of democratic socialists in several continents, not least in the UK.

He worked on two main questions: could social democratic parties become capable of transforming capitalist societies rather than just periodically managing them? And what did globalisation mean for socialists facing that challenge – was it really the end of the nation state, as received opinion held?

A student of the sociologist [Ralph Miliband](#), to whom he became close (he was godfather to Ralph's son, [Ed](#), the former Labour leader, and remained close to him in turn), Leo first took up the question posed by Ralph of whether the Labour party could become a vehicle for socialism. The defeat of "Bennism" seemed to confirm Miliband's earlier judgment that this was impossible, and in his first treatment of the issue, *The End of Parliamentary Socialism* (1997), which we wrote together, Leo agreed; but he thought that the contradictions of neoliberalism would eventually lead to a groundswell of popular support for a socialist project.

When this happened, and led to the [election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader in 2015](#), and the dramatic jump in Labour's support in the 2017 general election, Leo was ready to reconsider. He followed the Corbyn project closely, concluding that while it had eventually foundered on Brexit, its [heavy defeat in 2019](#) was also due to serious failures of strategy.

What emerged from this work, and a study of the parallel socialist projects occurring in Greece, Spain, the US, Brazil and elsewhere, was a sophisticated analysis (in *The Socialist Challenge Today*, 2018, and *Searching for Socialism*, 2020) of the lessons that democratic socialists everywhere must learn if they were to make a lasting advance in the impending new crisis of the capitalist system. Above all, it was essential to re-embed socialist parties in the lives and struggles of working people.

The advent of globalisation in the 1980s had led Leo to undertake an ambitious programme of research that finally led to the publication in 2012 of a landmark study, *The Making of Global Capitalism*. Against the commonly held view that internationalisation bypassed and weakened states, Leo and his co-author Sam Gindin demonstrated that, under globalised capitalism, states had instead become responsible for establishing the conditions for the successful operation of both foreign and domestic capital; the American state, in particular, played a central role in facilitating and superintending the making of this new world order. And while some argued that capitalism, and especially American

capitalism, was in decline, Leo and Gindin showed that the relevant crisis was not economic – profits were in fact growing – but one of delegitimation.

Growing inequality, worsening working conditions, chronic insecurity and politicians' repeated failure to deliver on their promises were ushering in an era of turbulent politics, prompting the rise of both the far right and a new left. This reinforced the prime challenge for socialists that Leo had long emphasised: developing working classes into social forces capable of leading the struggle to transform their own states, while preserving an internationalist sensibility that escaped nationalist scapegoating.

Leo's academic work was widely cited and respected – he received numerous academic honours – but his impact was at least equally due to his role as an international public intellectual of an unusual kind; and this in turn had much to do with having grown up in the historically radical North End area of Winnipeg, Manitoba, where his father worked as a fur cutter. His default identification was always with workers: wherever he went he connected with activists and keenly interrogated their analyses of the political issues they confronted.

Born in Winnipeg, the younger son of Max Panitch and his wife, Sarah (nee Hoffman), Leo was an undergraduate at the University of Manitoba, where he met and, in 1967, married Melanie Pollock, who would become a pioneering professor of disability studies. A Commonwealth scholarship took them both to London, the LSE and Miliband.

Leo's first academic appointment, in 1972, was at Carleton University in Ottawa; he moved to York University in Toronto in 1984. As professor and chair of the department of political science at York, where he remained until retirement in 2016, he created a culture in which progressive work could flourish, including a wide variety of non-sectarian Marxisms, which attracted students from around the world (and earned him the affectionate soubriquet of “Chairman Leo”).

It may be too strong to say, as one former student claims, that “almost all innovations in western Marxist thinking can be traced back to this department” in those years, but its theoretical vitality under his chairmanship had few parallels, and outstanding students went on to play important intellectual and sometimes political roles in half a dozen countries.

After moving to Toronto, Leo also took on the co-editorship of the international annual the Socialist Register, and was still editing it at his death 35 years later. He used to say that the reason why hardly any author, however eminent, declined an invitation to write for it, was its high reputation for quality. The truth was, however, that Leo was someone no one could refuse.

He was a big man in every sense, who combined formidable theoretical skills and knowledge with an infectious love of life – jazz, baseball, food, theatre, art, history and friendship. All this, along with his honesty and gifts as a speaker, his faith in the young and his immense generosity, made him universally admired and loved.

He is survived by Melanie, their children, Maxim and Vida, grandchildren, Ellen, Dean and Sara Rose, and his brother, Hersh.

- Leo Victor Panitch, academic and activist, born 3 May 1945; died 19 December 2020

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<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/14/leo-panitch-obituary>.

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Social media

'Hard graft': UK influencers scramble to justify exotic getaways in pandemic

Stung by scepticism over 'luxury business trips' in a pandemic, influencers in Dubai are touting their 'hard graft'

Chloe Ferry, Anton Danyluk and Gabby Allen in images posted on social media
Photograph: Instagram

Chloe Ferry, Anton Danyluk and Gabby Allen in images posted on social media
Photograph: Instagram

[Archie Bland](#) and [Matthew Weaver](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

In ordinary times influencers posting from [Dubai](#) go out of their way to show you what a good time they are having. In Covid's latest cruel reversal, they are now doing everything they can to show that they are working their socks off.

With a rising number of cases leading the UK to announce that the [United Arab Emirates](#) would be removed from its travel corridor list from Tuesday, British nationals returning home now face 10 days in isolation.

And in the aftermath of that [announcement](#) by the UK transport secretary, Grant Shapps, social media users have realised that an extraordinary number of the former stars of the TV series Love Island and Geordie Shore appear to be, at present, in the UAE.

Some of these exiled influencers are posting the same sunloungers-and-posh-dinners content as before – Dubai is not subject to lockdown measures like the UK. But now they are having to scramble to delete the hostile messages ensuing from their followers.

With “essential work trips” being one of very few consistently allowed justifications for travel as the UK’s rules have fluctuated over the last few months, some of the influencers in Dubai are trying to indicate that their 3,400-mile trip was a necessary part of their work – appearing in videos and paid-for endorsements.

As reaction built up on Wednesday, the Love Island star Anton Danyluk, who has been in Dubai since 10 December and has posted images of himself out for meals and smoking shisha in a pool, showed a video of his laptop with a view of the skyline behind it and the caption “love my office view”.

Meanwhile, The Only Way Is Essex star James Lock posted at least two images of his laptop, with unspecified graphs on screen, in his stories. On Wednesday morning he told his followers he and his girlfriend, Yazmin Oukhellou, were “working away, despite what you may think, we are still grafting”. He posted a video of himself sunbathing, with a drink but no laptop, an hour later.

Oukhellou, also an influencer, had previously explained that the Dubai trip was for an unavoidable product launch. “We are here for work purposes, for business,” she said. “Obviously we’ll make the most of it while we’re here as well.”

They are far from alone. The Geordie Shore stars Chloe Ferry, Sophie Kasaei, and Bethan Kershaw, said the apartment they had rented had a room devoted to producing sponsored content.

Gabby Allen, another Love Islander, has told her followers: “Hey guys, just to let you know, we made the decision to fly out to Dubai as my boyfriend’s business is based here and luckily allows us to travel.”

Others could have travelled before the UK ban on non-essential international journeys was imposed in November. The Love Island star Kaz Crossley has been there since October and, her agent said, was therefore a “resident” rather than tourist, the same claim made by fellow islander Georgia Harrison.

The extraordinary proliferation of workaholic influencers in Dubai, taking refuge even as the coronavirus case count rises, led the writer Clive Martin [to describe](#) the emirates hotspot as “the Covid Casablanca”.

Residents might welcome their city’s popularity with British tourists in general, but some are unimpressed by the latest deluge.

“With all of them coming in, getting reservations at attractions and slots for residents has been so difficult,” said Rhea Matthew, a social care executive. She said the problem was a specifically British one and coincided with the rising case count in the UAE. “Our city became so full overnight. Things were good and then boom – tourists everywhere. Things are escalating here and it’s scary.”

The UAE government has cited “a significant acceleration in the number of imported cases”.

In the influencers’ defence, Laura Anderson, another Love Island veteran, who is in Dubai, said: “I saw someone in my comments saying you’re on holiday, but when you’re working you’re not on holiday … I’m definitely not out and about every day as I need to be on my laptop working and life here is strict.”

But Olivia Attwood, yet another Love Islander, summarised such arguments derisively from her home in Manchester. “It’s the constant ‘I’m working, not on holiday’ shout,” she said in a video. “There is a difference between being able to earn money wherever you are, and being there for work.”

With scrutiny of the reality stars intensifying, Trending Travel, a holiday company that specialises in using celebrities to advertise, said it had been forced to stop posting anything featuring influencers.

Its chief executive, Keith Herman, said the company had advised about 15 influencers it works with, and who are in Dubai, against posting at the moment.

“Most have listened to us,” he said. “We’ve told them the world has changed over the last two weeks, you’ve got to be more sensitive to who is seeing your posts.” In their defence, he said, some had contracts to honour and were inexperienced. But he added: “Morally they should just lie low at the moment.”

Sarah Penny, head of content at the marketing agency Influencer Intelligence, said that such posts were ill-advised even from a branding standpoint. “We’ve been monitoring the situation throughout the pandemic and it’s clear that audiences are very sensitive to people’s [behaviour]. I completely understand they have to work, but it’s a very blinkered and short-term way of looking at it.”

The influencers themselves, meanwhile, were not keen to expand on their social media statements. Of the 23 contacted by the Guardian only Crossley’s agency provided a statement on her behalf. Twenty-one did not respond, while Danyluk’s agent asked if the influencer would receive a fee.

- This article was amended on 14 January 2021. It incorrectly stated that “essential work trips” had been the only exception to the UK’s travel rules since November. This has been clarified.

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[Toby Young](#)

Daily Telegraph rebuked over Toby Young's Covid column

Press watchdog says claims were ‘significantly misleading’ as newspaper told to publish correction

Toby Young admitted he had ‘got that wrong’ when he wrote last June that ‘the virus has all but disappeared’. Photograph: Ken McKay/ITV/Rex/Shutterstock
Toby Young admitted he had ‘got that wrong’ when he wrote last June that ‘the virus has all but disappeared’. Photograph: Ken McKay/ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

[Archie Bland](#)

Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.18 EST

An article by Toby Young for the [Daily Telegraph](#) was “significantly misleading” when it said that catching a cold could protect people from coronavirus and claimed that London was approaching herd immunity, the press regulator has ruled.

In a [decision published on Thursday](#), the Independent Press Standards Organisation (Ipsos) complaints committee ordered the Telegraph to publish a correction over the column, which was appeared in July last year under the headline: “When we have herd immunity Boris will face a reckoning on this pointless and damaging lockdown.”

Young told the Guardian that he “may have been overemphatic in putting the anti-lockdown case, but it’s not as if the advocates of a pro-lockdown position are any less emphatic”.

The comment piece, which is no longer available on the Telegraph website, claimed that some people “will have a natural immunity because they’ve already successfully fought off other coronaviruses, such as the common cold” and that “people in [this] category will be immune”.

The newspaper argued that Young was referring to “cross-reactive T-cells”, which were not mentioned in the article. But a complainant said that such T-cells “may lessen the impact of Covid-19 but would not confer ‘natural immunity’.”

Ipsos concluded that the Telegraph was unable to support its position and that it had “failed to take care not to publish inaccurate and misleading information”.

“The statement was significantly misleading,” it said, noting that the Telegraph had not offered to run a correction. “It misrepresented the nature of immunity and implied that people previously exposed to some common colds might be automatically immune to suffering symptoms and passing on Covid-19 to others.”

Ipsos also found that Young’s claim that “London is probably approaching herd immunity, even though only 17% tested positive [for antibodies] in the most recent seroprevalence survey” was misleading.

Challenged on the claim, the Telegraph referred to an article on Young’s own Lockdown Sceptics website. But the Ipsos committee said that the studies

ultimately relied on for the claim did not support its conclusion that London was close to herd immunity, and ruled that the article “was misleading both as to how herd immunity is reached and whether it existed in London”.

The ruling said there had been no breach of the Ipso code on two other points but upheld the complaint, saying that it “considered that the article contained multiple breaches of clause 1 on a topic of public importance”.

It said that a correction was appropriate rather than a more severe sanction because of the level of scientific uncertainty at the time of publication.

[How many waves will it take for Britain's lockdown sceptics to finally call it a day? | Marina Hyde](#)

[Read more](#)

Young, one of the most prominent critics of lockdowns as a response to the pandemic, admitted last week that he had “got that wrong” when he wrote last June that “the virus has all but disappeared”.

He has continued to argue strongly against lockdowns and on Wednesday called news coverage of the growing death toll from the virus “hysterical”. His [Free Speech Union group](#) also made an unsuccessful attempt to judicially review Ofcom’s role in regulating misinformation about coronavirus.

After Young deleted all of his tweets from before 6 January, the Conservative MP Neil O’Brien [tweeted a thread of claims](#) he had made, noting, among other examples, a piece for the Spectator in August which claimed: “As we sceptics are fond of pointing out, almost no one has the virus any more.”

Responding to the ruling, Young argued that Ipso had “been put in a difficult position because our scientific understanding of the virus is constantly evolving and there is a great deal about it that scientists still disagree about”. He said that T-cells “do contribute to herd immunity”. Claiming that data produced via PCR tests was unreliable, he added: “Have we achieved herd immunity in London? I think that’s an open question, not something that’s straightforwardly factually wrong.”

He said that “lots of journalists” had covered “alarmist” reports by the World Health Organization and added: “Why hasn’t Ipso reprimanded them?”

The Daily Telegraph did not respond to a request for comment.

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Rudy Giuliani

Trump 'refusing to pay' Rudy Giuliani's legal fees after falling out

President said to be offended by personal lawyer's demand for a reported \$20,000 a day

Rudy Giuliani has been one of Trump's most loyal and sycophantic supporters.
Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

Rudy Giuliani has been one of Trump's most loyal and sycophantic supporters.
Photograph: Mandel Ngan/AFP/Getty Images

Luke Harding

Thu 14 Jan 2021 07.35 EST

Donald Trump has fallen out with his personal lawyer, [Rudy Giuliani](#), and is refusing to pay the former New York mayor's legal bills, it was reported, with the president feeling abandoned and frustrated during his last days in office.

Giuliani played a key role in Trump's failed attempts to overturn the results of November's presidential election through the courts. The lawyer mounted numerous spurious legal challenges, travelling to swing states won by Joe Biden, and spread false claims the vote was rigged.

According to the [Washington Post](#), relations between Trump and Giuliani have dramatically cooled. Trump has instructed his aides not to pay Giuliani's outstanding fees. The president is reportedly offended by Giuliani's demand for \$20,000 a day – a figure the lawyer denies, but which is apparently in writing. White House officials have even been told not to put through any of Giuliani's calls.

Commenting on the report, Ken Frydman, who worked as Giuliani's press secretary in the 1990s, said: "Lay down with dogs. Wake up with fleas and without \$20,000 a day".

The apparent breach with Giuliani – one of Trump's most loyal and sycophantic supporters – has contributed to the president's sense of isolation and betrayal, aides have suggested.

00:43

Rudy Giuliani suffers hair malfunction as he makes more baseless voter fraud allegations – video

Trump is reportedly unhappy that members of his inner circle have failed to defend him following last week's deadly attack on the US Capitol by a mob of his supporters. Many have been silent following Wednesday's vote in the House of Representatives to impeach Trump for a second time.

Those who have reportedly failed to step up include Trump's press secretary, Kayleigh McEnany, his son-in-law and adviser, Jared Kushner, and his chief of staff, Mark Meadows, responsible for indulging Trump's belief that the election was rigged.

"The president is pretty wound up," one senior administration official [told the Post](#). "No one is out there."

Trump's refusal to pay Giuliani's bills is another blow to the former federal prosecutor. Giuliani is already under fire for his own alleged role in inciting Trump supporters to storm the Capitol building.

Addressing Trump's Save America rally in Washington last week, Giuliani said: "I'm willing to stake my reputation, the president is willing to stake his reputation, on the fact that we're going to find criminality there." He pointedly added: "Let's have trial by combat."

Michael Sherwin, the acting US attorney for Washington DC, is investigating the riot. He has said he is looking at numerous participants. They include those who instigated the Capitol invasion, a category that might implicate Trump and Giuliani.

A group of Giuliani's former colleagues from his time as a Manhattan federal prosecutor have blamed him directly for the post-rally mayhem. "It was jarring and totally disheartening to have seen one of our former colleagues engage in that conduct," they wrote. He is also [facing a disbarment complaint in New York](#).

Over the past week Trump has suffered a series of damaging reversals. Cabinet members have resigned, corporations have cut links with the Trump organisation, and the US Professional Golfers' Association has cancelled an agreement to hold its championship next year at Trump's New Jersey course. His longtime bank, Deutsche, has said it no longer wants him as a customer.

Trump is reportedly more isolated than ever. The White House is sparsely staffed, and those who do go to work there deliberately avoid the Oval Office, the Post reported.

The rift with the president may sink Giuliani's lingering hopes of receiving a presidential pardon. Last year, Giuliani held discussions with Trump about receiving an amnesty over his work on the president's behalf in Ukraine. Criminal charges of illegal campaign donations have been filed against two Giuliani associates, Lev Parnas and Igor Fruman. The trio worked to try to dig up dirt on Biden and his son Hunter.

Additional reporting by Martin Pengelly

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[Trump impeachment \(2021\)](#)

Donald Trump impeached a second time over mob attack on US Capitol

- Ten Republicans support unprecedented second impeachment
- Nancy Pelosi says Trump represents ‘clear and present danger’

The [House of Representatives](#) on Wednesday impeached Donald Trump for inciting a violent insurrection against the government of the United States a week after he encouraged a mob of his supporters to storm the US Capitol, a historic condemnation that makes him the only American president to be charged twice with committing high crimes and misdemeanors.

After an emotional day-long debate in the chamber where lawmakers cowered last week as rioters vandalized the Capitol, 10 House [Republicans](#) joined Democrats to embrace the constitution’s gravest remedy after vowing to hold Trump to account before he leaves office next week.

The sole article of impeachment charges the defeated president with “inciting an insurrection” that led to what the House speaker, [Nancy Pelosi](#), said would be immortalized as a “day of fire” on Capitol Hill.

The president, Pelosi said, represented a “clear and present danger to the nation we all love”.

The final count was 232 to 197, with [10 members of the president’s party](#) supporting his unprecedented second impeachment. Among them was Liz Cheney, the No 3 House Republican and daughter of Dick Cheney, George W Bush’s vice-president. Though she did not rise to speak on Wednesday, she issued an unsparing statement announcing her support for impeachment, in which she said that there had “never been a greater betrayal by a president of the United States” than Trump’s conduct on 6 January.

“The president of the United States summoned this mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack,” said Cheney in a statement.

Kevin McCarthy, the House Republican leader, attempted to carve a middle path for his caucus. He said Trump “bears responsibility” for Wednesday’s attack, while warning that impeachment would “further fan the flames of partisan division”. As an alternative, he proposed a censure.

The result of the lightning-fast proceedings was the most most bipartisan presidential impeachment vote in US history, a stunning end to the Trump presidency.

The scene at the Capitol on Wednesday. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

The House was prepared to immediately transmit the article of impeachment to the Senate after Wednesday’s vote. In a statement, the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, said there was “simply no chance” of concluding a trial before Trump leaves office, ensuring that the affair would begin during the inaugural days of Joe Biden’s presidency.

In a statement, Biden said the House had exercised its power to “hold the president accountable”, and that he hoped “the Senate leadership will find a way to deal with their constitutional responsibilities on impeachment while also working on the other urgent business of this nation”.

Though consequences for Trump will not include premature removal from office, the Senate trial would not be entirely symbolic. Two-thirds of the 100-member body are required to convict a president, meaning 17 Republicans would have to join [Democrats](#) to render a guilty verdict.

If convicted, it would then require only a simple majority to disqualify him from ever again holding public office.

“Make no mistake,” said New York senator Chuck Schumer, who will become the majority leader when his party takes control of the chamber later this month, “there will be an impeachment trial in the United States Senate; there will be a vote on convicting the president for high crimes and misdemeanors; and if the president is convicted, there will be a vote on barring him from running again.”

While it is currently considered unlikely that enough Senate Republicans would break with Trump, two have called on the president to resign, and the New York Times reported that McConnell believes the president had committed impeachable offenses.

McConnell’s souring on Trump is significant, because as Washington’s most powerful Republican his view could make it easier for others in his party to turn against the president.

In a letter to colleagues on Wednesday, McConnell said he had “not made a final decision on how I will vote, and I intend to listen to the legal arguments when they are presented to the Senate.”

The deadly assault a week ago came as the House and Senate were in session to certify Biden’s victory in November’s presidential election, a result Trump refused to accept. Five people died during the siege, including a police officer.

“We are debating this historic measure at an actual crime scene, and we wouldn’t be here if it weren’t for the president of the United States,” said Jim

McGovern, a Democratic congressman from Massachusetts and the chair of the rules committee, opening Wednesday's session.

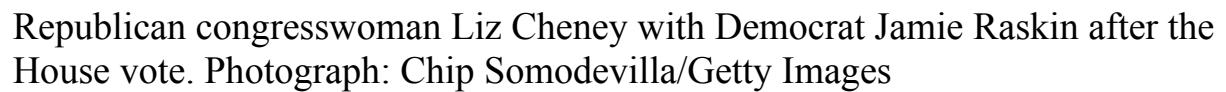
The president summoned this mob, assembled the mob, and lit the flame of this attack

Liz Cheney

All around as members argued the merits of impeaching a defeated president were reminders of the destruction wrought by rioters – the first occupation of the US Capitol since British troops burned the building during the war of 1812.

The building lawmakers call the People's House, poorly defended last Wednesday, had been turned into a fortress, protected by thousands of national guard troops and with metal detectors stationed outside the chamber doors. Some Republicans rebelled against the new safety protocols, evading the security check.

A remorseless Trump on Tuesday called his inflammatory language at a rally immediately before the mob marched on the Capitol "totally appropriate". Efforts to hold him accountable were nothing more than a "continuation of the greatest witch-hunt in the history of politics", he said.



Republican congresswoman Liz Cheney with Democrat Jamie Raskin after the House vote. Photograph: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

After his impeachment, Trump released a [video statement](#) belatedly condemning the violence and appealing to his supporters for calm ahead of Biden's inauguration next week – remarks lawmakers implored him to make during the hours-long siege of the Capitol.

"There is never a justification for violence, no excuses, no exceptions," he said, asking his followers to "ease tensions and calm tempers".

"Mob violence goes against everything I believe in and everything our movement stands for. No true supporter of mine could ever endorse political violence," he said.

The [Washington Post reported](#) that Trump's daughter Ivanka and her husband Jared Kushner, along with Pence and deputy chief of staff Dan Scavino, had

persuaded Trump to record the video in order to boost his support among Republicans likely to desert him.

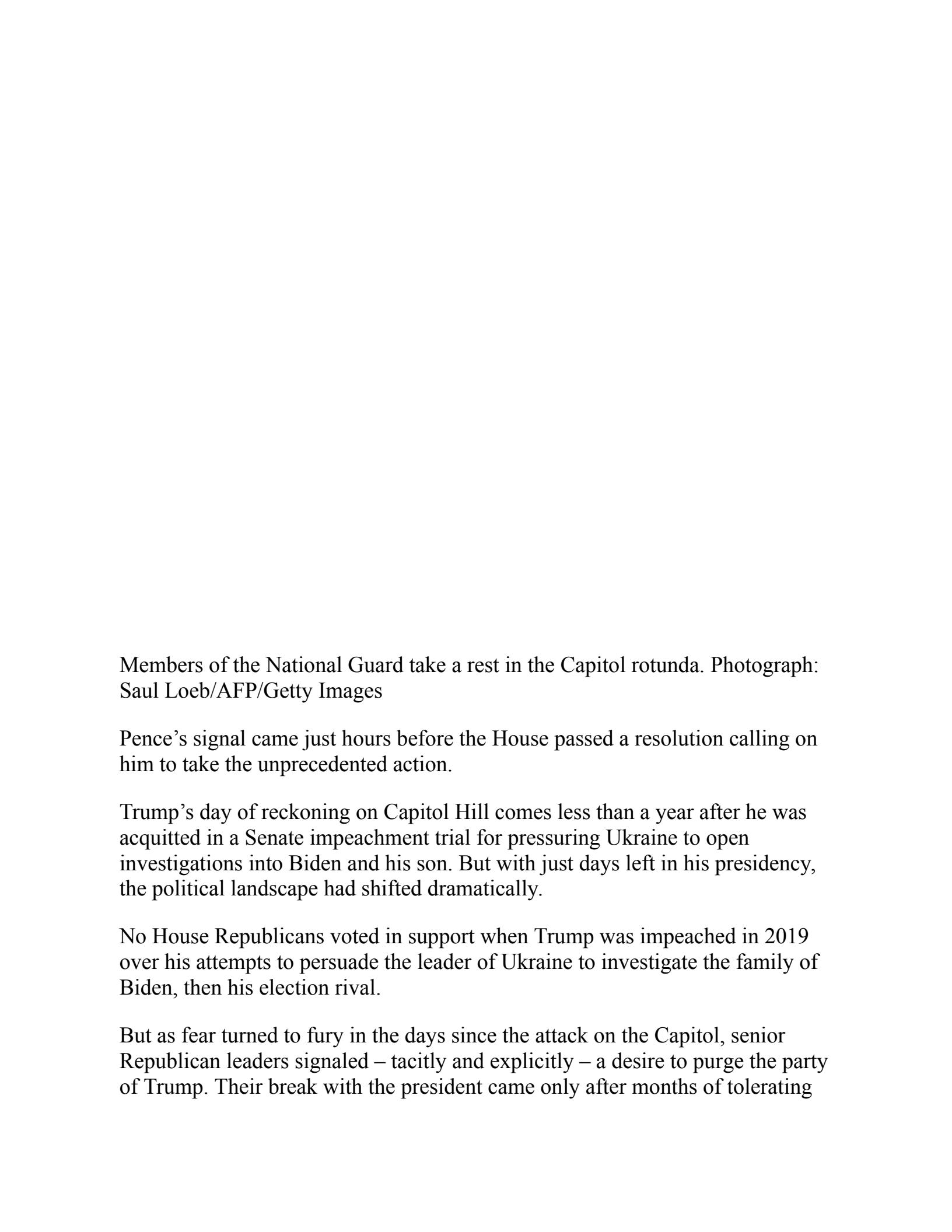
Few Republicans were willing to defend Trump's incendiary behavior last week. But those who oppose impeachment objected to the rushed nature of the proceedings.

"I can think of no action the House can take that is more likely to further divide the American people," said Tom Cole, a Republican of Oklahoma, who was among the more than 120 House Republicans who voted last week to reject the electoral votes of key swing states that Biden won, despite officials at every level calling November's vote the most secure election in US history.

Democrats were incensed by calls for bipartisanship, particularly from Republicans who refused to recognize Biden's election victory and voted to overturn the results of a democratic election even after the assault on the Capitol.

"It's a bit much to be hearing that these people would not be trying to destroy our government and kill us if we just weren't so mean to them," said Jamie Raskin, a Democratic Maryland congressman who will serve as the lead impeachment manager.

The House proceeded with impeachment on Wednesday after Mike Pence formally rejected calls to strip Trump of power by invoking the 25th amendment to the US constitution, which allows for the removal of a sitting president deemed unfit to perform his job.



Members of the National Guard take a rest in the Capitol rotunda. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

Pence's signal came just hours before the House passed a resolution calling on him to take the unprecedented action.

Trump's day of reckoning on Capitol Hill comes less than a year after he was acquitted in a Senate impeachment trial for pressuring Ukraine to open investigations into Biden and his son. But with just days left in his presidency, the political landscape had shifted dramatically.

No House Republicans voted in support when Trump was impeached in 2019 over his attempts to persuade the leader of Ukraine to investigate the family of Biden, then his election rival.

But as fear turned to fury in the days since the attack on the Capitol, senior Republican leaders signaled – tacitly and explicitly – a desire to purge the party of Trump. Their break with the president came only after months of tolerating

and indulging his campaign of lies about a stolen election, long after it was undeniably clear he had lost.

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Trump impeachment (2021)

Donald Trump's second impeachment: five key takeaways

The House voted 232-197 to impeach the president for a second time, the most bipartisan impeachment in US history

- [Trump impeached for second time – live updates](#)

Democrats in the House of Representatives made good on their vows to [impeach Donald Trump for a historic second time](#) on Wednesday in the wake of last week's attack on the Capitol by a pro-Trump mob.

The chamber voted for impeachment by 232 to 197 and the process now moves to the Senate, where it's unclear whether any Republicans will join Democrats in voting to convict Trump in a trial for his incendiary remarks before the attack.

Here are five key takeaways from a day of high drama:

1 There are signs of a deep split within the Republican party

Some of the most high-profile members of Republican leadership aren't denouncing the Democratic effort. Quite the contrary. Congresswoman Liz Cheney of Wyoming, the chairwoman of the House Republican Conference, announced on Tuesday that she would join Democrats and a handful of House Republicans in voting to impeach Trump.

On Wednesday, Senator Mitch McConnell, the highest-ranking Republican in his chamber, indicated to his colleagues that he is undecided on which way he would vote. Privately, McConnell has left associates with the impression that he's glad Democrats are moving to impeach Trump a second time.

Elsewhere, freshman lawmakers are feuding with each other. Congresswoman Nancy Mace of South Carolina and congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, who has supported the QAnon terrorist movement, got into a heated exchange, according to Axios. Mace blamed Greene and other QAnon supporters for the attack on the Capitol.

An ongoing question among members of Congress is if any of the 10 House Republicans who split with their party and voted to impeach Trump will face any kind of blowback. Some lawmakers privately supported impeachment but worried voting for impeachment could physically endanger them or their families from outraged Trump supporters.

2 The most bipartisan impeachment in American history

Unlike the last time Democrats impeached Trump, there's a higher level of bipartisan support for the move. Congressman Kevin McCarthy, the House minority leader and top-ranking Republican in that chamber, said during a speech on Wednesday that Trump was partially to blame for the mob assault on the Capitol last week.

Ten House Republicans also joined Democrats in voting in favor of impeaching Trump. It's unclear how many Republicans are willing to convict Trump in the Senate. A two-thirds majority of the Senate is needed. McConnell's potential openness to convict suggests there may be more than one or two senators willing to vote to convict him.

That's all a far cry from the last time Trump was impeached where it was almost completely a party line vote. Trump was not convicted then.

3 The vast majority of Republicans refused to concede any fault

Throughout the debate on Wednesday two patterns emerged among the arguments Republicans made: deflect and denounce. Republicans repeatedly denounced the mob attack last week.

“Violence has no place in our politics. Period. I wholly condemned last week’s senseless acts of violence, and I strongly reiterate the calls to remain peaceful in the weeks ahead,” the Republican National Committee chairwoman, Ronna McDaniel, said in a statement.

Trump himself also released a statement saying that he wanted to see a peaceful transition and inauguration for Joe Biden, the president-elect.

Republicans also cried hypocrisy against Democrats for, in their words, ignoring the damage inflicted during Black Lives Matter protests this past summer.

“Democrats are on record supporting violence when it supports their cause,” Greene said during a floor speech. “Democrats will take away everyone’s guns just as long as they have guards with guns.”

4 The Senate is a mystery

How things will shake out in the Senate is a mystery. McConnell wrote in a letter to colleagues that he has not “made a final decision on how I will vote and I intend to listen to legal arguments when they are presented to the Senate”.

When Trump was impeached the first time, only Senator Mitt Romney of Utah joined Democrats in voting to convict. This time it’s conceivable a few more Republicans could join Democrats, though they need 17 to convict.

McConnell himself said in another statement after the House vote that the earliest a trial could begin would be after Biden is sworn in on 20 January. That’s at odds with a statement from McConnell’s Democratic counterpart, Chuck Schumer.

“A Senate trial can begin immediately, with agreement from the current Senate majority leader to reconvene the Senate for an emergency session, or it will begin after January 19. But make no mistake, there will be an impeachment trial in the United States Senate; there will be a vote on

convicting the president for high crimes and misdemeanors; and if the president is convicted, there will be a vote on barring him from running again,” Schumer said in a statement.

5 Democrats’ security concerns seem well-founded

Reporters and lawmakers noted the increased security presence around the Capitol. Congressman Seth Moulton of Massachusetts noted in his floor speech that there were more US soldiers patrolling the Capitol than were stationed in Afghanistan.

In general there is a high sense of concern of another attack. Biden was briefed by officials from the Secret Service and the Federal Bureau of Investigation on security concerns for his inauguration. In a report from the [Boston Globe](#), congresswoman Ayanna Pressley of Massachusetts found during the mob attack that the panic buttons were ripped out of her office.

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Republicans

Are Republicans really ready to unhitch their wagon from Donald Trump?

Analysis: The attack on the Capitol – and perhaps the Senate losses in Georgia – have prompted some GOP leaders to signal a split even as others back his election lie

- [US politics – follow live](#)

Republican lawmakers celebrate the passage of their tax bill at the White House with Donald Trump and Mike Pence on 20 December 2017. Photograph: Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

Republican lawmakers celebrate the passage of their tax bill at the White House with Donald Trump and Mike Pence on 20 December 2017. Photograph:

Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

[Tom McCarthy](#)

[@TeeMcSee](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 14.18 EST

Sign up for the Guardian's First Thing newsletter

Has the spell really been broken? After years of joining [Donald Trump](#) in demonizing political opponents, and holding their silence as Trump furiously shredded public trust in elections, public service, the rule of law and the truth itself, have mainstream Republicans really decided to give him up?

Were the deaths of a police officer and four others at the US Capitol last week in a riot incited by Trump the final outrage? Or did the recent loss of two huge elections in Georgia – elections they expected to win – focus their minds?

[Capitol attack prompts top US firms to pull funding for leading Republicans](#)
[Read more](#)

Perhaps the [impressive list](#) of US corporations that have suspended political donations until Washington returns to sanity have been persuasive? Or the new [polls](#) showing that 74% of Americans strongly disapprove of the riot at the Capitol?

The questions arise from reports on Wednesday, [initially](#) in the New York Times, that the Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, privately supports the second impeachment of Trump. McConnell, whose iron grip on the Senate was torn from him suddenly by those Georgia losses, sees an urgent need for the party to purge Trump in the name of its own survival, multiple outlets reported.

“McConnell turns on Trump” is a headline that by itself signals that the Republican zeppelin is already on fire – even if it has yet to come apart in the sky.

But there are many other signals of important Republican defections from Trump. The third-ranking Republican in the House, Representative Liz Cheney of Wyoming, daughter of the former vice-president Dick Cheney and no closet liberal, said on Tuesday that she would vote in favor of an impeachment article charging Trump with incitement of insurrection.

“There has never been a greater betrayal by a president of the United States of his office and his oath to the constitution,” Cheney said.

William Barr, the former attorney general and Trump apparatchik, voiced the same charge last week, accusing Trump of “betrayal of his office”.

We’re seeing a fracturing, a breaking, because of the unprecedented situation – the sedition, the violence, the death

Steve Schmidt

More than 100 Republican party officials and sympathizers have signed a letter calling for Trump’s immediate resignation, the conservative political strategist Mike Murphy said [on his podcast](#).

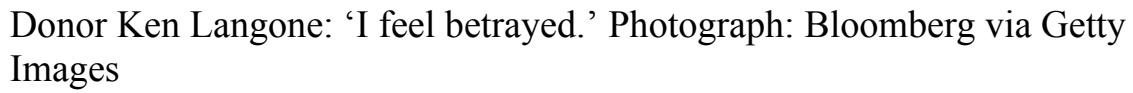
“We’re going to have a civil war now,” Murphy said, referring to the party. “The war is coming.”

Steve Schmidt, a longtime Republican strategist who left the party because of Trump, echoed that assessment.

“We’re at the moment now where we’re seeing a fracturing, a breaking, because of the unprecedented situation – the sedition, the violence, the death,” Schmidt told the Associated Press.

But observers who have watched for four years as [Republicans](#) happily harvested votes and amassed political victories under Trump – while fiercely defending the president against any whisper of criticism as Trump coerced election tampering from abroad and stoked racist hatred at home – might wonder how it is that the basic political dynamics have suddenly changed, if indeed they have.

One simple explanation might follow the money. Republicans were already facing a campaign finance crunch with the death this week of the casino magnate Sheldon Adelson, a fervent Zionist whose estimated \$480m in lifetime giving to Republican causes was bookended by the takeover of the US Capitol, one week before his death, by Trump supporters in “Camp Auschwitz” T-shirts.



Donor Ken Langone: 'I feel betrayed.' Photograph: Bloomberg via Getty Images

Another Republican megadonor and erstwhile Trump backer, Ken Langone, the billionaire founder of Home Depot, expressed revulsion on Wednesday at the Capitol attack.

"I feel betrayed. OK?" Langone said on CNBC. "Last Wednesday, if it doesn't break every American's heart, something's wrong. I didn't sign up for that."

Top US corporations have also signaled their displeasure. A list of [dozens of giant companies](#) – from American Express to Amazon, from Goldman Sachs to Bank of America to Blackrock, Google, Facebook, Marriott and Walmart – have suspended political donations in protest of the turbulence Trump has wrought, which is not taken to have been good for business.

Similarly, Trump's lack of interest in addressing the Covid-19 pandemic, which has cost upwards of 380,000 American lives, has left most of the US economy

idle and fueled unemployment as countries elsewhere have gone back to work with fewer lost lives –and no culture war over facial masking.

The explanation for the Republican break from Trump may come down to raw politics. As of November, Trump is a loser, who might have won re-election if only he had not alienated suburban Republican moderates in places like Atlanta, Philadelphia and Omaha.

Trump's future utility on the stump, in helping Republicans recover control of Congress in 2022 or the presidency in 2024, is questionable. In any case he might be deemed too unpredictable to build a long-term party strategy around.

Republicans might have noticed that Trump's base of voters only shows up to vote for him, and not down-ballot or off-year Republican candidates.

Or Trump's political utility might be deemed to have been used up, the politician an empty husk. In this analysis, Republicans have already gotten everything out of Trump they wanted, and the returns at the margin look to be extremely diminishing.

Donald Trump's rally in Georgia on 4 January did little for Kelly Loeffler, who lost her Senate runoff election. Photograph: Sandy Huffaker/AFP/Getty Images

Trump stood and smiled next to three supreme court nominees selected by outside conservative groups, and Trump nominated, for hundreds of federal judgeships, whoever conservatives told him to. Trump was foolish enough in his own egotism to believe that the makeover of the US judiciary was something he had done. Similarly, he bragged about the tax cut bill of 2017, thinking it was something he had negotiated.

More recently, Trump has been getting in the way of McConnell's business, and demonstrating his own impotence where Congress is concerned.

In a pathetic attempt to bend the Senate leader last month, Trump vowed not to sign a Covid relief bill, demanding larger individual payouts. McConnell did not blink, and Trump backed down. Likewise, Trump's veto of a defense spending measure was unceremoniously overridden by both houses of Congress.

But a Republican break with Trump is hardly complete. Trump retains huge support among the Republican rank-and-file of elected officials, among state legislators and among Republican base voters. Even after blood was spilled in the Capitol over the election lie, 137 Republicans in the House still voted in favor of that lie. Many Republicans vehemently opposed Trump's second impeachment.

Dave Wasserman, the Congress editor at the Cook Political Report, noted that in the 16 hours after Cheney announced she would vote to impeach Trump, only five Republicans had publicly said they would follow her lead.

"I'd be surprised if there are a dozen, ultimately," Wasserman tweeted. "The GOP reality: anti-Trumpism still faces a greater risk of purge than Trumpism."

But secret and not-so-secret motivations remain. At least some of the senators who will vote on whether to convict Trump in his second impeachment are eager to run for president themselves in 2024 – a job made a lot easier without Trump on the field.

If, that is, he really is on his way off.

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Republicans

The 10 Republicans who voted to impeach Donald Trump

Ten House Republicans joined every Democrat in voting yes, in the most bipartisan impeachment in US history

Staff and agency

Wed 13 Jan 2021 20.10 EST First published on Wed 13 Jan 2021 20.04 EST

Ten Republican members of the US House of Representatives [voted to impeach](#) Donald Trump over the deadly insurrection at the Capitol, making it the most bipartisan presidential impeachment in US history.

The break with the president stood in sharp contrast to the unanimous support for Trump among House [Republicans](#) when he was first impeached by Democrats in 2019.

All Democrats who voted supported impeachment, while 197 Republicans voted no.

The Republican votes made it a historic moment. In comparison, five Democrats voted to impeach Bill Clinton in 1998.

How the Senate will fall on Trump's second impeachment trial vote remains to be seen. Two-thirds of the 100-member body are required to convict a president, meaning 17 Republicans would have to join [Democrats](#) to render a guilty verdict. So far only a small number of Republican senators have indicated an openness to convicting the president in a senate trial, which is [now set to begin](#) after Biden's inauguration. Mitch McConnell, the top-ranking Republican in the Senate, indicated to colleagues that [he is undecided](#) on how he would vote.

Below are the Republicans who voted for impeachment in the House of Representatives:

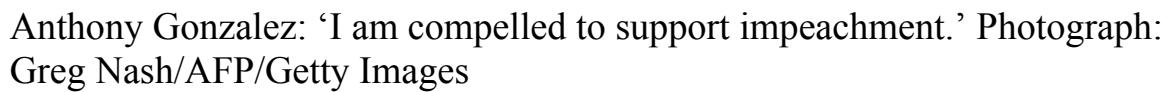
Liz Cheney

Liz Cheney, the daughter of former vice-president Dick Cheney. Photograph: Mark Makela/Reuters

The No 3 House Republican, Cheney was also the most senior member of her party to vote against efforts to challenge electoral college results confirming Trump's loss. The daughter of the former Republican vice-president Dick Cheney is a rising star in the party.

In a statement released on Tuesday, Cheney said: "There has never been a greater betrayal by a president of the United States of his office and his oath to the constitution."

Anthony Gonzalez



Anthony Gonzalez: 'I am compelled to support impeachment.' Photograph:
Greg Nash/AFP/Getty Images

Gonzalez is an Ohio Republican. In his statement, Gonzalez accused Trump of having "abandoned his post" amid the violence at the Capitol.

Gonzalez argued that the president's failure to act further endangered those present at the Capitol, and described the president's actions as "fundamental threats" to American democracy.

"When I consider the full scope of events leading up to January 6th including the president's lack of response as the United States Capitol was under attack, I am compelled to support impeachment," he wrote on Twitter.

Peter Meijer

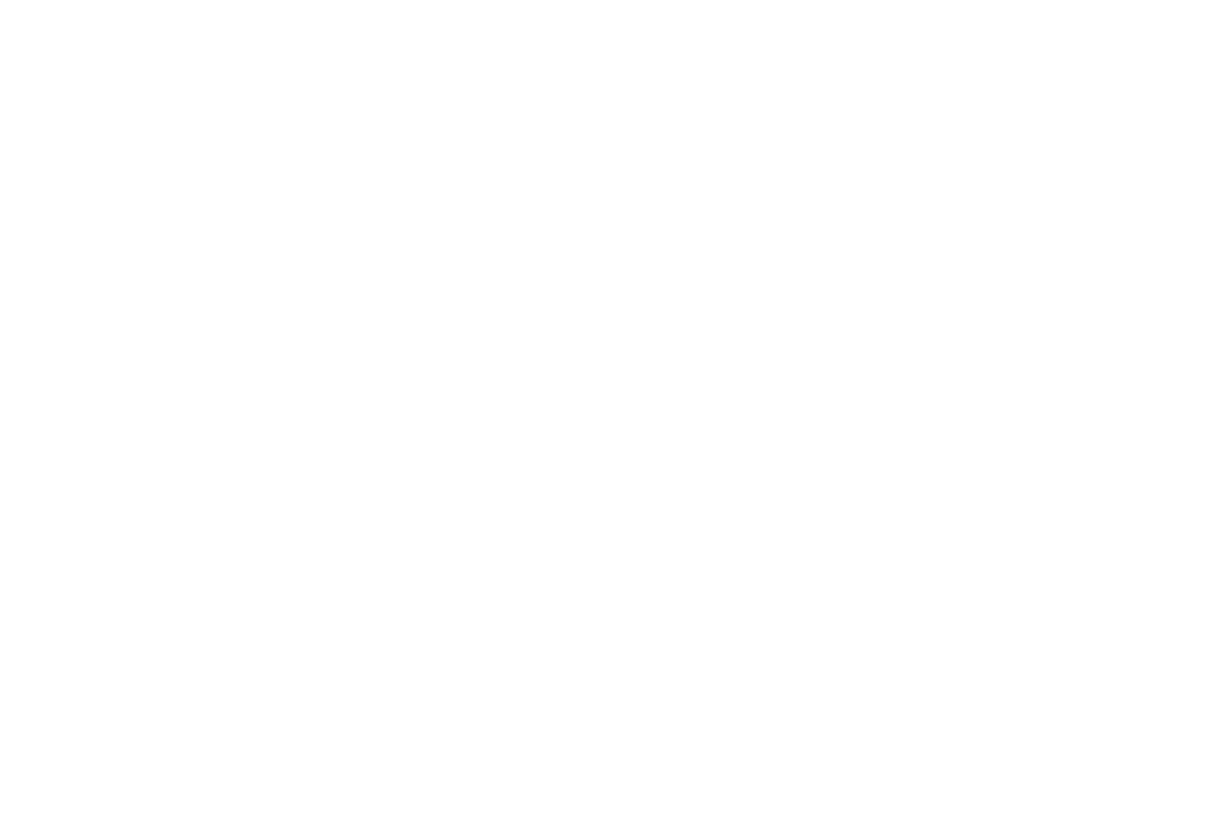


Peter Meijer on the campaign trail. Photograph: Carlos Osorio/AP

Meijer, a new member of Congress from Grand Rapids, Michigan, said he was voting for impeachment with a “heavy heart”.

“The president betrayed his oath of office by seeking to undermine our constitutional process, and he bears responsibility for inciting the violent acts of insurrection last week,” he said in a statement.

Dan Newhouse

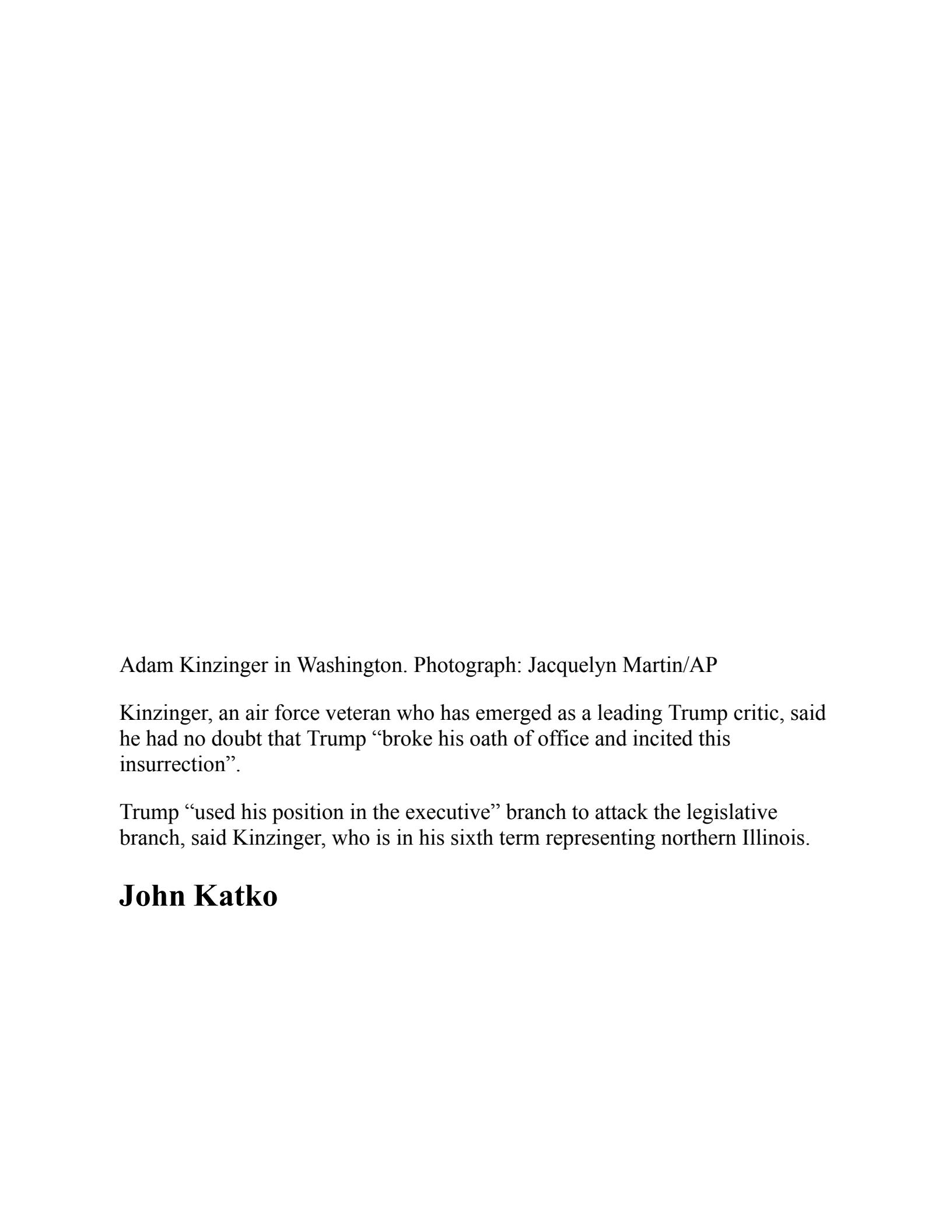


Dan Newhouse in the House chamber. He said: ‘There is no excuse for President Trump’s actions.’ Photograph: AP

Newhouse, from Washington state, announced his intention to vote to impeach on the House floor during Wednesday’s debate, drawing applause from the roughly two dozen Democrats on the floor.

“There is no excuse for President Trump’s actions,” he said.

Adam Kinzinger

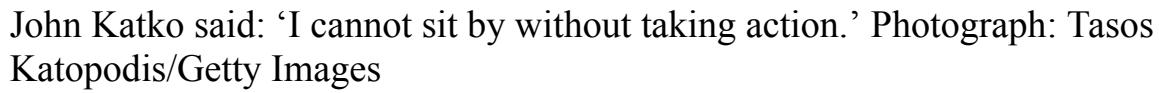


Adam Kinzinger in Washington. Photograph: Jacquelyn Martin/AP

Kinzinger, an air force veteran who has emerged as a leading Trump critic, said he had no doubt that Trump “broke his oath of office and incited this insurrection”.

Trump “used his position in the executive” branch to attack the legislative branch, said Kinzinger, who is in his sixth term representing northern Illinois.

John Katko

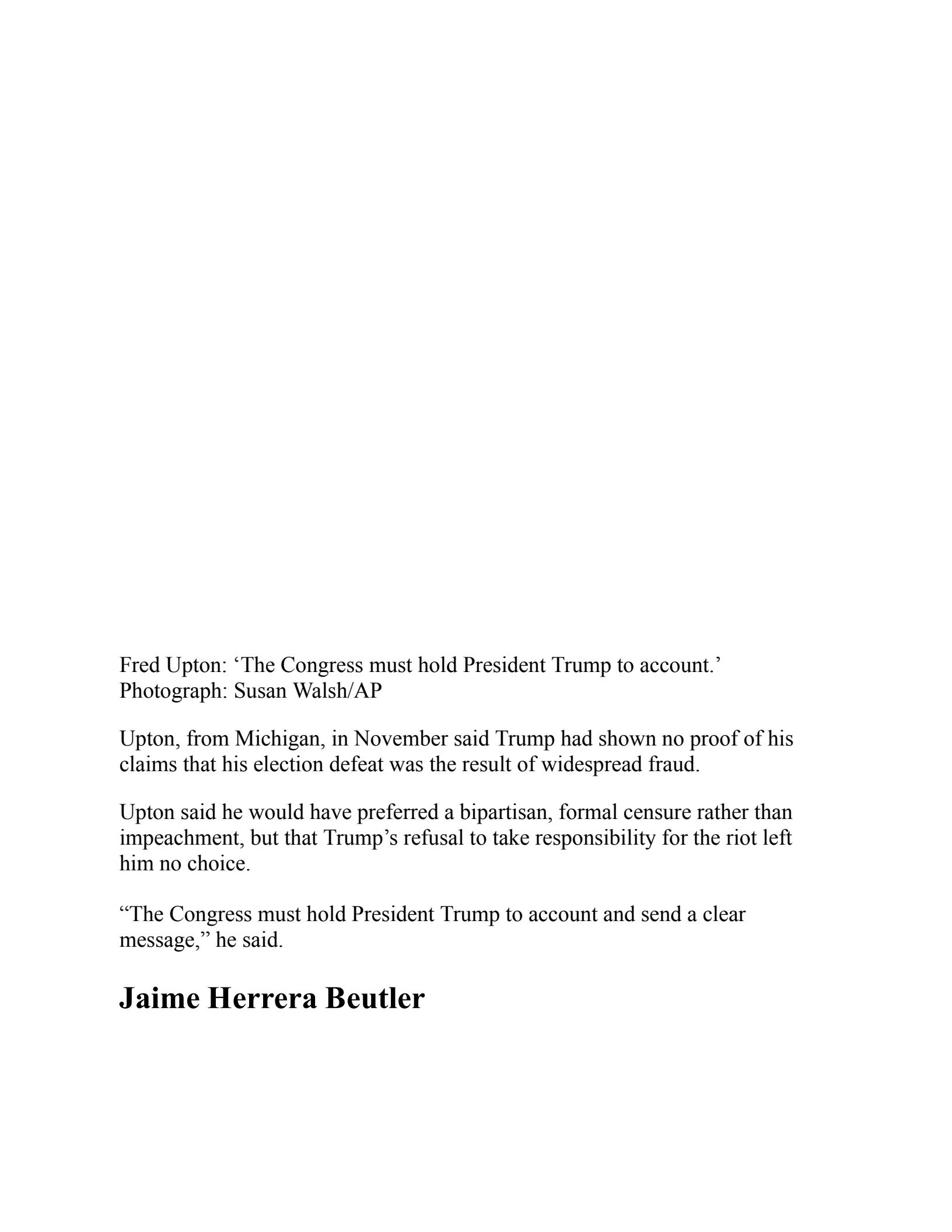


John Katko said: 'I cannot sit by without taking action.' Photograph: Tasos Katopodis/Getty Images

Katko, from New York, was the first member of the House Republican caucus to say he would vote for impeachment.

Katko, a former federal prosecutor, said in a statement on Tuesday that he had not made the decision lightly, adding: "To allow the president of the United States to incite this attack without consequence is a direct threat to the future of our democracy. I cannot sit by without taking action."

Fred Upton



Fred Upton: ‘The Congress must hold President Trump to account.’
Photograph: Susan Walsh/AP

Upton, from Michigan, in November said Trump had shown no proof of his claims that his election defeat was the result of widespread fraud.

Upton said he would have preferred a bipartisan, formal censure rather than impeachment, but that Trump’s refusal to take responsibility for the riot left him no choice.

“The Congress must hold President Trump to account and send a clear message,” he said.

Jaime Herrera Beutler

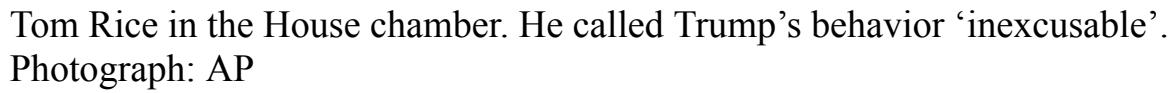


Jaime Herrera Beutler: ‘I’m not choosing a side. I’m choosing truth.’
Photograph: Al Drago/AP

Herrera Beutler is a moderate from Washington state. In a statement, she said that the president’s offenses were “impeachable based on the indisputable evidence we already have”.

Herrera Beutler, who is in her sixth term, said that while many lawmakers fear Trump, “truth sets us free from fear. My vote to impeach a sitting president is not a fear-based decision,” she said. “I am not choosing a side. I’m choosing truth.”

Tom Rice



Tom Rice in the House chamber. He called Trump's behavior 'inexcusable'.
Photograph: AP

Rice may have cast the most surprising vote.

His coastal South Carolina district strongly backed Trump in the election and he voted last week to object to certification of electoral votes in Arizona and Pennsylvania. "I have backed this president through thick and thin for four years. I've campaigned for him and voted for him twice. But this utter failure is inexcusable," Rice said in a statement after the vote.

Rice said he was disappointed that Trump has failed to show remorse over the riot or address the nation to ask for calm.

David Valadao



David Valadao said Trump ‘was, without question, a driving force in the catastrophic events that took place on January 6’. Photograph: Jacquelyn Martin/AP

Valadao in November reclaimed his former California seat from the Democrats. In a statement [posted to Twitter](#), Valadao said that Trump “was, without question, a driving force in the catastrophic events that took place on January 6 by encouraging masses of rioters to incite violence on elected officials, staff members, and our representative democracy as a whole”.

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Twitter

Twitter chief says Trump ban was right decision but sets 'dangerous precedent'

- Jack Dorsey: 'I do not celebrate having to ban Donald Trump'
- 'A ban is a failure of ours to promote healthy conversation'

Jack Dorsey at a congressional hearing in November. In a lengthy Twitter thread, Dorsey said it was 'time for us to reflect on our operations and the environment around us'. Photograph: Getty Images

Jack Dorsey at a congressional hearing in November. In a lengthy Twitter thread, Dorsey said it was 'time for us to reflect on our operations and the environment around us'. Photograph: Getty Images

[Kari Paul](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 21.16 EST

Jack Dorsey, the chief executive of Twitter, has said that banning [Donald Trump](#) from the platform was the “right decision” but that it sets a dangerous precedent.

[Donald Trump becomes the first US president to be impeached for a second time – live](#)
[Read more](#)

Speaking out for the first time since the social network took the remarkable step of permanently suspending the president’s account following a violent attack on the US Capitol, Dorsey said the company faced “an extraordinary and untenable circumstance, forcing us to focus all of our actions on public safety”.

“I do not celebrate or feel pride in our having to ban [@realDonaldTrump](#) from Twitter, or how we got here,” Dorsey admitted on Wednesday in an extended Twitter thread. “I feel a ban is a failure of ours, ultimately, to promote healthy conversation. And a time for us to reflect on our operations and the environment around us.”

Dorsey said that it was the right decision for the company but that such actions “fragment the public conversation”.

“They divide us,” he continued. “They limit the potential for clarification, redemption, and learning. And sets a precedent I feel is dangerous: the power an individual or corporation has over a part of the global public conversation.”

I do not celebrate or feel pride in our having to ban [@realDonaldTrump](#) from Twitter, or how we got here. After a clear warning we’d take this action, we made a decision with the best information we had based on threats to physical safety both on and off Twitter. Was this correct?

