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2021.01.03 - 2021.01.06

- [Headlines tuesday 5 january 2021](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Coronavirus](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Coronavirus uk](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Spotlight](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Opinion](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Sport](#)
- [2021.01.06 - From the uk](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Around the world](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Climate crisis](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Culture](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Lifestyle](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Take part](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Explore](#)
- [2021.01.06 - In pictures](#)
- [2021.01.06 - Most viewed](#)
- [Headlines tuesday 5 january 2021](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Coronavirus](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Coronavirus uk](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Spotlight](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Opinion](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Sport](#)
- [2021.01.05 - From the uk](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Around the world](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Climate crisis](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Culture](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Lifestyle](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Take part](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Explore](#)
- [2021.01.05 - In pictures](#)
- [2021.01.05 - Most viewed](#)

- [Headlines monday 4 january 2021](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Coronavirus](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Coronavirus uk](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Spotlight](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Opinion](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Sport](#)
- [2021.01.04 - From the uk](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Around the world](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Climate crisis](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Culture](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Lifestyle](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Take part](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Explore](#)
- [2021.01.04 - In pictures](#)
- [2021.01.04 - Most viewed](#)

Headlines tuesday 5 january 2021

- [Coronavirus Strict restrictions could last months, Boris Johnson signals](#)
- [England Pupils without laptops can still go to school in lockdown](#)
- [Vaccines Rollout 'may not hit target pace for two weeks'](#)
- [Education Pressure mounts on Williamson after BTecs reversal](#)
- [Alfie Dingley Mother fears son could die as Brexit stops medical cannabis supply](#)
- [Live Georgia polls close in race for control of US Senate](#)
- [Full report Georgia voters head to polls in critical Senate runoffs](#)
- [Senate runoffs Trump's Georgia call electrifies voters](#)
- [Khairi Saadallah Man viewed extreme Isis content before Reading knife attack, court hears](#)
- [Hong Kong Dozens of pro-democracy figures arrested in sweeping crackdown](#)
- [Jacob Blake Officers will not be charged in shooting that left Black man paralysed](#)
- [Julian Assange Doubts emerge in US over future of Assange extradition case](#)
- [Shukri Abdi Family of refugee schoolgirl who drowned sues police](#)
- [Environment Severe climate-driven loss of native molluscs reported off Israel's coast](#)
- ['One of the greatest' Manchester City legend Colin Bell dies at the age of 74](#)

- Change in the weather German storm names to be more diverse

[Coronavirus](#)

Strict Covid restrictions could last months, Boris Johnson signals

PM says lifting lockdown is subject to ‘lots of caveats’ as figures show 1m people in England have Covid

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[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Peter Walker](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.16 EST First published on Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.37 EST



One in every 50 people in England are estimated to have coronavirus.
Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

Britain could face harsh restrictions for many months to come, Boris Johnson and his chief scientists warned as figures suggested more than [1 million people](#) in England are infected with coronavirus, or one in every 50.

The prime minister said the plan to emerge from a newly-imposed national lockdown in mid-February was subject to “lots of caveats, lot of ifs”. He refused to guarantee that children would be fully back at school before the summer, calling this a “fundamental hope”.

Prof [Chris Whitty](#), England’s chief medical officer, warned some restrictions on normal life may still be necessary next winter. Covid-19 would not disappear “in a single bound”, he said, though he said he believed measures would be significantly eased through the warmer months.

The Office for National Statistics figures revealed on Tuesday that 2% of the UK population were estimated to have had the virus between 27 December and 2 January. Some 1.1 million people in private households were infected with Covid-19 in England, or one in 50 people, rising to one in 30 in London, the Downing Street briefing was told. The figure was one in 45 for south-east England, eastern England and north-west England.

More than 60,000 positive tests were recorded, and the 830 daily deaths were the highest since New Year’s Eve.

Play Video

1:51

One in 50 infected with Covid-19 in England, says Chris Whitty – video

The prime minister said almost a quarter of the over-80s, who make up one of the most vulnerable demographics, had now been vaccinated against the virus, and the UK would release daily immunisation totals from next week.

Unveiling England’s third national lockdown on Monday, including the closure of all schools, Johnson said more than 13 million of the most vulnerable people should receive the first dose of a Covid vaccine by mid-February, including all over-70s.

Johnson claimed it might be possible to start relaxing the lockdown measures from February but conceded this “depends on a number of things”.

“Provided we don’t learn anything new about the virus that we don’t yet understand, there’s not some new mutation that we haven’t currently

bargained for; provided the vaccine rollout goes according to plan; provided the vaccine is as efficacious as we think it is; but above all, provided that everybody follows the guidance now,” he said. “I wouldn’t put it any stronger than that.”

The Scottish first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, [said](#) the figures for England were a result of Johnson’s failure to act quickly as she defended her decision to close places of worship, which remain open in England.

“It is one of the points of difference between Scotland and the UK but so is the fact we decided to act much earlier in the curve of this wave of the pandemic to get it under control,” Sturgeon said during a coronavirus press briefing. “We are trying to act as cautiously as we can at the moment to stop this situation deteriorating any further.” Asked about the vaccination plan, Whitty called it “realistic, but not easy”, and told people to brace for potential restrictions for months to come. Whitty said risk levels from Covid would mean measures were “lifted by degrees possibly at different rates in different parts of the country”.

[Graphic](#)

“We’ll then get over time to a point where people say this level of risk is something society is prepared to tolerate and lift right down to almost no restrictions at all,” he said. “We might have to bring in a few in next winter for example, that’s possible, because winter will benefit the virus.”

Senior Conservatives have urged the prime minister to ramp up vaccination efforts further. Greg Clark, chair of the science and technology committee, which will quiz the vaccine minister, Nadhim Zahawi, next week, said it was vital the government met expectations this time around.

“The whole country is anxiously awaiting the release from lockdown that the vaccine programme provides,” he said. “It is essential that all the lessons are learned from mass operations like test and trace to ensure that it runs smoothly and at the fastest possible pace.”

Robert Halfon, the chair of the education select committee, said it was vital the vaccine programme had advanced sufficiently by half-term in order to let

schools reopen. “Nothing is more important now than getting an Israeli-style vaccination system up and running. It is huge credit that a million have been done already but we now know this is the only way out of this lockdown,” he said.

One Conservative backbencher said they found Johnson’s promises on the timetable for vaccinating vulnerable groups “somewhat tricky to believe” given the lack of detail and transparency.

They said: “Hopes are very high, but we’ve all learned to be very cautious about these big promises and specific deadlines. It’s not just that they’re hard to meet, but the virus changes – there’s political and medical factors at play here.”

In a TV address on Tuesday night, the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, said the UK should aim to be the first fully vaccinated nation, which would require a “round-the-clock vaccination programme”.

Johnson said: “And when you consider that the average age of Covid fatalities is in the 80s, you can see the importance of what we have already achieved. And that is why I believe that the Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation was right to draw up a programme aimed at saving the most lives the fastest.”

Play Video

1:33

Boris Johnson says more than 1.1m people in England have been vaccinated – video

Johnson said the UK had now vaccinated more than 1.3 million people and would have almost 1,000 vaccination sites across the country by the end of this week, with seven mass vaccination centres opening in places such as sports stadiums and exhibition centres next week.

He said the government was aiming for “the maximum possible transparency about this vaccine rollout with more detail on Thursday and daily updates from Monday so that you can see day by day and jab by jab how much progress we are making”.

Defending his decision to reopen schools a day before closing them again, Johnson said he had hoped to see evidence that tier 4 measures were working to bring the infection rate down.

“The tier 4 measures were something that we wanted to evaluate and over the course of the days leading up to Sunday … we were hoping that we would start to see some impact and that we would be able to keep schools open, because keeping schools open is an absolute priority for this country. It was clear that we’ve got to a situation where tier 4 on its own couldn’t be relied upon to get the virus under control.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/almost-a-quarter-of-over-80s-have-had-covid-jab-boris-johnson-says>

Schools

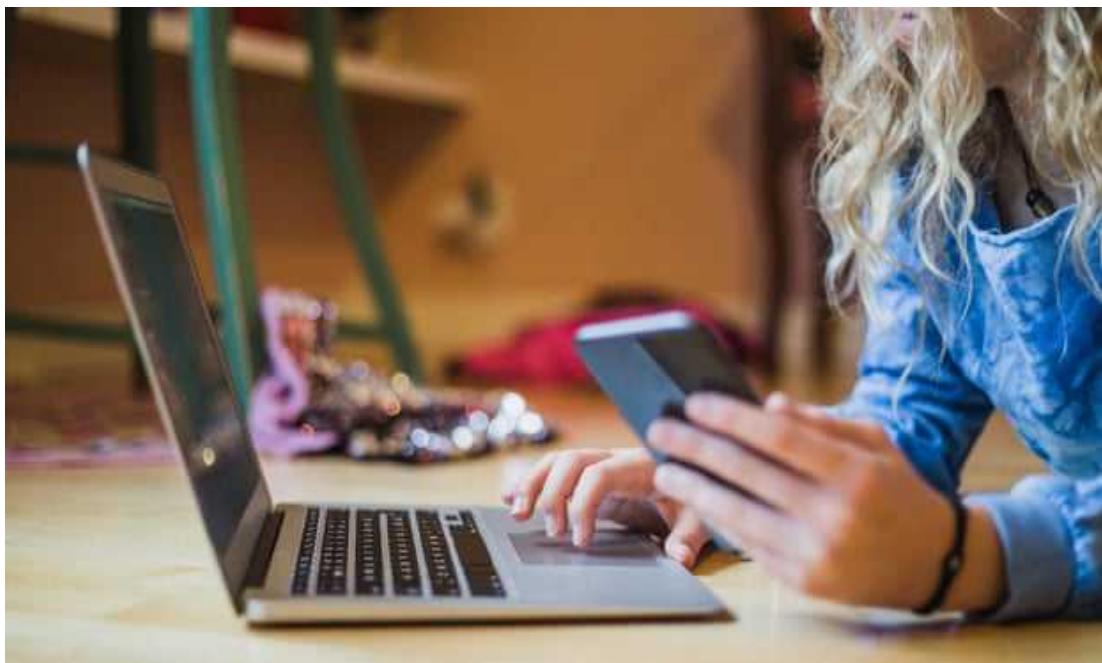
Pupils without laptops can still go to school in England lockdown

Guidance says children who lack devices are ‘vulnerable’ and can continue to attend in-person teaching

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[Ben Quinn](#), [Helen Pidd](#) and [Josh Halliday](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 18.51 EST First published on Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.31 EST



According to Ofcom, almost one in 10 children in the UK do not have access to a laptop, desktop or tablet at home. Photograph: Maskot/Getty Images

More than a million children in [England](#) who have no access to laptops have been designated as “vulnerable children” and can turn up at school for face-

to-face learning, it emerged on Tuesday night.

The development raises questions about whether schools will be ready for the resultant influx of children, when they have been told to restrict teaching for at least six weeks as England begins its third national lockdown.

The new guidance came as a surprise to the children's commissioner, Anne Longfield, who learned of it after she had called for pupils to be designated vulnerable if remote learning equipment could not be provided to them. Sources at Longfield's office questioned when the advice had been updated and why the Department for Education (DfE) was making no effort to publicise it.

In comments earlier on Tuesday, Longfield had said: "Those children who haven't got the tech should be offered a priority place in school from Monday." She also called on companies to provide free data capacity for children and families at a time of "emergency".

A few hours later, a DfE spokesperson pointed to [guidance on the gov.uk website](#) saying that children who lack devices or a quiet space to study were classified as vulnerable, and therefore could continue to go to school.

However, it was not clear if the website had been updated after Longfield's statement was made public. When asked when the guidance was published, the DfE spokesperson said they would not be able to establish that until the following day.

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, according to Ofcom. More than 880,000 of them live in a household with only a mobile internet connection.

Three UK, which has an 11% market share of mobile subscriptions in the UK, said on Tuesday that it would provide unlimited data upgrades to disadvantaged schoolchildren in England until the end of the school year in July, amid pressure on others to do the same.

The digital divide in England hits poorer pupils hardest, [with research suggesting](#) four of five schools with the poorest pupils do not have enough devices and internet access to ensure all those self-isolating can keep learning.

More than 560,000 devices were delivered to schools and councils last year, according to the DfE. It announced before Christmas that it had bought 440,000 more.

Nevertheless, schools such as St Ambrose Barlow Roman Catholic high school in Salford are still struggling. It said it had so far received just 75 laptops for a school of more than 1,000 pupils, where at least 40% don't have their own device. "Very few of our pupils have no devices at all at home, but you often have families of five with one laptop and everybody needing to get online," said the school's head, Ben Davis.

To plug the gap, the school has prioritised year-11 pupils, and gave out "30 or 40" laptops to that cohort on Tuesday. But the autumn term was a struggle, with 56% of pupils off self-isolating at some point during the new school year.

In Oldham, a headteacher said pupils with no broadband at home during the first lockdown last year rode trams all day to make use of free wifi. Glyn Potts, head of Newman Roman Catholic college in Oldham, added that his school had this week received 138 laptops from the central government scheme to add to the 34 they received last year – nine months after making the original request for 237.

There were reports elsewhere of 13-year-old pupils submitting schoolwork at midnight because that was the only time they could use the sole computer or smartphone in their home, according to Claire Garside, of the Leeds-based volunteer group Digital Access West Yorkshire.

"Every headteacher has told us they're short of devices. Due to the DfE criteria, headteachers applied for these devices knowing that it wasn't going to be enough for the children that they know need access," said Garside.

Aside from the shortage of hardware, ministers and telecoms companies faced calls to remove punitive mobile data costs. BCS, the chartered institute for IT professionals, said the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) should negotiate with mobile data providers to apply a “zero-rating” for educational websites in the same way they apply to online NHS resources.

“Many low-income families rely on mobile data for internet access, and the average data allowance is much lower. [Schools](#) would need to confirm details of the sites they need, but these can be agreed and refined over time,” said Adam Leon Smith, chair of BCS.

The DfE drew criticism [by posting a photo on Instagram](#) of a warehouse containing some of the 50,000 laptops and tablets due to have been delivered to schools this week.

Siobhain McDonagh, the Labour MP [who coordinated a letter](#) in which MPs, unions and charities called on [Boris Johnson](#) to take action to help “children on the wrong side of the digital divide”, said of the photo: “It beggars belief that the government would celebrate distributing devices almost a year after schools first closed and to just a fraction of the pupils who need them.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/05/call-for-pupils-without-laptops-in-england-to-be-allowed-into-schools-covid>

Coronavirus

UK Covid jab rollout may not hit target pace for two weeks, say officials

News narrows chances of hitting goal of protecting more than 13 million of most vulnerable people by 15 February

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[Robert Booth](#), [Sarah Boseley](#) and [Denis Campbell](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 14.54 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 16.16 EST



Government sources said talks are ongoing with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) about the need to speed up safety checks of batches, which have taken up to 20 days. Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

Health officials have warned that supply “delays” mean the Covid vaccination programme is only set to hit its target pace in the second half of this month, narrowing the chances of hitting the goal of protecting more than 13 million vulnerable people by 15 February.

AstraZeneca, which is overseeing the manufacture of the newest vaccine, claims it has over 3m doses. But government sources said talks are ongoing with the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority (MHRA) about the need to speed up safety checks of batches, which have taken up to 20 days.

Boris Johnson highlighted the checks as a “rate-limiting factor” in Tuesday’s Downing Street press conference.

It means the immunisation rate of at least 2m weekly vaccinations may not be met until the week after next, officials said. The MHRA countered that it has taken steps to speed up “without compromising quality and safety”. A spokesperson said: “We are working closely with the manufacturer, AstraZeneca, to ensure that batches of the vaccine are released as quickly as possible.”

It said biological medicines such as vaccines were “very complex” and independent quality and safety testing has to be carried out on batches by the National Institute of Biological Standards and Control (NIBSC).

Graph

By Tuesday 1.3 million people had been immunised across the UK, including almost a quarter of the over-80s, Johnson said. Most of these had the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine, which was approved in early December.

Nadhim Zahawi, the vaccines minister, was pressed by MPs in a call on Monday for a schedule of vaccine supplies but reportedly declined saying “manufacturing needs to stabilise”.

The Guardian understands AstraZeneca is only on course to increase its manufacturing capacity to 2m weekly doses by mid-January, which means

the harder-to-handle Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine is likely to be a critical part of the first weeks of the vaccine campaign.

Any slow start to the rollout of the easier-to-store Oxford/AstraZeneca jab is likely to pile pressure on GPs tasked with delivery. They warned on Tuesday that routine checkups for people with stable health conditions and appointments would have to be cancelled if they are to dedicate themselves to the vaccine campaign. The first 530,000 doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine are being administered this week from hospitals and some [GPs](#) surgeries.

“GPs need to be given the flexibility to let them focus on the vaccination campaign as a priority, and there must be honesty around what services will need to be paused to allow this to happen,” said Dr Richard Vautrey, chair of the British Medical Association’s GP committee.

“The challenge is going to be doing everything at once,” said Dr Michael Mulholland, vice chairman of the Royal College of General Practitioners. “We need a larger workforce.” Talks to reduce the paperwork needed to bring back former nurses and doctors are under way.

By the end of this week there will be 775 GP-led vaccination sites across England but there are calls for all of the UK’s 8,000 GP surgeries to get supplies.

“Primary care will be able to deliver at least 1m doses and hospitals and the other sites will do the other million,” Mulholland said. “The sites are set up, but now we need the vaccine. We haven’t been told there is an awful lot of AstraZeneca coming through yet.”

AstraZeneca has told the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) it will supply at least 20m doses by the end of March as part of a commitment to deliver 100m by the end of the year, but the government has issued no details of when supplies will be released. Pfizer/BioNTech is expected to provide 40m doses.

The Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine is being made in laboratories in Oxford and at Keele University in Staffordshire. Staff at Oxford Biomedica are

working around the clock and a spokesperson said it was producing batches “on time”.

“Growing cells is basically the process,” a spokesperson said. “We are effectively adding a bit of the virus that can make all the cells we have grown into vaccine.” Staff have been increased from 550 to more than 650, mostly working on the vaccine.

The DHSC said that after the over-70s, clinically vulnerable, care home residents and health and social care workers have been offered one dose, the programme will move to all over-50s.

They believe that without hitches that could mean by April almost all those with a more than a slight chance of dying from Covid will have received at least one shot.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/uk-covid-jab-rollout-will-not-hit-target-pace-for-two-weeks-say-officials>

Education

Pressure mounts on Williamson after BTec exams reversal

Education secretary forced into climbdown following calls from college leaders to halt vocational exams

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The Conservative chair of the education committee, Robert Halfon, described the government's handling of schools as 'a huge shambles'.
Photograph: PRU/AFP/Getty Images

The Conservative chair of the education committee, Robert Halfon, described the government's handling of schools as 'a huge shambles'.
Photograph: PRU/AFP/Getty Images

[Sally Weale](#), [Helen Pidd](#) and [Richard Adams](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.15 EST

Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, is facing growing pressure over the schools fiasco after being forced into a climbdown over this month's vocational BTec exams while drawing up new plans to replace this summer's cancelled GCSE and A-level exams.

After calls from college leaders, Labour and the mayors of Liverpool and Greater Manchester to halt the vocational exams, the Department for Education (DfE) issued a statement on Tuesday evening offering colleges flexibility to decide for themselves.

The DfE statement said: "In light of the evolving public health measures, schools and colleges can continue with the vocational and technical exams that are due to take place in January, where they judge it right to do so.

"We understand this is a difficult time but we want to support schools and colleges whose students have worked hard to prepare for assessments and exams where necessary."

The reversal came just a day after the DfE insisted to school leaders that the exams should go ahead, despite the national lockdown ordered by Boris Johnson this week.

David Hughes, chief executive of the Association of Colleges (AoC), said: "The risk is that this continues the confusion, leads to more uncertainty for every student and puts thousands of young people and their families at risk as well as the college staff managing the exams."

He added: "A national decision would have allowed for more fairness for all students across vocational and general qualifications – this compromise does not achieve that and I suspect that will cause more problems over the coming months. We are likely to see many colleges cancelling and some going ahead."

Williamson is to confirm to MPs on Wednesday that A-level and GCSE exams will be cancelled, but holds out the possibility that formal assessments will still be used in core subjects.

Williamson will say in a statement to the Commons that he has directed the English exams regulator, Ofqual, to come up with a new contingency plan to replace this year's summer exam series.

One of the options under consideration is to hold assessments or class assignments set by examination boards in core subjects such as [English and maths](#), to take place in March or April. The results will be used to moderate school assessments of pupils' final grades.

Ofqual is to undertake a rapid consultation on the use of assessments, to tackle concerns about implicit bias in school-based assessments.

A spokesperson for the DfE said: "We will continue to work with Ofqual, awarding organisations and other stakeholders to discuss the next steps and provide more detail on the way forward, including ensuring other students have a way to progress with as little disruption as possible."

Ofqual said it was considering a range of options: "We know how difficult this must be for students, teachers and lecturers. We wish at all costs to avoid arrangements for this summer's GCSEs, A-levels and vocational and technical qualifications inflicting further disadvantage on students."

Williamson's climbdown on BTecs comes as he faces mounting criticism, with the Conservative chair of the Commons education committee, Robert Halfon, denouncing the government's handling of schools as "a huge shambles", and former Ofsted chief, Sir Michael Wilshaw, adding his voice to those criticising the minister, suggesting he should resign because of his failings.

Speaking on BBC Radio 4's World at One, Wilshaw said the education secretary had got a lot of things wrong and should take responsibility for his actions: "He gets other people to resign – permanent secretaries and the head of Ofqual. He has got to take final accountability for what has gone on."

Earlier on Tuesday, Labour had called for vocational exams to be cancelled. Toby Perkins, shadow minister for apprenticeships and lifelong learning, said: "Once again BTec students who have missed out on lots of core practical teaching this year are an afterthought for this government."

A joint statement by the Liverpool region mayor, Steve Rotheram, and the Greater Manchester mayor, Andy Burnham, said: “BTEcs are more likely to be studied by those from working-class backgrounds and ethnic minority communities – groups which are already more vulnerable in terms of their life outcomes, including health inequalities. To not treat these students on a par with their peers studying an academic route would be a double injustice.”

There was confusion on the ground among students and teachers. Glyn Potts, the headteacher at Newman Roman Catholic college in Oldham, said about 80 of his year-11 pupils had been due to sit BTEcs in iMedia and sports science. “Why are those considered essential but the exams in summer are not?” he said, adding that the issue was causing “great anxiety” to pupils and parents as well as teachers.

Ben Davis, the head of St Ambrose Barlow Roman Catholic high school in Salford, said: “We’ve got children supposed to be doing BTEcs in music on Thursday and in PE on Monday – 75 pupils from years 10 and 11 on Monday.

“Reading through the government’s advice, which came through last night at 10.50pm, it’s very clear that only vulnerable children and key worker children should be on site. So there’s something to be reconciled there,” he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/05/pressure-mounts-on-williamson-after-btec-exams-reversal>

Brexit

Mother fears son could die as Brexit stops medical cannabis supply

Government gives two weeks notice that access to epilepsy treatment for nine-year-old Alfie Dingley will end



Alfie Dingley, pictured with his mother Hannah Deacon, is one of around 40 children facing loss of access to Bedrolite oil produced in the Netherlands.
Photograph: Claire Carroll Photography

Alfie Dingley, pictured with his mother Hannah Deacon, is one of around 40 children facing loss of access to Bedrolite oil produced in the Netherlands.
Photograph: Claire Carroll Photography

Lisa O'Carroll Brexit correspondent
[@lisaocarroll](https://twitter.com/lisaocarroll)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 14.22 EST

The mother of a nine-year-old boy with a rare and severe form of epilepsy has told how she fears her son could die after the government announced his

supply of [a life-changing cannabis medicine](#) from the Netherlands would stop because of Brexit.

Hannah Deacon was given just two weeks notice by the Department of [Health](#) and Social Care (DHSC) that due to the end of the transition period “prescriptions issued in the UK can no longer be lawfully dispensed in an EU member state”.

Her campaign to [save her son Alfie Dingley's life in 2017](#) led to a change in the law enabling the medicine which has seen him seizure free after years of 150 seizures a week, to be prescribed in the UK.

Deacon told the Guardian she is in despair about her child’s future if he cannot get the Bedrolite oil he now takes three times a day.

“They [the DHSC] said they understand our concern but they can’t do anything. Well let me tell them, it is not concerning, it is terrifying.”

She says she wasn’t even told directly by the DHSC that she would no longer get the drug, something she describes as “galling”.

Instead the letter went to pharmacy suppliers around the country who were told to advise on “alternative” prescriptions which would be “clinically appropriate to switch patients on to”.



Alfie Dingley with his mother Hannah Deacon who said the move was ‘grossly unacceptable’. Photograph: Handout

“I am facing the fact that my son might go into refractory epileptic seizures again which can kill people. That’s how dangerous this is. So to say ‘oh you can swap it for another product, sorry we can’t help’ it is grossly unacceptable. It’s very very dangerous and I’m really frightened about what is going to happen,” she said.

“The letter was sent on the 17 December, so we had no time. We’re very lucky that we were able to secure a couple of months worth of medicine. But that is not long. What makes me really angry is the lack of time we have, the lack of empathy, of care. My son is on a medicine that works for him, why would they take that away?,” she said.

Neurologist Mike Barnes who led the fight with the Home Office to get Bedrolite prescribed for Alfie accused the DHSC of “an astonishing level of ignorance” to think every cannabis product is the same when there are “147 different cannabinoids” in each plant in addition to terpenes which create very specific medical properties.

“Each variety of cannabis is subtly different and you can’t just swap a child from one product to another,” he said.

In desperation Deacon wrote to [Boris Johnson](#) begging him to intervene on 29 December.

“I just got an automatic response to say that he doesn’t reply to people that aren’t his constituents, which I find shocking because he is the prime minister,” said Deacon.

Alfie was born in 2011 and was “perfect” she says but when reached four months he was constantly sick.

At eight months he had his first “tonic-clonic seizure” and deteriorated from then losing every skill he had developed. By the time he was five years old he was having up to 150 cluster seizures every week, leaving him in intensive care once a week.

“He would sometimes have these seizures for three or four days and then have a massive inflammatory response with back to back seizures that would mean he was pretty much flying off the bed they were so bad,” his mother said.

He was diagnosed with a rare epilepsy syndrome caused by a mutation in the gene that codes for the protein protocadherin 19, something only nine known boys worldwide have so prognosis and clinical trials of potential drugs was not possible.

She went on to research treatments for epilepsy and found evidence of cannabis being used in 1841 leading her to developments in the Netherlands by a specialist pharmacist Arwin Ramcharan at Transvaal Apotheek.

She moved to the Netherlands in September 2017 and Alfie began the treatment which saw his seizures stop but had to return five months later after money ran out, prompting her battle to get it legalised.

“He has been seizure free for eight months,” she said on Tuesday. And before a tweak in the combination of drugs had an 11-month seizure free stretch before that.

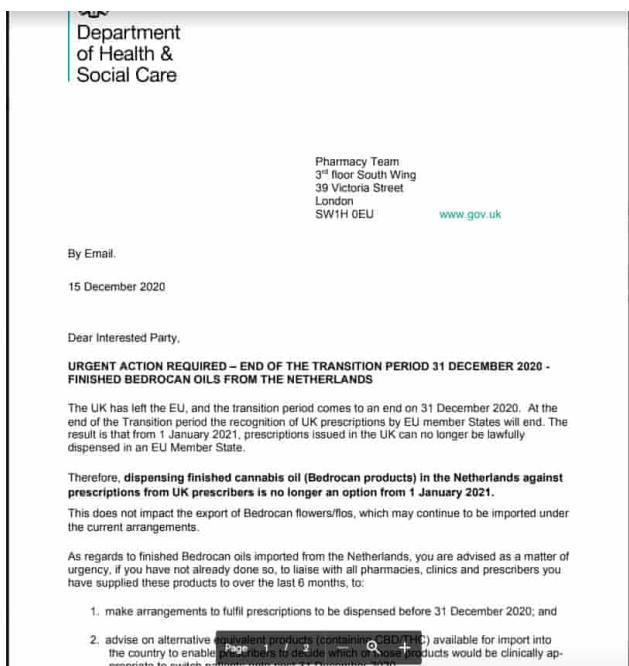
“We don’t have a perfect life and then he has a very difficult genetic epilepsy which causes behaviour problems; he has autism. Life is definitely

not rosy but his quality of life is amazing he hasn't been near a hospital for two years," she said.

Barnes said the situation was "appalling". It is "not an exaggeration", he says, to say that "one or two" of the 42 children on the drug "will die" if they can no longer receive this medicine.

He said the way the DHSC has dealt with the situation was "lazy and flippant" and these families are now in crisis.

Deacon says she would like to speak to Johnson and health secretary [Matt Hancock](#) to ask them what are they doing to protect her child.



Department of health letter to pharmacy suppliers about Bedrolite
Photograph: Department of health letter

Ramcharan said: "For me, it is really sad. We are not allowed to send this medicines whatsoever to the UK after [Brexit](#). It is now a battle between the UK government and the Dutch government."

Deacon said her boy had "a horrendous quality of life, no quality of life" when he was ill, he is now able to attend to school.

“I fought for two and a half years to keep my son well and to get him help on the NHS and it’s a real kick in the teeth, to be honest, for them to just, you know, not do anything to help us,” she said.

“For the prime minister to ignore me, and all the other families, is an utter disgrace,” she said.

The DHSC said: “We sympathise with patients dealing with challenging conditions. There is a range of alternative cannabis-based medicines available to UK patients.

“The decision on what treatments to prescribe for patients is rightly one for clinicians to make, on a case-by-case basis and dependent on the specific needs of the individual. If patients have any concerns, they should discuss them with their doctor.”

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US politics live with Joan E Greve

US news

Results trickle in for Georgia elections as turnout exceeds expectations - live

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[Georgia](#)

Georgia voters head to polls in critical Senate runoffs

More than 3 million people voted early, a record for a runoff election, with significant numbers in Democratic-leaning areas

- [Georgia Senate race: meet the candidates](#)



A sign directs people where to vote at a polling location in Marietta, Georgia, on 5 January. Photograph: Mike Segar/Reuters

A sign directs people where to vote at a polling location in Marietta, Georgia, on 5 January. Photograph: Mike Segar/Reuters

Sam Levine in Atlanta

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.09 EST

Georgia voters headed to the polls on Tuesday for the final day of voting in a critical election that will determine which party controls the US Senate and what Joe Biden can achieve in the first two years of his presidency.

After she cast her ballot on the chilly morning in Atlanta, Stephanie Aluko stood outside her polling place and noted how remarkable it was that the entire world was paying attention to her state.

[Trump call to Georgia secretary of state electrifies voters in Senate runoffs](#)
[Read more](#)

“It made people in Georgia see how important it actually is to vote,” she said outside Antioch Baptist church, where a steady stream of voters were able to quickly cast their ballots. “If the whole world is looking at you and paying attention to you, suddenly, maybe your vote matters.”

Democrats Jon Ossoff and the Rev Raphael Warnock are trying to oust Georgia's incumbent Republican senators, David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler, respectively. If [Democrats](#) win, they will win complete control of the US Congress, (the Senate would be evenly split with Kamala Harris, the vice-president-elect, casting the tie-breaking vote) allowing Biden to enact an ambitious policy agenda on items such as voting rights and the environment.

If Republicans win even one seat, they will maintain their majority in the Senate, giving them a powerful veto in government and limiting what Democrats can achieve. [A record amount of money](#) has poured into the race, a reflection of its high stakes.

The race is also a crucial test of a new emerging political power in Georgia. Long considered a conservative bastion, Joe Biden carried the state in November, the first Democrat to do so in nearly 30 years. The changing electorate is also being driven by efforts [from Stacey Abrams](#) and other grassroots groups, [many led by Black women](#), to organize and mobilize voters of color.



The Rev Raphael Warnock speaks as campaign volunteers listen. in Marietta, Georgia, on 5 January. Photograph: Mike Segar/Reuters

“To be able to be part of this specific election is memorable because I feel like my vote actually counted this time,” said Gabi Strode, 27, who also voted at Antioch Baptist church on Tuesday morning. “It’s surreal, kind of.”

Georgia Democrats have not won a statewide runoff election in decades, [according to ABC News](#), as Democratic turnout typically drops in the second race. But ahead of Tuesday, more than [3 million people](#) had voted early, a record for a runoff election, with significant numbers in Democratic-leaning areas. Black voters have also consistently made up a higher percentage of the early electorate than they did at the same point ahead of the November general election, [according to Ryan Anderson](#), who analyzes Georgia voter data and publishes to the website georgiavotes.com

The early vote data showed [Republicans](#) needed to have strong turnout on election day in order to win, said Charles Bullock, a political science professor at the University of Georgia.

Meanwhile, there was a jolt in the lead-up to election day after the Washington Post published a recorded phone call in which Donald Trump, who lost Georgia [by 11,779 votes](#), pressured Georgia election officials to change the results from the November election to make him the winner in the state. At a rally in Georgia on Monday evening, the president continued to falsely claim that he won more votes than Biden in the state.



Donald Trump claps as Kelly Loeffler speaks during a campaign rally in Dalton, Georgia, on 4 January. Photograph: Sandy Huffaker/AFP/Getty Images

Several Republicans [have backed Trump's baseless claims](#) of election fraud, and several, including Loeffler, plan to object to Congress's certification of electors in the presidential race on Wednesday

"It makes me angry," Shirley Rosser, 64, a voter in Atlanta said of Trump's false claims about voter fraud. "It makes me want to kick his behind."

Polls are open until 7pm ET in Georgia and voters are entitled to cast a ballot as long as they are lined up by then. Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's top election official, predicted there would be an election result on Wednesday morning, though it could take longer as election workers count absentee ballots. Experts are again urging patience in processing the results – since it may take longer for Democratic-leaning areas with large populations to report vote totals, it may appear that Republican candidates are ahead before all votes are counted.

If the race is close, there will probably be an aggressive legal effort to challenge ballots in the days to come.

During a rally in Riverdale, Georgia, about 20 minutes outside of Atlanta, on Monday, Warnock used the possibility of post-election litigation to motivate his supporters.

“We need to win by a comfortable margin. Because, you know, funny things go on,” he said.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The fight to vote](#)
[Georgia](#)

Trump call to Georgia secretary of state electrifies voters in Senate runoffs

Some voters not surprised by president's call but expressed uncertainty over how it would affect the race

The fight to vote is supported by



[About this content](#)

Sam Levine in Atlanta

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.04 EST



Donald Trump holds up his fist as he leaves the stage after a rally in Valdosta, Georgia, on 5 December 2020. Photograph: Andrew Caballero-Reynolds/AFP/Getty Images

An [explosive recording](#) of Donald Trump pressuring Georgia election officials to overturn the election results is further electrifying voters in Georgia's elections for two US Senate seats, in Tuesday's runoff that will determine which party controls Congress's upper chamber.

In the call, [made public](#) by the Washington Post on Sunday, Trump pressured Georgia's Republican secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, to "find 11,780 votes", to overturn Trump's loss there. When Raffensperger refused, Trump suggested he and his aides might be committing a criminal offense.

At an event on Monday, the Rev Raphael Warnock, the Democratic nominee for one of the seats, used the phone call to motivate supporters. He suggested there would be legal battles and challenges if the race was close.

"We need to win by a comfortable margin. Because, you know, funny things go on," he said at a drive-in event at a high school in Riverdale, about 20

minutes south of Atlanta. Warnock spoke to about 100 supporters at the drive-thru, who danced to Motown hits in warm weather and honked voraciously throughout his speech.

Warnock also noted that Lindsey Graham, the Republican senator from South Carolina, had also called Raffensperger to pressure him over the election.

“They both said essentially the same thing. Can’t you find 11,000 votes? They wouldn’t be saying that unless there was some history. If you listen, what they were saying was ‘don’t you know how we roll?’” he said.

More than 3 million [people have already cast their ballots early](#) in Georgia, a record number for a runoff. Democratic-leaning areas so far are seeing very high participation rates, while Republican voters appear to be holding back, said Charles Bullock, a professor at the University of Georgia. Early voting, he added, showed Black voters were “punching above their weight”.

“Republicans have to play catch up, and they can certainly do that,” he said.



Jon Ossoff and the Rev Raphael Warnock bump elbows on stage during a rally with Joe Biden in Atlanta, Georgia, on 4 January. Photograph: Jim Watson/AFP/Getty Images

Some voters said they weren't surprised by the call – Trump spent nearly all of 2020 saying the election was rigged – but expressed uncertainty over how it would impact the race.