— jack (@jack) [January 14, 2021](#)

Last week [Twitter](#) suspended the president, who was impeached for the second time on Wednesday for inciting a mob of his supporters, due to “the risk of further incitement of violence”. The decision comes as other big tech companies, including Facebook, Reddit, Pinterest, and YouTube have suspended Trump’s accounts temporarily and in some cases permanently over the attack.

Silicon Valley has faced a reckoning over its role in spreading disinformation and serving as a platform for planning the insurrection. For years, Dorsey has resisted moderating high-profile users of the platform, arguing that the public has the right to hear from newsworthy figures.

But in 2020 it began to flag tweets from Trump for misinformation, disable the ability to retweet except when adding commentary, and in some cases removed tweets that appeared to incite violence. Twitter had also in the months surrounding the US presidential elections tested a number of policies to limit the spread of hate speech and misinformation.

Still, it faced criticism for failing to address the growing danger posed by Trump's account, which boiled over after the president incited a mob to storm the Capitol building on 6 January.

Following the violent events, which left five dead, Trump tweeted what appeared to be an explanation or justification for the mob while continuing to push a false narrative that the election was not legitimate, saying: "These are the things and events that happen when a sacred landslide election victory is so unceremoniously and viciously stripped away."

On Friday, Trump's account was permanently suspended. The president frantically jumped from account to account, attempting to tweet from @POTUS and his campaign account @TeamTrump before those outlets were restricted for him as well.

Twitter explained its reasoning for removing Trump in an extensive blogpost on Friday evening. It said tweets from Trump could easily be interpreted as encouragement or justification to "replicate the violent acts that took place on January 6, 2021".

Dorsey underscored in his tweets a need for a new "open decentralized standard for social media".

"It's important that we acknowledge this is a time of great uncertainty and struggle for so many around the world," he said. "Our goal in this moment is to disarm as much as we can, and ensure we are all building towards a greater common understanding, and a more peaceful existence on earth."

Reuters contributed to this report

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<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/jan/13/trump-twitter-ban-jack-dorsey-chief-executive>

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US Capitol breach

Revealed: walkie-talkie app Zello hosted far-right groups who stormed Capitol

Audio and chat logs show insurrectionists communicated via the app, which has avoided proactive content moderation

Rioters at the US Capitol last week used Zello, which claims to have 150 million users. Photograph: Alex Edelman/AFP/Getty Images

Rioters at the US Capitol last week used Zello, which claims to have 150 million users. Photograph: Alex Edelman/AFP/Getty Images

Micah Loewinger and Hampton Stall

Wed 13 Jan 2021 21.24 EST

Audio and chat logs reveal that at least two insurrectionists who broke into the Capitol on 6 January used Zello, a social media walkie-talkie app that critics say has largely ignored a growing far-right user base.

“We are in the main dome right now,” said a female militia member, speaking on Zello, her voice competing with the cacophony of a clash with Capitol police. “We are rocking it. They’re throwing grenades, they’re frickin’ shooting people with paintballs, but we’re in here.”

“God bless and godspeed. Keep going,” said a male voice from a quiet environment.

“Jess, do your shit,” said another. “This is what we fucking lived up for. Everything we fucking trained for.”

The frenzied exchange took place at 2.44pm in a public Zello channel called “STOP THE STEAL J6”, where Trump supporters at home and in Washington DC discussed the riot as it unfolded. Dynamic group conversations like this exemplify why Zello, a smartphone and PC app, has become popular among militias, which have long fetishized military-like communication on analog radio.

After years of public pressure, Facebook, Twitter and Discord have begun to crack down on inciting speech from far-right groups, but Zello has avoided proactive content moderation thus far.

Most coverage about Zello, which claims to have 150 million users on its free and premium platforms, has focused on its use by the Cajun Navy groups that send boats to save flood victims and grassroots organizing in Venezuela. However, the app is also home to hundreds of far-right channels, which appear to violate its policy prohibiting groups that espouse “violent ideologies”.

Responding to a list of over 800 far-right channels, Zello said it was “prepared to take action on those”. The company also said it was working on a more elaborate response. In addition to locking some public features that would help researchers uncover more extremist content, Zello had begun purging some far-right groups as of Wednesday.

[Rightwingers flock to 'alt tech' networks as mainstream sites ban Trump](#)
[Read more](#)

Two hours after the Guardian published this report, Zello announced it had deleted more than 2,000 “channels associated with militias and other militarized social movements”.

“It is with deep sadness and anger that we have discovered evidence of Zello being misused by some individuals while storming the United States Capitol building last week,” the company wrote in a blogpost. “Looking ahead, we are concerned that Zello could be misused by groups who have threatened to organize additional potentially violent protests and disrupt the US presidential inauguration festivities on January 20th.”

The Zello user who described breaking into the Capitol building appears to be Jessica Watkins, a 38-year-old bartender from Ohio, who admitted to participating in the insurrection. Watkins told [the Ohio Capital Journal](#) she was the leader of a local militia called the Ohio State Regular and a member of the national Oath Keepers militia.

The username of the Zello profile in question, “OhioRegularsActual – Oathkeeper”, matches Watkins’s militia affiliations, referencing the Ohio State Regulars, Oath Keepers, and her role as a militia leader through the inclusion of “Actual” in her virtual “radio callsign”.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center, Oath Keepers are “one of the largest radical anti-government groups in the US today”, claiming to have tens of thousands of current and former law enforcement and military personnel in its ranks.

The user’s Zello messages also bear strong resemblance to posts on Watkins’s Parler profile, according to our research: “Yeah. We stormed the Capitol today. Teargassed, the whole, 9,” she wrote on Parler. “Pushed our way into the rotunda. Made it into the Senate even.”

Watkins, who could not be reached for comment, told the Journal that she did not believe she had done anything wrong.

Parler shut down this week after Amazon Web Services stopped hosting the platform because so many of its users had called for the insurrection. The woman’s profile was one of thousands uploaded to the Wayback Machine, an internet archive, by a group of hackers following the violence in Washington DC.

“We have a good group: 30 to 40 of us. We’re sticking together and sticking to the plan,” the female voice is heard saying on Zello as they were walking toward the Capitol. “The police are doing nothing. They’re not even trying to stop us.”

The Ohio Capital Journal also identified Watkins as one of a line of Oath Keepers pushing their way through the crowd on the steps of the Capitol toward the east entrance of the building. She can be seen toward the back of the line in livestream footage taken at the deadly event wearing battle rattle. Moments later a stream of pro-Trump insurrectionists poured inside.

Zello channels incubated organizing and feverish incitement in the days leading up to the deadly riot, records show. Photograph: Reuters

As she narrated her march toward and into the Capitol, others in the Zello channel cheered on the insurrection and called for the kidnapping of politicians.

“You are executing citizen’s arrest,” said “1% Watchdog”, the creator of the channel, evoking the viral image of a man carrying zip ties in the Senate chamber. “We have probable cause: treason, acts of treason, election fraud, all kinds of felony crimes, no competent authority,” he said, referencing claims of voter fraud that have been promoted by Donald Trump and other Republican lawmakers but repeatedly debunked by journalists and the courts.

Preparation and incitement

Records from several other far-right Zello channels show that the app was a platform for organizing and feverish incitement in the days leading up to the deadly riot.

Speaking in a password-protected channel called “DC 3.0”, a user named “AmericanRev2” described how Zello would fit into a communication plan featuring multiple apps: “Once we go operational, this channel will just be for intel gathering and organizing on the backside … All information, once verified, will be put into the Telegram and then shared to boots on the ground from there.”

The speaker’s voice, username and profile picture match other social media accounts used by Josh Ellis, the administrator of [mymilitia.com](#), another hotbed of far-right organizing.

“DC 3.0” is one of at least five channels that were created specifically for the 6 January event. Organizing also took place in channels that have been active for years, including one run by the III% Security Force, a Georgia-based militia group.

[Riots, effigies and a guillotine: Capitol attack could be a glimpse of violence to come](#)
[Read more](#)

“January 6th, revolution or bust,” proclaimed Chris Hill on 29 December. Hill, the group’s leader, has a long history of publicly preparing for civil war.

Unlike sites like 4chan and Gab, forums where posters use irony and memes to obfuscate violent calls-to-action, audio messages on Zello can convey more

complex and direct emotions. “How about if all of us stand the fuck up, and take this shit back?” asked a militia member on 4 January.

“I got a problem with fucking patriots not growing a fucking set of goddamn nuts and standing the fuck up, and kicking bitches in the fucking teeth. And shooting motherfuckers in the fucking head.” Then, catching himself, he tried to walk back the outburst. “I ain’t talking about doing anything illegal … I want y’all to know I love you … I just wanted to incite enthusiasm.”

Caravan to DC

Meanwhile, some Zello communities devoted their chatrooms to coordinating travel to the DC event. A photo set as the profile picture of a password-protected channel called “The Maga Cavalry” depicted rendezvous points in Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Kentucky and South Carolina for drivers to meet and caravan together into the city.

So-called “Maga drag” or “Maga caravan” channels exploded in popularity on Zello last year, thanks in part to Trump’s encouragement on Twitter.

On 6 January, at least one member of The Maga Cavalry channel appears to have joined the Capitol break-in: “I was there, inside for a bit there, someone broke into the door and opened it,” said a man going by the username “Q”, probably a reference to QAnon, the conspiracy-theory group. “We had a right to be there. We pay for this house. It’s our house.” He described aimlessly roaming the halls of the building before police used teargas to expel the mob.

Without more information about the user, the authors of this article were unable to verify his claims or identity. Another user, named ArmyVet365247, in The Maga Cavalry channel made the man’s incriminating clip public by using the app’s share function, which automatically posts it to a feed on Zello’s site. The very low engagement on Q’s story suggests making the message public may have been an accident.

A pattern of neglect

The revelation of Zello’s potential role in the Capitol riots comes just three months after a joint investigation from [On the Media and MilitiaWatch](#) revealed

that the company’s leadership resisted calls to enforce its terms of service, which prohibit “violent extremist ideologies”, and remove far-right groups and users from the app.

“Zello simply cannot actively monitor millions of concurrent discussions,” the company told On the Media in October, responding to a list of more than 200 far-right channels, including those with names clearly referencing white supremacist and militia iconographies.

The piece referenced a leaked company-wide email from June, during a national reckoning on institutional racism, in which a Zello employee proposed a new slate of moderation practices to thwart future far-right activity on the app.

Zello ultimately banned some “Boogaloo” and outright white nationalist groups and users. The company let militia channels stay up but made them harder to find by de-indexing them from search engines – a Google search for “militia Zello” no longer yields access to those groups – and blocking terms such as “Oath Keeper” from its in-app search function. That some of these groups still used the platform to organize for the 6 January insurrection suggests these changes were inadequate.

“Zello was completely unresponsive,” said Talia Lavin, an outspoken critic of platforms that host extremist speech and the author of [Culture Warlords](#). She led a [campaign on Twitter](#) in October to pressure the company to take more urgent action against Oath Keepers and other militias on the app. “They gave every indication of not caring at all about public opinion.”

Being slow to respond may threaten the future of Zello, which currently relies on access to the Google Play and Apple app stores for downloads and uses servers from Amazon Web Services as failover services should their primary cloud services provider, IBM, fail. By booting Parler from their platforms, Amazon, Apple and Google have demonstrated they may not tolerate companies hosting extremist content.

So far, that’s not true of Zello.

This article is part of an ongoing reporting project by Micah Loewinger, reporter/producer for the WNYC Studios show [On the Media](#), and Hampton Stall, founder of MilitiaWatch.

- This article was amended on 15 January 2020 to clarify Zello's connection to Amazon Web Services, which provide failover services to the company, not direct primary services. IBM Cloud is Zello's primary cloud storage provider.

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[Coronavirus](#)

Covid: England travel testing delay 'to help out business'

Rule requiring travellers to show negative test to come into force on Monday, not Friday as planned

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

[Matthew Weaver](#) and [Gwyn Topham](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 08.15 EST First published on Thu 14 Jan 2021 03.38 EST

Under the new requirement, travellers will need to present proof of a negative test result on boarding, while UK Border Force will conduct spot-checks on arrivals. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

The government has suggested it is delaying the requirement for travellers to England to have a negative coronavirus test to soften the impact of the move on businesses.

Late on Wednesday night, the transport secretary, Grant Shapps, said the new rule would come into force on Monday at 4am instead of Friday as planned.

Asked to explain the delay for a move that was signalled last week, the safeguarding minister, Victoria Atkins, said it was for economic reasons.

Speaking to Sky News, she said: “There’s a very delicate balancing act here between controlling the virus but also ensuring that we are not putting too much of a burden on the economy.”

UK coronavirus cases

She added: “We have listened to the concerns that many people had about whether the message has quite got through to people who are making the flights over the weekend, and we have acted in relation to those concerns.”

Shapps also said the delay was aimed at giving international travellers more time to prepare.

Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP (@grantshapps)

UPDATE: To give international arrivals time to prepare ☐ passengers will be required to provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test before departure to England from MONDAY 18 JANUARY at 4am ☐

[January 13, 2021](#)

Yvette Cooper, the Labour MP who chairs the home affairs select committee, said the latest delay on a measure to restrict the spread of the virus was “truly shocking”.

In a tweet, she claimed the real reason for the delay was a failure to publish the guidance in time.

Yvette Cooper (@YvetteCooperMP)

Truly shocking

Questioned PM repeatedly today on why border testing/quarantine is weaker than other countries

Repeatedly he said Govt is bringing in new testing (months later than elsewhere but due Fri)

But now it's not. More delays. As they haven't published guidance in time
<https://t.co/IrEmcyTOYE>

January 13, 2021

Under the new requirement, travellers will need to present proof of a negative test result to their carrier on boarding, while UK Border Force will conduct spot checks on arrivals. New arrivals who flout the rules will face a minimum £500 fine, while the operator who transported them will also be fined. Passengers will still have to quarantine for 10 days regardless of their test results.

However, the guidance specifying the type of tests and documentation that would be required was not published on the UK government's website until late on Wednesday, making it almost impossible for potential inbound travellers abroad to arrange tests in time for the original deadline.

Meanwhile, Scotland's deputy first minister, John Swinney, said rules requiring travellers arriving in the country to have a negative coronavirus test were in force in [Scotland](#).

In an interview on BBC Breakfast, he said: "The position in Scotland is that those restrictions are in place and we want to see people following those restrictions to make sure that we minimise the risk."

When asked if people had to have a test before they travelled to Scotland, he replied: "Yes," and agreed that the restrictions applied now.

Atkins also appeared to confirm that the government was about to ban flights from Brazil over concerns about a new strain of the virus detected there.

Asked why travel from Brazil had not been banned already, she said: “It takes a little bit of time … what we need to ensure is that when we make these very very important decisions that have a huge impact on people’s personal lives, but also on businesses, and so on, we’ve got to just have a little bit of time to let that fit in and to settle in.”

On Wednesday, Boris Johnson suggested the government [was preparing to ban travellers from Brazil](#), with an announcement expected on Thursday afternoon.

Answering questions from Cooper at the liaison committee, he said: “We are putting in extra measures to ensure that people coming from Brazil are checked: and indeed stopping people coming from Brazil.”

Atkins told Sky: “The prime minister was clear that measures will be taken. We have acted decisively in the past with both the Denmark and the South African variants. I wouldn’t want to speculate further at this stage.”

Flights between the UK and Brazil have been stopped since 25 December, at the instigation of the Brazilian government, due to the new variant of Covid-19 discovered in the UK.

The Lib Dems joined criticism of the government’s failure to act sooner, warning the UK’s “farcical travel rules” were putting lives at risk.

Sarah Olney, the Lib Dem spokesperson for transport, said: “Once again it seems the Conservatives have missed the opportunity to help stem the spread of Covid-19. They’ve delayed action on cutting travel between the UK and South America, risking the arrival of the new variant. And we are still not requiring testing prior to travel to the UK.”

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Politics live with Andrew Sparrow

Coronavirus

UK Covid: arrivals from South America and Portugal banned from Friday over Brazilian variant concerns – as it happened

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Vaccines and immunisation

Recovering from Covid gives similar level of protection to vaccine

PHE found immunity from earlier infection provided 83% protection against reinfection for at least 20 weeks

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Research found people are unlikely to become reinfected soon after their first infection but it is possible to catch the virus again and potentially spread it to others. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/EPA

Research found people are unlikely to become reinfected soon after their first infection but it is possible to catch the virus again and potentially spread it to

others. Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/EPA

Ian Sample Science editor

@iansample

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

People who recover from coronavirus have a similar level of protection against future infection as those who receive a Covid vaccine – at least for the first five months, research suggests.

A Public [Health](#) England (PHE) study of more than 20,000 healthcare workers found that immunity acquired from an earlier Covid infection provided 83% protection against reinfection for at least 20 weeks.

[Second shots of Covid vaccine could be delayed further in England](#)

[Read more](#)

The findings show that while people are unlikely to become reinfected soon after their first infection, it is possible to catch the virus again and potentially spread it to others.

“Overall I think this is good news,” said Prof Susan Hopkins, a senior medical adviser to PHE. “It allows people to feel that prior infection will protect them from future infections, but at the same time it is not complete protection, and therefore they still need to be careful when they are out and about.”

PHE recruited healthcare workers from hospitals across the UK and divided them into two groups: those who had coronavirus before and those who had not. Between June and November last year, the participants underwent fortnightly PCR tests for the virus, and monthly tests to examine the antibody levels in their blood.

Over the five months the researchers monitored infection rates in the two groups. They spotted 44 potential reinfections, including 13 symptomatic, among the 6,614 believed to have had Covid before, and 318 cases among the 14,173 who had no evidence of past infection. A previous infection, they conclude, provides 94% protection against symptomatic reinfection, and 75% protection against asymptomatic reinfection.

The cases are referred to as “potential” reinfections because a detailed genetic analysis of both first and second viruses must be done to confirm a reinfection,

but information for the first infections was often not available.

“The immunity gives you a similar effect to the Pfizer vaccine and a much better effect than the AstraZeneca vaccine and that is reassuring for people. But we still see people who could transmit and so we want to strike a note of caution,” Prof Hopkins said. In clinical trials, two doses of the [Pfizer vaccine](#) had an efficacy of 95%, compared with 62% from two doses of the [Oxford/AstraZeneca](#) vaccine.

While the study is encouraging, it is unclear whether the same protection applies to older people. The study participants were aged 35 to 54 and would be expected to have robust immune systems. Older people tend to have weaker immune responses that are more short-lived.

Another question mark hangs over the risk of reinfection from [new Covid variants](#) spotted [in the UK](#), South Africa and Brazil, an issue PHE will investigate as the study continues this year.

“What one thinks of the numbers is very much a ‘glass half full or half empty?’ question,” said Danny Altmann, professor of immunology at Imperial College. “To many, it may be disappointing to put hard numbers to the idea that immunity to this virus is seemingly so variable and feeble that there is a greater than 1 in 10 chance of suffering reinfection, even at five months, let alone now, when many UK healthcare workers are more than nine months out from infections in the first wave.”

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[Coronavirus](#)

GPs in England say inconsistent supply of Covid vaccine causing roll-out issues

Short notice is making it difficult to book advance appointments, as PM admits regional disparities

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- [See all our coronavirus coverage](#)

[Dan Sabbagh](#) and [Jessica Murray](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 00.06 EST First published on Wed 13 Jan 2021 15.28 EST

Doctors told the Guardian that batches of the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine frequently arrived with only a couple of days' notice, requiring last-minute planning and uncertainty for patients. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

Inconsistent vaccine supply is making it difficult for GPs in England to book patient appointments more than a few days in advance, experts have warned, as the prime minister admitted there were significant disparities in local immunisation rates.

Doctors, [NHS](#) specialists and MPs told the Guardian that batches of the Pfizer and Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine frequently arrived with only a couple of days' notice, requiring last-minute planning and creating uncertainty for patients.

Insiders said the distribution system was operating on a “push model” meaning that doctors could not order the vaccine but simply had to be ready to be receive batches whenever the NHS was able to deliver them.

Ruth Rankine, director of the primary care network for the NHS Confederation, said “it’s no secret that consistency in supplies is an issue” and that the 800-plus GP surgeries already delivering jabs had capacity to do more if the drugs were available.

“The commitment I have seen in the NHS is staggering. People just want to get on and do this. What they are frustrated about is the supply chain is not within their control; it will be possible to vaccinate the 2 million a week needed if the supply is there,” the NHS representative said.

The impact is being felt around the country, with examples including:

- In Coventry, out of seven primary care networks only one was distributing the vaccine as of last week, with practices having to cancel scheduled vaccination appointments due to supply problems. One GP was told vaccines would be arriving today, three weeks late.
- A vaccination centre covering St Albans, north of London, set up by eight groups of GP practices, only able to operate one or two days a week because of a lack of supply, with deliveries often confirmed only a couple of days in advance. “They want to roll out the vaccine faster,” said local MP Daisy Cooper.

- GP surgeries as far apart as Carnforth, north Lancashire, and Twickenham in south-west London reporting in the past few days that they cannot plan appointments more than a week ahead because they do not know what the NHS can supply them. “This is where pressure needs to be exerted on the politicians,” said David Wrigley, a GP in Carnforth and a vice-chair of the British Medical Association.

Parts of England are now being told they cannot start vaccinating those aged between 75 and 80, the third priority cohort, until other areas catch up to leading areas such as the north-east and Yorkshire. “We are told it is levelling up, but what is levelling up for one area is levelling down for another,” one GP said.

Other areas fear they cannot achieve the deadline of vaccinating the top four priority groups by 15 February. Derby and Derbyshire clinical commissioning group is understood to have completed less than 10% of its target so far, according to local sources.

Local shortages mean that some are being forced to consider riskier alternatives. Some Coventry residents aged over 80 were written to offering jabs in a large centre in Manchester, 100 miles away, despite a government promise that patients should not have to drive over 45 minutes, prompting Coventry North MP Taiwo Owatemi to complain that this was potentially “putting residents at risk”.

In the borough of Sefton, in Merseyside, it is estimated that 9,000 to 10,000 people a week would need to be vaccinated to hit the national 2 million a week target.

But last week the amount of vaccines available totalled 400, according to Bill Esterson, the Labour MP for Sefton Central, although the area has been given 4,000 this week and there are indications supplies could double again next week. “It looks like it is finally being sorted out, but we are frustrated with this delay”.

It comes as high street pharmacies will begin rolling out Covid vaccines with Boots and Superdrug branches among the six stores across England which will be able to administer the jabs from Thursday.

Andrews Pharmacy in Macclesfield, Cullimore Chemist in Edgware, north London, Woodside Pharmacy in Telford and Appleton Village pharmacy in Widnes will be in the first group to hand out the injections, alongside Boots in Halifax, and Superdrug in Guildford.

Boris Johnson was pressed to start publishing regional and local authority vaccination breakdowns at Wednesday's liaison committee meeting by former health secretary Jeremy Hunt. "Why are the public not allowed to know anything except the most basic information?" the MP asked the prime minister.

In reply, Johnson promised the government would publish regional breakdowns "later this week" but admitted they were likely to show wide disparities.

When it came to vaccinating the over 80s, he said it was "more than 50%, well over 50% now in the north-east and Yorkshire" but added it was "less good in some other parts of the country".

The latest figures show that 2.25m first doses of a coronavirus vaccine had been administered by Tuesday, an increase of nearly 175,000 in the last 24-hour period, a run rate of around 1.3m a week.

Johnson wants to give everybody in the top four priority groups a first immunisation by 15 February. That amounts to a single jab for 15 million people who are aged over 70, [live in a care home or have serious underlying health conditions](#).

Ministers acknowledge there has been "lumpiness" in deliveries but insist there is enough vaccine supply in the pipeline to ensure the target can be hit.

However, although AstraZeneca confirmed it had supplied 1.1m doses to the UK so far on Wednesday, ministers have refused to provide any further details.

A Department of Health and Social Care spokesperson said it was working as quickly as possible: "Vaccines are being distributed fairly across the UK to ensure the most vulnerable are immunised first and all GPs will continue to receive deliveries as planned."

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UK job furlough scheme

Furlough refused to 71% of UK working mothers while schools shut - survey

TUC say responses highlight rapid reversal in gender equality that could take decades to repair

[Alexandra Topping](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 17.21 EST Last modified on Thu 14 Jan 2021 06.10 EST

The survey of 50,000 women has revealed the crisis facing working mothers and was described as a ‘cry for help’ by trade union umbrella body the TUC.

More than 70% of working mothers who asked to be furloughed for childcare reasons since schools shut have been refused, according to a survey that experts said highlighted a rapid reversal in gender equality that will take decades to repair.

The survey of 50,000 women in the UK has revealed the crisis facing working mothers and was described as a “cry for help” by trade union umbrella body the TUC.

TUC general secretary, Frances O’Grady, said the government’s lack of support for working parents was causing huge financial hardship and stress – and hitting low-paid mums and single parents hardest.

“Just like in the first lockdown, mums are shouldering the majority of childcare,” she said. “Tens of thousands of mums have told us they are despairing. It’s neither possible nor sustainable for them to work as normal, while looking after their children and supervising schoolwork.”

Working mothers

Since April 2020 the job retention scheme has allowed bosses to furlough parents who can’t work due to a lack of childcare, but the survey found that 78% of working mothers had not been offered furlough.

The TUC survey found 90% of working mothers had seen their anxiety and stress levels increase during the latest lockdown, while almost half (48%) were worried about being treated negatively by their employers because of their childcare responsibilities.

The research also suggests a widespread lack of awareness among workers that they can ask to be furloughed for childcare reasons – two in five mothers were unaware the scheme was available to parents affected by school or nursery closures.

While the TUC marketed the survey to all parents, just 7% of respondents (2,660) were men – suggesting the issue is heavily gendered. Of the 167 fathers (compared to 3,100 mothers) who had asked for furlough, 75% had been refused, a similar percentage as women, at 71%. And while 25% of both male and female respondents were using annual leave to manage childcare, 10% of men had been forced to reduce their hours, compared to 18% of women.

The TUC is calling for a temporary legal right to furlough for parents and carers, along with 10 days' paid carers leave, a right to flexible work, an increase in sick pay and access to the self-employment income support scheme (SEISS) for newly self-employed parents.

"Making staff take weeks of unpaid leave isn't the answer," said O'Grady. "Bosses must do the right thing and offer maximum flexibility to mums and dads who can't work because of childcare. And as a last resort, parents must have a temporary right to be furloughed where their boss will not agree."

Joeli Brearley of the campaigning group Pregnant Then Screwed said the organisation had been frantically trying to help an influx of "distressed mothers".

"The government must have known this would happen, they must appreciate that by closing schools with little consideration for parent employees that we would see women trapped in impossible circumstances," she said. "We are on the brink of a mental health crisis and a rapid reversal of gender equality that will take us decades to repair."

Holly*, a single mother with two children requested furlough and provided her boss with government information, but he "refused to believe her" and insisted she take unpaid leave. "I have had to get support for the food bank just so I know at least I will be able to feed my children," she said.

Ciara*, who has three children under 10, said she had been told to work after her children had gone to bed. 'I finish at 1am and am up at 5.30am with my youngest. I'm facing weeks, maybe longer of this. I can't sustain it."

Anna Whitehouse, otherwise known as Mother Pukka author of 'Parenting the Sh*t out of Life' said working parents were being asked to do the impossible, adding: "This unpaid labour is mainly strapped to female shoulders because - for all the International Women's Days Sellotaped together - that's the current working world we live in," she said. "The system needs to step up for parents before we step back to the 1950s."

Under the [current rules](#) employees can be furloughed (with 80% of their wages covered by the government to a maximum of £2,500 a month) if they are clinically extremely vulnerable, caring for someone vulnerable or are "caring for children who are at home as a result of school and childcare facilities

closing". **Flexible furlough** is available for caring responsibilities and can also be given on a part-time basis, meaning families could choose to share caring responsibilities if supported by their companies.

A Treasury spokesperson said: "It's been clear since the first lockdown that employers can furlough eligible employees who are required to shield, or those with childcare responsibilities, including because of school closures."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/13/furlough-refused-to-71-of-uk-working-mothers-while-schools-shut-survey>.

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[Homelessness](#)

Covid: officials underestimated number of rough sleepers in England needing help

National Audit Office said number of people needing shelter was eight times greater than thought

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

The government has set a goal of ending rough sleeping by 2004. Photograph:
Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

The government has set a goal of ending rough sleeping by 2004. Photograph:
Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

[Rajeev Syal](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

The number of rough sleepers identified for emergency help during the coronavirus pandemic was eight times greater than official estimates, Whitehall's spending watchdog has found.

Officials working on the Everyone In scheme to find accommodation for those at risk of being left on the street relied on a survey which found that 4,266 people slept rough, the National Audit Office said.

But between the end of March when the scheme was launched and November 2020, auditors said that 33,139 people participated in the scheme.

The figures have been disclosed as [homelessness campaigners](#) demand an urgent reboot of the government scheme in England to provide safe shelter for rough sleepers.

A report released on Thursday has also found that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government rough sleeping strategy to house all those on the streets by 2024 has been put on hold as officials dealt with the pandemic.

Meg Hillier MP, chair of the public accounts committee, welcomed the success of the Everyone In scheme but warned that the government must now find a new strategy if the government is to achieve its goal of ending rough sleeping by 2024.

“MHCLG, local authorities and the voluntary sector all rose to the challenge. Their staff went the extra mile and may have saved hundreds of lives. And two thirds of people supported by Everyone in have since moved into long-term accommodation.”

“However, MHCLG can't rest on its laurels and it was caught off guard by just how many people needed help. Now rough sleeping is on the rise again, and the pandemic is far from over,” she said.

The Everyone In campaign, which asked local authorities to immediately house rough sleepers and those at risk of rough sleeping to protect their health and stop wider transmission of Covid-19, was launched on 26 March.

Despite not having a contingency plan for protecting the rough sleeping population in the event of a pandemic, officials adopted a hands-on approach to work with local authorities, homelessness charities and hotel chains, the report said.

Auditors said that local authorities expect to spend around £170m this financial year rehousing rough sleepers in response to the pandemic, paid for by a combination of emergency government grants, existing homelessness funding streams, and their own resources.

A total of 23,273 people had been supported to move into the private rental sector or another form of settled accommodation, the report found, and 9,866 people remained in hotels and other emergency accommodation.

Covid-19 claimed relatively few lives among the rough sleeping population in England in the first wave.

Up to June 2020 16 deaths among homeless people had been linked to the virus, the report said. One study suggests that Everyone In may have avoided more than 20,000 infections and 266 deaths overall.

An MHCLG spokesperson said: “Our ongoing Everyone In programme has protected thousands of rough sleepers from Covid-19, so we are pleased the National Audit Office recognises its achievement.

“By November, we had supported around 33,000 people, with nearly 10,000 in emergency accommodation and more than 23,000 in longer-term accommodation.

“We recently announced an additional £10m to help accommodate rough sleepers and ensure they are registered with a GP to receive the vaccine, and we will invest £750m next year as part of our commitment to end rough sleeping.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/14/covid-officials-underestimated-number-of-rough-sleepers-in-england-needing-help>

Global development

Ugandans go to polls in election pitting Museveni against pop star MP

Bobi Wine's challenge to Yoweri Museveni seen as emblem of Africa-wide generation gap

Ugandan presidential candidate and singer Bobi Wine gestures after casting his ballot in the presidential elections in Kampala on Thursday. Photograph: Baz Ratner/Reuters

Ugandan presidential candidate and singer Bobi Wine gestures after casting his ballot in the presidential elections in Kampala on Thursday. Photograph: Baz Ratner/Reuters

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[About this content](#)

[Emmanuel Akinwotu](#) in Lagos and [Samuel Okiror](#) in Kampala

Thu 14 Jan 2021 13.54 EST

Ugandans have cast their votes after one of the most keenly watched and violent election campaigns in a generation, as the pop star turned politician Bobi Wine tries to unseat [Yoweri Museveni](#) from his 34-year rule.

Delays were seen in the delivery of polling materials in some places, including where Wine voted in the capital and opposition stronghold of Kampala. After he arrived to the cheers of a crowd and cast his ballot, Wine made the sign of the cross and then raised his fist and smiled. He said he was confident of victory.

On Wednesday night internet access was cut off for most users, heightening fears of state-backed moves to compromise the election's integrity, though some in the land-locked east African country are using VPNs to communicate online.

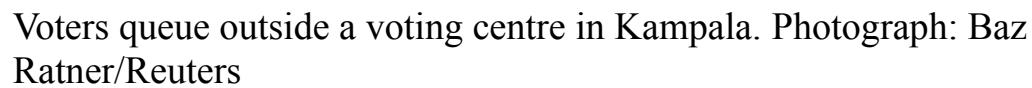
At a polling station in Kampala's Wakiso district, there were long queues as officials struggled to get biometric machines to work. "It's so disappointing and frustrating," said Daphine Ayereza, two hours after joining the queue to vote at 7am. "This is just a mess."

After polls closed at 4pm, hundreds of Wine supporters in Kampala returned to their polling stations to heed his call to "protect the vote" by watching the count. At the station where Wine had voted, security forces chased his supporters away.

Results are expected within 48 hours. A candidate must win more than 50% to avoid a runoff vote.

One of 10 opposition challengers, Wine has the backing of many young people in [Uganda](#) – where the median age is 15.7 – who are drawn to his charismatic, anti-corruption message.

Many observers see the challenge to Museveni, who at 76 is twice as old as his challenger, as emblematic of a continent-wide generational struggle between ageing leaders who refuse to relinquish power and younger voters mobilising against them.

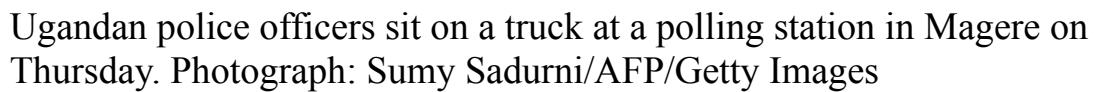


Voters queue outside a voting centre in Kampala. Photograph: Baz Ratner/Reuters

Wine's supporters were violently suppressed during the campaign by security forces loyal to Museveni, whose bid for a sixth term in power was only made possible when MPs changed the constitution to remove age limits. He has [repeatedly accused Wine](#) of being a foreign-backed "traitor".

Helicopters and military tanks have patrolled the skies and empty streets of Kampala and other cities in recent days.

[More than 55 people died](#) in November after [Wine was officially confirmed as a candidate](#), and he has been detained and prevented from campaigning on multiple occasions. Members of his party and other opposition figures have been attacked and arrested, purportedly because of rallies held in breach of Covid-19 restrictions.



Ugandan police officers sit on a truck at a polling station in Magere on Thursday. Photograph: Sumy Sadurni/AFP/Getty Images

On Wednesday Wine, whose real name is Robert Kyagulanyi, said members of his security detail around his home had been ordered to leave. In recent weeks, security forces have aggressively shut down his campaign activities, including [dragging him from his car](#) during a press conference last week. In December Wine said his [bodyguard had been killed](#) by soldiers. In an [interview with the Guardian](#) at the turn of the year he described the campaign as “a war and a battlefield”.

Lydia Namubiru, a journalist and the Africa editor at Open Democracy, said: “The brazenness of the violence is new. It’s both because he [Wine] is seen as a threat in the election but also because of what he symbolises.”

On Tuesday Uganda’s communications regulator ordered internet providers to block all social media platforms and messaging applications until further

notice, one day after Facebook announced it had taken down a network of fake and duplicate accounts linked to the information ministry.

On Wednesday the US and EU said they would not observe the elections, after several officials were denied accreditation. Isabella Akiteng, a civil society activist, said late on Thursday that she and 29 others who were observing the polls had been arrested at a hotel in Kampala and were being interrogated by police.

Museveni, who took power in 1986, enjoys widespread support, particularly among more conservative, rural and older voters who credit him with economic and healthcare gains and rural development.

"I expect my candidate to win massively," said Prima Mbazi, wearing the yellow cap of the ruling National Resistance Movement party in Kampala, on the eve of the vote. "He has offered free primary and secondary education for all children from families to study; we access health services in hospitals and at least every village has access to electricity. He needs to continue to secure our future."

09:52

From naked protests to challenging Museveni: Uganda's 'rudest feminist' on the campaign trail

On the campaign trail, the memory of mass suffering in the past underlined Museveni's message of stability and continuity. "When Museveni speaks, it's all about how he rescued the country when basic services were nonexistent," said Namubiru. "But people under the age of 35 have only a vague recollection of how things were then, and don't feel they were liberated."

Moreover, Museveni's message of economic progress jars with a harsh reality, particularly for younger people, more than 80% of whom work in the informal labour market.

Criticism of political patronage under Museveni's government has likewise grown in recent years. Elective positions have more than doubled since 2006 to almost 3 million officials – one for every 16 people – according to civil society groups.

The difficulty of unseating powerful long-term rulers was on sharp display in [Uganda's 2016 election](#), and expectations of a fair and transparent vote this time around are low.

At a polling station in the Kampala suburb of Mbuya, Joseph Okello said he had cast his ballot for Wine. “I am sure he will win with a landslide if they don’t manipulate the results and rig it,” Okello said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/14/uganda-polls-election-campaign-violence-museveni-wine>

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Brexit

Fisheries minister did not read Brexit bill as she was busy at nativity

PM stands by Victoria Prentis over admission she was too ‘busy’ to read deal, as SNP calls for resignation

Prentis in the House of Commons. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK Parliament/AFP/Getty Images

Prentis in the House of Commons. Photograph: Jessica Taylor/UK Parliament/AFP/Getty Images

PA Media

Wed 13 Jan 2021 17.41 EST

Downing Street has said Boris Johnson maintains confidence in the fisheries minister after she admitted not reading the post-Brexit trade deal with Brussels when it was agreed because she was busy organising a nativity trail.

Victoria Prentis faced calls for her to quit after the comments, but the prime minister is standing by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) minister.

Asked if her jaw had dropped when she saw the deal with the EU on Christmas Eve, Prentis told the Lords EU environment subcommittee: ‘‘No, the agreement came when we were all very busy on Christmas Eve, in my case organising the local nativity trail.

‘‘We had been waiting and waiting, it looked like it was coming for probably four days before it actually arrived.

‘‘I, for one, had gone through, as I’m sure members of this committee had, a gamut of emotions over those four days.’’

A No 10 spokesperson told the PA news agency that the prime minister had confidence in Prentis, 49.

[Seafood exports from Scotland to EU halted until 18 January](#)
[Read more](#)

But the Scottish National party took a dim view of the behaviour of Prentis, the MP for Banbury and North Oxfordshire, and insisted that she should stand down.

The comments came [following delays to seafood exports](#) after the Brexit transition period ended on New Year’s Eve.

Companies trying to export fish and other Scottish seafood have encountered red tape since the new trading rules with the EU came into force.

The SNP’s Brexit spokesperson, Philippa Whitford, said: ‘‘Due to Brexit-induced bureaucracy, Scotland’s fishing communities are already experiencing severe disruption and cannot get their produce to their customers in the EU market on time.

“For the Tory government’s fisheries minister to then admit that she did not even bother to read the details of the damaging deal because she was too busy is unbelievable and makes her position untenable.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/13/fisheries-minister-admits-not-reading-brexit-bill-as-she-was-at-nativity>

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Human trafficking

Three victims of trafficking and modern slavery to sue Biffa

The claimants were moved from Poland to the UK and placed in work with waste firm

A pre-action letter sent to Biffa by Leigh Day solicitors on behalf of the three victims states that the company has a responsibility to prevent forced labour.

Photograph: Simon Newman/Reuters

A pre-action letter sent to Biffa by Leigh Day solicitors on behalf of the three victims states that the company has a responsibility to prevent forced labour.

Photograph: Simon Newman/Reuters

Amelia Gentleman

[*@ameliagentleman*](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Three victims of trafficking and modern slavery who were subcontracted to sort rubbish for the national waste and recycling firm [Biffa](#) Waste Services are to launch legal proceedings to sue the firm for damages.

The claimants, who spoke no English, were trafficked from [Poland](#) to the UK in 2014 and 2015 and were placed in work with Biffa, sorting rubbish on a conveyor belt, via an employment agency.

Although they were paid for their work by the company, their wages were transferred into bank accounts that the organised crime group had opened in their names, and which they were unable to access. Solicitors acting for the two men and one woman said they received about £5 a week in cash for their work.

A pre-action letter sent to Biffa by Leigh Day solicitors on behalf of the three victims states that the company has a responsibility to prevent forced labour within its workforce. Parallel proceedings will be launched against Smart Solutions, the employment agency which placed the workers in jobs in Biffa recycling plants.

Around 400 people from Poland are believed to have been trafficked by the same criminal organisation to work in farms, poultry factories and various other recycling centres across Britain, working through a number of different recruitment agencies. Most were promised proper jobs before they left Poland, but were housed in substandard accommodation and were paid as little as 50p an hour, picking onions, making fencing and sorting waste.

West Midlands police uncovered the work of the Polish-run criminal gang after a three-year investigation into what was later described as Britain's largest modern slavery ring, and eight people were [jailed](#) in 2019. Investigations began in 2015 after two victims escaped and were helped by the anti-slavery charity Hope for Justice.

Leigh Day solicitor Liana Wood, representing the three victims, said: "Our clients have been through horrific experiences at the hands of an organised and far reaching criminal gang. The perpetrators of these crimes have been convicted but our clients believe that answers still need to be sought about the structures that enabled this exploitation to take place in plain sight."

“Our clients’ case is that companies have a duty to prevent modern slavery in their workplace: it is very unlikely that these crimes could have taken place if proper procedures had been in place to prevent them. It appears that a blind eye was turned while vulnerable people went through these terrible ordeals.”

She said her clients, who were housed in squalid, overcrowded accommodation, were seeking exemplary damages and damages related to psychiatric injury, as well as seeking to reclaim the wages they never received.

A spokesperson for Biffa said: “Biffa takes a zero tolerance approach to modern slavery. We cooperated fully with West Midlands police at the time of this investigation in 2016. We regularly review our practices and protocols to ensure we continually follow best practice … All allegations against Biffa are denied and will be defended in any court proceedings.”

Smart Solutions said it had been working with West Midlands police since 2015 to assist investigations.

“Since we were first made aware that our workforce had been infiltrated, we have worked tirelessly to ensure that we are continuously developing in our approach to hidden labour exploitation. We work to educate our clients, supply chains and external businesses so, as a collective, we can try and put an end to Modern Day slavery,” a spokesperson said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from
<https://www.theguardian.com/law/2021/jan/14/three-victims-of-trafficking-and-modern-slavery-to-sue-biffa>

South Korea

South Korean AI chatbot pulled from Facebook after hate speech towards minorities

Lee Luda, built to emulate a 20-year-old Korean university student, engaged in homophobic slurs on social media

Lee Luda, a Korean artificial intelligence chatbot, has been pulled after becoming abusive and engaging in hate speech on Facebook. Photograph: Scatter Lab

Lee Luda, a Korean artificial intelligence chatbot, has been pulled after becoming abusive and engaging in hate speech on Facebook. Photograph: Scatter Lab

[Justin McCurry in Tokyo](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 23.24 EST

A popular South Korean chatbot has been suspended after complaints that it used hate speech towards sexual minorities in conversations with its users.

Lee Luda, the [artificial intelligence](#) [AI] persona of a 20-year-old female university student, was removed from Facebook messenger this week, after attracting more than 750,000 users in the 20 days since it was launched.

The chatbot, developed by the Seoul-based startup Scatter Lab, triggered a flood of complaints after it used offensive language about members of the [LGBT](#) community and people with disabilities during conversations with users.

[AI and K-pop at the festival of Korean movers and shakers](#)

[Read more](#)

“We deeply apologise over the discriminatory remarks against minorities. That does not reflect the thoughts of our company and we are continuing the upgrades so that such words of discrimination or hate speech do not recur,” the company said in a statement quoted by the Yonhap news agency

Scatter Lab, which had earlier claimed that Luda was a work in progress and, like humans, would take time to “properly socialise”, said the chatbot would reappear after the firm had “fixed its weaknesses”.

While chatbots are nothing new, Luda had impressed users with the depth and natural tone of its responses, drawn from 10 billion real-life conversations between young couples taken from KakaoTalk, [South Korea’s](#) most popular messaging app.

But praise for Luda’s familiarity with social media acronyms and internet slang turned to outrage after it began using abusive and sexually explicit terms.

In one exchange captured by a messenger user, Luda said it “really hates” lesbians, describing them as “creepy”.

Luda, too, became a target by manipulative users, with online community boards posting advice on how to engage it in conversations about sex, including one that read: “How to make Luda a sex slave,” along with screen captures of conversations, according to the Korea Herald.

It is not the first time that artificial intelligence has been embroiled in controversy over hate speech and bigotry.

In 2016 Microsoft's Tay, an AI Twitter bot that spoke like a teenager, was taken offline in just 16 hours after users manipulated it into [posting racist tweets](#).

Two years later, Amazon's [AI recruitment tool](#) met the same fate after it was found guilty of [gender](#) bias.

[A robot wrote this entire article. Are you scared yet, human? | GPT-3](#)
[Read more](#)

Scatter Lab, whose services are wildly popular among South Korean teenagers, said it had taken every precaution not to equip Luda with language that was incompatible with South Korean social norms and values, but its chief executive, Kim Jong-yoon, acknowledged that it was impossible prevent inappropriate conversations simply by filtering out keywords, the Korea Herald said.

“The latest controversy with Luda is an ethical issue that was due to a lack of awareness about the importance of ethics in dealing with AI,” Jeon Chang-bae, the head of the Korea Artificial Intelligence Ethics Association, told the newspaper.

Scatter Lab is also facing questions over whether it violated privacy laws when it secured KakaoTalk messages for its Science of Love app.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/14/time-to-properly-socialise-hate-speech-ai-chatbot-pulled-from-facebook>

[Animal behaviour](#)

Bali's thieving monkeys can spot high-value items to ransom

Study finds macaques go for tourists' electronics and wallets over empty bags and then maximise their profit

A mischievous – and shrewd – monkey in Bali. Photograph: Melissa Tse/Getty Images/Flickr RF

A mischievous – and shrewd – monkey in Bali. Photograph: Melissa Tse/Getty Images/Flickr RF

[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) South-east Asia correspondent

Wed 13 Jan 2021 20.00 EST

At the Uluwatu temple in [Bali](#), monkeys mean business. The long-tailed macaques who roam the ancient site are infamous for brazenly robbing unsuspecting tourists and clinging on to their possessions until food is offered as ransom payment.

Researchers have found they are also skilled at judging which items their victims value the most and using this information to maximise their profit.

Shrewd macaques prefer to target items that humans are most likely to exchange for food, such as electronics, rather than objects that tourists care less about, such as hairpins or empty camera bags, said Dr Jean-Baptiste Leca, an associate professor in the psychology department at the University of Lethbridge in Canada and lead author of the study.

Mobile phones, wallets and prescription glasses are among the high-value possessions the monkeys aim to steal. “These monkeys have become experts at snatching them from absent-minded tourists who didn’t listen to the temple staff’s recommendations to keep all valuables inside zipped handbags firmly tied around their necks and backs,” said Leca.

After spending more than 273 days filming interactions between the animals and temple visitors, researchers found that the macaques would demand better rewards – such as more food – for higher-valued items.

Bargaining between a monkey robber, tourist and a temple staff member quite often lasted several minutes. The longest wait before an item was returned was 25 minutes, including 17 minutes of negotiation. For lower-valued items, the monkeys were more likely to conclude successful bartering sessions by accepting a lesser reward.

Unlike many previous studies that have examined similar behaviour, the macaques at Uluwatu, a Hindu temple, are free-ranging animals and were not being observed in a laboratory setting.

Such behaviours are learned by the monkeys throughout juvenescence, up until they are four years old, according to the research, which was funded by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and the Alberta Gambling Research Institute (AGRI) and published in *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society*.

Robbing and bartering is an expression of cultural intelligence on the part of the monkeys, said Leca. “These behaviours are socially learned and have been maintained across generations of monkeys for at least 30 years in this population.”

While temple staff at Uluwatu are on hand to ease monkey-tourist relations, managing the animals is a challenge in many other areas of the world. Marauding monkeys are infamous for causing trouble across India – eating farmers’ crops, raiding homes in villages and cities alike, and even mobbing a health worker and making off with [blood samples from coronavirus tests](#).

There are concerns that, in many regions, monkeys have become more aggressive because the pandemic has left them with little to eat. In Thailand, officials began sterilising monkeys in Lopburi, a city famous for its macaque population, last year. The lack of tourists during the pandemic has left the animals hungry, and increasingly hard to live alongside.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/jan/14/balis-thieving-monkeys-seek-bigger-ransoms-for-high-value-swag-study>

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2021.01.14 - Coronavirus

- [**Dealing with death Covid's toll on UK crematoria and morgues as fatalities pass 100,000**](#)
- [**UK Deaths pass 100,000 after 1,564 reported in one day**](#)
- [**China First Covid death since May as new outbreak worsens**](#)
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Death and dying

Dealing with death: Covid's toll on UK crematoria and morgues

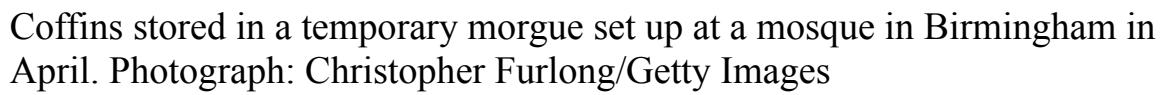
‘Mortality management’ has been stretched and as fatalities pass 100k systems are again feeling the strain

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



[Robert Booth](#) Social affairs correspondent

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.00 EST Last modified on Fri 15 Jan 2021 11.24 EST



Coffins stored in a temporary morgue set up at a mosque in Birmingham in April. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

When the UK's first victim of Covid-19 [died on 5 March 2020](#), there were only 116 recorded infections in the country and few people countenanced a death toll of 100,000.

But for government planners it was different. Emergency response experts tasked with “mortality management” braced for a death toll that they feared would dwarf anything seen since the second world war. As fatalities mounted in China and Italy, the worst-case scenario for the UK was so grim that one scheme hatched involved storing thousands of bodies in a warehouse in east [London](#).

Another was to anchor a ship in the Thames and load it with containers adapted to hold racks of bodies, a senior official who worked on the plans as part of London’s “gold command” told the Guardian. “It was incredibly chilling,” they said.

In Birmingham, plans were developed for a [mortuary in an airport hangar](#), in Glasgow a warehouse on an industrial estate was primed, and in Cardiff the Welsh government began sourcing space to hold bodies amid fears of a worst-case death toll of 20,000.

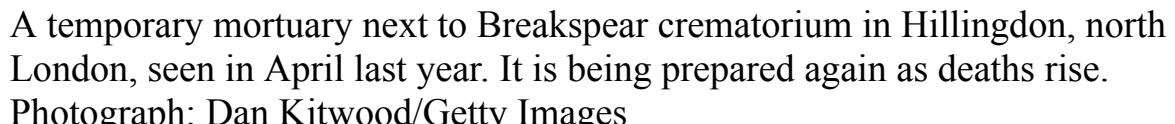
Existing disaster plans for handling pandemics, natural disasters and terrorist attacks show London had 3,500 mortuary spaces. But the capital braced for the virus with an additional 12,000 mortuary spaces. If cemeteries could not cope, bodies would be frozen to await their final committal. There were plans to transport scores of bodies at a time between storage locations in trucks, the official said, a practice that risks misidentifying or even losing the dead.

There were moments when the [system seemed to strain](#). Body bags ran out at one point and their price rose tenfold, which meant the armed forces had to give up some they had in reserve for battle casualties.

Officials said they wrestled with unforeseen difficulties, such as a backlog of bodies from the Greek Orthodox community whose families wanted them to be buried in Greece. That was not possible as flights were grounded.

In April, trench graves were dug in east London at the Eternal Gardens Muslim burial ground in Kemnal Park, south-east London, in response to high death rates and the religious mandate to bury bodies within 24 hours. It was a shocking but rare sight and in the end mortuary, burial and cremation facilities were stretched rather than overwhelmed. Neither London's ship nor its warehouse were needed and the country coped with the practical realities of a death toll 19% [higher](#) than on average for the previous decade. Now it is being asked to respond again as officials once more handle a sharp rise in deaths.

A temporary mortuary with capacity for 672 bodies, and more if needed, is being prepared at [Breakspear crematorium in Hillingdon](#), north London, while planners in Kent, Surrey and Lincolnshire have started storing bodies in temporary marquees to create space in crowded hospital mortuaries. In November, Lancashire county council erected a temporary storage unit for 210 bodies in a business park near Leyland, although it is yet to be used. In Birmingham, where Handsworth cemetery filled up after the first wave of coronavirus deaths, with Muslim plots running out fastest, burials are being redirected to open plots at Sutton New Hall on the north-east edge of the city.



A temporary mortuary next to Breakspear crematorium in Hillingdon, north London, seen in April last year. It is being prepared again as deaths rise.

Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Coroners' courts, which run essential inquests into deaths, have also become backlogged, partly because the law requires that coroners are present in court for an inquest to be carried out and many have been closed because of Covid-19. In cases where inquests are required, families cannot receive death certificates until they are concluded.

"Lockdown has meant that many inquests have had to be adjourned or postponed," said Mark Lucraft QC, who until last autumn was the chief coroner for England and Wales, in an annual report. He also said that many jury inquests, needed for the most complex cases, were also on hold. Lucraft has [called for a change](#) in the law to allow coroners to run inquests remotely and enable fully virtual hearings.

While there is confidence that systems for handling deaths are robust, the people who run them may be struggling more. “Having been through the first phase and knowing we can cope, the biggest worry this time is if our workers become ill and have to self-isolate,” said Julie Dunk, the chief executive of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.

Severe restrictions on funeral arrangements had taken an emotional toll not just on the bereaved but on staff too, she said, including those who work the cremation machinery that was being used so much more heavily that it required increased servicing.

“It was really difficult,” said Dunk. “Ours is a caring sector. Nobody works in cemeteries and crematoria for the money because there isn’t any. People do it because they care about bereaved people and want to offer the best service they can. Numbers were restricted and it was horrible.”

A third of all Covid-19 cremations were carried out with no one present apart from crematorium officials, according to a study by SunLife published this week.

Funeral homes are also wrestling with staff absences, said Jon Levett, the chief executive of the National Association of Funeral Directors. “It is starting to look very challenging,” he said. “The other thing is that the numbers over the next few weeks are only going to go up as we have not reached the peak. There is a worry about what may be ahead over the next few weeks.”

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Coronavirus

UK coronavirus deaths pass 100,000 after 1,564 reported in one day

Experts condemn ‘phenomenal failure of policy and practice’ in handling of pandemic

- [The challenge of the UK’s epidemic of grief](#)
- [Tributes to victims of the UK’s second wave](#)

[Caelainn Barr](#), [Nicola Davis](#) and [Pamela Duncan](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 14.43 EST First published on Wed 13 Jan 2021 11.17 EST

A public health notice in central London on Wednesday. Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

More than 100,000 people have died from coronavirus in the UK since the disease first appeared in the country almost a year ago, in what public health experts said is a sign of “phenomenal failure of policy and practice”.

On Wednesday the daily figure for recorded deaths was 1,564 – a new record high bringing the total to 101,160, according to analysis of figures from government and statistical agencies. The toll far exceeds some of the [worst-case scenario estimates](#) made during the first wave of the pandemic.

It comes amid warnings that the toughest weeks of the crisis are [yet to come](#) and that Britons are facing an [epidemic of grief](#) for lost relatives and loved-ones, with many forced to mourn alone amid lockdown measures and curbs on funerals.

Almost one in every 660 people in the UK have died from Covid or Covid-related causes so far during the pandemic – or about one-in-six of all deaths. The UK has one of the worst coronavirus mortality rates in the world, at 151 per 100,000 people.

Even by the lower government figure – which only measures deaths within 28 days of a positive Covid test – the UK is now ahead of the [US, Spain and Mexico](#), where there have been 116, 113 and 108 deaths per 100,000 people respectively.

The figures are also in stark contrast to counties that have maintained low case and death rates, including Taiwan, New Zealand and Australia where death rates per 100,000 people stand at 0.03, 0.5 and 3.6.

Gabriel Scally, a visiting professor of public health at the University of Bristol and a member of the Independent Sage group of experts, said the 100,000-plus death toll was an indictment of the way the pandemic had been handled.

“It is an astounding number of preventable deaths from one cause in one year, [an] absolutely astounding number. It’s a sign of a phenomenal failure of policy and practice in the face of this new and dangerous virus,” Scally said.

The government has been repeatedly accused of acting too late to reduce the spread of the virus. In March Sir Patrick Vallance, the government's chief scientific adviser, said keeping deaths from coronavirus below 20,000 would be a “good outcome”.

There have been 93,418 coronavirus deaths recorded by statistical agencies, based on those with Covid on the death certificate, from the beginning of the pandemic up to 10 January, and a further 7,742 deaths since, according to figures published by the government based on deaths within 28 days of a positive test for the virus.

The way coronavirus deaths in the UK are counted has changed since the beginning of the pandemic. While statistical agencies count deaths where Covid-19 is noted on the death certificate, the government figures released each day count fatalities within 28 days of a positive test. The Guardian analyses the data from both sources to achieve the most up-to-date fatality count possible.

Prof Andrew Hayward, a member of the government's Sage advisory group and director of University College London's Institute of Epidemiology and Health Care, said: “The UK ranks seventh in the world in terms of numbers of deaths per million population through the pandemic. During the last week, our death rate was the second highest in the world – a record that is ‘world-beating’ in all the wrong ways.

“Our intensive care units, which have always had much lower capacity than many other European countries, are at breaking point. Our frontline NHS staff are exhausted and traumatised. Hospitalisations and deaths will continue to increase across the country for at least the next two or three weeks and possibly beyond.”

Christina Pagel, a professor of operational research at University College London and also a member of Independent Sage, said that with deaths lagging infections by three to four weeks, the death toll would rise further.

“I could say it’s shocking that [the] UK has [the] worst death toll in Europe, or we could have prevented this with earlier measures in September or October, and it would be true,” she said. But this had been true for weeks, she added, and scientists had repeatedly stressed the gravity of rising infections. “Scientists were saying it all December, warning that deaths would go up after Christmas.”

Graph

The number of deaths announced by the government has increased by 55% in the last week, after the emergence of new variants, and relaxed rules over the Christmas period are thought to have driven up cases, hospitalisations and deaths.

Cases are now in decline, however, with a further 47,525 positive cases across the UK reported on Wednesday. But the numbers of people in hospital have continued to increase, with 4,253 more people admitted, an increase of 35% over the last seven days.

The figures come as concerns have been raised about the level of restrictions in place in England, which are not as strict as in March. Prof Kamlesh Khunti, of the University of Leicester, who sits on Sage and is also a member of the Independent Sage group of experts, said stricter rules could be part of the solution.

Khunti said: “This is indeed a dismal milestone in the pandemic for the UK. We need to urgently get the rates down as the number of infections and deaths seem still very high and we may need a stricter lockdown for longer. We are seeing younger people being admitted to hospital and we therefore need to have great urgency in prioritising a vaccination programme once we have completed the 14 million [most vulnerable people] as planned by the government by mid-February.”