"The [Republicans](#) keep handing more and more to us ... It really is hard to say, it couldn't have happened at a better time," said Rick Heson, 55, who covered nearly the entire hood of his car with signs during the Warnock event. "I think it will have some impact, but [Trump's] followers are diehard."

"I think it might discourage some Republicans, [who think] 'you know the election was stolen, they're gonna steal this one too,'" said Tyoniesha Blair, who stood next to her car with a Black Votes Matter as her nine-year-old son Derrick watched the sunroof.

Cardisha Webb, 25, who has spent the last several weeks canvassing neighborhoods telling people how to cast their ballots, said she thought people would be more motivated to turn out because of the call because it crystallized the importance of their vote.

Play Video

1:23

Biden slams Trump's 'whining and complaining' while campaigning in Georgia – video

But on the last full day before the election, Webb and several dozen other organizers were not leaving anything to chance. Early in the morning, about 100 canvassers – many of whom have spent the last several weeks going out in neighborhoods – gathered in a church parking lot in Atlanta for their last full day of canvassing. Organized by the group Stand Up [Georgia](#), a non-profit that advocates for voter participation, their goal was to hit just over 6,000 doors on Monday, bringing their statewide total to 100,000.

The effort is part of a larger movement, jolted by Stacey Abrams' 2018 gubernatorial campaign, to bring new voters, especially voters of color into the political process. It's a movement many say is crucial to turning the state blue.

A fleet of vans with the masked canvassers left the parking lot a little after 9am, with many of the canvassers munching on Dunkin' coffee and Bojangles biscuits inside. At a quiet cul-de-sac community in a suburb, the organizers unloaded in twos and threes, methodically leaving flyers telling people how to vote on Monday.

The driver and most senior member of the group was Michael Thibodeaux, 71, who said he felt energized by seeing Georgia vote for a Democrat in November.

"It just goes to show you that you don't have to accept the status quo, that you can make change," he said. "It's vitally important that we take a stand and use what we actually fought for and marched for and even died for in the 50s and 60s, which is the right to vote."

Later in the afternoon, Gabriel Sterling, a top official in Raffensperger's office, held a press conference debunking several of Trump's baseless claims about fraud. "This is all easily, provably false," he said at the state capitol.

Some Democrats have also called for an investigation into whether Trump broke both federal and Georgia laws prohibiting election interference. Fani Willis, the district attorney in Fulton county, where the call took place, said in a Monday statement she was "disturbed" by the call and pledged to investigate it, should she get a referral.

Tasha Mosley, the district attorney in neighboring Clayton county, told the Guardian on Monday she initially thought the call was a joke. She said Trump was walking a "very fine line".

"It didn't sit well with me at all," she said.

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[UK news](#)

Man viewed extreme Isis content before Reading knife attack, court hears

Old Bailey hears Khairi Saadallah had longstanding interest in extremism



A court artist sketch of Khairi Saadallah in November 2020. Photograph: Elizabeth Cook/PA

A court artist sketch of Khairi Saadallah in November 2020. Photograph: Elizabeth Cook/PA

[Vikram Dodd](#) Police and crime correspondent

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.48 EST

A man who stabbed three people to death in a minute in an alleged terrorist rampage had viewed material about a notorious Isis killer, a court has heard.

Khairi Saadallah murdered three men in a park in Reading on 20 June as they enjoyed a summer's evening.

A hearing at the Old Bailey to determine if the attacks were terrorist acts and therefore subject to a higher sentence, was told that Saadallah viewed

extremist material in the days before the attack and had a longstanding interest in extremism.

It also heard that Saadallah, 26, bought the knife from a supermarket the day before the stabbing spree in which he stabbed three people to death, wounded three others, and shouted: “Allahu Akbar”.

He has already admitted to three murders and three attempted murders at an earlier hearing.

The hearing was told Saadallah had in 2019 accessed material on his mobile phone about Mohammed Emwazi , the Isis propagandist seen in videos taunting victims before killing them, and two days before the attack had accessed a website with the flag associated with Isis, which had staged numerous attacks against western targets.

The prosecutor, Alison Morgan QC, said Saadallah, who was from Libya, believed the murders were an act of holy war.

His victims were three men enjoying a summer evening in Forbury Gardens, Reading, during the first national lockdown. They were James Furlong, 36, a history teacher; David Wails, 49, a scientist; and an American pharmaceutical worker Joseph Ritchie-Bennett, 39. The men died after being stabbed by Saadallah as they sat on the grass at about 7pm. Ritchie-Bennett and Furlong died after single wounds to their necks. Wails was stabbed once in the back.

Saadallah also stabbed and wounded their friend Stephen Young and two other men, Patrick Edwards and Nishit Nisudan, who were sat nearby.

Morgan told the hearing: “In less than a minute, shouting ‘Allahu Akbar’, the defendant carried out a lethal attack with a knife, killing all three men before they had a chance to respond and try to defend themselves.

“Within the same minute, the defendant went on to attack others nearby, stabbing three more people ... The defendant was ruthlessly efficient in his actions. The prosecution’s case is that the attack perpetrated by the

defendant was carefully planned and executed with determination and precision.

“The defendant believed that in carrying out this attack he was acting in pursuit of his extreme ideology, an ideology he appears to have held for some time. He believed that in killing as many people as possible that day he was performing an act of religious jihad.”

Morgan said Saadallah had carried out reconnaissance of the park and had been pictured in Libya handling firearms, and had come to Britain in 2012 after having been part of a militia opposing the regime of Muammar Gaddafi.

In Britain, Saadallah was refused asylum and started offending, carrying out thefts and assaults, for which he was jailed. He was assessed as having an emotionally unstable and antisocial personality disorder, and in jail was seen as “impressionable and volatile” and keen to associate with a known extremist preacher Omar Brooks in about 2017.

Morgan said this showed Saadallah, three years before the attack, was still interested in the extremism he had been exposed to in the chaos of Libya.

On 5 June, two weeks before his stabbing rampage, he was released from jail and in the days preceding the attack made a series of internet searches. These included whether coronavirus was “a sign of the end of the world”, military activity in Libya, body bags, the park where the attacks happened, and how to disappear with magic – believed to be linked to witchcraft.

He also accessed the website with the flag linked to Isis and the hearing heard that his probation officer became concerned about him, but when a crisis team visited him on 19 June he refused to open the door. That day he also went to a Morrison’s supermarket and bought the knife he used to stab six people.

The hearing before a judge continues.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Hong Kong](#)

Dozens of Hong Kong pro-democracy figures arrested in sweeping crackdown

Campaigners and politicians held in wave of arrests under the national security law



The national security law has given police in Hong Kong unprecedented new powers to arrest activists. Photograph: Anthony Kwan/Getty Images
The national security law has given police in Hong Kong unprecedented new powers to arrest activists. Photograph: Anthony Kwan/Getty Images

Helen Davidson in Taipei

@heldavidson

Tue 5 Jan 2021 20.36 EST

More than 50 pro-democracy politicians and campaigners have been arrested in early morning raids in [Hong Kong](#), in an unprecedented crackdown by authorities on opposition in the region.

The activists were reportedly held under the [national security law](#) over accusations they “subverted state power” by holding primaries and saying

they intended to win a majority of seats in the Hong Kong election.

The sweeping arrests on Wednesday morning came without warning, and shocked observers. It is the largest single mass arrest of people under the national security law (NSL), and appeared to relate to just a singular event: the holding of democratic votes.

Political parties associated with those arrested said the move by police appeared to be related to unofficial primaries held by the pan-democrats last year, ahead of the Hong Kong election. Campaigners had been aiming for 35 seats – a majority in the legislative council. The election was ultimately delayed by Hong Kong’s leader, Carrie Lam, for a year purportedly because of the pandemic.

[China moves to punish lawyers who helped Hong Kong activists](#)
[Read more](#)

“Being arrested for sedition for taking part in democracy 35+,” tweeted Dr Kwok Ka Ki, one of four legislators disqualified in November, who was detained on Wednesday morning.

The Facebook page of jailed activist Joshua Wong, said his home was also raided on Wednesday morning.

Among those named as arrested were former lawmakers Helena Wong, Lam Cheuk-ting, Chu Hoi-dick, and Leung Kwok-Hung, as well as co-organisers of the polls – [legal scholar Benny Tai](#) and pollster Robert Chung, [whose office was raided](#) just days prior.

Maya Wang, senior [China](#) researcher at Human Rights Watch, said the mass arrests removed “the remaining veneer of democracy in the city”.

“Beijing once again has failed to learn from its mistakes in Hong Kong: that repression generates resistance, and that millions of Hong Kong people will persist in their struggle for their right to vote and run for office in a democratically elected government.”

UK-based Hong Kong Watch accused Beijing of “once again undermining Hong Kong’s democracy & breaching its obligations under the Sino-British

Joint Declaration”.

“The international community must respond with Magnitsky sanctions and other punitive measures demonstrating that an attack on democracy has consequences.”

At the time of the primaries the Hong Kong government claimed it had received complaints that the poll might have “interfered with and manipulated” the election, and that by pledging to win a majority of seats in order to block government bills candidates and campaigners had potentially violated the NSL.

The primary polls, while not a formal part of Hong Kong’s election process, drew an estimated 600,000 people out to vote for democracy candidates in what was seen as a litmus test of the public’s response to government crackdowns, and an act of protest.

But Beijing’s top representatives in [Hong Kong](#) labelled the primaries “illegal” and accused organisers of colluding with foreign powers in a “serious provocation” of Hong Kong’s electoral system.

“The goal of organiser Benny Tai and the opposition camp is to seize the ruling power of Hong Kong and ... carry out a Hong Kong version of ‘colour revolution’,” said a spokesman for the Liaison Office, whose chief is also in charge of implementing the national security laws.

After the polls closed Tai predicted as many as 45 seats could be won by pro-democracy candidates, but he was wary of backlash from those in power.

“Everyone must be mentally prepared.”

The Beijing-designed law was imposed in June last year, and criminalised secession, subversion, terrorism and collusion with foreign forces, including benign acts of protest. Until Wednesday around 35 people had been arrested under the law, and four charged, including media mogul Jimmy Lai. Prosecutors have fought to ensure none are released on bail, suggesting anyone charged from Wednesday’s raids will likely be detained.

More to come.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Jacob Blake

Jacob Blake: officers will not be charged in shooting that left Black man paralyzed

Prosecutor says white officer who shot Blake several times in the back would not be charged due to Wisconsin self-defense law

Lauren Aratani

Tue 5 Jan 2021 18.44 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 20.21 EST



Family and supporters of Jacob Blake hold a news conference on Tuesday in Kenosha, Wisconsin. Photograph: Scott Olson/Getty Images

A Wisconsin prosecutor announced Tuesday that he will not bring criminal charges against the white police officer who shot [Jacob Blake](#) in the back from close range last August, which left the Black Kenosha father paralyzed from the waist down.

Michael Gravely, Kenosha county district attorney, said during a press conference that his office determined that the officer, Rusten Sheskey, would not be charged based on the state's law relating to self-defense.

The decision prompted immediate anger from attorneys representing Blake's family, Benjamin Crump, Patrick A Salvi II and B'Ivory LaMarr.

They denounced the decision not to charge Rusten Sheskey, the police officer who shot Blake.

"Officer Sheskey's actions sparked outrage and advocacy throughout the country, but the district attorney's decision not to charge the officer who shot Jacob in the back multiple times, leaving him paralyzed, further destroys trust in our justice system," the attorneys said in a [statement](#).

They added: "This sends the wrong message to police officers throughout the country. It says it is okay for police to abuse their power and recklessly shoot their weapon, destroying the life of someone who was trying to protect his children."

Play Video

2:05

Prosecutors clear white police officer over Jacob Blake shooting in Kenosha – video

Blake was shot several times by Sheskey on August 23 when officers were responding to a domestic incident call.

Kenosha then experienced several weeks of protests against police brutality, after a bystander's video of the incident was posted online.

The shooting came three months after the police killing of George Floyd, whose death prompted a surge of protests for racial justice across the country and internationally over the last spring and summer, and calls for police reform and action to address institutionalized racism in the US and beyond.

Blake survived the shooting but was left with multiple injuries to his arms, spinal cord and internal organs along with being paralyzed from the waist

down. Three of Blake's children were in the car at the time of the shooting.

Crump also tweeted that his team was "immensely disappointed" and that the decision "failed not only Jacob and his family but the community that protested and demanded justice".

Ben Crump (@AttorneyCrump)

BREAKING: Kenosha DA Michael Gravely will NOT charge the officers involved in the August shooting of Jacob Blake. We are immensely disappointed and feel this decision failed not only Jacob and his family but the community that protested and demanded justice.

[January 5, 2021](#)

And he [also posted](#) that: "We must broaden the fight for justice on behalf of Jacob Blake and the countless other Black victims of racial injustice and police brutality."

At the time of the shooting, police had a warrant for Blake's arrest on suspicion of

sexual assault and counts for trespassing and disorderly conduct, with officers responding to a 911 call from a woman who said that Blake was at her home.

Gravely said that Blake had resisted arrest, despite being shot with a stun gun.

"Officers said they had never seen a defendant who had such little impact by Tasers. That was certainly a factor in the use of force in this case," Gravely said.

Charges against Blake were [later dropped](#).

The district attorney on Tuesday also said that Blake had a knife, something he said Blake confirmed to investigators, and had refused police commands to drop it.

Crump has said Blake was attempting to break up a fight when he was shot in front of three of his sons, aged three, five and eight.

When Sheskey fired his gun, four shots hit Blake's back and three his side, Graveley said, while arguing that the officer could successfully argue self-defense before a jury, undermining the case for bringing criminal charges against the officer.

Gravely added that he has sent the case to the US attorney's office for a civil investigation, as a second opinion.

Gravely said the investigation included about 200 investigative reports, video and audio recording and photographs.

Blake's family members led many of the [protest rallies and marches](#) in the weeks after the wounding of Jacob Blake and have been adamant that Shuskey should be arrested for the shooting, saying he was trying to kill Blake, and put his life at risk.

"He tried to kill my son. He didn't try to take him down," Jacob Blake Sr, Blake's father, [said](#) at a march and vigil held Monday night in Kenosha.

While the protests in Kenosha in August and September were largely peaceful, there was initially violence that broke out on the fringes and destruction of some property in the small city. And within a few days, rightwing agitators appeared on the streets and attacked protesters.

Two men were [fatally shot](#) by Kyle Rittenhouse, who was 17 at the time, now 18, and was eventually arrested at his home in Illinois, despite [walking past law enforcement](#) in Kenosha with his hands up shortly after he'd fired the shots with an assault rifle.

Rittenhouse has since been charged with two counts of homicide and one count of attempted homicide, all of which he [pledged](#) not guilty to at a court hearing on Tuesday.

The [unrest](#) also left many local Black and brown businesses in Kenosha closed or destroyed.

Wisconsin governor Tony Evers authorized the mobilization of the state's National Guard on Monday in anticipation of the district attorney's announcement.

Julia Carrie Wong and Reuters contributed reporting.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

UK criminal justice

Doubts emerge in US over future of Assange extradition case

Joe Biden's priorities could scupper extradition of WikiLeaks co-founder, says departing Virginia attorney



Julian Assange's lawyers are pressing for bail in the wake of the Wikileaks co-founder's legal win earlier this week. Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

Julian Assange's lawyers are pressing for bail in the wake of the Wikileaks co-founder's legal win earlier this week. Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

[Ben Quinn](#)

[@BenQuinn75](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.45 EST

The American prosecutor seeking to put [Julian Assange](#) on trial in the US has said he is uncertain if Joe Biden's incoming White House administration will continue to seek the extradition of the WikiLeaks co-founder.

Zachary Terwilliger, who was appointed by Donald Trump, made the comments as [it was announced](#) that he was stepping down as the US attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia.

“It will be very interesting to see what happens with this case. There’ll be some decisions to be made. Some of this does come down to resources and where you’re going to focus your energies,” he [told NPR](#).

The departure of Terwilliger as the prosecutor in Virginia, where Assange would be tried on espionage and hacking charges if extradited from the UK, comes as the 49-year-old is hoping to be successful in a bail application on Wednesday at Westminster magistrates court in London.

Assange’s lawyers are expected to press for bail on the basis that his chances of avoiding extradition to the US have been greatly boosted by [a legal win on Monday](#) at the Old Bailey, when a judge ruled that health grounds mean he should not be extradited.

They will also emphasise new family ties here in the UK revolving around the two young children he has fathered with his partner, [Stella Moris](#). Assange would be bailed to their home address and would wear an ankle tag.

Lawyers for US authorities have indicated that they will appeal [against Monday's ruling](#) by a district judge Vanessa Baraitser, who was sitting at the Central Criminal Court of England and Wales. While rejecting arguments that Assange would not get a fair trial in the US she blocked extradition on the basis that procedures in prisons there would not prevent him from potentially taking his own life.

Carl Tobias, a law professor at the University of Richmond, Virginia, said that a pardon of Assange by Donald Trump was unlikely, adding that it was “more likely” that the US Department of Justice will file an appeal before the president leaves office on 20 January and attempt to refute the judge’s views on the US prison system.

He added: “The major decisions will fall to Biden and the new administration, namely his attorney general and US attorney for the Eastern

District of Virginia, where Assange was charged and would be tried, and those officials may not be confirmed for several months.”

Assange was one of the first major issues that Biden and the new DoJ leadership were likely to face and assumed symbolic and actual importance, he said.

“My sense is that Biden and his team will not allow the issue to be decided by attrition but will want to seriously consider all of the relevant issues and make the best possible decision.”

The case against Assange relates to WikiLeaks’ publication of [hundreds of thousands of leaked documents](#) about the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, as well as diplomatic cables, in 2010 and 2011.

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Police

Shukri Abdi: family of refugee schoolgirl who drowned sues police

Solicitors lodge civil action against Greater Manchester police for breach of Human Rights Act



Protesters in London last June holding banners asking for justice over the death of Shukri Abdi. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Protesters in London last June holding banners asking for justice over the death of Shukri Abdi. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

Diane Taylor

Tue 5 Jan 2021 08.15 EST

The family of a 12-year-old refugee schoolgirl who drowned in a river is suing the police force which investigated her death, claiming institutional racism.

The body of Shukri Abdi, who first came to the UK in January 2017, was found in the River Irwell in Bury, [Greater Manchester](#), on 27 June 2019. A group of children were with her at the river in the period before she died.

They can be referred to only as Child One, Child Two, Child Three and Child Four.

In December 2020 a coroner [concluded](#) that Shukri's death by drowning was an accident. Joanne Kearsley, senior coroner for Manchester North, concluded that there was no evidence that a child known as Child One had any intention to kill Shukri.

She also rejected claims that anyone had pushed Shukri into the water. However, she said that Child One should have recognised the risk of death to Shukri once they were in deep water and Shukri was relying on her to stay afloat. She rejected claims that Child One had not led Shukri into deep water.

"I am satisfied that Child One's breach of duty caused or made a significant contribution to Shukri's death," she said.

Solicitors have lodged a civil action for breach of the Human Rights Act against [Greater Manchester](#) police on behalf of Shukri's mother, Zamzam Arab Ture.

The legal action claims that there were a number of failures in GMP's investigation into Shukri's drowning including a failure to speak to all four children who were at the river with Shukri on the day of the incident. Two were spoken to on the day and the other two spoken to subsequently.

[Shukri Abdi's death: from a 999 call to a coroner's verdict via global protests](#)
[Read more](#)

The lawyers argue that police should have investigated more thoroughly before deciding the drowning was an accident because the incident involved a child who could not swim, who had never been to a river before, had for the first time in her life not come home from school and was with children she had never before been with after school.

They add that institutional racism played a part in the way the case was investigated because Shukri came from a family of black, Muslim refugees.

An [Independent Office for Police Conduct](#) investigation into GMP – following a complaint from Ture alleging that officers failed to conduct an effective investigation and prematurely concluded that Shukri's death was not suspicious – said it did not find evidence to indicate Shukri's family were treated less favourably because of their ethnic background.

The force is currently under fire after it was placed in [special measures](#) by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services. Inspectors found that the force had failed to record 80,000 crimes in 12 months and was providing a “poor service” to many victims of crime.

Attiq Malik, the solicitor representing Shukri's family, said: “The same criticisms that Shukri's family raised about the GMP's treatment of them and the investigation into her death resonate with the findings of the inspectorate of GMP's conduct across the board.”

Maz Saleem, of the Justice4Shukri campaign, said: “This is an important development in the fight for justice for Shukri Abdi. The family has maintained the firm position that they have been unfairly treated by GMP from the outset due to their status as a refugee family.”

A GMP spokesperson said: “The Independent Office for [Police](#) Conduct (IOPC) carried out an independent investigation and reviewed GMP's response following the death of Shukri Abdi.

“The IOPC concluded their investigation and no learning was identified for GMP. Following the inquest, a civil claim has been started and it would be inappropriate for us to comment further at this time.

“Our sincere thoughts remain with Shukri's loved ones and those affected by her death.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/05/shukri-abdi-family-of-refugee-schoolgirl-who-drowned-sues-police>

[Environment](#)

Severe climate-driven loss of native molluscs reported off Israel's coast

Mediterranean study finds subtidal populations of cockles, whelks and other species have collapsed by 90%



The murex has been used across the Mediterranean since Roman times to create dye but researchers did not find any members of the species during the four-year study covering 200km of coastline. Photograph: Alon Meir/Alamy

The murex has been used across the Mediterranean since Roman times to create dye but researchers did not find any members of the species during the four-year study covering 200km of coastline. Photograph: Alon Meir/Alamy

[Jonathan Watts](#) *Global environment editor*

[@jonathanwatts](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

The world's most devastating climate-driven loss of ocean life has been reported in the eastern Mediterranean, one of the fastest warming places on Earth.

Native mollusc populations along the coast of [Israel](#) have collapsed by about 90% in recent decades because they cannot tolerate the increasingly hot water, according to a new study, which raises concerns about the wider ecosystem and neighbouring regions.

Scientists said the sharp decline of native cockles, whelks and other shallow subtidal invertebrates is likely to have spread to waters off other countries in the region and would continue to progress westward to Greece and beyond as global temperatures increased.

[Revisited: What happens when the oceans heat up?](#)

[Read more](#)

The paper – published in the [Proceedings of the Royal Society B](#) journal – estimates native mollusc populations have fallen to 12% of their historical species richness in shallow subtidal sedimentary substrates, and to 5% on rocky substrates.

The authors of the paper expressed surprise at their findings. “The magnitude was totally unexpected,” said Paolo Albano, a marine biologist at the University of Vienna. “I expected a seascape that I was well accustomed to as a Mediterranean specialist but enriched with some interesting exotic species that had entered through the Suez canal. But what I found was a desert, totally devoid of even common Mediterranean species.”

The murex, for example, is a gastropod that has been used throughout the Mediterranean since Roman times for the Tyrian purple clothing dye. Albano said he found no members of this species on the 200km of coastline in the four-year study.

The research team took samples at multiple points, then compared living mollusc numbers with previous population sizes, which were estimated from empty shells found in sediment. The shortfall exceeded anything seen

before. “This is the largest climate-driven regional-scale diversity loss in the oceans documented to date,” the paper says.

The change is visible at scuba-diving depths of between 5 and 40 metres. In deeper waters the temperatures are lower. In intertidal areas, species have evolved to adapt to wider temperature ranges. In between, native molluscs are disappearing.

As with the declines of pollinators and soil quality on land, this has wider consequences. Molluscs make up the largest marine phylum, accounting for 23% of all sea organisms. As well as providing meat for the seafood industry, they play an [essential role](#) in regulating the chemistry of the ocean by recycling nutrients and removing nitrogen and phosphorus. In part that role might be taken on by new invasive tropical species from the Red Sea, but preliminary results suggested they would not perform the same ecosystem role as the lost native ones.

“The ecosystem will be different and it will function in a different way. This is very clear. But the situation is so dynamic it is hard to predict the consequences,” Albano said.

The scientists believe the cause of the destruction is human-driven climate disruption. The Israeli coast – which is one of the hottest parts of the Mediterranean – experienced a temperature increase of 3C between 1980 and 2013. The average summer surface temperature is 32C. This is thought to have triggered the eradication of native mollusc populations – a phenomenon detected in previous studies elsewhere.

Pollution and the arrival of tropical species through the Suez canal were deemed less significant factors. Pollution tended to be localised around ports such as Haifa, and the canal has existed for over 150 years. Studies of the coastline in the 1970s and 80s showed healthy waters.

Albano said the collapse was likely to have occurred in the past 20 years and had affected the entire ecosystem: “The sea is completely changing from temperate Mediterranean to impoverished tropical. This turnover is rapid and in progress. It has not yet reached a stable state.”

The few native mollusc species that remained were struggling. They were widely scattered and 60% failed to grow to reproductive size.

Albano believed this was part of an irreversible trend as global warming made the relatively cool Mediterranean more like the tropical Red Sea. This echoes similar findings in the far north, where scientists say the cold Arctic Ocean increasingly resembles the warmer Atlantic in terms of biology, chemistry and temperature.

As well as stepping up protections of the still relatively pristine deep waters and tackling localised problems like pollution, Albano said the only way to address this shift was to tackle climate change by reducing emissions as soon as possible.

“In my opinion we have no choice. This should be first on the list of things to do when we consider how we are changing the planet. It is blind to think this should not be tackled immediately. Exactly like Covid, we need to treat this as an emergency.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/06/severe-climate-driven-loss-of-native-molluscs-reported-off-israels-coast>

Manchester City

'One of the greatest': Manchester City legend Colin Bell dies at the age of 74

- 'The King' spent 13 years at City and has a stand named after him
- Mike Summerbee: 'He never knew how good he actually was'



The Manchester City chairman, Khaldoon Al Mubarak, said of Colin Bell: 'The passage of time does little to erase the memories of his genius.'

Photograph: PA

The Manchester City chairman, Khaldoon Al Mubarak, said of Colin Bell: 'The passage of time does little to erase the memories of his genius.'

Photograph: PA

[Jamie Jackson](#)

[@JamieJackson](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 14.41 EST

Tributes have been paid to Colin Bell, one of Manchester City's greatest players, who has died aged 74 after a short illness.

The midfielder was known at City as the King of the Kippax, after one of the stands at the club's former Maine Road stadium, and won 48 England caps from 1968 to 1975.

[Colin Bell wasn't a superstar. He just happened to be a brilliant footballer |](#)

[Simon Hattenstone](#)

[Read more](#)

“He is widely regarded to be the finest City player of his generation, making 492 appearances and scoring 152 goals for the club during a 13-year stay,” said City, who specified Bell’s illness was not Covid-related. The club’s players are set to wear a retro No 8 shirt at the Carabao Cup semi-final at Manchester United on Wednesday.

A mark of Bell’s status at City is that the Etihad Stadium’s west stand is named after him. Mike Summerbee, a former City teammate, said: “Colin was a lovely, humble man. He was a huge star for Manchester City but you would never have known it. He was quiet, unassuming and I always believe he never knew how good he actually was. He was just the greatest footballer we have ever had. Kevin De Bruyne reminds me a lot of Colin in the way he plays and the way he is as a person. Even though I knew he’d been poorly for a while; I wasn’t expecting to lose him – it’s a complete shock.”

Bell was instrumental in the great City side that from 1968 to 1970 claimed a clean sweep of domestic honours of the championship, FA Cup and League Cup, and won the European Cup Winners’ Cup.

In 1967-68 Bell scored 14 times for Joe Mercer’s team to help the club become champions of England for only the second time, having two seasons before got the goal that clinched promotion.

Remembering the King of the Kippax □

Immortal □

□ [#ManCity | https://t.co/axa0kID5re pic.twitter.com/SYW8Vw09E6](#)

— Manchester City (@ManCity) [January 5, 2021](#)

Khaldoon al-Mubarak, the chairman, said: “The passage of time does little to erase the memories of his genius. The fact that we have a stand at the Etihad Stadium named after Colin speaks volumes about the importance of his contribution to this club ... There is always the thought of what might have been if injury had not affected his career. Undoubtedly more trophies for City and far more than the 48 England caps to his name. Our club has lost a true great. Everyone’s thoughts and best wishes are with Colin’s family.”

[Colin Bell taught me the rules of attraction](#)

[Read more](#)

Bell, born in Hesleden, County Durham, had started his career at Bury in 1963, where he became captain. Signed by Mercer for £45,500 on 16 March 1966 – on what was then transfer deadline day – the manager’s assistant, Malcolm Allison, had publicly described Bell as “hopeless” to try to ward off other interest. Bell made his City debut aged 20 three days later, scoring in a 2-1 win against Derby.

Also nicknamed “Nijinsky” because of fitness and stamina reminiscent of the champion racehorse, Bell was part of Alf Ramsey’s squad for the 1970 World Cup in Mexico.

Sir Bobby Charlton wrote in the foreword to Bell’s autobiography, published in 2005: “He was a great athlete with a great football brain and a very dedicated person. He didn’t need motivating; he did that himself. He had his own standards and you can’t fail to be impressed by his playing record. I got the opportunity to work with him occasionally when we were in the same squad for England and I was amazed by his strength and fitness. When a player with those assets has also got a football brain, and you ally that to pace and the other abilities he had, you have a really exceptional player.”

We’re deeply saddened by the news that Colin Bell, who won 48 caps for the [#ThreeLions](#) between 1968 and 1975, has passed away.

Our deepest condolences go to Colin’s family, friends and former clubs.
pic.twitter.com/idD9CGzOeo

— England (@England) [January 5, 2021](#)

Bell was voted into the 1974-75 PFA Division One Team of the Year before a serious knee injury sustained in a tackle on Manchester United's Martin Buchan in a League Cup win in November 1975 had a severe impact on his career.

Bell missed the 2-1 victory against Newcastle United in that season's League Cup final at Wembley and all of the 1976-77. Although he did feature again for City, he left in 1979, briefly trying to revive his career by playing for the San Jose Earthquakes in the North American Soccer League, before retiring in 1980.

The City midfielder Phil Foden wrote on Twitter: "Extremely saddened to hear Colin Bell has passed away. The King Of Kippax was a true legend and someone I've grown up admiring. You'll be sorely missed Nijinsky."

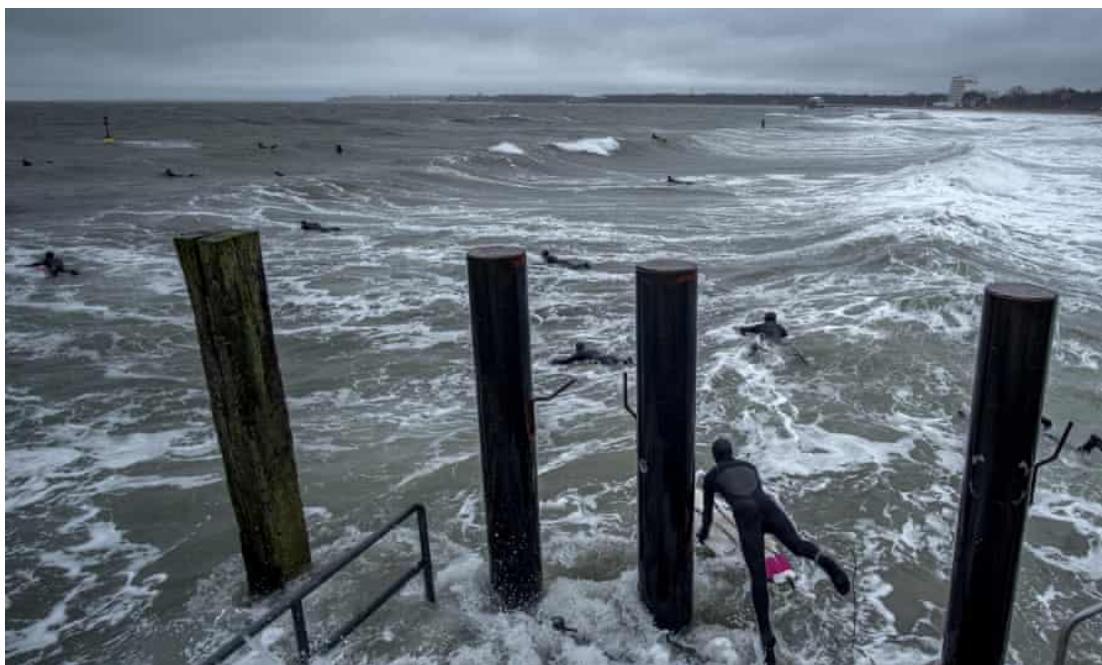
The former City and England goalkeeper Joe Corrigan said: "He was irreplaceable – he was a once-in-a-generation talent."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jan/05/colin-bell-manchester-city-legend-dies-at-the-age-of-74>

[Germany](#)

Change in the weather: German storm names to be more diverse

Symbolic #WeatherCorrection is part of campaign for inclusivity in society



A surfer jumps into the stormy Baltic Sea from the pier in Timmendorfer Strand, Germany, on Monday. Photograph: Michael Probst/AP

A surfer jumps into the stormy Baltic Sea from the pier in Timmendorfer Strand, Germany, on Monday. Photograph: Michael Probst/AP

Associated Press

Tue 5 Jan 2021 10.13 EST

Move over, Siegfried. Ahmet is on the way.

A journalists' group has named a low pressure system bringing low temperatures, dark clouds and snow to [Germany](#) after the boy's name of Turkish origin in an effort to increase the visibility of the country's increasingly diverse population.

Ahmet will be followed by low pressure systems with Arabic, Kurdish and Greek names such as Cemal, Goran, Hakim and Dimitrios. The high-pressure systems reaching Germany early this year will be called Bożena, Chana or Dragica, names with Polish, Hebrew and south Slavic roots.

In Germany, naming weather systems is not the sole province of meteorologists. Anyone can participate: naming a sunny high costs €360 (£325), while rainy lows cost only €240.

To make the weather news more cross-cultural, the New German Media Makers, an association representing journalists with diverse backgrounds, bought a number of lows and a few highs for the beginning of the new year, said Ferda Ataman, the head of the group.

[What's in a name? Berlin wrestles with past in metro station row](#)
[Read more](#)

“So far, our weather had mostly typical German names only, even though 26% of people in Germany have migrant roots,” Ataman, whose parents migrated from Turkey, said.

The weather-naming project, which the group dubbed #WeatherCorrection, is a symbolic initiative demanding that Germany’s diversity be better reflected across society.

The group is lobbying German media outlets to establish hiring quotas for journalists of colour and from migrant families. The group estimates that journalists of colour are vastly underrepresented in the media in Germany. They say only between 5% to 10% of reporters and editors in Germany have migrant roots.

The low and high pressure systems will also have plenty of traditional German names in 2021, including Reinhard, Volker, Margarethe, Trudi and Waltraud.

In the past, cloudy low systems always had traditionally female names and upbeat highs were male, but this practice changed in 1998. Since then, male and female names switch places each year in the high and low categories.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/change-in-the-weather-german-storm-names-to-be-more-diverse>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.06 - Coronavirus

- [Live Coronavirus: WHO chief 'disappointed' after China blocks' Wuhan visit; 1 in 50 infected in UK](#)
- [Vaccines No data to support UK delay of second dose, says WHO](#)
- [WHO China blocks entry to team studying Covid's origins](#)
- ['Useful' Police chief calls for power to enter lockdown breakers' homes](#)
- [Life without Covid Nations that have sidestepped the pandemic so far](#)
- ['I feel so worn down' Reactions to England's new Covid lockdown](#)
- [Grammys Awards postponed weeks before ceremony](#)

[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

Coronavirus live news: WHO chief 'very disappointed' after China blocks' Wuhan visit; 1 in 50 infected in UK

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World Health Organization

No data to support UK delay of vaccines' second dose, says WHO

Move to postpone second jab by up to 12 weeks is not supported by scientific evidence, experts find

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The World Health Organization has said it understands why some countries have decided to go beyond the evidence when it comes to vaccine doses.
Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

The World Health Organization has said it understands why some countries have decided to go beyond the evidence when it comes to vaccine doses.
Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

[Sarah Boseley](#) Health editor

Tue 5 Jan 2021 14.48 EST

There is no scientific evidence for a delay of more than six weeks in administering the second dose of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine against Covid, say experts from the [World Health Organization](#).

The UK is planning to postpone giving the second dose of both the Pfizer/BioNTech and the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccines by up to 12 weeks – twice the length of time for which there is data, according to the WHO.

However, the WHO's strategic advisory group of experts on immunisation (Sage – not to be confused with the UK government's Sage group) said it understood why a country facing the sort of increases in cases, hospitalisations and deaths that were happening in the UK might decide to go beyond the evidence.

“We feel that we need to be grounded in evidence in relation to our recommendations, but totally acknowledge that countries may see needs to be even more flexible in terms of the administration of the second dose,” said Dr Joachim Hombach, executive secretary of the WHO’s Sage.