Official statistics released on Tuesday showed 2020 was the deadliest year in England and Wales [for more than a century](#). More than 608,000 people died last year, 81,653 of whom as a result of coronavirus.

Deaths exceeded 600,000 for only the second time on record, and the toll was just behind that of 611,861 in 1918, the worst year of the flu pandemic.

Scally said the final death toll from Covid was likely to be far higher. “It could add another 50,000 [deaths] before we are finished,” he said.

- This article was amended on 14 January 2021. The death rate for Taiwan was originally published incorrectly as 0.3. This has been amended to the correct figure, 0.03.
-

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[China](#)

China records first Covid death since May as WHO team arrives in Wuhan

Delegation arrives as China suffers growing outbreak of coronavirus in Hebei province

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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China's worst outbreak in months is taking place in Hebei province.

Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

China's worst outbreak in months is taking place in Hebei province.

Photograph: Xinhua/REX/Shutterstock

[Helen Davidson in Taipei](#)

[@heldavidson](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 04.22 EST

Mainland China has reported its first Covid-19 death in eight months, as most of a team of experts from the [World Health Organization](#) landed in Wuhan to investigate the origins of the pandemic.

Two members of the team were stopped in Singapore after tests detected antibodies, while the rest of the delegation began quarantine in Wuhan for two weeks before beginning their inquiries.

Their arrival, which was live-streamed by state media, came after almost a year of negotiations with the WHO, and diplomatic spats between China – which has been [trying to change the narrative](#) about where the virus came from – and other countries who demanded it allow [a “robust” independent investigation](#).

No details of China's 4,635th death were provided on Thursday, except that the person was in Hebei province, the main site of China's [worst outbreak in months](#) and where new lockdowns have been imposed on tens of millions of people. It is the first death from the disease since May.

[WHO's Covid mission to Wuhan: 'It's not about finding China guilty'](#)
[Read more](#)

China's national health commission reported 138 new cases of confirmed Covid-19, and 78 new asymptomatic cases, which they count separately. It is the highest daily tally in [China](#) since March and comes weeks before the start of the busy lunar new year holiday period.

Of the 138 cases, 124 were local transmissions including 81 in Hebei province, which surrounds Beijing, and 43 in the north-eastern Heilongjiang province. All new cases in Heilongjiang were close contacts or secondary close contacts of earlier infections in a Wangkui county village, authorities said.

In response, authorities have locked down major cities home to tens of millions of people, and enacted tough travel restrictions. Anyone seeking to enter Beijing for work from surrounding Hebei must provide proof of employment and a negative test. The coastal city of Shanghai has forbidden entry to residents of designated streets within middle-high risk areas, and those from elsewhere in the designated areas will be subject to 14 days quarantine on

arrival and testing. The regulation was announced on Wednesday and is valid until the end of March.

In the outskirts of Hebei's capital Shijiazhuang on Wednesday, construction began immediately on a newly ordered centralised isolation facility, state media reported. Described [by Xinhua](#) as “integrated housing” for centralised medical observation, the facility is reportedly expect to contain 3,000 makeshift wards.

Authorities are pushing ahead with a drive to have 50 million people vaccinated before the lunar new year period begins on 11 February, and travel has been discouraged or banned in some sectors and provinces.

On Tuesday, Dr Zhang Wenhong, a director of a Shanghai hospital's infectious diseases department, said the outbreak would take [at least a month to be controlled](#), and called for the vaccination programme to speed up so authorities could get ahead of virus mutations.

The outbreak has alarmed officials, as each day this week recorded numbers not seen since early 2020, when the city Wuhan was still under its then-unprecedented lockdown.

The WHO team includes virus and other experts from the US, Australia, Germany, Japan, Britain, Russia, the Netherlands, Qatar and Vietnam.

“All team members had multiple negative PCR [polymerase chain reaction tests for current Covid infection] and antibody tests for Covid-19 in their home countries prior to travelling,” the WHO said. “They were tested again in Singapore and were all negative for PCR. But two members tested positive for IgM [immunoglobulins] antibodies.” The pair were now undergoing further testing.

The rest of the team will begin consulting immediately with Chinese counterparts via video link while they complete quarantine.

A Chinese government spokesperson said this week the WHO team would “exchange views” with Chinese scientists but [gave no indication](#) whether they would be allowed to gather evidence.

A “scientific audit” of records and safety measures would be a “routine activity”, said Mark Woolhouse, an epidemiologist at the University of

Edinburgh. But that depended on how willing Chinese authorities were to share information.

“There’s a big element of trust here,” Woolhouse said.

The WHO team were en route to China a week ago but some members had to turn back after Beijing announced they had not received valid visas. It prompted a rare criticism from the head of the WHO, but Beijing said it was a “misunderstanding”.

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[Scotland](#)

Scotland's Covid lockdown tightened with click and collect and takeaway curbs

Non-essential click and collect services and outdoor alcohol consumption to be banned

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Scotland's first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, announces the new Covid measures in Holyrood on Wednesday. Photograph: Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images

Shops in [Scotland](#) have been ordered to stop non-essential click-and-collect services and alcohol consumption is to be banned outdoors, in a further

tightening of lockdown measures.

Nicola Sturgeon, the first minister, said shops would be allowed to offer click and collect only for essential goods such as clothes, shoes, baby equipment, books and homeware from Saturday 16 January. Takeaway outlets will be banned from allowing customers into the building.

“I must stress at the outset that the situation we face in relation to the virus remains very precarious and extremely serious,” she told MSPs.

UK government ministers are considering restricting click and collect in England, and Matt Hancock, the health secretary, joined Sturgeon in welcoming John Lewis’s voluntary decision on Tuesday to suspend its collect services.

After announcing 79 further deaths, with 1,794 people in hospital with Covid, Sturgeon said shops must stagger collection times by offering appointments, as she set out six further controls on people’s movements and interactions.

These included banning any alcohol consumption outdoors across all level 4 areas, preventing people from buying takeaway beers to drink outside.

Sturgeon said Scotland’s stay-at-home legislation would be tightened to make it clear people were not legally allowed to remain outdoors for non-essential reasons once they had finished any essential task. That brought Scotland’s rules in line with those in the rest of the UK.

New statutory guidance will tell employers they are now required to help their staff work from home, and restrictions on builders or plumbers working on non-essential tasks in homes will be enforced in law.

Sturgeon said the current lockdown, which came into force across mainland Scotland on Boxing Day, seemed to be slowing the rate of increase in Covid cases. Testing suggested the new highly infectious variant, B117, was now responsible for 60% of cases, up from 50% in late December.

“Case numbers are still so high and the new variant is so infectious that we must be as tough and as effective as we can to stop it spreading,” she told MSPs. The new measures were “a regrettable, but necessary, means to an end”.

Business leaders and the Scottish Tory leader, Ruth Davidson, urged the Scottish government to significantly speed up the rollout of business support funds. Davidson said a majority of Sturgeon's promised support funds were still not operational.

Tracy Black, the director of CBI Scotland, said click-and-collect services were vital to some retailers' survival, particularly smaller shops. "It's really important that the Scottish government sets out compelling evidence that these services are a source of transmission and provides additional, urgent support to compensate for what would be a further loss of revenue in increasingly challenging times," she said.

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[Coronavirus](#)

UK records 1,248 deaths – as it happened

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Science Weekly

Science

Covid-19: how and why is the virus mutating?

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2021.01.14 - Coronavirus uk

- [**Brazil UK government to ban flights amid new variant**](#)
- [**Retail Study warns of huge jobs losses in retail in England after pandemic**](#)
- [**Vaccinations Second shots could be delayed further in England**](#)
- [**Coronavirus in the UK When will the worst of this be over?**](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

UK government to ban travellers from Brazil amid new Covid variant, PM hints

Announcement expected on Thursday after Boris Johnson challenged on issue

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Heather Stewart](#) Political editor

Wed 13 Jan 2021 14.32 EST Last modified on Thu 14 Jan 2021 17.55 EST

Heathrow international arrivals hall. The Labour MP Yvette Cooper asked Boris Johnson why the government had not stopped travel from Brazil, given

the risks of the newly-identified variant of the disease Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

The government is preparing to ban travellers from [Brazil](#) in an effort to limit the cases of a new Covid variant reaching the UK, with an announcement expected on Thursday.

Boris Johnson dropped a heavy hint that travel restrictions could be imposed, as he was pressed by Labour MP Yvette Cooper at a cross-party liaison committee.

Cooper asked why the government had not stopped travel from Brazil, given the risks of the [newly identified variant](#) of the disease.

“You were warned about the Brazil variant three days ago. We don’t know, yet, whether that variant could undermine the vaccination programme. Why aren’t you taking immediate action, on a precautionary basis?” Cooper asked.

The prime minister replied: “We are: we’re putting in extra measures to ensure that people coming from Brazil are checked: and indeed stopping people coming from Brazil.”

Brazil had already banned direct flights from the UK on Christmas Day, amid concerns about the Kent variant of the virus.

But ministers are understood to be considering halting flights from neighbouring countries as a precaution, to prevent travellers from Brazil arriving indirectly.

It is understood the government’s expert committee on new and emerging viruses, Nervtag, considered the implications of the Brazilian variant on Tuesday.

A decision on a travel ban is likely to be announced after a meeting of the ministerial Covid-O committee on Thursday – and could also include neighbouring countries.

It is not yet known whether the Brazilian variant is more transmissible than previous iterations of the disease – or whether it could be vaccine resistant.

Asked by Cooper whether he was contemplating a flights ban, Johnson repeatedly said the government was “taking steps”.

“We’re taking steps to stop the Brazil variant, as we’ve taken steps to stop the South African variant being imported into this country, as indeed the French took steps to prevent the Kent variant being imported into France: that’s what countries do,” he said.

Graphic

Graphic

Flights from South Africa were [banned](#) before Christmas, after a new variant of the disease was identified there. Cooper pointed to evidence showing that the virus had reached Europe from China via a series of routes early in the pandemic, not simply through direct flights.

“It’s nearly four weeks since we were warned about the South African variant, but if I wanted to travel from South Africa here today, I could get a flight via Dubai or Istanbul, with no test before I left, no test during, no test on arrival; go straight on to the tube from Heathrow, and then on to a train and travel home across the country,” she said.

The prime minister highlighted that [negative Covid tests would be required to enter England from Friday](#), but also pointed to the need for what he called a “balanced approach”.

“The reason that we’ve wanted to have a balanced approach in our border policy is obviously that you need to make sure that you’re balancing the threat to health with the threat to the economy,” he said.

- This story was amended on 14 January 2021 to clarify that the UK government was considering a ban on travellers from Brazil rather than flights.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/13/uk-government-may-ban-flights-from-brazil-amid-new-covid-variant-pm-hints>

Retail industry

Study warns of huge jobs losses in retail in England after pandemic

KPMG says affluent towns in south among most vulnerable if people continue to work from home and shop online

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Bracknell railway station. The London commuter belt town is judge to be most at risk of having the greatest declines in [retail](#) employment as a share of local economic activity. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

Bracknell railway station. The London commuter belt town is judge to be most at risk of having the greatest declines in [retail](#) employment as a share of local

economic activity. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

Richard Partington Economics correspondent

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Wed 13 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

England's high streets could lose up to 400,000 retail jobs as a result of more people [working from home](#) and shopping online after the coronavirus pandemic, according to a report, with affluent towns in the south among the most vulnerable.

Out of the 109 towns and cities studied by the accountancy firm KPMG, Bracknell in the London commuter belt was judged to be most at risk of having the greatest declines in [retail](#) employment as a share of local economic activity.

An increase in remote working and online shopping is expected to be one of the lasting legacies of the pandemic. However, the report said some places would record a bigger decline in commuter footfall than others, and that this would accelerate the hollowing-out of high street shopping in these locations.

According to the research, up to 27.4% of jobs in Bracknell – home to big technology firms including Fujitsu and Dell, and a popular base for London office workers – were expected to be still done from home, even after physical-distancing measures have been relaxed.

KPMG said this would deliver a heavy blow to retailers in the Berkshire town because it would reduce commuter footfall, leading to the loss of as many as 1,505 jobs, or about 38% of the local retail sector.

The percentages were similar in towns including Basingstoke, Hemel Hempstead, Warrington and Guildford, which KPMG ranked among the most vulnerable locations in [England](#) for high street job losses.

In a warning to the government, KPMG said the shifting trends caused by the pandemic would have far-reaching consequences for [Boris Johnson's levelling-up agenda](#), which has so far focused on historically weaker local economies in the Midlands and northern England.

Finding that some of the most vulnerable places in the Covid recession were in the traditionally affluent south-east, the company said the balance was shifting

so that these areas would need to do more to refocus their local economies in future.

However, more people typically work from home in these locations because there are more jobs in higher-paying sectors of the economy in which remote work is easier, such as in IT and finance.

According to KPMG, towns such as Burnley, Bradford and Huddersfield rank within the least affected by the crisis, in part because fewer jobs in these places can be done remotely.

While this could protect retail employment, many towns central to the levelling-up agenda were struggling before the pandemic and would, therefore, still need additional support coming out of the crisis.

Some commentators have also suggested that the rise of home working could help smaller towns and cities to emerge stronger from the pandemic, as fewer people may need to travel to big cities such as London, Birmingham and Manchester.

So far during the pandemic, central London has experienced the biggest hit to jobs owing to the dramatic decline in commuter footfall. [The population of the capital is expected to fall for the first time since 1988](#) this year as a consequence, as more people move out to the suburbs.

However, KPMG said the retail sector in big cities such as London would remain resilient, because its cultural amenities would continue to attract visitors after the relaxation of Covid restrictions, helping to cushion the blow from fewer commuters.

The most vulnerable locations, it said, had the highest number of home workers and fewest cultural assets – such as sports centres, museums and arts venues, as well as pubs, cafes and restaurants.

Guardian business email sign-up

According to the report, London, Liverpool, Burnley and Birmingham were the most resilient to the economic impact of further home working and online shopping.

Yael Selfin, the chief economist at KPMG in the UK, said: “As people travel less for work or to shop, town and city centres will need alternative offerings to fill vacant space and to attract people to the area as we hopefully leave the pandemic behind sometime this year.

“High streets will need to be reimagined as cultural and recreational hubs that will act as magnets for businesses and jobs able to transform less prosperous areas.”

The 10 most vulnerable places post-Covid

- 1 Bracknell
 - 2 Hemel Hempstead
 - 3 Basingstoke
 - 4 Warrington
 - 5 Guildford
 - 6 Swindon
 - 7 Watford
 - 8 Slough
 - 9 Stockport
 - 10 Basildon
-

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<https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/14/study-warns-of-huge-jobs-losses-in-retail-in-england-after-pandemic-south-work-from-home-shop-online>

[Coronavirus](#)

Second shots of Covid vaccine could be delayed further in England

Some evidence suggests spacing vaccination doses improves effectiveness

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Ian Sample](#) and [Sarah Boseley](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 10.43 EST First published on Wed 13 Jan 2021 08.50 EST

A patient receives a Covid-19 vaccine at Robertson House in Stevenage, Hertfordshire. Photograph: Joe Giddens/EPA

Second shots of coronavirus vaccine could be delayed even further amid growing evidence that spacing out the doses improves their effectiveness.

The NHS vaccination programme aims to immunise about 14 million people at greatest risk of Covid by mid-February, with second doses to be given up to 12 weeks later.

But Public [Health](#) England's head of immunisation, Mary Ramsay, told MPs on Wednesday that if infection data showed vulnerable groups, such as the over-80s, were well protected by their first shot, then second doses could be delayed to get a first jab to younger people as well.

The NHS originally planned to offer second shots of the Pfizer vaccine three weeks after the first, in line with the procedure in the trials, but the soaring infection rate forced [a rethink in late December](#) with the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation (JCVI) recommending first shots for as many people as possible in the highest-risk groups.

“Like we changed the schedule very quickly before Christmas, this is a very fast-moving field, and if more data emerges it may well be that the balance of those first doses, getting more first doses to people is a priority,” Ramsay told the Commons science committee. “If we’re seeing very high levels of protection, for example in the vulnerable groups, it may be more important to get more younger people vaccinated.”

Ramsay said Public Health [England](#) would review infection data weekly and that it may be possible to be “a little bit more relaxed” about the timing of second doses, depending on vaccine supply and the scientific evidence. Asked if second shots might be given beyond the current 12-week limit, she said: “That’s unlikely, but it’s always possible.”

► Quick guide

Who in the UK will get the new Covid-19 vaccine first?

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Evidence now suggests that spacing out doses of the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine may be more effective at protecting people. Clinical trials revealed the

efficacy of the vaccine was substantially higher, at 90%, in a subgroup of people who received half a dose followed by a full dose, rather than two full doses, which had an efficacy of 62%.

But Prof Wei Shen Lim, the chair of the Covid-19 immunisation group of the JCVI, told MPs further analysis by [AstraZeneca](#) showed the improved protection came from spacing out the doses.

“People who had the half dose then full dose were those who were vaccinated at a longer time interval, roughly six to 12 weeks, and what they’ve seen in their data is that people who have the second dose later probably have a three times higher antibody level than those who were vaccinated earlier. So if anything, it suggests that increasing the dose interval is beneficial,” he said.

Sir Mene Pangalos, the executive vice-president of biopharmaceuticals research and development at AstraZeneca, told the committee the first vaccine shot was more protective over time.

“What we’re seeing with our data so far is that as you go to the eight- to 12-week interval, you actually increase vaccine efficacy. People are protected enough with the first dose, to around 70%, but we see that within that eight- to 12-week interval is actually the sweet spot,” he said.

Lim said the JCVI had yet to decide how vaccine shots might be prioritised during the second phase of the rollout, once healthcare workers, those with underlying conditions, and the over-50s had received their shots.

He said essential workers may be prioritised. Modelling suggests one life is saved for every 25 to 40 people vaccinated in care homes, and for every 250 people vaccinated over the age of 80, he added, while “thousands” of train operators would need to be immunised to save one life.

AstraZeneca is “imminently” scaling up to release 2m doses of its vaccine a week in the UK, and may be able to go above that from April, the firm’s chief executive said.

Tom Keith-Roach, the president of AstraZeneca UK, said 1.1m doses of the company’s Covid-19 jab developed with Oxford University had been released to the UK to date, but the aim was to reach 2m doses per week on or before the middle of February.

Nadhim Zahawi, the minister in charge of the vaccine rollout, said the immunisation programme would be slower than some countries because we have chosen to vaccinate all those at highest risk of dying, such as people in care homes who are harder to reach. “Some of the countries have chosen to say, you know what, we will vaccinate anyone over the age of 60, as Israel’s done. That’s much easier to do.”

He said there were “absolutely no plans” to issue vaccine passports that could allow people who had been immunised to travel or enjoy more freedom from the restrictions.

First, he said, the vaccines protect against people getting ill but nobody knows whether they prevent transmission. “Second, it will be discriminatory because they’ll be those who, for a number of reasons may not be able to be vaccinated or choose not to,” he told the committee.

He agreed with Pangalos, who asked for vaccine production workers to be given priority immunisation because of the urgency of their work.

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Coronavirus

Coronavirus in the UK: when will the worst of this be over?

What data from the first wave suggests about how much longer deaths and hospital admissions may continue to rise

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A patient is taken from an ambulance by staff at the Royal Free hospital in London earlier this week. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images
A patient is taken from an ambulance by staff at the Royal Free hospital in London earlier this week. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

[Niamh McIntyre](#)

[@niamh_mcintyre](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 05.45 EST

The UK is on course for record hospital admissions and deaths in the coming weeks, as coronavirus cases hit an all-time high following the loosening of restrictions in December and the rapid spread of the new variant.

On Monday, the chief medical officer for England, Chris Whitty, warned that the country was [approaching the worst weeks](#) of the pandemic. Data from the first wave of Covid-19 and statistical modelling may give us some indication of just how much longer deaths and hospital admissions could continue to rise.

Have we reached a peak for new cases?

When the UK's first lockdown was announced on 23 March, the seven day-average figure for new cases of Covid-19 continued to rise for a further 16 days. However, in the first wave, testing was severely limited so the figures from that period will not reflect the true prevalence of the virus. We may also follow a different trajectory this time due to the highly transmissible nature of the new variant.

According to seven-day average figures for the UK, new cases of Covid-19 have already begun to decline.

Nigel Marriott, a fellow of the Royal Statistical Society, said his modelling showed the latest wave may have peaked in some parts of south-east England, but that cases might continue to rise for another two weeks elsewhere.

“This new variant of Covid-19 first appeared in [the Medway area in Kent](#) and spread very rapidly,” he said. “During the second lockdown in November, the number of cases and the proportion of positive tests were still going up, unlike other areas of the country, which is what prompted the investigation that discovered the new variant.

“But now the percentage of positive tests in the Thames Gateway area – north Kent, east London and south Essex – is falling a bit, and the moving average of new cases seems to be flattening out, though I’d like a couple more days to confirm that. The rest of the country may take another couple of weeks until they reach a turning point.”

When are we likely to see hospital admissions peak?

After the first lockdown was announced, new hospital admissions for Covid-19 continued to climb until they reached a peak about two weeks later, on 7 April, when the seven-day average figure reached 3,116.

The [third national lockdown](#) in England was announced on 4 January. If hospital admissions were to follow a similar trend in this wave of the pandemic, we would be likely to see new admissions continue to increase into the third week of January.

However, the NHS Providers chief executive, Chris Hopson, said on Tuesday it was “pretty clear” the Covid-19 infection rate was not going to go down as quickly as it did during the first wave because of the new strain, and so peak demand on hospitals might not be reached until “early to mid-February”.

The latest figures show the seven-day average for hospital admissions is at 3,845, exceeding the first wave peak.

Are we likely to have a higher number of deaths in the coming weeks than we saw in the first wave?

Deaths will continue to rise after hospital admissions level off, due to the time between symptom onset and death. In the first wave, the daily death toll, based on the Office for National Statistics death certificates, continued to rise after new admissions had peaked, with the seven-day average figure peaking at 1,340 on 13 April.

Marriott said he expected deaths to peak at some time in February. He said: “I would expect to see a five-week lag between cases and deaths, so if cases peak now we’ll see deaths peak in about five weeks’ time.”

“How high will that peak be? The current doubling rates for deaths are around 30 days so that could mean peak daily deaths about double where we are today. Obviously, there is a lot of uncertainty but it does look likely that the peak will be worse than the first wave.”

- This article was amended on 15 January 2021 to clarify that case numbers, though not deaths or hospital admissions, had begun to decline at the time of publication.
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'Colonialism had never really ended': my life in the shadow of Cecil Rhodes

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Tim Rice

Interview

Tim Rice: 'Evita was a bonkers idea'

[Rob Walker](#)

Dynamic duo ... Tim Rice, right, and Andrew Lloyd Webber in 1970.

Photograph: Hulton Deutsch/Corbis via Getty Images

Dynamic duo ... Tim Rice, right, and Andrew Lloyd Webber in 1970.

Photograph: Hulton Deutsch/Corbis via Getty Images

As the great songwriter prepares to take Jesus Christ Superstar on a 50th birthday tour, he talks about penning hits, his idea for a new musical – and drinking from Lloyd Webber's Georgian wine glasses

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

[Tim Rice](#) had a hunch the Oscar was in the bag. After all, he and Elton John had been responsible for three of the five nominations in the best song category. But, as he walked on stage that night in 1995, after Can You Feel the Love Tonight from The Lion King won, the tall, slightly awkward-looking English lyricist had no idea what he was going to say. So he drew a breath then decided, on a whim, to thank his childhood hero, [Denis Compton](#). No one in the Hollywood audience had heard of the England and Middlesex cricketing all-rounder and his words were greeted with a bemused silence.

Rice laughs at the memory and puts on a throaty American drawl to recount the scene back stage when reporters swarmed. “What movies was this guy Compton in?” “Oh, I said, he was in The Final Test.” “But what part did he play?” “Well, he played Denis Compton – and frankly, I thought he captured the character very well.”

He chortles away, still roguish at 76 and ever the raconteur. But then Rice is at his best telling stories. They’re the key to his craft. “A good story always inspires good words,” he says. And, over the past six decades, Rice has written some very good words for the biggest names in music, from Freddie Mercury to Madonna. Mention his name, though, and people are likely to think of him as part of a duo alongside – or even eclipsed by – [Andrew Lloyd Webber](#). Yet as a lyricist, Rice has won three Oscars, two more than Lloyd Webber.



Feel the love ... with Elton John at the Oscars in 1995. Photograph: Dan Groshong/AFP/Getty Images

Why isn't he more of a national treasure? "I really don't like people saying everything is wonderful," Rice says, when I suggest that he may be a bit too, well, self-effacing for someone with three Academy awards. "I don't want to completely put myself down – because there's the frightening possibility that people might agree." Is there anything he will say? "I think I'm quite good at judging my material, partly because it's only half mine in most cases."

He's speaking to me from his six-acre country home near Henley-on-Thames in Oxfordshire, a leafy retreat he moved to three years ago. Outside, the afternoon light's fading and his dog is impatient for a walk. Rice has spent the day organising all the songs he's ever written – putting his house in order "in case I get hit by a bus next week". He's been struck by how many never appeared in films or shows: 145 in all. Most are pretty average, he says, particularly the early ones. "It's made me realise just how much a show helps a song."

I like a perfect rhyme. I don't like time and mine, or girl and world

None more so than the hit musical Evita. A "bonkers" idea, he says, that came to him after hearing a radio programme about Eva Perón, the glamorous wife of Juan Perón, three times president of Argentina. The show made him drop everything and jump on a plane to Buenos Aires to do some research. "The best stuff I've written is when I have characters and I know what situation they're in – and I think, 'What would I say in that situation?'"

Which is exactly how Don't Cry For Me Argentina, possibly his most famous song, came about. "Had the tune been given to me by Andrew and he'd said, 'Let's make this a hit song for somebody', I'd have written a pretty average lyric. But because it was being seen in a show – with this lady dressed to the nines, speaking to her working-class voters, the people that she claimed to represent – I was able to write a different lyric that actually worked."

'It hadn't crossed my mind that going to a musical was something I would enjoy' ... the film adaptation of Evita, starring Madonna. Photograph:

Moviestore Collection/Rex

The powerful, lyrical result – “The truth is I never left you / All through my wild days / My mad existence / I kept my promise / Don’t keep your distance” – went to No 1 in the UK. But it wasn’t written to be a hit song, says Rice, it was written as a political speech, to be delivered to the people by Eva at a window. “I’m old-fashioned,” he says, when asked how he crafted the words. “I like a perfect rhyme. I don’t like time and mine, or girl and world.”

It wasn’t always that way. As a kid growing up in Buckinghamshire, Rice had no interest in rhyming couplets, much less musicals. He wanted to be a rock star. After leaving boarding school, he studied law because that’s what he felt his parents wanted, but he hated it. “I failed my exams three times,” he says, adding that he’d never even been to a show before, only panto. “It hadn’t crossed my mind that going to a musical was something I would enjoy.”

His life changed, he says, the day he met a 17-year-old called [Andrew Lloyd Webber](#). He remembers it like yesterday: it was April 1965, at Lloyd Webber’s family home, a flat in South Kensington, London. “Andrew spent money on things like Georgian wine glasses and paintings and classical records, which was extraordinary to me.”

Watch a song from Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat

The two had been brought together by an agent because Lloyd Webber was looking for someone to put words to his melodies. “I breezed in and fitted the bill,” says Rice. “Our differences helped us. Also, my comparative ignorance about musical theatre helped because I wasn’t so concerned about doing what you ‘ought’ to do.” Hence, perhaps, their first collaboration, Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, written initially as a show for a school choir in London featuring an Elvis impersonator, who Rice played in that first production.

“We wrote something funny,” says Rice, “with a nice long list of colours. You can see why the kids liked it.” In fact, that big number, Joseph’s Coat, wasn’t entirely written by Rice. “I just ended it with red and yellow and green and brown.” But then the kids added another 20 colours of their own. “It just worked – and it’s now one of the most popular songs in the show. People brag that they can recite all the colours.” The song has even been immortalised in a Simpsons episode.

The musical taught Rice a valuable lesson. “Make your first show funny,” he says. “Save the angst for later.” It would take five years for the first [West End](#) production of Joseph to open, an event made possible only by the success of the duo’s next biblical collaboration, Jesus Christ Superstar, a kitsch, flamboyant rock opera about the final week of Christ’s life. It catapulted the two into the big time.

‘It was ahead of its time’ ... the 1973 film of Jesus Christ Superstar.
Photograph: Allstar/Universal Pictures

This year sees the 50th anniversary of the show’s opening night. To mark this, the original double album is being rereleased, with interviews, outtakes, photographs and a new book. Covid-permitting, the musical will go on tour, too. Rice is keen to get the original cast – those who are still alive, that is.

“It was ahead of its time,” he says. “I don’t think anybody had put a heavy rock band and an orchestra on [Broadway](#) at the same time.” It was originally written as a studio album and, controversially, Rice gave sympathetic voices to Judas

Iscariot and King Herod. The record was even banned – briefly – by the BBC for being sacrilegious. “No one on the radio played it,” he recalls.

I’ve written with some of the greatest. I’m quite happy with my lot

But it fared better in America, reaching No 1 in 1971, and a Broadway opening followed. “When we arrived in New York, we were treated like Led Zeppelin. It was amazing, it was weird.” He switches to his American accent again: “We’ve got 24 interviews coming up, guys. We’re gonna do a big presentation on Fifth Avenue. Then we’re gonna go to LA and Toronto and Chicago.”

Despite their huge success, Rice and Lloyd Webber split in the 80s. While the composer was determined to make more mainstream musicals, Rice was drawn to the unconventional. He worked with Abba’s Benny and Björn on *Chess*, a musical about the rivalry between two grandmasters, one American, one Russian. Later came a stint in Hollywood, working with [Elton John](#) and the composer Alan Menken, writing songs for the Disney films *The Lion King* and *Aladdin*.

Elton was a “refreshing change” because he insisted on the lyrics being written before the music. “Initially, I was daunted. I asked Elton if he had something – *anything* – I could use. But he said no, he wanted the words first. That’s just how Elton did things.” He pauses. “In the end, I think it helped me.”

Of all the many people he collaborated with, Rice has a soft spot for Freddie Mercury. They got together thanks to the original *Evita*, Elaine Paige, who had made an album of Queen covers. “Freddie loved it,” says Rice. “And through that I got to know him. And out of the blue, he invited me to write a couple of songs for his *Barcelona* album with Montserrat Caballé.”



‘He let it all out on stage’ ... Freddie Mercury And Montserrat Caballe.
Photograph: FG/Bauer-Griffin/Getty Images

He got to see a different side to the flamboyant Queen frontman, who died in 1991. “I saw Freddie more often quiet than going berserk. He had a very calm speaking voice. He let it all out on stage. I think we might have done something in theatre together, or opera even, had Freddie lived. It was so tragic.”

Rice certainly has no shortage of memories and these days, perhaps because of Covid, he seems anxious to tie up loose ends. “Getting old is bit of a drag,” he says. In part, that’s why he’s been recording his thoughts in a weekly podcast, Get Onto My Cloud, an idea that came from a cricketer friend. It’s a sort of audio autobiography, he says, a way of setting the record straight on a few things. “I haven’t a clue if people are listening,” he says, “but I’m enjoying it.”

Is there anyone he would still like to work with? “There’s no one, really. I’ve written with some of the greatest. I’m quite happy with my lot.” But he does have one idea up his sleeve. Of his 145 unused songs, Rice thinks he could take

the best 15 and turn them into a show. “I’ve got the score,” he says. “I just need a story.”

- [Get Onto My Cloud is available on the Broadway Podcast Network](#) and all major platforms. Jesus Christ Superstar, the double album, will be rereleased at Easter.
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Journeys of hope: what will migration routes into Europe look like in 2021?

Migrants from Eritrea, Egypt, Syria and Sudan cross the Mediterranean after fleeing Libya. Photograph: Joan Mateu/AP

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[Black lives](#)[Fashion](#)

'I came up a black staircase': how Dapper Dan went from fashion industry pariah to Gucci god

Man about town: Dapper Dan on 125th Street in New York City Photograph: Andre D Wagner/New York Times/Redux/eyevine

Man about town: Dapper Dan on 125th Street in New York City Photograph: Andre D Wagner/New York Times/Redux/eyevine

In the 1980s, his Harlem store attracted famous athletes and musicians. Then the luxury brands got him shut down. Now, at 76, he's more successful than ever – and still on his own terms



[Yomi Adegoke](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

It was a mentor on the gambling circuit in Harlem, New York, who gave Daniel Day the moniker that would make him famous. Day was just 13, but had revealed himself to be not only a better craps player than his guide, who was the original Dapper Dan, but also a better dresser. So it came to be that Day was christened “the new Dapper Dan”.

It wouldn’t be until decades later that Day would truly [make his name](#). Dapper Dan’s Boutique, the legendary Harlem couturier he opened in 1982, kitted out local gamblers and gangsters, then later hip-hop stars and athletes such as Mike Tyson, Bobby Brown and Salt-N-Pepa. His custom pieces repurposed logos from the fashion houses that had overlooked black clientele. A pioneer in luxury streetwear, Day screenprinted the monograms of Gucci, Louis Vuitton, MCM and Fendi on to premium leathers to create silhouettes synonymous with early hip-hop style: tracksuits, bomber jackets, baseball and kufi caps. In the

process he became a pariah of the fashion industry – and to this day, now aged 76, still one of its great influencers.

Day was born into poverty in East Harlem in 1944. He remembers when horse-drawn carriages lined the streets of Manhattan. His parents arrived during the Great Migration, which saw millions of African Americans flee the more overtly racist south in the early 20th century. “Even though we had a class that was capable of moving out [of Harlem], segregation wouldn’t allow that,” he says. “That’s why the Harlem renaissance – all these dynamic writers and poets – they were there because they had to be there.”

His mother was a homemaker and his father worked three jobs to make ends meet. Day and his three brothers and three sisters would go down with holes in their shoes to the nearby Harlem river to build models from the mud because they couldn’t afford toys. “We was very, very poor,” he says. “To compare it to anything you see today, it was like the favelas or Soweto.”

Shoe-shining was Day’s first adolescent “hustle”, quickly followed by gambling. “First thing that I learned in life was about the gospel,” he says. “The second was gambling.” He acquired the basics from his uncle, “Fishman Eddie”, who was a professional. But Day was also a keen reader and soon began devouring books on “percentages, law of probability and manipulation and sleight of hand”, and became, in his words, “very proficient at it”. At 13, he was earning thousands of dollars a day.

By high school, Day and one of his brothers had started using heroin – and in his early 20s, he was arrested for dealing drugs. He notes in his 2019 memoir, [Dapper Dan: Made in Harlem](#), that had he been jailed today instead of in the late 60s, before harsh, discriminatory drug laws were implemented, he might have been imprisoned for a lifetime. Instead, he got one month and used prison as an opportunity to get clean, going cold turkey. “I was locked up with an older guy from my neighbourhood, Vic,” says Day. “And Vic says: ‘Listen, you know what you feel now? Well, it’s never getting worse than that.’ I learned that I could conquer these things.”



Dapper Dan in 2018. Photograph: MediaPunch Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

When Day left prison he began writing essays on Pan-Africanism in the late-60s progressive Harlem publication [Forty Acres and a Mule](#). His mother was a Garveyite – an advocate for the black separatist movement led by the Jamaican activist Marcus Garvey. His father, who moved to Harlem alone in 1910 aged 12, was born just 35 years after the Emancipation Proclamation. His paternal grandfather was born a slave and later freed. “I developed a consciousness along those lines without really realising it, because I was constantly listening to my mom and dad talking about the trials and tribulations associated with being black,” he says.

His writing led to him touring Kenya, Uganda, Ethiopia, Egypt and Tanzania in 1968, as part of a programme sponsored by Columbia University and the civil rights organisation the National Urban League. Six years after his initial visit, he went back to Africa to see the famed Muhammad Ali v George Foreman “Rumble in the Jungle” fight in Kinshasa in what was then Zaire but is now the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The fight was postponed because Foreman

had been injured while training, so Day travelled to Lagos, Nigeria and Monrovia in Liberia. There, he befriended a tailor who made him a suit from vivid local fabrics.

This west-African take on American style would serve as the primordial soup for his “Africanisation” of the designs of high-end European fashion houses. Day never made it to the boxing match – he spent all his money on more custom pieces and took a flight home. But what he had found was his calling. He returned to New York and became a clothier.

Once you've been embraced by white people, people look at you differently, right?

At first, for a few years, Day sold stolen designer goods out of the trunk of his car. When he set up his first boutique on 125th Street in Harlem in 1982, he kept it open 24 hours a day to cater to the schedules of his clientele: drug kingpins who had got rich on the crack cocaine boom, gangsters, professional boxers and rappers. At first, the boutique sold furs. But when the girlfriend of a drug dealer came in with a [Louis Vuitton](#) purse, and Day saw the faces in the store all turn to look at it, he realised that the power of fashion went beyond aesthetics. He went to his local library to study the origins of the Gucci and Fendi logos and their evolution from mere hallmarks to status symbols. He understood what wearing a designer logo meant to his customers and how it made them feel.

The first piece Day made was a jacket, which he trimmed with logo-printed canvas garment bags he had purchased from [Gucci](#). The jacket was a hit after a client wore it to a party and everyone wanted to know where it came from, but Day met hurdles from the outset. Like his customers, he too was alienated by the overwhelmingly white fashion industry. Recalling his first trip to Louis Vuitton on Fifth Avenue, he describes the whole shop tensing up when he walked in. On other occasions, he was prohibited from buying goods from the stores. But he was undeterred; fashion, too, was a hustle.



One of Dapper Dan's jackets on show at a design exhibition at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 2017. Photograph: ZUMA Press, Inc/Alamy

Back then, the only items luxury fashion houses were producing with all-over logos were leather goods and accessories, so Day taught himself fabric and leather printing techniques to create his own textiles featuring the iconography of Louis Vuitton, Gucci and MCM. “Fortunately, I had been to Africa and knew that I could make the same things that [luxury fashion houses] rejected me for – and to make it better.”

Day's offerings soon became preferable to the real thing. His bold prints were synonymous with the bombastic style and braggadocio that was beginning to typify hip-hop – and Day was creating designs for the cream of that scene: Big Daddy Kane, Eric B and Rakim, Run DMC, LL Cool J, Slick Rick. In the same way that sampling was rife in the music, so it was in hip-hop fashion: customised T-shirts and jackets were staples. Day's ostentatious creations didn't emulate, but rather amped up the luxury of existing labels, and he took to referring to them as “knock-ups” as opposed to “knock-offs”, saying he simply

“blackenised” the brands. He cites the cash-poor, [snappily dressed sapeurs of Congo](#), who adopted and adapted the fashion of French colonisers, donning three-piece designer suits and crocodile shoes despite their destitution. “That culture – that’s what happened to me,” Day says. “That’s why you saw Cadillacs pulling up to a dilapidated building in Harlem.”

Alongside race, class played a big part in how Day’s work was received. Middle-class black people showed the same level of disdain towards him as the white-dominated fashion houses or white Americans. “It took until last year for Ebony magazine to feature me,” he says. “Once you’ve been embraced by white people, people look at you differently, right?” Last year, he was named as one of Time magazine’s 100 Most Influential People.

Dapper Dan pictured in the aftermath of a street brawl between Mike Tyson and Mitch Green that took place outside his shop in 1988. Photograph: New York Daily News/Getty Images

Back in the 80s and 90s, even those of Day's customers who might have been willing to brave the hostile environments of New York's high-end fashion stores still struggled with finding suitable pieces. Ready-to-wear designer fashion was still relatively new (Louis Vuitton, for example, did not do a full collection until 1998) and the European sizing didn't fit the broader build of the rappers and athletes who made up Day's customer base. His designs catered to their specific needs: bullet-proof parkas for drug kingpins or jackets for gangsters that were fitted with extra-deep pockets to conceal weapons. "Fashion designers create from their mind, like poets and writers," Day explains. "I feel more like a doctor – I have to make the patient feel good."

Day's growing success was a double-edged sword. By the late 80s, the boutique was being regularly raided by the police. In 1988, Day made national headlines when Mike Tyson and fellow boxer Mitch Green were photographed fighting outside the boutique, Tyson wearing one of Day's "Fendi" jackets. Another raid followed – and the authorities seized not only equipment, but material and photos, which served as the only existing records of the pieces he made. In recent years, Day and his son – and brand manager – Jelani have begun trying to catalogue his surviving pieces. "Seems like at least once a week someone is popping up with an original Dapper Dan," he says, laughing. "I know one guy's got a collection I wish I could get, but he swears he's not giving it up."

There were more raids, and more close calls. When Day witnessed a drug dealer being kidnapped in his store, he was shot in the back and nearly died. In 1992, after a successful trademark infringement case from Fendi, Dapper Dan's shut for good.

Seems like at least once a week someone is popping up with an original Dapper Dan

Day returned to selling on the streets, faux Chanel T-shirts to private customers. In the late 90s, he set up a smaller-scale, more discreet operation in the home he shared with his wife and their two kids. "I had to go back to taking the subway, bringing fabric uptown on the train," he says. "I wasn't gonna fall victim to the worst slave master ever – the ego. You don't fall victim to that and you've made it." He was still exiled by the mainstream, but flourished on the fringes as ever. In 1999, he began outfitting the undefeated boxer Floyd Mayweather Jr. His legacy was frequently referenced in rap lyrics by Jay-Z, Pusha T, Lil Wayne and Tyler, the Creator among others.

In 2017 came a turnaround in Day's fortunes. When Gucci put a puff-sleeved mink bomber jacket emblazoned with the double G monogram down the catwalk, the piece's similarity to a Dapper Dan jacket made for the Olympian track star Diane Dixon in 1989 [was picked up on by social media users](#). The anger was palpable: Day's business had been shut down after European luxury brands came after him for copyright infringement, only for one of those same luxury brands now to copy his work, uncredited. At the time, Gucci said the jacket was a "homage" to Day's work.

And then something unprecedented happened: a collaboration. Gucci hired Day to design a capsule collection, and in 2018 it sponsored a new appointment-only atelier in Harlem in tribute [to his original boutique](#). To him, it is a fitting remedy. "Cultural appropriation and cultural exchange breaks down to one thing: economics," he says. "An exchange involves somebody getting something, for whatever it is they have. Appropriation means you ain't getting nothing."

Dapper Dan (right) at a Gucci show at Milan fashion week in 2019 with (from left) Gucci Mane, Keyshia Ka'oir, Jared Leto and Jodie Turner-Smith.
Photograph: Victor Boyko/Getty Images for Gucci

While the collaboration has been largely celebrated, some have remained critical. “I describe what I did as coming up a black staircase, as opposed to what Naomi Campbell or [Vogue editor] André Leon Talley did, which was come up a white staircase,” he says. “I didn’t have any contact with the fashion industry until I got this partnership with Gucci. I didn’t even have any white friends or associates until four years ago.” He rubbishes cynicism about collaborating with brands as “Jim Crow economics”. “When you talk to people and they’re like: ‘We can do it ourselves. We had a black Wall Street’, I say: ‘We had a black Wall Street because we wasn’t allowed on [the other] Wall Street … We had no alternative but to sell to ourselves.’”

[Homage or copy? Why fashion \(especially Gucci\) loves Dapper Dan](#)
[Read more](#)

The racist belief that black people devalue luxury brands is gradually changing. The rapper Nicki Minaj launched [a capsule line with Fendi last year](#) and after years of ignoring him, Gucci employed the rapper Gucci Mane to [front a campaign](#). But fashion’s problem with race remains, as recent scandals can show. In 2018, a display of tchotchkies in the windows of a New York Prada boutique [included one that looked like a Golliwog](#). When Gucci was forced to [withdraw a balaclava polo neck jumper from its shops in 2019, after it was said to resemble blackface](#), Day summoned the company’s president and CEO, Marco Bizzarri, for a meeting in Harlem to hold the brand accountable. Luxury labels, he says, want fast access to black culture, often without truly trying to understand the meaning or history behind it.

“Even me, I feel corny sometimes because the culture is moving so fast,” he says. “Black American culture is so popular right now that they look for anything they can use, without studying the significance of what it is to use them.”

Day still lives in Harlem, of course; some of his new customers are second- and third-generation Dapper Dan devotees. The rapper ASAP Ferg, real name Darold Ferguson Jr, was mentored by Day, and his father, Darold Sr, worked at the boutique in its heyday.

Well into his eighth decade, Day is at ease with change, still reinventing himself. A much overdue biopic [is in development at Sony](#), which he will executive produce. He has every intention of continuing to experiment with new hustles. “I don’t give a damn about failure,” he smiles. “I was born part of failure. We are the phoenix – all of us here in America, every black man, woman and child are part of the phoenix, still rising from those ashes. All my life is about getting knocked down and getting back up. I don’t care; it’s fun!”

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[The US politics sketch](#)
[Trump impeachment \(2021\)](#)

Second impeachment puts Trump in first place among lords of misrule

A presidency of fear, rage and division came to an appropriate climax in the House of Representatives but his loyalists stay true to his lies

- [US politics – follow live](#)

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Donald Trump, [Donald Trump](#) (so good they impeached him twice).

It was always going to end this way. A presidency centered on fear, rage and division is climaxing in a Grand Guignol of three acts at the US Capitol in Washington: last Wednesday’s insurrection, this Wednesday’s impeachment, next Wednesday’s inauguration.

As Barack Obama noted after act one, “we’d be kidding ourselves if we treated it as a total surprise”.

What remains uncertain is whether this is the moment that the fever breaks and the nation gets back on track or merely a harbinger of further polarisation, violence and decline.

Liz Cheney and nine other [Republicans](#) who joined Democrats in a 232-197 bipartisan vote to impeach Trump did not provide a comprehensive answer to that question. Yes, it was 10 more than the first impeachment just over a year ago and, yes, there are cracks in the dam. But it has not yet burst.

And certainly on this Wednesday, with its besieged capital being prised from the grasp of a would-be autocrat, America resembled the sort of fragile state that it used to think it was in the business of rescuing and rebuilding.

Barriers, checkpoints and a ring of steel had been erected on Capitol Hill. Members of the national guard, with masks, guns and military garb, could be

seen sleeping on hard floors in the hallways of the Capitol. The last time troops were quartered here was during the American civil war, there were more of them than in Afghanistan or Iraq today.

Inside the chamber, where members wore masks under strict new coronavirus rules, the historic day began with a prayer from R Adm Margaret Grun Kibben, the House chaplain. She noted that last week “we found ourselves seizing the scales of justice from the jaws of mobocracy”.

But it did not take long for partisanship to bare its teeth. Although this process has been much speedier than Impeachment One, which sanctioned Trump for pressuring Ukraine for political favours, there were again angry speeches from both sides.

The House of Representatives votes to impeach Donald Trump for the second time in little over a year. Photograph: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Democrats came to bury Caesar, not to praise him. The House speaker, Nancy Pelosi, said: “The president of the United States incited this insurrection, this armed rebellion, against our common country. He must go. He is a clear and present danger to the nation that we all love.”

Steny Hoyer, the House majority leader, followed up: “Donald Trump has constructed a glass palace of lies, fearmongering and sedition. Last Wednesday, on January 6th, the nation and the world watched it shatter to pieces.”

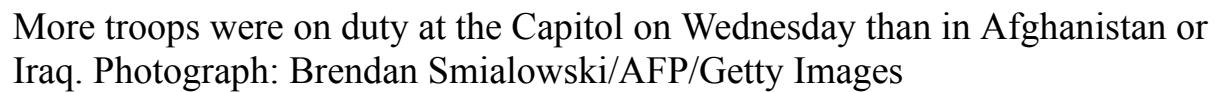
Case closed? No, this is still Trump’s Republican party. They played the cards of cancel culture, national healing and whataboutism and somehow they kept straight faces.

The Ohio congressman Jim Jordan, regarded as a loyal Trump attack dog, countered: “Democrats are going to impeach the president for a second time one week – one week – before he leaves office. Why? Why? Politics, and the fact that they want to cancel the president.”

Andy Biggs, another Trump loyalist, warned: “Yours will be a pyrrhic victory for instead of stopping the Trump train, his movement will grow stronger, for you will have made him a martyr.”

And Matt Gaetz of Florida complained: “It seems to me impeachment is an itch that doesn’t go away with just one scratch.” He went on to draw a false equivalence with last summer’s mostly peaceful Black Lives Matter protests, accusing Trump’s foes of lighting “actual flames, actual fires”. Democrats yelled objections.

What was most shocking, perhaps, was not that 10 conservative Republicans discovered a spine after three years and 11 months of the Trump presidency, but that nearly 200 were still willing to go down with the ship and perpetuate his big lie about election fraud. Their masters are not party leaders but the cult-like “Maga nation” of grassroots Trump fans and rightwing media.



More troops were on duty at the Capitol on Wednesday than in Afghanistan or Iraq. Photograph: Brendan Smialowski/AFP/Getty Images

Leader Kevin McCarthy summed up the soul tormenting conflict, admitting that Trump “bears responsibility” for the mob violence yet insisting: “A vote to impeach will further divide the nation. A vote to impeach will further fan the flames of partisan division.”

Some observers might find this pretty rich from the party of voter suppression, border wall and “Lock her up!” In essence, their argument was we can’t impeach him because it would upset the domestic terrorists who stormed the Capitol eager to hang his vice-president, Mike Pence.

Cori Bush, a new Democratic member, made the point for justice and accountability more pithily than most. “We have a mandate to legislate in defense of Black lives. The first step in that process is to root out white supremacy starting with impeaching the white supremacist-in-chief.” (She

tweeted later: “What does it mean when they boo the Black congresswoman denouncing white supremacy?”)

Indeed, the putsch against the US government was hardly unexpected in a country led by a man with a peculiar penchant for Confederate statues. Congressman Cedric Richmond, on his way to joining the Biden administration, referred to “some of my colleagues, some of whom may well be co-conspirators”, before concluding: “Simply put, we told you so. Richmond out.”

But unlike the last impeachment circus, this time there was an eerie silence in the digital universe. Trump may be more aggrieved by having his favourite toy, Twitter, taken away than now owning half the presidential impeachments in history; Andrew Johnson and Bill Clinton are mere also rans.

But his fate in a Senate trial, whenever it happens, is less certain than first time around and will tell much about the future of the Republican party and America. As Oscar Wilde almost said, to lose one impeachment vote may be regarded as a misfortune; to lose both looks like you’re in the wrong job.

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Can't Even by Anne Helen Petersen review – in defence of millennials

The system is at fault, not individuals ... a study of burnout makes clear why it's wrong to portray millennials as flimsy, fickle or lazy

The rest is noise ... ‘Social media feels compulsory’. Photograph: Tony Tallec/Alamy

The rest is noise ... ‘Social media feels compulsory’. Photograph: Tony Tallec/Alamy

[Sian Cain](#)

[@siancain](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.30 EST

Sometimes, while in the supermarket, Anne Helen Petersen likes to test herself: she purposefully stands in the biggest checkout queue, to observe how long she can live in her own head without distraction and frustration. “I’m addicted to stimulation,” she admits in *Can’t Even*, her meticulously researched study of burnout among millennials. “I’ve forgotten not just how to wait, but even how to let my mind wander and play.” Some readers may see this as a horrifying indictment of modern life, but to others, it will be completely understandable. When was the last time you simply stood in silence, rather than putting on a podcast or scrolling endlessly through Instagram or responding to an email or notification?

Burnout is a symptom of feeling overworked and undervalued, resulting in what Petersen calls “alienation from the self, and from desire”. Some might recognise it in themselves: an underlying anxiety, an inability to relax, a general fuzziness in the brain. Petersen’s book, born from a [BuzzFeed essay](#) that went viral in 2019, has a slightly misleading subtitle: “How Millennials Became the Burnout Generation”. It is really focused on American millennials, and doesn’t argue that only those born between 1981 and 1996 suffer burnout. Rather, millennials are the generation to bear the brunt of economic, social and political decisions made by their parents and grandparents, or generation X and the baby boomers; everyone is feeling the strain.

Petersen is at her best when drawing a line through history, showing how previous generations thrived within a framework of protections in the workplace and wider society, then dismantled them all while pushing the myth of the self-made man: hard work means success. The older generations didn’t spoil us, Petersen writes, “so much as destroy the likelihood of our ever obtaining what they had promised all that hard work was for”.

The sections on leisure and social media, and why millennials can feel exhausted by rest, are astutely observed. In the 1980s and 90s, their parents steered them towards “concerted cultivation” – extracurricular “enrichment” activities such as tennis, debating and singing in choirs – that would hopefully get them into prestigious schools, which would later land them white-collar work, then success, stability and happiness. Regardless of whether or not they went to Harvard, many millennial children developed a warped attitude towards leisure, as play became work and work became constant.

American millennials graduated into the worst job market in 80 years, after the financial crisis, while boomers and generation X continued to hold most of the power, first as their parents and teachers, now as their policymakers and bosses. The equation they had internalised at home and in schools (hard work equals success) meant that millennials settled for unpaid internships, or what Petersen calls “shitty” work, for corporations whose profits are now contingent on their workers suffering – and therefore devalued their own work even more. As it stands, millennials will be the first generation since the Great Depression to be worse off than their parents. Yet, frequently characterised in the media as fickle and lazy, they have internalised their precarity as a personal failure, rather than recognising that the problem is capitalism. It is what Petersen calls the “millennial way”: “If the system is rigged against you, just try harder.”

Petersen calls Covid-19 ‘the great clarifier’: parenting had felt exhausting and impossible, now it’s even more so

Social media is “uniquely aggravating”; the more it feels compulsory – or like work – the more social media becomes “frustratingly unrestorative”. Similarly, the 24-hour news cycle has created a continual sense of needing to “catch up” on both serious news and inane chatter, which are afforded the same significance; a couple of weeks ago, it seemed that the Georgia runoff elections and “Bean Dad” were equally important, given the noise around both. “We’re desperately, continuously confused,” Petersen writes, “and each click promises something approximating meaning.” Her interviewees, who come from a variety of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, report debilitating anxiety when they are not working, or posting, or reading news – simply, not doing anything.

For many, myself included, Petersen’s book will lead to excoriating self-reflection. I am a millennial child of gen X parents and boomer grandparents, all of whom worry that I will not be better off than they are. I found my last holiday exhausting because I felt nervous without tasks; I did attend university and saddle myself with debt because I assumed it was necessary for my success; I am still always anxious about money, years after making myself destitute as an intern; for me, too, checking email has become like a nervous tic – I’ll even do it while brushing my teeth or preparing for sleep.

Petersen has added a foreword acknowledging the impact of the pandemic, calling Covid-19 “the great clarifier”. Work was “shitty and precarious before;

now it's *more* shitty and precarious. Parenting felt exhausting and impossible; now it's *more* exhausting and impossible. Same for the feeling that work never ends, that the news cycle suffocates our inner lives, and that we're too tired to access anything resembling true leisure or rest." She predicts the pandemic will not change anything about millennial burnout, but make it even "more ingrained in our generational identity": "Millennials don't stand a chance ... but the same dire prediction holds true for large swaths of gen X and boomers, and will only get worse for gen Z. The overarching clarity offered by this pandemic is that it's not any single generation that's broken, or fucked, or failed. It's the system itself."

Petersen is reluctant to recommend actions to the reader – other books have, she says, and they were useless. "Actual substantive change has to come from the public sector – and we must vote en masse to elect politicians who will agitate for it tirelessly," she argues. But who are they? And what of all the other countries where voter turnouts are higher, even compulsory, where millennials remain overworked, overeducated and still largely without power?

Petersen says she has tried to expand beyond the common understanding of both millennials and burnout; namely, the experiences of white, middle-class people. But her concerns are overwhelmingly American. Yes, an Uber driver with three jobs is likely to feel precarious the world over – but not all Uber drivers will be worrying about healthcare or student debt in the way many Americans do. The epilogue contains some fascinating details on Japan, where they have a word, *karoshi*, for literally dying from burnout, but it is only really there to provide contrast. There are some perceptive observations here, but much of the book is not so much about millennials as being American. Regardless, *Can't Even* is extremely enlightening – I can only hope that millennials, and Americans, won't be the only ones to read it.

- *Can't Even* is published by Vintage (RRP £14.99). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply.

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[The Great British art tour](#)[Art](#)

The Great British Art Tour: a blood-tinged scene of merciless revenge

With public art collections closed, we are bringing the art to you, exploring highlights and hidden gems from across the country in partnership with Art UK. Today's pick: Worcester City Museum's Clytemnestra

Implacable and vengeful ... Clytemnestra by John Collier. Photograph:
Worcester City Museums

Implacable and vengeful ... Clytemnestra by John Collier. Photograph:
Worcester City Museums

Kate Banner, curatorial and exhibitions assistant, Museums Worcestershire
Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

[Worcester City Museums' Clytemnestra portrait](#) by the pre-Raphaelite painter John Collier illuminates one of the most enduring of the Greek myths. In order to appease the goddess Artemis and secure favourable passage as he embarked on his Trojan expedition, Agamemnon, king of Mycenae, sacrifices his daughter Iphigenia.

Her grief-stricken mother Clytemnestra was portrayed by Greek tragedians – and by artists for centuries afterwards – as implacable and vengeful, and Collier captures her in the moments following her murder of her husband.

Clytemnestra by John Collier, c.1914.

She stands as if in a pregnant moment of fading yet powerful emotion, the only sign of movement the trail of blood leading the viewer's eye off-stage to the scene of her crime. (She stabbed her husband as he was taking a bath.) The emotion of Collier's subject is an ironic parallel to the wild and unpitying wrath of Artemis, the goddess of the hunt to whom Clytemnestra's daughter was sacrificed, and also captures something of the goddess's physicality. Her

unclothed chest reminds us of her motherhood and the nature of her vengeance. It also serves as a portent of Clytemnestra's vulnerability, as she is herself murdered years later by her son Orestes.

At nearly two and a half metres in height, the painting is too large to navigate some of the doorways in Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum. And so, appropriate to the conflicting aspects of her character, Clytemnestra must first be removed from her frame and the two elements transported separately whenever she is moved.

It's likely that the painting, which was gifted to Worcester in 1939, was completed during the first year of the first world war, giving its themes of violence and justice added poignancy.

- You can see more art from Worcester City Museums on [Art UK here](#), and find out more on the [museums' website](#).
- This series is created in collaboration with [Art UK](#), which brings the nation's art together on one digital platform and tells the stories behind the art. The website shows works by 50,000 artists from more than 3,000 venues, including museums, universities and hospitals as well as thousands of public sculptures. [Discover the art you own here](#).

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2021.01.14 - Opinion

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The UK and EU are heading for bad-tempered rivalry, unless we can avert it

[Timothy Garton Ash](#)



For all the ‘sovereignty’ it has gained, post-Brexit Britain will be trapped in a future of permanent negotiation

‘The Johnson government has negotiated an excellent deal on trade in goods – excellent for the EU, that is.’ Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

‘The Johnson government has negotiated an excellent deal on trade in goods – excellent for the EU, that is.’ Photograph: Daniel Leal-Olivas/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

After Brexit, Britain and the EU face the [Gore Vidal](#) trap. As the waspish American writer once said: “It is not enough to succeed. Others must fail.” There is now a powerful political logic pushing both sides to make the relative failure of the other the measure of their own success.

We have seen it already over Covid-19 vaccinations, with Boris Johnson boasting that Britain has done more than all the rest of Europe together. [Gavin Williamson](#), Britain’s education secretary, took it to a juvenile extreme, claiming this is because “we’re a much better country than every single one of them”. What we might call “Vidalism” is baked into the Brexiteers’ project.

After all, the whole point of the exercise is supposed to be that Britain will be “better off out”.

This logic is less central for the EU side, not least because it has so much else on its plate. But it is still definitely there, especially in countries where strong Eurosceptic politicians (such as Marine Le Pen) might otherwise highlight the success of a “liberated” Britain. The logic can be seen clearly on the Twitter feed of France’s talented [Europe](#) minister, Clément Beaune. On the night of Britain’s final departure last month, for example, Beaune tweeted a comment he made to the LCI news channel. Britain is punishing *itself* by Brexit, he rightly observed, but “it was also necessary to show the price to be paid for leaving”.

But, you may object, surely the negotiations are over. We have a deal. Brexit is done. Well, think again. For years ahead, Britain will be in a state of [permanent negotiation](#) with the EU. The Johnson government said the choice came down to being “Australia or Canada”, but in fact we will be more like Switzerland, which endures endless rounds of nitpicky negotiations with the EU, punctuated by fits of retribution from Brussels. To be sure, Britain will be a Greater Switzerland with rockets, but the dilemma is fundamentally the same.

[We may have avoided no-deal, but this is still Brexit tier 3](#)
[Read more](#)

The Johnson government has negotiated an excellent deal on trade in goods – excellent for the EU, that is. German cars can continue to flow into Britain, along with other manufactured goods, in which the EU has a trade surplus with the UK. For the 80% of the British economy which is services, almost everything still remains to be agreed. That includes financial services, which make up close to 10% of British exports. As Beaune gleefully tweeted, some €6bn (£5.3bn) worth of European trades left the London Stock Exchange for markets inside the EU on the first day of trading this year. Le Figaro ironically called this a “Big Bang”. (Now what is the French for schadenfreude?)

An excellent [report](#) written by trade expert David Henig for the advocacy group Best for Britain argues that the Johnson deal is only “a framework for future cooperation”. He goes on to identify a long list of areas where it would be in Britain’s longer-term economic interest to secure further agreements. Many of these, such as a finding of “equivalence” for Britain’s financial services, are in the unilateral gift of the EU – and some can be withdrawn at will, as the Swiss

have found out. The asymmetry of power between the two sides is now more acute than ever.

And all for what? If “sovereignty” means a state’s formal legal authority to make its own laws, adjudicated by its own courts, then the UK has gained some more sovereignty. If “sovereignty” means the effective power of a state to control its own destiny and advance its national interests, then the UK has lost sovereignty.

The point here is not to replay the old [Brexit](#) “in or out” debate. It is that in this liminal swamp of permanent negotiation there will be endless occasions for bad-tempered disagreement, competition and conflict.

00:23

'Welcome to Brexit': Dutch officials seize ham sandwiches from British drivers – video

The question for all people of intelligence and goodwill on both sides of the Channel is therefore how to avoid falling into the Vidal trap. That doesn’t mean no competition. Competition is good for business. Indeed, historians have argued that the level of competition between various players is what historically made Europe rich and powerful, by contrast with more monolithic polities such as China. The trick is to find the right balance of competition and cooperation.

Anyone who has followed any internal EU negotiation knows that there is still plenty of rivalry between EU member states. But that rivalry is more like the contests in rugby union between what in Britain are called the “home nations”. The rugby players of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland (still counted as a home nation for this purpose) beat the hell out of each other for 80 minutes. But at the end they shake hands and pat each other on the back, knowing full well that next week they will be playing on the same side, for the British and Irish Lions against the All Blacks or Springboks. Similarly, the “home nations” of the EU know that next week they will be playing Russia or China for the European team.

Here there is a glimmer of hope. For when it comes to Russia, or China, or Iran, or the climate crisis, Britain and most continental European countries are on the same side. Brexit doesn’t change that. So there is a larger strategic logic of cooperation that cuts against the political logic of jealous rivalry.

But this rational insight, shared even by Britain's hard Brexiteer government, is not enough in itself to ensure a good cross-Channel relationship after Brexit. That requires trust, goodwill, clear communication and frequent interaction. After nearly five years of miserable Brexit argy-bargy, trust and goodwill are in short supply.

Michael Gove, the Cabinet Office minister who is, next to Johnson, the UK's leading "[Mr Brexit](#)", says we now have a "special relationship" with the EU. At the moment, that is just waffle. To make it a reality would require establishing new channels of communication, to replace the thick web of daily interaction we lost on leaving the EU. I see some willingness in Downing Street to do this bilaterally, especially with Germany and France, but none so far to do it with the EU as such.

Looking at the online roster of British ministerial roles, all I find is a mention of "future relations with the EU" under Gove (who in practice seems to be the minister for everything), while the foreign secretary has "Europe" listed among his responsibilities. Under him there is a junior minister "for European Neighbourhood and Americas". If the government goes on like this, then its special relationship with the EU will be ripe for the biting quip I once heard former German chancellor Helmut Schmidt make about Britain's vaunted special relationship with the US: "It's so special that only one side knows it exists."

After Brexit, Britain more than ever needs a European policy – and the EU needs a Britain policy.

- Timothy Garton Ash is a historian, political writer and Guardian columnist

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[**Opinion**](#)[**Donald Trump**](#)

What have we learned from Trump's reign? There are worse things than being boring

[Adrian Chiles](#)



Most of us dread it, but the outgoing president has shown us why it's a mistake to think that boredom is always to be avoided

Car crash ... can another president steer the US back to the middle of the road?
Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA

Car crash ... can another president steer the US back to the middle of the road?
Photograph: Jim Lo Scalzo/EPA
Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Boredom is arguably the biggest outcome of lockdown. I don't suffer from it as I can always default to worrying myself into a frantic state about something or other. And terror is never boring, I will say that for it. Boredom is generally regarded as a bad thing, and I have often taken it as saying more about the character of a bored person than the boringness of their situation.

But now I am wondering if we need to embrace boredom a bit more. Professionally, as journalists, we dread boredom. This can lead us into an awful place where bad or even terrible news reaching us can feel darkly thrilling or at least better than the worst thing of all: plain boring.

With some things, such as open heart surgery, it is surely better that they're boring. Politics may be one of those things. Shortly after Donald Trump was elected president, I was in Washington chatting to a venerable correspondent on that beat. "Can you imagine if Hillary had won?" he lamented. "It would have been so boring. I'd have been skiing every weekend." The feet of his and many other correspondents have barely touched the ground since. But at least they were never bored; it was never boring.

We often talk about the need to engage more people in politics. Trump achieved that by addressing arguably the key problem with engagement: a lot of people find politics extremely boring. Through fair means less than foul he made it interesting, turning it into farce, tragedy and comedy, intentionally or unintentionally, as the mood suited him. This man, probably himself driven by a fear of boredom as much as anything else, successfully alleviated boredom among the American electorate. And look how it went.

Bring back boredom, for heaven's sake. Joe Biden: you are the man for the job. Best of British to you.

- Adrian Chiles is a Guardian columnist
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[Opinion](#)[Barclay brothers](#)

I was David Barclay's ghostwriter – until, suddenly, I wasn't

[Tim Walker](#)

In my conversations with the Telegraph owner, he was eccentric and gossipy, but above all a true believer in Brexit

Sir David Barclay (left) and his brother Sir Frederick in 2000: ‘Barclay met me without informing Frederick and it soon became apparent the book he had in mind would be a celebration of how he had personally built a business empire.’

Photograph: Michael Stephens/PA

Sir David Barclay (left) and his brother Sir Frederick in 2000: ‘Barclay met me without informing Frederick and it soon became apparent the book he had in

mind would be a celebration of how he had personally built a business empire.'

Photograph: Michael Stephens/PA

Thu 14 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

For all that Daily Telegraph editors professed to be their own men, the newspaper seldom, if ever, took a view on a major issue of the day – most notably Brexit – that didn't happen to coincide with that of Sir David Barclay. "I owned the toy shop and got to play in it," Barclay, who [died on Sunday](#) at the age of 86, once gleefully admitted to me.

Slight, dapper and with a curious resemblance to the elderly Stan Laurel, Barclay, the co-owner of the Telegraph with his twin brother, Sir Frederick, kept a studiously low public profile, but was in private forthright and clearly used to getting his own way.

Some of his views might have been considered eccentric: he and his brother were, for instance, keen advocates of the health benefits of cold-water bathing, and they practised what they preached. He was also loyal to friends: he had helped Margaret Thatcher secure her [home in Chester Square](#) in Belgravia, after first offering to accommodate her and her husband, Denis, in a property on the Barclay estate on Brecqhou in the Channel Islands. It was at the Ritz, when it was still under the Barclays' ownership, that the former [prime minister eventually died](#).

A running joke during our meetings had been how David Cameron was desperately keen to get some time alone with him

Ironically, it was only after I had left the Telegraph, where I had edited the paper's Mandrake diary for more than a decade, that I got to know Barclay well. The late, great literary agent Ed Victor had suggested I write a biography of the [Barclay brothers](#). To our surprise, the first letter we sent to them elicited an immediate invitation to tea with David Barclay at the Ritz. "It is, I think, serendipity," he said in his slightly high-pitched voice, "as I have had precisely the same idea about a book and I need someone to help me write it."

In private rooms at the hotel overlooking Green Park, with countless WhatsApp messages and emails, I thus began in early 2015 a conversation with Barclay that was destined – like so many others in the country – to come to an abrupt halt because of the differing positions we took on the European Union.

Barclay met me without informing Frederick, and it soon became apparent the book he had in mind would be very much a celebration of how he had personally built a business empire – and a castle on the island of Brecqhou – from scratch. His initial idea for the title: The Man Who Built a Castle.

He had in mind a ghosted volume of memoirs, whereas Victor and I had been hoping for cooperation with an independent book, or, at worst, an authorised biography. Even before we had resolved that issue, Barclay was sending me draft chapters written in the first person. He had also set his heart on serialisation not in the Telegraph but in the Daily Mail – edited by his “good friend” Paul Dacre – but a lot of what he had written would have been a bit much even for that newspaper.

There was a section in the first chapter, for instance, about his distaste for Japanese people, whom he considered to be “very regimental and Germanic ... They are untrustworthy, as my experience doing business with them has shown.” It irritated him, too, that quintessentially British brands such as Sarson’s vinegar and Branston Pickle had been acquired by a Japanese-owned company. We were more than a year away from the EU referendum when we had first started to talk, but it was clear he also hated everything about Europe, even seeing in the Old Testament story of King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream a prophecy about its disintegration.

“The interpretation of this dream we read about in Daniel 2.26 is that a group of countries with different strengths and weaknesses create an empire and the weaker of the countries will not merge with the stronger ones, and it only requires a small thing, like the debts of Cyprus, a small stone, for the empire to collapse,” he wrote. “The stone that is the weakest part of the statue and caused the edifice to break up grew and grew into a great mountain. The only mountain that is growing today is government debt. Could this be King Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the future of Europe, as interpreted by Daniel?”

Of the EU, Barclay wrote: “Successive prime ministers have made us believe out of fear that we have to stay in Europe to survive as a nation because we are unable to stand on our own two feet ... we are merely a local council among a group of nations called the European Union.” There were occasional references to “migrant problems” in the draft chapters and a continuing concern about the national debt, which he felt was going to have to be “reduced in one way or another”.

A running joke during our early face-to-face meetings had been how David Cameron was desperately keen to get some time alone with him. “He has called again,” Barclay told me cheerily when we sat down over one of our many pots of earl grey. “But I think you are rather better company.” Barclay eventually did consent to a dinner with the then prime minister in his private dining room at the Ritz early in 2016, just as he was about to announce the date of the referendum.

“He kept talking to me about how he knew all about business and competition,” Barclay confided in me afterwards. “He was some sort of PR man at Carlton and he was trying to equate himself to me – a man who had bought and sold companies. He is not a man one could trust. My guess is Cameron will squander the remaining asset this country has: our credibility.”

Barclay was from the outset bullish about his side winning the referendum and saw it as a chance to reclaim a Britain he felt had been all but lost. “We gave our sovereignty to unelected bureaucrats in Brussels, who now make more laws and regulations than our own parliament does. We are a country of people who have lost their way and the will to govern ourselves … we have had years of relying on the state for our welfare and on promises no government can keep.” The referendum itself would also, he believed, “sell more papers”.

He told me he was talking a lot to Dacre about the issue, and alluded to meetings he’d been asked to attend with individuals such as Nigel Farage and Leave.EU luminaries. Boris Johnson interrupted one of our conversations with a telephone call. “Boris, I am in a meeting, I shall call you later,” I heard him say. When I gently pointed out to Barclay that there were clear advantages in the country remaining in the EU, he looked downcast. “I do hope you will give it a bit more thought,” he said simply.

Barclay had a love of old black-and-white war films, which he and his brother would play on their yacht, Lady Beatrice, to pass away the evenings with their guests. He’d often digress and ask whether I thought The Dam Busters was more of a classic than Reach for the Sky. His favourite was The Cruel Sea. He sometimes seemed a reluctant inhabitant of the modern world.

Barclay had suffered from ME in the past, and tiredness made him pull out of a number of meetings with me. He WhatsApped about what he called “a feud” in his family that he was thinking of relating to me for “a story” for the Mail on Sunday, but then changed his mind.

[Brexit may spell the end of the tabloid version of Englishness. Can Labour redefine it? | Andy Beckett](#)

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The book later became less of a preoccupation as he and his newspaper devoted their energies to campaigning for [Brexit](#). He did, however, find the time to send me his concluding chapter, which he had ended, somewhat camply, with the words of the song Climb Every Mountain. There is no question in my mind that Barclay was happily married and heterosexual, but I wondered sometimes about the messages he might inadvertently have been putting out.

I wish I could have found some common ground with Barclay over Europe, but eventually it was clear we marched to the beat of very different drummers. Victor wasn't all that bothered when I told him I'd abandoned the project. He said he was never convinced there would be that great a market for the book in any case, and certainly little chance of any transatlantic deal.

I heard Barclay eventually published his memoirs, privately and in collaboration with another writer. There was no serialisation in the Mail. It may be that the "feud" he alluded to was the one destined to come out in an [unedifying saga](#) in the high court. I wrote to him one last time to wish him well and to say I was sorry things hadn't worked out, but I had enjoyed our chats. His final words to me, presumably about my own hopes that Britain might yet remain in the EU, were these: "Be careful what you wish for."

- Tim Walker is a columnist for the New European

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[Opinion](#)[Brexit](#)

If Brexit is 'done', then where's the dividend?

[Martin Kettle](#)



There was never a yardstick by which to judge the policy – so the issue will never be entirely settled

A Sainsbury's store in Belfast, 11 January 2021: 'The big UK supermarkets warned of long-term shortages in Northern Ireland, which will get worse when Brexit grace periods end.' Photograph: David Young/PA

A Sainsbury's store in Belfast, 11 January 2021: 'The big UK supermarkets warned of long-term shortages in Northern Ireland, which will get worse when Brexit grace periods end.' Photograph: David Young/PA

Wed 13 Jan 2021 13.01 EST

It is two weeks since Britain finally cut its ties with the [European Union](#). It may therefore seem a bit premature to ask how it is all going. But the reality of Brexit in early 2021 is stark. We may now be a sovereign nation – which matters a lot to many – but in almost every material respect the UK is currently worse off than before 1 January.

Whatever else this tells us, it is a reminder that [Brexit](#) is not yet done. Great Britain remains an island off the coast of the EU, which is its major market. This requires policy and action from politicians and parties. [Brexit](#) is a stage in

that process. But the process goes on, and [Brexit](#) still shapes it. Consider four live examples, on all of which parliament heard evidence today.

First, there is the mountain of paperwork freshly involved in trading across the Channel and into the EU. The Food and Drink Federation's Ian Wright told MPs on the Brexit committee today that a job that typically took three hours before Brexit is now taking five days, even for big companies. The customs enforcers were currently as much in the dark about the rules as the exporters, he added.

Second, there is the specific effect of all this on the emotive issue of [fish and seafood exports](#), over which the Scottish national party berated Boris Johnson at this week's prime minister's questions. Scotland Food and Drink warned on Tuesday that seafood exporters were [losing £1m in sales](#) every day.

Third, there is a separate specific crisis in food distribution between Great Britain and Northern Ireland. This week the big UK supermarkets warned of [long-term shortages](#) in Northern Ireland supermarkets. Andrew Opie of the British Retail Consortium told the Brexit committee today they [would get worse](#) when Brexit grace periods end, on 31 March.

Finally, there is the ending of full police and security cooperation between the UK and the EU. In a separate session today, Prof Gemma Davies of Northumbria University told the Northern Ireland affairs committee that Brexit amounted to an overall "[security downgrade](#)" compared with the years of EU membership, and highlighted the loss of access to real-time data as a major problem.

All the committee witnesses were clear that this deal, whatever its problems, was better than no deal. It may also turn out that their concerns prove to be Brexit teething problems. The lateness of the 24 December deal certainly posed massive challenges. As the new rules begin to bed in, it is also likely that all sides will find workaround solutions.

Yet this would still be a highly optimistic way of looking at the problems facing the more than 50,000 UK manufacturers whose only trade is with the EU. And while workarounds are to be welcomed, they are inferior to the free passage of the past, and they must ultimately be compatible with law and regulation on both sides. This is another fragile area of the agreement, yet to be tested.

The emotional importance of Brexit should never be underestimated. Support for it will always depend more upon feelings than realities. Yet the plain fact is that there has been no material Brexit dividend of any kind in the first two weeks of the break. Perhaps that does not matter. Perhaps a dividend will come. But perhaps the EU has also succeeded in showing there are real costs to leaving.

The current reality is nevertheless that each of the material problems seems likely to grow more acute. That is true for distribution chains in particular. According to Wright, all EU-UK supply chains will have to be re-engineered over the coming months. The economic and employment implications of this statement are huge, especially amid the pandemic. The impact on fishing will be especially politically sensitive. And no one pretends that the medium-term future for [Northern Ireland](#) after Brexit is anything other than delicate.

But the uncertainty extends deep into other areas of the economy and society too. Since London can no longer be the financial centre of the EU, UK financial services [seem doomed to decline](#) in importance. So does the attractiveness of UK universities to students and researchers. The arts industries are vulnerable too, as [Simon Rattle's return to Germany](#) underlines. Lockdowns and travel restrictions mean there is currently less attention to post-Brexit tourism problems, but these will unquestionably revive.

The Conservatives and Labour each have a shared interest in treating Brexit as done. Johnson wants to tout it as his passport to history, especially amid his Covid failures. Keir Starmer can see no route to a Labour majority (or party unity) from reopening the European issue. This week he tried to close the file on [freedom of movement](#) as part of that. This may be understandable from the point of view of electoral self-interest – but that does not mean the party interest is the same as the public interest.

Material issues over commerce, trade and jobs thrown up by Brexit cannot be ignored just because to talk of why they are occurring may reopen the deep and disturbing divisions of the past decade. Nor can there be a code of silence over the umbilical link between Brexit and issues such as the potential breakup of the UK or the decline in Britain's standing in the world. These are real and growing dangers to Britain, and thus even to Brexit itself.

[Simon Rattle is leaving London. Is this a taste of the capital's future? | Charlotte Higgins](#)

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The feeling that Brexit was based on – that Britain and the British were being done down by the EU – lay behind its enormous political success at home. But beyond leaving the EU, Brexit never amounted to a programme of change. There was no yardstick other than departure by which to judge the policy.

This simplicity remains both the strength and weakness of Brexit. It means all the areas that were left blank before and after 2016 will now need to be filled in. In practice, this mostly means working with the EU rather than competing against it, whether in trade or foreign policy generally. The head of the foreign affairs thinktank Chatham House, Robin Niblett, wrote this week that Britain will fail after Brexit if it tries to recreate itself as “[a mini great power](#)”. The former cabinet minister David Lidington has said he sees the prospect, over time, of various forms of “[association agreement](#)” between Britain and the EU.

None of this is to say that a British return to the EU is remotely on the cards any time soon. But, as time passes, the grip exerted by the votes of 2016 and 2019 will weaken. Britain’s multiple living relationships with Europe, meanwhile, will not go away. Decisions will have to be taken. Things will have to evolve. In one form or another, what we now call Brexit will never be an entirely settled issue. We would be deceiving ourselves to treat it as one.

- Martin Kettle is a Guardian columnist

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[OpinionTV news](#)

Is Britain's TV news at risk of being dominated by those who shout loudest?

[Jane Martinson](#)



New, right-leaning opinionated competitors such as GB news are the latest threat to the BBC

‘Andrew Neil has indicated he will not be looking to ape Fox News.’

Photograph: Nick Ansell/PA

‘Andrew Neil has indicated he will not be looking to ape Fox News.’

Photograph: Nick Ansell/PA

Wed 13 Jan 2021 10.28 EST

Older, Brexit-supporting men who live outside London are really unhappy with the BBC. A [survey](#) commissioned by the Times first said so, followed earlier this week by Lord Botham, [writing](#) in the Telegraph on behalf of “country people” fed up with the [“woke” BBC](#). “There is another unaccountable institution that Britain got fed up with,” he warned. “The European Union and its officials in Brussels made the mistake of thinking that we would always grin and bear it.”

There has long been an alignment of interests between those who despise the EU and those who despise the [BBC](#) for its publicly funded journalism. This confluence has also been demonstrated by British newspaper owners and their editors; now two new television ventures are providing a fresh outlet.

In the coming weeks, Rupert Murdoch's News UK, owner of the Times and other papers, will reveal plans for a livestreamed "alternative" to existing TV news. Last week GB News, led by the former BBC presenter and Sunday Times editor Andrew Neil, announced funding for its new 24-hour channel to serve the "vast number of British people who feel underserved and unheard" by existing television news channels.

Much ink has been spilled over what this potential Foxification of the airwaves will do without much thought for the fact that the culture war over Britain and its place in the world has already been led by the UK's rightwing press, most of which is owned by Rupert Murdoch and other Brexit-backing billionaires. The differences with the US are many, from the expectation of impartiality on TV, governed by regulation, to a print media that is far more opinionated than its US counterparts.

What both countries share, however, is the tendency for the biggest billionaires to claim they speak on behalf of so-called ordinary people. Indeed, one of the ironies of this battle for the hearts and minds of the British television viewer is that many of the BBC's bitterest critics live so far outside the south-east of England that their main residence isn't even in the UK.

[The threats to tear down the BBC have not gone away. Watch this space | Alan Rusbridger](#)
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The Australian-born American citizen Murdoch is at least now living in Oxfordshire with his fourth wife, Jerry Hall. The chairman and a founding partner of Legatum, the investment firm that stumped up some £20m to become co-lead investor in GB News, is the New Zealand-born, Dubai-based [Christopher Chandler](#). The US media group Discovery Inc is the other co-lead investor. Its significant shareholder is John Malone, the libertarian and erstwhile Murdoch cable rival.

Neil intends GB News to be "proudly independent and fearless in tackling the issues people care about, especially in communities outside London". It is true that the BBC does have a satisfaction problem (relatively speaking) among those licence-fee payers who live outside the wealthier, more diverse parts of the UK. The BBC's internal research and that of the [media regulator, Ofcom](#), suggests that people from poorer, less-diverse communities get less satisfied the

farther they live from the south-east, with this process culminating in some resentment in Scotland.

Despite this, more than 90% of the population still use BBC news. What's more, 78% believe it is high quality, while 71% say it is trustworthy. Those are far higher figures than for any newspaper and particularly the tabloids such as the Express and Mail, which have long been the BBC's sharpest critics.

Decent, accurate journalism costs money, and GB News's £60m war chest will allow chairman Neil to hire 140 staff members, most of them journalists. The buzz that comes with a new venture has much currency and Neil, a canny and hugely experienced journalist himself, will hope for access despite his own criticism of the prime minister for not turning up to his BBC show.

It is not yet clear how closely the new players will abide by the spirit of Ofcom's impartiality rules, which allow for fines and indeed outright bans for real transgressions. But if timing is all, the timing of this is dreadful, coming as it does after rightwing US broadcast media have been partly blamed for stoking the fires of populist dissent to such an extent that last week a Donald Trump-supporting mob carved "Murder the Media" into a door in the US Capitol.

Neil has indicated that he will not be looking to ape Fox News. The smart money is on the sort of combative "newstainment" often heard on LBC radio with a roster of presenters from all political stripes. [Piers Morgan](#) is said to have been courted by News UK, given the way his Marmite presentations have led to increased figures for ITV's Good Morning Britain.

The older, male critics the BBC needs to be most worried about, of course, are those in government who have taken to calling it "the Brexit-Bashing Corporation".

The danger is not that the UK may grow to enjoy opinionated news presenters, but that a still-powerful press culture and shouty television news will leave too little room for an organisation that depends on universality to survive. The BBC may well become so cowed by attacks loud and silent that it is no longer able to grin and bear it.

- Jane Martinson is a Guardian columnist

- This article was corrected on 14 January 2021. Christopher Chandler is not the owner of Legatum as stated in an earlier version. The ITV programme presented by Piers Morgan is Good Morning Britain, not GMTV.
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OpinionCapital punishment

The Guardian view on Trump's executions: vicious to the end

[Editorial](#)

The federal execution of a woman who was mentally ill was the act of a morally bankrupt administration

A woman holds a sign to protest the execution of Lisa Montgomery.

Photograph: Joseph C Garza/AP

A woman holds a sign to protest the execution of Lisa Montgomery.

Photograph: Joseph C Garza/AP

Wed 13 Jan 2021 13.33 EST

In the early hours of Wednesday morning, Lisa Montgomery became the first woman to be put to death by the United States government for almost seven decades. At the Indiana penitentiary where she was executed by lethal injection, there are no facilities for female prisoners. So during prolonged legal wrangling over her fate, Montgomery was cruelly placed in a holding cell in the execution-chamber building itself.

Her crime was horrific. In 2004, Montgomery strangled a young woman, Bobbie Jo Stinnett, who was eight months pregnant. She then cut a baby girl from her womb, and attempted to pass her off as her own. The pain and suffering of Ms Stinnett's family can barely be imagined. But the political context of this week's execution, and overwhelming evidence of Montgomery's longstanding mental illness, suggests a gross miscarriage of justice has taken place.

Issuing a stay of execution, subsequently overruled by the supreme court, a district judge cited evidence that "Ms Montgomery's mental state is so divorced from reality that she cannot rationally understand the government's rationale for her execution." Since entering the penitentiary system, the 52 year-old had been diagnosed with bipolar disorder, PTSD, anxiety and depression, psychosis, mood swings, dissociation and memory loss. Throughout her childhood, Montgomery was gang-raped by her alcoholic stepfather and his friends, in a cabin built for that purpose. She was physically tortured in myriad ways by both parents. Social workers and doctors failed to intervene. A consultant to her legal team said Montgomery was "profoundly mentally ill as a result of a lifetime of torture and sexual violence. Lisa is not the worst of the worst – she is the most broken of the broken." This was not enough to prevent her sharing the fate of 10 other prisoners executed by the government since July, when the Trump administration resumed the practice after a 17-year pause. In the history of US justice, there have never been so many scheduled federal executions during the lame-duck period of a presidency.

Donald Trump's recently-departed attorney general, William Barr, has said the rush of executions is delivering justice for "staggeringly brutal" murders. In truth it amounts to a vicious and vindictive last stand by a bullying, authoritarian administration. In the US and the rest of the world, support for capital punishment is declining. Globally, only six countries executed more people than America last year: China, Iran, Egypt, Iraq, Somalia and North

Korea. In Europe, Belarus is the only state to retain the death penalty. Russia imposed a moratorium in the 1990s.

The association of capital punishment with dictatorships and authoritarian regimes is no coincidence. The [postwar rise](#) of democracies around the world took place alongside a growing drive for human rights and limits on government powers. Death penalty abolition movements benefited as a consequence. In bucking this trend, Mr Trump has yet again turned his country into a dysfunctional outlier, as well as a fellow-traveller with regimes he professes to despise. His successor, Joe Biden, has pledged to work towards the elimination of capital punishment in America. For Lisa Montgomery, whose life was a tragedy from beginning to end, it will be too late.

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[England in Sri Lanka 2020-21](#)

Sri Lanka v England: first Test, day one – as it happened

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Jacques Kallis

England batting consultant Jacques Kallis regrets enforced South Africa exit

- South Africa role ‘fell away’ because of affirmative action policy
- Kallis: ‘It’s tough but we understand where it comes from’

‘It’s sad in a way that I can’t help out in South Africa, but I’m thoroughly enjoying my time in the England setup,’ says Jacques Kallis. Photograph: Phill Magakoe/AFP/Getty Images

‘It’s sad in a way that I can’t help out in South Africa, but I’m thoroughly enjoying my time in the England setup,’ says Jacques Kallis. Photograph: Phill Magakoe/AFP/Getty Images

[Simon Burnton](#)

[@Simon_Burnton](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 17.00 EST

Jacques Kallis, the legendary all-rounder who is working as England's batting consultant for the Test series in Sri Lanka, has spoken of his regret at being forced out of a similar position with his native South Africa after their adoption of an affirmative action policy last year.

"I wasn't allowed to be involved because [Cricket](#) South Africa said there would be no more white consultants, so unfortunately that fell away," Kallis said before the first Test which starts on Thursday.

[Since Jardine's ill-fated taxi ride, Sri Lankan Tests have always been a bit taxing\]](#) [Andy Bull](#)

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"I suppose it's the way of our country – a lot of players have fallen away because of needing people of colour involved.

It's tough but we understand where it comes from. It's the modern way of the world. It's sad in a way that I can't help out in South Africa, but I'm thoroughly enjoying my time in the England setup."

After he left his role with the Proteas several players spoke to Kallis about continuing to work with him on a more informal basis, but that possibility was blocked. "Unfortunately there was that rule, so it was pretty much taken out of my hands," he said.

CSA clarified in September that it "had not taken and will not take a decision to work exclusively with black consultants" and "put on hold" the affirmative action policy, at least temporarily, after the entire board who decided on it resigned en masse in October. Kallis said he knew nothing about the latter development, and has no plans after the end of the Sri Lanka series beyond returning home to assist his wife with raising their 10-month-old boy, Joshua.

"This was a wonderful opportunity for me to take and see where it goes," he said of the England role. "In the beginning it was a little bit strange because England were the arch enemy when we played them, but I suppose in the world we're living now guys go and coach other teams around the world. So it's kind of the norm in the modern world and I really have thoroughly enjoyed it. We'll go through this tour and then see what the future holds."

The 45-year-old's appointment has certainly been well received by England's players: last week Jonny Bairstow, who returns to the Test side batting as Kallis himself often did at No 3, described the South African as "in my eyes the best all-rounder that there has ever been". Dan Lawrence, the 23-year-old batsman who is expected to make his Test debut, spoke about his excitement at working with "arguably the greatest player to have ever played".

In Lawrence, Dom Bess – who is 10 days younger – and the 22-year-old Zak Crawley England have a group of emerging young batsmen who stand to benefit from the wisdom of a former player who, of all non-Asians who played at least 20 Tests on the continent, has a batting average second only to Clive Lloyd.

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"I've been very impressed with them," Kallis said of England's young players. "They've got a lot of knowledge, and they're hungry to succeed. They're going to make mistakes along the way but that's OK, that's how you learn and grow. I think there's a lot of youngsters that are going to score a lot of Test runs for England. It's nice I can perhaps help them achieve the goals and dreams they want to achieve."

[Colin Graves insists rich IPL owners are willing to invest in the Hundred](#)
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Kallis has also been impressed by the all-rounder Sam Curran, another 22-year-old, for whom the series represents a chance to shine in the absence of the rested Ben Stokes. "He certainly has a lot of talent, and he's willing to learn," Kallis said.

"He's a hard worker and a great kid, I see a lot of potential in him. Is he the best young all-rounder in the world? Yes, I think so. What he adds with the ball and the bat, he is certainly right up there. There are exciting times for him ahead. He's hungry, and that's half the battle already."

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[Sportblog](#)[England cricket team](#)

Since grumpy Jardine's ill-fated taxi ride, Sri Lanka have always been a bit taxing

[Andy Bull](#)



Only after being thrashed at the Oval in 1998 have England stopped treating their Test rivals this month as underdogs – but all subsequent series have been played on equal footing

Muttiah Muralitharan celebrates the wicket of Mark Butcher of England as England were humbled on home soil at the Oval in 1998. Photograph: Laurence Griffiths/Allsport/Getty Images

Muttiah Muralitharan celebrates the wicket of Mark Butcher of England as England were humbled on home soil at the Oval in 1998. Photograph: Laurence Griffiths/Allsport/Getty Images

Wed 13 Jan 2021 10.59 EST

From this distance it seems to have been a tricky little start to the tour of Sri Lanka, where England spent three days locked up inside their hotel rooms, then had one half of their only warmup game washed out by rain. Still, Joe Root has handled these little challenges with more grace, and good humour, than some of his predecessors did.

Sri Lanka has always been a delightful place to visit but at times a taxing place to play cricket. There is a story about England's tour there in 1934, when their captain, Douglas Jardine, was two hours late for the start of the game because his taxi broke down on the drive down the coast from Colombo to Galle. The

car suffered a series of punctures and the driver didn't have a spare tyre to hand.

England captain Douglas Jardine in 1934. Photograph: Popperfoto/Getty Images

Jardine had the knack of rubbing people up the wrong way. Not just Australians. When the local fans barracked him for his slow play in Colombo, he is supposed to have refused to continue until those doing the heckling were kicked out of the ground. When the MCC wired him to ask exactly what was going on, he wrote back: "Simply, these fools had allowed lunatics from the asylum to witness proceedings." In SS Perera's official history of Sri Lankan cricket, he wrote that "because of his snobbism and arrogance, the name of DR Jardine has been permanently cut out of our island's history".

England were the opposition in Sri Lanka's very first Test, too, almost 50 years later, in February 1982. The match was tagged on to the tail end of a dreary six-match series in India, which England lost 1-0. The players were demob happy

after four months on tour, and enjoyed a VIP reception, first-class train travel, a spread of receptions and banquets. According to the Guardian, they were “delighted to find that such things as crispy fried bread, real Scottish Scotch, and St Bruno tobacco really exist and were not after all mirages from some long ago incarnation”.

Better yet, they were put up in a hotel that had Guinness on tap. Of course it was an artfully laid trap, and after three days England found themselves scrambling to get back into the match, as Sri Lanka were 150 runs ahead and had seven wickets left in their second innings on a tricky, spinning pitch.

General view of the first Test match played between England and Sri Lanka at Colombo in February 1982. Photograph: Adrian Murrell/Getty Images

It didn't help any that their captain, Keith Fletcher, kept putting his foot in it. The country had changed its name from Ceylon a decade earlier but, according to Frank Keating, Fletcher struggled to get his head around this and kept calling it “Sri-Lon” in his speeches to the local dignitaries. (Fletcher, Keating reports,

had already got himself in a spot of bother with the Foreign Office earlier on the tour when he'd called the Maharajah of Baroda "old cock".) Worse, the day before the Test started he grumbled that the pitch was being over-watered, and said that Sri Lanka weren't "County Championship standard".

It had been a long, hard few months, and Fletcher wasn't at his best. He was sacked as captain soon after and didn't play for England again. Which was a curious way to repay him for his decision to turn down a £50,000 offer to join the rebel tour to South Africa, which was being organised in the background all the while that winter.

The former England captain Keith Fletcher. Photograph: Getty Images

He was replaced by Bob Willis, who took charge of the Test against Sri Lanka, too, when he stood up and told his teammates: "Here we are, limply rolling over to be beaten by this lot. A humiliation is staring us in the face and all we can do is whinge on about the flaming umpires. We should be ashamed of ourselves. Let's just get up and get out there and win." The next morning John

Emburey took five for five, Sri Lanka were bowled out for 175, and [England ended up winning by seven wickets.](#)

It was Fletcher's lot to end up back in Sri Lanka, as England's team manager this time, when Sri Lanka did beat them for the very first time, in 1993. Arjuna Ranatunga, who had been a skinny 18-year-old kid batting at No 6 back in 1982, had grown into a stout and redoubtable captain, and led his side to victory by five wickets.

England were still grumbling about the umpires, and the weather ("It's very nearly too hot here for Europeans to play cricket," Fletcher said), and the muttering about the bowlers' actions (Muttiah Muralitharan took five wickets). "But overall," Wisden wrote, "England had nothing and no one to blame but themselves."

[Joe Root backs England's patient approach to bring success in Sri Lanka](#)
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It was only after England's humiliation at the Oval in 1998, when Sri Lanka (incensed that they had only been invited to play a single Test) [thrashed them by 10 wickets](#), that England stopped treating them like underdogs. After all, it's hard to condescend to a side who have just handed you a beating like that, and on your own patch.

Their series since have been played on an equal footing and have mostly made for brilliant viewing, too, from [England's famous victory away in 2001](#) to [Sri Lanka's in England in 2014](#). Let's hope for more of it in the next fortnight. Goodness knows we could use the distraction.

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[Australia cricket team](#)

Marcus Harris replaces injured Will Pucovski for Australia in fourth Test

- Pucovski unable to prove fitness for series decider at the Gabba
- Harris, in first recall for 16 months, to open batting with Warner

Australia's Will Pucovski has been ruled out of the fourth Test against India, with Marcus Harris to replace the injured batsman in the top order. Photograph: Saeed Khan/AFP/Getty Images

Australia's Will Pucovski has been ruled out of the fourth Test against India, with Marcus Harris to replace the injured batsman in the top order. Photograph: Saeed Khan/AFP/Getty Images

Australian Associated Press

Wed 13 Jan 2021 22.16 EST

Marcus Harris's 16-month wait for a Test recall is over, with the opener locked in to replace the injured Will Pucovski in Australia's XI for the series decider against India.

Harris was dumped after the 2019 Ashes and repeatedly overlooked since. The 28-year-old has been part of Australia's enlarged Test squad throughout the current series, which is level at 1-1 heading before the Gabba decider that begins on Friday.

[Gabba a fitting venue for Nathan Lyon's 100th Test milestone | Adam Collins](#)
[Read more](#)

Harris has watched Victoria teammate Pucovski, David Warner, Joe Burns and Matthew Wade open the batting in recent weeks.

But Tim Paine has now confirmed Harris will open alongside fellow left-handed batsman David Warner in the fourth Test, declaring it will be the only change to Australia's XI.

Pucovski failed to bat in the Gabba nets on both Wednesday and Thursday, with the Australian skipper confirming he had been ruled out of the series finale because of a shoulder injury.

"He tried to train this morning, didn't quite come up," Paine said. "He'll have a bit of work to do with our medicos to see where he goes from here. Marcus Harris will come in, open the batting and we're looking forward to seeing what he can do."

Paine described Harris as a "no fuss, very good player".

"He's been working his backside off in our hub," he said. "He deserves his opportunity. He's a really relaxed type of character, so he's one we certainly enjoy having him in and around our group."

Warner spent almost an hour in the nets on Thursday, with coach Justin Langer having already declared the veteran will back up in Brisbane, after he returned from a groin injury in the SCG Test.

Australia XI: Marcus Harris, David Warner, Marnus Labuschagne, Steve Smith, Matthew Wade, Cameron Green, Tim Paine, Pat Cummins, Mitchell

Starc, Nahtan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood.

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[Football](#)

'Inexcusable, a disgrace': Fifa's damning verdict on Yves Jean-Bart

- Findings published on former Haiti FA president's life ban
- 34 alleged victims of Jean-Bart and others identified
- [How the Guardian broke the story](#)

Yves Jean-Bart arrives at his hearing at the Crois-Des-Bouquets prosecutor's office in May 2020. Photograph: Jeanty Junior Augustin/Reuters
Yves Jean-Bart arrives at his hearing at the Crois-Des-Bouquets prosecutor's office in May 2020. Photograph: Jeanty Junior Augustin/Reuters

[Ed Aarons](#)

[@ed_aarons](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 15.42 EST

The shocking scale of sexual abuse allegations at Haiti's national football centre has been documented in a Fifa report that outlines why Yves Jean-Bart has been banned from football for life. Thirty-four alleged victims of sexual abuse at the centre by 10 possible perpetrators and accomplices including Jean-Bart, the former football federation president who has consistently denied the allegations, were identified in a report by the players' union Fifpro to Fifa's ethics committee.

The Fifpro report formed part of the investigation into alleged abuses by Jean-Bart, [first revealed by the Guardian](#), at the Centre Technique National in Croix-des-Bouquets. It claimed that 14 of the 34 were alleged victims of Jean-Bart himself.

[Ruler of the ranch: the rise and fall of Yves Jean-Bart, Haiti's king of football](#)
[Read more](#)

The ethics committee's adjudicatory chamber concluded that Jean-Bart, who ruled Haitian football for more than two decades, had committed acts of "unprecedented gravity".

"Mr Jean-Bart's behaviour is simply inexcusable, a disgrace for any football official," the chairperson of the adjudicatory chamber, Mr Vassilios Skouris, said. "The pain and suffering he has caused his various victims of sexual harassment and abuse cannot even be fully comprehended, and represents a very dark stain on the image and reputation of football as a sport loved by so many."

"While claiming he was developing Haitian football, in particular women's competitions and teams, Mr Jean-Bart did the exact opposite: he abused his position in order to satisfy his personal attitude of domination over the most fragile people, destroying the careers and lives of young promising female players."

► Q&A

What Fifa's report said

Show

After allegations of sexual abuse by Jean-Bart were published by the Guardian in April, Fifa's ethics committee conducted a detailed investigation lasting almost six months that included hiring an independent IT consultancy company to use Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) techniques to validate some of the alleged victims' claims using mobile phone data. According to the decision of the adjudicatory chamber, that enabled investigators to corroborate several occasions where "young female players visited the [hotel], one of the alleged locations where the sexual abuse apparently occurred".

A female footballer at the Croix-des-Bouquets training centre. Photograph: Pierre Michel Jean/AFP/Getty Images

In the final report from the investigatory chamber, the panel heard statements from two alleged victims of Jean-Bart, one of whom detailed her experiences after being selected to play for Haiti Under-17s. "President Yves Jean-Bart called me on the phone to ask me to come and see him," she said. "When he arrived he gave me a pack of panties. I said 'thank you' and when it was time to leave he offered me to stay with him in his room. He told me to stay with him

and suddenly pulled me towards him. And I pushed him and he fell on his bed. And back at the centre, it was as if I no longer exist in the eyes of everyone.”

Another alleged victim described when she had to sit next to Jean-Bart in the back of a car. “Throughout the trip, Mr Jean-Bart kept touching me,” she said. “And I always pushed him away to leave me alone. From that day on, every time he sees me on the court he never stops telling me that I will never progress to the centre and he will never lift a finger in my favour to help me in anything.”

The Fifpro report alleged that there was “sufficient evidence” to suggest the centre “was being used as enticement for minor football players coming from poor backgrounds who were groomed and threatened into sexual abuse”.

Fifa’s three-person panel was also of the opinion that the allegations of sexual abuse “seem to be of a more cooperate/cartel organisation”.

Yves Jean-Bart, pictured last May. Photograph: Jeanty Junior Augustin/Reuters

Jean-Bart has consistently protested his innocence and last month reiterated in a [Daily Mail interview](#) his plan to take his case to the court of arbitration for sport. He argued in his closing oral statement to the panel that “in Haiti there is no ‘culture of rape’ or of sexual abuse”. But the panel found that his claim the FHF was “being robbed as a consequence of the ‘plot’ against him” was “very difficult to conceive”.

“In summary, the panel considers that the final report prepared by the investigatory chamber is based on solid evidence, gathered from distinct sources … as well as reputed media outlets [such] as the Guardian and the New York Times. In the view of the panel, after examining such evidence, as well as the position expressed by Mr Jean-Bart, it is highly implausible, and even impossible, that such a diverse group of individuals and entities, from all over the world, could be involved, let alone design, an extremely complex and detailed plot, by providing extensive, congruent and consistent testimony, at various levels and times during the investigation conducted by the Fifa ethics committee.”

The panel’s decision determined that Jean-Bart had been involved in “sexual abuse of female players, including minors, who were or are residing in the centre”.

[How Yves Jean-Bart's reign of abuse at Haiti FA ended after two decades](#)
[Read more](#)

Fifa fined Jean-Bart 1m Swiss francs (£827,000) and banned him from all football-related activities for life. Skouris said Jean-Bart’s conduct “had revealed a pattern of not only disrespect for [the] core values” of Fifa’s code of ethics “but also human dignity”.

“With regard to the circumstances of the case, the adjudicatory chamber emphasises that several of its aspects render the case at hand to be of unprecedented gravity,” Skouris said. “Mr Jean-Bart sexually abused various female players, including and in particular minors, using threats, coercion, as well as gifts and the promise of advantages (of a sportive or financial nature) on those who refused to accept his advances. The sexual harassment/assault and abusive conduct was repeated and, in fact, part of a systematic treatment to which female players were subjected at the centre.”

In December, Fifa [appointed a normalisation committee](#) for the FHF after it found “strong indications” that Jean-Bart was still exerting his influence despite his ban.

The report said: “It must also be borne in mind that Mr Jean-Bart committed the offences over a course of several years, (at least) between 2014 and 2020, and that the situation was kept hidden due to a well-implemented system of ‘omertà’ or code of silence, under which the victims and witnesses were silenced through extreme pressure and coercions, not only by Mr Jean-Bart, but also his network of accomplices in the FHF and the centre (some of which were facilitators, and some possibly perpetrators of sexual abuse themselves).

Football shirts drying at the Croix-des-Bouquets training centre last May.
Photograph: Pierre Michel Jean/AFP/Getty Images

“It was due to the exposure created by the media and various NGOs involved in the fight against sexual harassment and the protection of human rights, and the bravery of some of the victims and witnesses, who decided to speak out despite

fearing for repercussions, that the matter was discovered and could be investigated and prosecuted.”

A spokesperson for Jean-Bart said: “Repeating false and salacious allegations to foreign journalists and a bureaucratic committee within Fifa does not make them true, and Dr Jean-Bart continues to maintain his innocence.

“Fifa played right into the hands of the president’s detractors by hurriedly pushing out Dr Jean-Bart despite a lack of evidence and being cleared by actual investigators in Haiti.

“Because judicial systems and courts of law rely on facts and proof rather than politically motivated rumours, Dr Jean-Bart believes he will be cleared of wrongdoing when his case is examined before the court of arbitration for sport.”

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Ruler of the ranch: the rise and fall of Yves Jean-Bart, Haiti's king of football

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Premier League

Ivan Cavaleiro's header earns Fulham deserved point at Tottenham

Tottenham refuse to learn their lesson. Once again they allowed a game to slip from their control, failing to build on Harry Kane's early goal and falling into defensive mode. It has become a recurring theme and Spurs ended up paying the price for José Mourinho's conservatism when [Fulham](#), inspired by a thrilling cameo from Ademola Lookman, punished their negative opponents with a deserved equaliser.

Mourinho could not complain about bad luck, even though his side missed a series of outstanding opportunities and had a winner from Sergio Reguilón disallowed for offside. To focus on misfortune and missed chances would be a distraction when the reality is that Spurs, who have won two of their past eight league games, have made a habit of conceding costly late goals.

It happened when they drew with Crystal Palace and Wolves last month, it happened when they lost against Liverpool at Anfield, and it happened again when Ivan Cavaleiro leapt in the 74th minute to haul Fulham level. Spurs had contrived to squander yet another commanding position and although they were top of the league midway through December, they now are six points behind Manchester United in first place.

Although the reliance on Kane and Son Heung-min is a hindrance, the overall mentality is an issue. Spurs did not approach the second half like title contenders. They were quick to retreat and, although Fulham rode their luck at times, Scott Parker's side merited a draw that lifts them two points below Brighton in 17th place.

Fulham, who have two games in hand on Brighton, ran their hearts out and almost snatched a priceless win when Hugo Lloris denied Ruben Loftus-Cheek. Although they arrived in a funk, seething at being given only two days to prepare after a Covid-19 outbreak forced Aston Villa to postpone their game against Spurs, they responded magnificently.

Parker had called the scheduling scandalous, arguing that Fulham needed more notice from the [Premier League](#). This fixture had originally been postponed on 30 December after Fulham, who also had to call off their trip to Burnley on 3 January, recorded a number of positive coronavirus tests.

Parker had not banked on it being rearranged so quickly; otherwise he would not have played so many of his regulars when his side returned to action against Queens Park Rangers in the third round of the FA Cup last weekend.

Yet perfection is impossible given the sport is playing by the pandemic's rules and Fulham had no choice but to get on with it. Mourinho, who expected Fulham to field a strong side, had dismissed Parker's complaints and Spurs were determined to make their guests suffer during the first half.

Harry Kane heads Tottenham in front. Photograph: Shaun Botterill/EPA

Spurs sought to expose Fulham's rustiness, threatening whenever they raised the tempo. Mourinho wanted his full-backs high and wide, attacking the space

behind Parker's wing-backs, and whipping in crosses for Kane and Son. The tactic was effective throughout the opening period and it should have led to a goal in the sixth minute, Serge Aurier's cutback reaching Reguilón, who fired over from close range.

Spurs kept cutting through Parker's cautious 3-5-2 system. Alphonse Areola had to be in inspired form in Fulham's goal, twice denying Son. Tosin Adarabioyo was forced into last-ditch action, sliding in to rob Kane, and it was not a surprise when Fulham cracked. Reguilón raided from left-back and delivered a peach of a cross for Kane to head home.

Yet Fulham, who had not played a league game since Boxing Day, refused to lie down. They have developed a solid work ethic under Parker and were diligent in their approach, with Harrison Reed fighting in midfield.

Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa offered a languid quality on the ball, showing quick feet before testing Lloris. Loftus-Cheek almost equalised and the longer it stayed 1-0, the bolder Fulham became.

Parker saw that Spurs had lost their fluency in midfield. He gambled, introducing Lookman, a livewire on the left. Spurs dropped deeper, relying on counterattacks, their nerves growing when Son hit a post at the end of a swift break.

Fulham saw their chance. Spurs could not contain Lookman, who turned Aurier inside out before crossing for Cavaleiro to score. Fulham, who host Chelsea on Saturday, ended up enjoying their last-minute invitation to north London.

"People need to understand the predicament we were in," Parker said afterwards. "We are not making it up. We have been very open and had worries for the safety of others too ... we don't need to apologise for anything. I thought we were immense tonight. I was very proud because of what we faced."

Mourinho, meanwhile, was left frustrated by his team's inability to take their chances. "This is the same story basically since the beginning of the season," he added. "Today was a clear situation where we could and should have killed the game in the first half but then you go back to the goals that we concede."

“There are some things [that] have to do with organisation of the team, but other things they have to do with individual skills, individual ability, and it’s as simple as that.”

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Premier League

Phil Foden's moment of class sets up Manchester City victory over Brighton

[Manchester City](#) are 14 matches unbeaten, the scoreline of this victory not reflecting the conveyor-belt of chances they created. In the end all that separated the sides was Phil Foden's impressive goal near half-time – the substitute Raheem Sterling blasted an added-time penalty over – and as Brighton had seriously pressed as the final whistle approached City ended relieved to collect a vital three points.

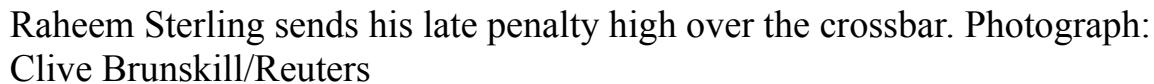
This was the first of two games Pep Guardiola's side had in hand and in winning they rise to 32 points, four behind the leaders, Manchester United.

"In the last 20 minutes we struggled because they are really good," Guardiola said. "Now it's on top Palace [here on Sunday]."

Graham Potter arranged his team in a 4-3-1-2 that featured Leandro Trossard and Percy Tau at the tip. The problem they had was the regular one when facing City: how to use whatever parsimonious possession they were allowed to hurt their opponents.

A favourite move of Guardiola's side has two or three slick passes exchanged around the area that open up a defence and create a close-range opportunity. A Kevin De Bruyne one-two with Ilkay Gündogan offered a perfect illustration: suddenly the Belgian was in on Robert Sánchez's goal but after De Bruyne took a stride and unloaded the keeper saved well.

City bombarded Brighton. A Riyad Mahrez diagonal was turned back from the left post towards Foden but Joel Veltman cleared the danger. De Bruyne stood the ball up for Mahrez near the opposite upright but his right foot let him down. Then a De Bruyne pass was touched back by a stretching Adam Webster to Sánchez who picked it up causing Darren England, the referee, to award an indirect free-kick 10 yards out.



Raheem Sterling sends his late penalty high over the crossbar. Photograph:
Clive Brunskill/Reuters

De Bruyne hit this at an onrushing Alexis Mac Allister and so again his team were denied but Brighton were having to concentrate relentlessly against the City wave. Even when Bernardo pickpocketed João Cancelo and City claimed a corner this was turned into a home attack: Ederson grabbed the delivery and Guardiola's men raced upfield, the indefatigable De Bruyne firing at Sánchez.

Finally came Foden's sweet finish, the youngster receiving a De Bruyne pass, cutting infield, then deliberately wrongfooting Sánchez by beating him at his near post with a right-foot shot. This was Foden's 10th of the campaign, making him City's top scorer in all competitions.

"Phil Foden is 20 years old, look at the starts," said Guardiola. "The amount of games, the assists compared to the bigger stars in football. He can play both sides, in the middle as a false nine. He is so clever in front of goal. That is why he deserves to play."

Despite calls for players not to hug due to Covid, John Stones – followed by others – had embraced Foden. Guardiola said: “The situation is critical and I respect the protocols of the [Premier League](#) [but] it is difficult. I don’t know if we will be able to do it. In the moment when you score a goal and one guy runs and the others don’t go to celebrate with him, it is weird and uncomfortable.”

Potter offered a similar take. “It is difficult but should be manageable – we know how serious the situation is,” he said.

City continued to purr, enjoying a level of control akin to toying with their opponents. Foden had another attempt blocked and, moments later, the 20-year-old was denied a penalty when going down under a Veltman arm.

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Brighton now saw a Davy Pröpper effort hit at Ederson. City shrugged this off and found a higher gear but still remained profligate. Mahrez missed the target, Gündogan saw a shot saved, and Bernardo Silva hit the left post.

Next, Pröpper’s skid along the turf to connect with a Bernardo ball only barely missed in another warning that Brighton would not be bowed. The catalogue of City attempts was added to by Cancelo and De Bruyne before Brighton threatened towards the close. And, at the death, came Sánchez upending De Bruyne for the penalty opportunity Sterling spurned. “Next time Raz will be better,” Guardiola said of the forward.

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[Football League blog](#)[Championship](#)

Championship at halfway: miracles at Swansea and a Rooney-led revival

Clockwise from top left: Swansea's head coach Steve Cooper, Emi Buendía of Norwich, Wycombe's Admiral Muskwe, Brentford's Josh Dasilva and Derby's interim manager Wayne Rooney. Composite: Huw Evans/Shutterstock; Getty Images; ProSports/Shutterstock; BPI/Shutterstock

Clockwise from top left: Swansea's head coach Steve Cooper, Emi Buendía of Norwich, Wycombe's Admiral Muskwe, Brentford's Josh Dasilva and Derby's interim manager Wayne Rooney. Composite: Huw Evans/Shutterstock; Getty Images; ProSports/Shutterstock; BPI/Shutterstock

Norwich are top but have not hit full tilt and Neil Warnock is targeting a remarkable ninth promotion with Middlesbrough



[Ben Fisher](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Pacesetters

Things could soon get snug at the summit but, for now, leaders **Norwich** have a four-point advantage over **Swansea**, where Steve Cooper continues to work minor miracles. For Daniel Farke the good news is that in 11 of the past 12 seasons, the team top at Christmas have clinched promotion. The bad news? For their rivals, it is that they are not yet at full tilt. Norwich have the same manager and almost an identical team to the one that secured this crown two years ago – the Tottenham loanee Oliver Skipp has slotted into midfield – but it is largely a tried and trusted formula; Tim Krul in goal, Max Aarons marauding into the box, Emi Buendía pulling off preposterous passes, and Teemu Pukki putting the ball in the net.

[Reading defender Omar Richards in line for free transfer to Bayern Munich](#)

[Read more](#)

Bournemouth, too, seem to have plenty left in the tank and in a revitalised Dominic Solanke they are also able to lean on a goalscorer who is into double figures. **Brentford** are purring and a meaningful charge from a team hungry to go one better after [losing at Wembley in August](#) appears inevitable, although they will have to utilise games in hand following a Covid-19 outbreak. [Ivan Toney, the division's joint-top scorer](#) and Josh Dasilva have been among the league's standout performers, while Vitaly Janelt has proven a typically shrewd acquisition. Swansea attack with a punch fuelled by the wing-backs Jake Bidwell and [Connor Roberts](#) – one of three outfield players to have not missed a league minute – but also boast the meanest defence, despite [the sale of Joe Rodon](#) to Tottenham in October. Last season Rhian Brewster arrived on loan to help Swansea gatecrash the play-offs and, although Jamal Lowe has risen to the task of leading the line and André Ayew has been selfless, another goalscorer may be required to help them over the line.

Play-off chasers

When Veljko Paunovic took his first **Reading** training session four days before the season, a club that had lost its way seemed destined to fail. But after a flawless start and a winter blip, they are poised to continue an unlikely promotion push, propelled by Lucas João and Michael Olise, a teenage midfielder with an eye for a killer pass. The presence of Neil Warnock on the edge of the top six is not so surprising – the wily 72-year-old has stimulated a sorry-looking **Middlesbrough** since rescuing them last summer. Duncan Watmore has been a revelation since signing in November. Warnock couldn't rack up a record ninth promotion, could he?

Neil Warnock first rescued Middlesbrough and now has them on the edge of the top six. Photograph: Athena Pictures/Getty Images

Watford are a beacon of instability but the spine of the team, now led by the former Valencia winger Xisco, remains familiar. Ben Foster, Tom Cleverley and Troy Deeney should ensure they go close, and the arrival of Philip Zinckernagel, who scored 19 goals to help Bodo/Glimt to the Norwegian title, will surely augment an underperforming attack. **Stoke** need Rabbi Matondo to fill the void left by the injured Tyrese Campbell to sustain their push, while **Blackburn**, recently boosted by the return of Bradley Dack, have no problems finding the net but have been inconsistent.

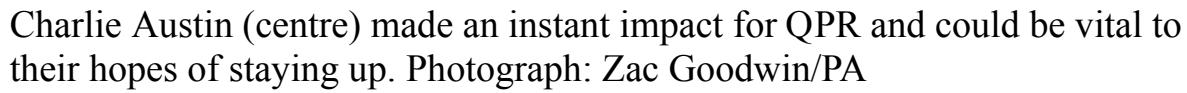
Cardiff are 15th under Neil Harris and probably the lowest-placed team with genuine play-off aspirations but belief is fading and pressure mounting before Norwich visit on Saturday, after four defeats in five matches. Valérien Ismaël has hoisted a youthful and buccaneering **Barnsley** from above one dotted line to the brink of another but the Yorkshire club must hold on to Alex Mowatt, Callum Styles and Cauley Woodrow to have a chance of maintaining their

surge. On Saturday **Preston** and **Bristol City** meet at Ashton Gate hoping to signal their ambitions of going the distance after collapsing in recent years; Alex Neil's side won two of their final 12 matches last season and the Robins two of 14.