“But it is important to note that there is very little empiric data from the trials that underpin this type of recommendation.”

There has been some disquiet among scientists in the UK and the US over the decision of the UK’s joint committee on vaccinations and immunisation (JCVI) to recommend a 12-week delay.

While there is some evidence from trials of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine that a late second dose, up to 12 weeks, does not interfere with the efficacy of the vaccine, [Pfizer](#) put out a statement saying there was no evidence from its trials.

Pfizer’s phase 3 final trial showed people began to be protected from 12 days after one vaccination – but nearly all were given two shots within three weeks. “There are no data to demonstrate that protection after the first dose is sustained after 21 days,” the company said.

Dr Kate O’Brien, another member of the WHO’s working group, said she hoped to see more data. “I think we have to emphasise the need for

additional evidence. Because there is no recommending body there is no entirety of the evidence that tells us the clear and full answer to these policy questions. And the nature of policymaking is that we must make recommendations based on imperfect data.”

It was a trade-off of two risks, she said. Sticking scrupulously to the timing of vaccines for which there was trial evidence could limit the number of people who get first doses. But the second risk was a delay to people getting their booster shot.

The WHO’s Sage committee brought together a working group of 26 experts from around the world, who met online to recommend how the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine should be used. They will also meet to discuss other vaccines as they are approved by various regulators.

Their conclusion was that the two doses should be given three to four weeks apart, unless there are “exceptional circumstances of vaccine supply constraints and epidemiologic settings to delay the administration of the second approach for a few weeks in order to maximise the number of individuals benefiting from a first dose,” said Sage chair Dr Alejandro Cravioto in announcing their decision.

The exceptional delay was six weeks, it was later clarified. The data on safety and efficacy from the trials did not go beyond three to four weeks, but there was some data up to 42 days, or six weeks, the experts said.

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[Coronavirus](#)

China blocks entry to WHO team studying Covid's origins

Officials say visas not yet approved for World Health Organization delegation due to visit Wuhan

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



The World Health Organization's director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Photograph: WHO/AFP/Getty

The World Health Organization's director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Photograph: WHO/AFP/Getty

Sarah Boseley *Health editor*

Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.08 EST

China has blocked the arrival of a team from the World Health Organization investigating [the origins of the coronavirus pandemic](#), claiming that their

visas had not yet been approved even as some members of the group were on their way.

The WHO's director general, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, expressed his dismay and said he had called on [China](#) to allow the team in. "I'm very disappointed with this news, given that two members have already begun their journeys, and others were not able to travel at the last minute," he said.

"But I have been in contact with senior Chinese officials. And I have once again made it clear that the mission is a priority for WHO and the international team."

The WHO has been attempting to send in the team of global experts from a number of countries for some months. It has been talking with Chinese officials since July. Scientists have long said it is essential to find out how the virus jumped species into humans.

[Origin story: what do we know now about where coronavirus came from?](#)

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The expedition to China was heading to Wuhan to investigate the earliest cases. It was not intending to probe claims that the virus originated in a Chinese lab, [which have been dismissed by most scientists](#).

The mission has been criticised by the US, where the outgoing president, Donald Trump, has categorically blamed the Chinese for the pandemic.

Garrett Grigsby, of the US Department of Health and Human Services, said in November the investigation appeared to be "inconsistent" with the WHO's mandate. "Understanding the origins of Covid-19 through a transparent and inclusive investigation is what must be done to meet the mandate."

Dr Mike Ryan at WHO said the team had been working very closely with Chinese colleagues on planning the trip.

"We were all operating on the understanding the team will begin deployment today [Tuesday]," he said.

Two members of the team, who had a long distance to travel, had begun their journeys, he said, but it had become clear that their visas had not been approved by the Chinese authorities.

“We did not want to put people in the air unnecessarily if there wasn’t a guarantee of their arrival in [China](#) being successful,” said Ryan. “Dr Tedros has taken immediate action and has spoken with senior Chinese officials and has fully impressed upon them the absolute critical nature of this.”

The team hoped it was “just a logistical and bureaucratic issue that can be resolved very quickly”. One of the two colleagues who were on their way had gone back, while the other was remaining in a third country in transit.

“This is frustrating and, as the director general said, disappointing. That disappointment has been expressed very clearly by Dr Tedros directly to our counterparts in China. We trust that in good faith, we can solve these issues in the coming hours and recommence the deployment of the team as urgently as possible,” said Ryan.

Ilona Kickbusch, the founding director and chair of the Global Health Centre in Geneva, said geopolitics had got in the way of countries joining together to defeat the coronavirus pandemic and the hostilities that had been generated could now get in the way of finding out how it began.

“I think it will be incredibly difficult to be able to find the origin of the virus, because so much time has passed,” Kickbusch said.

The world managed to come together to eradicate smallpox at the height of the cold war, she pointed out. Even when Sars, another coronavirus, surfaced in China and caused havoc between 2002 and 2003, the global reaction had been one of cooperation and a push for more transparency.

Back then, Beijing had acknowledged it had made mistakes, reorganised its health ministry and created the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Other countries had given it the benefit of the doubt and called for more cooperation.

“Sars actually led to China [understanding] that they needed to be much more integrated into the [global] system,” Kickbusch said. “It was a period of opening.” But now, she said: “There is a closing of the mind, quite clearly, on all sides.”

Before the crisis, geopolitical tensions had bled into the global health response, she said, pointing to how the US-China trade war had morphed into a “geopolitical blame game”. As a result “China clamped down totally [and] the US did what it did” and in the end “the whole world has suffered”.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Coronavirus

Police chief calls for power of entry into homes of suspected lockdown breakers

West Midlands police commissioner calls for ‘useful tool’ to enforce new national lockdown measures

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[Vikram Dodd](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.32 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 16.23 EST



Police community support officers in Leeds city centre after Boris Johnson announced further lockdown measures. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

The government should toughen the lockdown by giving officers the right to force entry into homes of suspected law breakers, a policing leader has said.

David Jamieson, the police and crime commissioner for the West Midlands police, England's second biggest force, said: "For the small minority of people who refuse entry to police officers and obstruct their work, the power of entry would seem to be a useful tool.

"I have raised this issue with the policing minister previously and clarity on the power of entry would help police officers enforce the new Covid regulations more easily."

As the third lockdown [comes into force in England](#) at midnight on Wednesday, the rising infection rate is also causing increasing absences from the ranks of officers needed to help enforce the lockdown.

The Guardian understands that ahead of the lockdown announcement, the government considered other tough measures including restricting how far people can travel for exercise and a night-time curfew from 10pm to early morning.

The curtailment of movement ideas considered could have seen people limited to traveling only several miles from their main residence or to their own county.

In discussions with government since the first lockdown, police have pointed out the coronavirus regulations do not allow them to gain entry to a place where they suspect laws may be being broken, such as where large parties are taking place.

Sources expect the new lockdown to be broadly similar to the first last March and to be policed in a similar way. The 43 local forces in England will make their own operational decisions and concentrate on the biggest breaches such as unlicensed music events and parties.

[Police](#) say most people are complying with the parts of the regulations they have been enforcing. Research for the government's scientific advisers found that less than 20% of people in England fully self-isolate when asked to do so.

A spokesperson for the National Police Chiefs Council said: “We are confident that the majority of people will respect the rules and do their part to keep our communities safe and to protect the NHS.

“Those who do not follow the regulations and measures put in place to limit the spread of the virus should expect to receive a fixed penalty notice”.

The new lockdown, caused by rising infection rates, is causing increasing absences among police ranks, currently understood in England to be on average 7%. In some forces it is higher, and as in the first lockdown, forces have drawn up plans as to what they would stop doing if absence levels continue to rise and become a crisis.

Mark Burns-Williamson, West Yorkshire’s police and crime commissioner said: “By complying, we are protecting one another, our loved ones and those emergency service and key workers who are on the front-line of the response this winter, putting their safety before others on all our behalfs.

“The police in West Yorkshire will continue to maintain their approach of engaging, explaining and encouraging the public, but using enforcement powers when and where it’s necessary for wider public protection purposes and I’ll be having further conversations with the chief constable and policing minister later [on Tuesday].”

The Metropolitan police, which covers Greater London, said the alleged organiser of a party in Kensington, which up to 200 people attended, could face a £10,000 fine. The Met said they were called to the party on 30 December and officers recovered weapons including knives and hammers.

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[The Pacific project](#)[Pacific islands](#)

Life without Covid: the nations that have sidestepped the pandemic so far

A handful of countries – most of them islands, most of them remote – remain coronavirus-free, but life has not remained wholly unchanged

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Young men play a game of rugby at sunset in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. The largest cluster of places without the coronavirus can be found in the scattered islands of the South Pacific. Photograph: Mark Baker/AP

Young men play a game of rugby at sunset in Nuku'alofa, Tonga. The largest cluster of places without the coronavirus can be found in the scattered islands of the South Pacific. Photograph: Mark Baker/AP

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[About this content](#)

Emmanuel Samoglou in Rarotonga, Bernadette Carreon in Koror, and Ben Doherty Pacific Editor

Tue 5 Jan 2021 19.43 EST

For all of its virulence, for all the breathtaking speed with which it spread seemingly everywhere around the globe, there are places still where Covid-19 has not reached, and might never.

Places without face masks or elbow-bumps, without QR codes or capacity limits, without lockdowns or social distancing. There are a handful of countries across the globe – many of them islands, most of them remote – that have managed to escape the pandemic. But while the virus hasn’t hit, the global shockwaves it has sent rippling around the world certainly have.

The Pacific is home to the world’s largest cluster of Covid-free nations. In the distant archipelago of the [Cook Islands](#), coronavirus has been a spectre that never emerged from the shadows.

In the early months of the outbreak, schools were closed on Rarotonga - the most populous island - and social distancing encouraged in public places. Relaxed after a handful of weeks, the measures were the closest the Cooks would get to experiencing living with the virus.

[The return of shell money: PNG revives old ways after Covid's blow to economy](#)

[Read more](#)

But in a country of only 22 doctors and two ventilators for a population of 17,500, many have lived in fear of an unchecked outbreak.

“No matter how prepared we may think we are,” Glenda Tuaine said from Rarotonga, “we have been in a safe bubble here devoid of the real impact and devastation Covid-19 can and does have on communities.”

Tourism contributes over two-thirds of the Cook Islands nominal gross domestic product. So when the government shuttered borders to international travellers in mid-March, the impact was swift and pronounced.

“The moment we closed our borders, it hit our people in the pocket,” [prime minister Mark Brown](#) said.

Since then, the economy has been propped up by a government relief package that’s kept workers in jobs and a fraction of commercial activity ticking along in the absence of vital tourist dollars.

Despite, or because of, the hardship, Brown argues a stronger community spirit has emerged. “People taking care of each other, looking out for their neighbours, their relations, sharing food they have grown: the creativity of our people has re-emerged with a vengeance.”

In the meantime, a business community struggling to stay afloat waits still for a partial lifeline through a potential quarantine-free travel bubble with New Zealand, and residents lead lives without facemasks or restrictions.

Across the Pacific, keeping the virus out has required, essentially, keeping borders resolutely shut.

Tonga has stopped almost all movement in and out of the kingdom, and has avoided the virus, as has [Kiribati](#), Niue, Nauru and Tuvalu.

Enforced isolation helps. Two of the only places on earth not connected by aviation - the airstrip-less islands of Tokelau (a New Zealand dependency)

and Pitcairn Island (a British territory) - are also Covid-free.

But the counter-narrative has been all too starkly apparent.

French Polynesia re-opened its borders and abandoned quarantine in July, in order to reignite a stalled tourism-dependent economy. At that stage, the French territory had just 62 confirmed cases: it now has more than 15,000, and 91 deaths.

But staying shut has come at its own price. Covid-19 shutdowns have devastated already fragile economies across the Pacific, especially those dependent on tourism.

Fiji's economy cratered more than 20% in 2020, and thousands there have abandoned tourism sector jobs to return to farming on ancestral lands. In some parts of Papua New Guinea, people have returned to using shell money and bartering as the formal economy ground to halt.

Across PNG, more than half (52%) of families have pulled children out of school because they could not afford to keep them enrolled and attending, according to a World Bank survey.

And in neighbouring Solomon Islands, where there have been just 17 cases, 57% of all families surveyed are eating less because of reduced incomes.

In Koror, the largest city in the western Pacific archipelago of Palau, remaining Covid-free after a year is regarded as a combination of luck, fortified by the early decision to close borders. The country has even received 2800 doses of the Moderna vaccine, courtesy of the United States, and has ambitions to effectively vaccinate its entire population by mid-year.

“It has definitely made me appreciate the ‘normal’ activities that we have taken for granted like family gatherings, or social events like graduations. Even traffic I get to appreciate as it is an indication of normalcy,” Semdiu Decherong, a government employee, told the Guardian.

Decherong said he has close relatives living in the US: some are healthcare workers on the front line of American emergency wards.

New Zealand and Cook Islands to launch quarantine-free travel bubble

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“I’ve been able to get a vivid picture of the situation they have faced for many months now. There is always the fear here that we might get one case and everything is locked down,” he said.

But being isolated for the duration of the pandemic has made Decherong anxious to “get off the rock” when he can.

“Living on a beautiful island has many perks but it is definitely nice to just get away for a bit every once in a while. But, if anything, the isolation has forced me to re-explore or revisit places that I have long forgotten or not made time to see on the island.

“Maintaining a positive outlook will get me through the isolation. I do hope that family members wishing to come home may be able to do so sooner rather than later.”

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Coronavirus

'I feel so worn down': reactions to England's new Covid lockdown

Snapshots from Exeter and Manchester highlight grim determination but also concerns about family life

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[Steven Morris](#), [Rhi Storer](#) and [Nicola Davis](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.29 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.46 EST



Faye Jennings-Mosquera, the owner of Zero Exeter, which is one of the businesses allowed to stay open during the lockdown. Photograph: Jim Wileman/The Guardian

Sarah Blakesley, a businesswoman and mum, was having a difficult day. "It's very hectic and very stressful," she said. "I just want to get today over

with, to be honest.”

The start of the [third national lockdown](#) was having an impact both on commercial and family life. “I run a cleaning company. Lots of clients are shutting down their offices. I may have to furlough workers.”

Blakesley, from Exeter in Devon, also has a 17-year-old who will not be going to college for the foreseeable future. “We don’t know what’s happening with college so that’s another worry. I wish we didn’t have to go through this again. I’m concerned about people’s mental health.”

Across the city people were working through tricky professional and family issues.

Sue Jones was in one of the city parks with her son and daughter, both of primary school age. She had to take a day off from her job in a food processing plant to look after them. “I couldn’t get childcare for them in time so had to phone in and ask for the day off. I feel so worn down by the idea of another lockdown.”

The Covid rates for Exeter are by no means as bad as other parts of the country – there were just under 200 new cases per 100,000 people in the seven days up to 31 December.

But most people seemed resigned to the idea that a UK-wide effort is needed. “We’ve got to have a national lockdown. It’s got out of control,” said Alan Taylor, who manages a hardware store in the city centre.

“The tiers clearly haven’t worked – people didn’t know what was going on. At least everyone knows the score now.”



Ben Mangan, an Exeter restaurant owner, said he was disappointed with the lockdown but felt the government had no choice. Photograph: Jim Wileman/The Guardian

Ben Mangan, the owner of the Eat on the Green restaurant near the cathedral, said he was disappointed at the lockdown. “But we could see it coming and I agree with it. The situation is so dire, the government had no choice. I think we need to all be in it together. It’s fair that there’s one rule for everyone.”

Steph Flisher was sticking a handwritten sign to the window of her dog grooming business informing customers that she was closing. “Safety has to take priority. We’ve all got to come together and get this sorted. The NHS needs us to do this.”

Faye Jennings-Mosquera is allowed to keep her zero-waste food and cleaning products store open. “I think the lockdown needs to happen,” she said. Her partner was at home looking after their two young children. “If we have got two months let’s just do it, let’s all wear masks and be respectful to each other.”

Around the corner at the food bank, teams of volunteers were working hard to prepare food packages, fearing there would be an increase in people

unable to afford the groceries they need.

Safety has to take priority. The NHS needs us to do this

Steph Flisher

Cllr Philip Bialyk, the leader of Exeter city council, said he “reluctantly” accepted the need for the lockdown. He said deliveries to vulnerable people would be stepped up again and more financial support funnelled to community groups helping people at risk.

“There’s nothing more important than defeating the virus,” he said. “That has to be our main aim. We have to protect loved ones and ourselves. Nobody is safe.”

There were some doubters. Stan Henderson, a lorry driver, said he thought the tier system should have been persevered with. “We were doing OK in the west country,” he said.

But Exeter has had its problems. Just before Christmas the Royal Devon & Exeter NHS foundation trust went to Opel 4 status – the highest alert level – due to high levels of inpatients with Covid and a large number of staff absences. There are about 30 patients in its Nightingale hospital on the edge of the city.

David Strain, a senior clinical lecturer at the University of Exeter Medical School and the co-chair of the British Medical Association’s medical academic staff committee, backed tighter restrictions and warned there would be no quick return to normality.

“It is important to highlight that this vaccination programme will not allow the return to normal life in February, as the majority of adults on which the economy depends are not in the four priority groups. In four to six weeks’ time when the lockdown is reviewed, there is no guarantee that there will be a nationwide lifting of restrictions.”

Almost 250 miles north of Exeter in Longsight, Manchester, the mood was weary. Apart from three weeks in July, Greater Manchester has been in some sort of lockdown since March last year.



Eliot Riley, 24, in Longsight, Manchester, had been meant to start a teaching job this week. Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Eliot Riley felt the latest lockdown was “too little too late”. He was hoping to start a teaching job this week at a primary school assisting special educational needs pupils, but after the government’s announcement of tougher restrictions, the school said they did not need him.

“I feel like I can’t plan for anything now. I can’t save, and I can’t look forward to anything. Me and my girlfriend had the intention to buy a flat, but that doesn’t seem possible at all,” he said.

“We are both in our early 20s, and I feel the pandemic is robbing us of our life opportunities. This should be the most freeing time for us, instead I just feel very restricted.”



Saki Hussain helps a customer at Longsight market in Manchester.
Photograph: Christopher Thomond/The Guardian

Saki Hussain, who works at Longsight market, remained optimistic. “There is a lot of difficulty, especially with our children now staying at home. But I hope one day, with God’s help, we will win against this disease.”

Jack Weaver, who owns a trophy and engraving shop, said: “You can’t blame Boris. He hasn’t done a good job as far as I am concerned, but I don’t think any of the leaders have. This virus is new and nobody knows how to deal with it. I’m just hoping these vaccines will work and they get them out as soon as possible.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/i-wish-we-didnt-have-to-go-through-this-again-reactions-to-englands-new-covid-lockdown>

Grammys

Grammy awards postponed weeks before ceremony over Covid concerns

The biggest night in US music is being pushed back as a result of virus spread in California



Billie Eilish holding her Grammy awards at the 2020 ceremony. Photograph: Chris Pizzello/Invision

Billie Eilish holding her Grammy awards at the 2020 ceremony. Photograph: Chris Pizzello/Invision

[Benjamin Lee](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.20 EST

The 2021 Grammy awards will be postponed after a steady increase in Covid-19 cases in California.

The ceremony was scheduled to take place on 31 January hosted by Trevor Noah and while a new date has yet to be confirmed, sources suggest that it could be pushed back until March. A limited show had already been planned

without an audience and only performers and presenters allowed on stage with nominees accepting awards remotely.

The [Grammys](#) typically attracts an in-person audience of over 18,000 and, in recent years, has mostly been held at the Staples Center in Los Angeles. The [Grammys](#) chief, Harvey Mason Jr, had said this year's plan would be to hold the event "in and around downtown Los Angeles" but the city has continued to see a sustained surge in cases.

The news comes a week after the Los Angeles county department of public health urged the entertainment industry to be cautious with nearly half of LA county's total cases to date reported in the last month. An increased strain on services has led to oxygen being rationed and ambulances advised not to transfer patients who have no chance of survival.

Numerous film productions have now decided to take a pause while certain shows that had returned to the studio, such as *The Late Late Show* and *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, have now gone back to remote shooting.

This month would have also traditionally have seen the Golden Globes, which have this year been pushed back to the end of February while the Oscars have moved from early March to late April.

This year's Grammy nominations are led by Beyoncé with nine.

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2021.01.06 - Coronavirus uk

- [Labour Former chair criticised for raising doubts over vaccine](#)
- [Media BBC to expand educational shows in response to UK Covid lockdown](#)
- [Rail transport Services likely to be halved as lockdown hits UK travel sector](#)
- ['I have never felt safe' UK shielders on new lockdown](#)

Labour

Former Labour chair criticised for raising doubts over Covid vaccine

Ian Lavery expressed ‘concerns about how these vaccines have come on to the market’ in just four months

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Ian Lavery in January 2020. Photograph: Aaron Chown/PA

The former [Labour](#) party chair, Ian Lavery, has come under fire after questioning why anyone would have confidence in the Covid vaccine and expressing concern at the pace at which the two newly introduced jabs were approved.

Footage of the MP emerged hours after the Labour leader, [Keir Starmer](#), [spoke out about anti-vax campaigns](#) and said he would support emergency

legislation to tackle them. It shows Lavery apparently casting doubt over the speed at which the regulatory process was carried out for the vaccines.

However, Lavery – who is understood to have been spoken to by Starmer’s office – [later tweeted](#) that “my words have been taken out of context”, adding that he rejected “any claims that I am in any way opposed to the rollout”. He also praised the scientific community’s achievements on the vaccine.

The comments were made in a [video broadcast](#) by Socialist Telly – which describes itself as “Grassroots Socialist Television, for the many” – on 3 January. Noting the government’s handling of test and trace, PPE provision and the awarding of public contracts, Lavery said: “Why would anybody have any confidence in the vaccine?”

[Graphic](#)

Lavery, who also made reference to the UK’s decision to delay administering the second vaccine dose so more people could get their first jab sooner, made clear he wanted people to get the vaccine. “I want everybody, let me be honest, I want people to take the vaccines, I really, really do and it’s important,” he said.

However, in the footage – first reported by the Guido Fawkes website on Tuesday – he added: “I have got concerns about how these vaccines have ... come on to the market when it would normally take 10 years and it’s ... [taken] four month[s]. It normally takes three or four years to pass through the regulatory procedures ... it hasn’t taken three or four weeks. And of course I’ve got concerns, massive concerns, about this government and the lack of trust.”

Responding to a clip of the footage, the former Labour MP Mike Gapes – who defected to Change UK in 2019 before losing his seat at the general election – [tweeted](#): “What a disgrace.”

Lavery, an ally of the former leader Jeremy Corbyn, served as the party chair for nearly three years until April 2020.

On Tuesday, Starmer told ITV's Good Morning Britain that "we have to deal with the anti-vax campaigns because they will cost lives", as he explained that he would be prepared to work with the government to pass emergency legislation to deal with them.

Lavery tweeted on Tuesday afternoon: "Like everyone else, I am blown away by the achievements of our scientific community in bringing a vaccine forward for a disease we have only known about for a year. My words have been taken out of context and I reject any claims that I am in any way opposed to the rollout.

"We now need a national effort to ensure the vaccine is rolled out. I urge everyone to make sure they get the vaccine as soon as possible so we can once again see family and friends and get back to fighting for a better Britain."

Rollout began on Monday for the [recently-approved Oxford/AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine](#), the second to be given the green light in the UK. It follows the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) also [authorising the Pfizer/BioNTech jab](#) last month, which made the UK the first western country to license a vaccine against Covid. Speaking as the Oxford vaccine was approved at the end of last month, the MHRA chief executive, Dr June Raine, stressed "no corners, whatsoever, have been cut".

As England begins a [third national lockdown](#) that will last for at least seven weeks to stem the spread of the virus, the government is hoping to deliver a first vaccine dose to those in the four highest-priority groups – 13.9 million people – by mid-February.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/05/former-labour-chair-ian-lavery-criticised-for-raising-doubts-over-covid-vaccine>

[CBBC](#)

BBC to expand educational shows in response to UK Covid lockdown

CBBC broadcasts aim to ensure all children can access curriculum-based learning without the internet

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Tim Davie, BBC director general: ‘Education is absolutely vital – the BBC is here to play its part ...’ Photograph: Bloomberg/Getty Images

A significant expansion of [BBC](#) educational programming for children is to be launched in response to the latest UK lockdowns and school closures that are expected to continue for the foreseeable future.

Amid concerns that large numbers of children without access to remote learning are losing out, the BBC said that the biggest education offer in its

history was designed to ensure that all children can access curriculum-based learning without the internet.

Broadcasting from Monday each weekday on [CBBC](#) – which is aimed at children aged between 7 and 16 – it will include a three-hour block of primary school programming from 9am.

Programming will include BBC Live Lessons and BBC Bitesize Daily, as well as Our School and Celebrity Supply Teacher and older programming such as Horrible Histories, Art Ninja and Operation Ouch.

The broadcaster said BBC Two would cater for secondary school students with programming to support the GCSE curriculum, with a least two hours of content each weekday.

Content will be built around secondary school shows produced for Bitesize Daily, the BBC's summer term service, it added, and will be complemented by Shakespeare, classic drama adaptations as well as science, history and other items.

[Tim Davie](#), the BBC director general, said: “Ensuring children across the UK have the opportunity to continue to follow the appropriate core parts of their nation’s school curriculum has been a key priority for the BBC throughout this past year.

“Education is absolutely vital – the BBC is here to play its part and I’m delighted that we have been able to bring this to audiences so swiftly.”

Oliver Dowden, the culture secretary, said in a statement released by the broadcaster that the new programming would be “a lifeline to parents”.

He said: “The BBC has helped the nation through some of the toughest moments of the last century, and for the next few weeks it will help our children learn whilst we stay home, protect the NHS and save lives.”

The education secretary, Gavin Williamson, tweeted: “Thank you @BBC for supporting continued education for pupils at home, alongside the strengthened remote education offer from schools + access to 10,000 @oaknational online lessons.”

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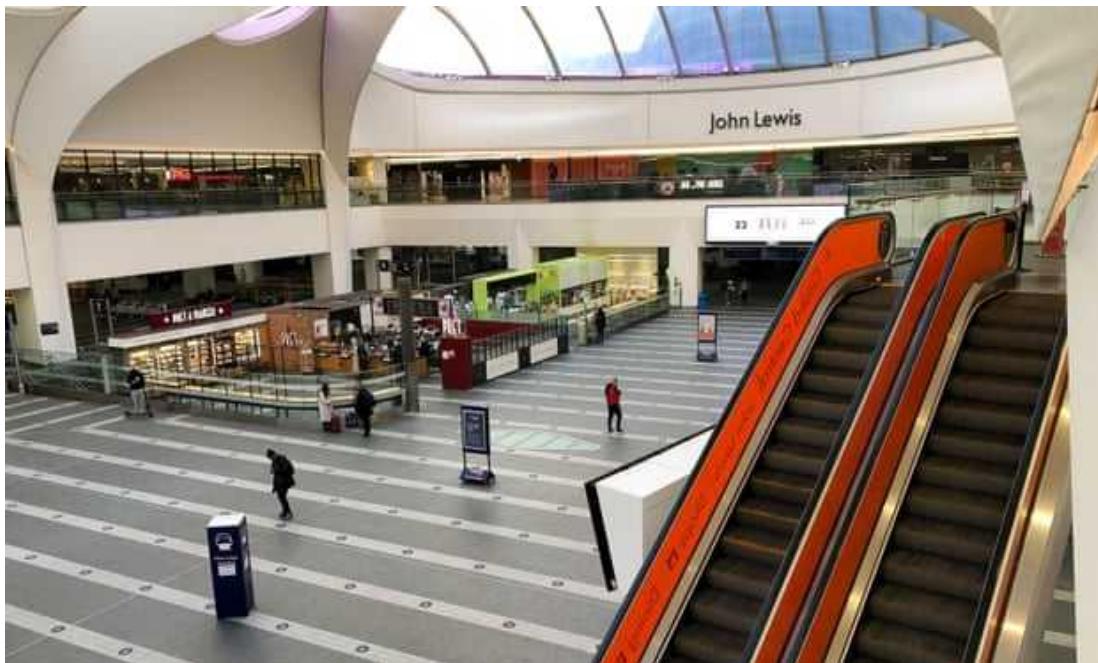
| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Rail industry

Rail services likely to be halved as lockdown hits UK travel sector

Airlines review flight schedules in light of restrictions and tour operators cancel holidays

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An almost deserted New Street train station in Birmingham the morning after Boris Johnson set out further restrictions as part of a lockdown in England. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

Rail services in Britain are likely to be slashed by about 50% in the coming weeks, as a result of Covid travel restrictions, as airlines look to cut schedules and holiday firms cancel bookings for the coming months.

The government is to consult with train operators over services to be removed from the schedule, as it seeks to cut the running costs of the now

effectively nationalised railway.

Rail firms expect that the [rules introduced on Monday](#), which instruct people to stay home for work wherever possible and ban non-essential travel, will mean journeys fall back towards the [levels of the first lockdown](#) in 2020. At that time, passenger numbers were down to as little as 4% of pre-Covid levels and many trains ran effectively empty.

Train operators are also braced for staff falling sick or needing to self-isolate with Covid infection rising across the UK.

No official figures for usage in 2021 are yet available for national rail, but [Transport](#) for London said tube journeys on Tuesday morning, the first peak hours under new lockdown rules, were 18% of pre-pandemic numbers, while bus journeys were at 30%.

Both are so far significantly higher than the lowest weekday figures during the 2020 lockdowns (5% and 16%), possibly reflecting the broader exceptions for permitted travel for support bubbles.

The Department for Transport said: “We will work with operators in the coming days to assess the right level of service provision as we have done throughout the pandemic.

“While we cannot predict the long-term effect of Covid-19 on travel patterns, it is critical that we ensure the railway can respond quickly to changes in passenger demand whilst supporting economic recovery.”

The shortfall in ticket revenue is mainly shouldered by the government under emergency recovery contracts agreed across the industry in October, and ministers are anxious to curtail costs that have already risen to £9bn in additional subsidy since [franchises were replaced in March](#).

Grand Central, which runs services between London and the north-east and still relies on fare income, on Tuesday suspended all its services throughout January and February.

In the first lockdown, operators ran timetables roughly equivalent to Sunday services, about 55% of weekday levels, gradually restoring services through

the autumn until 87% of trains ran, allowing for social distancing as passengers returned.

Robert Nisbet, a director of industry body the Rail Delivery Group, said: “We are working closely with government to ensure we run the right level of services ... By increasing cleaning and providing better customer information, our people are ensuring that those who must travel can do so with confidence.”

Meanwhile, [British Airways](#) and EasyJet said they were reviewing their flight schedules. A BA spokesperson said: “Our focus is on keeping crucial air links open – transporting vital goods and ensuring people who are permitted to travel can continue to do so safely.”

BA passengers whose flights are still operating can choose to accept a voucher or rebook, while customers of BA holidays travelling before 12 February will be refunded.

EasyJet said it would reduce its schedules to UK domestic connections and a small number of international routes. It said all customers unable to travel as a result of the lockdown restrictions, whether the flights were cancelled or not, could rebook or obtain a refund. The airline renewed its [calls on the Treasury for bespoke support](#) for the sector, “such as has been provided to hospitality, where decisions have directly affected the ability to trade. The same principle should be applied to aviation.”

Tour operator Tui said it was cancelling holidays departing before 31 January, and until mid-February from English airports. The company is contacting customers due to travel in departure date order to offer rebookings, vouchers or refunds.

A TUI UK spokesperson said: “We will constantly review holiday cancellations in line with updated travel advice. Customers currently overseas can continue to enjoy their holidays as planned and we will update them directly if there are any changes to their holidays.”

Thomas Cook also said it was calling all customers affected to offer rebookings or refunds.

While Monday's lockdown announcement will shape emergency timetables, the rail industry is increasingly resigned to seeing long-term cuts, with the decline in demand for commuter services expected to persist past the pandemic – particularly in the south-east, which forms a sizeable majority of UK rail journeys.

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Labour said that the government needed to come up with a long-term plan to ensure that rail could recover. Shadow transport secretary, Jim McMahon, said: "The government must ensure that transport services are being run in such a way that the essential workers using them, as well as staff, are kept safe."

But, he added: "Ministers cannot continue to shift the financial burden onto the taxpayer while guaranteeing private companies' profits."

Rail unions demanded an industry-wide approach to manage the risks of the new Covid variant. RMT general secretary Mick Cash said the union's priority was to protect jobs, capacity and infrastructure: "We have to navigate the next few months whilst looking ahead to the crucial role rail will play in rebuilding our economic strength."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/05/rail-services-likely-to-be-halved-as-lockdown-hits-uk-travel-sector>

Coronavirus

'I have never felt safe': UK shielders on new lockdown

The vulnerable share their concerns and reveal how the new restrictions will affect their lives

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Shielders in the UK are struggling with the ever changing regulations.
Photograph: Massimiliano Finzi/Getty Images

Shielders in the UK are struggling with the ever changing regulations.
Photograph: Massimiliano Finzi/Getty Images

[Mattha Busby](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.54 EST

Kate Osborn breathed an immense sigh of relief when [Boris Johnson](#) advised the clinically extremely vulnerable to begin shielding again. Not for

herself, she continued to shield and work from home throughout last year, but for all of those who could not live off £94 statutory sick pay.

“I’ve been concerned about other shielders risking their lives,” she said. “I know people who had to go into frontline work [when shielding ended](#) on 1 August. All it did was take away the statutory protection. I’ve had a terrible guilt for people who have not been able to shield.”

The 50-year-old teacher from Cambridgeshire, who has chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), a lung disease, as well as severe asthma, and has been teaching remotely while her children have stayed away from home, says all shielders should have had a choice of whether to continue isolating.



Kate Osborn in Venice prior to the pandemic. Photograph: Guardian Community

“I’m glad to be shielding again,” says teaching assistant Sharon, who takes immunosuppressant medication for Crohn’s – which led her to be hospitalised last year – and did not wish for her surname to be published.

“It’s right for kids to be in school but I’ve never felt that safe. The first lockdown I didn’t even leave the garden – you weren’t allowed to leave your premises so I didn’t do anything at all, it was awful. But then all of a sudden

I'm in a classroom with some 30 kids and two teachers, packed in like sardines."

Aaron Foulds, 49, an insurance broker with asthma so severe that he has been hospitalised following chest infections on a number of occasions, never stopped shielding – only venturing outside, to the hospital, three times since 13 March.

"It doesn't take me much to get out of breath, it's not something I can risk getting, the outcomes are not expected to be any good" he says of contracting Covid.



Aaron Foulds at an event prior to the pandemic. Photograph: Guardian Community

But Foulds, who lives in Keyleigh, West Yorkshire, is most concerned about the delay to the second dose of the vaccine: "Changing it without any concrete evidence seems to be quite a risky strategy. The government have no form in getting these decisions right: 'Wear a mask', 'don't wear a mask'; 'Eat out to help out', 'don't go out'. It just worries me this is another one they might get wrong."

He said he will only "take a chance" and go outside after he had received a second shot of the vaccine. "I take vitamin D supplements too, and again

that was off my own back early doors,” he added.

“I’ve been doing what I think was right,” he said. “They were late shutting down the first time, and it didn’t make any sense when they stopped shielding because the virus was still out there. They still haven’t even updated the website with the new shielding advice yet [as of 5.30pm Tuesday].”



Foulds at the hospital. Photograph: Guardian Community

But retired electrical engineer Jim Petrie, 78, who has COPD, feels mass restrictions are tantamount to effectively placing people “under house arrest”, and just wants the freedom to continue to stay active – playing golf regularly and attending his local health club in Glasgow.

“Covid would certainly be very bad for me, but I want to be able to decide for myself so long as I’m not affecting other people,” he says. Scotland’s chief medical officer wrote to shielders on Monday saying they should stay at home as much as possible: “We are not advising you stop going outside, which we know is good for mental and physical health.”

Petrie also believes there have been failures throughout the pandemic. “The problem is both the faulty PCR testing and exaggerated forecasts. I’m losing

my liberty because the authorities have not been doing their jobs properly preparing the NHS [for a national emergency](#).”



Ian Deacy with his wife Lisa prior to the pandemic. Photograph: Guardian Community

But others are more sympathetic to the dilemma facing the government. “I don’t want to see everyone locked behind closed doors but the only way to do anything about it is to stay away from other people,” says 64-year-old Ian Deacy, a building services engineer who is immunosuppressant due to medication taken for rheumatoid arthritis, of the rising transmission rate.

“We should’ve locked down before Christmas, I don’t think the festive mixing was a good idea. I’d sooner miss one Christmas and make it to the next one.”

Deacy, from Leicester, who has been furloughed since March, says he is also hunkering down and waiting for the jab. “The sooner the injection comes the better. However I’ll be in a position where I’m injected and my wife won’t be and might have to go to the office.”

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.06 - Spotlight

- The long read Burning the furniture: my life as a consumer
- Boris's boosterism means he never learns
- 'A lifetime of torture' The story of the woman Trump is rushing to execute
- How to Lose Weight Well review Crash diets and bad advice
- Emma Mackey You'd have to be a sociopath to want to be a celebrity
- Analysis Qatar and Saudi Arabia breakthrough is more exhaustion than compromise
- 'Getting help was scary' Doctor Who's Sacha Dhawan on his battle with anxiety
- 10 ways to use leftover Christmas booze From prosecco chicken to amaretto cake

[The long read](#)

Burning the furniture: my life as a consumer

Suburban housing in Chicago. Photograph: Allan Baxter/Getty Images

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[The politics sketch](#)[Coronavirus](#)

Boris's boosterism means he never learns

[John Crace](#)



The prime minister's first Downing Street press conference kept up his veneer of acting as if he knew what he was doing

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Prime minister Boris Johnson used the Downing Street press conference to promote the UK's vaccination programme. Photograph: Hannah McKay/PA
Prime minister Boris Johnson used the Downing Street press conference to promote the UK's vaccination programme. Photograph: Hannah McKay/PA
Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.53 EST

Let's take the positives first. There have been [no changes in government policy](#) on coronavirus in the past 24 hours. After the confusion of the past few days, weeks and months, that is in itself cause for celebration. A sign of some much needed stability in Westminster.

Boris Johnson's narcissism is an open secret. What's less clear is whether he is at heart just deeply cynical: a politician who is aware of his own failings and goes out of his way to conceal them. Or whether he is a man who is merely the product of his own imagination: bending reality to suit his personality. It's hard to know which is the more disturbing prospect. But then maybe it's a bit of both.

You might have thought that Johnson would want to use his first Downing Street press conference after announcing a [third national lockdown](#) the day before, to explain both how he came to take the decision and the mistakes made along the way. Boris likes to talk a lot about levelling up, but the one thing he appears unable to do is to level with himself and the country.

So there was nothing on the [delays, confusion and ignored advice](#) over recent weeks. The past isn't just another country for Johnson, it's a different geological era. A place that does not bear scrutiny. And certainly one not worthy of apology. Not just because he doesn't think the country can bear to hear the truth, but because he can't either. All his life has been spent running from the horror of being Boris.

It turned out that Johnson did not want to talk through the implications of another lockdown on people's lives. That was yesterday's story. Today, after rattling through the latest terrifying statistics, all he wanted to do was talk up the success of the [vaccination programme](#) he was planning to undertake. The top four most vulnerable groups – 14 million people – would be vaccinated by the middle of February and the immediate threat would be over. Simples.

Johnson was flanked throughout by the old team of the chief medical officer, [Chris Whitty](#), and chief scientific adviser, [Patrick Vallance](#), who one would have imagined had been brought in to inject a note of realism. But while both were suitably sombre about the scale of the crisis, neither could quite bring themselves to challenge the prime minister's optimism. It was as if they had both long since given up on keeping Boris's boosterism in check and were now more interested in making sure they were not implicated by anything he might say.

The first question from the BBC got to the nub of the problem. How could anyone trust that the government was taking the right steps at the right time given its track record? Johnson's reply rather gave the game away. He had been looking at the numbers for some time and had been hoping they would magically decrease of their own accord with the measures he had already put in place. Yet again Boris's inability to take the tough decisions – hoping for the best has always been his default position in both his personal and public life – had further endangered the country.

Whitty was rather more guarded when asked if the vaccination timetable was realistic. "Yes," he said hesitantly, unwilling to puncture the prime minister's optimism. But it wouldn't be easy, not least because it was by no means clear we had the logistics in place. As in the vaccines hadn't all been batch-tested and we had yet to set up sufficient centres to administer the doses. But apart from that, yes, it was all totally realistic. Vallance had

clearly decided that his best tactic was to say as little as possible. Asked when it was that Sage (the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) had recommended that schools shouldn't go back in January, he mysteriously omitted to mention the date in his answer. For the record, it was some time in December.

The press conference continued with Boris promoting his vaccination programme and the two experts being rather more cautious about the threat levels, the risks of the South African variant and when the country might return to something like normal. Most of us don't have our sights set that high. What we want is a no-bullshit answer to when we're likely to get the jab and when the NHS will return to a level where it can cope with patients.

It all felt curiously insubstantial. Anticlimactic even. The first Downing Street briefing after the introduction of a third national lockdown should have been a moment of high drama. Instead it felt somewhat meta. A press conference that had taken place because Johnson thought the occasion required one and not because he had anything important to say. It was a presser that could have been a re-run of any of the others the three amigos had given over the past months.

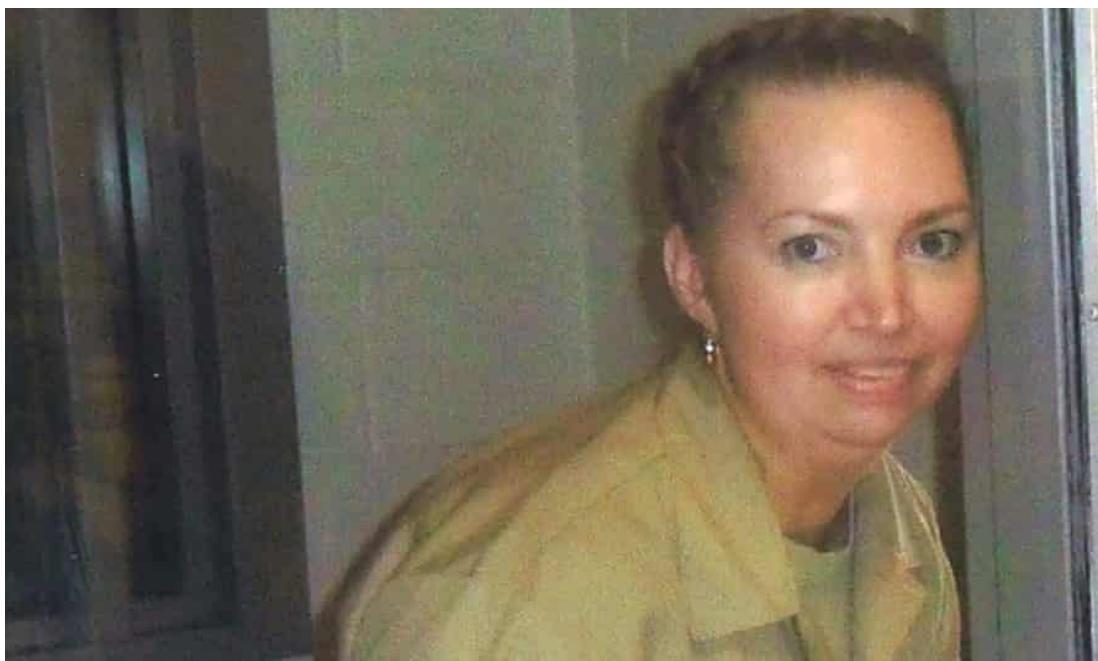
But then maybe that was the whole point. To normalise the abnormal. After all, Boris still needs to believe that saying everything will be OK will somehow make it so. His only goal is to make it through to the end of each day unscathed having maintained the veneer of acting as if he was in charge and appearing to know what he was doing. Because even he must know it will take a miracle to deliver on his latest promises. But that's a problem for six weeks' time. And in Boris World tomorrow never comes.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/boris-boosterism-means-he-never-learns>

Capital punishment

‘A lifetime of torture’: the story of the woman Trump is rushing to execute

Lisa Montgomery, the only woman on death row, was found guilty of an ‘especially heinous’ crime – but those who have looked deeply into her agonized life see it differently



Lisa Montgomery at the federal medical center Fort Worth in an undated photo. Photograph: Attorneys For Lisa Montgomery/Reuters

Lisa Montgomery at the federal medical center Fort Worth in an undated photo. Photograph: Attorneys For Lisa Montgomery/Reuters



[Ed Pilkington](#)

[@edpilkington](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

Lisa Montgomery's first experiences of sexual abuse occurred indirectly when she was three years old. She would lie in bed at night beside her beloved half-sister Diane, close enough to touch, while Diane, then eight, was being raped by their male babysitter.

At the age of 11, Montgomery learnt what it was like to be attacked herself. Her stepfather Jack, a "mean drunk" who regularly beat her and her mother, began raping her once or twice a week.

[Execution of only woman on US federal death row can go ahead, court rules](#)
[Read more](#)

The assaults became such an important part of Jack's life over the next four years that he built a room for the girl on the side of their trailer, deep in the Oklahoma woods. It had its own entrance, so that he could come and go as he desired and nobody would know or hear her screams.

He would rape and sodomise her, often with a pillow smothering her face. When she resisted, he slammed her head so hard against the concrete floor that she suffered traumatic brain injury, [MRI brain scans](#) would later show.

One day, her mother Judy happened to enter the room while the child was being assaulted by her husband. Judy was so incensed [she fetched a gun](#) and held it to her daughter's head, screaming: "How could you do this to me?"

Over time, the abuse expanded. Montgomery's stepfather invited friends round to gang rape her in the room – ordeals that would last for hours and end with the men urinating on her like she was trash. Her mother got in on the act too, selling Montgomery's body to the plumber and the electrician whenever she needed odd jobs doing.

This is Lisa Montgomery's story.

These were her formative experiences which doctors, psychologists and social workers have all concluded amounted to torture endured across years. This is the woman, now aged 52, whom the Trump administration intends to put to death in seven days' time on grounds that she is such a cold-hearted murderer that even being locked up for the rest of her natural life would be insufficient punishment.

On Friday, a US appeals court [cleared the way](#) for the execution to proceed. The move was enthusiastically endorsed by the US justice department which [has argued under Trump](#) that Montgomery is guilty of an "especially heinous" crime. But those who have looked deeply into the agonized life that lay behind her criminal act see it differently.

"This is a story about a woman who is profoundly mentally ill as a result of a lifetime of torture and sexual violence," said Sandra Babcock, faculty director of the Cornell Center on the Death Penalty Worldwide and a consultant to Montgomery's legal team. "Lisa is not the worst of the worst – she is the most broken of the broken."

Lisa is not the worst of the worst – she is the most broken of the broken

Sandra Babcock

Should Montgomery's execution go ahead by lethal injection at the federal death chamber in Terre Haute, Indiana, on 12 January it would be the first execution of a woman by the US government in [almost 70 years](#). She would

also be among the first prisoners to be executed by a lame-duck president in more than a century, as Donald Trump rushes to kill three prisoners over four days as a macabre climax of his time in the White House.

Nobody would disagree that the crime for which Montgomery was convicted was anything but horrifying. Its details are hard to contemplate.

On 16 December 2004, at the age of 36, she traveled from her home in Kansas to the tiny town of Skidmore in Missouri to meet Bobbie Jo Stinnett, a woman she had got to know online through their shared love of dogs.

Stinnett, a dog breeder, was eight months pregnant with her first child. Montgomery went to see her ostensibly to buy a puppy, but once inside the house she attacked Stinnett and strangled her to death with a rope.

She then cut out the fetus using a kitchen knife, and over the next several hours attempted to pass off the newborn baby as her own. She was arrested the following day after the discovery of Stinnett's body; the baby was returned to her family, and went on to be raised by her father.



Police tape outside the home of Zeb and Bobbi Jo Stinnett in Skidmore, Missouri, in December 2004. Photograph: Larry W Smith/Getty Images

For some Americans, including it seems Trump who has resumed federal executions after a hiatus of 17 years, the Lisa Montgomery case stops there. She committed a horrendous murder, and now it is time for her to face the ultimate punishment that she deserves.

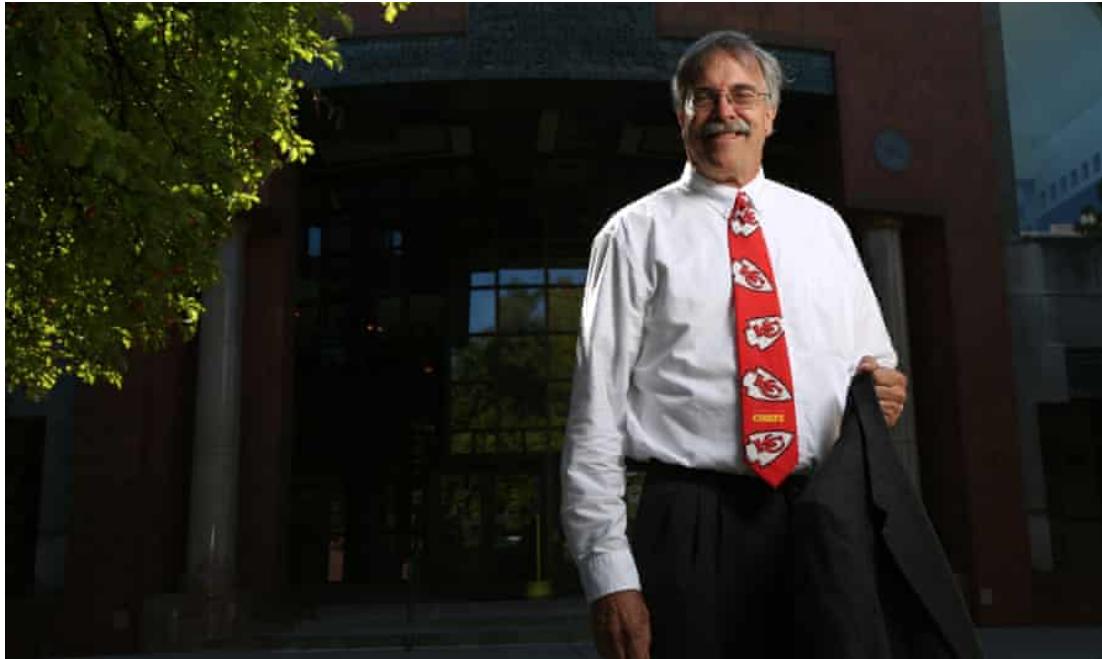
But to the lawyers and professional experts who have spent years investigating Montgomery's crime, personality and formative experiences, the chilling headlines about her gruesome act are just the beginning of a journey – not towards condoning or excusing, but towards understanding.

"We need to understand what could lead to someone being so profoundly disconnected from their actions that they would be capable of doing something that a normal healthy person would find unimaginable," said Katherine Porterfield, a child psychologist specialising in treating survivors of torture. Porterfield spent many hours with Montgomery over 18 days as part of an appeals process in 2016.

"Things that are almost impossible to comprehend are comprehensible when you take into account mental illness, massive childhood trauma and what that does to kids," she said.

Part of the journey towards understanding has involved taking on board the inadequate legal defense Montgomery received at the sentencing phase of her trial. It was in 2007, and the jury, which had already convicted her of murder and kidnapping, was being asked to decide whether or not to put her on death row.

At her 2007 trial, Montgomery was represented by a public defense lawyer who had never tried a capital case and by Fred Duchardt, a Kansas City attorney with a particular claim to fame. In 2016, the Guardian revealed that Duchardt had the distinction of having more of his clients sentenced to death in federal court than any other defence lawyer in America – four out of seven federal death row inmates from Missouri had had the fortune, or misfortune, to have him as their attorney.



Fred Duchardt at the Clay county courthouse in Liberty, Missouri.
Photograph: Christopher Smith/The Guardian

Montgomery's lawyers gave her the narrowest of defenses at trial. Duchardt came up with a peculiar legal argument – that she suffered from a rare mental illness called pseudocyesis which induced the delusion in her that Stinnett's baby was her own.

The theory didn't fit the facts, and the jury didn't buy it. Having found Montgomery guilty, they were also unimpressed by the limited mitigating evidence that was presented to them during the sentencing phase of the trial. The defense lawyers cited some evidence of physical abuse, called a few woefully prepared witnesses, and that was about it. The prosecutors lampooned the thinly argued plea to spare her execution the "abuse excuse".

And so Montgomery duly came to condemned to death on 26 October 2007.

It was only years later, when a fresh team of defense lawyers began to represent Montgomery at appeal, that the vast extent of the sexual violence and torture that she had absorbed as a child began to emerge. As part of their investigations, the legal team employed several expert witnesses to examine the prisoner and piece together her story.

Janet Vogelsang, a clinical social worker, spent several long days talking to Montgomery in 2016. After many hours slowly gaining the prisoner's trust, and learning about her childhood trauma, Vogelsang began to have a sense of déjà vu with similar sessions she had had with military veterans traumatized by war.

"Talking to Liza was like talking to Vietnam and Korean war veterans who had been held in holes and bamboo cages under the most horrible conditions," Vogelsang told the Guardian.

At the end of her researches, Vogelsang produced a mammoth [184-page social history](#) of Montgomery's life. Most of the material she chronicled had never been presented to the jury.

It included the sexual assaults and the gang rapes, the sexual trafficking and the violence. But that was just the start of it. There was also the constant demeaning and humiliation.

From a young age, Montgomery's mother would duct tape her mouth to prevent her talking. The girl was stripped naked and made to stand on the porch in front of drunken visitors, then told she would be sent away to a home if she made the slightest noise.

Her parents made her beat her younger sister with a board until the child bled. Then there was that room on the side of the trailer where her stepfather abused her, not just sexually but in the depths of her psyche.

"He cut a hole in the closet where he could go and watch her in the room when she was back from school," Vogelsang recalled. "The stepfather would sit in the closet to surveil her. So she found the one tiny part of the room where she could stand where he could not see her – she would literally curl up in that corner for hours just to stay out of his field of vision."

Vogelsang's report concludes that what Montgomery experienced in the room was tantamount to the torture more commonly experienced by child soldiers and prisoners of war. "She was isolated, brainwashed, humiliated and degraded, not allowed to speak, and beaten at will."

Porterfield told the Guardian that in her one-to-one sessions with the prisoner, she quickly came to recognize symptoms of trauma and mental illness. “When I met with her she would become spacey,” she said.

“She would not be able to keep her train of thought, and describe strange ways of thinking to describe her reality. She lives in a state of disassociation, going in and out all the time. When I asked about her childhood, she would display an inability to connect to her emotions – with a blank facial expression, blank voice, talking about herself in the third person.”

Porterfield and Vogelsang are united in their diagnosis of Montgomery. “There is no question,” Porterfield said. “Mrs Montgomery is profoundly mentally ill. She has multiple impairments, no question at all about that.”

Since Montgomery has received intensive psychiatric care and analysis in the prison system she has been variously diagnosed with bipolar disorder, PTSD, anxiety and depression, psychosis, mood swings, disassociation and memory loss. Exhaustive studies of her childhood and early adulthood suggest that she was grappling with many of these conditions before, and leading immediately up to, the committing of her crime.

In the months leading up to the murder, she had several episodes in which she told those around her that she was pregnant – a claim that was palpably false as she was involuntarily sterilized after the birth of her fourth child. She also displayed all the symptoms of her mental illness, including disassociation, memory loss and profound depression.

I have never seen a case like this

Sandra Babcock

And yet nobody ever came to her assistance or offered her any protection or help. It is the one booming theme of the Lisa Montgomery story that leaps out of the court documents, every bit as strongly as the horrifying crime that she went on to commit: society failed her.

Only once throughout her entire rotten childhood did social workers pay the family a visit, and even then they helpfully called Montgomery’s parents

ahead of time so that they were able to enforce silence upon her on pain of death.

Then there was the doctor in Oklahoma who examined her as a child, learnt about the regular rapes – but did nothing about it. The child welfare office whom Montgomery’s mother, Judy, informed about the sexual abuse – but did nothing about it. And the family court judge who presided at the parents’ divorce who actually scolded Judy for failing to report the rape of her daughter to police – but then himself did absolutely nothing about it.

Society failed Lisa Montgomery, not once, not twice, but repeatedly. Now society, in the form of the Trump administration, is preparing to kill her as punishment for the outcome.

Sandra Babcock told the Guardian that over the past 30 years she has defended hundreds of prisoners facing execution in countries around the world, “and I have never seen a case like this. I don’t know of any execution in the US or elsewhere that has been carried out on someone who has been subjected to such unrelenting sexual torture and violence.”

Babcock said that she is convinced most Americans would want to halt the execution were they to know all the facts about what Lisa Montgomery did and what came before that. Most Americans do not know all the facts.

The clock is ticking. “If the execution goes ahead we should all feel a deep sense of shame,” she said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/lisa-montgomery-death-row-execution-history>.

[TV review](#)[Television & radio](#)

How to Lose Weight Well review – crash diets and bad advice

Six Britons were put on short-term regimens so complicated that you needed graphs and spreadsheets to decipher them



Javid Abdelmoneim and Helen Lawal (*front left and right*) with Bose and Temi (*back left and right*) in How To Lose Weight Well. Photograph: Tom Watkins/Channel 4

Javid Abdelmoneim and Helen Lawal (*front left and right*) with Bose and Temi (*back left and right*) in How To Lose Weight Well. Photograph: Tom Watkins/Channel 4



[Stuart Jeffries](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 16.00 EST

Maurice from Sheffield hasn't seen his feet for four years. Thanks to the miracle of television ([How to Lose Weight Well, Channel 4](#)), I have and can confirm that they remain in Yorkshire and attached to the rest of him.

The bigger mystery is how Maurice and his equally overweight pal Mick can realise their dream which, for some misbegotten reason, is to complete the Yorkshire Three Peaks Challenge six weeks' hence.

In Maurice's case, this means he must do downward dogs in his garden and foreswear fry-ups. The TV doctors who came up with this plan called it the Yoga Diet, but you could call it the Just Shoot Me Now diet and it would be equally effective.

Mick and Maurice were among six Britons put on different short-term regimens so cumulatively complicated that I'll be posting graphs and spreadsheets worked up by the Guardian TV department's statistics unit shortly. There were fasts that made you cry, protein-rich meat diets that made you smell and vegetable ones that made you envy the lifestyle of the Mongolian yak. Presenters Dr Helen Lawal and Dr Javid Abdelmoneim

yelled imperatives, “No raw after 4!” and “ You snooze, you lose ... weight!” at their charges with the charm of a Heathrow cavity search.

Debra and Lesley, sisters from Essex, went on diets the show associates with the weight loss of [Rebel Wilson](#) and [Adele](#) respectively, proving that nothing is worth doing unless someone famous is connected to it. Lemmings now jump off cliffs only if a Lemming Love Island contestant has shown the way. The diet Adele is reported to have followed, composed mostly of liquidised kale so far as I could tell from the show, helped the singer lose seven stone, but had an hallucinogenic effect on Lesley. Just like Emerald City in the Wizard of Oz, everything looked green she said. What Lesley didn’t realise is that you’re supposed to pour the stuff down the sink not drink it.

It was Temi I felt most sorry for. Her lockdown workstation is the kitchen table. While she juggled work and the logistical difficulties of a diet involving alternating fasting with eating to trick her metabolism into burning calories, family members roamed behind her scouring cupboards for crisps and made sumptuous Nigerian meals. “Could you crunch any louder?” Temi snapped at sister Lisa. It’s not true that 99% of diets fail because of Lisas in the kitchen, but it doesn’t help.

As for Temi’s dieting companion Bose, she flew off for a Spanish mini break to cheat. “What happens in Barcelona,” she told her phone as she snacked on pastries, “stays in Barcelona”. If you’re going to make a claim like that, Bose, perhaps don’t let Channel 4 broadcast it to the nation.

January 2021 is no time for such nonsense. Nights are long, hospitals full, opportunities for delight minimal, HMRC texting me every hour demanding payment every five minutes like a particularly boring lover. What we need is what we can’t have, namely waiters queuing at our table with dessert trolleys, cheese trolleys and glasses of lovely drinks. What we get is what we always get: forced atonement for our presumed Christmas excesses, TV punishment beatings from those who have brilliantly found means of monetising our seasonal guilt while looking insufferably smug.

Abdelmoneim, for instance, went on a diet of blue-coloured muffins so a nutritionist could monitor his “[transit time](#)” and make a point about the individuality of metabolic rates . His transit time was less Northern Line,

more Shanghai bullet train and his poo turned blue within 24 hours. He examined the contents of his toilet bowl with self-satisfaction. If we ever take to clapping the NHS again, the memory of that shot will make my applause muted.

While researchers microanalysed Abdelmoneim's poo, they didn't test whether January's glut of diet shows, fitness supplements and self-improvement apps work. My data suggests they don't, but rather contribute to both weight gain and its ugly sibling, denial.

This show has been running for six series now and seems to have no improving effect on the nation's weight, perhaps because its contents deconstruct its title. One of the hosts offered a disclaimer: "Crash dieting is not advised by most health professionals." Each of the six participants was put on a crash diet, though, and there was no suggestion that any of them would make permanent lifestyle changes. Even Maurice revealed his yoga pants are destined to be mothballed.

Worse, all six celebrated losing a few pounds by putting weight on again. Debra and Lesley toasted their weight loss with champagne in their hot tub. Mick and Maurice raised celebratory glasses of brandy. Temi and Bose were filmed at a lavish birthday meal. How are we to change our diets for good? If Channel 4 renamed the series How to Lose Weight Badly, that would be a start.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/jan/05/how-to-lose-weight-well-review-crash-diets-and-bad-advice>

Film

Emma Mackey: ‘You’d have to be a sociopath to want to be a celebrity’



A sideways approach ... Emma Mackey. Photograph: Guen Fiore
A sideways approach ... Emma Mackey. Photograph: Guen Fiore

The Sex Education star on the perils of social media, playing Emily Brontë, and her new Disney whodunnit with French and Saunders



[Rebecca Nicholson](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

When the trailer came out, it felt really *Hollywood*, which makes me laugh. I was like: ‘Ah, OK. This is quite a big deal.’” Emma Mackey spent the last few months of 2019 filming Death on the Nile, the [second of Kenneth Branagh's Poirot adaptations](#). It’s a big-budget, big-name Disney extravaganza, and for Mackey, who turns 25 on Monday, it marks a first dip into blockbuster waters.

“I’d never really had that experience of walking into a studio before, where the sets were all built, and the costumes were tailored to my body, and I had a wig, and it was just … ” She trails off, lost for words. “I clearly can’t talk about it!” she says, laughing. “It completely blows my mind, still.” She does an impression of a 1930s ingenue. “‘It felt like a movie! A proper movie!’ Which is a good sign, I guess.”

[The Guide: Staying In – sign up for our home entertainment tips](#)

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Death on the Nile is one of those films that has been buffeted around by the pandemic. It was supposed to be out last October, then just in time for Christmas but, with uncertainty continuing, Disney has pushed it back again

to September this year. Mackey says she loved the whole thing: the costumes, the props, the choreography. Seeing the boat for the first time floored her. The film stars Gal Gadot, Armie Hammer, Sophie Okonedo and Annette Bening, as well as Dawn French and Jennifer Saunders.

“I would purposely put myself in a French and Saunders sandwich most days, just to feel good,” she laughs. “And Annette Bening would call us ‘her women’. We went for dinner one day and she ordered for us: ‘My women and I will have this bottle of wine.’ I was like: God, you’re so glamorous.” It’s hard not to love the idea of French and Saunders in a film with [Wonder Woman](#). She giggles. “Exactly. Dawn was like: ‘Obviously *I’m* Wonder Woman, aren’t I, Gal? This is all very well, but …’ They’re so lovely.”

When we spoke last September, Mackey was in Cardiff, filming the third season of [Sex Education](#). She plays tough girl Maeve, the book-loving, riot grrrl-listening loner with a nose ring and a heart of gold. Filming continued, with restrictions: the cast couldn’t leave the country or use public transport, and were tested for Covid twice a week. The second season ended with her romantic interest (and teenage sex-therapy business partner) Otis confessing his love in a voicemail deleted before she could hear it. “That’s what series do! You’ve got to leave cliffhangers.”

Mackey grew up mostly in the Pays de la Loire region of France, with an English mother and a French father. She moved to England at 17, to study English at the University of Leeds. “My favourite course was Beckett, Kane and Pinter. I did that in my final semester, and I was like, yeah, theatre’s for me.” She moved to London, got an agent, and through a casting call landed her first real gig, Sex Education. Astonishingly, it only began in 2019, though its cultural impact makes it feel as if it started much earlier. It has been a bona fide phenomenon, slotting easily into cultural conversations around sex and identity, and making stars of its cast. Life must have changed a lot in those two years. “I mean, Death on the Nile? Don’t know how that happened,” she smiles.

If Mackey shares anything with Maeve, it’s a certain earnestness; she has a calmer air than her character, and is up for a laugh, but she gives the impression of a person who thinks about everything deeply. When she has spare time, which isn’t often, she likes to make it matter: she walks, cooks,

reads, watches documentaries. She says she doesn't feel the need to be constantly working, constantly chasing the next part. "I'm realising it more and more, how bizarre it is, to spend a lot of your waking hours dressed up as someone else. Wearing clothes that aren't yours, you don't get a lot of agency." Any time she has is precious, and she wants to make the most of it. "I think what I'm saying is: the simpler, the better."



Mackey deeds ... Emma with Asa Butterfield in *Sex Education*. Photograph: Jon Hall/Netflix

Does that apply to work, too? "Definitely. I've always been like that anyway, but more so now. It's fine to ask yourself the question: 'Would I be a better person if I do this job, will it elevate me?' And now, I think it's more: 'If I do this film, is it necessary, does it have a place in this day and age?' Because I don't like to feel useless or like I'm wasting my time, or not doing something that is going to benefit other people in some way."

She puts this down to the experience of being in *Sex Education*, which is disarmingly frank when it comes to its portrayal of sex, tackles "issues" without seeming heavy-handed or hectoring, and has a winning refusal to be judgmental. "That's where the sentiment stems from. That show has set the bar high, in terms of inclusivity, in terms of storylines, and the female characters we're portraying. It has been of great service to people of all

generations. And it's started conversations: regardless of how you feel about the show, it's going to make you think. Regardless of what you think about the acting, the style, the music, whatever, it doesn't matter, because we're sort of pioneers, in that field of frankness and openness about things that we deal with every day. That's really special."

Sex Education is a popular show, and Maeve is a very popular character, which has translated to Mackey having a quite shocking number of followers on Instagram: 5 million, at the last count. She snorts. "Quite shocking!" I didn't mean it like that! "Brilliant. A *quite shocking* amount of followers," she laughs. But she rarely posts on it. "I don't really have a comfortable relationship with social media. I don't have Twitter, I don't have Facebook, or things like that." She'll read messages from friends on Instagram, "but I would never look at comments, because I don't see the point. Maybe that's quite pessimistic, but I kind of see it as: it can only be detrimental to my brain and self-confidence. So I just don't. It's not my job to be an Instagrammer so I don't see why I would spend my waking hours scrolling through an app, of which I am a product." She shudders: "Ugh."



Going with the flow ... Mackey and Gal Gadot in Death on the Nile.
Photograph: Lifestyle pictures/Alamy

Acting and celebrity go hand-in-hand, though. Is it fair to say she doesn't feel comfortable with the celebrity side of it? "It is, because I don't believe in it. I don't think anyone gives a shit about celebrities." Well, 5 million people might say otherwise. "Yeah, but they don't care about me. It's Maeve, it's not necessarily me. They don't know me. So what does it actually mean? Celebrityism, or whatever, is a byproduct of the job. I certainly didn't get into acting to become a celebrity, because it's terrifying. You'd have to be a complete sociopath to want to be a celebrity." But lots of people do. "But I find it absurd."

She has ambitions to write and direct: "I think I'm probably more of a director than an actor, in some part of me." On set, she says, she pays attention to everything that's going on behind the camera. "I'd probably quite enjoy directing because I'd see the whole thing through, as opposed to just popping in for two months, getting to do a bit of acting," she whistles, "then off, poof, it's not mine any more. So I am thinking of directing, just not right now. I've never written anything either. But I've got ideas. When the time's right they'll happen, and I'll just trust in that, I think."

For now, there is *Death on the Nile*, and *Eiffel*, due later this year. And that's French-language? "Yeah, fully French. The Frenchest film," she laughs. "A romance about the Eiffel Tower? That's me." In May, it was announced she will play Emily Brontë in *Emily*, about the author's journey to womanhood, which should start filming next year. How good is her Yorkshire accent? "Pretty good," she says. "It's Emily Brontë, I studied English at Leeds, we're filming in Leeds, so it feels like a full-circle moment." She sounds excited: "Twelve-year-old Emma would be freaking out right now."

Sex Education resumes later this year on Netflix; *Death on the Nile* is in cinemas, 17 September

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jan/05/emma-mackey-sex-education-disney-death-on-the-nile>

[Qatar](#)

Qatar and Saudi Arabia breakthrough is more exhaustion than compromise

Talk of brotherly unity rather than lessons learned dominated the Gulf Cooperation Council summit



Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman welcomes Qatar's Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani upon his arrival to attend the Gulf Cooperation Council's 41st summit in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, 5 Jan 2021. Photograph: AP

Saudi Arabia's Mohammed bin Salman welcomes Qatar's Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani upon his arrival to attend the Gulf Cooperation Council's 41st summit in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia, 5 Jan 2021. Photograph: AP

[Martin Chulov](#) Middle East correspondent

Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.32 EST

The [meeting on Tuesday](#) between Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler, crown prince [Mohammed bin Salman](#) and his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani was hailed as a breakthrough that brought together two feuding parties who were finally willing to resolve their differences.

But as the two leaders gathered at a Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit in the north-western Saudi region of Al-Ula there was no mention of concessions, or further ultimatums, such as those that had led to the rift. The detente seemed borne more of exhaustion than compromise; the talk more of brotherly unity than lessons learned, and the end to it all more about the incoming US president than regional realpolitik.

Wins from the three year dispute, which saw [Saudi Arabia](#), and the rest of the GCC oust Qatar from the alliance amid a list of seemingly unmet demands, are hard to define. Not so the cost, both economically and politically. Qatar bore the burden of the former, while [Saudi Arabia](#) shouldered much of the latter, but the final toll has fallen on the very issue that the Saudi-led sanctions aimed to safeguard – Gulf solidarity.

When the ambitious heir to the Saudi throne, together with the UAE ruler, Mohammed bin Zayed, moved against [Qatar](#) in late 2017, the charge sheet against the tiny Gulf state was long. They, and other GCC members, as well as Egypt, accused their neighbour of backing Iran's ambitions, and supporting Islamist groups, including the Muslim Brotherhood – a preoccupation of the UAE leadership.

A growing alliance with Turkey was also seen as a threat, and the removal of a Turkish garrison from Qatar listed as another demand. By Riyadh's reckoning, its recalcitrant neighbour could be brought to heel, and the region would know that Saudi Arabia was under new management and not afraid to assert itself so visibly.

Except, it didn't work out that way. Qatar, the smallest – and richest per capita – of the Gulf states had long tried to position itself as a go between on regional issues, a country that could serve all parties, without being beholden to any. It contested that its relations with Iran and support for Islamist groups should be viewed through that prism, and dug in as the accusations flew from Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. It had the reserves to sweat out blockades and a friend in Ankara, which it could – and increasingly did – turn to.

Qatar and the Islamist leaning government of Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdogan became closer than ever over the last three years. Together

with the remnants of Egypt's Muslim Brotherhood, in exile in Turkey, they became the linchpin of an axis, up against Prince Mohammed in Riyadh, Mohammed bin Zayed in Abu Dhabi and Egyptian leader, [Abdel Fatah al-Sisi](#) – who see their regimes as more aligned with Arab nationalism, and view the rival alliance as a strategic threat. In Riyadh, Abu Dhabi and Doha, state media helped deepen the faultlines and enmity replaced any chance of reconciliation – particularly as Turkey and Saudi Arabia faced off in the aftermath of the murder of Jamal Khashoggi, carried out in Istanbul by Saudi royal court aides.

Over the past year, Riyadh had led attempts to break the ice, receiving the Qatari foreign minister and hosting the national football side. However, it took events further away to force a breakthrough – the ousting of [Donald Trump](#) – a staunch Saudi ally – from the White House, and the imminent arrival of Joe Biden, whom GCC leaders fear will take a softer line on an even bigger foe, Iran.

After Biden's election win last November, resolving the Gulf dispute became a lead priority. It could be cast as a trust building measure to the incoming president; something to take to the table when talk turns to Iran, with whom the Trump regime had avowedly tussled.

Qatar, preparing to hold the 2022 football World Cup could do without further headaches, and also benefit from a diplomatic reset. Its precondition for a rapprochement was that it not be seen to be cowed into concessions.

And, as talk in Al-Ula turned to fraternal bonds and common foes, there was no attempt to grandstand by either side. State media in Qatar had dutifully changed its tune, with Al Jazeera Arabic airing a breathless tribute to the Saudi capital Riyadh, and its Saudi counterpart touting unity. A cooperation agreement was signed in private – unlike the public shaming of 2017.