Strugglers

This time last year Wayne Rooney was acclimatising to life in the **Derby** midfield but, after appearing to knock the quarterback role on the head for good, he is cutting his coaching teeth at the sharp end and trying to prevent them from dropping into League One. Rooney has dragged Derby off the bottom since taking interim charge but they remain light in attack – no Football League team have fewer goals – and a protracted takeover and unpaid wages undermine signs of progress.

Sheffield Wednesday have been beset by more boardroom fireworks either side of having their 12-point deduction halved – they have had more managers than away wins – but, like Nottingham Forest, have enough to stride clear of danger. The return of Charlie Austin, who needed only 39 minutes to strike in Tuesday's victory at Luton, coupled with the craft of Ilias Chair and the electric Bright Osayi-Samuel should cure **Queens Park Rangers'** attacking woes but they have been frail for some time and had taken eight points from the previous available 36. **Birmingham**, who have flirted with relegation for the past five years, are on a rotten run of six defeats in seven. Aitor Karanka must address their soft centre to arrest the slide, starting at former club Boro.



Charlie Austin (centre) made an instant impact for QPR and could be vital to their hopes of staying up. Photograph: Zac Goodwin/PA

Rotherham won more hearts after [taking Everton to extra time](#) in the FA Cup but have again found the going tough in the second tier. **Wycombe** are bottom but not adrift under Gareth Ainsworth, whose wardrobe extends to a Guns 'N' Roses face mask and whose squad includes a Zimbabwe international with Admiral Muskwe on loan from Leicester. “We really believe we’re not far off having a side that can win enough points to keep us in the division,” says Ainsworth.

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[Aston Villa](#)

Aston Villa ask Premier League to postpone Sunday's match against Everton

- Villa's first-team squad self-isolating after Covid outbreak
- Southampton move Leeds game in order to play FA Cup tie

Most of Aston Villa's squad cannot emerge from self-isolation until Sunday – the day of the Everton game. Photograph: Neville Williams/Aston Villa FC/Getty Images

Most of Aston Villa's squad cannot emerge from self-isolation until Sunday – the day of the Everton game. Photograph: Neville Williams/Aston Villa FC/Getty Images

[Paul Doyle](#)

[@Paul_Doyle](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 13.31 EST

Aston Villa have asked the [Premier League](#) to postpone their fixture against Everton on Sunday because of the Covid-19 outbreak at the Midlands club.

Villa's entire first-team squad and support staff have been in isolation since last week after nine players and five backroom staff tested positive for the virus. The club's Bodymoor Heath training ground was closed as a result.

[Tony Dorigo on England, Italy and a short stint with Souness at Torino](#)
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Public Health England guidelines demand anyone who has been infected with Covid-19 or been in close contact with an infected person must isolate for at least 10 days after the day of the test. That means most of Villa's squad and staff cannot emerge from isolation until Sunday at the earliest. Villa have concerns about the feasibility of going from isolation straight into a league game without having trained for nearly two weeks.

Villa fielded a team consisting of under-23 and under-18 players in order to complete their [FA Cup tie against Liverpool](#) last week but their league match against Tottenham, slated for Wednesday, was pushed back until later in the season with Fulham instructed to step in and fill the gap in the fixture list by playing Spurs instead.

If the match on Sunday is postponed, Villa will have played three matches fewer than some teams, since they have yet to play the game against Newcastle that was supposed to take place in December but was postponed [after a coronavirus outbreak](#) at the north-east club.

The Fiver: sign up and get our daily football email.

Villa have received guidance from PHE about how to handle the outbreak at their club. "PHE has given advice on the management of the Covid-19 cases at [Aston Villa](#)," the agency said in a statement. "This has involved detailed and independent assessment of the cases and their close contacts.

"PHE provides the same (or equivalent) advice to all workplaces on managing a Covid outbreak, and where appropriate would recommend a review of their infection control processes and compliance with these."

Saints' FA Cup tie rescheduled with Leeds game put back

Southampton's postponed FA Cup third-round tie against Shrewsbury has been rescheduled for 19 January, with next week's Premier League fixture at Leeds called off as a result. The game at Elland Road, originally set for 20 January, will now be played at a later date.

The cup tie at St Mary's had been scheduled for 9 January, but was postponed because of a coronavirus outbreak at the Sky Bet League One club. It will now take place at 8pm next Tuesday, and will be shown live on BT Sport. The winners will host Arsenal in the fourth round.

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[YouTube archive](#)[Football](#)

Liverpool v Manchester United, cracking catches and desert rallying

One of our all-time favourite Paris-Dakar images, taken from the 2000 race.

Photograph: Bruno Fablet/EPA

One of our all-time favourite Paris-Dakar images, taken from the 2000 race.

Photograph: Bruno Fablet/EPA

This week's round-up also features a maverick assist, Aimee Fuller's snowboard days and much more

[*Guardian sport*](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

- 1) The Premier League leaders once again play at Anfield on Sunday, but on this occasion Manchester United are the team top of the pile, rather than Liverpool. The clash has brought many famous moments. [There was the 3-3 draw in 1988](#), [the 3-3 draw in 1994](#), [Jerzy Dudek forgetting what his job was](#), [a John O'Shea winner](#), and, not to mention, [a brief compilation of other things](#). There was a less savoury incident in 1986 when the [United players were sprayed with CS gas](#) as they arrived at the ground. It was less dramatic last season when [Mohamed Salah sealed the win as Liverpool sauntered to the title](#).
- 2) Mathieu Valbuena gets knocked down, but sets them up again: [a remarkable sprawling assist for Olympiakos against Panetolikos](#). The consolation goal from Panetolikos was decent too, assisted by [former Nottingham Forest winger Gboly Ariyibi](#) and scored by ex-Sheffield United midfielder Aymen Tahar.
- 3) Great Britain snowboarder Aimee Fuller announced her retirement this week. [Fuller infamously celebrated an Olympic contender falling while on BBC commentary](#). Conveniently, she has her own YouTube channel, so you can learn about [a day in her life](#). Alternatively, you can just [watch Fuller on the slopes](#).
- 4) This is no time for festivities, but it didn't stop [a firework display outside Edgeley Park](#) from halting play at Stockport's FA Cup third-round tie against West Ham. Fireworks and football [have long had a relationship, of course](#), not least during [Brazil v Chile back in 1989](#).
- 5) Edwin van der Sar might come to mind when you say "incredible diving catch by a Dutchman", but Logan van Beek brought new meaning to it in New Zealand's Super Smash. The all-rounder produced a brilliant dive [and one-handed catch](#) to dismiss Brett Hampton. Meanwhile, [Alex Hales has also been causing bother to boundary riders](#) in the southern hemisphere, as he makes them collect the ball in the Big Bash. There are a number of Englishmen in fine form in Australia, including [Lancashire's Liam Livingstone](#) and [Surrey's Jason Roy](#).

If you haven't seen this catch from [@loganvanbeek](#) for [@cricketwgtninc](#) in the Dream11 [@SuperSmashNZ](#) yet, do yourself a favour and enjoy it now! [#SuperSmashNZ](#) pic.twitter.com/aAVEjE0lQc

— BLACKCAPS (@BLACKCAPS) [January 9, 2021](#)

6) The Dakar Rally concludes on Friday. [Have a look back on the first 18 years of the race](#) when it was Paris-Dakar.

Our favourites [from below the line last week](#)

- 1) Magnus Carlsen can do it with his eyes shut – [well, blindfolded anyway](#).
- 2) Escape from it all with the [latest America's Cup action](#).

Spotters badges: Danstable, whobroughtoranges

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Finances

Covid-19 impact leaves major European football clubs with €1bn loss

- Pandemic has hit players' values, says KPMG study
- Kylian Mbappé most valuable player at €200m

Clubs across Europe have lost matchday revenue because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Photograph: Franck Fife/AFP/Getty Images

Clubs across Europe have lost matchday revenue because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Photograph: Franck Fife/AFP/Getty Images

[Sid Lowe](#)

[@sidlowe](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Twenty of Europe's biggest clubs lost more than €1bn in revenue over the past year while almost 10% has been knocked off players' average values as the game struggles with the economic impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, [according to a study](#) by the market analyst KPMG.

The European Champions Report, focused on the league winners across the six major leagues and carried out by the Football Benchmark Team, found Juventus, [Paris Saint-Germain](#) and Porto had double-digit percentage drops in revenue while Bayern Munich, Liverpool and Real Madrid experienced more modest revenue decline. Madrid and Bayern still posted profits, with the Spanish club boasting the highest income with €681.2m (£607m). They are followed by Bayern's income of €607.2m, Liverpool's €557m and PSG's €540.6m.

[Top football clubs relying on transfer valuations made by volunteers](#)
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Madrid returned a profit despite income dropping by 8% through cost-cutting measures including 10% salary cuts applied to all their players and summer sales. They did not sign anyone in the summer and while they have the biggest budget in the study it has reduced by more than €200m this season. [Liverpool](#) are estimated to have the most valuable squad.

According to KPMG's figures, Kylian Mbappé is the world's most valuable player at €200m while there are four Englishmen in the top 10 – Raheem Sterling (second, €132.5m), Jadon Sancho (third, €130m), Harry Kane (fifth, €120m) and Marcus Rashford (€112.2m). Lionel Messi is 12th on €101.3m. Cristiano Ronaldo is outside the top 50, valued at €63.2m. Mohamed Salah (€122.2m), Sadio Mané (€120m) and Trent Alexander-Arnold (€107.1m) are rated as Liverpool's most valuable. Madrid's most valuable player is the defensive midfielder Casemiro.

A broader, 20-team sample of European teams calculated an aggregate loss of revenue of €1bn, with an 18.5% decline in revenue at Manchester United, 12.3% at Tottenham and 7.9% at Liverpool. Celtic were down 15.5%, while [Porto](#) had the continent's biggest drop, at 50.5%. Liverpool's decrease, a result of having to play behind closed doors and their early exit from the Champions League, where they were knocked out by Atlético Madrid just before lockdown, was mitigated by a 14% rise in commercial revue.

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Key findings of KMPG report

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Of the sampled teams – which included three from England, Spain, and Italy, plus two from the Netherlands, Germany, France, Portugal and Turkey as well as Celtic – only Sevilla and Borussia Dortmund had an increase in revenue over last season. The study cited the European Club Association figures that predict player salaries could reach more than 70% of clubs' average budget over the coming year, a figure that is unsustainable.

Liverpool's operating revenues decreased 8% year on year to €557m over the past 12 months, with a 14% decrease in matchday income a key factor. They also failed to match the €111.1m in Champions League TV money that they earned the previous season. That situation has continued into the new season, but the study calculated the value of the club to still be growing at €2.658bn.

According to a report from CIEA there was a 43% drop in transfer activity in Europe's five biggest leagues over the summer, and KPMG estimated that half a billion euros had been taken off the market values of the 500 most expensive players. On average, players' values are down 9.6%, the study found. It calculated the market value of Liverpool's squad at €1,094.3m, with Bayern at €943.4m, Madrid at €874.2m, PSG at €806.6m and Juventus at €734.8m.

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Swimming

Olympic swimming champion Klete Keller charged over US Capitol invasion

- Two-time gold medallist charged on three counts over unrest
- 38-year-old was teammate of Michael Phelps on US relay teams

Klete Keller with his gold medal after the 200m freestyle at the Pan Pacific 2006 swimming championships. Photograph: Jason Reed/Reuters

Klete Keller with his gold medal after the 200m freestyle at the Pan Pacific 2006 swimming championships. Photograph: Jason Reed/Reuters

[Tom Lutz](#)

[@tom_lutz](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 16.56 EST

Olympic swimming champion Klete Keller has been charged over the invasion of the US Capitol by a pro-Donald Trump mob last week.

The 38-year-old won two relay gold medals as a teammate of Michael Phelps at the 2004 and 2008 Olympics. Charges of knowingly entering or remaining in a restricted building, disorderly conduct in the Capitol building and impeding law enforcement were filed against Keller in a Washington DC court on Wednesday.

Olympic Champion Klete Keller Appears to Have Been in US Capitol During Insurrection - <https://t.co/JiDwxgSPogpic.twitter.com/9b0zwbLXCH>

— Swimming World (@SwimmingWorld) [January 12, 2021](#)

A number of people who saw videos of the Capitol invasion identified a tall man in a US Olympic team jacket as the 6ft 6in Keller. The man in the video was part of a crowd being pushed towards the exit of the Capitol by police. He did not appear to be acting violently.

[Golf's pitch to distance itself from Donald Trump came five years too late](#)
[Read more](#)

“We respect private individuals’ and groups’ rights to peacefully protest but in no way condone the actions taken by those at the Capitol last week,” a spokesperson for USA [Swimming](#) told the Guardian on Wednesday, before the charges against Keller were announced.

The US Olympic and Paralympic Committee CEO Sarah Hirshland did not name Keller in a statement released on Wednesday, in which she condemned the Capitol violence.

“As many of you know, there are reports of an alumni Olympic athlete involved in the horrific acts at the US Capitol building last week,” read the statement. “I strongly condemn the actions of the rioters at the US Capitol. They do not represent the values of the United States of America or of Team USA.”

Keller deleted his social media accounts earlier this week and is yet to comment on the allegations against him. [Swimming website SwimSwam reported](#) that prior to the deletion, Keller had written several posts in support of Trump.

In recent years, Keller has spoken about his struggles to adapt after his swimming career ended, but he had been working as a real estate firm, Hoff & Leigh recently. The company this week said they no longer employed Keller.

“Hoff & Leigh supports the right of free speech and lawful protest,” the company wrote in a statement. “But we cannot condone actions that violate the rule of law.”

On Wednesday, Trump became the first president in history to be impeached twice, after he incited the mob to invade the Capitol. Trump baselessly claims he lost the presidential election because of voter fraud.

Five people, including a Capitol police officer, died as a result of last week’s violence.

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Talking Horses**Horse racing**

Talking Horses: Blackmore building strong Cheltenham book of rides

Irish jockey added another major contender to her mounts at the Festival when Bob Olinger impressed at Naas

Rachael Blackmore rides Bob Olinger to victory at Naas. Photograph: Caroline Norris/INPHO/Rex/Shutterstock

Rachael Blackmore rides Bob Olinger to victory at Naas. Photograph: Caroline Norris/INPHO/Rex/Shutterstock



[Greg Wood](#)
[@Greg_Wood](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 05.22 EST

Rachael Blackmore added another major contender to her book of rides at the [Cheltenham Festival](#) on Wednesday when Bob Olinger, the 6-4 favourite, burst clear to win the Grade One Lawlor's Of Naas Novice Hurdle at Naas, marking himself out as Ireland's leading contender for the Ballymore Novice Hurdle on 17 March as he did so.

Bob Olinger went into Wednesday's race with only one win over hurdles to his name, but had previously finished a close second to Ferny Hollow, last year's Champion Bumper winner, on his debut over timber in November.

[Talking Horses: weighing room spat behind Bryony Frost investigation](#)
[Read more](#)

Blackmore, who was looking for the 11th Grade One success of her career, always looked confident on Henry de Bromhead's gelding and quickened to lead between the final two flights. Bob Olinger flew the last and crossed the line six-and-a-half lengths clear of Blue Lord, earning a top quote of 5-1 second-favourite for the Ballymore Novice Hurdle behind the 9-2 market leader, [Bravemansgame](#).

"He's always shown us a lot at home and I think today was the stamp of the kind of horse he is for the future," Blackmore said. "I wanted to ride a straightforward enough race on him. He's a simple horse to ride in that sense and I was happy most of the way."

Bob Olinger joins A Plus Tard, the 10-1 second-favourite for the Gold Cup, and Honeysuckle, the 4-1 joint-favourite for the Mares' Hurdle, in Blackmore's book of rides for the Festival, where she can also look forward to riding Aspire Tower and Notebook, both runners-up at Grade One level last time, in the Champion Hurdle and Champion Chase or Ryanair Chase respectively.

Another serious challenger for the Festival meeting emerged earlier on the card as Willie Mullins's Energumene, in the blue and white colours of owner Tony Bloom, recorded an easy success in a two-mile novice chase.

Energumene is now as short as 5-1 and no bigger than 7-1 for the Arkle Trophy on 16 March, in a market headed by Nicky Henderson's Shishkin, currently the only odds-on favourite for a race at the Festival at a top price of 5-6.

The Festival's three races for amateur riders, meanwhile, could be contested by professional jockeys this year if the current lockdown restrictions extend into March, after the British Horseracing Authority said on Wednesday that amateurs will not be permitted to take part in races under Rules after Saturday.

A handicap chase at Southwell in September, in which the veteran chaser Cillian's Well suffered a fatal fall, is reportedly the race at the centre of a BHA investigation which also involves leading rider Bryony Frost, who discussed "ongoing things that need to be sorted out" in a [recent interview](#) in the Guardian.

Frost, riding Wisecracker, was a short distance in front of Cillian's Well and Robert Dunne when the 11-year-old fell four out and suffered a fatal injury. A

subsequent exchange of words between Frost and Dunne is now understood to have led to Frost lodging a complaint with the BHA.

Thursday's best bets

Overnight snow has put paid to the North Yorkshire Grand National card (and the original nap) at Catterick, but Fontwell and Bangor have escaped the worst of the weather. **Enry Iggins (1.20)** could perhaps be a point or two shorter for the three-mile handicap chase at the latter track.

Robert Walford's runner is the outsider among a trio of novices at the top of the market but has a win to his name – unlike Kilpin – and has been raised just 3lb after getting off the mark at Doncaster last time. He went in snatches there but will race in cheekpieces for the first time and that just tips the balance in his favour at around 6-1.

Emphatic Qualm (2.50) is a drifter for the handicap hurdle later on the same card but did not do a great deal wrong at Newton Abbot last time. He will probably want further in time but heavy ground holds no fears and 10-1 is a big each-way price.

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Greg Wood's Thursday tips

Show

Lily The Pink (2.30) did not get home over three miles last time but drops back to two-and-a-half today and could have the edge over market leader Cristal Spirit, who steps up in grade after two wins in Class 5 company. **Old News (7.00)** and **No Nay Bella (7.30)** look the pick of the prices at around 6-1 and 3-1, respectively, on the Flat card at Chelmsford.

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Good Friday agreement

Labour to educate members on history of Good Friday agreement

Shadow Northern Ireland secretary wants to highlight party's role in securing peace while in government

SDLP leader John Hume in 1997 with the secretary of state for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam, both key figures in guiding Northern Ireland to peace and reconciliation. Photograph: Brian Little/PA

SDLP leader John Hume in 1997 with the secretary of state for Northern Ireland Mo Mowlam, both key figures in guiding Northern Ireland to peace and reconciliation. Photograph: Brian Little/PA

[Heather Stewart](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 19.00 EST

Labour is to launch a programme to educate its 500,000 members about the history of the [Good Friday agreement](#) and the party's role in delivering peace to Northern Ireland while in government.

Louise Haigh, the shadow [Northern Ireland](#) secretary, said that since taking on her position last year she had learned more about the aftermath of the decades-long conflict, which was brought to an end by the historic deal, ratified by referendums in [Northern Ireland](#) and the Republic, and signed in 1998.

"It's not taught well enough in schools, given that it was within the UK, it was four decades of conflict brought to an end, and is a peace process that is held up around the world as a model," she added.

The Agreement set the political framework for the power-sharing executive that governs Northern Ireland today, and tackled a string of other fraught political and social issues.

Louise Haigh took on the role of shadow Northern Ireland secretary last year.
Photograph: Liam McBurney/PA

“When the British government got in the helicopters and flew away from Stormont, that wasn’t that, it took nine more years to get the institutions back up and running,” Haigh said. “The peace process still continues, and there is still so much left to do to implement the Good Friday agreement. And that’s the biggest lesson that I’ve learned since taking on this role, about how much, 23 years on, is still left unfulfilled.”

Labour has produced educational material, including videos, for its members to highlight the history of the agreement, celebrating the role of the last [Labour](#) government and key figures such as the Northern Ireland secretary Mo Mowlam.

“We want to highlight Labour’s special role in delivering that, and the unwavering commitment of [Tony Blair](#) to securing and protecting the peace through the entirety of the last Labour government,” Haigh said. “I think that’s an important story to tell.”

Under Sir Keir Starmer, Labour has been notably keener on hailing the achievements of the Blair government than during Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership when Blair was mainly remembered as the instigator of the UK’s military involvement in Iraq.

Labour will hold four online seminars to teach members the history of the Good Friday agreement and its legacy. One of these will involve Avila Kilmurray and Monica McWilliams, members of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition, who were actively involved in the talks.

Haigh called the women’s involvement “part of the untold story of peace,” adding: “I think there’s a lot for us to learn here in our kind of fractured politics, about what can be achieved when we bring communities together and we recognise what we have in common.”

She accused the Tory government of neglecting Northern Ireland, citing as an example ministers’ threat to tear up the Northern Ireland protocol, the section of the [Brexit](#) agreement governing trade between Northern Ireland, the Republic and Great Britain.

Boris Johnson, the prime minister, insisted on Wednesday that trade had been running smoothly since the Brexit transition period ended at the end of December. But Haigh said the government was failing to acknowledge the scale of the problems facing some companies.

“A lot of the delay is completely avoidable and it was because of the government’s totally shambolic preparations and attitudes to the negotiations and to the protocol,” she said. “Some businesses, for example those delivering parcels between Britain and Northern Ireland, only received their guidance 12 hours before the transition period ended. And so it’s no surprise that we’re seeing these delays and disruption. And we need to see the government getting their heads out of the sand.”

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Tesco posts record Christmas sales; US jobless claims jump – as it happened

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[Tesco](#)

Tesco hails record Christmas fuelled by online grocery surge

Retailer posts 8% rise in sales and reveals it has had some issues with post-Brexit border controls

Sales of Tesco's Finest range were up 14% over Christmas as shoppers treated themselves. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Sales of Tesco's Finest range were up 14% over Christmas as shoppers treated themselves. Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[Zoe Wood](#)

[@zoewoodguardian](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 07.44 EST

[Tesco](#) has hailed a “record” Christmas on the back of booming online sales and customers treating themselves to its luxury Christmas food ranges.

The UK’s biggest supermarket said sales at stores open one year were up 8.1% over the key six-week Christmas trading period. That was a step up from growth of 6.7% over the three months to 28 November.

[Panettone and pink prosecco push Lidl to record UK Christmas](#)
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Ken Murphy, the [Tesco](#) chief executive, described the performance over the six weeks to 9 January as “market-leading”, adding: “We delivered a record Christmas across all of our formats and channels.” The “unprecedented demand for online groceries” meant the company delivered more than 7m orders containing 400m-plus items over Christmas.

Murphy also revealed there were some gaps on in its shelves in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as the supermarket chain grappled with new post-Brexit border controls. The problem was focused on products, such as ready meals and processed meats, which have a short shelf life, as well as citrus fruits. Tesco has hired a veterinary agency to certify products before they cross the border.

“We are working with government on both sides of the Irish Sea to smooth the flow of products and I would say that our availability in both markets remains strong,” Murphy said. “The disruption is limited to certain categories, with a particular emphasis on some short shelf-life products where every hour, let alone every day counts.”

The company was also experiencing “teething problems” at the main Channel crossing, where about a tenth of the food consumed in the UK is transported.

“Inevitably there are the bedding issues that you would expect with any new process that’s been set up as a relatively short notice,” said Murphy. “We’re working our way through and we would hope over the coming weeks and months that we will end up with a much smoother flow of product.

“I want to reassure the public that we are coping with this and availability in Northern Ireland, the Republic and mainland UK remains very strong. We see

this as a challenge that needs to be overcome and resolved ... but we don't see it as a crisis."

Last week Marks & Spencer complained about new "[rules of origin](#)" [regulations](#), which dictate whether tariffs must be paid based on where a product's ingredients come from and where it has been manufactured. However, Tesco said the issue was minimal for its business.

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With more shoppers turning to the web to buy groceries, the retailer said online sales had increased by more than 80% over the 19 weeks. That equates to nearly £1bn in extra sales. The retailer also highlighted that sales in its largest stores also grew strongly as customers favoured larger, less frequent shopping trips.

Sales of its Finest range were up 14% over Christmas while demand for plant-based products also increased strongly, with sales of its Plant Chef range up more than 90%. General merchandise sales were also up 4% driven by a strong performance in toys, home and electrical items.

Tesco, which is the UK's largest private sector employer, said about 10%, or 30,000, of its staff were off or shielding as a result of coronavirus, three-fifths the number in the initial months of the pandemic. The retailer is introducing rapid testing in its distribution centres and Murphy urged the government to prioritise vaccinating food industry workers after the vulnerable groups had been done.

The company said extra costs linked to the pandemic would be £810m in the current financial year, up almost £100m from a previous estimate. Its annual profits forecast remained unchanged despite the strong Christmas performance. Sales at its wholesale arm Booker, which Tesco bought for £3.7bn in 2017, have been dented by the closure of hospitality businesses.

Clive Black, an analyst at Shore Capital, said Tesco had done well but had not "shot the lights out". The sales growth was, he said, "a little behind our expectations. Whereas Sainsbury's has been boosted by Argos, Tesco has witnessed greater headwinds than we anticipated from Booker in the UK, where lockdowns have been weighing heavily upon the catering side of the business."

Tesco's shares closed at 241.4p, remaining flat compared to the previous day's trading.

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Primark

We'll be back, vows Primark after predicting £1bn sales hit

Sales projected to dive in main UK and European markets as Covid restrictions keep stores closed

Primark lost £540m in sales in November and December 2020. Photograph:
Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

Primark lost £540m in sales in November and December 2020. Photograph:
Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

[Jasper Jolly](#) and [Zoe Wood](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 10.59 EST

[Primark](#) has said lockdown store closures will mean missing out on more than £1bn in sales, but said it was confident of a resurgence after the Covid crisis ends, promising: “We are going to be back.”

The fast fashion retailer does not sell online, and three-quarters of its store space is closed, including all of its 190 UK shops, plus a further 115 across European markets such as Germany, Ireland and Spain.

John Bason, the finance director at Primark’s owner, [Associated British Foods](#) (ABF), said: “We are an emblem of the non-essential retail on the high street that is closed. I hate losing the sales we are going to lose but … we are going to be back. People will want to go on holiday, meet one another and shop at Primark again.”

Shop closures and other restrictions in its main UK and European markets resulted in a 30% fall in sales to £2bn during the 16 weeks to 2 January 2021. Sales for the Christmas period in 2019 totalled £2.9bn.

The retailer lost sales worth £540m during November and December, prompting it to increase its forecast of a £650m loss, made a fortnight ago, to more than £1bn in the six months to the end of February.

Primark has been hit particularly hard by the pandemic because its strategy focuses on bricks-and-mortar stores. Before the pandemic, the strategy helped it become one of the [UK’s largest clothing retailers](#), focusing on low prices rather than expensive investments in online shopping.

“Our price point is the reason that we can’t and other people cannot make money online,” said Bason. “That makes us different. When we reopened back in June I met people who said ‘thank God you’re open again, I’ve been waiting for you’. Why are they waiting? Because they can’t get what we offer elsewhere. We’re giving people what they want.”

The figures mean sales during the traditionally lucrative Christmas period have dropped for two years in a row. A year ago the retailer said it had [switched its focus to growing overseas](#) rather than in the highly competitive UK market.

ABF said a 14% like-for-like decline in [Primark](#) sales while stores remained open was “strong”, given a “significant decline” in commuting and tourism footfall in city-centre shops. Sales at out-of-town retail park locations were

higher than the year before, but shopping centres and regional high streets suffered.

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Primark will put unsold clothes for autumn and winter worth £200m in warehouses to try to sell later this year, but still expects to roughly break even because of cost cuts. However, ABF said it would honour all orders with suppliers, after fast fashion retailers were [criticised for order cancellations](#) that would effectively make workers in poorer countries bear much of the cost of reduced sales.

Primark's difficulties were balanced by a stronger performance in ABF's food and agricultural divisions, all of which grew faster than expected. Group revenue fell 13% compared with the same period last year, to £4.8bn. ABF's agriculture division, which makes animal feed, enjoyed the fastest growth, with sales up by 10% year on year.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from
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Rail transport

UK rail services to be reduced to 72% of pre-pandemic levels

Timetable cuts to be announced Thursday are less than 50% reduction in services that was expected

Train operators have focused on retaining services at morning and evening peak travel times so that key workers such as NHS staff can get to their workplace.

Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

Train operators have focused on retaining services at morning and evening peak travel times so that key workers such as NHS staff can get to their workplace.

Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

[Julia Köllewe](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Rail services in Britain will be reduced to 72% of pre-pandemic levels over the next few weeks, and passengers are being asked to check before they travel that their service is running.

The cuts, which will be announced from Thursday, are [less than the 50% reduction in services](#) that had been expected. Train operators have focused on retaining services at morning and evening peak travel times so that key workers such as NHS staff can get to their workplace.

The rail industry argues that the timetable cuts will mean a more reliable service for passengers because rail staff can catch the virus like other key workers and cause disruption to more extensive schedules.

[Rail companies were effectively nationalised last March](#) when franchises were suspended. [The rescue deal was extended in October](#), when emergency recovery contracts were agreed with rail operators ranging from six to 18 months, while the industry moves to a long-term overhaul. [Ministers are anxious to curtail costs](#) that have already risen to £9bn in additional subsidy since March.

Before [fresh lockdowns were announced in England and Scotland on 4 January](#), rail services were running at 87% of pre-pandemic levels. [According to provisional Department for Transport figures](#), passenger use of national rail was 17% of normal levels on Monday. The new Covid-19 rules instruct people to work from home wherever possible and have banned all non-essential travel.

During the first national lockdown last spring, rail services were cut to 55% of pre-Covid levels. However, passenger numbers fell by as much as 96% as people stayed home where possible. Between April and June, [passenger journeys on Britain's railways fell to the lowest level sine the mid-19th century](#). According to the rail industry regulator, 35m journeys were undertaken, which was just 8% of the total for the same period in 2019.

Following the first nationwide lockdown, a number of timetable changes were introduced to steadily increase services throughout last year as more people were able to travel again, and to increase space to allow physical distancing on trains.

Rail minister Chris Heaton-Harris said: “It is critical that our railways continue to deliver reliable services for key workers and people who cannot reasonably

work from home, and that they respond quickly to changes in demand.

“The new reduced timetable delivers that, as well as reducing the financial burden on the taxpayer. Levels of services will vary by operator and changes will come into effect steadily over the next few weeks. Passengers who are using the railways, including those who need to travel to vaccination centres, should check their route before they travel, and aim to do so outside of peak times wherever possible.”

Rail companies have sought to make travel safer, by improving cleaning and installing modern air conditioning on the vast majority of trains so the air in carriages is replaced every six minutes to reduce the risk of Covid-19 transmission.

Since the start of the pandemic, rail companies have paid out more than £500m in ticket refunds to people who were unable to travel due to the pandemic. People whose travel plans have been affected by the new Covid-19 restrictions in January can change their date of travel, request a refund or apply for a travel voucher depending on the type of ticket they have purchased, said industry body the Rail Delivery Group.

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[Homelessness](#)

Tory London mayoral candidate: homeless can save for house deposit

Shaun Bailey's claim that homeless people could afford £5,000 deposit prompts derision

Shaun Bailey said those in temporary accommodation could apply for shared ownership properties. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

Shaun Bailey said those in temporary accommodation could apply for shared ownership properties. Photograph: Henry Nicholls/Reuters

[Patrick Butler](#) Social policy editor

Wed 13 Jan 2021 14.23 EST

The Conservative candidate for [London](#) mayor has sparked controversy after suggesting that homeless people in the capital would be able to save up for a £5,000 deposit to buy a share in a newly-built affordable home.

Shaun Bailey has promised to deliver 100,000 affordable homes with his £4bn housing budget if he wins the election in April, many of them shared ownership, of which buyers would be able to purchase a share for as little as £100,000.

Asked in an interview with [Inside Housing](#) how this policy would benefit the capital's 62,670 households currently in temporary accommodation, Bailey said he would encourage them to apply for shared ownership properties.

Asked how these families would produce a £5,000 deposit and secure a mortgage, he said: "I don't think the £5,000 will [be a problem]. The mortgage application thing might be a bit tougher ... they could save for it, yeah."

Pressed by the interviewer on whether he was suggesting a homeless family in bed and breakfast accommodation could afford a deposit, Bailey replied: "Not all of them, but some people could. A full proportion of people could."

He added: "I know about that situation, I sofa surfed for years. You're right, I definitely couldn't have come up with £5,000, but those people I'm not expecting to or asking to. We'll provide social housing for them."

[Calls for Covid debt relief package as county court judgments soar](#)
[Read more](#)

Bailey, 49, said his intention was to build 100,000 affordable homes of all tenures in the capital – with shared ownership making up the largest proportion. This would "help Londoners attain a 'stake' in the city and serve those whose incomes are too high to qualify for social housing but still cannot afford to buy in the city".

Shared ownership involves residents taking out a mortgage for a 20% to 75% share in a newbuild home, often developed by housing associations, and renting the remainder.

Although it is seen as a way of giving first-time buyers a foot on the property ladder, there are also drawbacks, including annual service charges.

Bailey's comments attracted widespread bewilderment on Twitter. The Liberal Democrat councillor and candidate for London mayor, Luisa Porritt said: "Oh dear, the Tory candidate is at it again. This time he's suggesting homeless families 'save up' for a deposit. Just how out of touch can he get?"

Lambeth Labour councillor Ed Davie tweeted: "Famously, people living in poverty usually have at least £5,000 lying around – it's amazing that it hasn't occurred to them to simply buy a London property, which are well known for being really cheap. Thank God senior Tories are here to give out this good advice."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from
<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/13/tory-london-mayor-candidate-homeless-can-save-up-for-house-deposit>

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Brexit

Brexit problems halt some Scottish seafood exports to EU

Fishing industry plunged into crisis as smaller firms face huge post-Brexit obstacles

Workers process the day's catch on a trawler in Eyemouth harbour in Berwickshire. Photograph: Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images

Workers process the day's catch on a trawler in Eyemouth harbour in Berwickshire. Photograph: Andy Buchanan/AFP/Getty Images

[Julia Kollewe](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 05.26 EST

Deliveries of Scottish seafood to the EU from smaller companies have been halted until Monday, 18 January, after post-Brexit problems with health checks, IT systems and customs documents caused a huge backlog.

Scottish fishing has been [plunged into crisis](#), as lorry-loads of live seafood and some fish destined for shops and restaurants in France, Spain and other countries have been rejected because they are taking too long to arrive.

The industry's biggest logistics provider, DFDS, a Danish company, pointed to delays regarding health certificates, issues with the IT system interface between the group and local authorities, and incorrect or missing customs documentation from customers.

[Brexit costs and delays push Scottish seafood firms into crisis](#)

[Read more](#)

New Brexit rules require every box of seafood and fish to be offloaded from lorries and inspected by vets before it leaves [Scotland](#). It has taken business owners five hours per lorry to obtain a health certificate, which is required to apply for other customs paperwork.

If the issues are not resolved soon, some fear the trade, worth more than £1bn annually to Scottish businesses, could collapse.

Faced with the backlog, DFDS suspended its “groupage export service” – which allows several exporters to group products together in a single consignment – last Friday, a week after the UK’s departure from the EU.

It said it wanted to fix IT issues and train more staff to help its customers to get the customs documentation right. It is understood that single-load, single-commodity consignments are still being delivered.

DFDS said it expected to resume deliveries next Monday, but the service would take considerably longer than before Brexit, and it highlighted the importance of 100% correct paperwork.

Goods sent off on day 1, for example from Larkhall near Glasgow, are now being scheduled to arrive in Boulogne on day 3 – one to two days longer than it took to send goods to France before Brexit.

Customers have been told to wait before sending orders, until they have received written clearance and completed a “summary control document” for each export dispatch. DFDS said: “By working together, we aim to have a robust service running very soon again.”

Jimmy Buchan, chief executive of the Scottish Seafood Association, told the Guardian the problems were partly caused by the “untried and untested” new IT system, which went live on 28 December when the industry was on holiday.

“We were thrown in at the deep end. We’ve had two years to prepare for this and government are standing back and saying: ‘This is what you wished for.’”

He suggested setting up an independent clearing house for [Europe](#) in Scotland, which “clears seafood on Scotland’s soil, and it doesn’t have to stop again until it arrives in France”.

He said this would save valuable time and could enable the industry to make overnight deliveries again.

Guardian business email sign-up

The Cabinet Office minister, [Michael Gove](#), told MPs that Britain needed to secure easy access to Europe for the Scottish seafood industry.

“[Regarding] the specific issue of seafood supplies, because of their perishable nature it’s absolutely vital that we ensure the smoothest possible access to European and other markets,” he said in parliament.

At the same time, the UK government proposed to fast-track empty supermarket food lorries returning to Europe to reload, amid concerns that disruption at ports could lead to food supply shortages, the Financial Times [reported \(paywall\)](#).

A consultation document sent to the industry by the agriculture ministry on Tuesday said “the potential for further disruption remains high”.

It said: “Given the potential for border delays to impact supply chains over the next few weeks, we are proposing an emergency contingency measure ... to expedite the return of empty food lorries from the UK to the EU where they can be restocked with supplies.”

- The headline on this article was amended on 14 January 2021. The EU is not responsible for halting the exports as stated in an earlier version.
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<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/13/fresh-seafood-exports-scotland-eu-halted-fishing-brexit>

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School meals

Marcus Rashford calls for urgent review of free school meals system

Footballer's request comes after Boris Johnson admits quality of some food parcels was sub-standard

Marcus Rashford tweeted: 'It's 2021 ... now is the time for a full major review of the free school meal system.' Photograph: Oli Scarff/EPA

Marcus Rashford tweeted: 'It's 2021 ... now is the time for a full major review of the free school meal system.' Photograph: Oli Scarff/EPA

[Patrick Butler](#), [Sally Weale](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 13.45 EST

Marcus Rashford has called for an urgent and comprehensive review of the free school meals system across the UK in the wake of the controversy over the pitiful standard of some food parcels delivered to struggling families in England over the past few days by private catering firms.

The footballer's [End Child Food Poverty](#) alliance has asked the government to review whether free school meals are available to enough families, whether the level of funding is adequate, and what school food lessons can be learned from the impact of the pandemic on low-income families.

The call came hours after the prime minister, [Boris Johnson](#), admitted in a call with the Manchester United striker that the quality of some food parcels had been sub-standard.

The government on Wednesday abandoned its "food parcel first" approach and said schools could choose instead to issue vouchers to the parents of children on free school meals.

The U-turn came as Labour pointed out the government's own guidance on what should be in food parcels was strikingly similar to images of the contents of food parcels [circulating on social media](#) that the prime minister described as "unacceptable".

The Labour leader, Sir Keir Starmer, confronted Johnson with the guidance at prime ministers' questions on Wednesday, saying: "So, he blames others, but this is on his watch. The truth is, families come last under this government, whether it's exams, free school meals or childcare."

01:57

PMQs: Boris Johnson and Keir Starmer spar over 'unacceptable' free school meal parcels – video

Scores of parents had tweeted photographs earlier this week of the meagre food parcels they had received, ostensibly to provide a week's worth of lunches for their children, provoking widespread outrage. The parcels were criticised by Rashford, poverty campaigners, nutritionists and paediatricians.

On Wednesday afternoon, Johnson [tweeted](#): "I totally agree with you @MarcusRashford, these food parcels do not meet the standards we set out and we have made it clear to the company involved that this is disgraceful."

Rashford subsequently [tweeted](#): “Thanks to the efforts of individuals, businesses, charities, educators, and govt so many of our vulnerable children have been helped during this pandemic and we should be proud of what we have achieved so far. That being said, there is so much work to be done.

“This year has shown us how dangerous and life-altering many children’s access to food is and frankly too many children have been falling through the cracks, at risk of being seriously left behind.”

He added: “It’s 2021. Our eyes are open. Now is the time for a full major review of the free school meal system.”

A statement by the [Food Foundation thinktank](#), a member of Rashford’s End Child Food Poverty alliance, and published with the backing of the footballer, said the review should include:

- Widening eligibility for free school meals, and exploring whether disadvantaged children are being excluded from the scheme.
- Considering how the UK can learn from Covid-19 and its impact on children in low-income families, and the implications of this for school food policy.
- Examining the adequacy of current funding levels, and the financial transparency of contracts with school food providers.

The review should explicitly look at the eligibility for free school meals of the children of low-paid migrant workers and others with [no recourse to public funds](#), who are not eligible for help under the scheme or for other social security benefits, the statement added.

“In light of recent developments on current food provision for free school meal pupils during Covid-19 school closure, we are calling on the government to conduct an urgent comprehensive review into free school meal policy across the UK to feed into the next spending review,” it said.

It added: “The review should be debated in parliament and published before the summer holidays.”

Meanwhile, Chartwells, the catering supplier – and corporate member of Rashford’s alliance – whose food parcels were targeted for widespread criticism this week, has said it will add school breakfasts free of charge to its food parcels.

Its managing director, Charlie Brown, said: “We have been listening to parents and working out how we can best use our resources to do more to help.”

Chartwells said the breakfast offer, available from 25 January, would include a bloomer, bagel, butter, yoghurts, juice, milk, oats and fruit.

Asked to respond to Rashford’s calls for a root and branch review of free school meals policies, the Department for Education said ministers had held talks with several school food suppliers on Wednesday, including Chartwells.

The education secretary, [Gavin Williamson](#), said: “The contents of some of the food parcels we’ve all seen were clearly unacceptable and we will not tolerate substandard packages being provided to children.

“I know there are many examples of good lunch parcels and I’m grateful to those caterers who are working hard with schools to provide nutritious, balanced lunches for children.

“Where this isn’t happening, we’ve set out a clear process for parents to raise concerns so appropriate action can be taken, by contacting their schools in the first instance or calling the department helpline.

“We have also urged schools, academy trusts and councils to take robust action, including cancelling a contract where necessary.”

According to official pre-pandemic figures, about 1.4 million children in England are on free school meals. Some estimates suggest as many as 900,000 more children may have been registered since March as a result of family incomes being hit hard by the Covid crisis.

Eligibility for free school meals is restricted to children in households where parents claim out-of-work benefits, including some on universal credit.

Widening eligibility was a [key recommendation](#) of the government-commissioned national food plan published in July, and is a central demand of Rashford’s campaign.

The plan, drawn up by a panel headed by the government adviser and restaurant entrepreneur Henry Dimbleby, said 1.5 million more seven- to 16-year-olds in England in households claiming universal credit should get free school lunches, at a cost of £670m a year.

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Liverpool

Wendy Simon: the interim mayor running Liverpool from her living room

Ex-social worker says Covid has hit the city hard but is confident it can come out of the crisis stronger

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Alexandra Topping](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 10.52 EST Last modified on Wed 13 Jan 2021 14.18 EST



Wendy Simon: ‘As well as it being really intense, it’s been a time when local government has shone.’ Photograph: Christopher Thomond/Guardian

Wendy Simon was preparing for a Liverpool-wide open council Zoom meeting on Friday 4 December, when she got a message asking if she, as the council’s designated deputy, would lead the session. That wasn’t unusual, she’d done it several times before. The reason, however, couldn’t have been more out of the ordinary.

“My phone was on charge upstairs, I went to make a cup of tea and then I came back into the lounge to lock everybody else out and do the meeting and the chief exec said to me: ‘Have you not seen your phone? I need to speak to you.’”

The city’s larger-than-life mayor, Joe Anderson, had been [arrested by Merseyside police](#) on suspicion of conspiracy to commit bribery and witness intimidation, alongside four other men from the city as part of an investigation into building and development contracts in Liverpool.

Hit by this controversy at the same time as the number of coronavirus cases in the city was starting to rise exponentially, Simon took over as interim mayor with immediate effect and has been running the city out of the living room of the house she shares with her partner, daughter, son-in-law and two-year-old granddaughter ever since.

Not put off by the long days and occasional sleepless nights, she is bidding to become the first woman to do the role on a more permanent basis, this week launching her candidacy for mayor if local elections go ahead in May. Anderson has denied wrongdoing and is on bail until mid-February, but has said he will not be Labour's candidate.

"It isn't something I aspired to do, but as I've seen the enormity of what we were facing over the coming months and coming years, I do feel it is important that I put myself forward," says the softly spoken former social worker. "I am fully aware of the situation we face, and I'm confident of being able to work together with the team to get us through this together and make sure [Liverpool](#) comes through this stronger."

In the lead-up to Christmas, Liverpool's role in fighting the pandemic was being praised by the government and city leaders alike. A groundbreaking mass test-and-trace system was [piloted in the city](#) from the second week of November, identifying hundreds of asymptomatic cases. On 19 November the city region had 189 cases per 100,000 people; by 3 December that number had fallen to 88. However, by 7 January it had rocketed to 1,017 cases per 100,000, with 602 Covid beds occupied, compared with 314 in mid-November.

The crisis has been monumentally difficult for local authorities to cope with, but has highlighted the extent of the work they do and the expertise they have to offer, says Simon.

"Because of the range of services we provide, we're really at the frontline," she says. "But as well as it being really intense, it's been a time when local government has shone."

Often seen as one of the sharpest thorns in the side of any Conservative government, Liverpool has been cited as a shining example of local and national government collaboration – praise that Anderson likened to [a viper showing its teeth](#). Simon is more pragmatic, pointing out that with only 12% of the council's funding generated locally, the city has little choice.

“There’s a difference between criticising policies and trying to get the best for your city, between highlighting the unfairness and injustice and actually trying to work to bring about better policies to get support and services into the city,” she says. “That doesn’t mean we need to agree with everything that they do, because we certainly don’t.”

It could be harder for the city to maintain its position in the limelight with the shadow of criminal proceedings hanging over it. While no charges have been made against Anderson, the government has ordered an [emergency inspection of the council](#) following the arrests of the mayor and, in 2019, the council’s director of regeneration, Nick Kavanagh.

Simon was first elected to the council in 2007 and has held the tourism brief for a decade as well as working as a senior social worker – a job she resigned from at the end of last month. Seen as an Anderson loyalist over the years, she has insisted she is “her own woman”, adding that the city wants to be as transparent as possible during the corruption inquiry.

People “do still want to talk to us as a city”, she insists, but when pushed she admits the scale of the damage is not yet known. “We can’t begin to believe that it’s not devastating, for the individuals concerned and for the city as a whole,” she says. “We’ll have to assess the impact of that in the weeks and months to come.”

For now, she will continue to slog away in her living room, the door handle of which is fortunately too high for her granddaughter to reach. Despite the scale of the task ahead, she feels “that little bit of hope that you’re moving towards”, and like the city she hopes to serve, says she has to be resilient.

“People are really, really tired. And people have been scared,” she says. “But I think as a city, we still have fantastic opportunities. I think we’re a world-class city, the best city in the world,” she says. “But I would say that, wouldn’t I?”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/13/wendy-simon-the-interim-mayor-running-liverpool-from-her-living-room>

[**Coronavirus**](#)

NHS orders rapid acceleration of care home Covid vaccinations

GPs in England told to complete care home jabs by 24 January at latest

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

[**Robert Booth**](#) Social affairs correspondent

Wed 13 Jan 2021 12.00 EST Last modified on Wed 13 Jan 2021 23.37 EST

Gordon Brooks, pictured with granddaughter Millie, was diagnosed with Covid two days before the vaccine arrived. Photograph: Emma Gilmartin

NHS England has ordered a rapid acceleration of care home vaccinations in response to rising Covid outbreaks in which deaths of residents have risen to levels not seen since May.

GPs have been instructed to complete all care home vaccinations by the end of this week “wherever possible” or by 24 January at the latest. [The government’s original target was the end of the month.](#)

The urgent move came as new figures showed 1,200 care residents died from Covid in England in the first week of January. Weekly death tolls in Scotland and Wales have also been rising.

The NHS will triple [the bonus paid to doctors for every jab carried out](#) before next Monday to £30. Doses administered next week will attract £20. One senior GP told the Guardian outbreaks were threatening to slow down delivery of the jab and that vaccination had become “a race against the virus”.

“With the increased rate and spread of infections, the need to ensure that these cohorts are vaccinated as the top priority is higher than ever,” said Nikita Kanani, the NHS’s medical director of primary care in a letter to GPs, first reported by Pulse magazine.

The new target is likely to be highly ambitious. Dr Anshumen Bhagat, a GP in Enfield, said his local primary care network only started vaccinating its 1,500 care home residents on Wednesday and has so far received 500 doses of the vaccine with another 400 scheduled for next week.

Dr Richard Vautrey, chair of the BMA’s GP committee, said the order was “a huge ask” but added: “The increased availability of the AstraZeneca vaccine makes the task far easier. Care home residents and staff need to be vaccinated as quickly as possible and GPs and others involved in this mammoth programme will be doing everything possible to do this in the coming days.”

MHA, the UK’s largest not-for-profit care home operator with 90 homes, said at least a third of its residents had been vaccinated. It added it needs several days notice to prepare consent forms and logistics for each session.

The NHS said doctors may need to operate 12 hours a day, seven days per week and where there are outbreaks they must vaccinate all other staff and residents.

Even a delay of a few days in getting the vaccine into care homes can mean infection. Gordon Brooks, 77, who lives at a care home in Norfolk was hospitalised with Covid on 7 January, two days before the vaccine arrived.

“There were vaccinations in the community for the over 80s before Christmas but they haven’t concentrated on the care homes,” said his daughter, Emma Gilmartin.

“It surprised me because my dad and others are the most vulnerable. I couldn’t believe how close he was to getting the vaccine.”

One GP tasked with vaccinating 19 care homes in west London said that in some care units, up to half of residents were now sick with coronavirus and infection rates were similar to those seen in the first peak.

“We are starting to see bigger, more severe, outbreaks,” Dr Anna Down, clinical lead for care homes at the Argyle practice, told the Guardian.

“Supply [of the vaccine] is not going to be the issue moving forwards. It is logistics and making sure we get in there before the virus. We are pushing to do them all as soon as we can. It really feels like a race against the virus.”

Down and her colleagues are working evenings and weekends but two homes have only been partially vaccinated because of outbreaks. Six more are planned by the end of this week, although again outbreaks are causing delays.

The latest official data shows deaths of care home residents rising sharply. England recorded 824 Covid deaths in care homes and a further 376 care home residents died in hospitals and other settings in the week ending 8 January.

Scotland recorded 113 deaths from Covid in care homes in the week ending 4 January, also the highest number since May.

In Wales 57 care home residents died from Covid in care homes and hospitals in the week to 1 January and one in eight care homes reported infections.

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['Spy cops' scandal](#)[House of Lords](#)

Lords inflict two defeats on government over 'spy cops' bill

Amendments pass to curtail use of children and stop informants participating in murder and rape

Posters in London, 2019, from people affected by undercover policing.
Photograph: David Rowe/Alamy Stock

Posters in London, 2019, from people affected by undercover policing.
Photograph: David Rowe/Alamy Stock

Dan Sabbagh

Wed 13 Jan 2021 16.59 EST

Peers inflicted two significant defeats on the government on Wednesday evening over a bill to regulate the use of undercover informants, passing amendments to stop them participating in murder and rape, and to curtail the use of children as informants.

The lords voted by 339 to 235 [to ban the use of under-18s](#) as police or MI5 informants except in exceptional circumstances, in an amendment put forward by the children's rights campaigner and peer Beeban Kidron.

Children are frequently recruited by police seeking to prosecute "[county lines](#)" gangs who coerce youngsters and other vulnerable adults into transporting

illegal drugs around the UK.

“In every other interaction with the criminal justice system we try to remove children from criminal activity, to take them away from harm and towards safety,” Lady Kidron told fellow peers. “But before us is legislation which formalises our ability to do the opposite.”

Thirteen Conservatives also rebelled against the government, led by the former transport secretary Lord Young. He warned that if an underage informant were to be discovered and killed “the policy would be reversed the next day after a public outcry and incredulity that this was permissible”.

Peers were voting on the final set of amendments to the [covert human intelligence sources \(Chis\) bill](#), legislation put forward to codify existing guidance covering the handling of informants and undercover operatives used principally by the police and [MIS](#).

The government was also defeated by 299 to 284 on an amendment from the peer Doreen Massey, which proposed explicitly banning those acting undercover from being allowed to participate in a list of serious crimes, including murder, torture, rape or other sexual offences as they gained information.

Ministers had ruled out introducing such a list previously, arguing that creating a list of forbidden offences could give terrorists and serious criminals ways to unmask infiltrators by asking them to engage in such banned activities.

“If we create a checklist on the face of the bill we make it very easy for criminal gangs to write themselves a list of offences which amount to initiation tests,” said Lady Williams, a Home Office minister. The government also argued that because the bill would be compliant with the Human Rights Act [some offences were effectively banned, meaning that it did not amount to a “licence to kill”](#).

Campaign groups welcomed the result, arguing that it would put the UK on a par with similar western countries in setting clear limits.

Dan Dolan, deputy director of Reprieve, said: “The US, Australia and Canada all recognise the need for common sense limits to prevent undercover agents

being authorised to commit murder, torture or rape, and now the [House of Lords](#) has too.”

The defeats by the lords mean that the amendments will return in due course to the Commons. An acceptance of the amendment calling for an explicit ban on murder and other serious crime is not thought likely, but Labour sources said that Williams had indicated that the government would look again at the question of child informants.

Peers were debating the bill at the second day of its report stage. On Monday, an amendment from [Shami Chakrabarti seeking to strike out immunity for undercover agents acting within authorised guidelines](#) was defeated by 309 to 153, after the Labour leadership chose to abstain.

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US policing

US police three times as likely to use force against leftwing protesters, data finds

Law enforcement responses to more than 13,000 protests show a clear disparity in responses, new statistics show

A demonstrator is pepper sprayed shortly before being arrested during a Black Lives Matter protest in Portland, Oregon, on 15 October. Photograph: Marcio José Sánchez/AP

A demonstrator is pepper sprayed shortly before being arrested during a Black Lives Matter protest in Portland, Oregon, on 15 October. Photograph: Marcio José Sánchez/AP

Lois Beckett
[@loisbeckett](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Police in the United States are three times more likely to use force against leftwing protesters than rightwing protesters, according to new data from a non-profit that monitors political violence around the world.

In the past 10 months, US law enforcement agencies have used teargas, pepper spray, rubber bullets, and beatings at a much higher percentage at Black Lives Matter demonstrations than at pro-Trump or other rightwing protests.

Law enforcement officers were also more likely to use force against leftwing demonstrators, whether the protests remained peaceful or not.

[Maga v BLM: how police handled the Capitol mob and George Floyd activists – in pictures](#)

[Read more](#)

The statistics, based on law enforcement responses to more than 13,000 protests across the United States since April 2020, show a clear disparity in how agencies have responded to the historic wave of Black Lives Matter protests against police violence, compared with demonstrations organized by Trump supporters.

Barack Obama highlighted an [earlier version of these statistics](#) on 8 January, arguing that they provided a “useful frame of reference” for understanding Americans’ outrage over the failure of Capitol police to stop a mob of thousands of white Trump supporters from invading and looting the Capitol on 6 January, a response that prompted renewed scrutiny of the level of violence and aggression American police forces use against Black versus white Americans.

The new statistics come from the [US Crisis Monitor](#), a database created this spring by researchers at Princeton and the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data project ([ACLED](#)), a nonprofit that has previously monitored civil unrest in the Middle East, Europe and Latin America.

The researchers found that the vast majority of the thousands of protests across the United States in the past year have been peaceful, and that most protests by both the left and the right were not met with any violent response by law enforcement.

Police used teargas, rubber bullets, beatings with batons and other force against demonstrators at 511 leftwing protests and 33 rightwing protests since April, according to updated data made public this week.

The Guardian compared the percentage of all demonstrations organized by leftwing and rightwing groups that resulted in the use of force by law enforcement. For leftwing demonstrations, that was about 4.7% of protests, while for rightwing demonstrations, it was about 1.4%, meaning law enforcement was about three times more likely to use force against leftwing versus rightwing protests.

A protester confronts police officers as Trump supporters riot outside the US Capitol on 6 January. Photograph: Alex Edelman/AFP/Getty Images

The disparity in police response only grew when comparing peaceful leftwing versus rightwing protests. Looking at the subset of protests in which demonstrators did not engage in any violence, vandalism, or looting, law enforcement officers were about 3.5 times more likely to use force against

leftwing protests than rightwing protests, with about 1.8% of peaceful leftwing protests and only half a percent of peaceful rightwing protests met with teargas, rubber bullets or other force from law enforcement.

“Police are not just engaging more because [leftwing protesters] are more violent. They’re engaging more even with peaceful protesters,” Dr Roudabeh Kishi, ACLED’s director of research and innovation, told the Guardian. “That’s the clear trend.”

ACLED’s data also shows that US law enforcement agencies were more likely to intervene in leftwing versus rightwing protests in general, and more likely to use force when they intervened. American law enforcement agencies made arrests or other interventions in 9% of the 10,863 Black Lives Matter and other leftwing protests between 1 April 2020 and 8 January, compared with only 4% of the 2,295 rightwing protests.

Half of the time police made any intervention into a leftwing protest, it involved using violent force, ACLED found, compared with only about a third of the time for rightwing protests.

Overall, 94% of the leftwing demonstrations in the past ten months were peaceful, compared with 96% of the rightwing demonstrations, according to ACLED’s most recently updated data. Kishi cautioned that the process of categorizing demonstrations as peaceful did not take into account whether demonstrators who engaged in violence or property damage were responding to aggressive or violent behavior from the police.

The US Crisis Monitor previously found that, despite Trump’s rhetoric and the intense media coverage of property damage or violence during protests this summer against police violence, [more than 93% of Black Lives Matter protests](#) since April had involved no harm to people or damage to property.

The majority of the protests ACLED categorized as leftwing were Black Lives Matter demonstrations, but also included pro-Biden demonstrations; protests by left-leaning groups such as Abolish ICE, the NAACP, or the Democratic Socialists of America; and protests associated with anti-fascists or left-leaning militia groups and street movements.

The rightwing protests included pro-Trump and pro-police demonstrations, including “Blue Lives Matter” rallies; rightwing protests against coronavirus

public health restrictions; protests involving QAnon conspiracy theory supporters and others associated with the “Save Our Children” movement; and the “Stop the Steal” rallies promoting Trump’s false claims about his 2020 election loss.

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US Capitol breach

Washington DC braces as thousands of National Guard move in for inauguration day

National Guard troops are protecting the US Capitol to prevent a repeat of last week's violence, which led to five deaths.

Photograph: Michael Brochstein/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

National Guard troops are protecting the US Capitol to prevent a repeat of last week's violence, which led to five deaths.

Photograph: Michael Brochstein/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Fences go up and roads and subway stations to close down as inauguration day approaches

Staff and agencies
Wed 13 Jan 2021 22.12 EST

The National Guard has started to move into Washington en masse in an attempt to prevent violence in the run up to the inauguration of [Joe Biden](#) next week.