Wounds however, remain raw. And it remains to be seen whether rallying against a common foe – Iran will be enough to overcome a spat that is seen in some regional and global circles as pointless and damaging. A fear remains that the detente may only tape over a faultline that has deepened over three unnecessary years.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Television](#)

Interview

Doctor Who's Sacha Dhawan on his battle with anxiety: 'Getting help was scary'

[Stuart Heritage](#)



Up to no good ... Sacha Dhawan as The Master in Ascension of the Cyberman. Photograph: Everett Collection/Alamy

Up to no good ... Sacha Dhawan as The Master in Ascension of the Cyberman. Photograph: Everett Collection/Alamy

The young actor, who plays the timelord's arch enemy The Master, talks about his meaty new role in The Great – and reveals how he overcame the fears that used to leave him traumatised in his trailer



[@stuheritage](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 10.17 EST

When Sacha Dhawan learned that he had been chosen to play [Doctor Who](#) baddie The Master, it should have been one of the biggest moments of his career. “My agent was ecstatic,” he says. “The BBC was ecstatic.” But he wasn’t. “I put the phone down and I couldn’t have felt more sad,” he says. The reason, it turns out, is a hidden battle with anxiety that Dhawan had been waging for years.

The opportunity was too big to pass up, but at that moment its scale felt insurmountable. “I would be the first British South Asian actor to play The Master,” he says. “So I’m kind of representing not only the Whoniverse but my community. And if I fuck this up, they aren’t going to be casting another South Asian actor for this.”

Now, with hindsight, Dhawan admits that he was catastrophising a little, but his worries felt real. “The saddest thing in this business is that no one will know if you have something like anxiety, because you always have to have this confidence on set. No one will know you’ve been sitting in your trailer, not eating your lunch because you’re trying to sleep because you want to switch the anxiety off. The heartache I’d go through before a scene – worrying that I wouldn’t deliver – was traumatic.”



A riotous and visceral drama ... Dhawan with Elle Fanning in *The Great*.
Photograph: Alamy

Dhawan is currently delivering in [The Great](#), which has just launched on Channel 4. An “occasionally true” period piece recounting the life of Catherine the Great, the series slots Dhawan alongside Elle Fanning and Nicholas Hoult in a comedy drama that is both riotous and visceral. (One character soils themselves during a sex act.)

Dhawan plays Orlo – not to be confused with Catherine’s lover Count Orlov – who probably didn’t exist in real life. But, in an age where commenters heap scorn on *The Crown* for not being a word-perfect depiction of past events, this flippant attitude towards the truth feels rather bracing. It’s from the pen of Tony McNamara, who was Oscar-nominated for co-writing [The Favourite](#). “He sees it,” says Dhawan, “as the story of a young woman who marries a douchebag and then tries to kill him. And that’s as much as you need to know.” Dhawan’s journey from meek courtier into something far meatier is one of the treats of the series.

Now 36, Dhawan has been acting more or less non-stop since the age of 10, when he played the lead in the children’s ITV series *Out of Sight*. From there, he vaulted to *The History Boys*, appearing on stage alongside Russell Tovey and James Corden. He had roles in *24* and *Line of Duty*, before

winning a major role in the Marvel series Iron Fist. Then came [Doctor Who](#) and The Great, but this torrent of work came at a cost to his mental health.

Lockdown gave him his first real chance to seek help. “It was fucking scary,” he says of taking this first step. “Especially since us guys aren’t very good at talking about these things. And the South Asian community aren’t very good about talking about these things either. In some way, you’re conditioned to feel like a bit of a failure, that you’re letting your community down a bit.”



‘You think, Why did I not do this before?’ ... Sacha Dhawan. Photograph: David Levene/The Guardian

It was an actor on The Great who suggested psychosynthesis, a talk-based therapy that focuses on personal growth. “It really gets you to articulate your thoughts.” But the nature of the treatment seems secondary to his decision to seek help in the first place. “When you take that leap, you realise you’re not on your own. You think, ‘Well, why did I not do this before?’”

Dhawan thinks much of his anxiety came from his sense of identity. “It’s confused,” he says. “I’ve spent so many years going, ‘OK, I’m not brown enough and I’m not white enough. When you go on sets and you don’t see

anyone like you, you think, ‘You’re just very lucky to be here, so keep your mouth shut.’”

During lockdown, he started connecting with other South Asian creatives. “I’ve been disassociated from that culture since I was a kid,” he says. “There were only two brown kids in my school – and we used to walk past each other without even looking up.” His first contact was the writer Nikesh Shukla, with whom he made a film for YouTube: Yash Gill’s Power Half Hour, a brilliant mental health-themed short in which he played the seemingly joyful titular standup.

I was too scared to say what I felt. I was like, 'Your opinion doesn't matter'

“The pressure of being British South Asian,” he says, “is that it feels like you’re not just doing it for yourself but the entire community. It feels like your success is everyone’s success, but your failures are also everyone’s failure. It shouldn’t be like that any more. You should feel confident enough to take risks.”

His career is still on rockets: season two of *The Great* begins production soon and, after what appeared to be a narrow escape for *The Master* at the conclusion of the latest series, he’s eager to return to *Doctor Who*. But, for now, Dhawan seems more buoyed up by the rediscovery of who he actually is. “I feel like I’ve used my parents’ story for so many years,” he says. “When people say, ‘Hey, what’s your story?’ you go, ‘Well, my parents came from India.’ ‘OK, but who are you?’ And I’m like, ‘I don’t know.’”

Although he still doesn’t feel entirely out of the woods, his enthusiasm is infectious. He’s in the early stages of producing a new film, written for two South Asian actors, about which he is reluctant to say too much, although he does ask: “Why can’t we be in a sci-fi movie? Why does it have to be about arranged marriages or terrorism?”

[Jodie Whittaker: speculation rife after reports she is to quit Doctor Who](#)
[Read more](#)

As we begin to wind up, Dhawan makes another admission. “I had a conversation with the Guardian years ago,” he says. “They were asking about identity. And even though all this stuff was here in my heart, I was too scared to say what I felt. I was like, ‘Your opinion doesn’t matter. You’re not as articulate as Riz Ahmed, so shut up.’”

I tell him his openness will probably help those in a similar position. “It’s really scary,” he replies. “You’re the first person I’ve really gone into detail with. I mentioned my anxiety to someone once and they replied, ‘Do you not worry that people might think of not casting you because of it?’”

As I leave, I tell Dhawan how much I enjoyed *The Great*. “Yes, mate!” he beams, suddenly unburdened. “I have to remember to just enjoy the ride.”

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How to live now*Life and style*

10 ways to use leftover Christmas booze – from prosecco chicken to amaretto cake

If you have an unloved stash of sloe gin, advocaat or Cointreau, these recipes offer delicious ideas for using them in the kitchen



Strike a light ... crepes Suzette can relieve you of unwanted Cointreau, Grand Marnier and champagne. Photograph: Marka/Alamy

Strike a light ... crepes Suzette can relieve you of unwanted Cointreau, Grand Marnier and champagne. Photograph: Marka/Alamy



[Stuart Heritage](#)

[@stuheritage](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 06.30 EST

There is a reason why [dry January](#) exists. It is because, after a long and gruelling festive season, there is usually a fairly good chance that you feel as if you have pickled your guts. The thought of putting any more rich, creamy, booze into your body is unappealing. Luckily for you, you drank most of it at parties.

This year may be a little different, though. We are mostly trapped inside, so we probably drank at home, which means our cupboards are still full of half-finished bottles of all kinds of Christmassy rubbish. You could just drink your leftovers, of course. But you could cook with them instead.

Crepes suzette

The most sensible way to use up leftover alcohol is to set it on fire. If you agree, [Dan Lepard's reproduction of the Tour d'Argent crepes suzette](#) recipe should be your first destination. Not only does it require Cointreau, Grand Marnier, champagne and brandy, but it is also a pancake, so technically it counts as a breakfast food.

Watercress salad

If you have a lot of leftover port, but you want to curb your festive excesses, Josie Le Balch of Bon Appétit [has a recipe for watercress salad](#) that requires a whole bottle of the stuff. Tip the bottle into a saucepan, add 450g (1lb) of figs, braise for half an hour, then remove the fruit and boil the port down to a syrup. There – it is practically a health food.

Short ribs



Pass the sherry ... braised beef short ribs. Photograph: creativesunday2016/Getty Images/iStockphoto

While we are on a savoury bent, The Spruce Eats has a recipe for [sherry-braised short ribs](#) that is perfect for cold January evenings. It requires 250ml (1 US cup) of sherry and several hours of your time, but the result – especially if served with a fat dollop of mash – is unbeatable comfort food.

Chicken with prosecco sauce

If you want something marginally lighter, Caroline Phelps from Pickled Plum has [a recipe for chicken with prosecco sauce](#). You might be asking

yourself how this can be any different from chicken cooked in white wine. But it is completely different, because drinking week-old wine is fine, but do the same with prosecco and suddenly anyone in your social bubble starts backing away from you. Anyway, this is a good recipe.

Banoffee trifle



Sparking up ... Liam Charles's banoffee trifle, made with Baileys.
Photograph: Yuki Sugiura/The Guardian. Food styling: Aya Nishimura

Most recipes that require the addition of festive booze are sweet. While your tolerance for great big boozy puddings may be low so soon after Christmas, you deserve a treat. Let's start with Liam Charles and his brilliantly easy [recipe for banoffee trifle](#). The base is just a load of smashed chocolate biscuits soaked in Baileys, while the cream is also soaked in Baileys. The custard is shop-bought. You could probably put Baileys in that, too, if you wanted.

Eierlikörkuchen



Eierlikörkuchen ... make your leftover advocaat disappear. Photograph: SKatzenberger/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Eierlikörkuchen is a German cake made with eierlikör, which is not too dissimilar to advocaat. [Love That Bite's recipe](#) is very simple: it is a sponge that has 250ml of advocaat tipped into it. The advocaat gives the cake a rich, dense, custardy feel. Still have leftover advocaat? Mix it with icing sugar and pour it over the top.

Sunken chocolate amaretto cake

No list of recipes of this ilk would be complete without [Nigella's sunken chocolate amaretto cake](#), which is a work of art. It doesn't require an awful lot of alcohol – just three tablespoons for the cake and another for the cream – but this is a moist, squidgy, truffley delight that you can whip up in about half an hour.

Mulled wine sorbet



Perfect for dry January ... the alcohol is boiled off to make mulled wine sorbet. Photograph: semenovp/Getty Images/iStockphoto

If even that sounds like too much work, let me introduce you to the mulled wine sorbet. This is [a Jamie Oliver recipe](#) that – once you have frozen your mulled wine in ice-cube trays – can be made in less than 15 minutes. Put the ice cubes in a blender, add natural yoghurt and that is it. However, before you attempt to freeze the mulled wine, be sure to cook out all of the alcohol.

Roasted plums



Winter warmers ... plums roasted with sloe gin. Photograph: Anne Murphy/Alamy Stock Photo

The idea of drinking sloe gin in January seems the sort of berserk decadence that would have had you strung up during the French Revolution. If you have any left over, one nice idea is to roast some plums in it. [Delicious has a recipe](#). The result is as warming and sticky as you would imagine.

Rose and raspberry meringue nests



Pipe up! Rose and raspberry meringue nests. Photograph: Angela Field

Finally, if you are sick of that bottle of Chambord you bought eight years ago and drink three drops of every Christmas, here is a way to turn it into food. Patisserie Makes Perfect's [rose and raspberry meringue nest recipe](#) might be a little more complicated – requiring delicate piping skills, crème diplomat and some rose petals – but the result is impressive. Plus, it uses up Chambord. Will wonders never cease?

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2021.01.06 - Opinion

- [If Boris Johnson cared about schools, he'd already have sacked Gavin Williamson](#)
- [Another lockdown was inevitable. We have to get this one right](#)
- ['Needs more than PR' The Guardian view on Boris Johnson's mutant virus plan](#)
- ['Relief, not victory' The Guardian view on Julian Assange's extradition ruling](#)
- [Cartoon Seamus Jennings on Boris Johnson's latest Covid lockdown](#)
- [Rishi Sunak, give business a long-term Covid plan now](#)
- [Johnson is to blame for the schools fiasco, but there are lessons for Starmer too](#)

[Opinion](#)[Gavin Williamson](#)

If Boris Johnson cared about schools, he'd already have sacked Gavin Williamson

[Rafael Behr](#)



Be it the exams fiasco or the schools U-turns, the only doubt is whether the damage he inflicts is by negligence or sabotage



Gavin Williamson. 'Resources and goodwill have been squandered with a thoroughness that would make more sense as deliberate villainy.'

Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

Gavin Williamson. 'Resources and goodwill have been squandered with a thoroughness that would make more sense as deliberate villainy.'

Photograph: Justin Tallis/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.25 EST

Not much is constant about Britain's handling of the pandemic, but one rule applies throughout: there is no scenario so bad that it cannot be made worse with [Gavin Williamson in charge of schools](#).

[Closing classrooms](#) is demoralising for parents, teachers and children. The prospect of cancelled exams for a second year compounds the stress. Months of disrupted education will wound a generation. Poorer families will bear the deepest scars. There is no quick policy solution, but it is possible to imagine that remedies exist. Government cannot fix everything, but it must be capable of something.

It is not the task itself that induces despair, but the identity of the man whose job it is to complete it. Williamson's record allows only [expectation of failure](#). The unknown element is whether he will inflict the damage by negligence or more assertive sabotage.

Will his next adventure in maladministration look like last summer's [exam grades fiasco](#), when the education department had months to prepare for a predictable problem and was still ambushed? Or will it be something more proactively malevolent, as when he [threatened legal action](#) against councils that wanted to shut schools before Christmas, thus forcing them to stay open for a few gratuitous days of viral proliferation?

An education secretary possessing even flimsy scruples might, in recent weeks, have got to grips with practical challenges: sourcing laptops for remote learning, equipping venues to safely teach children who cannot stay at home. Instead English schools were shut with less than a day's notice, after a Christmas holiday during which headteachers had been told the priority was [arranging the Covid tests](#) that would allow them to stay open. They did open, but for just one day: a bonus round of infections before the U-turn.

Resources and goodwill have been squandered with a thoroughness that would make more sense as deliberate villainy – a plot to induce staffroom stress – except Williamson is not capable of implementing a conspiracy that effective.

Administrative inadequacy is aggravated by the absence of any passion for the portfolio. There is no evidence that the secretary of state has any notion of what education is even for, or how it fits into some wider national story. His only known expertise in the field is the fact of having once been to school himself. And it is unclear how much attention he was paying then.

He is despised by teachers. He has alienated even the moderate wing of the trade unions. It is never easy for Tory ministers to win trust in the staffroom, but Williamson has fulfilled the caricature of ideological provocateur with spiteful relish, casting teachers as slackers and saboteurs.

[In a recent survey](#) where frontline staff were asked whom they would trust with the decision on whether it was safe to go into the classroom, Williamson came a distant last – miles behind scientific advisers, local authorities, Public Health England, headteachers and trade unions. Respondents were allowed to tick multiple boxes, and still the education secretary got just 1% of the vote.

The rebarbative side of his character is notorious in government. It is not unusual for advisers and MPs to whisper unkind things to journalists about ministers, but the acridity of what is poured on Williamson by his own party is unique and mostly unprintable. The kinder accounts dwell only on his abject ineptitude, but most include chapters on deviousness, duplicity and vindictiveness. It is said that he styles himself as a Machiavellian operator with an ostentatious immaturity that undermines any plot he might undertake – a homage to House of Cards in cruel, humourless slapstick.

All of which raises the question of why he is in the cabinet. Williamson's incompetence was not a secret. He failed at defence before he got his hands on education. His memorable contributions in the security arena were the playground exhortation that Russia should "go away and shut up", and his dismissal by Theresa May after the leaking of secret information. He denied that one, but steam was still rising from the disgrace when, just three months later, Johnson tapped Williamson for the education job.

The only credentials that mattered to the new prime minister were loyalty and readiness to defend the most extreme Brexit. Williamson had been a remainder for David Cameron, and a defender of May's doomed deal when she was his benefactor. When May resigned, Williamson adopted a more hardline position instantly and without qualm, like a true mercenary. It did not take Johnson long to see the utility of a man as lacking in principle as himself. What might happen to schools was never a consideration.

Yet, by now, Johnson must see that repetitive failure in that department damages his own reputation. The pandemic has generated countless painful dilemmas for Downing Street, but the choice between keeping the current education secretary and putting almost anyone else in charge is at the easier end of the spectrum. The argument that a crisis needs consistency of personnel does not apply when the person in question is a walking engine spewing out more crisis.

A popular view in Westminster last year, when Williamson was barely flexing the full extent of his uselessness, was that Johnson kept him on so as to sacrifice him at a later date. The reviled minister might soak up more public opprobrium before being discarded. But the rag is now saturated and rank. Another theory is that Williamson has some sinister leverage dating

back to [his time as chief whip](#): that he knows where bodies are buried, having served as executioner and undertaker.

Perhaps Johnson [avoids sacking people for incompetence](#) through fear of signalling that competence matters, and that success in politics should be measured by capable policy delivery. That is not the prime minister's favourite test.

Williamson will go, eventually, once the stench of having him around exceeds Johnson's [reluctance to deal with foul messes](#). It is hard to predict when that point will come. The prime minister's nose is accustomed to the smell of bad government, but he can see other people recoil.

Sacking the education secretary would not automatically make things better. But it would at least eliminate one compelling reason to keep expecting the worst.

- Rafael Behr is a Guardian columnist

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OpinionCoronavirus

Another lockdown was inevitable. We have to get this one right

[Devi Sridhar](#)

Even with vaccines, we are entering a perilous new phase of the pandemic. Here are the measures that must be taken

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



Composite: Guardian Design/Getty/Shutterstock

Composite: Guardian Design/Getty/Shutterstock

Tue 5 Jan 2021 05.27 EST

A [third lockdown](#) for England was inevitable. Pressure on the NHS is growing as it deals with new infections from a variant of the coronavirus that scientists estimate is 50-70% more transmissible. New infections continue to climb past 50,000 each day, and daily deaths are in the hundreds. A few weeks ago, many felt optimistic that vaccines could return England to

normal by the spring. Instead, it seems we are entering a dangerous new chapter of this pandemic.

It's easy to feel frustrated by the government's response to this pandemic, and wonder why it hasn't acted sooner. Ministers wasted an opportunity to suppress the virus in the summer when cases were low, and instead chose to open up quickly and recklessly after the first national lockdown. The government subsidised people to eat out in restaurants and bars, and encouraged holidays abroad via "travel corridors" without any kind of testing or quarantine restrictions for when travellers returned. It was always likely that, if uncontrolled, the virus that causes Covid-19 would mutate. High prevalence created more opportunities for a variant to emerge that now appears to be spreading at a worrying pace.

[UK Covid live: Sunak announces £4.6bn package of grants to help firms through third coronavirus lockdown](#)

[Read more](#)

Where does this leave the UK? Among scientists, optimism about several approved vaccines is tempered by serious concerns about the new variant, and what the next weeks have in store. Sage experts note that even with restrictions in place, it will be a challenge to stop the spread of this new variant over the next few weeks.

Several fringe scientists have argued that this builds a stronger case for the government to allow the virus to spread through younger, healthier members of the population. Aside from the opportunities this would create for more mutations to emerge, new data from Manaus, Brazil, shows just how catastrophic an uncontrolled epidemic would be. An estimated 76% of people have been exposed to Covid-19, and the epidemic is still continuing. Applying age-specific infection fatality rates from Manaus, a 76% attack rate would mean 350,000 deaths in the UK and 1.58 million deaths in the US. Manaus has a particularly young population, so the fatality rate is likely lower there than it would be in the more elderly demographics of western Europe and North America.

The substantial rate of serious illness associated with Covid-19 also underlines the risks of exposing a large percentage of the population to a

virus that is still not fully understood. Even a plan to allow the virus to run through the population would require restrictions, because the high rate of hospitalisation that results from Covid infections is dangerous to everyone. If hospitals are full, patients of all stripes – whether they’re suffering from a heart attack or a road traffic injury – can’t get the necessary treatment. And without spare beds, Covid-19 patients can’t get access to the ICU care they need to stay alive.

The opposite response to this is what has been called a maximum suppression or “zero Covid” model. But at this stage, with the Office for National Statistics estimating that England is [around 100,000 infections a day](#), and the new variant putting pressure on the NHS and the test-and-trace system, pursuing this strategy no longer seems feasible. The immediate priority should be surviving the next few months without the NHS collapsing, and planning for a robust response to eliminate Covid in the spring and summer.

Vaccinating as many people as quickly as possible will be key to this. The UK has decided to [vaccinate more people with one dose](#) rather than fewer people with two. This is an ethical and political judgment rather than a scientific one; waiting for follow-up doses to be delivered carries huge costs.

But vaccinating everyone will take time, which is why a national lockdown was necessary. Schools will be closed until mid-February, except for the most vulnerable children and those of essential workers. This will reduce community transmission and allow scientists to gather new evidence about the variant.

As always, mass testing and supported isolation are central to controlling the virus. Both during the lockdown and after these new restrictions are lifted, we should be testing people rapidly to identify those who are carriers, and ensuring those who must isolate have the resources – both financial and practical – to spend 10 days alone. That isolation is an act of goodwill is something the government has repeatedly overlooked during this pandemic, and those who are isolating need to be compensated for doing so.

[England's changing coronavirus lockdown strategy: a timeline](#)
[Read more](#)

The government has spent many months and billions of pounds on its testing-and-tracing strategy. So it's surprising that, despite these efforts, its approach to visitors arriving from overseas is still so lax. Preventing the import of Covid-19 cases and variants requires robust testing and quarantine procedures at our borders. Yet people are allowed in to the UK without a negative Covid test result, and pictures of crowding at airports – in contrast to the carefully planned approach of countries such as South Korea – do little to instil confidence in the safety of this approach.

Finally, and most importantly, we need to follow these new restrictions, continue to distance from each and avoid crowded spaces and public transport, wear face coverings, and do our best to avoid getting infected and passing the virus on. We must deprive it of any opportunities to survive and infect others. In the spring, longer days and mass vaccinations will give us another chance to eliminate Covid and prepare for the coming winter. The UK's health and economy depends upon it.

- Prof Devi Sridhar is chair of global public health at the University of Edinburgh

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[Opinion](#)[Coronavirus](#)

The Guardian view on Boris Johnson's mutant virus plan: needs more than PR

[Editorial](#)

The prime minister aims to be credible rather than accountable in a time of Covid. That's a mistake



Boris Johnson at Monday's news conference. 'The prime minister wants to give an impression that he is up to the job, but the disaster of the last few weeks suggests he is not.' Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

Boris Johnson at Monday's news conference. 'The prime minister wants to give an impression that he is up to the job, but the disaster of the last few weeks suggests he is not.' Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

Tue 5 Jan 2021 14.25 EST

It was during the Vietnam war that the euphemism "[credibility gap](#)" was coined to describe the Lyndon Johnson administration. The phrase was used instead of saying what everyone thought – that the US government was systematically lying. The president's team reasoned that to restore

“credibility”, the answer was not to stop lying but to improve public relations. Fast forward a few decades and swap London with Washington, and another Johnson government is attempting the same trick.

On Tuesday, the UK recorded 60,916 new positive coronavirus cases and 830 deaths. In England, [one in 50](#) had coronavirus in a week. Boris Johnson’s response was to restart daily [Covid updates](#) so that he can push the government’s narrative that this country is in a frantic race between the vaccine and the virus. In short, this will be a contest between injections and infections. This plays to the idea that perceptions matter more than facts.

Rather than admit the many mistakes he has made and seek to correct them, Mr Johnson aims to be “credible” in a time of Covid. He should be accountable. Credibility is not built on a moral foundation of meaning what you say or saying what you mean. This appeals to a prime minister who doesn’t bother defending policies today because there is every chance of a U-turn tomorrow. On Sunday, Mr Johnson said that schools were [safe](#) for children and teachers. By Monday, they were so dangerous, [he said](#), that they must be closed. Nor can it be reliably said that Mr Johnson’s argument rests on scientific advice. If this were true, Downing Street would have surely prepared for even stricter measures than those the country endured in March – as its scientific advisers [warned were necessary two weeks ago](#) – to control the spread of a new coronavirus variant in England.

The prime minister wants to give the impression that he is up to the job, but the disaster of the past few weeks suggests he is not. Mr Johnson has been warned again and again about the dangers of a winter surge that would stretch the NHS to breaking point unless the virus was prevented from circulating. He could have heeded [warnings](#), including from his own [chief medical officer](#). But Mr Johnson preferred to believe that the public did not need to suffer further lockdowns because the lurking threat of viral spread could be seen off by a “world-beating” mass vaccination programme.

The trouble was that Sars-CoV-2 was following the evolutionary rule book rather than the Downing Street script. By failing to suppress the virus with a working test, trace and isolate system, the United Kingdom tolerated a [higher prevalence than was necessary](#) and increased the chances that incubators for novel viral variants could be found. The emergence of a

highly transmissible Covid strain is evidence that nature did locate bodies to breed in.

Mr Johnson now wants the public to believe that a mutant virus is the problem rather than a government that bet against its appearance. Yet, it is the prime minister who repeatedly delayed lockdown measures and so made the problem for the country worse. He compounded his error by failing to improve the country's ability to manage the pandemic during the lockdowns so things were better when they were lifted. Covid has heightened and highlighted inequalities. The affluent have been able to protect their health and livelihood more effectively than the poor. The pathogen has disproportionately affected those burdened by a mixture of illness, age and poverty. Yet the government has not taken the initiative in recognising this by offering adequate help in times of crisis.

The government's chief medical officer for England has said that this virus is not going away. He's right. We are going to be living for some time in an acutely changed world, wearing masks and avoiding crowded places. The government should be less bothered with its credibility and more focussed on providing properly funded support to deal with the clinical, psychological, social and economic shock of the pandemic. Modern living environments may incubate more germs, but they also incubate ways to deal with them and their fallout. The government should act on this reality, not political spin.

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[Opinion](#)[Julian Assange](#)

The Guardian view on Julian Assange's extradition ruling: relief, not victory

[Editorial](#)

A judge has rightly rejected the US request, but only on mental health grounds. The case should be dropped



‘Julian Assange’s his prospects of avoiding extradition now appear considerably brighter.’ Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

‘Julian Assange’s his prospects of avoiding extradition now appear considerably brighter.’ Photograph: Dominic Lipinski/PA

Tue 5 Jan 2021 14.24 EST

Donald Trump is using his last days in office to pardon those who do not deserve it. Among the most egregious recipients are the Blackwater security guards [responsible for the Nisour Square massacre](#) – the killing of unarmed civilians, including children, in Iraq. The president’s deplorable decision fits a pattern: just over a year ago, he [pardoned](#) a former army lieutenant found

guilty of murder after ordering his men to fire at three Afghans, and a former US army commando facing trial over the killing of a suspected bombmaker.

There has been no such mercy shown to a man whom the US is pursuing after he cast an unforgiving light on its abuses in Iraq and Afghanistan. Julian Assange's future is dependent on the decisions of British courts. On Monday, district judge Vanessa Baraitser ruled that the WikiLeaks founder could not be extradited to the US, where he has been charged under the Espionage Act, including for publishing classified material.

But she rejected defence arguments that the prosecution had misrepresented the facts and that he was being pursued for a political offence. She ruled against extradition only on the grounds that the risk of him killing himself was substantial, given his mental health and the conditions in which he was likely to be held – in isolation in a “supermax” high-security prison.

This decision is a relief for Mr Assange and his family. But it is no cause for celebration for the defendant and his supporters, or for those concerned about press freedom more broadly. The American Civil Liberties Union has described charging him over publication as “a direct assault on the first amendment”. The ruling offers no protection to any journalist who might find themselves in Mr Assange's position. It is no victory for the right to share material of clear public interest.

Mr Assange's lawyers will on Wednesday apply for bail on his behalf. Legal experts suggest that his chances are poor: he served a 50-week sentence for skipping bail after police removed him from the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he had fled to avoid extradition to Sweden over a sexual assault investigation that was subsequently dropped. But his prospects of avoiding extradition now appear considerably brighter; he has a family to consider; and his mental health and the physical risks posed by Covid in Belmarsh prison, where he has been held since April 2019, make the case for bail more pressing.

Legal proceedings are likely to drag on for years – unless the US chooses to scrap these charges rather than appeal. It should do so. There is a shameful contrast between this administration's simultaneous pardoning of men for horrific offences and the pursuit of a man who exposed war crimes. When

Joe Biden takes office on 20 January, he cannot undo the damage caused by undue and unjust lenience. But he can, and should, let Mr Assange walk free.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Guardian Opinion cartoon

Coronavirus

Seamus Jennings on Boris Johnson's latest Covid lockdown – cartoon

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Nils Pratley on financeBusiness

Rishi Sunak, give business a long-term Covid plan now

[Nils Pratley](#)



The £4.6bn support package is welcome but firms need clarity long before the March budget

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The chancellor announced further financial support for business on Tuesday.

Photograph: Simon Walker/HM Treasury

The chancellor announced further financial support for business on Tuesday.

Photograph: Simon Walker/HM Treasury

Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.09 EST

Thanks for the latest [£4.6bn support package](#), chancellor, but when will you be serving the main course? That was the gist of the business world's response to Rishi Sunak's announcement of grants for the retail, hospitality and leisure sectors. One could call the reply churlish, but companies' demand for clarity – and soon – is entirely fair.

Decisions on jobs and investment for the spring are being made now. If Sunak intends to extend the business rates holiday beyond March, or the furlough scheme beyond April, he needs to hurry up and make the announcement.

[Rishi Sunak unveils £4.6bn relief package for UK retail and hospitality sectors](#)

[Read more](#)

The chancellor did not definitively say the Treasury intends to say nothing until 3 March, but that was his strong hint. "We'll have a budget in early

March to take stock of our wider support and set out the next stage in our economic response,” he said.

One can understand – up to a point – the Treasury’s desire to keep its options open. The length of the latest lockdown is unknown and the vaccination programme is in its infancy. The UK will borrow £400bn this financial year, so it will feel pressing to ensure all support for business is actually needed. The Treasury does not want to accumulate “dead weight” costs.

Yet delay carries a price. The modest grants offered in Tuesday’s measures are unlikely to change calculations for many small pubs, restaurants or events companies. Faced with a new lockdown, they will be asking whether it is worth trying to hang on until the spring if rates relief and furlough support could disappear in March and April.

At the start of the pandemic, Sunak won praise for acting swiftly: the economic plan was aligned with the healthcare response. One can not say the same about subsequent Treasury decisions, most of which have gone down to the wire. The effect is to create additional financial uncertainties for business, on top of the obvious trading uncertainties created by the pandemic.

Adam Marshall, director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, put it well: “The government must move away from this drip-feed approach and set out a long-term plan that allows all businesses of all shapes and sizes to plan, and ultimately survive.” A budget in two months’ time is too long to wait.

Next up: a V-shaped recovery



Despite Next wondering whether lockdown store closures would cause losses, it now expects pre-tax profits of £342m. Photograph: Universal Images/Alamy

Still, at the top end of the business world, there are striking examples of what self help can achieve, with the clothing retailer Next [producing two remarkable forecasts on Tuesday.](#)

First, despite [Next](#) having wondered at the start of the pandemic whether losses could be on the cards this year, its chief executive, Simon Wolfson, now expects pre-tax profits of £342m in the 12-month trading period that closes at the end of January. Then he expects profits in the financial year to January 2022 to rebound to £670m on a “central planning scenario” – only £60m less than in the last full pre-pandemic trading year.

[Next's Christmas profits better than expected, buoyed by online sales](#)
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Sadly, it is dangerous to read too many wider lessons into Next’s experience. For starters, the company’s online operation, even in normal times, generates about half the sales; therefore, in the nine weeks before Christmas, gains through the internet compensated for almost all the sales lost in stores. As important, [Next](#) is simply better than most competitors in managing costs.

But one factor should give hope to all retailers who make it to the post-vaccination world: defaults in Next's credit business have been low and those consumers who have kept their jobs seem inclined to spend when they have the chance. Few retail recoveries will match Next's V-shaped profile, but most rivals would settle for V-ish.

Is bitcoin a tulip bulb fraud – or pure gold?



A representation of the virtual currency bitcoin, which has risen to more than \$30,000. Photograph: Dado Ruvic/Reuters

Here is a brave prediction by a team of analysts at JP Morgan, the Wall Street bank: a unit of bitcoin, which has already risen fourfold to more than [\\$30,000](#) in the past year, could eventually hit \$146,000 if investors come to view the digital currency as an alternative to gold.

[Bitcoin hits record high on 12th anniversary of its creation](#)

[Read more](#)

Any wacky forecast can seem plausible in the wild climate for bitcoin, but the bravery of this punt lies in the view of Jamie Dimon, JP Morgan's chairman and chief executive. The boss's analysis was famously straightforward: bitcoin is a "fraud ... worse than tulip bulbs" and fit only

for drug dealers, murderers and people living in North Korea, [he said back in 2017](#).

One admires the analysts' independence of mind. And one wishes them luck with their careers at [JP Morgan](#) if their prediction soon looks ridiculous.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

OpinionSchools

Johnson is to blame for the schools fiasco, but there are lessons for Starmer too

[Sienna Rodgers](#)

Labour needs to be braver on education, and recognise that frontline workers are the experts

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‘Labour refused to back school closures in England until hours before they were announced.’ Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

‘Labour refused to back school closures in England until hours before they were announced.’ Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

Tue 5 Jan 2021 11.54 EST

Weeks of pressure finally cut through to the prime minister on Monday, when he plucked up the courage to deliver some bad news and announced a fresh lockdown in England. The move came less than 36 hours after he had limply conceded that Covid restrictions were “[probably about to get tougher](#)” but insisted that “[schools are safe](#)”. It was clear that the government’s stance was unsustainable, yet Labour refused to back the closure of all schools in England until hours before the move was announced.

When the government [launched legal action](#) against Greenwich council for recommending to its local schools that for the last days of term they stay open only for vulnerable children and those of key workers, something the government has now mandated, Labour did not defend the position taken by the local authority. Instead, a shadow cabinet member [reiterated the line](#) that “schools should be the last thing to close” and urged the government to work with the council to change course. At the time, Greenwich had [3,670 pupils and 314 school staff in self-isolation](#), and two schools in the area had already been forced to close completely owing to lack of staff.

Throughout the crisis, and particularly after Rebecca Long-Bailey, an advocate on behalf of education unions, was replaced by Kate Green as shadow education secretary, Keir Starmer had made it clear that schools remaining open would be a priority for him. “I don’t just want all children back at school next month, I expect them back at school. No ifs, no buts, no equivocation,” was [his message to Boris Johnson](#) in mid-August. No reference was made to the unified [demands of education unions](#): for schools to reopen only when safe to do so, with additional resources provided for enhanced cleaning, PPE and risk assessments.

Labour also clashed with unions in July [over face coverings](#) in schools, with Green arguing that their use was not necessary after unions called for staff to be allowed to wear them. The party’s [position changed](#) the following month, when the World Health Organization issued fresh guidance.

Labour’s approach to education during Covid has differed from its approach in other policy areas. For the most part, the opposition leader has consistently made demands in line with the advice offered by the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage). When [Starmer called for](#) a “circuit-

breaker” in England in October, this was based on minutes of a Sage meeting that had taken place in September. He was calling out the government for ignoring the science, rather than following it as promised. A four-week lockdown was announced soon afterwards, making Starmer look like [Captain Foresight](#).

[It's back to school for Boris Johnson, the man who refuses to learn | Marina Hyde](#)
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A similar pattern could have been applied to schools. At the end of December, [Sage warned](#) that November-style restrictions, with schools open, would be “highly unlikely” to keep the R number below 1 – and that this measure might not be enough to stem the spread of the virus. Not to take on this advice on board, particularly when the increased transmissibility of the new variant was known earlier, was a refusal to accept the reality of the situation. It is compounded by the fact that everyone knew children were repeatedly being sent home to self-isolate after every outbreak, making a mockery of the idea that schools were fully open and able to function as normal anyway.

Although Starmer called for a fresh lockdown on Sunday afternoon without advocating for the closure of all schools, the shadow education minister Wes Streeting [criticised the government](#) for being “behind the curve” on schools and “deviating” from the scientific advice. He did not explicitly support closures, but it appeared to be a signal of support for a move in that direction. However, the shadow education secretary, Kate Green, [specified the next morning](#) that Labour’s proposed lockdown would “try to get this virus under control and to keep children in class”, and repeated that “schools should be the very last place to close” despite it being clear that the time for the very last place to close had arrived.