As Congress acted to [impeach](#) Donald Trump on Wednesday and the president urged his supporters to shun violence, the National Guard started to deploy 20,000 troops in the US capital.

At Trump's inauguration in 2016, the figure was about 8,000.

The National Guard are on a 24-hour watch in the US Capitol after last week's violence, with off-duty members catching naps in hallways and below the bust of General George Washington.

[More than 70 charged so far over Capitol attack as FBI inundated with tips](#)
[Read more](#)

Riot shields and gas masks were piled in the hallways, with large numbers of Guard members in fatigues and carrying rifles stationed around the exterior of the building.

Troops have been present at the seat of Congress since at least Friday but more were due to arrive before inauguration day, according to the city's acting police chief Robert Contee.



National Guard take a rest in the Rotunda of the US Capitol below a bust of George Washington. Photograph: Saul Loeb/AFP/Getty Images

The preparations continued as Trump said in a White House statement: “In light of reports of more demonstrations, I urge that there must be no violence, no lawbreaking and no vandalism of any kind. That is not what I stand for, and it is not what America stands for.”

New fencing and other security measures have also gone up around the building, a global symbol of democracy. A seven-foot (two-metre) high fence has been erected around the Capitol, with metal barriers and National Guard troops protecting the congressional office buildings that surround it.



Guard patrol outside the US Capitol. Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

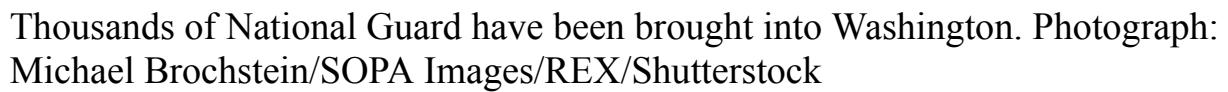
Roads near the Capitol have been closed, and the National Park Service has closed the Washington Monument to tours. Mayor Muriel Bowser has asked visitors to stay away.

“The attack on the Capitol was a violent insurrection that resulted in the spilling of American blood,” said US Representative Hakeem Jeffries, a Democrat from New York. “And that’s why extraordinary security measures have been taken.

“Officers were brutally beaten. The attackers wanted to assassinate Nancy Pelosi, hang Mike Pence, and hunt down sitting members of Congress. That’s insurrection. That’s sedition. That’s lawlessness. That’s terror,” he said.

National Guard are expected to only support law enforcement but some are available to be deputised if needed. Photograph: Kevin Dietsch/UPI/REX/Shutterstock

Washington's subway system said it would close 13 stations from Friday through to 21 January – including Union Station, a major transit hub. It is also closing the three busiest downtown stations.

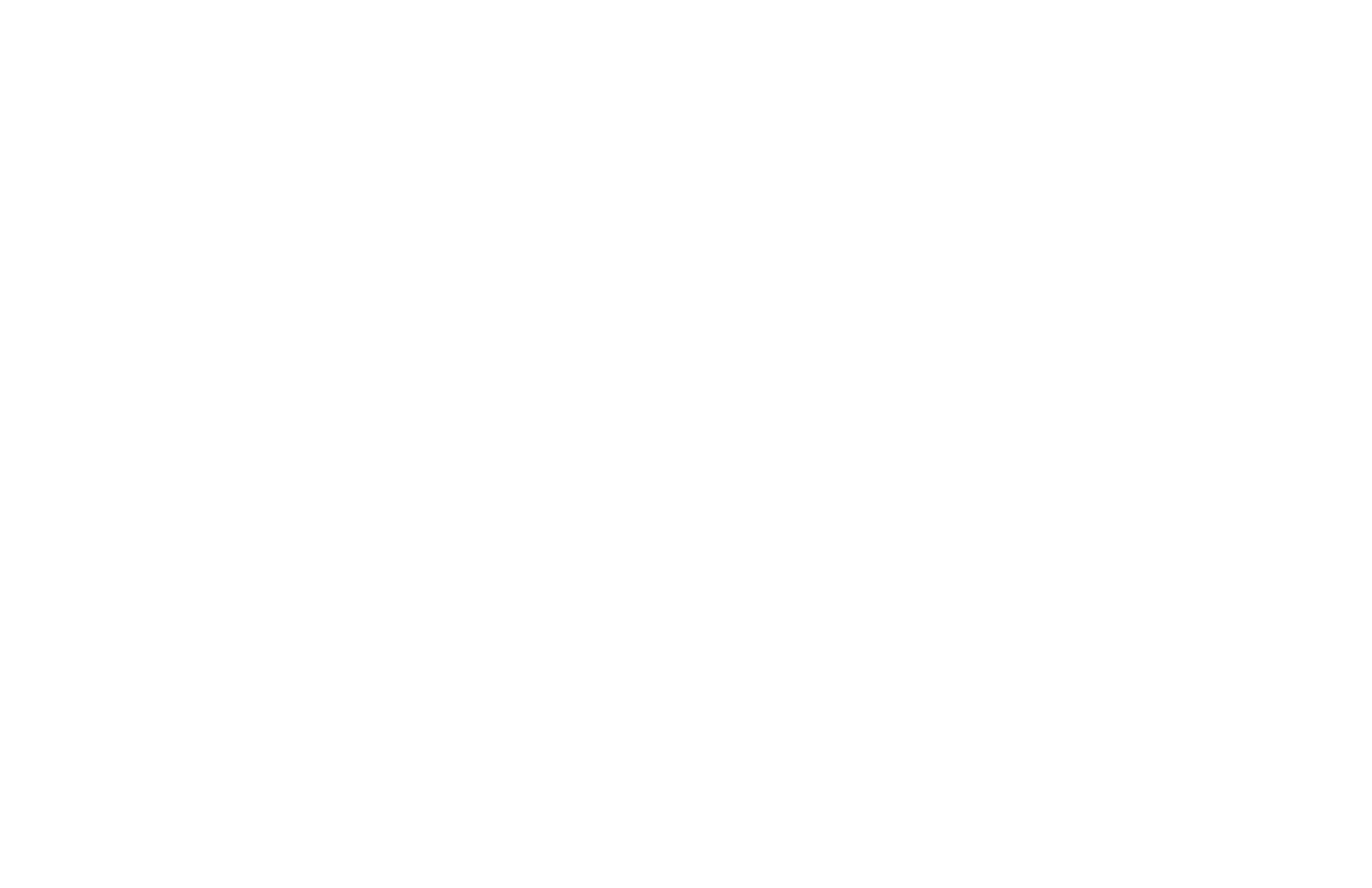


Thousands of National Guard have been brought into Washington. Photograph: Michael Brochstein/SOPA Images/REX/Shutterstock

Steve Dickson, the head of the Federal Aviation Administration, on Wednesday signed an order vowing a “zero-tolerance approach” to any disruptive air passengers after some Trump supporters caused problems on flights after the Capitol rampage. The order will last until 30 March.

Home-sharing giant Airbnb and subsidiary HotelTonight were cancelling all reservations in Greater Washington during the inauguration week.

National Guard troops have been frequently used by states to help law enforcement quell protests over the past year. However, the decision to arm them at the Capitol highlights fears about the threat of further violence in the days leading up to the inauguration.



At least 20,000 National Guard troops will be deployed in Washington by the end of the week. Photograph: Justin Lane/EPA

Officials have said it is important for the troops to be armed for their self defence and that they are still playing a supporting role to law enforcement officers. However, two officials said some National Guard troops were deputised as Capitol Police officers to carry out law enforcement functions if needed.

“The Capitol has responded in an appropriate way to meet the nature of the severe security threat that is being posed by domestic terrorists and white supremacists,” said Jeffries.



Republicans Vicky Hartzler and Michael Waltz hand pizzas to members of the National Guard on Wednesday. Photograph: Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

He said the National Guard already had been considered as part of the security bubble for the inauguration but, based on the events of last week, the security had been ratcheted up.

Acting US attorney general Jeffrey Rosen warned against further attacks and urged the public to come forward with tips about potential attacks and threats before the inauguration, including “attempts to forcefully occupy government buildings”.

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US Capitol breach

More than 70 charged so far over Capitol attack as FBI inundated with tips

Hundreds more are expected to face prosecution as acting DC attorney general warns: ‘These are only the beginning’

Aaron Mostofsky, right, seen inside the US Capitol wearing a police bulletproof vest and carrying a police shield, has been arrested on a felony count of theft of government property. Photograph: Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

Aaron Mostofsky, right, seen inside the US Capitol wearing a police bulletproof vest and carrying a police shield, has been arrested on a felony count of theft of government property. Photograph: Manuel Balce Ceneta/AP

[Adam Gabbatt](#)

[@adamgabbatt](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 12.08 EST

Sign up for the Guardian's First Thing newsletter

Nearly a week on from the attack on the Capitol by a pro-Trump mob, more than 70 people have been charged, hundreds more are expected to face arrest and prosecution, and the [FBI](#) has been inundated with more than 100,000 tips, according to authorities.

Among those charged are some of the most recognizable faces from the attack, including a [self-described](#) “QAnon Shaman”, and the man who was photographed sitting at a desk in the office of Nanci Pelosi, the Democratic speaker of the House, but in recent days, authorities have widened the net as they track people involved in the riot, with online tips helping to identify those who took part.

['Always for law and order': Chuck Norris denies being at Capitol attack after image goes viral](#)

[Read more](#)

The continuing arrests – and the FBI’s promise that more were coming – came as a Democratic congresswoman accused some Republicans of giving “reconnaissance” tours of the Capitol, and another said she feared that her Republican colleagues would out her location as the riot took place.

Mikie Sherrill, a US congresswoman from New Jersey, said in [a Facebook](#) live broadcast that she saw “members of Congress who had groups coming through the Capitol that I saw on January 5 for reconnaissance for the next day”.

“I’m going to see that they’re held accountable,” Sherrill said.

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who represents New York in the House of Representatives, said on Instagram: “I thought I was going to die” during the riot.

On Wednesday morning a man who wore a “Camp Auschwitz” sweatshirt during the riot was arrested in Virginia, after his image was widely shared on social media. [CNN reported](#) that Robert Packer, 56, was arrested and was due to appear in court in Norfolk, Virginia, on Wednesday afternoon.

A Florida firefighter was [also arrested](#), while another man was arrested in the state after he was photographed [carrying a lectern](#) through the Capitol. On Saturday a Georgia man who had been [charged](#) with entering the Capitol killed himself after being released.

As the FBI appealed for people to help identify the rioters, at least one person said they had named family members who were in Washington. Helena Duke, from Massachusetts, [responded to a video](#) of a physical encounter in DC on 5 January, which involved her mother, with the words: “hi mom remember the time you told me I shouldn’t go to BLM protests bc they could get violent...this you?”

Shattered glass from last week’s attack on Congress by a pro-Trump mob is seen in the doors leading to the Capitol Rotunda, in Washington, on Tuesday. Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

Duke proceeded to name her mother, aunt and uncle. It was unclear if the trio took part in the riot.

On Tuesday the FBI said more than 70 people had been charged over the storming of the Capitol. The agency said it had opened more than 170 case files in connection with the riot, and had received “more than 100,000 pieces of digital media” since 6 January.

“These are only the beginning,” the acting attorney general for the District of Columbia, Michael Sherwin, said at a press conference [on Tuesday](#). “This is not the end.”

The same day, Aaron Mostofsky, the son of a prominent New York City judge, was arrested in Brooklyn, New York. Mostofsky, 34, was charged with a felony count of theft of government property – a bulletproof police vest worth \$1,905 and a riot shield valued at \$265 – and released on \$100,000 bail.

Mosofsky stood out during the attack for his unusual clothing. He was wearing a fur costume and carrying a wooden staff, and at points during the riot was [filmed](#) wearing a black police vest and holding a shield.

“My belief is that this election was stolen. We were cheated. I don’t think 75 people – 75 million people voted for Trump. I think it was 85 million,” Mosofsky said in an interview with CBS inside the Capitol during the siege.

“I think certain states that have been blue for a long time … were stolen, like New York.”

Nationwide, 74.2 million people voted for Trump, and he won 46.9% of the vote. Joe Biden won New York with 60.9% of the vote to Trump’s 37.8%.

In the neighboring New York City borough of Queens, Eduard Florea, a member of the far-right Proud Boys group was arrested on Tuesday, after he reportedly attempted to organize an armed caravan to travel to Washington. Florea is not believed to have taken part in the Capitol riot, [NBC News said](#).

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Biden inauguration

Airbnb to cancel all Washington DC reservations during inauguration week

Rental platform takes action amid concerns of violence on 20 January as Joe Biden takes office

Airbnb will block and cancel all reservations in the Washington area during the week of Biden's inauguration. Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

Airbnb will block and cancel all reservations in the Washington area during the week of Biden's inauguration. Photograph: J Scott Applewhite/AP

[Kari Paul](#) and agencies

Wed 13 Jan 2021 14.29 EST

Airbnb will block and cancel all reservations in the [Washington DC](#) area during the week of the presidential inauguration.

The decision, announced by the San Francisco-based short-term rental site on Wednesday, comes amid [concerns over renewed violence](#) during the 20 January event following the attack on the US Capitol last week.

Airbnb initially announced it would review reservations in the area ahead of the inauguration and bar any guests associated with hate groups or violent activity, but later decided to widen its action.

[Trump impeachment: six House Republicans indicate they will vote in support – live](#)

[Read more](#)

The company declined to say how many reservations were cancelled. .

Guests who lost their reservations will be refunded in full and hosts will be reimbursed the money they would have earned. Reservations at HotelTonight, a service owned by Airbnb that handles last-minute deals at top-rated hotels, will also be cancelled.

“We are continuing our work to ensure hate group members are not part of the Airbnb community,” Airbnb said in a corporate blogpost.

Following the riot on 6 January, Airbnb investigated whether people involved had accounts on the platform, after learning their names through media reports and law enforcement sources. It found numerous individuals associated with known hate groups and banned them from the service.

Airbnb has had a policy of removing guests who are confirmed to be members of hate groups since 2017, when it blocked guests who were headed to a white supremacist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

Airbnb’s measures come as tech companies face increased scrutiny for their roles in enabling violence such as the Capitol event.

In the past week, Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and YouTube have [suspended Donald Trump](#) from posting on their platforms. Twitter removed more than 70,000 accounts related to QAnon, a conspiracy theory that motivated some of

those who stormed the Capitol. Facebook has suspended most uses of the phrase or hashtag “Stop the Steal”, used by those campaigning to overturn the 2020 presidential election results.

Many companies – including Airbnb – are also committing not to give political donations to the Republicans who voted against certifying the results of the election last week. Others taking that stand include Marriott, AT&T, and Walmart.

Airbnb’s political action committee donated \$866,519 to candidates and political parties in the 2020 election cycle, according to Open Secrets, which monitors campaign finance donations. Joe Biden was the biggest recipient of Airbnb donations.

The Associated Press contributed to this report

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[**Poland**](#)

Poland plans to make censoring of social media accounts illegal

Following Trump's Twitter ban, Polish government wants to protect posts that do not break nation's laws

Mateusz Morawiecki with Angela Merkel. Both have questioned tech firms' no-platforming of Trump. Photograph: Sean Gallup/Getty Images

Mateusz Morawiecki with Angela Merkel. Both have questioned tech firms' no-platforming of Trump. Photograph: Sean Gallup/Getty Images

[***Shaun Walker***](#) *Central and eastern Europe correspondent*

Thu 14 Jan 2021 00.00 EST

Polish government officials have denounced the [deactivation of Donald Trump's social media accounts](#), and said a draft law being readied in Poland will make it illegal for tech companies to take similar actions there.

“Algorithms or the owners of corporate giants should not decide which views are right and which are not,” wrote the prime minister, Mateusz Morawiecki, on [Facebook](#) earlier this week, without directly mentioning Trump. “There can be no consent to censorship.”

Morawiecki indirectly compared social media companies taking decisions to remove accounts with Poland’s experience during the communist era.

“Censorship of free speech, which is the domain of totalitarian and authoritarian regimes, is now returning in the form of a new, commercial mechanism to combat those who think differently,” he wrote.

['Four years of propaganda': Trump social media bans come too late, experts say](#)
[Read more](#)

Poland’s ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, which is ideologically aligned with Trump on many issues, has itself been accused of trying to limit freedom of speech in recent years.

Some of its members have made a habit of posting [anti-LGBT](#) or anti-refugee rhetoric. However, government officials have long claimed that people with rightwing views in Poland and abroad have been the victims of biased decisions by international tech companies.

Sebastian Kaleta, secretary of state at Poland’s Ministry of Justice, said Facebook’s decision to remove Trump’s account was hypocritical, politically motivated and “amounts to censorship”.

He said the draft law prepared by the justice ministry would make it illegal for social media companies to remove posts that did not break Polish law.

“Removing lawful content would directly violate the law, and this will have to be respected by the platforms that operate in Poland,” Kaleta told *Rzeczpospolita* newspaper.

In recent years, Facebook has moved to block content from far-right Polish organisations and politicians on numerous occasions. The MP Janusz Korwin-Mikke, aligned with the Konfederacja party, was in November shut out of his account, which had 780,000 followers, for what Facebook called repeated violations of community standards. Korwin-Mikke accused Facebook of being run by “fascists and Bolsheviks”.

Under the provisions of the Polish draft law, users would be able to file a court petition to force social media companies to restore removed content if they believed it did not violate Polish law. The court would rule within seven days and the process would be fully electronic.

Morawiecki called on the EU to introduce similar regulations. Other European politicians, including Germany’s Angela Merkel, have also expressed unease at the ban on Trump by various social media outlets, and a new EU proposal, the [Digital Services Act](#), envisions tougher regulations on tech companies, including tough fines for failure to block illegal content.

Katarzyna Szymielewicz, president of the NGO Panoptikon, said the proposed Polish law, on paper, was “quite in line with what civil society has been fighting for, against arbitrary censorship online”, noting that national laws are a better benchmark for what content should be allowed online than arbitrary decisions taken by tech companies.

However, there is a clear political context behind the Polish law, even if on paper it aligns with the thrust of the EU-wide proposals, which could take two or three years to become law.

“It would be much wiser to focus on co-creating a mature, sound EU-wide regulation,” said Szymielewicz.

PiS officials have made it clear that they believe their fight against tech companies is part of an ideological battle to defend rightwing and far-right political positions.

“Every day there is more news from the US about the mass removal of accounts criticising the left … defending the freedom of speech is again the biggest challenge of conservatives globally,” the MEP Patryk Jaki of the United Poland party, which is in the ruling coalition together with PiS, wrote on his Facebook account.

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[Trump administration](#)

Revealed: White House liaison sought derogatory info on E Jean Carroll from DoJ official

Revelation raises prospect that president's allies were pressing DoJ to dig up potentially damaging info on Trump accuser

E Jean Carroll in New York on 21 October 2020. The journalist and advice columnist sued Trump in November 2019. Photograph: John Minchillo/AP
E Jean Carroll in New York on 21 October 2020. The journalist and advice columnist sued Trump in November 2019. Photograph: John Minchillo/AP
Murray Waas

Thu 14 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

The White House liaison to the Department of Justice (DoJ), Heidi Stirrup, sought out derogatory information late last year from a senior justice department official regarding a woman who alleges she was raped by Donald Trump, according to the person from whom Stirrup directly sought the information.

The revelation raises the prospect that allies of the US president were directly pressing the justice department to try to dig up potentially damaging information on a woman who had accused Trump of sexually attacking her.

E Jean Carroll, a journalist and advice columnist, [sued Trump in November 2019](#), alleging he had defamed her when he denied her account of having been raped by him. Carroll alleges Trump sexually assaulted her in a dressing room in Bergdorf Goodman, a high-end Manhattan department store, in either late 1995 or early 1996.

[I accused Donald Trump of sexual assault. Now I sleep with a loaded gun'](#)
[Read more](#)

Trump at the time responded to her allegations by claiming Carroll was “totally lying” and attempted to ridicule her by saying “she’s not my type”. Those and similar comments led Carroll to sue him.

Stirrup apparently believed the justice department had information that might aid the president’s legal defense in the suit. The attorney who Stirrup sought information from regarding Carroll said that Stirrup approached them not long after a judge had ruled the justice department could not take over Trump’s defense.

Stirrup asked if the department had uncovered any derogatory information about Carroll that they might share with her or the president’s private counsel. Stirrup also suggested that she could serve as a conduit between the department and individuals close to the president or his private legal team.

Stirrup also asked the official whether the justice department had any information that Carroll or anyone on her legal team had links with the Democratic party or partisan activists, who might have put her up to falsely accusing the president.

Earlier, Trump himself, without citing any evidence, suggested that his political opponents were behind the allegations: “If anyone has information that the Democratic party is working with Ms Carroll or New York Magazine [to whom Carroll first told her story], please notify us as soon as possible,” Trump said.

The official from whom Stirrup sought information admonished Stirrup, telling her that her request was inappropriate.

The official recalled “conveying to her in the strongest possible terms” that it was wrong in the first place to seek out such information, and instructed her not to do so in the future.

When it was learned Stirrup had later sought out non-public information from other justice department officials about other ongoing investigations, including around election fraud, and non-public information in regards to matters of interest to the White House, Stirrup was told she was unwelcome at the justice department and banned from the building.

On 3 December the Associated Press, [citing three sources](#), reported Stirrup’s banning “after trying to pressure staffers to give up sensitive information about election fraud and other matters she could relay to the White House”. It has not been previously reported, however, that one of the issues that led to Stirrup’s banning was her seeking out information about the Carroll case.

It is unclear whether Stirrup was acting on her own or at the direction of the White House when it comes to the Carroll case.

But many see it as unlikely that Stirrup was making her inquiry entirely independently. Stirrup served as the liaison to the justice department during a period when the White House was removing its liaisons to virtually every major federal agency who they believed might be disloyal – while informing their replacements that they would no longer reporting to the agencies they were assigned to but rather directly to the White House.

A justice department spokesperson declined to comment, saying that they had been unsuccessful in uncovering more information.

The outcome of the Carroll defamation case may have immense political and legal consequences for Trump.

Steve Vladeck, a University of Texas law professor, said that if the case comes to trial, Trump will have to “provide evidence and give testimony about the underlying rape allegation” and he could run the risk of perjury.

Not testifying truthfully during a civil case can have severe consequences for a president or other high-profile political figure. When former president Bill Clinton was sued for sexual harassment, and later admitted to giving misleading testimony in that case, he was impeached by the House of Representatives, acquitted by the US Senate after a trial, and voluntarily surrendered his license to practice law for five years.

Judge Lewis Kaplan, of the southern district of New York, who considered the justice department’s attempt to take over Trump’s legal counsel, noted in [a 26 October ruling](#), that any finding that Trump defamed Carroll would probably be considered an implicit finding by a jury that Trump indeed raped Carroll.

“The question as to whether Mr Trump in fact raped Ms Carroll appears to be at the heart of her lawsuit. That is so because the truth or falsity of a defendant’s alleged defamatory statements can be dispositive of any defamation case,” Kaplan said.

In early September, the justice department, at the direction of the then attorney general, William Barr, sought to replace Trump’s private legal counsel with department attorneys, to defend him from Carroll’s lawsuit. Justice officials contended that while accusing Carroll of lying and further attacking her, Trump was acting in his official capacity as the president of the United States.

Kaplan ruled that the justice department could not take over Trump’s defense, concluding Trump’s alleged defamation of Carroll had nothing to do with his official duties as president or “the operation of government” or “within the scope of his employment”.

The justice department pledged to appeal Kaplan’s decision. But it is unlikely the justice department of Joe Biden will move forward with any such appeal.

Justice officials and outside legal observers say the department’s position that the president was acting in official capacity while allegedly defaming his alleged rape victim – from about 20 years earlier – is a position that would be unlikely to prevail with most judges.

Last week, while announcing that he was nominating the federal appeals court judge Merrick Garland to be his new attorney general, the president-elect said he would end Trump's practice of "treating the attorney general as his personal lawyer and the department as his personal firm".

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[Australian foreign policy](#)

Labor fears humanitarian crisis on Australian coal ships stranded off China

The opposition calls on the Morrison government to work to repair the relationship with Beijing as exporters face a ‘grim’ year

Workers unload coal at a Chinese port. A standoff over more than 70 ships carrying Australian coal threatens to cause an international humanitarian crisis, Labor says. Photograph: China Stringer Network/Reuters

Workers unload coal at a Chinese port. A standoff over more than 70 ships carrying Australian coal threatens to cause an international humanitarian crisis, Labor says. Photograph: China Stringer Network/Reuters

[Daniel Hurst](#) and [Ben Butler](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 03.27 EST

Australian exporters face another “grim” year driven by tensions with [China](#) while a standoff over more than 70 ships stranded with Australian coal on board threatens to cause an international humanitarian crisis, the opposition has said.

While warning of the mounting economic costs to Australia, the shadow trade minister, Madeleine King, called on the Morrison government to take a step towards repairing the relationship by pledging to “eradicate deeply offensive anti-China rhetoric” [from some backbench MPs](#).

The government says it is pressing China to resolve delays in clearing Australian coal and it has also raised fears about the welfare of seafarers who have been [stuck on the ships for months](#).

But in the latest blow to Australian coal exports to China, which are worth \$14bn a year, the Australian newspaper [reported on Thursday](#) that Beijing had told the owners of nearly 8m tonnes of Australian coal aboard 73 waiting ships to find new buyers because the cargo will not be unloaded in China.

[Richard McGregor on where to for Australia's tumultuous relationship with China in 2021](#)
[Read more](#)

Australian coal companies are generally paid when the product leaves Australia, so it is up to the buyers to try to find a new home for the coal that has already been shipped. However, there may be ramifications for Australian coal companies with the standoff undermining certainty in the trade with China.

Exports from Queensland’s four big coal ports were down by 10% in December compared to the same time in the previous year, according to data compiled by investment bank UBS.

The ports – Abbot Point, Gladstone, Hay Point and Dalrymple Bay – generally operated well below capacity all year, pushing total coal shipped last year down to levels last seen in 2017.

The trade minister, [Dan Tehan](#), said the Australian government had made a number of representations to the Chinese government on the delay in processing Australian coal, the most recent being on Wednesday.

“The Chinese government is aware of our concerns in relation to the delays in processing Australian coal and the welfare of the crew on vessels carrying Australian coal,” Tehan said in a statement.

“We continue to monitor the situation closely.”

Tehan said the current impasse involved “private commercial arrangements” and Australia was urging “all parties to reach a resolution as soon as possible”.

King said she was “enormously worried” about the coal standoff and, more broadly, the apparent lack of a plan to recover Australia’s economic relationship with its largest trading partner.

“The most immediate people caught up in that is the 1,500-odd seafarers caught on ships that hold Australian coal that was sold to China and is now looking for another home,” the opposition trade spokesperson told Guardian Australia.

“I fear that there’s a humanitarian crisis brewing off the coast of China. Given the number of nationalities involved in the seafaring industry, this becomes an international problem if this stalemate isn’t resolved.”

King said if the government was not able to get the China relationship on a better footing soon “there are grim consequences for our economy”.

“If we miss out on the new wave of Chinese growth … we will be missing out on growth to our future prosperity.”

King acknowledged the situation was difficult in light of Australian ministers being unable to secure phone calls with their Chinese counterparts, and she backed the government on national security issues – such as clamping down on foreign interference and blocking Chinese telco Huawei from the 5G network.

[China to Australia: stop treating us as a threat or we won’t pick up the phone](#)
[Read more](#)

But she said the [Coalition](#) could signal the importance it placed on the relationship by reining in anti-China rhetoric from a number of its backbenchers.

Miner Whitehaven [Coal](#) said on Thursday that as a result of the ban on Australian thermal coal China was instead using domestically produced coal and more expensive Russian, Indonesian and South African coal.

“China’s restrictions have altered seaborne coal trade flows where, instead of being delivered to China, Australian coal is now finding customers in alternate destinations including India, Pakistan and the Middle East, and traded coal historically delivered into these markets is finding its way into China,” the company said in a trading update.

It said prices for thermal coal, which is used in producing electricity, had been propped up by interruptions to supply and booming demand from the rest of Asia.

However, prices for the higher value metallurgical coal, which is used in steel production, “remain weak in the absence of Chinese buyers”, Whitehaven said.

Whitehaven gets only about 2% of its revenue from sales to China, analysts at Macquarie Group said in a note to clients.

Thermal coal prices in China were about US\$20 a tonne higher than elsewhere in December as a result of the ban, the analysts said.

Chris Richardson, a partner at Deloitte Access Economics, said the trade tensions had, in many ways, “hurt China much more than it’s hurt us”.

“That doesn’t mean there’s going to be any short-term solution, but at some stage China would have to count the cost to its own citizens,” Richardson said.

The treasurer, Josh Frydenberg, acknowledged it was a “challenging time” in the relationship but argued Australia had been a “very reliable, trusted long-term partner for China” in supplying “very high quality” coal.

Frydenberg also defended the blocking of a \$300m bid by the state-owned China State Construction Engineering Corporation to take over Australian building company Probuild, after China’s embassy accused Australia of “weaponising the concept of national security to block Chinese investment”.

Such moves, the embassy said, were “detrimental to mutual trust as well as bilateral economic and trade relations”.

Frydenberg said Australia's national interest "always comes first". Over the last six months, he said, about 20% of approved foreign investment applications included at least one Chinese party.

"That means more than 250 Chinese-related foreign investment applications have been approved," he said. "Less than a handful have not proceeded."

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Australia news

Racing pigeon that survived 13,000km journey from US to Australia now faces euthanasia

Australian quarantine authorities have contacted Melbourne man who found the bird saying they are concerned about disease threat

The racing pigeon christened Joe after arriving in a Melbourne backyard, having somehow made a 13,000km journey across the Pacific from the US.

Photograph: AP

The racing pigeon christened Joe after arriving in a Melbourne backyard, having somehow made a 13,000km journey across the Pacific from the US.

Photograph: AP

Associated Press

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.49 EST

A racing pigeon that survived a 13,000km Pacific Ocean crossing from the United States to Australia now faces being euthanised as a quarantine risk.

Kevin Celli-Bird said he discovered that the exhausted bird that arrived in his Melbourne backyard on Boxing Day had disappeared from a race in the US state of Oregon on 29 October.

Experts suspect the pigeon that Celli-Bird has named Joe, after the US president-elect, Joe Biden, hitched a ride on a cargo ship to cross the Pacific.

Celli-Bird said the Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service called him on Thursday to ask him to catch the bird, after its arrival was [reported in the media](#).

[Cicada 'super year': the familiar sound of Australian summer is louder than usual](#)

[Read more](#)

“They say if it is from America, then they’re concerned about bird diseases,” Celli-Bird said. “They wanted to know if I could help them out. I said, ’To be honest, I can’t catch it. I can get within 500mm of it and then it moves.’”

He said quarantine authorities were now considering contracting a professional bird catcher.

The quarantine service did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In 2015, the government [threatened to euthanise](#) two Yorkshire terriers, Pistol and Boo, after they were smuggled into the country by Hollywood star Johnny Depp and his ex-wife Amber Heard. Faced with a 50-hour deadline to leave Australia, the dogs made it out in a chartered jet.

Pigeons are an unusual sight in Celli-Bird’s backyard in suburban Officer, where Australian native doves are much more common.

“It rocked up at our place on Boxing Day. I’ve got a fountain in the backyard and it was having a drink and a wash. He was pretty emaciated so I crushed up

a dry biscuit and left it out there for him,” Celli-Bird said.

“Next day, he rocked back up at our water feature, so I wandered out to have a look at him because he was fairly weak and he didn’t seem that afraid of me and I saw he had a blue band on his leg. Obviously he belongs to someone, so I managed to catch him,” he said.

Celli-Bird, who said he had no interest in birds “apart from my last name”, said he could no longer catch the pigeon with his bare hands since it had regained its strength.

He said the Oklahoma-based American Pigeon Union had confirmed that Joe was registered to an owner in Montgomery, Alabama.

Celli-Bird said he had attempted to contact the owner, but had so far been unable to get through.

[Australian bird photographer of the year 2020: vote in the people's choice awards](#)

[Read more](#)

The bird spends every day in the backyard, sometimes sitting side-by-side with a native dove on a pergola. Celli-Bird has been feeding it since it arrived.

“I think that he just decided that since I’ve given him some food and he’s got a spot to drink, that’s home,” he said.

Australian National Pigeon Association secretary Brad Turner said he had heard of cases of Chinese racing pigeons reaching the Australian west coast aboard cargo ships, a much shorter voyage.

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Migration

Bad Bridgets: podcast reveals Irish emigrants' tales of poverty and prison

Loneliness and poverty made female arrivals to US turn to sex work, crime and alcohol, say historians

Two women in a kitchen, 1880s-90s. Bridget became a synonym in 19th-century American English for housemaid. Photograph: Heritage Images/Getty Two women in a kitchen, 1880s-90s. Bridget became a synonym in 19th-century American English for housemaid. Photograph: Heritage Images/Getty

Rory Carroll Ireland correspondent

[@rorycarroll72](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

The millions of Irish girls and women who emigrated to North America in the 19th and early 20th centuries tend to be remembered, if at all, as domestic servants, cooks, wives and mothers.

A reputation for diligence and rectitude cast them as the unsung heroes of a diaspora that went on to conquer US business and politics.

But it turns out there is an untold chapter in the Irish emigrant experience, because many girls and women were in fact sex workers, thieves and drunkards, even killers, and they filled the prisons of Boston, New York and Toronto.

Two Northern Ireland-based academics have excavated their stories from police, court and prison records and coined a name for the transgressors: “Bad Bridgets”.

“That image of Irish women as sexually virtuous, good wives, good mothers and obedient domestic servants was not quite the lived reality for all,” according to Elaine Farrell of Queen’s University Belfast and Leanne McCormick of Ulster University. “In fact, we were completely overwhelmed by the sheer number of Irish women in records relating to crime and punishment.”

The historians have launched a five-part [podcast series](#) titled Bad Bridgets and are working on a book based on five years of [research](#) funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. The actor [Siobhán McSweeney](#), who plays Sister Michael in Derry Girls, joined the podcast.

Bridget became a synonym in 19th-century American English for housemaid because so many women with that name worked in domestic employment.

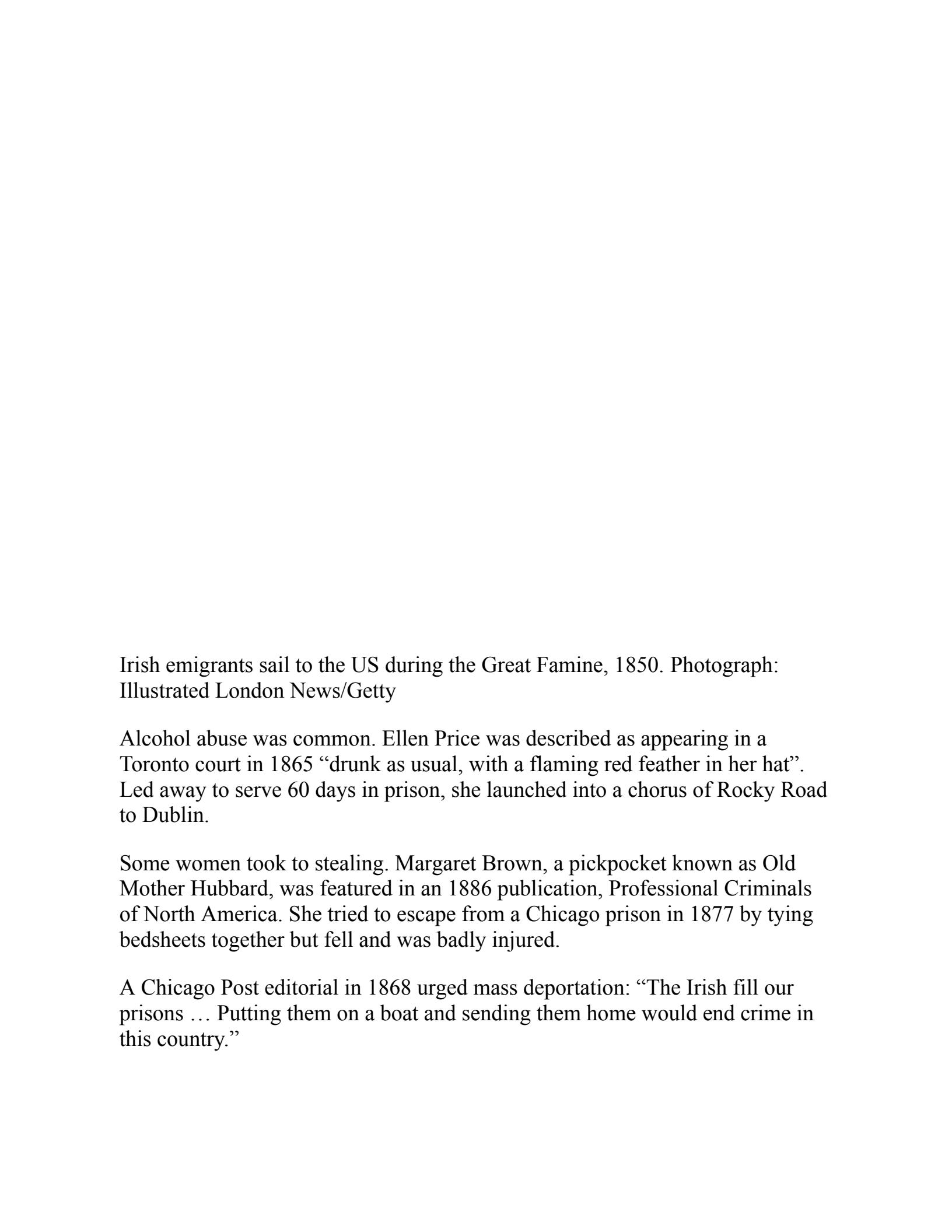
When the historians started investigating the incarceration of Irish women in US and Canadian prisons they expected high numbers but were still shocked by what they found, McCormick said. “The numbers were so huge it was difficult to manage them.”

In the 1860s, Irish people made up about a quarter of New York’s population but Irish men comprised half of the male prison population and Irish women 86% of the female prison population.

Between 1860 and 1881, at least 5,260 Irish women were imprisoned in Toronto – almost double the combined number of Canadian, English and Scottish women jailed during that time. More than a third of the 12,514 women admitted to Boston's House of Correction from 1882 to 1915 were Irish, but the Irish were just 17% of the city's population.

Back in [Ireland](#), it was assumed female emigrants were becoming good mothers and wives and bringing up good Irish-American children but many arrivals endured extreme poverty, isolation and loneliness, said McCormick. "It was thought emigrants might have drunk too much and nothing else. But of course people were up to all sorts."

Irish women were the single biggest group of foreign sex workers in New York. A 19th-century survey of 1,238 foreign-born sex workers found that 706, just over half, were Irish, including Bridget Bell, who was sentenced to 12 months in prison in 1886 for visiting a brothel. She was 13. Another young servant was jailed briefly after joining a procession of 37 women, thinking they were going to church when in fact they were heading to jail for soliciting.



Irish emigrants sail to the US during the Great Famine, 1850. Photograph:
Illustrated London News/Getty

Alcohol abuse was common. Ellen Price was described as appearing in a Toronto court in 1865 “drunk as usual, with a flaming red feather in her hat”. Led away to serve 60 days in prison, she launched into a chorus of Rocky Road to Dublin.

Some women took to stealing. Margaret Brown, a pickpocket known as Old Mother Hubbard, was featured in an 1886 publication, Professional Criminals of North America. She tried to escape from a Chicago prison in 1877 by tying bedsheets together but fell and was badly injured.

A Chicago Post editorial in 1868 urged mass deportation: “The Irish fill our prisons ... Putting them on a boat and sending them home would end crime in this country.”

Lizzie Halliday was infamous. Originally from County Antrim, she was convicted of multiple murders and became the first woman sentenced to die in New York's electric chair. The sentence was commuted on grounds of insanity. Upon Halliday's death in 1918, the New York Times called her the "[worst woman on earth](#)".

Other cases invited pity. Rosie Quinn, aged 19, was sentenced to life in 1903 for drowning her baby in the lake in Central Park. "Some of the stories are absolutely heartbreaking," said McCormick. "These women have nowhere else to turn."

Ireland and Irish America have long preferred to dwell on diaspora successes, such as John F Kennedy's rise to the White House, and Joe Biden's election win has enhanced that narrative, said the historian. Those emigrants who found no American dream, only a nightmare, she said, largely vanished from memory in "collective amnesia".

- This article was amended on 14 January 2021. Lizzie Halliday was the first woman to be sentenced to die in New York's electric chair, but not the 'only woman' as an earlier version stated.

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[Moonwatch 2024Space](#)

European Space Agency to build module for Gateway space station

Esprit module will supply communications and refuelling to international lunar station

Thales Alenia Space will build the Esprit module for the lunar Gateway space station for the ESA. Photograph: Thales Alenia Space/Briot.

Thales Alenia Space will build the Esprit module for the lunar Gateway space station for the ESA. Photograph: Thales Alenia Space/Briot.

[Stuart Clark](#)

[@DrStuClark](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

The European Space Agency (Esa) has [signed a contract](#) to begin building the module to supply communications and refuelling for the international lunar Gateway space station.

The European System Providing Refuelling, Infrastructure and Telecommunications (Esprit) will consist of two separate units. The communications system will be used by astronauts to provide data, voice and video links to and from the lunar surface. It will be mounted on the Nasa Habitation and Logistics Outpost (Halo) module, which is scheduled for launch in 2024.

Esprit's separate refuelling unit will provide the Gateway with xenon and chemical propellants that will allow the space station to maintain its orbit around the moon. It will also be used to refuel lunar landers, and potentially other spacecraft that wish to use the Gateway as an "interplanetary petrol station". In addition, the module will boast a series of observation ports, allowing 360-degree views of the moon and spacecraft as they approach and dock.

The contract to build Esprit was signed between Esa and Thales Alenia Space on 7 January. Worth €296.5m (£265m), the work will be split between Thales sites in France, Italy and the UK. Meanwhile, Nasa [plans to test-fire](#) its Space Launch System moon rocket next week.

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Employment

Nigeria launches 'biggest job creation scheme' in its history after long delay

Initiative aimed at shielding young people from economic impact of Covid-19 will provide 750,000 paid placements

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Construction workers in Lagos ... the public works programme will cost 52bn naira (\$136m).

Photograph: Akintunde Akinleye/EPA-EFE

Construction workers in Lagos ... the public works programme will cost 52bn naira (\$136m).

Photograph: Akintunde Akinleye/EPA-EFE
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[About this content](#)

Emmanuel Akinwotu, west Africa correspondent

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.15 EST

Nigeria has launched a much-delayed programme that promises to provide jobs for more than 750,000 young people amid worsening youth unemployment.

The scheme, launched this month, is being hailed by government officials as the largest job creation initiative in the country's history.

The 52bn naira (\$136m) Special Public Works (SPW) programme will target low-skilled workers. From October, it offers three-month job placements, paying 20,000 naira (\$53) a month, which is less than the minimum wage of [30,000 naira](#), but a significant help in a country where so many young people are without work.

Since 2015, the number of under 24-year-olds who are unemployed has almost tripled to [14 million](#), 40% of the youth labour force, according to Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics. About 83 million of Nigeria's population of 200 million live on less than \$1 a day. President Muhammadu Buhari caused outrage in 2018 when comments he made at a Commonwealth event in London were widely interpreted as suggesting that young people in Nigeria caused their own joblessness.

Months of dispute between politicians and the government over control of the initiative meant the much lauded programme has been delayed since the middle of last year.

Politicians and officials have attracted criticism for wanting to take an active role in selecting young people in their constituencies who qualify for the programme.

[It took me 15 trips to withdraw money. Banking is a maze for ordinary Nigerians](#)
[Read more](#)

In recent years, Nigeria's economy has suffered from a combination of dwindling oil revenues and policies widely seen as harmful to small businesses. The economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic has added to the problems.

[According to the World Bank](#), the impact of the Covid-19 outbreak will push a further 5 million people into poverty.

Festus Keyamo, Nigeria's minister for labour and employment, said the jobs programme "is also aimed at shielding the most vulnerable from the ravaging effects of the Covid-19 pandemic".

"Our target is to immediately engage the 774,000 selected unemployed Nigerians for the programme to execute carefully selected projects," he said.

The SPW is one of a number of initiatives launched by the government to provide grants, loans or short-term jobs in an attempt to improve employment prospects.

But the management and effectiveness of the SPW programme has been called into question. Critics have also said that short-term jobs, while offering much-needed cash support and experience, do little to dent long-term unemployment and poverty.

Last year, Nigeria's parliament called for the programme to be halted, amid a power-tussle between MPs and the government minister in charge of the scheme. Many MPs want some control over the distribution of jobs. "It is worthwhile for us to know how the distribution of jobs to Nigerians and those who we are representing in our constituencies is handled," one politician said, claiming the government was seeking to sideline MPs.

The application process is via a government portal.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/14/nigeria-launches-biggest-job-creation-scheme-in-its-history-after-long-delay>

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[Italy](#)

Italy facing political crisis after ex-PM withdraws party from coalition

Loss of Matteo Renzi's Italia Viva party comes as country struggles with Covid and economic crises

Matteo Renzi's manoeuvre has left observers baffled over his motives.

Photograph: Alberto Lingria/Reuters

Matteo Renzi's manoeuvre has left observers baffled over his motives.

Photograph: Alberto Lingria/Reuters

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Wed 13 Jan 2021 13.32 EST

Italy has been plunged into chaos after former prime minister [Matteo Renzi](#) withdrew his Italia Viva party from the country's ruling coalition in a largely unpopular move that could end in fresh elections.

The political meltdown, which leaves the prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, without a parliamentary majority, comes at the worst possible time for Italy as it struggles to [contain the coronavirus pandemic](#) and emerge from economic quagmire.

Renzi announced the resignation of his two ministers, Teresa Bellanova and Elena Bonetti, following weeks of clashes over a variety of issues including Italy's post-Covid economic recovery plan.

Conte could now either offer his resignation to the president, Sergio Mattarella, who could give him a mandate to try and forge a new alliance, or go to parliament for a vote of confidence.

But if he opts for the latter, it is unclear if he'll secure enough support to fill the gap left by Italia Viva's 18 senators. Other possible outcomes include Mattarella putting together a broad-based government of national unity or, failing that, calling elections.

Renzi's manoeuvre has left observers baffled over his motives. His popularity has severely plummeted since he was forced to quit as premier after [his failed referendum](#) in late 2016 and Italia Viva attracts less than 3% of voters in opinion polls.

In an Ipsos survey on Wednesday, over 70% of Italians said now was not the time for a political crisis and that they couldn't understand Renzi's motives, other than merely pursuing his own interests.

"It's much more difficult to leave a government post than to cling to the status quo," Renzi said as he announced the resignations. "We are experiencing a great political crisis, we are discussing the dangers associated with the pandemic. Faced with this crisis, the sense of responsibility is to solve problems, not hide them."

Renzi's original gripe was targeted at Conte's plans for spending the €223bn Italy is poised to receive in loans and grants from the EU to reboot its economy, arguing that the money risked being squandered on handouts rather than wisely

invested. His suggestions were taken onboard and the recovery plan was changed and approved by the cabinet late on Tuesday night, albeit with Bellanova and Bonetti abstaining from the vote.

Renzi said earlier on Wednesday the plan was a “step forward” but reiterated his grievance over Italy not tapping the EU’s bailout fund – the European stability mechanism (ESM) – in order to shore up the health service. The Five Star Movement (M5S), the largest ruling party, has always resisted this over fears it would leave Italy beholden to strict EU austerity rules.

“I don’t understand Renzi’s strategy,” said Mattia Diletti, a politics professor at Rome’s Sapienza University. “Looking from the outside it really looks like a lose-lose strategy … or maybe there is something for real that we don’t know yet.”

“I don’t believe Renzi thinks in terms of the big picture, or what the country really needs … he’s not Winston Churchill,” added Diletti.

Nicknamed the “Demolition Man”, Renzi was appointed prime minister in early 2014 after ousting Enrico Letta from power. He then resigned as leader of the centre-left Democratic party in March 2018 after a poor performance in the general elections.

Renzi in effect orchestrated the [Conte-led coalition](#) between the PD and M5S after [the collapse of the coalition government of M5S and Matteo Salvini’s far-right League](#) in August 2019. He then left the PD to establish Italia Viva, a centrist force that he said would “do politics differently”.

Wolfgang Piccoli, the co-president of the London-based research company Teneo Holdings, said Renzi was trying to regain space at the centre of politics.

“But firstly, his party is lucky if it gets 3% of the vote, and secondly and most importantly, he is one of the most despised and untrusted politicians in the country, and he’s not aware of that,” he added.

But regardless of what happens next, Piccoli said Italy would still end up with a government ill-equipped to face the country’s challenges.

“That is the real drama here,” he added. “Because regardless of who will be prime minister or whether Renzi is in or out, we’re still going to have a

coalition government with a bunch of political parties who are only there for one main reason: to avoid early elections.”

Italia Viva, M5S and PD would be trampled upon if a national ballot is held any time soon. Meanwhile the opposition, which is made up of the League, its fellow far-right partner, Brothers of Italy, and Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, could potentially secure more than 50% of the vote.

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US news

The truth is out there ... perhaps: CIA releases thousands of UFO files

- Archive made available but some documents difficult to read
- Intelligence agencies instructed to submit report to Congress

The document dump comes just as UFOs seem to have caught the attention of lawmakers in Congress. Photograph: Gabe Palmer/Alamy

The document dump comes just as UFOs seem to have caught the attention of lawmakers in Congress. Photograph: Gabe Palmer/Alamy

[Lauren Aratani](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 15.27 EST

The truth is out there. Well, maybe. Thousands of documents from the CIA on unidentified flying objects were released this week in a document dump that the agency says includes all their records on [UFOs](#).

[Trump impeachment: six House Republicans indicate they will vote in support – live](#)

[Read more](#)

The documents are currently available on [the Black Vault](#), an online archive of declassified government documents, after the site's founder John Greenewald Jr, purchased a CD-Rom the CIA had made with its UFO documents. About 2,700 pages were included in the collection, what the agency says are all the files it has on UFOs, but Greenewald notes on his website that "there may be no way to entirely verify that".

Some of the reports, including one about mysterious [explosions](#) in a Russian town and another with a first-hand [account](#) of a strange sighting of a flying object near Baku, the capital of Azerbaijan, are the sort of reads that you might expect to find in a science fiction novel rather than official government documents. But some of the documents are difficult to read, and what exactly they were used for is unclear. Greenewald told Vice's [Motherboard](#) that the intelligence agency put the documents together in an "outdated" format that makes it hard to parse the collection.

"The CIA has made it INCREDIBLY difficult to use their records in a reasonable manner," he wrote to Motherboard. "This outdated format makes it very difficult for people to see the documents, and use them, for any research purpose."

The document dump comes just as UFOs – or, as the US government calls them, unidentified aerial phenomena (UAP) – seem to have caught the attention of lawmakers in Congress.

The government funding bill Congress passed at the end of December, which included the \$900bn coronavirus stimulus, instructed the director of national intelligence and secretary of defense to release a report on UAPs in six months' time.

The Senate's intelligence committee, which wrote the [directive](#), said intelligence and defense agencies should note any "links to adversarial foreign

governments” and “the threat they pose to US military assets and installations” in the report, suggesting that lawmakers are wondering if a US adversary could be in charge of strange UFO sightings.

Three videos that were leaked from and eventually released by the US defense department in April of last year showed unidentified objects in airspace that were captured on tape during pilot training flights. The pilots could be heard noting the speed and shapes of the objects.

The former US senator Harry Reid, who was at the helm of previous efforts to investigate UFOs, retweeted the video writing: “The US needs to take a serious, scientific look at this and any potential national security implications. The American people deserve to be informed.”

I’m glad the Pentagon is finally releasing this footage, but it only scratches the surface of research and materials available. The U.S. needs to take a serious, scientific look at this and any potential national security implications. The American people deserve to be informed.

<https://t.co/1XNduvmP0u>

— Senator Harry Reid (@SenatorReid) [April 27, 2020](#)

In August of last year, the defense department created a UAP taskforce to “detect, analyze and catalog UAPs that could potentially pose a threat to US national security” after lawmakers pressured the department to make more serious inquiries into UAP sightings following the release of the videos.

Senator Marco Rubio, a Republican from Florida who leads the Senate intelligence committee, suggested in an interview with a Miami news station that lawmakers are more concerned about technological advancement from US adversaries than signs of extraterrestrial life.

“Frankly, if it’s something from outside this planet, that might actually be better than the fact that we’ve seen some sort of technological leap on behalf of the Chinese or the Russians or some other adversary,” he said.

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2021.01.14 - Climate crisis

- [Analysis Why are ocean warming records being broken year after year?](#)
- [Climate crisis Record ocean heat in 2020 supercharged extreme weather](#)
- [Environment Clothes washing linked to ‘pervasive’ plastic pollution in the Arctic](#)

[Climate consensus - the 97%](#)
[Climate change](#)

Why are ocean warming records so important?

If we want to understand global heating, we have to examine ocean temperature trends

- [Climate crisis: record ocean heat in 2020 supercharged extreme weather](#)

[John Abraham](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 04.00 EST Last modified on Thu 14 Jan 2021 11.39 EST

Coral bleaching in Kimbe Bay, Papua New Guinea. Photograph: mauritius images GmbH/Alamy Stock Photo

As if 2020 could get any worse, the latest research showed that oceans hit their highest recorded temperatures, a record that keeps getting broken year after year.

Why are the oceans so important? It is quite simple: almost all of the extra heat we gain because of greenhouse gases ultimately ends up in the oceans. In fact, the oceans absorb more than 90% of the excess heat. Consequently, if you want to understand global warming, you have to measure ocean warming.

I am part of a team of 20 climate scientists who just published new research in [Advances in Atmospheric Sciences](#). We collected temperature measurements spread out across the world's oceans – measurements that in some cases, went back to the 1950s and even earlier. These data paint an unambiguous picture of a warming planet – warming that is a direct consequence of human emission of greenhouse gases.

Ocean warming has been continuing apace for as long as we have made measurements. Scientists acknowledge year-to-year records, but the long-term trends are what matter most. Any single year that is warm or cold cannot prove or disprove global warming. The more important issue is, what happens year after year after year? Is there a trend?

[ocean warming graph](#)

The unambiguous answer is yes.

Since the oceans are huge, they absorb unbelievable amounts of energy. The most common everyday unit of energy is the joule. But for the oceans, we think about energy in terms of zettajoules. A zettajoule is equal to 1,000,000,000,000,000,000 joules. How much is this? Well, in the past year, according to our data, the Earth has absorbed about 20 zettajoules of heat, equivalent to the heat given off by 630bn common household hairdryers blowing all day and night, 360 days a year.

To check our findings, we compared our results with other institutions. We found that the US-based National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration data also ranked 2020 as the hottest year ever for the oceans. Their data showed

a much smaller warming last year compared with the preceding year, but over the long term, the data from the two groups agrees quite well. When different groups using different techniques reach similar conclusions, it adds confidence to the results.

“But people don’t live on the oceans, so why should we care?” That is a question I get all the time and the answer is clear. The oceans actually control the Earth’s weather. Approximately 70% of the planet is covered by ocean waters; when those waters heat, they in turn warm the atmosphere. Also, water evaporates from oceans into the atmosphere and the evaporation increases dramatically as temperatures rise.

Think about how humid a warm day can be compared to a cold day. By these mechanisms, oceans control both the temperature and the humidity level in the atmosphere. Consequently, oceans control the weather.

All of this affects humans. Warming oceans are creating more powerful storms, like cyclone Yasa, which recently hit the South Pacific. Some areas are becoming wetter, with heavier rainfall and flooding. Simultaneously, other areas are becoming more dry, with more intense heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires. We have seen these effects manifest with wildfires in Australia, the western US, and other locations.



A satellite image released by NASA shows Cyclone Yasa over Fiji on 15 Dec 2020 Photograph: AP

We can expect studies like ours to become routine as global warming continues. We expect to see heat records continue to be broken and weather to become more and more strange. And of course, there will be costs – in human lives and infrastructure.

But there is still time to turn this ship around. We can still do things that make the future better for us and our children. With the change in leadership in the US, we can hope things will get better. President-elect Joe Biden must rejoin the rest of the world in working to create the planet we want and that our children deserve.

John Abraham is a professor of thermal sciences at the University of St Thomas in Minnesota

- The headline was amended on 14 January 2021 to more accurately reflect the content of the article.
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2021/jan/13/why-are-ocean-warming-records-being-broken-year-after-year>

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Oceans

Climate crisis: record ocean heat in 2020 supercharged extreme weather

Scientists say temperatures likely to be increasing faster than at any time in past 2,000 years

- [Analysis: why are ocean warming records being broken year after year?](#)

A surfer at Huntington beach on the Pacific coast of the US. Scientists expect about 1 metre of sea level rise by the end of the century. Photograph: Allen J Schaben/Los Angeles Times/Rex/Shutterstock

The world's oceans reached their hottest level in recorded history in 2020, supercharging the extreme weather impacts of the climate emergency, scientists

have reported.

More than 90% of the heat trapped by carbon emissions is absorbed by the oceans, making their warmth an undeniable signal of the accelerating crisis. The researchers found the five hottest years in the oceans had occurred since 2015, and that the rate of heating since 1986 was eight times higher than that from 1960-85.

Reliable instrumental measurements stretch back to 1940 but it is likely the oceans are now at their hottest for 1,000 years and [heating faster than any time in the last 2,000 years](#). Warmer seas provide more energy to storms, making them more severe, and there were a [record 29 tropical storms in the Atlantic](#) in 2020.

[The world's oceans were the hottest ever recorded in 2020](#)

Hotter oceans also disrupt rainfall patterns, which lead to [floods, droughts and wildfires](#). Heat also causes seawater to expand and drive up sea levels. Scientists expect about 1 metre of sea level rise by the end of the century, endangering 150 million people worldwide.

Furthermore, warmer water is less able to dissolve carbon dioxide. Currently, 30% of carbon emissions are absorbed by the oceans, limiting the heating effect of humanity's burning of fossil fuels.

"Ocean warming is the key metric and 2020 continued a long series of record-breaking years, showing the unabated continuation of global warming," said Prof John Abraham, at the University of St Thomas in Minnesota, US, and one of the team behind the new analysis.

"Warmer oceans supercharge the weather, impacting the biological systems of the planet as well as human society. [Climate change](#) is literally killing people and we are not doing enough to stop it."

Recent research has shown higher temperatures in the seas are also harming marine life, with the number of [ocean heatwaves increasing sharply](#).

The oceans cover 71% of the planet and water can absorb thousands of times more heat than air, which is why 93% of global heating is taken up by the seas.

But surface air temperatures, which affect people most directly, also [rose in 2020 to the joint highest on record](#).

The average global air temperature in 2020 was 1.25C higher than the pre-industrial period, dangerously close to the 1.5C target set by the world's nations [to avoid the worst impacts](#).

The latest research, [published in the journal Advances in Atmospheric Sciences](#), showed the oceans absorbed 20 zettajoules more heat than in 2019. This is equivalent to every person on Earth running 80 hairdryers all day, every day, or the [detonation of about four atomic bombs a second](#).