By the time Starmer called for closures, he found himself on the back foot, as it was evident to all of Westminster that the government was ready to U-turn on schools. Teachers, school staff and trade unions, as well as Sage, councils, frustrated Labour MPs from across the party and the British public, [according to polling](#), had been proved right, and this left many wondering why Starmer had not listened to them earlier. It seemed to be in stark

contrast to the approach taken by the previous Labour leadership, which was not afraid to be seen as close to the unions and was often willing to take cues from them on policy.

The focus should of course be on the prime minister's chaotic handling of the situation. On Sunday morning he said schools were "safe"; by Monday evening, he told us they were "[vectors of transmission](#)". The blame for this mess lies squarely with Johnson and his government. But Labour can learn from its own mistakes in this debacle. Starmer's party needs to be braver on education, but also must recognise that frontline workers are the experts. Labour's affiliation to many trade unions is actually an advantage in this crisis, and one that should be used consistently.

- Sienna Rodgers is the editor of LabourList
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2021.01.06 - Sport

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Colin Bell wasn't a superstar. He just happened to be a brilliant footballer

[Manchester City](#)

Colin Bell wasn't a superstar. He just happened to be a brilliant footballer

Manchester City's Colin the King was the antithesis of the modern gated player. But he was the complete midfielder



[Simon Hattenstone](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 17.27 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 19.28 EST



Colin Bell eats up the turf on a breakaway move during a First Division match against Liverpool in August 1969 Photograph: Pa Photos/PA

The King is dead. RIP Colin Bell. He was nicknamed Nijinsky after the great racehorse because he'd run and run and never tire. But it could just as easily have been after the ballet dancer. To the rest of us he was simply Colin the King.

He strode through midfield like a colossus; a god – and the space invariably opened up in front of him. He didn't do anything particularly tricky or fast, he just ran with the ball. Bell was the complete midfielder. He scored goals with his head, he scored tap-ins, he scored bangers from outside the area. He tackled, chased, closed-down, dribbled, crossed, headed, defended and passed beautifully. He was the complete midfielder. Colin won 48 England caps, and there would have been so many more if he'd not been injured in his prime.

He scored the greatest goal I ever saw, against Burnley. I think. From 40 yards out he wellied the ball, and it screamed into the top corner. I say I think. I never saw the goal again. The cameras weren't there that day. So for me it will be the greatest old-fashioned goal, for ever framed in the mind's eye.



Colin Bell was awarded an MBE in 2005. Photograph: Fiona Hanson/PA

We all wanted to play No 8 – Colin’s number. Of modern players, the way he ate up the turf was similar to Kevin De Bruyne. He was not as outrageously gifted as De Bruyne, but this was a different era. De Bruyne never had to play on the Baseball Ground. King Colin was mighty in the mud.

Bell, who came to City from Bury, was at Maine Road for the glory days Mk1 – that era in the late 1960s when City enjoyed phenomenal success without buying it (unless you count the £45,000 we paid to Bury for him). He was the totem of the City team that won every domestic trophy in a three-year period between 1968 and 1970, followed by the European Cup Winners’ Cup. He made so many goals (we didn’t call them assists back then) and could be relied on to knock in 14 or so goals in a 42-match season, sometimes more. He scored 142 goals in 481 for City – a phenomenal record, particularly back then, for a midfielder.

I started going to City in 1974, at the arse-end of the glory days. We won one more trophy, in 1976, the League Cup, but by then Colin was crippled – scythed down by Martin Buchan in a league Cup derby City won 4-0. It was one of the greatest nights of my life, and one of the worst. City fans of a

certain vintage still replay that tackle in their head. We never forgave Buchan. Weeks turned into months, and still the King wasn't back.

De Bruyne never had to play on the Baseball Ground. King Colin was mighty in the mud

Eventually, two years and 44 days after the injury, he returned against Newcastle United. It was Boxing Day 1977, and the ground was full. He came on as a substitute to the most sustained, emotional roar you ever heard at a football match. But he wasn't the same Colin Bell. The knee was kaput. He could no longer do the thing for which he was famous – run and run, and eat up the turf. But he was still King Colin.

For 35 years during which City won no trophies, Colin was pretty much all we had; all we talked about, all we sang about. Even the kids who never saw him. "No 1 is Colin Bell, No 2 is Colin Bell, No 3 is Colin Bell, and No 4 is Bell as well." The song went right down to the sub (only one back then) being Colin Bell. The song built up to its rousing chorus – a hymn to the tune of Lily the Pink, was "We'll drink a drink a drink, To Colin the king, The king the king the king, He's the leader of our city, He's the greatest centre forward, That the wooooooooooooorrrrrld ... has ever seen."



Colin Bell leads out Manchester City in 1967. Photograph: PA

And he was for us. When we moved to the Etihad Stadium, one of the stands was named after him – unfortunately the Bell End never had the majestic resonance intended, so it was renamed the more sober Colin Bell Stand. When former players cited the greatest City players, they always named Bell. Even in the moneyed era when we could buy the best in the world. At the end of last season I interviewed Mike Summerbee, who played in the same team as Bell (two thirds of the famous Bell-Summerbee-Lee triumvirate) about the departure of David Silva. He said no City player has had Silva's ability, but of course he had to compare him with Colin. And adore Silva as he did, I think I knew where his loyalty ultimately lay.

Colin was a rock star footballer. But what made him so special was that he was also the ultimate anti-rock star. He was gorgeous, almost iconically cool, but the hair was slightly too pudding basin to be George Best cool or Rodney Marsh cool. When George Best opened up a designer boutique with Summerbee, Bell opened up a restaurant with the equally unflashy Colin Waldron. Bell wasn't above serving anybody a bit of grub.

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There were no histrionics when he scored. He didn't punch the air or do backflips, he simply raised his hands, turned around and got on with the game. When players tried to embrace him he virtually shooed them away. He'd done nothing special, he'd scored a goal, done the job that he was paid for. Bell wasn't a superstar, he was a workman plying his trade.

When he retired he wasn't interested in being a star commentator or the big I am. He simply left. On the rare occasion the TV cameras caught up with him, he seemed lost for words. King Colin was as un-regal as it gets – the antithesis of the modern gated superstar. He wasn't even the boy next door. He was too shy for that. He was simply a quiet fella called Colin who happened to be a brilliant footballer. If ever there was a time to drink a drink a drink to Colin the king, it's now.

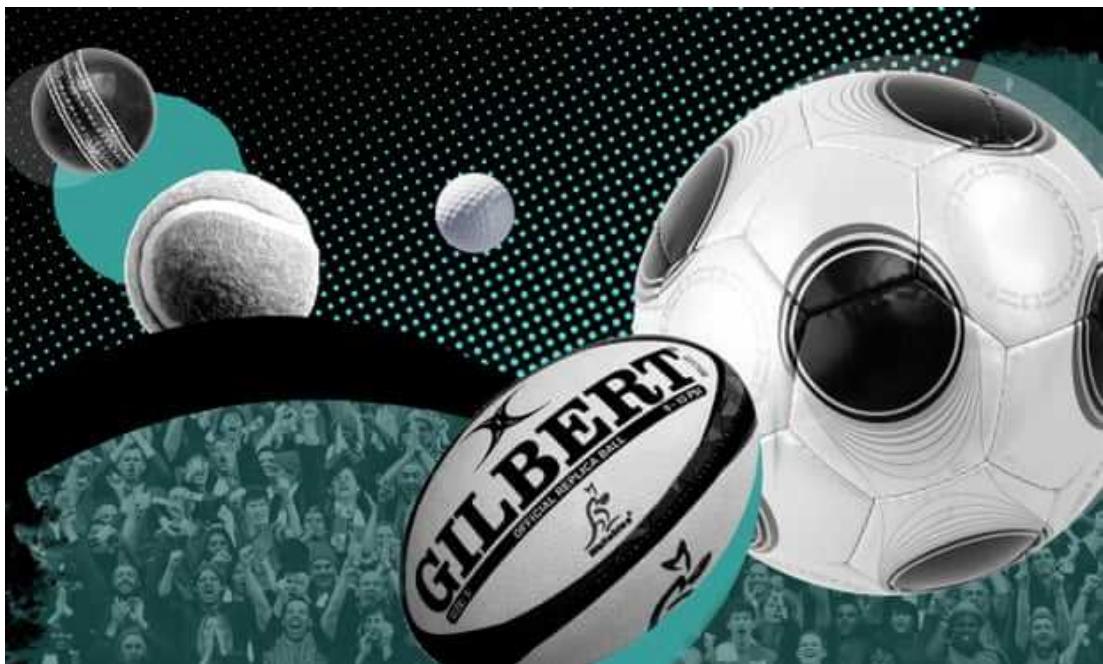
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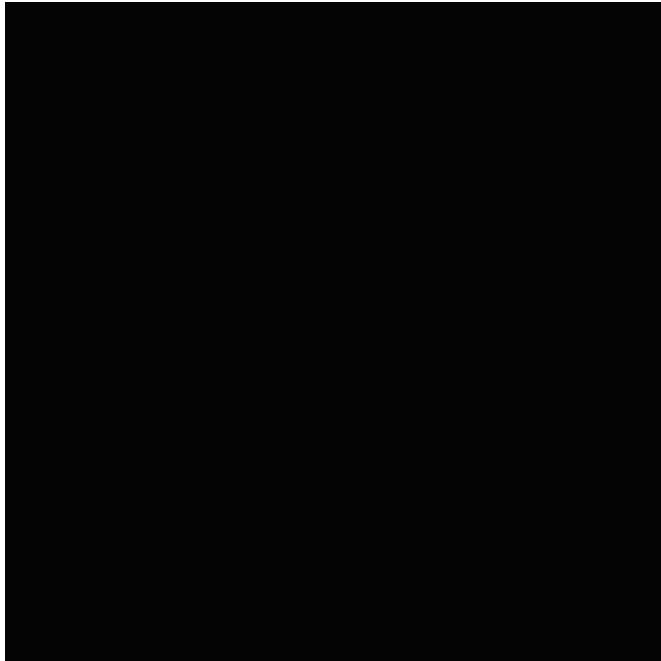
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[Sport](#)

Britain heading for 'perfect storm' over fitness in winter lockdown, says expert

- Greg Whyte warns activity levels likely to fall even further
- ‘We can’t underplay how damaging this could be’



A council worker puts up a sign notifying the closure of an outdoor gym on Clapham Common in London. Photograph: Peter Summers/Getty Images

Britain is heading for a “perfect storm” in which a further reduction in activity levels during the winter lockdown has a disastrous effect on physical and mental health, a world-leading sports scientist has said.

[Greg Whyte](#), a former Olympian in modern pentathlon who has also worked as consultant physiologist in Olympic and professional sports, also criticised the government for not listening to experts – or doing enough to get the nation healthier.

“The first lockdown led to a reduction in activity even though there was glorious weather last spring,” he told the Guardian. “So with a winter lockdown we’ve got almost the perfect storm for a dramatic reduction in physical activity. Alongside that is the impact it will have on people’s physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health. We can’t underplay how damaging this lockdown could be for national health.”

Whyte, who deals with the government regularly as a scientific adviser to ukactive, questioned why most grassroots sports and activity in England – except walking, running and cycling – had been stopped when many could still safely go ahead with social-distancing measures in place.

“One problem is that the government has no exercise specialists advising them,” he added. “Take a look at the makeup of Sage. I’ve spent a long time talking with DCMS. They have some great people, as have Sport England, but the government doesn’t listen to them. That has to change.”

There is mounting frustration within sports such as golf, tennis and angling, where it is straightforward to maintain social distancing, that they have been forced to stop in England. Those frustrations have been exacerbated by Scotland’s lockdown being less restrictive and allowing golf, tennis, angling and some sport for under-12s.

The government was also urged to do more to help young people stay active by the Youth Sport Trust. “We know that young people’s activity levels plummeted during the first lockdown, and this has contributed to some of the issues they are now facing – from mental health difficulties and low levels of physical fitness to developmental delay,” its chief executive, Ali Oliver, said. “Over the coming weeks a virtual PR curriculum focused on recovery should be a priority. This could be a game-changer for young people’s wellbeing.”

Whyte also urged adults to be given more support to get active too, especially given that 400,000 people who work within the fitness sector in the UK are currently being told to stay at home.

“We talk a lot in this country about the Couch to 5K programme,” he added. “But actually the biggest problem we have in UK society is couch to the

front door – the fact that 22 million people in this country do less than 30 minutes of activity a week. And when you think that the recommendation is 30 minutes a day, the government has to do more to provide solutions for people who are inactive.”

On Tuesday the government announced that gyms could apply for £9,000 in government grants. However, Sarah Lindsay, a three-times Olympian in short-track speed-skating who now runs the Roar fitness chain of gyms, told the Guardian that was nowhere near enough.

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“So many of us are going to go out of business because we don’t have an awful lot of cashflow,” she said. “We still have rent and bills to pay and the government is not doing enough to help. They have to realise we are one of the solutions to getting the country healthy again.”

Andy Lane, a sports psychologist, warned of the dangers to mental health if people are restricted in their activity. “If you feel it’s not worth it, and it might require a great deal of effort to do exercise, then your physical and mental health will suffer,” he said. “What makes this worse is the background of a pandemic where this so much uncertainty, frustration and where hope feels squashed.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/05/britain-heading-for-perfect-storm-over-fitness-in-winter-lockdown-says-expert>

[Tottenham Hotspur](#)

'I sense that desire': Mourinho believes Tottenham can end trophy drought

- Manager praises 'honest people' after win over Brentford
- Højbjerg should be fit for FA Cup after despite late injury



Son Heung-Min takes the acclaim of his teammates after sealing Tottenham's path into the Carabao Cup final with a typically emphatic finish against Brentford. Photograph: Tottenham Hotspur FC/Getty Images

José Mourinho believes Tottenham's players have shown their desire to end the club's trophy drought after booking their place in the Carabao Cup final with a [2-0 win against Brentford](#).

An early header from Moussa Sissoko put Spurs on course to reach Wembley for the first time since 2015 before Ivan Toney's goal was disallowed for a marginal offside in the second half. Son Heung-min's 16th of the season sealed Tottenham's victory and in the April final they will

meet the winners of Wednesday's showdown between Manchester United and Manchester City.

Victory would mean Mourinho surpasses Sir Alex Ferguson's and Brian Clough's record of winning this competition on four occasions, having done so with Chelsea in 2005, 2007 and 2015, and with Manchester United in 2017. But while Spurs have not won a trophy since Juan Ramos led them to extra-time [victory against Chelsea](#) in the 2008 League Cup, their current manager is hopeful that could be about to change.

"I came to England in 2004 and I remember in that period I had to learn the meaning of the cups here," Mourinho said. "I always took it seriously. If there is any secret it is to take it seriously."

Knowledge embed

"What I sense in the team is exactly that desire. I'm not saying [a] winning mentality – I'm not saying that we are this or that. I just say that we are honest people and since the first game at Chelsea and the second at Stoke, the guys took it seriously. That's what I hope to do again on Sunday in Crosby against Marine."

Mourinho said he expects Pierre-Emile Højbjerg to be fit to face the non-league side in the FA Cup third round despite being substituted late on with a gashed shin after a challenge from Brentford's Josh Dasilva. The former Arsenal youth-team player was shown a straight red card after VAR reviewed the incident but Mourinho revealed Højbjerg did not want to be replaced by Japhet Tanganga.

"It was for sure a bad tackle because he is bleeding a lot and the shinpads are a bit broken. But that's football. The kid Dasilva is a young guy and is a good player. In the heat of the game there is nothing to be critical of. Pierre has a big cut but he didn't even want me to play Tanganga in the last five minutes so I believe he can be OK for the weekend."

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Carabao Cup

Tottenham beat Brentford to reach Carabao Cup final after Son seals win



Tottenham's Son Heung-min scores his side's second goal in their Carabao Cup semi-final victory against Brentford. Photograph: Adam Davy/PA

Son Heung-min had no time for the romance of the [Brentford](#) story. The Championship club had never played a major semi-final in their 132-year history but they thought they had a springboard to victory midway through the second half.

Ivan Toney had headed home from point-blank range for what he thought was the goal to cancel out Moussa Sissoko's 12th-minute opener and Brentford felt a jolt of momentum. And then they did not.

Most people had forgotten VAR was in use for this [Carabao Cup](#) semi-final. It had not featured previously in the competition. But up it cranked to spot that Toney had been fractionally in front of Sissoko, the last Spurs defender. It was a blow to Brentford and Son was quick to twist the knife.

It was a typically slicing run by the Tottenham attacker on to a Tangy Ndombele pass following a quick transition and, when he shrugged off Henrik Dalsgaard's challenge, everybody knew what would happen next. The finish was cool and precise, Brentford were crushed, heading towards a first defeat in 17 games and Spurs could begin to look forward to the final on 25 April against one of the Manchester clubs.

Brentford's frustration was encapsulated by what happened with six minutes to play. Josh Dasilva might not have meant it but he went over the top of the ball and raked his studs down the shin of Pierre-Emile Højbjerg, who went to ground in agony and anger.

As play went on, with Højbjerg lying prone, the Brentford bench were furious. They sensed a ruse. "I know him," bellowed Thomas Frank, their Danish manager, who had coached Højbjerg at Denmark youth level. In other words, he knew he was not hurt. "It's a disgrace," yelled one of Frank's backroom staff.

It was nothing of the sort. VAR took a look and did not need long to advise the red card for Dasilva while Højbjerg limped off, having rolled down his sock to reveal a long cut. Brentford had simply allowed the heartbreak to overwhelm them.

Frank had recovered his composure by full-time and he embraced Højbjerg. There were no hard feelings, it was heat-of-the-moment stuff, but Højbjerg and Tottenham did not mind. They could tolerate a few battle scars because they had what they wanted – a shot at the final and the chance to end the club's 13-year trophy drought.



Tottenham's Pierre-Emile Højbjerg reacts after being fouled by Josh Dasilva, who was sent off. Photograph: Alex Livesey - Danehouse/Getty Images

José Mourinho had billed this game as his most important at the club because of what it meant. Now he will have an even more important one, as he chases the trophy to harden the squad's mentality and give himself a slice of history.

Mourinho has won the competition four times – the same number as Brian Clough and Sir Alex Ferguson. No manager has won it five times.

What is the secret, he was asked. To take it seriously, he replied, and he certainly did that with his starting XI, which was practically full strength. It was not a vintage Spurs performance – Mourinho said he was unhappy with it – but they controlled the first half and responded when Brentford threatened to make a game of it.

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Sissoko scored his first goal since December 2019 when he capitalised on slack marking to head home from Sergio Reguilón's cross and Spurs might have had more before the interval. Son hit a curling shot straight at David

Raya while the Brentford goalkeeper saved brilliantly after Lucas Moura's header from a Son corner had looped up off Toney.

There was greater tempo and spice after half-time, although it still did not feel like a semi-final that Brentford had waited so long to contest. This is what happens when the only cries that can be heard are from the players.

Brentford were slightly fortunate not to lose Sergi Canós to a second yellow card on 47 minutes for a foul on Lucas and then came the first of two big chances for the equaliser.

Bryan Mbeuno beat Davinson Sánchez on the byline and, when the Spurs centre-half nibbled back at him, it felt as though he had the invitation to go down for a penalty. Mbeuno wanted more and he crossed for Toney, who was denied by a saving block by Serge Aurier. "He was very honest not to dive," Mourinho said of Mbeuno.

Aurier flashed high and Son volleyed off target but Brentford had come to life and they thought they had their moment when Ethan Pinnock headed back a corner. Hugo Lloris could only touch the ball up and there was Toney to convert. His joy was short-lived.

The curiosity from a Spurs point of view is that it has taken them only three games to reach the final. Then again, this is a season like no other.

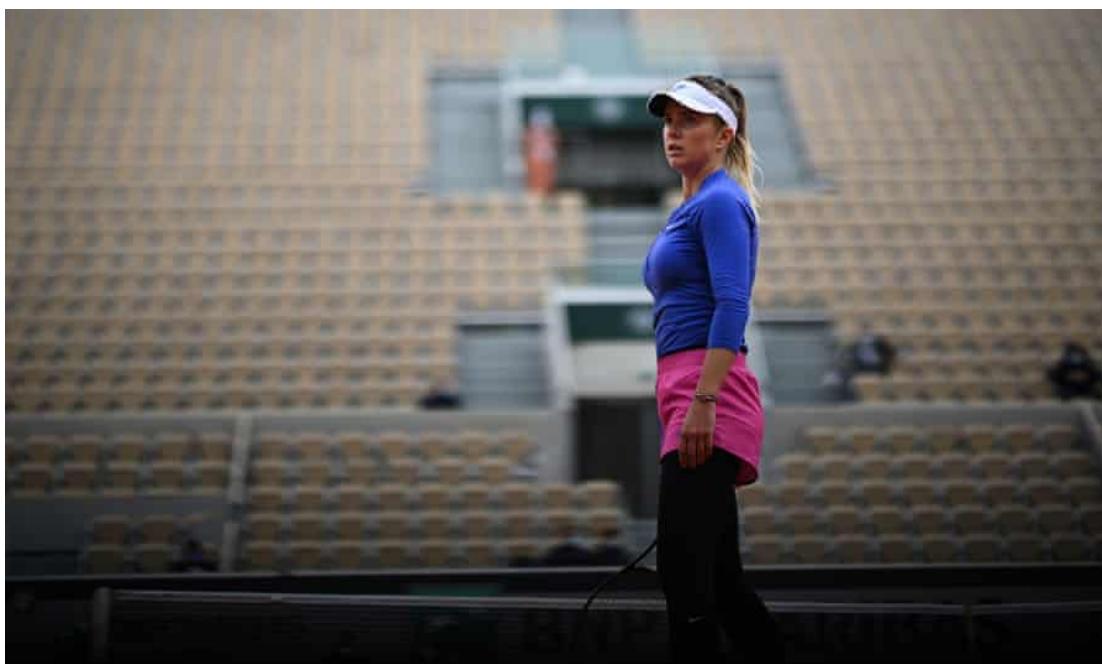
Brentford had taken the scalps of four Premier League clubs. The fifth was beyond them.

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Tennis

Women's tennis stars cautious as 2021 season starts inside fragile bubble

The WTA's top players will converge on Abu Dhabi to begin a season that is vulnerable to Covid-19 and financial worries



World No 5 Elina Svitolina has hired a coach to specifically support her mentally this season. Photograph: Anne-Christine Poujoulat/AFP/Getty Images

World No 5 Elina Svitolina has hired a coach to specifically support her mentally this season. Photograph: Anne-Christine Poujoulat/AFP/Getty Images

[Tumaini Carayol](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.33 EST

In regular times, the first days of the tennis season are moments of unfiltered satisfaction as players embrace their colleagues again and arrive refreshed for the year ahead. But for Ons Jabeur in Abu Dhabi this week, her joy is accompanied with a hint of resignation.

“I’m hoping that this bubble life will end very soon,” she said. “Even though I’m not sure when the Covid’s going to be over. But, I mean, we want our freedom. We are professionals and I think we can have the responsibility to be in the tournament and also be responsible at the same time. We don’t need those restrictions. But what can you do? You have to accept them after all.”

[Government says Australian Open quarantine hotels safe amid Melbourne Westin legal dispute](#)

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As the 2021 tennis season marks its arrival this week, acceptance for professional tennis players means travelling to the Abu Dhabi WTA 500 event or the opening ATP 250 events in the Turkish city of Antalya and Delray Beach in Florida respectively. After Australian Open qualifying concludes next week, more than 300 players and some team members will fly to Australia on up to 18 chartered flights. They will desperately hope that their flight around the world is not ruined by a positive coronavirus test when they arrive.

The reality is that last year’s difficult season was likely only a prelude to the many months of players travelling between hotel bubbles around the world. The arrangement produced divergent results in 2020 as some adapted and others struggled. The world No 5, Elina Svitolina, failed to reach her top level as she watched the strong pre-pandemic form of her boyfriend, Gaël Monfils , crumble. This year she has hired a coach to specifically help her mental health along the way.

“During the difficult time right now, I think mentally it’s very important to stay strong, to stay fresh,” Svitolina said. “You have a different kind of pressure and also playing without people, without fans, it’s a different feeling. So after playing a few tournaments at the end of the last season, I was thinking to take the mental coach and I think this is the right decision for me right now.”



Karolina Pliskova, has said: 'There is no room for complaining' while she is able to travel and compete. Photograph: Christian Hartmann/Reuters

Abu Dhabi stands as a reflection of the tour's pandemic difficulties. Its total prize money is, like most ATP and WTA events, significantly lower than similar tournaments last year. However, the entire pot is provided by the WTA rather than sponsors, a reflection of the difficulty of erecting a completely new tournament with just four weeks' notice in the middle of a pandemic. It also underlines the struggles of even the most successful women's sport during these times.

With the Australian Open looming on the horizon, it remains to be seen whether all will adhere to the strict rules. Few sports have come across as badly as tennis during the pandemic, with numerous players having failed to grasp its significance, especially within the men's game.

[Walking with giants, talking with stars: this sporting life is grand | Kevin Mitchell](#)

[Read more](#)

Most recently, Sam Querrey was handed a lenient suspended \$20,000 fine by the ATP [after fleeing Russia by private jet](#) with his wife and seven-month old child following their positive coronavirus tests. In [an interview](#) with

Sports Illustrated on Monday, Querrey revealed the European city that offered lax enough airport controls for him to cross the border while infected: London.

Still, for most players this is just another opportunity to play tennis, even in conditions that are not ideal. The former No 1 Karolina Pliskova identified her simple goal for 2021 as not complaining about the rules, conditions and all that could upset her along the way.

“For me it’s still better than to be home. My family is healthy, I can travel and I can still do what I love. I think there is no room for complaining.” Then she laughed to herself: “No matter how my results go.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/05/tennis-players-get-ready-to-renew-bubble-life-as-new-season-arrives>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Australia sport](#)

Westin hotel scrapped as Australian Open quarantine venue after legal threat

- Organisers forced to find alternative hotel for international players
- Lawyer representing owners says plan was “the epitome of hubris”



Australian Open players and their entourages are due to serve their 14-day quarantine period in Melbourne from 17-31 January. Photograph: Andy Wong/AP

Australian Open players and their entourages are due to serve their 14-day quarantine period in Melbourne from 17-31 January. Photograph: Andy Wong/AP

Agencies

Mon 4 Jan 2021 16.37 EST

Australian Open organisers have been forced to tear up a quarantine accommodation plan for international players a month before the grand slam

following a threat of legal action from apartment owners at a luxury hotel in Melbourne.

Tennis Australia and government authorities had arranged for players to serve a 14-day mandatory quarantine at the Westin Melbourne ahead of the tournament, which runs 8-21 February.

[Roger Federer had the perfect excuse to walk away in 2020 – but he wants to go on | Tumaini Carayol](#)

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On Tuesday, the plan was scrapped after apartment owners at the Westin complained they had not been properly consulted and would seek an injunction against it.

“Following consultation between the owners of the Westin Melbourne, the hotel’s existing residents and Covid-19 Quarantine Victoria the decision has been made to accommodate players and their support teams arriving in Melbourne for the upcoming ATP at an alternate hotel location,” the Westin said in a statement.

Graeme Efron, a lawyer representing the owners, told Reuters the quarantine plan was “never going to get through”.

“It was the epitome of hubris that they thought people would go along with it without being consulted,” he said.

International players at the Australian Open are expected to arrive in Melbourne from mid-January.

Victoria state police minister Lisa Neville told reporters on Tuesday an alternative quarantine hotel had been secured for the players, which would be “stood up today or tomorrow”.

Many of the world’s top players are planning to compete at tournaments at Melbourne Park in the week before the grand slam.

World No 1 Novak Djokovic and second-ranked Rafael Nadal are scheduled to play at the team-based ATP Cup, meaning they would need to arrive in

Melbourne at least two weeks before the 1-5 February tournament to complete quarantine in time.

Melbourne, capital of Victoria state, was the epicentre of Australia's largest second wave outbreak of Covid-19, which started at two quarantine hotels for international arrivals.

More than 18,000 infections were recorded in Victoria during the outbreak and nearly 800 deaths.

Victoria recorded four new cases of Covid in Melbourne on Tuesday, including one in hotel quarantine.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

England cricket team

Sri Lanka confident Test series with England will not be derailed by Covid

- Coach Mickey Arthur says officials have ‘done a hell of a job’
- ‘More cases in the England camp could be the only issue’



England captain Joe Root (right) arriving at Rajapaksa airport in Sri Lanka on Sunday. Photograph: Ishara S Kodikara/AFP/Getty Images

Sri Lanka have full confidence in their biosecure arrangements for the upcoming series against England, with the chief question now being whether Covid-19 was able to spread among the tourists during the journey from London last weekend.

Moeen Ali is England’s one confirmed case [after testing positive on arrival](#) on Sunday, and on Tuesday the all-rounder, who is asymptomatic, was transported from the team hotel in Hambantota to one in Galle to complete his 10 days of isolation.

Nick Peirce, the ECB's chief medical officer, travelled in a separate vehicle to ensure Moeen is comfortable in his new surroundings, having himself been vaccinated before departure due to his other job as a frontline NHS doctor.

England were on Tuesday night awaiting results from a fresh round of testing to determine whether a spread has occurred or whether the players can leave their rooms to begin training, albeit with Chris Woakes isolating for a seven-day period after sharing a taxi from the West Midlands to Heathrow with Moeen last Saturday.

Joe Root's side are due to undergo another round of testing on Thursday, after which they will play a two-day intrasquad match before travelling to Galle ahead of the series opener on 14 January. So far the reports back speak of an impressively stringent environment being in place.

Sri Lanka has had 45,242 reported cases since the start of the pandemic and 215 deaths, suggesting an effective response from a country with a population of 21 million. Their cricket board successfully staged the inaugural Lanka Premier League in November and December, with a handful of positive cases contained within the teams.

"The Ministry of Health has done a hell of a job in Sri Lanka, so I don't think the upcoming series will be derailed," said Mickey Arthur, the Sri Lanka head coach. "The country has been ultra-cautious, with a good number of curfews and lockdowns."

"Cricket-wise, the LPL was very good for getting the protocols right, and unless there is a sudden increase in infections nationally, this [tour] will go ahead. More cases in the England camp could be the only issue, I suppose."

Arthur was speaking after his injury-afflicted side endured a [10-wicket defeat against South Africa in Johannesburg](#) to complete a 2-0 series defeat, despite a battling 10th Test century from their captain Dimuth Karunaratne.

The Spin: sign up and get our weekly cricket email.

A three-day conclusion to the match saw the tourists ask South Africa whether they could prepare some turning tracks in the nets at the Wanderers to aid their preparations for the England series before their departure via charter flight on Friday.

However, the hosts were unable to assist given that the biosecure bubble at the ground immediately ceased after the match, meaning Sri Lanka's players have to wait until they have cleared testing at home over the weekend before resuming training.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Talking HorsesHorse racing

Talking Horses: lockdown is costly but the feeling in racing is one of relief

Owners ban and betting shop closures are a blow, but there is comfort that the sport has at least been allowed to continue



The parade ring at Hereford racecourse, from which owners will be banned during lockdown. Photograph: Getty Images

The parade ring at Hereford racecourse, from which owners will be banned during lockdown. Photograph: Getty Images



[Greg Wood](#)

[@Greg_Wood_](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Racehorse owners will be barred from all British tracks for the duration of the latest national lockdown while the closure of all betting shops for the first time since June 2020 will mean “a direct hit in the low millions per month” to racing’s betting levy income, according to Alan Delmonte, the Horserace Betting Levy Board’s chief executive.

While the next few weeks will be costly for racing, however, the overwhelming mood among the sport’s senior figures on Tuesday was relief that the disaster of a fresh suspension of all racing has been averted.

[Talking Horses: new rules mean even owners unlikely to attend Festival |](#)

[Greg Wood](#)

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Racing’s levy income from off-course betting, both online and in high-street shops, usually averages around £8m per month, while shops also pay significant sums in media rights payments direct to racecourses.

“It’s a direct hit to levy revenue in the low millions per month,” Delmonte said, “but at the moment we’ve got the reserves to withstand that and

maintain what we're doing [to support prize money]. But the longer the restrictions are in place, the more that flexibility is removed.

"The Levy Board has paid quite a bit of money towards helping to make racecourses secure locations to give the public confidence that the sport can continue with low to negligible risk, and the industry has then behaved extremely well in following all of the protocols."

The efforts made by all participants and attenders to adhere to the Covid-19 protocols were also acknowledged on Tuesday by the British Horseracing Authority. However, a tightening of the rules to ensure they are "reflective of the wider national situation" will mean an earlier ban on owners attending meetings in tier 4 areas will be extended to all racecourses.

"Our protocols must be particularly stringent at this time," a spokesperson for the BHA said. "Attendance must be limited to the most essential personnel only. We are aware that this will be disappointing news for a number of owners. We will work with the necessary bodies to ensure that, as soon as possible following the end of the national lockdown, we will be able to welcome some owners to attend meetings once again, under appropriate controls.

"In the meantime, our priority must be to focus on the continuation of racing behind closed doors, to ensure the sport can continue to support the many livelihoods which are dependent on it."

The BHA is also seeking further clarification from the government on whether runners and riders from abroad will be allowed to compete while the current lockdown is in place.

There were just 150 runners from Ireland on British tracks in January and February last year, but the BHA will be mindful that the lockdown could extend into March, when several hundred Irish-trained horses would normally arrive to compete at the Cheltenham Festival.

Quick Guide

Greg Wood's tips for Wednesday

Show

Wolverhampton

12.45 Jumira Bridge
1.15 Batraan
1.50 Whistling Sands
2.20 Top Boy
2.55 Crimewave
3.25 Born To Sire
3.55 Peerless Percy

Kempton Park

3.40 Jeanette May
4.10 Fuwairt
4.40 Spark Fury (nb)
5.10 Iesha
5.45 Great Esteem
6.15 Amtiyaz (nap)
6.45 Aberama Gold
7.15 Global Warning

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

“We are also working closely with DCMS [the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport], Public Health England and other appropriate bodies to determine whether there are any further impacts on the sport’s operation, for example in terms of the participation of international runners and riders,” the spokesperson said. “We will provide further updates as and when we have clarity on these issues.”

Horses trained in Ireland are unable to compete in Britain in any case after the Irish government banned all non-essential travel to the UK until 6 January. The ban is expected to be extended on Wednesday, which would almost certainly rule out two entries from Gordon Elliott’s yard – Duffle Coat and Quilixios – in the Grade One Coral Finale Junior Hurdle at Chepstow on Saturday.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

**David Squires on ...
Soccer**

David Squires on ... football's festive faux pas

Our cartoonist looks back at ill-judged decisions made by footballers, clubs, politicians and more over the Christmas period

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Tue 5 Jan 2021 08.06 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.49 EST

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[Manchester United](#)

Solskjær brushes off penalty complaints from Manchester United rivals

- Manager hits back at criticism from Jürgen Klopp
- Solskjær says United have ‘no excuses’ in derby semi-final



Paul Pogba wins Manchester United’s latest Premier League penalty against Aston Villa on New Year’s Day. Bruno Fernandes scored it to give United a 2-1 win. Photograph: Getty Images

Ole Gunnar Solskjær has dismissed complaints from Jürgen Klopp and José Mourinho regarding the number of penalties [Manchester United](#) win, saying it is up to the Liverpool and Tottenham managers if they want to “spend time worrying” about it.

Solskjær suggested Klopp may have been trying to influence referees when he said after [Liverpool lost at Southampton](#) on Monday that United had won more penalties in two years than his team have had during his more than five

years at Anfield. Klopp felt Sadio Mané had been denied a clear spot-kick. Mourinho has previously questioned United's penalty count.

"I don't count how many penalties they [Liverpool and Spurs] have, so if they want to spend time on worrying about when we get fouled in the box, I don't spend time on that," Solskjær said.

United have won six penalties to Liverpool's five and Tottenham's three in the Premier League this season. Since Solskjær took over in December 2018 United have been awarded 42 penalties to Liverpool's 19 in all competitions.

Solskjær cited Chelsea's manager, Frank Lampard, who before the FA Cup semi-final last season claimed VAR was helping [United to win spot-kicks](#).

"I felt it worked in the semi because Frank spoke about it and we had a nailed-on penalty that we should have had that we didn't get, so maybe it's a way of influencing referees," he said. "I don't know, but I don't worry about that. Anthony [Martial] came on and he should have had a penalty." That incident actually occurred outside the area at Wembley last July.

United host [Manchester City](#) in Wednesday's single-leg Carabao Cup semi-final and Solskjær is clear there are no excuses for them not to perform given a run that has taken them level with Liverpool at the top of the Premier League. "We are confident," the manager said. "We're going into the game in good form so there's no excuses."