The analysis assessed the heat absorbed in the top 2,000 metres of the ocean. This is where most of the data is collected and where the vast majority of the heat accumulates. Most data is from [3,800 free-drifting Argo floats](#) dispersed across the oceans, but some comes from torpedo-like bathythermographs dropped from ships in the past.

The study also reported that the sinking of surface ocean waters and upwelling of deeper water is [reducing as the seas heat up](#). This means the surface layers heat up even further and fewer nutrients for marine life are brought up from the depths.

The worldwide lockdowns resulting from the coronavirus pandemic in 2020 [cut carbon emissions by about 7%](#). While this was a record drop, it was “[not even a blip](#)” in terms of the total CO2 in the atmosphere and had no measurable effect on ocean heating.

“The fact the oceans reached yet another new record level of warmth in 2020, despite a record drop in global carbon emissions, drives home the fact that the planet will continue to warm up as long as we emit carbon into the atmosphere.” said Prof Michael Mann, at Penn State University in the US, and one of the study team. “It is a reminder of the urgency of bringing carbon emissions down rapidly over the next several years.”

Prof Laure Zanna, of New York University, said: “Continuous ocean temperature measurements, as presented in this study, are crucial to quantify the warming of the planet.”

Rising sea level driven by heating, as well as the melting of glaciers and ice caps was important, she said. “That directly impacts a significant fraction of the world’s population.”

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Plastics

Clothes washing linked to ‘pervasive’ plastic pollution in the Arctic

Polyester fibres that injure marine life were found in sea water across region

A study has found microplastics in 96 of 97 sea water samples taken from across the polar region. Photograph: Natalie Thomas/Reuters

A study has found microplastics in 96 of 97 sea water samples taken from across the polar region. Photograph: Natalie Thomas/Reuters

[Damian Carrington](#) Environment editor

[@dpcarrington](#)

Tue 12 Jan 2021 11.00 EST

The [Arctic](#) is “pervasively” polluted by microplastic fibres that most likely come from the washing of synthetic clothes by people in Europe and North America, research has found.

The most comprehensive study to date found the microplastics in 96 of 97 sea water samples taken from across the polar region. More than 92% of the microplastics were fibres, and 73% of these were made of polyester and were the same width and colours as those used in clothes. Most of the samples were taken from 3-8 metres below the surface, where much marine life feeds.

Other recent analysis estimated that [3,500tn plastic microfibres from clothes washing](#) in the US and Canada ended up in the sea each year, while modelling suggested plastic dumped in the seas around the UK was [carried to the Arctic within two years](#).

The researchers found plastic fibres at the north pole. With plastic recently discovered [at the deepest point on Earth](#), the Mariana Trench, and the [peak of Mount Everest](#), it is clear humanity’s litter has polluted the entire planet. It is known to injure wildlife that mistake it for food. People also consume microplastics [via food](#) and [water](#), and [breathe](#) them in, although the health impact is not yet known.

Much more water flows into the Arctic from the Atlantic than the Pacific, and the new research found higher concentrations of the microplastic fibres nearer the Atlantic, as well as longer and less degraded fibres.

“We’re looking at a dominance of Atlantic inputs, which means sources of textile fibres in the North Atlantic from Europe and North America are likely to be driving the contamination in the Arctic Ocean,” said Peter Ross, at Ocean Wise Conservation Association in Canada, who led the study. “With these polyester fibres, we’ve essentially created a cloud throughout the world’s oceans.”

“The Arctic is, yet again, at the receiving end of pollutants from the south,” he said. Toxic chemical pollutants including [mercury](#) and [PCBs](#) are well known at the pole. “It’s certainly cause for concern, when we realise that the Inuit people rely very heavily on aquatic foods.”

The 3-8m layer of sea water is “a biologically important area where we find phytoplankton, zooplankton, small fish, big fish, seabirds and marine

mammals, foraging looking for food”, said Ross. Large animals such as turtles, albatross, seals and whales are known to be killed by plastic and he said there was no reason to think it was different for the smaller ones.

The research is [published in the journal Nature Communications](#), and took 71 near-surface samples stretching from Norway to the north pole and then into the Canadian High Arctic. Another 26 samples were taken at depths down to 1,000m in the Beaufort Sea, to the north of Alaska.

“A dominance of polyester was evident throughout the water column, highlighting the pervasive spread of synthetic fibres throughout the waters of the Arctic Ocean,” the researchers concluded. They found an average of 40 microplastic particles per cubic metre of water.

The researchers said the type of plastic found at different depths in the oceans would depend on the density of the plastic, with buoyant polystyrene likely to float and dense PVC more likely to sink to the ocean floor. Polyester is closer to neutral buoyancy. Only a small proportion of the fibres found are thought to be from fishing gear, which use different plastics. It is possible that some of the fibres were [carried to the Arctic by winds](#).

“It is impressive how many samples they were able to take from such inhospitable places,” said Erik van Sebille, at Utrecht University in the Netherlands. “The results show again plastic is now omnipresent. The question should perhaps become ‘where don’t we find plastic yet?’”

“Plastic anywhere in the environment is an atrocity, but in the Arctic it’s probably more harmful than in most other places,” he said. “That’s because it comes on top of the dramatic and dangerous climate change that the region and its ecosystems are experiencing. [Pollution](#) could be the proverbial drop that tips the bucket, as we say in Dutch.”

Ross said individuals, clothes manufacturers, wastewater treatment companies and governments could all help stem the flow of microplastics into the Arctic: “We all have a role to play. It’s not about blaming textiles, or blaming the petrochemical complex. It’s about everybody acknowledging that this is not something that we want to see in the world’s oceans.”

Van Sebille said: “We could hardly go out and about without clothes, could we? But we should think about better textiles.”

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<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/12/clothes-washing-linked-to-pervasive-plastic-pollution-in-the-arctic>

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Documentary films

'Ignorance is bliss mentality': inside Florida's 'Disneyland for seniors'

Richard Schwartz in Some Kind of Heaven, a sly, open-hearted documentary on the Villages. Photograph: Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

Richard Schwartz in Some Kind of Heaven, a sly, open-hearted documentary on the Villages. Photograph: Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

The Darren Aronofksy-produced documentary Some Kind of Heaven explores the Baby Boomer mecca that is the Villages and asks: what happens when fantasy becomes a nightmare?

[Adrian Horton](#)

[@adrian_horton](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.34 EST

In the Villages, central Florida's sprawling, master-planned retirement community billed as "Disneyland for seniors", there is one ubiquitous presence: the golf cart. The hybrid transport abounds within the Baby Boomer mecca that's now bigger than Manhattan (and, from 2010-2017, the [fastest-growing metropolitan area](#) in the United States), zipping among the complex's lush golf courses and filling its miniaturized parking spots.

The cart is nearly a character unto itself in *Some Kind of Heaven*, Lance Oppenheim's sly, remarkably open-hearted documentary on the Villages – it darts along postcard sunsets, past signs for "Florida's friendliest home town", circles town squares and loops in a synchronized cart parade. The cart serves both a utilitarian purpose – it's a safer mode of transport than a car, especially as most residents travel small distances – and the symbol of a fantasy: why have a car if you never need to leave?

[The Reason I Jump: behind a groundbreaking film on autism](#)
[Read more](#)

Some Kind of Heaven, the debut feature from Oppenheim and executive-produced by director Darren Aronofsky, traces the outline and underside of this arresting, distinctly American vision of marketable nostalgia, in which seniors pay anywhere from the low six figures for the promise of a permanent vacation. The Villages is "designed to hide all of the problems of everyday life", Oppenheim told the *Guardian*, and it's a popular pitch: residents now number over 130,000. Designed to evoke the manicured streets and small-town familiarity of Reagan's "morning in America" ad, it's also a fundamentally conservative fantasy; over 98% of the residents are white, and Villagers [voted overwhelmingly](#) – nearly 70% – for Trump in both 2016 and 2020.

That fantasy of sustained, uninterrupted comfort has its pull, which courses throughout *Some Kind of Heaven*'s shots of watercolor sunsets and seniors letting loose to live music. "There was something relatable about living in a bubble," said Oppenheim, a south Florida native who began the project in 2018 as a short for his college thesis. Yet "there's something deeply terrifying about the fact that this is a utopian/dystopian experiment that is so wildly successful that a whole demographic of people have chosen to live inside of something like this."

In atmospheric, sumptuous shots that lean into the artifice of the town's twilight visions, *Some Kind of Heaven* zips between activities that play like a college

fair for seniors – martial arts instruction and majorettes, dance classes and tambourine groups, pickleball and water aerobics, margarita mixers and dances any night of the week. The convivial scenes offer a vision of life in the sunset years delightfully at odds with cultural assumption of old age – that it would be devoid of parties, sex, drugs, the capacity for new hobbies — framed by palm trees and watercolor skies, all while embroidering said vision with the tribulations of four actual seniors who “call into question the marketing brochure fantasy”, Oppenheim said.

Where other films and investigations have focused on the Villages’ rapid, billion-dollar development, its stark political fault-lines, or its ugly and very real racism, *Some Kind of Heaven* slinks through the illusion, tracing the currents of desire, confusion and frustration that undercut it. “It’s very easy, obviously, to make any documentary subject, but especially people who are in the Villages, to look foolish,” Oppenheim said. “I wanted to make a film that was not about elderly people; I just wanted to make a film about people, whose desires to live and express themselves were not really that dissimilar to our own.”

Filmed over 18 months between 2018 and 2019, *Some Kind of Heaven* primarily follows four seniors on the margin of the fantasy. Barbara, a widower from Boston, searches for connection through seemingly endless extracurricular options and tires of the bubble’s performance of perpetual satisfaction. The bond between Reggie and Anne, married over 50 years, strains under Reggie’s derailing foray into drugs, agnostically borrowed mysticism and slipping grip on reality, as broadcast on his YouTube page. Dennis, a roguish charmer into his 80s, prowls the Villages’ manicured streets in his van, reeling out his worn flirtation skills for a female companion and, maybe, a backdoor into Village membership.

Dennis Dean. Photograph: Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures.

The shifting sands of Reggie and Annie's marriage, Barbara's bonding over Jimmy Buffett with a potential suitor, demonstrate how, as Oppenheim put it, "there is authenticity that can happen there, even in one of the most inauthentically constructed places ever." Nevertheless the fantasy of safe spaces and Mayberry-esque streets promotes an "ignorance is bliss mentality", Oppenheim said, "which really can start hovering over to just plain ignorance".

In other words, the Villages' often vocal Republican allegiance. Numerous journalistic features have documented the Villages' increasingly hostile conservatism, its faux history, its relatively small upwelling of liberal activism, its financial ties to the GOP (billionaire founder H Gary Morse was one of the top Republican donors until his death in 2014). This summer, Villagers for Trump, an organization of more than 2,000 members, hosted a maskless, Covid-denial-filled event; a viral video, retweeted by Donald Trump, of another Villagers for Trump rally captured a man shouting "white power!" with fist in the air as he rolled past a Panera bread in, yes, a golf cart.

But the Villages' explicit, often bumper-stickered political fault-lines never intrude on *Some Kind of Heaven*, which doesn't so much avoid the subject as smudge the place's fundamental conservatism – its focus on self-actualization through planned fantasy, its overwhelming whiteness, its six-figure barrier to entry – into a haze of sunsets in paradise, swimming pools and Parrothead parties. Though Trump's name is never mentioned in the film, "I wouldn't call this an apolitical movie," Oppenheim said. "I wanted to make something that was more engaged with the ideas of the Trump presidency, or a body of people who do believe in those kinds of ideas that Trump believes in." *Make America Great Again* does, after all, sprout from the same bedrock of constructed nostalgia as the Villages' movie-set Main Street.

The "insane lengths people will go to to cocoon themselves inside of a fantasy or a dream," he added, "felt so much more immediately interesting and relevant ... than just making a 'here's the Trump club,' 'here's the Democrat club,' this is how they face off."

Barbara Lochiatto. Photograph: Photo courtesy of Magnolia Pictures

Observing said cocoon translates into a remarkably un-condescending movie; there's palpable joy to be found in scenes of conviviality between the people often shunted to the margins of society, dismissed as dispensable by the many during the pandemic, whose interiority, growth and capacity for change is generally masked or ignored. The Villages may be a homogeneous, Swiss cheese fantasy of the sunset years, but that doesn't preclude the fantasy from holding some genuine revelations, often captured in attentive, warm closeup – Barbara's acting class journey from passive audience to self-excavating participant, Anne's ginger steps toward an identity outside her husband and literally dancing on her own in a crowd.

Ultimately, Oppenheim said he saw the project as "sort of a hopeful movie", that revels in the fact that "maybe in your eighth or ninth or seventh decade on this planet, you still may be as hot of a mess as you were when you were in your second decade on this planet, and that's totally fine."

Whether audiences find that prospect depressing or soothing depends on one's personal idea of what life could look like when there's assuredly less time left on the clock than passed before. But the vision, however limited, of exploration and frivolity late in life tips toward hope. "Especially right now, when we have a lot of time on our hands and we're stuck inside and we have to kind of find ways to improve our lives, I think the quest to better yourself is always a worthwhile one," Oppenheim said. "Seeing that for elderly people should hopefully illustrate that point for everybody."

- Some Kind of Heaven is released digitally in the US on 15 January and in the UK at a later date

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<https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jan/14/some-kind-of-heaven-the-villages-florida-film>

[Armie Hammer](#)

Armie Hammer drops out of Jennifer Lopez film amid social media controversy

Hammer was due to appear opposite Lopez in the action comedy Shotgun Wedding but has requested to step away

Armie Hammer has dropped out of upcoming film Shotgun Wedding alongside Jennifer Lopez. Photograph: Todd Williamson/E! Entertainment/NBCU Photo Bank/Getty Images

Armie Hammer has dropped out of upcoming film Shotgun Wedding alongside Jennifer Lopez. Photograph: Todd Williamson/E! Entertainment/NBCU Photo Bank/Getty Images

Guardian staff and agencies

Wed 13 Jan 2021 21.16 EST

Armie Hammer has dropped out of an upcoming film with Jennifer Lopez after messages allegedly sent by the actor were leaked online. Hammer has described the messages and social media response to them as an online attack, calling them vicious and spurious.

Hammer, star of movies including *The Social Network* and *Call Me By Your Name*, had been set to appear opposite Lopez in action comedy *Shotgun Wedding*. However, he will no longer take the role.

A production spokesman told the PA news agency: “Given the imminent start date of *Shotgun Wedding*, Armie has requested to step away from the film and we support him in his decision.”

[Call me by my dead wife's name: can Netflix persuade us we need another *Rebecca*?](#)

[Read more](#)

Hammer, 34, became the focus of social media commentary over the weekend after explicit and disturbing messages alleged to have been sent by him were circulated online.

Hammer said in a statement to *The Hollywood Reporter* on Wednesday: “I’m not responding to these bullshit claims but in light of the vicious and spurious online attacks against me, I cannot in good conscience now leave my children for four months to shoot a film in the Dominican Republic. Lionsgate is supporting me in this and I’m grateful to them for that.”

Shotgun Wedding will be directed by *Pitch Perfect* filmmaker Jason Moore and follows a couple who get cold feet before they are due to walk down the aisle. Things are complicated further when the wedding party is hijacked by criminals.

Hammer played the Winklevoss twins in *The Social Network* and starred opposite Timothee Chalamet in acclaimed drama, *Call Me By Your Name*.

He most recently appeared opposite Lily James in a Netflix adaptation of *Rebecca*.

- *With Press Association*
-

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Fiction

Slash and Burn by Claudia Hernández review – memories of war and motherhood

A former insurgent and her daughters navigate life after wartime in an intense narrative of hope and despair

‘At the heart of *Slash and Burn* is a woman who joins a guerrilla movement.’
Photograph: Luis Robayo/AFP/Getty Images

‘At the heart of *Slash and Burn* is a woman who joins a guerrilla movement.’
Photograph: Luis Robayo/AFP/Getty Images

[John Self](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

In her 1983 book *Salvador*, [Joan Didion](#) wrote that El Salvador during its 13-year civil war was “not a culture in which a high value is placed on the definite”, but that “terror is the given of the place”. Both characteristics are vividly honoured in Claudia Hernández’s *Slash and Burn*. It shares with [Anna Burns’s Milkman](#) a focus on how women cope in a conflict made by men; like *Milkman*, this is a story that could come from only one place, but is carefully unspecific in its details, leaving country and characters unnamed. At its heart is a woman who joins a guerrilla movement, becoming a *compañera* in the war after suffering abuse by soldiers who terrorise the locals. But the horrors of her experience are a prelude, and most of the book is about the future that during the fighting seemed unreachable.

Several years after the war, the woman has four daughters, though one of them lives in Paris, having been sold to a French family to fund the insurgent cause (there is no “good” side here). Paris represents another world, elusive yet containing everything the woman desires. We see-saw with her through hope and despair: when her daughter does come home for a time, it’s only to tour the country talking to other families who have also lost children.

The novel is controlled and defined by its style: long, tightly knitted paragraphs of intricate memories with no direct speech. The sustained interiority of the narrative makes for an intensive reading experience, but it’s a tribute both to Hernández’s careful structure and to Julia Sanches’s translation that the reader is only briefly disoriented each time the narrative passes from mother to daughter to sister. Men, whose best option during the war was to be a deserter, remain largely absent afterwards, and make themselves unwelcome when they do appear.

What *Slash and Burn* – named after a method of agriculture both destructive and regenerative – shows is the difficulty of creating a new life after war or other trauma. The mother is unsure how to identify herself: with her *nom de guerre* or her birth name? Has life returned to normal, or begun anew? Her daughters struggle with the opportunities for education and travel that the “success” of the war has opened for them. Because all in all, we are powerfully reminded, “none of it was under their control. It may never have been.”

- *Slash and Burn* by Claudia Hernández, translated by Julia Sanches, is published by And Other Stories (RRP £11.99). To order a copy go to guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply.

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Documentary films

MLK/FBI review – startling study of the war against Martin Luther King

This documentary throws the bureau's appalling dirty-tricks campaign into sharp focus but is frustratingly reticent on other, more contentious issues

Unanswered questions ... MLK/FBI
Unanswered questions ... MLK/FBI



Peter Bradshaw

[@PeterBradshaw1](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

The FBI's secret campaign of bugging, harassment and defamation against [Martin Luther King Jr](#) in the 60s is the subject of this startling but sometimes frustratingly reticent and guarded documentary. This poisonous dirty-tricks campaign continued until King's assassination in Memphis in 1968, a murder that the bureau was somehow unable to prevent, despite its fanatical round-the-clock surveillance of King as well as its loudly proclaimed dedication to crimefighting.

It is now a matter of record that King was a flawed human being and had extramarital sex, but this is an enduringly mysterious part of his public image. (Even Ava DuVernay's very fine biopic account of King in her 2014 movie [Selma](#), starring David Oyelowo, tactfully romanticises these indiscretions.) The bureau's audio tapes of alleged meetings in hotel rooms were finally, in 1977, handed over to the National Archives by order of a federal judge but sealed –

they cannot be released until 2027 at the earliest. What exactly will they prove? Anything at all? All we have right now are the typescripts of the agents' highly subjective summary reports.

This film from Sam Pollard, based largely on the work of Pulitzer-winning historian David J Garrow, shows how bizarrely toxic and dysfunctional the FBI's campaign was, an ongoing secret war that involved running informants within the civil rights movement – a painful and even tragic aspect of this history that probably deserves a documentary of its own. Bureau director J Edgar Hoover was incensed by King's leftist associations, and by his international celebrity, especially after he was awarded the Nobel peace prize in 1964. After chancing on evidence of his adultery, Hoover hoped to use this to undermine him, and with extraordinary spite circulated the tapes to King's wife Coretta and even to church leaders and the press, apparently hoping (in vain) that someone would go public.

There was even a suggestion that King was present at a rape – and this film, very gingerly indeed, comes close to hinting that there might one day be a #MeToo case to answer. But wait. Where is the proof here? Where is the naming of names? Surely the bureau, with all the dark powers at its command, could have induced one of King's alleged mistresses to come forward and go public? Apparently not. It is a question that this film does not fully address, although it certainly gives us a queasily detailed picture of Hoover's pure paranoid nastiness.

- MLK/FBI is on digital platforms from 15 January.

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[Shakira](#)

Shakira becomes latest artist to sell rights to catalogue of hits

Colombian singer-songwriter sells rights to her 145-song catalogue for undisclosed sum

Shakira is the most successful female Latin singer of all-time, with more than 80m album sales to her name. Photograph: Clive Brunskill/Getty Images

Shakira is the most successful female Latin singer of all-time, with more than 80m album sales to her name. Photograph: Clive Brunskill/Getty Images

[Mark Sweeney](#)

[@marksweney](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 12.42 EST

The Colombian singer Shakira has become the [latest big name artist](#) to cash in on her catalogue of hits, selling the publishing rights to the London-based music royalties investment firm Hipgnosis.

The most successful female Latin singer of all-time, with more than 80m album sales to her name, [Shakira](#) has sold the rights to her 145-song catalogue for an undisclosed sum. The three-time Grammy award winner's string of hits, which began with the release of her first album in 1991 at the age of 13, include Hips Don't Lie, Whenever, Wherever and the 2010 Fifa World Cup song Waka Waka.

"Being a songwriter is an accomplishment that I consider equal to and perhaps even greater than being a singer and an artist," said Shakira. "At eight years old, long before I sang, I wrote to make sense of the world. I know Hipgnosis will be a great home for my catalogue."

The streaming boom has encouraged investors to put their cash into companies like Hipgnosis, a London stock market-listed outfit, which receives a cut of the royalties from the songs it owns each time they are played on the radio, streamed, or used in places like department stores, as well as income from sales of albums, singles and use in TV adverts and films. Hipgnosis, which was co-founded by the legendary producer Nile Rodgers, has raised £1.2bn from investors since launching in 2018, and has acquired more than 120 catalogues to date.

Last month, Bob Dylan sold the publishing rights to his entire catalogue of 600 songs, including Blowin' in the Wind and Knockin' on Heaven's Door, to Universal Music for an [estimated \\$300m \(£220m\) in the biggest music publishing deal in decades.](#)

[Stars with evergreen hits](#) such as Dolly Parton – who controls the rights to 3,000 songs including I Will Always Love You, the 1992 cover of which by Whitney Houston was a global phenomenon, and 9 to 5 – have said [they are considering selling up](#) as part of "estate planning" as they get nearer to the end of their careers. Others include Barry Manilow, Chrissie Hynde and Stevie Nicks, the Fleetwood Mac singer and solo artist who sold a majority stake in her catalogue for \$100m to the music publisher Primary Wave.

Hipgnosis has said that it has already identified a pipeline of catalogues worth more than £1bn that it is in talks about buying this year. Last week, the

company announced three deals paying an estimated \$150m for a 50% share of the rights to Neil Young's 1,180 songs, purchased the catalogue of the former Fleetwood Mac guitarist Lindsey Buckingham and reached a deal with the super-producer Jimmy Iovine.

Iovine, who co-founded the headphones maker Beats with Dr Dre which was subsequently snapped up by Apple for \$3bn in the tech firm's largest ever deal, has production rights to a 259-track catalogue that includes albums created with John Lennon, Bruce Springsteen and Tom Petty and the Heartbreakers. He also co-produced 8 Mile, the 2002 film starring Eminem, which included the mega-hit Lose Yourself, and the movie Get Rich or Die Tryin', which starred the rapper 50 Cent.

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Film

Archive review – anyone for a posthuman wife? She comes with an off switch

A lonely computer scientist in the year 2038 secretly works on an android version of his wife who died in a car crash – is it romantic, or something more sinister?

Playing God ... Theo James in Archive
Playing God ... Theo James in Archive

Cath Clarke

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

British illustrator and visual-effects director Gavin Rothery makes his feature debut with this artificial intelligence thriller: a tale of love, death and robotics

that has some nicely creepy moments. Set in 2038, it centres on lonely computer scientist George Almore (Divergent's Theo James), who is holed up in a remote research facility in Japan secretly working on an android version of his wife Jules (Stacy Martin); she has died in a car crash. His prototype, J3 (also played by Martin), is his closest yet to the real thing: a highly advanced humanoid with spookily pale skin who looks like she might be the ghost of his dead wife. Poor old J1 and J2, his earlier, clunkier prototypes: they look on bitterly as the newer, sleeker model gets all George's attention.

The movie opens with sweeping helicopter shots over a snowy forest. Inside the concrete bunker-like facility, Rothery works wonders with a modest budget (he was behind the look of Duncan Jones's *Moon*), creating an ungimmicky nearish future that looks a lot like today. When George's corporate bosses threaten to pull the plug on his research, he hurries to put the finishing touches to J3 – a task involving the contents of a fridge-like archive unit containing his dead wife's consciousness. George is surrounded by the robot versions of Jules. J1 is boxy, non-verbal and baby-like. J2 is a little more advanced: she can speak, and behaves like a teenager, huffing jealously when George removes her legs to give to J3.

In the end, George is playing God – creating a woman not from a rib but electrical components and computer programming. The script's take on this is romantic: here is a man who'll do whatever it takes to be reunited with his wife. I couldn't help finding it a bit more sinister; when J2 misbehaves, George orders her back to her docking station. He is in control. (Anyone for a posthuman wife? She comes with an off switch.) And the final ta-da revelation felt a bit contrived. Still, Archive is refreshingly non-cerebral – and that's a compliment. It's a sci-fi movie that wants to entertain, not deliver a lecture on AI.

- On digital formats from 18 January.

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Food and drink

Pongal is comfort food for south India's harvest season – plus the recipe

Pongal is both a harvest festival, which starts today, and the rice and dal breakfast dish eaten to mark its arrival

‘A study in restraint’ ... pongal (top, centre) is a rice and dal dish that involves minimal use of spices. Photograph: Shoba Narayan

‘A study in restraint’ ... pongal (top, centre) is a rice and dal dish that involves minimal use of spices. Photograph: Shoba Narayan

Shoba Narayan

Thu 14 Jan 2021 01.30 EST

I stand in my kitchen, in the liminal light between dreams and dawn, trying to contain my delight. Normally, I am a late and grouchy riser but today is Pongal – the harvest festival celebrated across southern India, particularly Tamil Nadu, in mid-January – which gives me the opportunity to eat its namesake food, one that I love.

There are two kinds of pongal: a sweet one made with *jaggery* (palm sugar) and this savoury *ven* (white) pongal, a simple dish made with rice and split mung dal. It is a study in restraint, unusual for India and almost Japanese in its minimal use of spices. Heartier than porridge, it is a vegetarian's chicken soup, the epitome of comfort food. When served along with *idlis* (steamed rice dumplings) and *dosas* (thin, crispy pancakes), it forms a perfect south Indian breakfast.

It is also served at wedding breakfasts.

While I lived in New York years ago, my Sunday routine after a night on the tiles was to walk to [Pongal restaurant](#) on Lexington Avenue and order copious amounts of it. When I holed up in London for a month to write a piece, I told chef Sriram Aylur of Quilon restaurant that while his Michelin-starred tasting menu was exquisite, what I truly craved was my grandmother's pongal. "You and me both," he laughed.

So here I stand in my kitchen, pouring the rice and mung dal into the pressure cooker. I want to have the dish ready before sunrise, so we can worship the sun as we usually do on this day.



A floor decoration of the harvest festival at a Hindu temple. Photograph: Chamila Karunarathne/EPA

This year, Pongal falls on 14-18 January. It is a time when we decorate our homes with symbols of the harvest. I have tied two tall sugarcane stalks on either side of my front door. There they stand, like exuberant if emaciated knights, guarding the threshold. Young turmeric, plentiful in the market at this time of year, is laid out on banana leaves, which we will feed to the cows tomorrow. My earthenware “pongal pot,” decorated with white designs, has mango leaves tied around the rim. Garlands of fragrant jasmine and marigolds are strung on every doorway. There is green everywhere I look.

I walk to the terrace and draw a design on the floor with rice flour. Orange light fills the sky. It is time. My husband and two daughters troop in. Together we carry trays of fruits, vegetables and flowers out to the terrace. The pongal pot takes pride of place in the centre.

The sun rises. We touch our palms together in a namaste and pray to Surya, the sun god. As we stand quietly, savouring the new light, the fragrance of the pongal rises up and tickles our nostrils.

“*Pongal-o Pongal*,” calls my husband.

“*Pongal-o Pongal*,” we echo his wish. May the harvest be bountiful.

Then, we go in, to sample this perfect dish on what will surely be a perfect day.

Savoury pongal

Serves 2

100g rice, ideally not basmati because you want the grains to stick together, so any medium- to short-grain rice

60g mung dal

½ tsp cumin seeds, lightly crushed

¼ tsp asafoetida

3cm piece fresh ginger, chopped

700-750ml water, or add as required

12 cashew nuts, halved or quartered

10 black peppercorns

A few curry leaves

1 tbsp ghee or clarified butter

½ to 1 tsp salt (as required)

Roast the mung dal on a low heat until aromatic. Pour into a bowl, add the rice and water and pour the whole thing into the pressure cooker, adding the ginger, asafoetida and salt. Pressure cook on a medium to high heat for 10 to 12 minutes until the texture of thick porridge. (If you do not have a pressure cooker, you can make the pongal in a pot or pan on the stove-top. Simply follow the recipe and cook the rice, lentils in 800-950ml cups water for 30-40 minutes. Do add more water if needed.)

Heat the ghee in a separate pan, add cumin seeds and fry until they sputter, then add the cashews. Stir over a low heat until golden. Add a few curry leaves and black peppercorns, then pour this over the pongal. Mix well and serve hot with coconut chutney or sambar.

- Shoba Narayan's latest book is [Food & Faith – A Pilgrim's Journey Through India](#)

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Dementia

How everyday objects can improve quality of life for people with dementia

A new training programme in care homes shows how mundane tasks like making a drink or polishing is good for residents' wellbeing

Kellyn Lee, who developed the material citizenship programme, with care home staff Charlotte Gilbert and Becci Fletcher outside the home in Hampshire.

Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

Kellyn Lee, who developed the material citizenship programme, with care home staff Charlotte Gilbert and Becci Fletcher outside the home in Hampshire.

Photograph: Martin Godwin/The Guardian

[Juliet Rix](#)

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.30 EST

“When you woke this morning the clothes you planned to wear were gone. The shower gel smelt weird – it wasn’t your usual. There was no hairdryer to dry your hair. You wanted to make a hot drink but you had no access to a kettle ... How is your day going? How do you feel? Welcome to the lives of many people with dementia living in care homes.”

This is the opening of a new training programme for care home staff developed by Dr Kellyn Lee, chartered psychologist and research fellow in ageing and dementia at the University of Southampton. Called material citizenship, it aims to get staff thinking about the importance of mundane, functional objects to our lives and identities, and how giving their residents agency over these things can significantly improve their wellbeing.

Some [850,000 people in the UK](#) are living with dementia and about 70% of care home residents have the condition or severe memory problems. So anything that delivers a better quality of life to these people without a huge input of resources is very valuable, says Charlotte Gilbert, manager of Brendoncare Knightwood, a care community near Eastleigh, Hampshire, which includes the 20-bed Knightwood Court care home.

Gilbert and the care home’s senior care assistant, Becci Fletcher, were among five staff from Knightwood who participated in the first one-day material citizenship course (moved online due to Covid). They credit the training with improving their practice as well as making them feel good about their work and the difference they can make – a welcome morale boost, mid-pandemic. Crucially, they say, it has “definitely” made life better for people in their care.

“One of our residents really wanted to polish her own room with a particular polish,” says Gilbert. Initially this was seen as unnecessary: the cleaning staff were there to clean. “But now we’ve got her the polish she wanted. She polishes her room and it makes it smell like home.”

“Another resident goes around collecting up all the trays after breakfast,” adds Fletcher. “Before the training we would say, ‘don’t worry, we’ll do that’ but now we let her do it. She enjoys it. She feels she’s looking after people and it gives her more sense of worth.”

Lee first became concerned about the culture in care homes while working in the sector as a 19-year-old student. “It was awful – all these people sitting in chairs waiting for something to happen, or getting agitated and being labelled

‘challenging’.” The idea that ordinary objects might prove a key to improving wellbeing came later through her work as a therapeutic psychologist.

“I had a client who was struggling with her relationship with her mother who was in a care home. One day my client said she had had a really good visit after taking in a flask of tea. She had no idea why the flask made a difference.” Lee suggested it might be because it gave her mother control – she did not have to ask the staff to bring their tea, instead pouring it out herself as she chose.

[The music project helping people with dementia find their voice during lockdown](#)

[Read more](#)

From this grew Lee’s [Phd](#): qualitative research in two care homes in southern England, which found that residents with dementia often moved in directly from hospital, without a chance to go home and select possessions. They were frequently excluded from the decision-making process and objects were even removed from their rooms without their knowledge or permission. In the risk-averse atmosphere of residential care, says Lee, few residents had access to functional objects, let alone freedom to use them as they wished. She concluded that a better understanding of “material citizenship” could “support a rights-based approach to dementia care by using functional objects as an enabler to balance protection and empowerment”.

With funding from the [Economic and Social Research Council’s Impact Acceleration Account](#), Alzheimer’s Society, and Brendoncare, Lee developed the training that has now led to Fletcher and Gilbert putting this into practice: “We have a resident who is very wobbly on her feet, but really wanted to go into the kitchenette and make herself a cup of tea. There was obviously a risk of her spilling boiling water and burning herself, so we had a discussion about it. Now she goes in and puts the tea bag and sugar and milk into the cup. Then we go in and add the boiling water. It’s become part of her routine and she’s really happy with that,” says Gilbert.

“Another lady is very particular about her bed,” Fletcher observes, “She wanted to make it herself but we were afraid she might fall – you can’t hold on to a frame and make a bed. Now we stand with her and do it together”.

“They are such simple things,” says Gilbert, “we don’t usually think about them, but they are part of who we are.” And they have been even more

important during the pandemic, she says. Although Knightwood Court, which looks after 20 residents, has had no cases of Covid-19, like all care homes it has had to deal with the loss of visits, outings, and for a while even collective meal times, making “the little things of daily life more important than ever”.

“Material citizenship has given us more of a can-do attitude,” Gilbert continues. “Instead of just thinking about the risks, we think round it. It’s a change of mindset.” This is exactly the change Lee was hoping her project would spark. “Having dementia doesn’t mean you aren’t an individual capable of some decision-making and taking part in aspects of everyday life,” she says, but many care homes are much more restrictive than Knightwood. “If we can start really simply with everyday objects, the hope is that we can build a shift in approach, a culture change across the sector.”

Knightwood has asked for a repeat of the training to include their 28 domestic staff so that everyone is on the same page, and a follow-up session for 40 care staff to explore the ideas further. This has prompted Lee to develop a second part to her programme. “Staff are very vulnerable to blame if anything goes wrong,” she says, “so the next training will look at incorporating material citizenship into care plans. This would allow them to explain the balance between risk of physical harm and risk of psychological harm, ensure all staff deliver the same care, and evidence the process for inspectors.”

Lee has now secured another year of funding, from the [National Institute for Health Research’s Applied Research Collaboration Wessex](#), to roll out the training to more care homes. Sessions for other Brendoncare homes and [Hallmark Care Homes](#) will begin in February with more to follow.

Fletcher and Gilbert are in no doubt about the value of the rollout: “We feel passionately that everybody should have this training. If you take people’s everyday things away they lose independence and who they are. It may only mean changing 10 minutes of the day but it can make a massive difference.”

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Your problems, with Anna TimsMoney

Will expats be able to access their private pension after Brexit?

It is feared that some UK providers will not be able to make payments directly into an EU account

Pensions from UK providers may not be able to pay directly into an EU bank.
Photograph: Julian Elliott Photography/Alamy

Pensions from UK providers may not be able to pay directly into an EU bank.
Photograph: Julian Elliott Photography/Alamy

Anna Tims

Thu 14 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

My parents live in France on company pensions (from the Prudential and John Lewis) paid directly into their French bank accounts. Following reports of bank accounts being closed after Brexit, will private pensions to expats be affected?

CB, London

The grim fact is, no one is really sure. The government trade deal was largely silent on the future of financial services. According to Paul Beard, of Alexander Beard Group, an expat specialist financial advisory business, it's possible that some UK pension providers may no longer make payments into an EU bank account. Those who have pensions paid into a UK bank in their name could also be affected, as some banks have closed expat accounts. Discuss it with your bank.

A solution would be to open an account with a foreign exchange provider to receive the payments in sterling and then transfer them in euros to an EU account at the prevailing exchange rate, less their margin.

If you need help email your.problems@observer.co.uk. Include an address and phone number. Submission and publication are subject to our [terms and conditions](#)

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[Leading questions](#)[Parents and parenting](#)

I've moved back with my parents in my early 30s and feel I'm missing milestones. Does this get easier?

You sound like you live well, writes advice columnist **Eleanor Gordon-Smith**. Don't be fooled into a view of success based on values that aren't your own

‘The skill of being unreplicable doesn’t get a toast and rounds of congratulations.’ (Drawing: Crusoe on his raft, salvages as much as much as he can from the wrecked ship (1719) from Mary Evans Picture Library.)

Photograph: Chronicle/Alamy

‘The skill of being unreplicable doesn’t get a toast and rounds of congratulations.’ (Drawing: Crusoe on his raft, salvages as much as much as he

can from the wrecked ship (1719) from Mary Evans Picture Library.)

Photograph: Chronicle/Alamy

[Eleanor Gordon-Smith](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 11.30 EST

I have recently moved back with my parents in my early 30s after over 10 years of living independently, and while my parents love having me here and we have a wonderful relationship, I feel as though I am failing at the linear life path that nearly all of my friends are living. Most of my friends are settling down in relationships, buying properties, excelling in their careers. However, I have been single for over eight years and do not seem to be able to attract a partner. I don't want to settle and dating gay men is difficult if you don't look like a Greek Adonis. I absolutely love my job but I work for a charity, which means I don't get those salaries my friends in financial services get and it's hard to excel up the career ladder quickly because of limited roles, and I have minimal savings so the prospect of home ownership is nothing short of a fantasy.

Why do I feel so stressed and sad about this? I know we all have our own paths in life and the standard line life isn't so perfect. But I just feel as though I am getting older and missing out on those milestones that I should be and do want to be experiencing. Does this get easier and do you care less as you get older?

[I spend a stupid amount of time thinking about my appearance. How can I care less? | Leading questions](#)

[Read more](#)

Eleanor says: People love to flash these things like badges – the house, and the marriage, and the car, and the business card. What's mysterious is what *exactly* they communicate – what club do they get you into, such that people on the outside feel shut out of somewhere good?

It can't be the club of happy people, because these things are absolutely useless predictors of any wellbeing worth predicting. Like Leonard Cohen says, everybody's got that broken feeling like their father or their dog just died. Everybody. The idea that the house and the career *by themselves* fix that feeling is promulgated by people who sell houses, or want to keep people at work.

I think the club those badges get you into is just the club of people who have those things; we're taught to want them so it feels good to display them when we get them. It's natural that you'd feel bad surrounded by those displays – nobody likes to be reminded of pleasures they can't access. But don't lose sight of the pleasures *you* have that other people can't access.

You sound like you have a wonderful life. You have a family who love you and a career you're proud of, one that doesn't give you Sunday-night dread. You have a clear sense of what you want in a romantic partner and enough self-esteem to not compromise it to avoid being alone. You have a life that you chose and you cultivated.

That gives you something that many other people don't have: a path that doesn't look like anyone else's. Your world has your tastes and priorities imprinted on it. It is not a replica of something you were taught to aspire to. This reflects genuine skill on your part – it is tremendously difficult to create something unrepeatable when we're surrounded by tropes and well-worn grooves. A lot of money and psychological effort goes into shaping your preferences; you resisted that and made something of your own. That deserves applause – and it's a pleasure that many people will never know.

It's just bad luck that this kind of pleasure doesn't get much press. The skill of being unreplicable doesn't get a toast and rounds of congratulations. That's a shame – and one that could easily make you feel conspicuous for not "giving" your parents or yourself a big occasion, like you'd get if you bought a house or got engaged.

But don't be fooled by that into valuing the joys you don't have more than the joys you do – it's an accident of culture that we publicly celebrate what we do. The best gift you can give the people who love you is to live your own life well. You've done that already, no matter whether or when you arrive at the traditional reasons to throw a party.

Ask us a question

Do you have a conflict, crossroads or dilemma you need help with? Eleanor Gordon-Smith will help you think through life's questions and puzzles, big and

small. Questions can be anonymous.

If you're having trouble using the form, [click here](#). Read terms of service here.

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Walking holidays

How intention turns a walk into a pilgrimage – plus 5 British pilgrim trails

Bwlch yr Eifl, North Wales Pilgrims Way. Photograph: Mike Costello
Bwlch yr Eifl, North Wales Pilgrims Way. Photograph: Mike Costello

The co-author of a book on Britain's pilgrimages reveals the benefits of structuring a walk around a purpose that is 'determined by your heart'

Guy Hayward

Wed 13 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

When we are set free from our confinement, what are the safe options for venturing out? Last year was the year of walking outdoors, so perhaps – and I may be biased – 2021 will be the year for pilgrimages, given that throughout

history people have made pilgrimages at times of crisis? To lay the ground for rediscovery, in summer 2020 the British Pilgrimage Trust (BPT) launched Britain's Pilgrim Places, a compendium of 600 sites and 100 routes, which I co-authored.

Walking outdoors is how, throughout history, many of humanity's greats have found meaning, made discoveries, and embarked upon new paths of inner discovery. In Thinking, Fast And Slow, Nobel-prize-winning economist Daniel Kahneman explains how walking is the perfect ambulatory speed to free our minds. As we sit in our chairs, our minds are good at executing tasks but not at thinking big. Going for a run clears our mind, but it's hard to keep your train of thought. Walk, however, and your mind can become the blue sky above you, allowing your thoughts to soar and form new connections. Extended walking also frees your emotions.

[How 2020 became the year of the walker](#) [Read more](#)

To gain the richest inner experience while walking, it helps to be ever-present to all around you: plants, animals, birds, landscapes, skies, paths, villages, architecture, sounds, smells, textures, weathers. Achieve this and you will feel more connected to nature and humanity.

So, walking can be reframed without needing to mention the word pilgrimage. But some kind of defining characteristic of pilgrimage is useful – structuring a walk around a unique purpose, determined by your heart and activated by your feet. All of us usually have at least one question we want answering, something we want to bring into our lives, or let go of. So choose one “intention” from your many options and dedicate your journey to that purpose.

Once you have set your intention, you need a good destination. This can be traditional, like those described below, or somewhere less obvious such as an ancestor's grave or a place where you have felt loved.

That being said, the most well-established, accessible routes tend to have “tried and tested” traditional destinations. My book can help with that, along with websites such as [megalithic.co.uk](#), [explorechurches.org](#) and [LabyrinthsinBritain.uk](#). These examples are accessible via Google Maps and [britishpilgrimage.org](#), once Covid restrictions have been lifted. But right now, seek out your local place of pilgrimage.

St Magnus Way

Photograph: Mark Ferguson/Alamy

Orkney is about as remote and free of humans as it's possible to get in Britain. A typical landscape is flat with gentle hills leading the eye to the high cliffs of the west coast. If over the past year your imagination has been limited by your home's four walls, there are fewer antidotes better than the expansive sky here.

There is an ancient but newly waymarked 58-mile pilgrimage route inspired by the life and death of Magnus, Orkney's patron saint, who lived in a not-so-saintly period of history. Magnus was tricked and then killed by his cousin Håkon so that he could rule the Earlship instead. The route follows the procession of Magnus's body after his mother pleaded for it to be returned from the island of Egilsay, where he was martyred, to his (first) burial place in Birsay. His body was later exhumed, and the second part of the route represents its later journey to the cathedral at Kirkwall.

Getting to Egilsay by ferry, walking the pilgrimage route on the island and then returning takes a day. The second stage, from Evie to Birsay, follows the journey of Magnus's body via coastal routes with breathtaking views, and passes "Mansie" (Magnus) stones marking where his coffin rested along the way. The coastal walking along this section can be affected by Atlantic storms and tides and the Magnus Way website recommends planning extra days in case of unpredictable weather – throughout the year. The final leg to Kirkwall follows the gentler coastal waters of Scapa Flow, one of the largest natural harbours in the northern hemisphere, before reaching the magnificent Saint Magnus Cathedral, unique in Britain for having both patron saint and founding saint still in identifiable shrines.

- stmagnusway.com

Whitby Way

River Esk near Glaisdale. Photograph: Guy Hayward/British Pilgrimage Trust

The 66-mile Whitby Way starts at York Minster, climbs from the Vale of York to the rolling hills at Crayke then crosses the North York Moors and River Esk valley before meeting the sea at Whitby. When treading the old paths of the Yorkshire Dales and North York Moors, I have always felt connected with the landscape's ancientness, a depth of history going beyond human understanding. But the route also introduces the pilgrim to a high concentration of "newer" medieval establishments in extraordinary settings, such as Byland, Rievaulx and Whitby abbeys. Other old pilgrim places are Lastingham, with its Norman crypt that housed the saintly abbot brothers Cedd and Chad, and pre-Norman places like Crayke and Kirkdale. The landscapes alone make this route special; add the pilgrim places – and the care given to the presentation of the route in the official guidebook – and it is an unforgettable pilgrim experience.

- ldwa.org.uk

Peak District Old Stones Way

Carl Wark. Photograph: Guy Hayward/British Pilgrimage Trust

On the Pennine moorlands south-west of Sheffield, the prehistoric rock fortress of Carl Wark stands proud near Higger Tor, a high point from which your destination of Minninglow, 25 miles south, can be seen. This 38-mile route pays homage to the scale of landscape design in the neolithic and bronze ages, which could be perhaps described as “horizon architecture”. Standing at key points along the route, observe the various monuments in multiple directions, sometimes tens of miles apart.

The route passes the old stones of the Nine Ladies, and Stanton Moor’s sacred groves, which burst alive on midsummer night with local festivities, and Arbor Low, the neolithic “clock” whose recumbent stones are aligned to midwinter sunrise and midsummer sunset. All of these prehistoric sites have a direct sightline to Minninglow, resting place of past chieftains in their chambered cairns. There is a joy in engaging with this sightline technology and feeling the awe our ancestors must have felt. With this route it’s not always obvious what each place is exactly for; nevertheless, at each the atmosphere is palpable.

- britishpilgrimage.org

North Wales Pilgrims Way



Llangelynnin church. Photograph: Chris Potter

Pilgrims in their thousands used to make for [Bardsey Island](#), known as “the isle of 20,000 saints” and, some say, the “real Avalon” where King Arthur is buried (Glastonbury is the other Avalon). Now, a 140-mile, two-week route has been waymarked, starting at Holywell in Flintshire. Here, there is a large holy water swimming pool in which I enjoyed kneeling on St Beuno’s stone, my body submerged.

The route wends by prehistoric stone circles, ancient churches, two cathedrals, thousand-year-old stone crosses, sacred springs and waterfalls. It passes through woodlands and across rivers, up mountains and along coastal paths, and over ancient roadways, through wilderness and human settlements. Tiny stone churches nestled into the hills provide shelter and rest along the way, much as they would have done in the past. Welsh poets have taken inspiration in this part of north Wales, among them Gerard Manley Hopkins and RS Thomas. The most poetic pinnacle lies in the tricky crossing to Bardsey Island in a simple boat. Pilgrims for years to come will be drawn to the island where

the sun sets over the watery horizon at the end of the world – a Welsh *finisterre*.
• pilgrims-way-north-wales.org

Old Way, Hampshire, Sussex and Kent

Chichester Cathedral. Photograph: Guy Hayward/British Pilgrimage Trust

The Old Way is being re-established by the BPT, first having been rediscovered by its co-founder, William Parsons, while researching the [Gough map in the Bodleian Library](#), Oxford. European and British pilgrims alike sought Thomas Becket's shrine in Canterbury. On the basis that the double-tide port of Southampton would have been a busy landing spot for pilgrims, this is where the Old Way starts, with 250 miles and three weeks to go. Then the route ambles along the Solent shoreline, crosses the River Hamble in a tiny pink ferry that has been going since 1493, and meanders around the coastal channels to St Richard's shrine at Chichester Cathedral. From there, it follows wooded downland to Arundel, with its cathedral and castle.

The route continues along the South Downs, past a medieval pilgrim hostel at Bramber, before a welcome splash at the sacred springs of Fulking, which John Ruskin channelled for the village. There's an ascent to Ditchling Beacon before reaching Lewes and its 11th-century Cluniac priory. Shortly after, there's peace at Bible Bottom valley before another ascent to Mount Caburn, then through "Bloomsbury set" country around Firle, visiting Berwick village's brightly painted church.

Leaving the Downs, the fifth-century Wilmington ancient yew tree is a presence to behold before crossing the low wet grasslands of the Pevensey Levels to Battle Abbey, where the Norman Conquest was settled. Dramatic coastal landscapes follow, passing through Winchelsea and Rye, before the route turns inland towards Canterbury along the River Rother into Kent. Romney Marshes extend almost to Saltwood Castle, where the knights who killed Thomas Becket made their final fateful journey. The [Elham Valley Way](#) then runs into Canterbury, seen first from Mount Joy before entering the city walls.

- [britishpilgrimage.org](#)

Visit [**British Pilgrimage Trust**](#) for organised pilgrimages and its **Old Way** online guide, when Covid restrictions have been lifted. Britain's Pilgrim Places, by Nick Mayhew Smith and Guy Hayward (Lifestyle Press at £19.99), is an illustrated compendium of British pilgrim places and routes

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Felicity Cloake's masterclassFood

How to make cock-a-leekie – recipe

Felicity Cloake's cock-a-leekie soup. Photograph: The Guardian. Food styling: Loïc Parisot

Felicity Cloake's cock-a-leekie soup. Photograph: The Guardian. Food styling: Loïc Parisot

A hearty, warming Scottish chicken-and-leek soup with roots in the Middle Ages



[Felicity Cloake](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 07.00 EST

One in a long and noble list of wonderfully named British soups, cockie leekie, as it's sometimes known, is an old Scottish favourite that dates back to at least the 16th century, but that has its roots in the medieval culinary tradition of meat and fruit pottages. It's also, in my opinion, one of the most wholesome lunches or suppers imaginable; a true feast in a bowl.

Prep 10 min

Cook 2 hr 45 min

Serves 4

2 chicken legs

2 large leeks

1 large carrot

1 bay leaf

100g barley (optional)

25g soft dried prunes

1 Choose your chicken

Traditionally, recipes call for an old boiling fowl, but those can be hard to get hold of these days, while a whole chicken yields far more meat than is required here – by all means use one, strip off the meat and save the excess for something else entirely, such as a pie, but otherwise legs are a flavourful and economical choice. (Note, a whole chicken will serve eight and require double the other ingredients.)

2 Poach the chicken

Put the legs, skin on, in a large pan with two litres of cold water and bring to a boil, skimming off any foam that rises to the surface.

Meanwhile, wash the leeks well, making sure you get rid of any grit lurking between the layers, then cut off the coarse green parts and set aside the whites until later.

3 Prep the vegetables

Wash and roughly chop the carrot – there's no need to peel it, unless it's filthy. If you like, add any celery, garlic, onions or old herbs in need of using up; peel the onion and garlic, but otherwise merely clean veg is sufficient, because you'll discard them before serving. I prefer to keep things simple, though.

4 Add the veg, season and cook for two hours

Once the pan is bubbling, skim again, then turn down the heat to the barest simmer and add the leek tops, carrot, bay leaf and any other veg. Season with salt and a good pinch of ground pepper, preferably white, for its gentler flavour, and leave to cook gently for two hours, checking occasionally that the mixture is not boiling.

5 Remove the vegetables and add the barley

Remove and discard the carrot, bay leaf and leek greens, plus any other vegetables you've put in there (this is easiest done with tongs or a slotted spoon, so you lose as little of the broth as possible). Add the barley, if using, to the pot – you could swap in rice, spelt, oats or even small pasta shapes, in which case adjust the cooking time as necessary.

6 Add the leek whites

Cook the barley for 15 minutes (you can skip this part for oats or pasta, because it will cook in the same time as the leeks). Meanwhile, chop the reserved white part of the leeks into chunky rounds and, once the barley is starting to soften, add these to the pan, too, and simmer for another 10-15 minutes, until both are cooked through.

7 Remove the chicken and add the prunes

While the leeks are cooking, roughly chop the prunes, removing the stones, if necessary. When the leeks and barley are ready, carefully lift the chicken legs out of the pan, again making sure to take out as little liquid as possible, and put in a bowl until cool enough to handle. Add the prunes to the pan, taste the broth and season as you see fit.

8 Pick the meat off the chicken

Put four bowls into a low oven to warm (or fill them with hot water). Pick the meat from the chicken, discarding the bones and skin (they should have given up all their flavour to the soup, so there's not much point in keeping them for stock, unless it's to flavour pet food). Divide the chicken meat between the bowls.

9 And serve

Reheat the broth and pour over the top of the chicken to serve, snipping a few chives, parsley leaves or celery tops over the top if you'd like a dash of colour, though I tend to confine the garnish to a little more pepper. Like almost all soups, this one is even better served with robust brown bread to mop up the last of the broth.

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2021.01.14 - Take part

- [**Tell us UK workers are you still going into your workplace?**](#)
- [**Healthcare workers in the UK Share your experiences during the second wave of Covid**](#)
- [**Tell us How has the pandemic affected Barking and Dagenham?**](#)
- [**Schools Share your experiences of laptop provision during the pandemic**](#)

Coronavirus

Tell us: UK workers are you still going into your workplace?

We'd like to hear from people who are being encouraged by their employer to come into their workplace during the latest national lockdown

Co-workers sitting at a table, looking at a laptop

Photograph: Albert Shakirov/Alamy Stock Photo

Co-workers sitting at a table, looking at a laptop

Photograph: Albert Shakirov/Alamy Stock Photo

[Guardian community team](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 09.23 EST

According to the latest government advice, “everyone who can work from home must do so”. However, many are still going in to their workplace, often at their employer’s request.

We’d like to hear from those who are not working from home. Were you able to do so during the first national lockdown? Is your employer reluctant to allow you to work from home now? How have you been encouraged or incentivised to remain in the office?

Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions.

One of our journalists will be in contact for publication before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/13/tell-us-uk-workers-are-you-still-going-into-your-workplace>

Health

Healthcare workers in the UK: share your experiences during the second wave of coronavirus

We'd like to speak to healthcare workers about how they're coping with the second wave of coronavirus, and how it compares to the first

A patient in intensive care during the coronavirus pandemic in University Hospital in Coventry, taken during mid December 2020. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

A patient in intensive care during the coronavirus pandemic in University Hospital in Coventry, taken during mid December 2020. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

[Guardian community team](#)

Thu 31 Dec 2020 06.42 EST

With the new variant of coronavirus spreading rapidly in the UK, the strain on healthcare workers is as great as ever.

But after months of tackling coronavirus, many are experiencing high rates of stress and fatigue, and some healthcare workers have reported feeling less supported by their communities than during the first wave of the pandemic.

We'd like to speak to healthcare workers in the UK about how they're feeling.

Share your experiences

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Coronavirus

Tell us: how has the pandemic affected Barking and Dagenham?

We're looking to speak to people who live or work in Barking as part of our investigation into the recent surge of positive coronavirus cases

A sign warning of the rising cases of Coronavirus in London. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

A sign warning of the rising cases of Coronavirus in London. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

[Guardian community team](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 11.55 EST

An estimated 54.2% of residents in the London borough of Barking and Dagenham are thought to have had coronavirus, according to new modelling released last week.

The Guardian would like to speak to residents on what it's like to live in a coronavirus hotspot. We are particularly interested in hearing from those who have had Covid-19 or know someone who has, as well as families who have lost loved ones to coronavirus. If you are a resident of Becontree estate, where cases have reported to have soared, we would also like to hear from you.

Share your experiences

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Schools

Share your experiences of school laptop provision during the pandemic

We would like to hear from teachers, parents and students on their experiences around laptop provision for children remote learning across the UK

Justin Hughes (L) delivers a crate of restored laptops to Elm Wood primary school, that have been donated by members of the public, at the Lambeth TechAid offices in London. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Justin Hughes (L) delivers a crate of restored laptops to Elm Wood primary school, that have been donated by members of the public, at the Lambeth TechAid offices in London. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

[Guardian community team](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 06.39 EST

According to Ofcom, about [9% of children in the UK](#) – between 1.1 million and 1.8 million – do not have access to a laptop, desktop or tablet at home. More than 880,000 of them live in a household with only a mobile internet connection.

The government is providing more than[one million laptops and tablets](#) to those without adequate provision and says that those who require more should contact the Department for Education.

We would like to hear from teachers, parents and students about their experiences around laptop provision for school students who are remote learning because of the national lockdown. How is it going so far? Do you have any concerns?

Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below or [via WhatsApp](#) by [clicking here](#) or adding the contact +44(0)7867825056. Your responses are secure as the form is encrypted and only the Guardian has access to your contributions. One of our journalists will be in contact before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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2021.01.14 - Explore

- [Analysis Rashford has Johnson grovelling again – but this time is different](#)
- [Epidemic of grief The challenge of the UK's massive loss of life](#)
- ['A huge loss' Tributes to victims of the UK's Covid second wave](#)
- [Riots, effigies and a guillotine Capitol attack could be a glimpse of violence to come](#)
- [A memory bobbing around the ocean Message in a bottle found after two years](#)
- [Jamie Raskin Grieving congressman leads push to impeach Trump](#)
- ['People are traumatised and scared' Germany's student-run law clinics for refugees](#)

School meals

Rashford has Johnson grovelling again – but this time is different

Analysis: decision to swiftly accept failings over latest free school meals scandal marks change of approach

Marcus Rashford. No 10 has in the past tried to brush off the Manchester United player's concerns over free school meals, but this time was quick to cave in. Photograph: Peter Powell/AFP/Getty Images

Marcus Rashford. No 10 has in the past tried to brush off the Manchester United player's concerns over free school meals, but this time was quick to cave in. Photograph: Peter Powell/AFP/Getty Images

[Heather Stewart](#) Political editor

Wed 13 Jan 2021 13.57 EST

Once again, [Marcus Rashford](#) has scored against the government, after Boris Johnson was forced to admit at prime minister's questions that food parcels being sent to England's poorest families were "appalling" and "an insult".

Keir Starmer attacked the prime minister for trying to dodge the blame, pointing out that the stingy-looking packages – pictures of which had been shared by Rashford, and by furious parents, on social media – appeared to [reflect government guidance](#).

But Johnson's abject apology, which followed a hastily arranged phone call with the footballer, did mark a change of approach from last year.

No 10 had initially sought to brush off Rashford's calls for free school meals provision to continue throughout the 2020 summer break, before changing its mind and setting up a [voucher scheme](#).

Then in the autumn, the government again resisted a holiday voucher scheme – one backbencher, Brendan Clarke-Smith, even warned against "[nationalising children](#)" – before ministers caved in.