United were [eliminated by Pep Guardiola's team](#) at the same stage a year ago. Having also been knocked out in last season's FA Cup and Europa League semi-finals, Solskjær was asked the importance of reaching a final at the fourth attempt. He said: "We've developed a lot in the 12 months since the last semi-final in the Carabao Cup. But it's not just learning to win semis, we've also earned the right to feel we can go all the way with our performances. You play football to win trophies, to get your hands on a trophy, even though when you win that trophy you just move on to the next one. But it gives you hunger to get more."

Solskjær described how after winning his first trophy as a United player he found "it becomes a drug". He believes United will benefit from extra

recovery time. “We’ve had four days now after Villa so hopefully we’ve got more fresh legs,” he said.

The Fiver: sign up and get our daily football email.

City are aiming to win the trophy for a fourth year in a row and Guardiola said the competition “means a lot”. He said: “If it were not important then we would drop it before. It is the semi-final, we cannot expect more difficult than with the rival we are going to face, but we have the desire to play well and get to another final.”

He pointed to a change in the balance of power with United. “For many decades United was above Manchester City. For us, we are incredibly proud and it is an honour for the last decade to be there with them and sometimes win, most of the times, and sometimes lose.”

City’s manager added he is confident Kevin De Bruyne will extend his contract. “I’m pretty sure he will stay but at the same time we have to respect the process. He knows how we appreciate him not just as a football player but as a person and how important he is at the club. I’m not worried but at the end of course it is his decision.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jan/05/solskjaer-manchester-united-semi-final-manchester-city-carabao-cup>.

2021.01.06 - From the uk

- 'The vast majority may disappear' Music festivals call for new government scheme as sector faces ruin
- 'Black hair is constantly scrutinised' Unilever to help black groups tackle hair discrimination
- 'Only a sticking plaster' Hospitality sector unimpressed with Sunak's Covid lockdown grant
- Business Rishi Sunak unveils £4.6bn relief package for UK retail and hospitality sectors
- HG Wells Fans spot numerous errors on Royal Mint's new £2 coin
- Media YouTube reverses TalkRadio ban for allegedly breaching content policy
- Marks & Spencer Retailer looks to snap up Jaeger
- Domestic violence Urgent call for new law to tackle non-fatal strangulation in England and Wales
- Nurseries Unison calls for closures in England amid third Covid lockdown
- Veganuary Record 500,000 people pledge to eat only vegan food in January
- Energy industry Cold snap forces UK electricity market prices to new high

Music festivals

Music festivals call for new government scheme as sector faces ruin

MPs told state-backed insurance could allow festivals to plan summer events with confidence



Festival crowds like these are under threat without government support, the sector says. Photograph: Cesare Ferrari/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Festival crowds like these are under threat without government support, the sector says. Photograph: Cesare Ferrari/Getty Images/iStockphoto

[Laura Snakes](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.18 EST

The vast majority of British music festivals will disappear if faced with a second consecutive barren year, according to evidence given at a parliamentary inquiry into their post-pandemic survival.

Following a live music action plan [published on Tuesday](#) by industry body UK Music, the cross-party Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) [committee inquiry](#) heard a plea from the sector for the government

to offer its own insurance scheme to protect festivals from bankruptcy, as the new pandemic lockdown harms consumer confidence ahead of the summer season.

Industry witnesses also asked the government to confirm an indicative date when it anticipated mass gatherings would be possible, to help assess viability for 2021 festivals. “The public target from ministers is 2m vaccines a week,” said Jamie Njoku-Goodwin, chief executive at UK Music. “If you have that information you should be able to calculate some kind of roadmap.”

A smaller festival season was “inevitable” in 2021, said Anna Wade, director of communications and strategy for Hampshire’s Boomtown, but possible with government support along with vaccination and continued mass testing.

A government-backed insurance scheme was the “most critical factor” regarding the planning of festivals, said Paul Reed, chief executive at the Association of Independent [Festivals](#). Event organisers are operating on the understanding that commercial insurance for Covid 19-related cancellations is unlikely to exist until 2022, he said.



Good times ... Boomtown in 2017. Photograph: Sam Neill

Reed outlined to MPs a potential scenario this year whereby festivals cancel “early and en masse” owing to a lack of insurance, yet public health “drastically improves” over the spring, generating “a certain level of confidence” in festivals taking place – resulting in demand without supply.

A government-backed insurance scheme would benefit supply chains, local economies, and British taxpayers, MPs were told. Festivals bring £1.76bn in value to the British economy each year, supporting 85,000 jobs.

“The UK has the biggest festival market globally,” said Sacha Lord, co-creator of Parklife and the Warehouse Project, and night-time economy adviser for Greater Manchester. “We’re proud of that. Music’s one of our biggest exports. If we don’t take place in 2021, I think the vast majority will disappear.”

In 2019, music tourism generated £4.7bn of spending nationwide, a future total that might be threatened if the UK government does not introduce insurance schemes equivalent to those implemented in Germany and Austria, said Njoku-Goodwin. “We really don’t want to be putting our festival circuit at a competitive disadvantage.”

An extended furlough scheme would also aid the freelance workers essential to the festival industry, the inquiry was told. Out-of-work contractors forced to redeploy their skills in different industries could have a “catastrophic” effect on the festival sector, said Wade.

Lord called for an extension of business rates relief and an industry-specific extension to the furlough scheme, as well as a three-year extension of the reduced 5% VAT rate on admission charges.



Lost skills ... freelance engineers and technicians need financial support.
Photograph: MBI/Alamy Stock Photo

Already narrow financial margins mean it is not viable for most festivals to run at reduced capacity in order to facilitate social distancing, the meeting heard. Wade called for the government to support technological advancement in mass testing to enable pre-entry checks on festivalgoers, and said the cost of such testing would need to be split between the festival, the consumer and government.

It was down to festivals to plan for potential future pandemics, said Njoku-Goodwin. “Locking down the whole sector again is not really tenable. We want to be clear that we have capacities and systems in place so we can operate safely but also viably through it.”

The panel also addressed the impact of Brexit and government inability to procure an agreement for culture workers moving between the UK and the EU. Heightened visa fees would be unlikely to affect headline acts, said Lord. “But that headliner has not become a star overnight,” he continued, describing the new costs for touring artists as “a big, big red tape that might stagnate new talent coming through”.

Njoku-Goodwin questioned why so much of the debate around the UK's Brexit deal had concerned fishing, a £1.4bn industry, and not the £5.8bn music industry. UK Music had urged the government to make the matter of touring a priority in supplementary agreements with the EU, he said, describing it as a "critical" issue for the British music industry and the future of the festival sector, "which depends so much not just on European talent but also on UK musicians being able to go to Europe and bring back that experience and fanbase".

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The inquiry concluded that the low rate of application from festivals to the government's £1.57bn [culture recovery fund](#) was a result of the £50,000 threshold excluding smaller events that did not require such sums, and pledged to raise the issue of lowering it. Supporting smaller UK festivals was key to ensuring a competitive sector, consumer affordability and cultural diversity, the committee said.

"Once we get beyond this, there is going to be an incredible appetite for these festivals," said Reed.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/jan/05/music-festivals-call-for-new-government-insurance-scheme-as-sector-faces-ruin>

Race

Unilever to help black groups tackle hair discrimination

Dove, owned by Unilever, also to offer workshop to schools on discrimination around black hairstyles



According to Unilever's Crown Fund UK initiative, 63% of black adults have experienced hair discrimination. Photograph: Getty

According to Unilever's Crown Fund UK initiative, 63% of black adults have experienced hair discrimination. Photograph: Getty

Priya Elan

Tue 5 Jan 2021 11.57 EST

Unilever, one of the UK's biggest employers, has announced it will give £170,000 to black grassroots organisations to help tackle racism.

The company, which owns Dove and Magnum, is launching the Crown Fund UK, an initiative that Unilever hopes will stop discrimination around black hairstyles and texture. Organisations working to eliminate barriers of progress for black women and girls will receive up to £20,000 each in 2021.

Dove has also developed a workshop through the Dove self-esteem project, which supports teachers in discussions about hair discrimination in schools.

[Unilever pledges to protect staff with afros and dreadlocks](#)

[Read more](#)

Last month Unilever announced it would sign up to the [Halo Code](#), which pledges to stop discrimination against workers with hairstyles like dreadlocks and afros.

The move follows the lead of the [similarly named Crown Act in the US](#), a piece of legislation, passed in California last year and later in New Jersey, New York and Virginia, which prohibits discrimination based on hairstyles.

According to the Crown Fund UK, 63% of black adults have experienced hair discrimination. “Who would have thought that to just simply wear your hair as it is, a very normal everyday practice, is a defiant act?” said Prof Carol Tulloch of the University of the Arts London.

“Black hair is constantly scrutinised and politicised where our non-black counterparts do not face such opposition [and] contention,” said Wofai JE, executive director of the dance theatre company Initiative.dkf, who created Scalped, an immersive play about afro hair.

“There’s this air of fascination and curiosity, as if the very act of rocking non-treated hair is a spectacle: it’s simply what naturally comes out of our scalps

“The British attitude of viewing it as this separate oddity is baffling. People ask, or just straight up touch it, whether it’s natural or not, to be honest – so many of my friends have stories regardless of the style. The overriding feeling is always an apparently acceptable invasion of personal space. Are we animals or something less than human to be stroked or petted?”

Tulloch said natural hair movements are “confidence building” and offer the “reassurance to choose to wear one’s hair naturally [and that] you are not alone. That it is your right to do this. Of course, it is also about having the right to express one’s visibility.”

Tulloch said she wore her hair naturally in the early 90s. “I grew dreadlocks. I used to notice from time to time white members of the public step back, but not sure if it was the locks or just that I was black.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/unilever-to-help-black-groups-tackle-hair-discrimination>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Hospitality industry](#)

Hospitality sector unimpressed with Sunak's lockdown grant

‘Sticking plaster will not even cover basic costs’, as half a million businesses in England forced to close

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UK bars and pubs have branded the latest support for lockdown as a ‘sticking plaster’. Photograph: Christopher Furlong/Getty Images

Pubs, restaurants and breweries in [England](#) have given a lukewarm reception to Rishi Sunak’s offer of grants of up to £9,000 to help them survive until the spring, warning the financial “sticking plaster” will not stave off closures in the long term.

On the morning after the prime minister [imposed a seven-week lockdown](#) that will force hundreds of thousands of businesses across England to close,

the chancellor announced a £4.6bn package of support for the retail, hospitality and leisure industries.

But with the hospitality sector on its knees, having been singled out for tough restrictions, industry figures called for a more comprehensive long-term plan, while craft breweries decried a lack of support for their previously thriving industry.

“While this announcement is most welcome, make no mistake that this is only a sticking plaster for immediate ills,” said Kate Nicholls, chief executive of the trade body UK Hospitality.

“It is not enough to even cover the costs of many businesses and certainly will not underpin longer-term business viability for our sector.”

More than half a million businesses across England will have to close due to the third lockdown, according to the real estate adviser Altus Group.

Most are non-essential retailers that were previously able to trade but the number also includes 27,022 restaurants and 37,515 pubs, many of which have already been shut for extended periods, including the lucrative Christmas weeks.

Admiral Taverns boss Chris Jowsey, whose company leases premises to 1,000 publicans, said most would still be unable to cover their costs, with smaller venues particularly vulnerable.

“It won’t be sufficient to stave off a lot of difficulties and closures,” he said.

The grants, worth £277m across England’s pubs sector, are based on the “rateable value” of a premises, effectively the rent the site could command on the open market.

Those with a rateable value above £51,000 – typically larger pubs such as big chain venues – can get the maximum £9,000 grant. Smaller venues with a rateable value of less than £15,000 – often community pubs that largely serve alcohol – are only eligible for £4,000.

Jowsey said this amounted to about £1,000 a month if restrictions on opening stay in place until the end of March.

Together with existing support worth £1,334 a month for smaller pubs, the combined package falls well short of the £3,000 he said smaller pubs needed just to keep their heads above water.

“That’s got to cover everything, including living expenses and feeding their family,” said Jowsey. “It doesn’t leave anything for rent.”

About two thirds of Admiral’s 1,000 pubs fall into the smaller venues category in terms of rateable value – less than £15,000 - and the company is charging them a maximum of £500 per month, about a third of what they would usually pay.

Pub and beer trade bodies said extra support from the government provided a lifeline but would only bring short-term respite, with far more comprehensive measures needed in the long-term.

British Beer and Pubs Association chief executive Emma McClarkin said: “Without this support, pubs across England were at real risk of being lost for good at the beginning of this year.

“We had been anticipating permanent closures in the very short term without it.”

She said their longer-term survival would required an extension of business rates relief and the cut to VAT on hospitality to 5%, which is due to expire at the end of March. She also called for a cut in beer duty.

The real ale group Camra called for a long-term sector-specific support package to help pubs survive.

“While one-off grant support is welcome, it is nowhere near enough to cover the haemorrhaging costs for pubs and breweries that don’t see any end in sight,” its chair, Nik Antona, said.

Camra also backed the anger expressed by small breweries’ trade body Siba that pubs will not be allowed to serve takeaway beers during the lockdown.

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Siba's chief executive, James Calder, said craft breweries, which have not been eligible for much of the support available to the hospitality sector, had already lost 80% of their route to market due to the closure of pubs.

“Sales through takeaway, click-and-collect and drive-through have enabled many to just about survive up to now,” he said.

“This reversal in policy directly discriminates against small businesses while allowing supermarkets to continue to sell beer from global breweries.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/05/hospitality-sector-unimpressed-with-sunaks-lockdown-grant>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Retail industry

Rishi Sunak unveils £4.6bn relief package for UK retail and hospitality sectors

Retail, hospitality and leisure sectors to be given one-off grants worth up to £9,000

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Larry Elliott Economics editor

Tue 5 Jan 2021 06.17 EST First published on Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.18 EST

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1:16

Rishi Sunak announces £4.6bn relief package for UK businesses – video

Firms in those sectors of the economy hardest hit by stringent new lockdown measures will receive grants of up to £9,000 in a £4.6bn Treasury package designed to keep them afloat to the spring.

The chancellor, [Rishi Sunak](#), said he expected 600,000 business properties in retail, leisure and hospitality to receive financial support from the government through a one-off grant.

Acknowledging that the period ahead would be “difficult”, the chancellor said the government was bolstering its efforts to protect jobs and to prevent businesses from collapsing.

In addition to grants worth £4bn, a further £594m will be made available to local councils to assist businesses impacted by the lockdown but not eligible for the new payments. As part of the package, the Scottish government will

receive £375m, the Welsh government £227m and the Northern Ireland executive £127m.

The director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, Adam Marshall, said: “While this immediate cash flow support for business is welcome, it is not going to be enough to save many firms. We need to see a clear support package for the whole of 2021, not just another incremental intervention.

“The government must move away from this drip-feed approach and set out a long-term plan that allows all businesses of all shapes and sizes to plan, and ultimately survive.”

Sunak, who has already spent close to £300bn tackling the economic fallout from the Covid-19 crisis, said: “The new strain of the virus presents us all with a huge challenge – and, while the vaccine is being rolled out, we have needed to tighten restrictions further.

“Throughout the pandemic we’ve taken swift action to protect lives and livelihoods and today we’re announcing a further cash injection to support businesses and jobs until the spring.

“This will help businesses to get through the months ahead – and crucially it will help sustain jobs, so workers can be ready to return when they are able to reopen.”

The Treasury said there would be a £4,000 grant for businesses with a rateable value of £15,000 or under, £6,000 for businesses with a rateable value of between £15,000 and £51,000, and £9,000 for businesses with a rateable value of more than £51,000.

Some business groups have been calling on the government to extend a business rates holiday for a further year to help firms with their cashflow or to prolong the temporary cut in VAT, which is due to end this month.

Treasury sources did not rule out further announcements but said the grants were intended to tide the worst-affected businesses over until it was clear whether the new lockdowns had been effective. Sunak dropped strong hints

that the budget on 3 March would provide the opportunity for a more comprehensive package of economic support.

Many analysts are forecasting that after collapsing by almost a quarter in the first half of 2020 the UK economy will again contract in both the final three months of last year and the first three months of 2021 – thus meeting the definition of a double-dip recession.

Sunak expects more employees to be placed on the furlough scheme – which runs until the end of April – as a result of the measures deemed necessary to control the spread of the virus.

The Treasury said the new one-off grants came on top of existing business support, including grants worth up to £3,000 for closed businesses, and up to £2,100 a month for impacted businesses once they reopen.

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Roger Barker, the director of policy at the Institute of Directors, said: “This new grant package is welcome, and will go some way to reassuring the worst affected businesses.

“We are particularly pleased the Treasury has taken on board our recommendation to increase the discretionary local authority grant fund. This policy has helped to reach those who haven’t been able to access other support. The government should be prepared to top up the fund if necessary.

“The chancellor must remain wary of a spring cliff-edge in business support as the furlough scheme and other support measures unwind.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2021/jan/05/rishi-sunak-unveils-46bn-relief-package-for-uk-retail-and-hospitality-sectors>

HG Wells

HG Wells fans spot numerous errors on Royal Mint's new £2 coin

Readers say coin commemorating the author of The War of the Worlds gives his alien tripod a fourth leg and The Invisible Man the wrong kind of hat



Disputed legacy ... the coin released by the Royal Mint on 4 January to mark 75 years since the death of HG Wells. Photograph: The Royal Mint/PA
Disputed legacy ... the coin released by the Royal Mint on 4 January to mark 75 years since the death of HG Wells. Photograph: The Royal Mint/PA
[Alison Flood](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 07.45 EST

Observant fans of [HG Wells](#) have questioned how a new coin from the Royal Mint commemorating The War of the Worlds author could be released with multiple errors, including giving his “monstrous tripod” four legs.

The £2 coin is intended to mark 75 years since the death of Wells, and includes imagery inspired by The War of the Worlds and The Invisible Man.

Unfortunately, it strays from Wells's vision of his creations. "As someone who particularly likes one of his very famous stories, can I just note that the big walking machine on the coin has four legs? Four legs. The man famous for creating the Martian TRIpod," [wrote artist Holly Humphries](#). "How many people did this have to go through? Did they know how to count?"

Science fiction novelist and professor of 19th-century literature Adam Roberts, who is author of a biography of Wells and vice president of the HG Wells Society, also criticised the depiction of the Invisible Man, shown in a top hat; in the book he arrives at Iping under a "wide-brimmed hat".

"It's nice to see Wells memorialised, but it would have been nicer for them to get things right," Roberts said. "A tripod with four legs is hard to comprehend (*tri*: the clue is in the name), and Wells's (distinctly ungentlemanly) invisible man, Griffin, never wore a top hat ... I'd say Wells would be annoyed by this carelessness: he took immense pains to get things right in his own work – inviting translators of his book to stay with him to help the process and minimise errors and so on."

Stephen Baxter, vice president of the Wells Society and author of *The Massacre of Mankind*, an official sequel to *The War of the Worlds*, said he thought Wells would have been "very flattered by the coin, but infuriated by that non-tripod! It's not just the extra leg but the stiffness of it. In the book itself, he has a sideswipe at the 'stiff, stilted tripods' depicted in an early 'pamphlet' on the war - in fact he was talking about clumsy illustrations in the newspaper serialisation of the book, its first publication. 'They were no more like the Martians I saw than a Dutch doll is like a human being.' Take that!"

Asked about the errors, a spokesperson for The Royal Mint said, "We have created a new £2 coin to celebrate the life and works of HG Wells. The coin depicts scenes from famous works such as *War of the Worlds* and the *Invisible Man* as imagined by designer Chris Costello." Costello [has said he was inspired](#) by "vintage HG Wells book covers and movie posters".

The Wells slip-up is not the first mistake immortalised in legal tender. In 2013, Ireland's Central Bank misquoted James Joyce on a commemorative coin intended to honour the author. While Joyce wrote in *Ulysses*:

“Ineluctable modality of the visible: at least that if no more, thought through my eyes. Signatures of all things I am here to read ...”, the Central Bank included an extra “that” in the final sentence, with its coin reading: “Signatures of all things that I am here to read.” The bank later claimed the coin was intended to be “an artistic representation of the author and text and not intended as a literal representation”.

Later that year, a new £10 note featured Jane Austen with the quote “I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading!” However, the line is spoken by Caroline Bingley, described by academic John Mullan as “a woman who has no interest in books at all”. “You can imagine being the Bank of England employee given the task of finding the telling Austen quotation. Something about reading, perhaps? A quick text search in Pride and Prejudice turns up just the thing,” wrote Mullan at the time.

And a year ago, a new 50p commemorating Brexit was slammed by critics including Philip Pullman for failing to utilise an Oxford comma. The coin reads “Peace, prosperity and friendship with all nations”, and Pullman said it should be “boycotted by all literate people” for failing to include a comma after “prosperity”.

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[YouTube](#)

YouTube reverses TalkRadio ban for allegedly breaching content policy

Station was banned from the platform for 12 hours but insists it has ‘robust editorial controls’



James Whale on TalkRadio. Photograph: TalkRadio
James Whale on TalkRadio. Photograph: TalkRadio

Alex Hern Technology editor

[@alexhern](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 11.36 EST

YouTube has reversed a short-lived ban of the digital station TalkRadio from its platform, about 12 hours after it removed the organisation’s channel for what it said were breaches of its community guidelines.

The station, part of Rupert Murdoch’s [TalkSport](#) network, said it had not been told by the platform what the most recent breach was. A TalkRadio spokesperson said: “We urgently await a detailed response from

Google/YouTube about the nature of the breach that has led to our channel being removed from its platform.

“TalkRadio is an Ofcom-licensed and regulated broadcaster and has robust editorial controls in place, taking care to balance debate.

“We regularly interrogate government data and we have controls in place, use verifiable sources and give space to a careful selection of voices and opinions.”

On Tuesday evening, the streaming platform broke its silence and reinstated TalkRadio’s account. “TalkRadio’s YouTube channel was briefly suspended, but upon further review, has now been reinstated,” a YouTube spokesperson said. “We quickly remove flagged content that violate our Community Guidelines, including Covid-19 content that explicitly contradict expert consensus from local health authorities or the World Health Organization. We make exceptions for material posted with an educational, documentary, scientific or artistic purpose, as was deemed in this case.”

A TalkRadio insider told the Guardian that the problem was particularly acute for shows that host public debates about the coronavirus. “You can have a debate about an issue and if, in someone’s opinion, it undermines official guidance in any way, then it is classed as medical misinformation,” they said.

YouTube’s content moderation system enforces a “three strikes” rule, under which accounts can be issued “strikes” for posting content that violates content guidelines. A single strike carries with it a number of restrictions, but a channel receiving three strikes in a 90-day period will be removed from the platform entirely. One previous strike had been issued on TalkRadio’s account for a discussion featuring the Conservative MP Tobias Ellwood, the Guardian understands.

The platform has a specific set of policies around medical misinformation related to Covid. At least two of the station’s hosts, Mark Dolan and Julia Hartley-Brewer, regularly speak out against lockdown policies both on and off-air.

Shortly after news of the suspension broke, the Cabinet Office minister, Michael Gove, appeared on Hartley-Brewer's show, and spoke out in defence of TalkRadio's right to criticise the government.

"I don't believe in censorship and we have a free and fair press, and we have commentators and interviewers of distinction who do criticise the government's position," Gove said, "From Lord Sumption to Peter Hitchens and others, and long may it remain so. I think it's absolutely right that people should ask questions."

YouTube's definition of medical misinformation, while similar to that of competitors such as Facebook and Twitter, has drawn criticism in its own right.

Commentators have noted that the rule prevents criticism of organisations that have themselves changed their advice – in some cases significantly – over the course of the pandemic.

In March 2020, for instance, many tech platforms classed as misinformation claims that mask-wearing could help prevent the spread of Covid; now, those same tech platforms class as misinformation the claim that mask-wearing does not help prevent the spread of Covid. In both cases, statements from local and international health authorities lay behind the decision.

An [Ofcom](#) spokesperson said: "This was a decision for YouTube. Like other UK stations, TalkRadio's radio channel comes under our broadcasting code. When we assess programmes under our rules, we take account of a broadcaster's right to freedom of expression, and the right of listeners to receive information and ideas."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/jan/05/youtube-bans-talkradio-for-allegedly-breaching-content-policy>.

Marks & Spencer

Marks & Spencer looks to snap up Jaeger

M&S expected to buy Jaeger's brand and stock, but not its scores of shops, reports say



A Jaeger store in London before owner Edinburgh Woollen Mill Group went into administration. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

A Jaeger store in London before owner Edinburgh Woollen Mill Group went into administration. Photograph: Leon Neal/Getty Images

Zoe Wood

@zoewoodguardian

Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.03 EST

Marks & Spencer is finalising a deal to buy upmarket fashion brand Jaeger as it seeks to bolster its clothing business with new names.

M&S has been linked to [Jaeger since it fell into administration in November](#), as part of entrepreneur [Philip Day](#)'s stricken Edinburgh Woollen Mill Group,

which also owns [Peacocks](#) and Austin Reed. Both M&S and Jaeger were founded in the 1880s.

Last year, M&S chief executive Steve Rowe announced plans to stock other brands to broaden the appeal of its clothing. It tried but failed to buy the [lingerie brand Victoria's Secret](#) in the UK and last year started selling eco-fashion label Nobody's Child .

M&S is expected to buy Jaeger's brand and stock, but not its scores of shops, according to Sky News.

In its heyday, Jaeger dressed Audrey Hepburn and Marilyn Monroe, but in recent years the brand has struggled. [▲](#)

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/05/marks-spencer-looks-to-snap-up-jaeger>

Domestic violence

Urgent call for new law to tackle non-fatal strangulation in England and Wales

Victims' commissioner says current legislation minimises seriousness of 'domestic terror tactic'



Vera Baird, the victims' commissioner for England and Wales, said data showed non-fatal strangulation was dangerous, prevalent and often ignored.
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Vera Baird, the victims' commissioner for England and Wales, said data showed non-fatal strangulation was dangerous, prevalent and often ignored.
Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

[Alexandra Topping](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 09.36 EST

Non-fatal strangulation is a “domestic terror tactic” that urgently requires a change to the law, according to the victims’ commissioner for [England](#) and Wales.

A push to make non-fatal strangulation a criminal offence is being led by the former victims' commissioner Baroness Newlove, who is campaigning for the change via an amendment to the domestic abuse bill as it returns to the Lords on Tuesday.

Dame [Vera Baird QC](#), the current victims' commissioner, said the crime was undercharged, and a new law was needed to give police a tool to tackle the "magnitude of the threat".

"Non-fatal strangulation is the ultimate domestic terrorist tactic," she said. "The data shows us that this is urgent, it's very dangerous, very prevalent and, currently, it is often ignored."

The government has said it has no plans to change the law and that non-fatal strangulation can be charged under existing legislation.

In a statement, the Ministry of Justice said: "Non-fatal strangulation is a serious crime which is already covered by existing laws such as common assault and attempted murder."

But Baird said common assault minimised the seriousness of the crime, while strangulation was often used as a means of control and intimidation, rather than as an attempt at murder.

"It's not about intending to kill, it's about terrorising into submission," she said. "This is a crime which has massive consequences, and is a hugely powerful weapon, but has no place in the current criminal lexicon."

An inquest into the [death of Anne-Marie Nield](#), who died during a sustained assault by her partner, found he had strangled her on previous occasions. Two and a half years after her death the [Coroner expressed concerns](#) there was still no reference to non-fatal strangulation in the police force's domestic abuse policy and a lack of understanding of the issue among officers.

A research project led by Dr Catherine White, the clinical director of St Mary's Sexual Assault Referral Centre in Manchester, says non-fatal strangulation is a "gendered crime, with nearly all the patients female and

the alleged perpetrators male". Strangulation or suffocation was the second most common method of killing in female homicides, accounting for 29% of adult women according to the [2018 Femicide Census](#), compared with 3% of male homicides, [according to ONS figures](#).

Nogah Ofer, a lawyer with the Centre for Women's Justice, which has campaigned for a new offence, said non-fatal strangulation was commonly used in domestic abuse cases.

"Domestic abuse support workers on the ground tell us strangulation is undercharged," she said. "Although it's a really terrifying and serious form of violence, there is often not a physical mark, or just a red mark – so police officers routinely treat it as common assault – the equivalent to a slap," she said.

She added that studies indicate that while experience of strangulation is between 3% and 10% in the adult population, it rises to 50-68% for victims of recurring abuse. Two studies of intimate partner violence and sexual assaults found that [strangulation was involved in 20% and 23%](#) of cases.

[Newlove tweeted](#): "The #DABill comes to the floor of @UKHouseofLords my amendments MUST be added to such bil. More needs to be added for children of this horrific abusive cycle! Until the system fully understands impact violence this bill will not protect those in the hands of the perpetrators."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/05/urgent-call-for-new-law-to-tackle-non-fatal-strangulation-in-england-and-wales>

Coronavirus

Unison calls for nurseries in England to close amid third Covid lockdown

Nurseries should be treated the same as schools and staff should be prioritised for vaccination, union says

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Maya Wolfe-Robinson](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.36 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 19.15 EST



Demand for nurseries and pre-schools has plummeted during the pandemic.
Photograph: Martin Rickett/PA

Britain's biggest union has called for nurseries to close to most children amid pressure on ministers to produce scientific evidence showing they can stay open safely.

Unison said nurseries and pre-schools should close to all but vulnerable children and those of key workers, saying that staff and local communities were at risk and describing social distancing as impossible with small children.

On Monday the prime minister described schools as “vectors for transmission” as he announced a third national lockdown for England, including the closure of all primary and secondary schools.

Unison said nurseries should be treated the same as schools, as in the first lockdown, and that early-years staff should be prioritised for vaccination and mass testing.

Tulip Siddiq, the shadow minister for children and early years, [in a letter](#) to her Conservative counterpart, echoed the union’s concerns, urging Vicky Ford to “set out clearly and in detail the scientific basis of the decision”. Many nursery staff, childminders and nannies would fear for their safety as infection rates rose around the country, she said. She also asked the government to commit to regular testing of early-years staff and additional PPE.

Demand for nurseries and pre-schools has plummeted during the pandemic, as parents keep their children at home through safety fears or financial strain. While the government had continued to provide funding at the level of the number of children who had attended pre-pandemic, allowing many nurseries to stay afloat, this policy stopped this month.

Highlighting the [financial difficulties](#) the sector has faced as a result, Siddiq called for increased support, warning that many nurseries ran “at a significant loss” during the previous lockdown, and that the new restrictions could “wipe out much of the demand for childcare”.

She urged the government to rethink the “misguided decision to change early years funding” saying that to proceed would be a “death knell for many nurseries and childminding businesses”.

Neil Leitch, chief executive of the Early Years Alliance, said many workers were extremely anxious about continuing to work. He said: “It is simply

unacceptable that the government has yet to produce any clear scientific evidence about the risk of the new strain of Covid, not only to children but to providers and their families as well.”

Unison’s head of education, Jon Richards, said: “Social distancing is impossible with young children and the government has yet to publish the scientific evidence to justify nurseries being treated differently to schools. The decision seems to have been taken with little regard to the health and safety of employees. Ministers must treat nurseries the same as schools, as in the first lockdown. Staff must be a priority for vaccinations and mass testing.”

A Department for Education spokesperson said early-years settings remained “low risk environments for children and staff”, adding: “Keeping nurseries and childminders open will support parents and deliver the crucial care and education for our youngest children. We are funding nurseries as usual and all children are able to attend their early years setting in all parts of England. Where nurseries do see a drop in income from either parent-paid fees or income from DfE, they are able to use the furlough scheme.”

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Environment

Record 500,000 people pledge to eat only vegan food in January

Veganuary taken up by rising number of people trying plant-based alternatives to meat



A winter vegetable barbecue. Photograph: Daniel Reiter/Alamy

A record 500,000 people have signed up to the Veganuary challenge to eat only plant-based foods for a month. The milestone is double the number who pledged to go vegan for January in 2019.

A quarter of those taking up the challenge – 125,000 – are in the UK, and this year British supermarkets including [Tesco](#) have run television and radio adverts promoting Veganuary for the first time. Other supermarkets such as [Aldi](#), [Asda](#) and [Iceland](#) have produced dedicated pages including information and recipes in 2021, again for the first time.

[A record 500,000 people have pledged to eat vegan in January 2021](#)

New research from the investment bank UBS on plant-based alternatives to meat, such as veggie burgers and sausages, shows a rising number of people are trying the new products. The proportion of people who have tried the alternatives rose from 48% to 53% between March and November 2020, according to UBS's survey of 3,000 consumers in the UK, US and Germany. It also found that half of those who try plant-based alternatives to meat continue to eat them at least weekly.

[Veganuary](#) is a global campaign that has recently focused on Latin America, where 150,000 people have signed up this year, along with 80,000 in the US and 50,000 in Germany.

People give a number of reasons for choosing to cut the amount of animal foods in their diets, from reducing animal suffering, improving health or to lessen the environmental damage caused by food production. Many people in rich countries already [eat more meat than is healthy](#), and scientists say cutting out meat is the [single best way](#) individuals can tackle the climate and wildlife crises.

"It really feels to me that plant-based eating is no longer controversial," said Toni Vernelli from Veganuary. "Pretty much everyone has accepted we need to be reducing animal products in our diets for environmental reasons."

"The way British supermarkets have embraced Veganuary this year is truly game-changing," she said. "They are not simply using it as a marketing opportunity, but are promoting the many benefits of plant-based eating. As bastions of our food supply, they know that the only sustainable way forward is plant-focused."

Vernelli highlighted a message about animal welfare on Aldi's website: "Eating less meat or avoiding animal products altogether is often a really transparent way to show you want to make a difference." Vernelli also noted that Marks & Spencer had produced a 31-day Veganuary meal plan.

"The latest iteration of our survey shows that plant-based meat continues to gain momentum," said Andrew Stott at UBS. But he said taste was the key issue for many people: "Of those consumers not willing to try plant-based meat at this time, 59% stated, 'I don't think it will taste good'." Other

reasons included not liking the “highly processed nature” of the products (37%) and the expense (29%).

However, half of the people in the UBS survey said they believed the plant-based meat alternatives were healthier and more environmentally friendly than meat.

Dozens of companies around the world are also working on growing real meat cells in vats without the need to slaughter any animals. The first sale of cultured meat [took place recently in Singapore](#), where Eat Just’s “chicken bites” were served to restaurant diners. But it is expected to be at least several years before cultured meat reaches a wide market.

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Energy industry

Cold snap forces UK electricity market prices to new high

National Grid issues urgent call for suppliers to generate extra 524MW of electricity capacity

Jillian Ambrose

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.35 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 16.16 EST



Combination of high demand and low wind speeds has emerged just as many traditional power plants remain on outage. Photograph: David Moir/Reuters

Plunging temperatures and a drop in wind turbine power generation have pushed UK electricity market prices to a new high and prompted the [National Grid](#) to put out an urgent call for suppliers to provide extra capacity.

The [National Grid](#) control room warned that its spare electricity supplies would be “tight” this week, and on Tuesday issued an official call for generators to bring forward an extra 524 megawatts of electricity capacity within 24 hours.

Electricity market prices have surged tenfold in a day to reach a new record high of £1,000 per megawatt hour, as colder than normal temperatures and lower electricity generation left a dent in Great Britain’s power supplies.

The cold snap is forecast to drive energy demand to its highest level for this winter, while wind turbines come to a virtual standstill only weeks after setting [a new generation record](#). The combination of high demand and low wind speeds has emerged as supplies from many traditional power plants remain out of action, causing electricity prices on the wholesale market to soar.

The electricity system operator, a branch of National Grid, said that although a warning notice can “sound quite serious”, it is “a routine way” to encourage generators to produce more electricity, and does not mean electricity supply is “at risk”.

The National Grid control centre has issued a flurry of [informal and official warnings](#) this winter, which it expected to be one of the tightest winters for electricity supplies in [the last four years](#). There were two official warnings on consecutive days in November, and another in December.

Hartree Solutions, a merchant commodities trading business, said that the UK is “at much greater risk of blackouts this winter [than the National Grid has forecast](#)”, which is reflected in market prices.

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The wholesale price of electricity to meet Wednesday’s peak demand, which will be in the hour from 4pm, climbed to £1,000 per megawatt on one of the UK’s most important electricity auction platforms, the highest price since the auction began in 2014 and 10 times the price for the same hour on Tuesday.

Hartree said the shrinking electricity supply margins mean the National Grid control room “will need to be issuing alerts, warnings and utilising many – if not all – of their balancing tools on Wednesday to keep the lights on”.