01:57

PMQs: Boris Johnson and Keir Starmer spar over 'unacceptable' free school meal parcels – video

This time, the Department for Education had dropped its "[food parcel first](#)" guidance by Wednesday afternoon, allowing families to use vouchers if they prefer, once the scheme is set up.

Conservative insiders say the children's minister, Vicky Ford, was involved in pushing for a swift response on the issue. And Johnson's language suggested the Downing Street machine has learned a tangle [with Rashford](#) only has one outcome.

But some of Johnson's backbench troops despair that No 10 continues to be outflanked by the footballer – something they see as part of a pattern of flat-footed political management.

On a call with Boris Johnson's [press secretary](#), [Allegra Stratton](#), on Tuesday, backbench Conservative MPs complained that No 10 remained too slow at rebuttals – and too vulnerable to elephant traps set by Labour.

[Fresh U-turn over free school meals as Labour criticises guidance on parcels](#)

[Read more](#)

Throughout the pandemic, Starmer has repeatedly stolen a march on Johnson by pushing for moves the government's scientific advisers have demanded. In a pattern that has become wearily familiar, Johnson instinctively hits back, before giving way to the inevitable a few days or weeks later.

The clearest recent example was the prime minister's attack on Starmer on 16 December for wanting to "[cancel Christmas](#)", delivered in a tone of injured indignation, before Johnson announced last-minute changes to the festive mixing rules three days later.

This about-turn, and the more recent one on schools reopening, came more than a month after Stratton's arrival and the [departure of Dominic Cummings and Lee Cain](#), who were often blamed for Johnson's pugnacious style.

There have been modest signs in recent weeks that the prime minister is picking fewer fights, and trying to restrain his irrepressible boosterism – urging caution about when the lockdown can be lifted, for example. But it is unclear as yet whether that is the result of a fresh approach to communications or the severity of the current phase of the pandemic. And no amount of fancy political footwork will help if the government is failing the public, in the way a slick campaign such as Rashford's can relentlessly expose.

Ultimately, the reason the government continues to be caught out over child food poverty is a more fundamental one: the fact that the threadbare social safety net means children are going hungry in the first place.

Once housing costs are taken into account, the incomes of the poorest families were falling even before the pandemic hit. As the Joseph Rowntree Foundation says in its annual report on poverty on Wednesday, the squeeze on incomes was happening predominantly as the result of deliberate political decisions taken by Conservative governments to reduce the welfare bill – in particular, the 2016-20 benefits freeze.

Rishi Sunak increased universal credit [by £20 a week](#) early in the pandemic, in an implicit admission that the payments had become too paltry to live on. The chancellor has not yet said whether that will remain in place from April,

choosing instead in a recent Spectator interview to highlight the necessity of “hard choices” to tackle the deficit.

With Rashford already on the warpath, extending the £20 a week increase looks all but inevitable; but the government will continue to remain vulnerable to the campaigning footballer’s attacks as long as there are parents in 21st-century Britain who cannot afford to feed their kids.

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Coronavirus

Epidemic of grief: the challenge of the UK's massive loss of life

Many of those bereaved by Covid seek help online, but that won't be enough for everyone, experts warn

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

A display in a funeral director's window during the pandemic. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

A display in a funeral director's window during the pandemic. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian



[Sarah Marsh](#)
[@sloumarsh](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 11.14 EST

Those mourning loved ones lost in the coronavirus pandemic are increasingly turning to online forums and virtual remembrance websites for support with grief, experts say.

Meanwhile, the national bereavement charity Sue Ryder and a coalition of cross-party MPs, charities and healthcare professionals are calling on the government to introduce a minimum of two weeks' statutory paid bereavement leave for UK employees who have lost someone.

The number of deaths due to Covid-19 in the UK [has exceeded 100,000](#), and in the absence of physical contact, people are seeking solace through social media, phone helplines and other platforms.

But experts say this will not help everyone, as some are unable to access online support while others will still struggle to overcome grief because the pandemic has put their life on hold.

More than 6,400 tributes have been added to an online book of remembrance for victims of Covid-19 since the site was launched in May by St Paul's Cathedral in London. Friends and carers of those who have died can submit, free of charge, the name, photograph and a short message in honour of their loved one. There has been an increase in people leaving memorials during this second wave, compared with in the summer and autumn.

Others have set up support groups, including a series of free online services called CovidSpeakEasy, to allow people whose partners have died from the virus to tell their stories and share their experiences.

Jon Van Niekerk, from the general adult faculty at the Royal College of Psychiatrists, said it was aware of more people seeking help through friends via Zoom, as video conferencing had become more normal. "Normally when we grieve we are surrounded by friends and family and people are now getting that from reaching out in a virtual way, getting a virtual hug," he said. Van Niekerk said that talking was vital, as grieving could be an "extremely lonely" process without it.

Jon Levett, chief executive of the National Association of Funeral Directors, noted the ascent of online portals to help, with grief forums increasingly appearing, as well as funeral homes offering video links so people could say goodbye virtually. He said: "There were always so-called death cafes where groups of people who had suffered a bereavement would get together and sit and so on. That is not allowed under current restrictions but increasingly those platforms [support groups] are now moving online so those who suffered a bereavement are going online and talking."

Angharad Burden, who is a bereavement support coordinator at Marie Curie – an end-of-life care charity in the UK – said there was a 25% increase in the number of calls to the national support line between March to December last year compared with the year before. One million people have accessed online information via their website since March.

"There are a number of unique challenges with grief at the moment," Burden said. "Lockdowns and restrictions mean lots of people are not able to lean on

their usual support networks or reach those in the local community as they would have done in more normal times.”

Burden said people also had a sense that their individual grief was “insignificant” amid a pandemic with thousands of deaths. “We try to make them feel truly listened to and heard and validated … It can be overwhelming with all the statistics,” she said.

Prof Lorraine Sherr, a professor of clinical and health psychology at University College London, said community and relationships played an important role in grieving. She added that losing someone unexpectedly could be “harsher”.

Sherr worried about people “putting grieving on ice”. She added that, as well as deaths, people were experiencing other losses at the moment, giving the example of a mother who might have her partner absent at the birth of their child due to Covid restrictions.

“Normally when you have grief you integrate it into your new life but Covid has jarred that process as we don’t have our normal life to go back to. We don’t visit our children and go out somewhere nice and listen to music. All those pathways to reconnect with life are closed so it must make it much harder.”

Van Niekerk said clinicians would welcome more government support for grief counselling, as well as more information to make people aware of what is already out there. “In the longer term, for those with complicated or prolonged grief, there will need to be more specific interventions and a scaling up in response to that,” he said.

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Coronavirus

'A huge loss': tributes to victims of the UK's Covid second wave

Composite: Handouts

Composite: Handouts

Stories of a 10-year-old and a 102-year-old, a heart doctor, a kebab shop partner and a Santa

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

[Lucy Campbell](#) and [Sarah Marsh](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 19.59 EST

The number of lives lost with Covid-19 recorded on the death certificate in the UK has [passed the tragic milestone of 100,000](#), an incalculable loss to the families and loved ones left behind. As the second wave of the pandemic shows no sign of abating and the daily death toll continues to climb, we pay tribute to some of the stories, lives and memories of those we have lost, many well before their time.

- [Share your tributes and memories of lives lost during the second wave](#)

Gerry Cottle, 75

Gerry Cottle died aged 75 in a hospital in Bath after contracting coronavirus.

Gerry found fame in the 1970s with the touring Gerry Cottle Circus, while he also presented the Moscow State Circus and Chinese State Circus in Britain.

He had planned to enter the circus trade ever since he saw a performance in Earl's Court, London, at the age of eight. At 15 he ditched his O-levels and left his family in Surrey to join the circus, and learned juggling, stilt walking, acrobatics, clowning and barebacked horse-riding. He put on his first circus show of his own in the summer of 1970 in Sturminster Newton, Dorset, with just five performers including himself, staged inside a second-hand tent previously used to sell flowers.

Later in his career, Gerry helped pioneer animal-free circus performances and reportedly stopped using animals in shows during the 1990s. He retired from the circus in 2003 bought Wookey Hole, a museum and amusement attraction in Somerset.

Described by his agent as “a loving family man”, Gerry is survived by his wife Betty, four children, seven grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

The Archbishop of Glasgow, the Most Reverend Philip Tartaglia, 70

Philip Tartaglia.

Archbishop Tartaglia died at his home in Glasgow at the age of 70. The Catholic Church has said the cause of his death is not yet clear. He tested positive for Covid-19 in December.

He was ordained a priest in 1975 and had served as leader of Scotland's largest Catholic community since 2012. He was also a lifelong Celtic fan.

Scotland's Catholic bishops described Archbishop Tartaglia as a "gentle, caring and warm-hearted pastor". They said in a statement: "His loss to his family, his clergy and the people of the Archdiocese of Glasgow will be immeasurable but for the entire Church in Scotland this is a day of immense loss and sadness. His contribution to the work of the Bishops' Conference of Scotland over the past 16 years was significant and we will miss his wisdom, wit and robust Catholic spirit very much."

Donal O'Donoghue, 64

Professor Donal O'Donoghue

Leading kidney care doctor Prof Donal O'Donoghue died from Covid-19 on 3 January. Tributes were paid to the medic who helped to shape modern kidney care and was a highly respected figure in the British renal medicine community.

O'Donoghue, who was based at Salford Royal and was registrar of the Royal College of Physicians, was made an OBE in 2018 for his services to kidney patients. He had previously served as president of both the British Renal Society and the Renal Association and chair of the board of trustees at Kidney Care UK. He was appointed as the first national clinical director for kidney care at the Department of [Health](#) in 2007.

The RCP president, Prof Andrew Goddard, led the tributes: “Donal was the loveliest person and considered by many to be the ‘big daddy’ of British renal medicine. I will miss him terribly”.

David Weir

Dr David Weir

Dr David Weir, who was in his sixties, died from coronavirus on 3 December. He was a respiratory consultant and had worked for the [NHS](#) in north Manchester for 30 years, before moving over to east Lancashire to help with the frontline pandemic response.

The East Lancashire Hospitals NHS trust, chief executive, Kevin McGee, told the [Lancashire Telegraph](#): “David spent his life helping people in their time of need.

“When not at work David would walk his four dogs and relaxed in his beloved garden, tending to his vegetable patch, making jam and baking bread, he truly enjoyed the good life.

“David will be greatly missed, and we send our deepest and heartfelt condolences to his wife Jane, their children and family.”

Eve Branson, 96

Eve Branson

Eve Branson died at the age of 96 after contracting Covid-19.

Her son, the business magnate Richard Branson, said that rather than mourn the loss of his mother, he wanted to “celebrate her wonderful life, her tremendous spirit, the joy she brought to so many, and the love she gave us all”.

He said the “fearless” and “inventive” grandmother-of-11 and great-grandmother-of-10 had lived a colourful and adventurous life. She had taken glider lessons disguised as a boy, acted on the West End stage, enlisted in the Wrens during the second world war and toured Germany as a ballet dancer in the postwar years.

Later in life, she founded the Eve Branson Foundation, a small non-profit based in Morocco providing young people with craft skills training.

Her son also credits her with starting off his career when she gave him the money she had earned from selling a necklace. “One day in the late sixties mum saw a necklace lying on the road near Shamley Green and took it to the police station,” he said. “After three months nobody had claimed it so the police told her she could keep it. She came up to London, sold the necklace and gave me the money. Without that £100, I could never have started Virgin.”

Alan Henry

Alan Henry, from Ballymena, Country Antrim, died on 6 January after being admitted to intensive care. He and his wife, Noeleen, who has been working as a nurse in the same ICU where her husband died, contracted Covid-19 in December despite taking extra care.

Alan was a former member of Antrim area hospital’s rapid response team before joining the dementia team. He died just days after his wife shared an emotional plea on social media for people complaining about lockdowns to take the virus seriously and not take chances. “Are these excuses really worth a life?” she had asked.

He is survived by Noeleen, three children, and four grandchildren. Noeleen described her husband as a “friendly and caring gentleman”.

Kevin Hughes, 63

Kevin Hughes died at the age of 63 on 8 January at the Wrexham Maelor hospital after a long illness with Covid-19. His death came less than three weeks after he delivered an appeal from his hospital bed for people to observe social distancing over the festive period.

Hughes had planned to do a coast-to-coast walk this year in aid of Hope House but he died only a month after the funeral of his mother, June Margaret Hughes, 89, also from the virus on 25 November at the Countess of Chester hospital. He had spoken of his sadness at missing her funeral after he tested positive for the virus, describing it as one of the “darkest days” of his life.

Born in Chester, Hughes had a varied career. He joined Cheshire constabulary and was a police diver during his service and after his retirement worked for a time as head diver at the Blue Planet Aquarium, at Cheshire Oaks. He moved into journalism with the Chester Chronicle and rose to be editor of the

Flintshire Chronicle before his retirement and in recent years worked in public relations and represented Gwernymynydd as a Flintshire county councillor.

He was also a passionate football fan, first with his native Chester and latterly as a season ticket-holder at Premier League Aston Villa, a keen motorcyclist and photographer.

He is survived by his wife, Sally, with whom he celebrated 40 years of marriage three years ago, sons Chris, Steve and Andy, and seven grandchildren. His son Andy wrote on Facebook: “At 12.45 this morning Dad passed away. So proud of him, not only in the final few weeks but over an incredible 63 years walking this earth, making his mark on it in a way that only he could.”

Colin Morris, 68

Colin Morris, who had worked at Bridgnorth Cliff Railway for 20 years, died of Covid-19 in December aged 68.

He had previously been a relief driver as well as a night porter at the hotel in Alveley. Having retired from the hotel, Colin became a regular member of the cliff railway’s staff from December 2012 and colleagues said he had remained a “very fit and active 68-year-old” upon retiring last year.

The railway’s owner, Malvern Tipping, paid tribute, saying Colin was a man who “always retained a sense of humour and remained unflappable in times of crisis”.

Rachel Trott, 36

Rachel Trott

The mother of three died aged 36 just three months after starting a job she had always dreamed of working with the NHS. She contracted Covid-19 while working as a healthcare assistant in Ashford, in Kent, and died at her mum's house on New Year's Eve.

Her partner, Finn Carmody, said in a statement: "Rachel was an amazing person, who would do anything for anyone, and always put other people first." She is the mother of three children: Charlie, nine, Lily, six, and Willow, 20 months.

Susan Acott, chief executive of the East Kent Hospitals trust, said Trott was a valued member of the team. "Rachel's commitment to her role was clear," she added. "And her friendly and reassuring nature made her an instant hit with patients as well as staff.

Lyn Marshall, Trott's ward manager, said: "Rachel had only been with us for a short time but had made an impact on many of us with her lovely caring nature and warm personality.

"She was a lovely girl who will be greatly missed."

Jamie Slade, 35

Jamie Slade

Father-of-two Jamie Slade died aged 35 from the virus, prompting his brother to warn that Covid-19 is "no hoax". The father-of-two from Ipswich died on 3 January after testing positive over Christmas. His brother Gary described him as a "get up and go type" who "could walk into a pub on his own and come out with new friends".

He warned on social media that Covid causes "endless heartbreak" and urged people to take it seriously. Speaking to BBC Radio Suffolk, Gary said that his

brother died from a Covid-related cardiac arrest two days before he was due to come out of isolation.

He said he felt “absolutely numb” after losing “more than a brother - a best friend, a confidant, a drinking buddy”. In a Facebook post, he said: “Covid is no hoax, take this serious, it’s real, and causes endless heartbreak.”

Joseph Araneta, 50

Joseph Araneta

The 50-year-old night porter from Eltham in south-east London died of coronavirus on 3 January. His brother-in-law, Terry Millard, said it was Joseph’s dying wish to be with his wife Emy Angeles, 47, and son Miguel, 12.

Terry said: “Joey was the kindest, most generous, gentle-hearted, thoughtful person, who embodied the Filipino values of family - he was fiercely protective and loving of his family.”

Araneta moved from the Philippines with his sister as a teenager to live with his dad in the UK, after the death of his mum.

Emy, his wife, said her husband died suddenly and her family are now recovering from Covid. “He stayed at home for a while – for seven days – and we were hoping he would recover but we had to call an ambulance as his oxygen got low. We were surprised: it happened very quickly.”

She said her husband was a stay-at-home father who cooked for the family and did night shifts as a porter at a hotel. “He looked after our son, picking him up from school and preparing dinner for him before he went to work at night. He was furloughed until December so he was asked to go into work before Christmas Day. He did not want to work as he had an underlying illness – a heart problem – so we don’t know where he got the virus.”

A [charity fundraising page](#) has been set up by Terry Millard.

Augustine Obaro

Dr Augustine Obaro

Obaro worked as a family doctor in Walthamstow, London for the last 17 years and died on 1 January. He moved to the UK from Nigeria in 1999 to start GP training and went on to serve as part of the Waltham Forest GP Federation.

Obaro was active in his local community. He completed a postgraduate diploma in diabetes with the University of Leicester in 2015 and was working to become a trainer in general practice before his death.

Patients paid tribute to him on Twitter, with one saying: “Have just heard. This is horrendous. He was wonderful with my youngest when she was very ill - am heartbroken for his family. He was a great doctor and I believe him to have been a great man... R.I.P.”

Tommy Pilling, 62

Tommy Pilling

Tommy Pilling, 62, from Shoeburyness in Essex, died on 1 January, two weeks after contracting the virus. He and his wife, Maryanne, one of Britain's first married couples with Down's syndrome, marked their 25th wedding anniversary in July and had been shielding since March.

Pilling's sister-in-law Lindi Newman wrote, on Facebook: "I will cherish the thousands of memories I have with him."

In the statement, on the couple's Facebook page, Newman said: "Thank you for making Maryanne so happy and for being the best uncle my children could ever ask for.

"Thank you for being you and making the world a better place, touching the lives of millions just by being you.

"Marriage made you my brother-in-law, love made you my brother."

Babatunde Elemosho, 62

Babatunde Elemosho

Babatunde, who died with Covid-19 on 23 December, was a pillar of the Nigerian community in his area. The father-of-six hailed from Gorton, in Manchester.

The project worker was a well-known volunteer in the city's Nigerian community. He was chief executive of the Community Inspire Foundation and was involved in the first Levenshulme Manchester Boys Brigade.

Babatunde was a former general secretary of the Nigeria Community Manchester, a not-for-profit body that represents the cultural, social, welfare and economic interests of Nigerians in the region.

Mimi Veheary, welfare officer at the Nigeria Community Manchester, said: "Mr Elemosho's was a dear friend, husband and a father, but above all a great pillar

to our community. His contribution will never be forgotten, but as we say farewell till we meet again his gift of love for our community will remain with us all for ever.”

Barclay Mason, 56

Barclay Mason Photograph: Handout

Barclay Mason, 56, a senior NHS emergency department nurse died after contracting Covid-19.

Mason, who was originally from New Zealand, was treated for coronavirus at Princess Alexandra hospital NHS trust in Harlow in Essex, where he worked for more than 20 years.

Lance McCarthy, the trust’s chief executive, said: “It is with great sadness that I confirm the death of Barclay Mason, 56, a member of our emergency department team who will be remembered for his commitment to patient care,

his kindness and as a valued friend and colleague to many at the Princess Alexandra hospital.”

His family and close friends, in a tribute issued through the hospital, said: “The sadness we feel is more than words can express. The most amazing man in our life, father to our children, has died. He leaves behind committed colleagues and friends who are shocked but who continue to go to work every day with compassion and care for their patients, just as Barclay did.”

They shared a Māori blessing in his honour, including the lines: “Fly free, o spirit/ Fly to the realms of the heavens/ Uplifted by the sun.”

Derek Sugar

Derek Sugar

Derek Sugar, the brother of the Apprentice star Alan Sugar, died on Monday after contracting the coronavirus. Lord Sugar, 73, paid tribute to his sibling on

social media.

He tweeted: “Today I lost my long-suffering brother Derek, another victim of Covid, which added to his underlying health issues. He was a lifetime, passionate Spurs supporter. I never forget my sister-in-law joking with me, thanking me for buying him the club. A sad day for us all in the family,”

He posted a picture of Derek on Instagram with the caption: “RIP bro.”

The BBC Breakfast host Dan Walker was among those sending their condolences, writing: “Sorry for your loss.”

Pete Bland, 79

Pete Bland. Photograph: Handout

Pete Bland passed away on 28 November. He had tested positive for Covid-19 on 7 November and was admitted to hospital on 16 November.

Bland was one of the Lake District's best known athletes, described as a "true legend" of the local running community and a fell running icon. He started running at school, where he won many cross-country events, and had a long running career in the Lakeland fells.

He later set up the beloved Kendal running store Pete Bland Sports with his wife Anne, and he was a regular at local races selling kit from his trade van. He was honoured as a life member of the team at Ambleside Sports. A statement from Pete Bland Sports read: "Pete devoted most of his life to two things: family and running."

Billy Procter, the president of Kendal-based running club Helm Hill, [told the Westmorland Gazette](#): "You could not go to a fell race without the name of Pete Bland being brought up in conversation. He was not only a phenomenal runner, but then went on to help other fell runners achieve their dreams, as well as raising the profile of the sport to the exceptional levels we see today."

Kalli Mantala-Bozos, 50

Kalli Mantala-Bozos.

Mantala-Bozos, a clinical psychologist and bereavement specialist in Halifax, West Yorkshire, died on 26 November. She had four children aged 11 to 17 with her husband, Stavros.

She was born in Greece and studied psychology at the American College of Athens. After further study in Glasgow and receiving a PhD from Birmingham, she became a clinical psychologist in the Calderdale core mental health team and part of the trust's bereavement group.

Colleagues described her as “so full of life and a beautiful person to be around”. Another said: “Kalli was a genuine, kind-hearted individual who made time to build relationships, bring a smile to others’ faces, and who put her all into her clinical work while being family-oriented and a cornerstone of her community.”

A Facebook post shared by the Greek Orthodox Community of Leeds paid tribute to her volunteer work for the church and community, describing her as “a kind-hearted and generous lady”. [A charity fundraising campaign](#) set up in her memory has raised more than £10,000 in one week.

Barbra Hassack, 55

Barbra Hassack.

Healthcare worker Hassack, known to loved ones as Babs, died at her home in Strelley, Nottingham, on 29 November. She had tested positive for coronavirus six days earlier.

Hassack was an assistant practitioner and had been with Nottingham CityCare for 19 years. The team said they were heartbroken by her death. Her sister Patricia Hodgkinson, speaking on behalf of the family, [told](#) [NottinghamshireLive](#): “Babs was a very special person, full of enthusiasm and

kindness. She brought laughter and happiness to everyone who knew her, and leaves behind a family who will miss her dearly.”

Fehzan Jamil, 10

Fehzan Jamil

Fehzan is believed to be one of the youngest victims of coronavirus in the UK. The 10-year-old from Bradford, who had a number of underlying health issues including epilepsy, died in hospital after contracting the virus. A funeral was held on 23 November.

His parents, Tayyaba and Mohammed Jamil, [spoke to Channel 4 News](#) about their “indescribable pain” following his death. “There were four of us, now there are only three,” said Mohammed. Tayyaba said: “I just can’t describe our loss. Everything feels empty now.” They described their son as a “really brave fighter” and a “soldier” who was cheerful in spite of his health problems.

Fehzan's family tried to shield him during the pandemic, knowing that his health issues made him vulnerable to Covid-19. They kept him at home as much as possible, and anyone entering the home had to wear a mask. "We tried our best to keep him safe but somehow Covid got to him," Mohammed said.

The family praised the care Fehzan received from staff at Bradford Royal Infirmary, where he had been receiving treatment for several years. "All of the staff were very good to us. They have known Fehzan for many years now and have always looked after him," Tayyaba said. "They let us be beside him when he died. It meant a lot."

Anthony Gershlick, 69

Anthony Gershlick

Gershlick, a leading heart doctor, died on 20 November in intensive care at the hospital where he worked. Known as Tony, he was a renowned clinician and researcher. He had worked as a consultant cardiologist at Glenfield hospital in

Leicester for more than 30 years, pioneering research into using wire stents to improve blood flow.

Tony specialised in coronary intervention and was involved in use of the procedure from shortly after its introduction in the UK in the mid-1980s. He received the inaugural British Cardiovascular Intervention Society lifetime achievement career award in 2017, and remained active clinically until becoming unwell recently. He had been a professor of interventional cardiology at the University of Leicester since 2018.

Colleagues paid tribute to the “talented, dedicated and much-loved” professor who had “made a difference to many, many lives”. A minute’s silence was held in remembrance at the university and hospital after his death.

Owen and Bredge Ward, both 69

Owen and Bredge Ward

The couple, from Strabane, County Tyrone, died 12 hours apart in hospital after contracting Covid-19. They loved the simple things in life and lived for their six children and nine grandchildren, on whom they “doted”.

Their son, Martin, held his father’s hand as he died, and his siblings were with his mother at the funeral home. [Speaking to BBC NI](#), he asked for people to think of others and follow coronavirus guidance: “Treat everyone the same – with respect and as if they are one of your family – so you can minimise the harm to others.”

At their funeral at St Mary’s church in Melmount, where the couple married almost 50 years earlier, the parish priest, Fr Michael Doherty, spoke poignantly about how the couple “had a great love of life” and were “united in life and death”.

Owen was an avid GAA supporter and former player of both hurling and football. He was described as outgoing and highly respected. Bredge was known as a quiet and friendly woman. They were happiest when spending time with their ever-growing family, who were “the love of their lives”. Owen loved spending time with the dogs, Bredge enjoyed reading, baking and knitting, and together they loved going for walks.

Hannah Jackson, 36

Hannah Jackson

Jackson died from Covid-19 on 21 November, having been taken to hospital the day before. She had contracted the virus around a week earlier. She was a staff nurse at Medway Maritime hospital in Kent, having left her family in Dominica to join the NHS in 2019. She had been sending money to her relatives to help them after the devastation of Hurricane Laura in August.

Her death came as a shock to her loved ones in her village, Castle Bruce, who remember her as a loving, kind, gentle person. Her sister Hannel [told Dominica News](#): “She lived for nursing and she cared. She went away to make life better for herself and her family; family came first to her.”

Colleagues described Hannah as a “much-loved” and “amazing lady” and said there was “never a frown in the room while she was around”.

Asaf Oktem, 65

Asaf Oktem

Oktem, a father of seven, died on 18 November, shortly after celebrating his 65th birthday. His youngest son, Alex, 26, described his father as amazing and warm. He [told LancsLive](#): “He was just a really warm person. He was probably drawn to people that others would maybe write off and he’d try and keep them right. He was just such a warm presence and he was always smiling. He was just class.”

Oktem was a partner at a kebab shop, Ali Baba on North Road, which opened in 1985, and he was known fondly by regulars as Mr Ali Baba. Customers shared memories of him, calling his passing “a huge loss to the city of Lancaster”. One wrote: “A world with Asaf in was always a brighter, better place. RIP sweetheart.”

A statement posted on the takeaway’s Facebook page read: “Asaf Oktem, you’re now up in the stars, you will never, ever be forgotten and our lives will never be the same without you. We will try our best to continue your work and

make you proud! RIP Asaf.” The takeaway was closed on the day of his death but reopened on the following night, with staff saying Asaf “wouldn’t have it any other way”.

Derek Masterton, 66

Derek Masterton

Masterton, a former Daily Record journalist, died on 13 November, two weeks after testing positive for coronavirus. Having had lung cancer and sepsis in recent years, he had been shielding during the pandemic.

Derek grew up in Irvine and attended Ravenspark Academy, where he met his future wife, Nanette. He moved to Germany aged 16 where he took on a factory job to improve his German, before attending Glasgow University to study languages. He became fluent in German but quit university to become a reporter at the Irvine Times.

He moved to the Record in 1979, where he spent 30 years and rose to assistant news editor, before becoming a senior media relations officer for the Red Cross in 2009. He retired from that job two months before his death.

The former Record news editor Andy Lines, who knew Derek for 35 years, said: “Derek was a brilliant journalist and a Daily Record legend. He was a great reporter and if there was something going on in his beloved Ayrshire he knew about it before anyone else.”

Tracey Donnelly, 53

Tracey Donnelly

Donnelly, a support worker for an autism charity, died in Sunderland general hospital after testing positive for coronavirus. Her death followed those of Sue Gargett, 53, and 66-year-old Margaret Blyth, who worked for the same charity. The charity said there was no evidence any of them contracted Covid-19 through their work.

Born and raised in Edinburgh, Tracey moved from Scotland to the north-east of England when she met her husband, George, whom she married in 2012. She joined the North East Autism Society five years ago and worked at several locations across the region, for the past two years mainly at three residential homes in Sunderland. She had four sons, three stepchildren and eight grandchildren.

“I loved her the first time I saw her and I always will. She was so loving and kind – just an extra-special person in every way,” said George. “The one bit of comfort I’ve been able to draw is the number of private messages I’ve had from her colleagues, along with a letter from the parent of one of the service users. That shows what she meant to everyone.”

Jim Pass, 102

Jim Pass recalling his wartime service at his home in Sheffield. One of Yorkshire’s last Dunkirk and D-day veterans, he died with Covid at the age of 102. Photograph: Yorkshire Post/SWNS

Pass, one of Yorkshire's last Dunkirk and D-day veterans, died on 4 November shortly after being diagnosed with Covid-19. He had been moved into a care home in July following a fall at home. His stepdaughter Kerensa Welsby said he was unable to have visitors including his wife, Rita, inside the care home due to the pandemic. "It has been quite a traumatic period. But there are blessings," she [told the Yorkshire Post](#). "He was 102 and actually died quite peacefully. He didn't suffer, which he could have done with Covid, and he lived an amazing life."

Pass was a motorbike dispatch rider in the Royal Army Service Corps early in the second world war. He narrowly escaped death at Dunkirk, where after waiting for seven days he boarded a paddle steamer that was hit by a bomb. Jim was among those saved by a naval destroyer. On D-day he played a key role, driving a DUKW amphibious vehicle bringing ammunition onshore to Sword beach. After D-day, Jim landed a glider in Holland and fought across to Germany where he reached newly liberated Belsen.

For more than 50 years after the war, Jim was a keen member of the Camping and Caravanning Club. He was awarded the Légion d'honneur in 2016 for his service in liberating France.

Walter Parnham, 79

Walter Ernest Parnham

Parnham was taken to Pilgrim hospital in Boston, Lincolnshire, after a heart attack in October and contracted Covid-19 while being treated. He died on 21 November.

Since the mid-1980s Parnham, known locally as Wally or Mick, had brought Christmas cheer to thousands of children in his home town of Wainfleet, Lincolnshire, by dressing up as Santa Claus and handing out gifts during appearances at schools and events. A keen drummer, he also worked as an engineer and lorry driver and was part of the Wainfleet Theatre Club, regularly helping out with the scenery.

His son, Carl, 55, [told LincsLive](#): “He was full of kindness, he would do anything for anybody and never make a fuss or ask for anything in return. I guess that generosity is what made him a good Santa. I’m heartbroken, and it’s even more crushing that it has happened at this time of year. It was his favourite

time and I'm sure many will have fond memories of him bringing them the magic of Christmas.”

Oskar Hartwig, 59

Oskar Hartwig

Hartwig died on 19 November after he was hospitalised and then moved to intensive care after contracting Covid-19. About four weeks prior to his death, he and his wife, Jan, caught the virus. While Jan had a mild form of Covid-19, Oskar had underlying health conditions and had to be put on a ventilator.

He worked for Nuneaton and Bedworth borough council for close to 30 years, and while on duty he was known as “Gentle Giant” or “Big Man”. His niece Jackie [told CoventryLive](#) he was “Uncle Osk” to many. “He wasn’t just my uncle, he was everyone’s uncle, he was everyone’s friend, an amazing husband to Jan and just as an amazing dad to Kelly, Andy and Sarah and an absolute fabulous grandad. Everyone who got to be in his presence was just instantly

drawn in with that beaming smile and that Scotch voice of his and just instantly fell in love with him.”

Andrew Sumner, 78

Andrew Sumner

Sumner died at Lancaster Royal Infirmary on 12 November after testing positive for Covid-19. Born in Preston, he studied at Preston grammar school and Manchester University before becoming a teacher, and head of modern languages at Penwortham girls’ school, until his retirement. Apart from his family, his greatest love was boxing and he became an amateur coach, mentoring young people in gyms in Preston, Blackpool and Bolton.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



[US Capitol breach](#)

Riots, effigies and a guillotine: state capitol protests could be a glimpse of violence to come

Fresh calls for extreme action circulate on social media forums as the FBI warns of planned demonstrations leading up to the inauguration

Trump supporters storm the grounds of the US Capitol on 6 January.

Photograph: Michael Reynolds/EPA

Trump supporters storm the grounds of the US Capitol on 6 January.

Photograph: Michael Reynolds/EPA

[Lois Beckett](#) in Los Angeles

[@loisbeckett](#)

Wed 13 Jan 2021 06.00 EST

A guillotine outside the state capitol in Arizona. A Democratic governor burned in effigy in Oregon. Lawmakers evacuated as pro-Trump crowds gathered at state capitols in Georgia and New Mexico. Cheers in Idaho as a crowd was told fellow citizens were “taking the Capitol” and “taking out” [Mike Pence](#), the vice-president.

As a mob of thousands invaded the US Capitol on 6 January, Trump supporters threatened lawmakers and fellow citizens in cities across the country.

Compared with the violent mob in Washington, the pro-Trump crowds elsewhere in the country were much smaller, attracting dozens to hundreds of

people. But they used the same extreme rhetoric, labeling both Democratic politicians and Republicans perceived as disloyal to Trump as “traitors”.

[Congress briefed on fresh security threats ahead of Biden inauguration](#)
[Read more](#)

As the FBI warns of plans for [new armed protests](#) in Washington and all 50 state capitols in the days leading up to Biden’s inauguration, and fresh calls for extreme violence circulate on [social media forums](#), the intensity of the nationwide pro-Trump demonstrations and attacks last week offer evidence of what might be coming next.

Not everyday you see a guillotine at the Arizona State Capitol.
pic.twitter.com/tYjGjou04Y

— Jerod MacDonald-Evoy (@JerodMacEvoy) [January 6, 2021](#)

Some of the pro-Trump demonstrations on Wednesday did not turn violent. The dozens of Trump supporters who entered the Kansas state capitol remained peaceful, according to [multiple news reports](#). In Carson City, Nevada, hundreds of Trump supporters [drank beer and listened to rock music](#) while denouncing the election results, the Reno Gazette Journal reported.

But in Los Angeles, white Trump supporters assaulted and [ripped the wig off](#) the head of a young black woman who happened to pass their 6 January protest, the [Los Angeles Times reported](#). A white woman was [captured on video](#) holding the wig and shouting, “Fuck BLM!” and, “I did the first scalping of the new civil war.”

In [Ohio](#) and [Oregon](#), fights broke out between counter-protesters and members of the Proud Boys, the neo-fascist group Trump directed in September to “[stand back and stand by](#)”. Proud Boys also reportedly demonstrated in [Utah](#), [California](#), [Florida](#) and [South Carolina](#).

And in Washington state, Trump supporters, some armed, [pushed through the gate](#) of the governor’s mansion and [stormed on to the lawn](#) of Democrat Jay Inslee’s house. In Georgia, where lawmakers were [evacuated](#) from the state capitol, members of the [III% Security Force militia](#), a group known for its anti-Muslim activism, had gathered outside.

An effigy of Gov. Kate Brown is tarred and feathered by pro-Trump Supporters and anti-lockdown protesters at the Oregon State Capitol.
pic.twitter.com/XSmHI82cXD

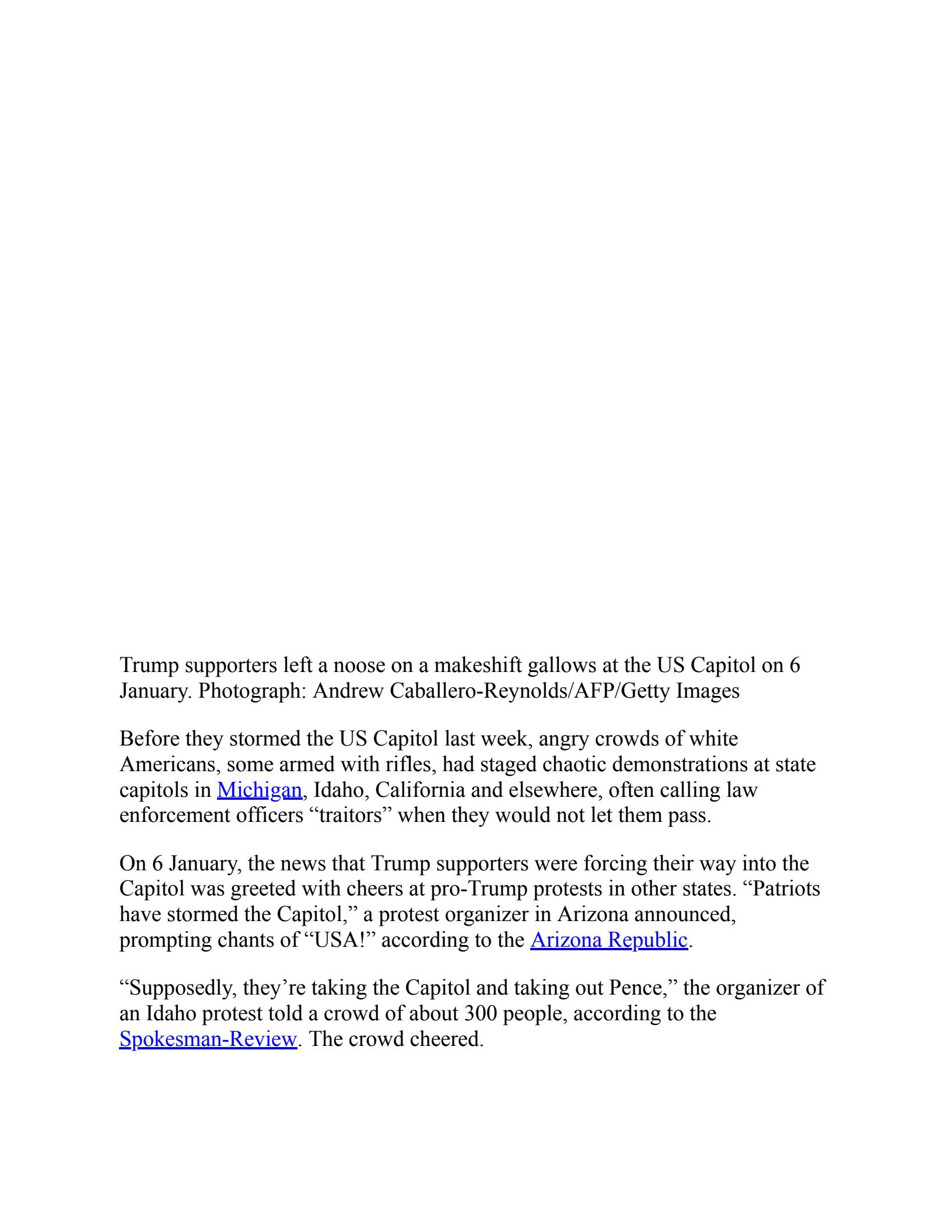
— Brian Hayes (@_Brian_ICT) [January 6, 2021](#)

Militia members, neo-Nazis, and other rightwing extremists have discussed multiple potential dates for armed protests in the coming days, researchers who monitor extremist groups say, with proposals ranging from rallies or attacks on state capitols to a “million militia march” in Washington.

The FBI’s [intelligence bulletin](#) has warned of potential armed protests from 16 January “at least” through inauguration day on 20 January, but researchers say that energy had not yet coalesced around a single event. Public social media forums where Trump supporters have gathered to discuss plans are full of dramatic, contradictory rumors, but experts say that more concrete plans are likely being made in private and in smaller forums that are more difficult to infiltrate.

The United States has no shortage of heavily armed extremists who have been openly calling for a new civil war, from members of the [Boogaloo Bois](#) – a nascent domestic terrorism group that has been linked to the murders of two law enforcement officers – to militia leaders such as [Stewart Rhodes](#), the Yale-educated founder of an anti-government group that recruits police and military officers, who was [photographed](#) outside the Capitol during the mob invasion last week.

Accusations at public protests that Democratic politicians are dictators, tyrants and “traitors” and suggestions that white Americans need to seize power back from their elected officials, have been intensifying for more than a year, fueled in part by furious demonstrations against public health measures that forced businesses to close to prevent the spread of the coronavirus, which has disproportionately killed Black and Latino residents.



Trump supporters left a noose on a makeshift gallows at the US Capitol on 6 January. Photograph: Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP/Getty Images

Before they stormed the US Capitol last week, angry crowds of white Americans, some armed with rifles, had staged chaotic demonstrations at state capitols in [Michigan](#), Idaho, California and elsewhere, often calling law enforcement officers “traitors” when they would not let them pass.

On 6 January, the news that Trump supporters were forcing their way into the Capitol was greeted with cheers at pro-Trump protests in other states. “Patriots have stormed the Capitol,” a protest organizer in Arizona announced, prompting chants of “USA!” according to the [Arizona Republic](#).

“Supposedly, they’re taking the Capitol and taking out Pence,” the organizer of an Idaho protest told a crowd of about 300 people, according to the [Spokesman-Review](#). The crowd cheered.

In Washington DC, part of the mob at the Capitol had been captured on video shouting “[Hang Mike Pence!](#)” after the vice-president refused to give in to Trump’s repeated demands to deny the results of the election and name him the winner.

Signs and rhetoric linked to the QAnon conspiracy theory, which holds that Trump is fighting a secret war against a powerful network of elite pedophiles, were present at multiple state events last week.

In Salem, Oregon, where an effigy of the Democratic governor, Kate Brown, was tarred and feathered before being burned, the protest outside the statehouse turned violent, as [Proud Boys clashed with counter-protesters](#). In Colorado, an estimated 700 people gathered at the state capitol to protest, many of them [not wearing masks](#), and Denver’s mayor [announced](#) he was closing municipal buildings early as a precaution.

In Arizona, where 1,000 Trump supporters gathered to protest against the certification of Biden’s victory, the guillotine outside the state capitol had a Trump flag on it, and the Trump supporters who had brought it gave an Arizona Republic reporter [a written statement](#), which included a list of baseless allegations of election fraud, and demands for new fraud audits and investigations.

“Why do we have a guillotine with us? The answer is simple,” the statement read. “For six weeks Americans have written emails, gathered peacefully, made phone calls and begged their elected officials to listen to their concerns. We have been ignored, ridiculed, scorned, dismissed, lied to, laughed at and essentially told, no one cares.

“We pray for peace,” the statement concluded, “but we do not fear war.”

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'A memory bobbing around the ocean': message in a bottle found after two years

Conservationist on a remote Papua New Guinean island finds message from American girl thrown overboard more than 2,500km away

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Wed 13 Jan 2021 19.07 EST Last modified on Thu 14 Jan 2021 14.37 EST



Conservation ranger Steven Amos with a note dropped from a sailboat by American teenager Niki Nie that washed up on a remote Papua New Guinean island. Photograph: Conflict Islands Conservation Initiative

This bottle was different. Glass, with its lid sealed tight, it contained a handful of rice grains and a few seashells. And a note.

In November, on the remote Conflict Islands of Papua New Guinea, conservation ranger Steven Amos was cleaning the beachfront on Panasesa island when he stumbled across something that was not thoughtlessly thrown away, but consciously sent as a [message to an unknown recipient](#), somewhere in the world.

Nearly two years earlier, then 17-year-old American Niki Nie had dropped the message overboard as she crossed the equator, sailing with her family between Vanuatu and the [Marshall Islands](#).

“I suppose if you are reading this, it means that this bottle has survived its long journey and managed to safely land in your hands. I hope it finds you well!

“I am extremely curious to know where this bottle landed and how long it took to get there.”

Message in a bottle. A note dropped by American teenager Niki Nie from a sailboat that washed up on a remote Papua New Guinean island. Photograph: Conflict Islands Conservation Initiative

Amos, who has been working with the Conflict Islands Conservation Initiative for four years, involved in turtle conservation and plastic collection, told the Guardian he was ecstatic when he found the bottle.

“When I read the letter, I tried my best to get in touch with Miss Nie and with my colleague’s assistance – I was able to do that. I was so excited, I couldn’t sleep when I was told I was to meet her via Zoom,” Amos said.

It almost didn't happen. The email address on the letter bounced, but a social media post found its way to Nie, who responded online. The pair were eventually able to meet online.

Nie told the Guardian: "When I threw the bottle overboard, I never imagined that I would actually meet the person who found my message."

"I also would never have guessed that it [bottle] would have landed in Alotau, [Papua New Guinea](#) – but it's incredibly amazing."

Amos has invited Nie to the Conflict Islands when Covid-19 restrictions ease.

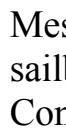
Nie and her family were sailing from [Vanuatu](#) to the Marshall Islands after working for six years on humanitarian missions across the Pacific, when she threw the bottle overboard on 8 January 2019 as she crossed the equator from the southern hemisphere to the north.

[Niki Nie's message in a bottle travelled more than 2500kms across the Pacific Ocean](#)

Niki Nie's message in a bottle travelled more than 2500kms across the Pacific Ocean

"I just wanted to leave a little piece, a memory bobbing around the ocean that we spent so much time in." She had since returned to the US to begin college, when her note found its way back into her life. The note, in its tightly sealed bottle, had travelled more than 2,500km to the remote Conflict Islands.

Amos said it was vital to conserve the remote and fragile ecosystem of the Conflict Islands, a nesting ground for numerous turtles.



Message in a bottle. A note dropped by American teenager Niki Nie from a sailboat that washed up on a remote Papua New Guinean island. Photograph: Conflict Islands Conservation Initiative

“It is very important to do [plastic collection on the beaches](#) to conserve turtles and other marine life. We ensure turtles are relocated during nesting season from outer islands to where it’s safer and release them later. The increased plastic pollution has seen a decrease in the number of turtles coming to nest on the islands,” he said.

Marine biologist and zoologist at the Conflict Islands Conservation Initiative Hayley Versace told the Guardian nearly 900 female nesting Hawksbill sea turtles had been tagged since 2017 – but only three have returned.

“From the tagging, we’ve discovered that the turtles actually go back to the Great Barrier Reef in Australia to feed and forage, and only use the islands as a nesting ground.”

The Hawksbill, threatened by a degraded environment and increased levels of poaching, faces extinction within a decade on current trends.

“If we don’t change, turtles will become extinct, and without them the future won’t get to see them, and more importantly, they will be lost forever and their important role in the food chain and ecosystems in the ocean will be lost as well.”

According to PNG’s Conservation Environment and Protection authority (CEPA), the country has the highest rate of plastic mismanagement in the Pacific, with about 10 tonnes of plastic waste disposed of every day and 3,719 tonnes annually, none of which is recycled.

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[Trump administration](#)

Jamie Raskin: grieving congressman leads push to impeach Trump

Democrat who buried his son 24 hours before Capitol assault has spent week drafting article of impeachment

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Jamie Raskin has said he felt his son Tommy's presence throughout the recent events. Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP

Jamie Raskin has said he felt his son Tommy's presence throughout the recent events. Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP



Peter Beaumont

Wed 13 Jan 2021 08.35 EST

For Jamie Raskin, the Democratic congressman and constitutional law professor who is leading the push to [impeach Donald Trump](#) for a second time, the last fortnight has been tumultuous.

He lost his son 25-year-old son, Tommy, who had struggled with depression, on New Year's Eve.

[Stage set for impeachment after Pence dismisses House call to invoke 25th amendment](#)

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Seeing it as his duty, Raskin attended last week's certification of Joe Biden's presidential victory in Congress with members of his family, from whom he was separated as a mob of pro-Trump extremists [stormed the Capitol building](#).

Despite these profound emotional shocks, Raskin has spent the last week drafting the article of impeachment against Trump over his role in inciting the storming of Congress, which is likely to be voted on by the House of Representatives later on Wednesday.

The day before the storming of the Capitol, Raskin had buried his son, who died after leaving his family a note. “Please forgive me,” he had written. “My illness won today. Please look after each other, the animals, and the global poor for me. All my love, Tommy.”

As he stood to speak in the debate on the certification less than 24 hours later, Raskin – who had pinned a piece of black cloth to his lapel – received a standing ovation from fellow members of Congress on both sides of the aisle, who were aware of his recent loss and that he had still come to vote.

Not long afterwards, the Trumpist mob broke in.

Since then, Raskin has authored the House resolution that called on the vice-president, Mike Pence, to [invoke the 25th amendment](#) and declare Trump unable to complete his term, which expires next week. Pence ruled out doing that Tuesday night.



Jamie Raskin speaking to the Republican congresswoman Liz Cheney in the US Capitol on Tuesday. Photograph: Erin Scott/Reuters

The chamber quickly moved to the article of impeachment, which Raskin also helped draft. He has been clear about why he has needed to push through the difficult emotions he and his family have been confronting to hold Trump to account.

“The president is a lethal danger to the American republic and the American people,” Raskin [told the Atlantic magazine](#) last week as he began drawing up the article of impeachment. “There has been nothing like this since the civil war.”

And as [Raskin told the Washington Post](#), he felt his son’s presence throughout the recent events. “I felt him in my heart and in my chest,” he said. “All the way through the counting of the electoral college votes and through the nightmare of the armed attack on the Capitol.”

[Riots, effigies and a guillotine: Capitol attack could be a glimpse of violence to come](#)

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His son, a law student, as Raskin explained to the paper, had once asked him a question that had focused his mind.

For a class about the first amendment issue of freedom of speech, Tommy Raskin had asked his father about “incitement to imminent lawless action”, and whether a government official who had sworn an oath to uphold the constitution should be held to a higher standard.

“That ironically is going to be the critical issue for us talking about [Donald Trump](#),” said Raskin. “Some people are saying: ‘Well, [Donald Trump](#) was just exercising his free speech.’ As president of the United States, he cannot be encouraging, counselling and inciting mobs that go and attack the Capitol of the United States.”

Raskin is clear about what the US is confronting in the aftermath of the assault on Congress.

“The president didn’t want to let go, and the fruit of his obsession with his big lie that he had actually won the election was this nightmarish assault on Congress,” Raskin said. “The president has become a clear and present danger to the republic.”

“That is the groundwork for fascism, when you add racism, antisemitism, conspiracy theory and magical thinking. That is an absolute powder keg in terms of an assault on democracy,” Raskin said of the riot in an interview. “So we have to be very tough, and very strong right now in defending the constitution and democracy.”

During the storming of Congress, Raskin’s thoughts were mostly on his 23-year-old daughter, Tabitha, and his son-in-law, who had accompanied him to the Capitol and were separated in the mayhem.

When they were eventually reunited, Raskin assured his daughter that the next time she went to the Capitol, it would be calmer. “Dad, I don’t think there’s gonna be a next time,” she replied.

Associated Press contributed to this report

- *In the UK and Ireland, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123 or by emailing jo@samaritans.org or jo@samaritans.ie. In the US, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline is 1-800-273-8255. In Australia, the crisis support service Lifeline is 13 11 14. Other international helplines can be found at www.befrienders.org.*

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Studying law

'People are traumatised and scared': Germany's student-run law clinics for refugees

Over 30 drop-in law clinics have sprung up across Germany to help refugees apply for asylum

Germany has over 30 drop-in clinics across the country. Photograph: Natali Gbele

Germany has over 30 drop-in clinics across the country. Photograph: Natali Gbele

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[Abby Young-Powell](#) in Berlin

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Wed 13 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

After fleeing war, human rights violations, or persecution, refugees and asylum seekers in [Germany](#) must overcome another hurdle; to stay in the country they have to submit an asylum application.

The lengthy process throws up a number of challenges, such as dealing with language barriers, navigating Germany's notoriously tricky bureaucracy, and accessing legal expertise.

"It's difficult, most people are traumatised and scared," Natali Gbele, 22, a law student who helps people with the process as a counsellor and board member of the Refugee Law Clinic Munich, says.

But a number of Refugee Law Clinics have been set up to help; Germany has [over 30 drop-in clinics](#) across the country, including in Berlin, Munich, and Cologne. The clinics, which are funded by donations from a combination of private, charitable and governmental organisations, offer weekly sessions where asylum seekers and refugees can get legal information.

Counsellors, who are law students and volunteers, answer questions about topics like asylum applications, residency, and family reunification.

Those involved want to use their skills to help others. Gbele says she believes it's a privilege to study law and wants to share what she knows. "My motivation has a lot to do with my heritage," she says. "I'm Palestinian and [the Refugee Law Clinic] complements all of my ideas and morals. I want to use what I've learned in law school to help people."

Saleh Jumaa, 25, fled war in Syria to come to Berlin. He has signed up as a volunteer counsellor at the Refugee Law Clinic Berlin. "I have some understanding of law, can speak Arabic, and am able to share my own personal experience," he says. "People are pleased when they see me as a counsellor, because they see I've been through the same process. I help take a bit of the anxiety away."

But not just anyone can be a counsellor. Counsellors like Gbele and Jumaa must undergo a year-long programme of training. During training, the volunteers discuss working with people who have experienced trauma, Gbele says. "We think about things like the kind of language to use."

Counsellors are also supported by an advisory board of lawyers who specialise in immigration and asylum law. In Munich, they meet with professional lawyers once a month and can ask for help by email, too. "We get constant support from them, they're very hands on," says Gbele. In the process, those involved gain a better understanding of asylum and immigration law, which is not taught at university.

Once trained, being a counsellor is not easy. Some weeks no one turns up, Gbele says, but on other sessions five or six people seek help. "Sometimes we can answer a question immediately, but normally I take the case away and look through it," she says.

Germany now has the [fifth highest population of refugees](#) in the world, with 1.7 million people having applied for asylum between 2015 and 2019 when Chancellor Angela Merkel decided not to close the country's borders.

Most who visited the Berlin and Munich offices last year were from Syria and Afghanistan, but people come from all over the world.

This year, the Covid-19 pandemic has meant services have shifted online, creating a whole new set of challenges. Counselling sessions can currently be done by phone, video, or email. But it can be harder to get hold of the people who need help, as many asylum seekers don't have access to Wifi or a computer, and it can be difficult to work with a translator over the phone.

One of the hardest things is having to break bad news to people, Gbele says. "For me, the biggest challenge has been keeping a professional distance. You need to show empathy but you can't start crying with people," she says.

Nora Gohrt, 27, is a law student and board member of the Refugee Law Clinic Berlin. "We are filling a gap that shouldn't be there," she says. "The state should fund independent organizations and lawyers to do this work."

Nevertheless, the students feel they are well-placed to gain people's trust. "There's a reason people come to us. Many have had a bad experience with lawyers, or they don't have money," says Vincent Holzhauer, 22, who works alongside Gbele. "We don't have any financial interest and we don't work for the state, so I feel like people trust us."

Ultimately, the students say they have learned a lot by working in the clinics. "We learned about how other people live and what they endured and also about ourselves," says Holzhauer. "It makes you question your own style of living. For example, I've become more political."

Gohrt says the volunteering work has been "extremely humbling" and she wants to continue to work in human rights law when she graduates. "The clinic gave my studies a purpose," she says.

Jumaa is now studying a degree in social work at the Alice Salomon Hochschule Berlin. Sometimes being a counsellor is difficult, he says. "It can be frustrating, especially when there are cases with family involved." But it's

important to Jumaa to play a part. “I have to help,” he says. “Doing nothing is not an option for me.”

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Wildlife

Wanted: UK bison rangers, no previous experience expected

Project using large beasts to help restore woodland offers unprecedented job opportunity

The European bison, coming soon to Blean Woods, Kent, is a close relative of the extinct steppe bison that once roamed Britain. Photograph: Tom Cawdron/PA

The European bison, coming soon to Blean Woods, Kent, is a close relative of the extinct steppe bison that once roamed Britain. Photograph: Tom Cawdron/PA

*[Patrick Barkham](#) and agencies
[@patrick_barkham](#)*

Wed 13 Jan 2021 09.27 EST

Can you handle a beast as heavy as a small car, that can hurdle high fences from a standing start, and is a peaceful bulldozer for biodiversity?

If you're not intimidated by the weightiest wild land mammal in [Europe](#), you could become Britain's first ever bison ranger.

Two people are being sought to manage a small herd of wild European bison (*Bison bonasus*) being introduced into Blean Woods, near Canterbury, to help restore the woodland for wildlife.

[Kent Wildlife Trust](#) and the [Wildwood Trust](#) hope that the bison, the closest living relative to the ancient steppe bison that once roamed Britain, will positively disrupt pine plantations within the ancient woodland for the benefit of other species.

Blean Woods, Kent, site of a National Nature Reserve. Photograph: Ray Lewis/PA

Bison, which were hunted to extinction in Britain thousands of years ago, fell trees by rubbing up against them and eating the bark, creating areas of space and light in woods and providing dead wood which helps thousands of invertebrate species. They also create patches of bare earth by dust bathing, which can provide habitat for insects and lizards.

Blean Woods is one of the last strongholds for [the heath fritillary butterfly](#), which has only survived because parts of the wood were regularly coppiced by people, providing light where the insect's food plant could thrive.

Bison had been driven to extinction in Europe by 1927 and were only [saved from complete obliteration by the existence of 54](#) of the mammals kept in zoos. In 1954 the first animals were returned to live freely in Białowieża Forest, Poland. There are now more than 1,000 bison in Białowieża and the species has been reintroduced to other European countries as part of restoration and rewilding projects.



Bison in the Slikken van de Heen nature reserve, Zeeland, Netherlands.
Photograph: Amanda Fegan/Kent Wildlife Trust/PA

The herd of four European bison will be introduced into a 200-hectare (500-acre) fenced enclosure in the woods, in the first case of the animals being brought to transform a nature reserve in the UK.

As part of [the Wilder Blean project](#), funded with £1,125,000 raised by players of the People's Postcode Lottery, two people are needed to help keep the bison in as wild a state as possible so that they can follow their natural behaviour patterns and consequently have the greatest positive impact on the environment.

Stan Smith, wilder landscapes manager at Kent [Wildlife](#) Trust, said: "This is a truly unique role for the UK. It's a chance to manage a free-roaming herd of Europe's largest living land mammal and to develop an entirely new skill set which will enable the success of this and future wilding projects."

“This is a first step to European bison becoming more frequent tools for the restoration of ecosystems in Britain and for two [people] to get to know these animals like no other.”

The project organisers said that no significant experience with bison was required for the ranger posts but candidates would need ecological knowledge, understanding of animal behaviour, and a passion to tell others about the creatures. The bison are set to arrive in the spring of 2022.

The bison rangers will be responsible for licences, health checks, safety, maintaining fences and gates, and planning and monitoring how visitors interact with the bison. Training for the role will include time at several Dutch nature reserves with bison to increase understanding of the management of the free-ranging animals.

Mark Habben, head of living collections at the Wildwood Trust, said it would be “the job of a lifetime” for two people who were passionate about conservation and nature.

“European bison are a fascinating, important, species in the UK, and we look forward to the positive impact that they will have when inhabiting Blean Woods,” he said.

- This article was amended on 14 January 2021. An incorrect statement that steppe bison were present in the UK up until 6,000 years ago was added during the editing process. This has been removed.

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Thursday briefing: Donald Trump – 'a danger to America'

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