The official warning from the electricity system operator said: “In the short-term, we would like a greater safety cushion (margin) between power demand and available supply. It does not signal that blackouts are imminent or that there is not enough generation to meet current demand.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.06 - Around the world

- [India Supreme court gives go-ahead for controversial new parliament building](#)
- [US Russians are 'likely' perpetrators of government hack, official report says](#)
- [Ghislaine Maxwell FBI tracked down Epstein associate using cellphone data](#)
- [Qatar Arab states agree deal to end three-year boycott](#)
- [US elections Trump makes false claim Pence has power to alter election result](#)
- [US Mourners at Andre Hill's funeral demand justice after police shooting](#)
- [Mali People at wedding party killed in airstrike, local sources say](#)
- [Tanya Roberts Bond girl and Charlie's Angel dies day after premature announcement](#)
- [Business China's stock market closes at highest level since 2008 financial crisis](#)
- [France High-profile political scientist accused of sexually abusing stepson](#)

[India](#)

India's supreme court gives go-ahead for controversial new parliament building

Critics say Narendra Modi's \$3bn redevelopment of Lutyen's central vista is 'expensive vanity project'



Narendra Modi, right, performing a ritual at the foundation stone laying ceremony in December for the new parliament building. Photograph: Indian press information/Getty

Narendra Modi, right, performing a ritual at the foundation stone laying ceremony in December for the new parliament building. Photograph: Indian press information/Getty

Hannah Ellis-Petersen South Asia correspondent

Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.03 EST

India's supreme court has given approval for a new parliament building that critics have called an "expensive vanity project" for the prime minister, [Narendra Modi](#).

Under the \$3bn development project, Delhi's iconic central vista at the heart of the capital, home to its parliament and the famous [India](#) Gate monument, will be transformed by a new triangular parliament building, government and legislature offices and a new home for the prime minister.

Since the project was announced, it has [faced criticism](#) from civil society groups, environmentalists and politicians about its lack of transparency and public consultation and high cost in a time of economic crisis.



Plans of the new parliament complex. Photograph: HCP Designs

The government plans to have the new parliament building ready by India's 75th Independence Day in August 2022, but was forced to halt construction in December after a legal challenge in India's highest court over allegations it had violated environmental and land use laws. The vista is the only area in India designated Grade I heritage status.

On Tuesday the supreme court voted in favour of the project by 2:1. The dissenting judge had expressed concern about the lack of public consultation for the new parliament complex.

[Modi the fanatic is using the coronavirus crisis to destroy India's heritage |](#)

[Anish Kapoor](#)

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After the ruling, Randeep Singh Surjewala, a spokesperson from the opposition Indian National Congress party, said the central vista project was a case of “misplaced priorities of a whimsical autocrat seeking to etch his name in the annals of history with cement and mortar”.

The current parliament, designed for the British Raj by Sir Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker in 1912, was opened in 1927 and repurposed after independence to become the seat of democracy in India. According to the government it is no longer fit for purpose, and the construction of a larger, modern parliament building is necessary.

Critics have asked why the current building can not be upgraded and questioned the decision to spent hundreds of billions of rupees on a new building while [India was facing an economic crisis because of Covid](#), with a slump in wages, the highest unemployment in 45 years and its first recession.



The statue of Mahatma Gandhi surveys the current parliament house.
Photograph: Ajit Kumar/AP

In May, 60 former civil servants wrote to Modi and the urban affairs minister, Hardeep Singh Puri, to condemn the central vista project as an

“irresponsible move at a time when enormous funds are required to strengthen the public health system”.

Modi laid the foundation stone for the new parliament building at a ceremony in December, calling it “a landmark of India’s democracy”. He said: “If the old parliament building gave direction to India after independence, the new building would be a witness to the making of an *Aatmanirbhar Bharat* [self-reliant India].”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Hacking

Russians are 'likely' perpetrators of US government hack, official report says

Multi-agency report is the Trump administration's first statement of attribution for the breaching of at least 10 federal agencies



The US Treasury building in Washington. The treasury department was one of many compromised by the hack. Photograph: Jim Bourg/Reuters

The US Treasury building in Washington. The treasury department was one of many compromised by the hack. Photograph: Jim Bourg/Reuters

Reuters in San Francisco

Tue 5 Jan 2021 16.54 EST

Russia was “likely” to have been behind [a string of hacks of US federal agencies identified last month](#), according the office of the US director of national intelligence which said the hackers breached fewer than 10 federal agencies.

The office and the FBI, the National Security Agency, and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency inside the Department of Homeland

Security, in a joint statement, said the hackers' goal appeared to be collecting intelligence, rather than any destructive acts.

The agencies said that the actor, "likely Russian in origin, is responsible for most or all of the recently discovered, ongoing cyber compromises of both government and non-governmental networks". The investigation is continuing, they said, and could turn up additional government victims.

[What we know – and still don't – about the worst-ever US government cyber-attack](#)

[Read more](#)

It was the first formal statement of attribution by the Trump administration.

Elected officials briefed on the inquiry had previously said Russia was behind the hacking spree, but Donald Trump had muddied the waters by saying it could have been China.

The penetration of departments including defense, state, homeland security, treasury and commerce is already considered the worst known cyber-compromise at least since electronic dossiers on most Americans with security clearances were taken from the Office of Personnel Management five years ago.

The security company FireEye, which was itself breached, discovered the new round of attacks, many of which were traced to a tainted software update from SolarWinds, which makes widely used network-management programs.

Other attacks have used resellers of Microsoft cloud services, with email being a main goal of the hackers.

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[Ghislaine Maxwell](#)

FBI tracked down Ghislaine Maxwell using cellphone data

Newly unsealed court documents show FBI use GPS and data use to narrow her whereabouts to an area measuring about 1 sq mile



Ghislaine Maxwell, pictured here in 2013, is currently being held in detention before her trial, which is scheduled to begin in July. Photograph: Reuters

[Ghislaine Maxwell](#), the Jeffrey Epstein associate facing child trafficking charges, was tracked down to her remote hideaway by the FBI using data from her mobile phone, according to court documents.

Maxwell was arrested at the 156-acre property in Bradford, New Hampshire, on 2 July last year, a day after a request was made for a search warrant to “employ an electronic investigative technique … to determine the location of the cellular device”.

The newly unsealed documents, first reported by the Daily Beast, show that the [FBI](#) tracked GPS and data use to narrow Maxwell's whereabouts to an area measuring around 1 sq mile. The former socialite had opened up a mobile phone account under the name "G Max" and used it to communicate with her sister, one of her lawyers and Scott Borgerson, a technology executive.

Play Video

Ghislaine Maxwell charged over role in Epstein sexual exploitation – video

To more precisely determine the building Maxwell was in the FBI used a device that it said "may function in some respects like a cellular tower", suggesting "stingray" technology was deployed. The equipment, which can fit inside a briefcase, mimics a cell tower and forces nearby mobile phones to connect to it, allowing the exact location of a certain phone to be captured.

Maxwell had been hiding out in the \$1m home, which she purchased with cash in 2019, following the arrest and subsequent prison cell death of Epstein, with whom she had a relationship in the 1990s. Maxwell, daughter of the disgraced British newspaper owner Robert Maxwell, has been charged with recruiting and grooming three girls, the youngest aged 14, to be sexually abused by Epstein. She has pleaded not guilty to the charges.

Maxwell is currently being held in detention in New York City ahead of her trial, which is set to begin in July. She has twice been denied bail.

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[Qatar](#)

Arab states agree to end three-year boycott of Qatar

Reconciliation with Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the UAE includes a non-aggression pact



Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (right) welcomes the emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, at the airport in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia.
Photograph: Bandar Al-Jaloud/Saudi Royal Palace/AFP/Getty Images

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (right) welcomes the emir of Qatar, Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, at the airport in Al-Ula, Saudi Arabia.
Photograph: Bandar Al-Jaloud/Saudi Royal Palace/AFP/Getty Images

[Patrick Wintour](#) Diplomatic editor

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.03 EST

A three-year boycott of [Qatar](#) by four other Middle Eastern countries that disfigured Gulf cooperation and raised concerns in the west about a strengthened regional role for Iran and Turkey has come to a stuttering close.

“The kingdom is happy to welcome you,” Saudi Arabia’s crown prince Mohammed bin Salman said as he greeted Qatar’s emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani, on the tarmac of the airport in Al-Ula, north of Medina, on Tuesday.

With varying degrees of enthusiasm, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates announced they were ending their air, land and sea boycott of the tiny, gas-rich state of Qatar. The boycott had begun in June 2017, when the four countries accused Qatar of supporting Islamist groups in the region and of having warm ties with Iran.

The summit agreed a solidarity statement in which all sides agreed to respect the principle of non interference in one another’s affairs whilst retaining the freedom to conduct their own foreign policy.

In his remarks to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit on Tuesday, Prince Mohammed, Saudi Arabia’s de facto leader, stressed the need for Arab unity to confront Iran. “We are today in need of such unity to counter the threats against our region represented in the Iranian regime’s nuclear programme, its ballistic missiles and agenda of sabotage adopted by its sectarian proxies,” he said.

“This demands that the international community work seriously to stand against these harmful practices that threaten the peace of the region and world.”

As part of the deal Qatar has agreed to freeze a number of its high-profile legal claims, such as at the World Trade Organization and to sign up to a non-aggression pact with the boycotting states aimed at tempering a media war waged by local websites.



Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad al-Thani of Qatar at the Gulf Cooperation Council summit. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

But most of the boycotting states' 13 political demands, such as ending support for the Muslim Brotherhood and closing a range of media operations including Al Jazeera, have been quietly dropped. Qatar has said all along during negotiations mediated by Kuwait that submitting to the demands would have meant effectively losing sovereignty over its foreign policy and becoming a cipher for Saudi Arabia.

The summit is widely seen as an attempt by Riyadh to clear the ground for a better relationship with the incoming Biden administration in the US, even though the actual reconciliation was brokered by Kuwait and Jared Kushner, the son in law of outgoing US president Donald Trump. Kushner flew to the summit to celebrate the end of the rift. One source knowledgeable of the deal said “The impression was Saudi wanted to move because of Biden’s election, but it took Kushner to bring along other states like the UAE that were more reluctant.”

Riyadh also feared that if the boycott persisted Turkey and Iran might benefit by giving them an opportunity to draw Qatar closer into their orbit.

The dispute has nevertheless left scars on the region, and some analysts say fundamental ideological differences have been left unresolved, including Qatar's belief in its role as a mediator in disputes across Africa and the Middle East. Qatar has long argued that trying to suppress legitimate grievances with a security-led response fuels terrorism.

On Twitter, Qatar's former prime minister Sheikh Hamad bin Jassim al-Thani wrote: "While I certainly welcome the end of the crisis from the bottom of my heart, I appeal and invite everyone to take lessons to avoid the outbreak of such crises in the future. In order to ensure this, there must be a deep and frank study of the causes of this crisis, and the psychological wounds it left behind, which afflicted the entire Gulf community and shaken confidence in the future."

The reconciliation, in doubt right up to the last few days, means that subject to Covid-19 disruption Qatar will be able to host the World Cup in 2022 without the distraction of a neighbourhood dispute. There are also hopes that fractured personal relations between families hailing from different parts of the Gulf will be healed.

In practical terms the reconciliation means Qatar will no longer need to pay Iran to fly over its airspace, which was costing Qatar millions of dollars in fees..

Despite Prince Mohammed's focus on confronting the threat posed by Tehran, Qatar is unlikely to sever its links with Iran, since the two countries share a giant gas field and Qatar does not believe the nuclear deal signed in 2015 should be ended.

Reflecting his country's ambivalence about the end of the boycott, Dr Anwar Gargash, the UAE's foreign minister, tweeted that although "a bright new chapter had opened" there was more work to be done.

US elections 2020

Trump makes false claim Pence has power to alter election result

President pressures vice-president to subvert democracy while Washington DC prepares for protests planned by Trump supporters

[David Smith](#) in Dalton, Georgia, and [Peter Beaumont](#) in London and agencies

Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.35 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 23.18 EST

Play Video

1:40

‘Firearms are not permitted’, police warn Trump supporters ahead of protest – video

[Donald Trump](#) is intensifying pressure on Mike Pence to subvert democracy and overturn the election result when Congress meets on Wednesday to affirm Joe Biden’s victory.

The president has been hyping the congressional tally of electoral college votes as a dramatic last stand and urged supporters to stage “wild” street demonstrations in Washington. In reality, Biden’s win is a foregone conclusion and [the vice-president’s ceremonial role](#) as presiding officer has been likened to an awards host opening envelopes.

Even so, defying norms to the end, Trump falsely insists that Pence can intervene and change the outcome. [At a rally in Dalton](#), Georgia, ahead of Tuesday’s crucial Senate runoff elections, the president said: “I hope Mike Pence comes through for us ... He’s a great guy. Of course, if he doesn’t come through, I won’t like him quite as much.”

He followed up with a tweet on Tuesday that wrongly claimed: “The Vice President has the power to reject fraudulently chosen electors.” Experts were

quick to point out that the vice-president has no such power and there is no evidence of election fraud.

Pence has arguably been the most ardently loyal member of the administration, [bridging a gap](#) between Trump's cult of personality and traditional conservatives, but now finds himself in a quandary as he weighs his own presidential ambitions in 2024. Democrats and moderate Republicans are calling on him to finally put the constitution [before his own boss](#).

At his own rally in Milner, Georgia, on Monday, Pence said: "I promise you, come this Wednesday, we'll have our day in Congress. We'll hear the objections. We'll hear the evidence."

Biden won the White House in November with 306 electoral votes to Trump's 232, with a margin of more than 7m in the popular vote. Congress will meet to rubber-stamp those results in what is usually a low-key formality, the final step before Biden is sworn in on 20 January.

But 13 Republican senators and more than a hundred House Republicans have said they intend to object to the results, a vivid display of Trump's continued grip on the party. This will not change the outcome but does raise the prospect of political theatre that could run late into the night.

Objections to a state's result will halt the count and trigger up to two hours of debate in both the House and Senate, followed by votes on whether to sustain or dismiss the objection. Trump's allies do not have sufficient numbers in either chamber to invalidate Biden's victories but, by raising multiple objections in multiple states, threaten to drag out a process already slowed by coronavirus restrictions.

Along with divisions in his own party, Trump has also been actively stirring up trouble on the street. [Washington DC](#) has mobilised the national guard to help police planned protests by his supporters in the lead-up to the congressional vote.

Amid fears of violence, Washington's chief of police and mayor have issued warnings that the carrying of firearms to the protests is illegal and urged

residents to avoid the areas where far-right groups, including the Proud Boys, are planning to gather.

Officials said 300 local national guard members would be deployed to help police, although they would not be carrying weapons.

Trump supporters are planning to rally on Tuesday and Wednesday, seeking to bolster the president's baseless claims of widespread voter fraud and following suggestions he might make an appearance at one rally – at the Ellipse, close to the White House.

Restrictions on carrying guns [have been introduced](#) for the area from Monday to Thursday this week in addition to Washington DC's already tough firearms regulations.

The city's mayor, Muriel Bowser, also issued a reminder that carrying firearms was illegal while in National Park Service areas, including the National Mall and Freedom Plaza, two areas protesters are [expected](#) to gather. Open possession of a firearm is also illegal throughout the city.

The moves come as Enrique Tarrio, the leader of the Proud Boys, [was arrested in Washington DC](#) and charged with destruction of property – a charge related to a previous pro-Trump protest – and for being in possession of two illegal magazines of ammunition and a high-capacity feeding device.

According to a [report in the Washington Post](#) last week, figures in the Proud Boys – which the [FBI has said](#) has “ties to white nationalism” – had encouraged members to drop their signature black T-shirts to better avoid detection.

“The Proud Boys will turn out in record numbers on 6 Jan but this time with a twist,” Tarrio said on the messaging service Parler before his arrest. “We will not be wearing our traditional black and yellow. We will be incognito and we will spread across downtown DC in smaller teams.”

Other unnamed figures discussed their hopes for violence at the rallies on social media.

Washington DC police have posted signs throughout the downtown area warning that carrying any sort of firearm is illegal and its acting police chief, Robert Contee, asked residents to tell authorities of anyone who might be armed. “There are people intent on coming to our city armed,” Contee said on Monday.

Concern has been mounting after previous pro-Trump rallies late last year involving the same groups ended with a spate of stabbings and several churches with a history of black worship were vandalised.

Far-right groups have also discussed on social media how to avoid laws that ban openly carrying weapons in DC and on federal land to bring guns close to the White House.

Trump has repeatedly encouraged this week’s protests and hinted that he may get personally involved. Over the weekend, he retweeted a promotion for the rally with the message: “I will be there. Historic day!”

Lauren Boebert (@laurenboebert)

Let me tell you why I WILL carry my Glock to Congress.

Government does NOT get to tell me or my constituents how we are allowed to keep our families safe.

I promise to always stand strong for our 2nd Amendment rights.<https://t.co/E75tYpdN4B> pic.twitter.com/qg7QGenrNo

[January 4, 2021](#)

During a press conference on Monday, Bowser also asked local residents to stay away from downtown DC, and avoid confrontations with anyone who is “looking for a fight”.



A police sign near the White House reminds visitors of the capital's strict firearms laws.

Photograph: Susan Walsh/AP

In a statement on Monday evening, Washington DC's attorney general, Karl Racine, also condemned groups that planned to incite violence at the protests, referring to them as entities that "promote hate on a racial and religious basis".

He said: "While we respect their right to protest, we will not tolerate criminal behaviour – and we should deny them the opportunity to cause chaos."

At previous pro-Trump protests, police have sealed off Black Lives Matter Plaza itself, but the confrontations spilled out on to the surrounding streets.

Expected attendees include high-level Trump supporters such as the Texas attorney general, Ken Paxton, and the Republican strategist Roger Stone, whose [three-year prison sentence was commuted by Trump](#). Stone was convicted of repeatedly lying to Congress during the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Associated Press contributed to this report

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Ohio](#)

Mourners at Andre Hill's funeral demand justice after police shooting

- Family, friends and strangers gather in Columbus, Ohio
- ‘We must say enough is enough’ says chair of city council

Associated Press

Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.08 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.17 EST



Congresswoman Joyce Beatty pays her respects at the casket of Andre Hill during his funeral on Tuesday at First Church of God in Columbus, Ohio.
Photograph: Joshua A Bickel/AP

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As light snow fell around the [Ohio](#) church on Tuesday morning, Andre Hill’s family, friends and strangers angry about his death – clad in their Sunday best and Black Lives Matter masks – walked in to honor his life.

Inside the church in Columbus, a photo of Hill, 47, surrounded by the faces of Tamir Rice, Breonna Taylor and the other black people killed by authorities in recent years leaned against the stage next to his open casket. A white mark was taped on every other chair to facilitate social distancing during the coronavirus pandemic.

State senator Hearcel Craig greeted guests at the door. The Democratic lawmaker is a minister at south-west Columbus's The Church of God, where Hill's service was taking place. "This is the second time in three weeks I have been here to honor the life of a black man taken by this city's officials," he said.

The first was for the funeral of 23-year-old Casey Goodson Jr, who was killed by a Franklin county sheriff's office deputy on 4 December.

Scarcely three weeks later, Officer Adam Coy of Columbus police can be seen in body-cam footage fatally shooting Hill early on 22 December as Hill emerged from a garage holding a cellphone in his left hand with his right hand obscured. He was visiting a family friend at the time.

"Being black in America gives us cause to be cynical, and we must say enough is enough," Shannon Hardin, the Democratic chair of the Columbus city council, said at the beginning of Hill's service.

Hardin also announced a city council resolution called Andre's Law that would ensure Columbus police officers use their body cameras accurately by turning them on before shootings take place and to give victims aid within an appropriate timeframe.

"We know that Andre Hill was indeed our brother, but the question bears repeating itself: am I my brother's keeper? Are we our brother's keeper?" he said. "If we are our brother's keeper, then we, as a community, need justice for Andre. If we are our brother's keeper, we won't turn a blind eye to these injustices against black men and black women."

Columbus's mayor, Andrew Ginther, US representative Joyce Beatty, state representative Erica Crawley were among a number of lawmakers and leaders in attendance.

Beatty, a Columbus Democrat and chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, noted that Hill died wearing a Black Lives Matter shirt, which she called a symbol of resistance against excessive police force.

“His death will not merely be a rallying cry at protests. His death will not be in vain. His memory will not be forgotten,” Beatty said. “Instead his life will be celebrated as a call for justice, his legacy upheld by all.”

In the moments after Hill was fatally shot, additional body-cam footage shows two other Columbus officers rolled Hill over and put handcuffs on him before leaving him alone again. None of them, according to the footage released on Thursday, offered any first aid even though Hill was barely moving, groaning and bleeding while lying on the garage floor.

Coy, who had a long history of complaints from citizens, was fired on 28 December for failing to activate his body camera before the confrontation and for not providing medical aid to Hill.

Beyond an internal Columbus police department investigation, Ohio’s attorney general, the US attorney for central Ohio and the FBI have begun their own investigations into the shooting.

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[Mali](#)

Wedding guests killed in Mali airstrike, local sources say

French forces were in area but say they attacked ‘fully-identified armed terrorist group’



A French armoured vehicle drives by Mount Hombori during operations in Mali’s Gourma region in 2019. Photograph: Daphne Benoit/AFP/Getty Images

A French armoured vehicle drives by Mount Hombori during operations in Mali’s Gourma region in 2019. Photograph: Daphne Benoit/AFP/Getty Images

Staff and agencies in Bamako

Tue 5 Jan 2021 15.16 EST

More than 20 people, including children, were killed in airstrikes during a wedding ceremony in a remote desert area of central [Mali](#), according to local sources.

It was not immediately clear who carried out the attacks but the reports emerged as French military sources said its forces in the country had carried out an airstrike in the area on Sunday that killed “dozens of fighters” from Islamist groups.

Witnesses said the attacks appeared to target men on motorbikes in the villages of Bounti and Kikara who were believed to be Islamist militants.

But civilians were caught up in the attack as people gathered for a wedding ceremony on Sunday.

One man who was wounded in the strike told the Associated Press that the extremists had approached a group of civilians who were celebrating a wedding and demanded that the men in attendance separate from the women.

“We were in the process of carrying out the orders when I heard the sound of an airplane and immediately a strike from above. Afterward, I didn’t see anything because I was unconscious,” the man said from a health centre in Douentza, speaking on condition of anonymity for fear of reprisals.

Other villagers in Bounti said a lone helicopter opened fire in broad daylight, sowing panic among a crowd gathered for a wedding.

“It was ‘run for your lives’,” said Ahmadou Ghana, who said 19 people died, two of whom were his brothers, and several others were seriously wounded.

“We were surprised by the intensity of the strike,” said another villager, Mady Dicko, adding: “The helicopter was flying very low.”

On Sunday, Tabital Pulakuu, an association that promotes the culture of Mali’s Fulani ethnic group, reported an “airstrike that claimed the lives of at least 20 civilians” during a wedding.

Confirmation of reports is difficult in a remote area where many jihadists are thought to operate.

A French military spokesman, Col Frederic Barbry, denied a connection between the strike and a wedding party, saying such a link “does not

correspond to information collected prior to the airstrike”.

Barbry told the Associated Press the operation followed an intelligence mission of several days that showed a “suspicious gathering of people”. The French military was able to conclude it was a “terrorist armed group” based on individuals’ attitudes, their equipment and other intelligence information, he said.

France has more than 5,100 military personnel based in the region to help counter Islamist militants. But a seven-year intervention has come at a cost as forces struggle to contain jihadists in the open desert.

Offensive aerial operations in Mali are mainly conducted by the Malian military or by the French anti-jihadist force Barkhane.

Bounti lies in the Mopti region, about 370 miles from the Malian capital, Bamako. There are many jihadists operating in the area.

The region is the centre of a deadly Islamist offensive that began in northern Mali in 2012 and then advanced into neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger, inflaming ethnic tensions along the way.

Thousands of soldiers and civilians have died in the conflict to date and hundreds of thousands of people have had to flee their homes.

But the Bounti deaths come during an apparent increase in bloodshed across the Sahel.

On Saturday in western Niger, jihadists killed 100 civilians in one of the single largest massacres of non-combatants in the history of the insurgency.

France also lost five soldiers to roadside bombs in recent weeks.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/people-at-wedding-party-in-mali-killed-in-airstrike-local-sources-say>

Film

Tanya Roberts, Bond girl and Charlie's Angel, dies day after premature announcement



Tanya Roberts, pictured in 2006. Photograph: Chris Delmas/AFP/Getty Images

Tanya Roberts, pictured in 2006. Photograph: Chris Delmas/AFP/Getty Images

Initially announced to have died on Sunday after a mistaken statement by her publicist, Roberts' partner now reports she died on Monday

[Andrew Pulver](#)

[@Andrew_Pulver](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.10 EST

Tanya Roberts, the glamorous actor who starred opposite Roger Moore in the 1985 Bond film *A View to a Kill*, has died aged 65, it has been reported. Roberts' death had been [mistakenly announced by her representative Mike](#)

[Pingel on Sunday](#), leading to multiple news organisations, including the Guardian, to report it, before a retraction was issued a day later.

Now Roberts' partner Lance O'Brien is [reported](#) to have said he was informed by staff at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles that Roberts died on Monday evening. O'Brien had [reportedly mistakenly informed](#) Pingel of her death on Sunday, leading to inaccurate media reports.

[The Sun quoted O'Brien](#) as saying Roberts died from an unspecified illness that began with a urinary tract infection, and subsequently affected her kidneys, liver and gall bladder. He also said Roberts had collapsed at home in Los Angeles.

O'Brien said that he believed Roberts had died on Sunday after visiting her in hospital, and told Pingel, who announced it to the media. [However, while being filmed by the TV show Inside Edition](#), O'Brien received a call on Monday from the hospital saying that Roberts was alive.

Cedars-Sinai Hospital has not commented, citing patient confidentiality.

Roberts' best-known film role was in *A View to a Kill*, where she played geologist Stacey Sutton, Bond's principal love interest and a key ally in the battle against Christopher Walken's villainous industrialist Max Zorin. By then she had already consolidated her on-screen appeal by appearing in the 1980-81 season of detective series *Charlie's Angels*, taking over from Shelley Hack as one of the three title characters.

Born Victoria Leigh Blum, Roberts carved out a career as a model before moving to Hollywood with her screenwriter husband, Barry Roberts. She secured a string of small roles, including James Toback's 1978 drama *Fingers* and waxwork slasher *Tourist Trap*. After winning the *Charlie's Angels* role her profile increased, and she was cast as slave girl Kiri in cult fantasy-horror *The Beastmaster* (1982) and as the title role in the Tarzan-style adventure *Sheena: Queen of the Jungle*, released in 1984 and which has also become a cult film despite its disastrous initial reception.

Roberts disliked the "Bond girl" label, [telling the Daily Mail](#) that it pigeonholed her as a "dumb, glamorous broad" and that "the reason most

Bond girls don't go on to have careers [is] because people just don't take them seriously". But she said she did not regret taking the role: "At the time I didn't know what I know now, and to be honest, who would turn that role down, really? Nobody would ... I was very young and I did what I felt was the right choice to make."

A View to a Kill did not, as Roberts correctly suggested, lead to a career transformation: she found herself playing in "erotic thrillers" such as Night Eyes, Inner Sanctum, and Sins of Desire, and TV series such as Hot Line (also with an "erotic" slant).

However, in 1998 she was cast in a long-running role in retro sitcom That '70s Show, as dim-bulb Midge Pinciotti, appearing in more than 80 episodes. Her husband's terminal illness, and subsequent death in 2006, led her to retire from acting.

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Stock markets

China's stock market closes at highest level since 2008 financial crisis

World's second-largest economy mounts rapid financial recovery from Covid-19 pandemic



The CSI 300 index, which tracks the value of the biggest companies on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets, closed up 1.9% on Tuesday at 5,368 points. Photograph: Héctor Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

The CSI 300 index, which tracks the value of the biggest companies on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets, closed up 1.9% on Tuesday at 5,368 points. Photograph: Héctor Retamal/AFP/Getty Images

[Richard Partington](#)

[@RJPartington](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 12.35 EST

China's stock market has soared to its highest level since the 2008 financial crisis as the world's second-largest economy mounts a rapid recovery from the coronavirus pandemic.

The CSI 300 index, which tracks the value of the biggest companies on the Shanghai and Shenzhen stock markets, closed up 1.9% on Tuesday at 5,368 points – the highest level since January 2008.

Narrowly surpassing a level of 5,353 reached in 2015, when fears over a hard landing for China's economy after years of blockbuster growth led to a sell-off in shares, the fresh landmark stands as the latest dramatic turnaround in global financial markets since the onset of the coronavirus pandemic.

It comes as China's economy stages a [faster recovery than expected](#) at a time when other nations around the world are still grappling with rising infections and severe disruption to business and social life caused by the pandemic.

As the nation at the centre of the initial Covid-19 outbreak, Chinese GDP [fell for the first time in four decades](#) in the opening months of 2020. However, many analysts believe harsh controls to contain the spread of the disease helped to lay the ground for a faster return to relative normality.

China avoided the technical definition of a recession last year – two consecutive quarters of falling GDP – with a [return to growth in the three months to June](#) as it rolled back lockdown restrictions.

After recording growth of just 1.9% for 2020 as a whole – the lowest level for 30 years – the [International Monetary Fund](#) expects China's economy to grow by more than 8% in 2021, dramatically outpacing the recovery in many other countries.

Nigel Green, the chief executive of deVere Group, an investment management firm, said the gains on the Chinese stock market reflected its rapid recovery. “China’s rebound is quite remarkable, compared to other major economies, many of which are once again rolling out stricter restrictions to stop the spread of Covid amid a tsunami of new cases.”

“China’s already impressive economic recovery is likely to pick up momentum and this will be extremely attractive. But as 2020 showed us with perhaps too much clarity, things can change quickly and so-called ‘certainties’ can shift overnight,” he said.

The fresh landmark for the Chinese stock market came on a day of choppy trading on the London stock market, with the [FTSE 100](#) closing up 0.6% at 6,612, after recording modest losses earlier in the day amid concerns over the economic impact of the third Covid lockdown in England.

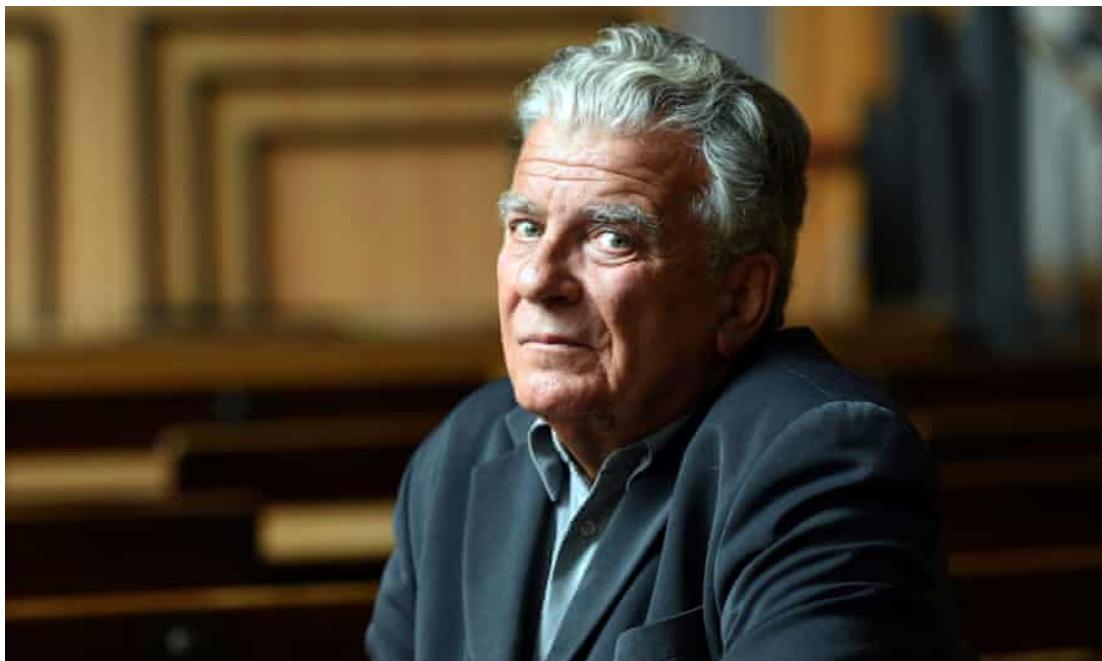
There are however hopes for a stronger economic recovery in Britain once more people receive vaccinations, which could propel the blue-chip index higher. Joshua Mahony, senior market analyst at the financial trading firm IG, said: “The swift nature of the vaccination process should ensure that any lockdown-fuelled weakness will be greeted by buying pressure as we look towards a March reopening.”

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[France](#)

High-profile French political scientist accused of sexually abusing stepson

Olivier Duhamel quits academic and media posts after allegations made in stepdaughter's book



Olivier Duhamel in May 2016. The French political scientist has resigned from the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques and deleted his Twitter account. Photograph: Stéphane de Sakutin/AFP/Getty Images

Olivier Duhamel in May 2016. The French political scientist has resigned from the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques and deleted his Twitter account. Photograph: Stéphane de Sakutin/AFP/Getty Images

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Tue 5 Jan 2021 07.42 EST

Olivier Duhamel, one of France's most high-profile political scientists and media commentators, has resigned from his academic and media posts after he was accused of sexually abusing his stepson.

The constitutional expert's stepdaughter – the alleged victim's twin – says the abuse happened in the 1980s when she and her brother were 14 and was well known to many members of the family and friends.

Camille Kouchner revealed the alleged abuse, which she said was an "omerta" among those in Parisian political and media circles, in her book, *la Familia grande*, which is due to be published on Thursday but has been serialised in L'Obs magazine and Le Monde.

Duhamel, 70, has resigned from his job at the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques, which oversees and finances the prestigious Sciences Po grande école, and deleted his Twitter account, but has made no comment on the allegations.

Kouchner and her twin are the children of Bernard Kouchner, a former health and foreign affairs minister and the founder of the NGO Médecins Sans Frontières, and Evelyne Pisier, a historian and writer, who died in 2017.

Kouchner and Pisier had three children, Julien and Camille and her twin brother, before separating in 1980. Afterwards Pisier had a four-year affair with the Cuban leader [Fidel Castro](#) before marrying Duhamel.

In the book, Camille Kouchner gives her twin the name "Victor". She writes that the abuse continued for at least two years and that Pisier was told but preferred to protect her husband, as did family friends, to "avoid a scandal". She says her brother begged her to keep the secret, telling her: "If you speak, I will die. I'm too ashamed. Help me tell him no, please."

"I was 14 and I let it happen ... I was 14 and I knew and I said nothing," Kouchner, 45, writes. "Why does he have the right to live outside this reality when it haunts me."

Kouchner, a legal specialist, adds that the "incest" – as it has been described in the French media – happened more than once and was an open secret among friends and family, who were asked not to say anything.

“My book recounts just how many people were aware,” she told Le Nouvel Observateur website L’Obs. “Of course I thought my life could be seen as offensive because my family is so well known, then I told myself, that’s exactly why I have to do this.”

She added: “I chose to write because I could no longer keep quiet. This book is born of a necessity: to bear witness to incest, to show that it went on for years and that it is very, very difficult to break the silence. I did not write it in the name of my brother, but for the sisters, the nieces, all those affected by incest. The omerta in a family weights on everyone.”

Her father, [Bernard Kouchner](#), issued a statement through his lawyer. “A heavy secret that has weighed on us for so long has been lifted. I admire the courage of my daughter, Camille,” he wrote.

The FNSP sent an internal message to staff, seen by AFP, saying it had accepted Duhamel’s resignation “for personal reasons”. The foundation’s director, Frédéric Mion, said he had been “shocked” to read the allegations.

Duhamel, a former MEP and author of the much-studied constitutional work The Left and the 5th Republic, is also president of Le Siècle, an influential men’s club whose members include leading political, economic, cultural and media figures. He is the son of Jacques Duhamel, who was a minister under president Georges Pompidou.

Duhamel told Le Monde and L’Obs he had “nothing to say” in response to the allegations. On Monday, he tweeted he had resigned from “the institutions for which I work” after being the subject of “personal attacks”. He then deleted his account.

There can be no legal action as the accusations are beyond the time limit for prosecution.

Alexandre Kouchner, Camille and the alleged victim’s stepbrother, supported his siblings in a Twitter message after the revelations of abuse.

“I love my brothers and my sister. I admire their courage and support their choice of breaking the silence. We must always listen, hear and protect those

who have suffered and suffer. For the rest, I suggest you read the book,” Alexandre wrote.

The alleged victim of the abuse has yet to comment publicly on the case.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.06 - Climate crisis

- [US Trump auctions Arctic refuge to oil drillers in last strike against US wilderness](#)
- [Norway Electric cars rise to record 54% market share](#)
- [Environment Climate crisis will cause falling humidity in global cities – study](#)

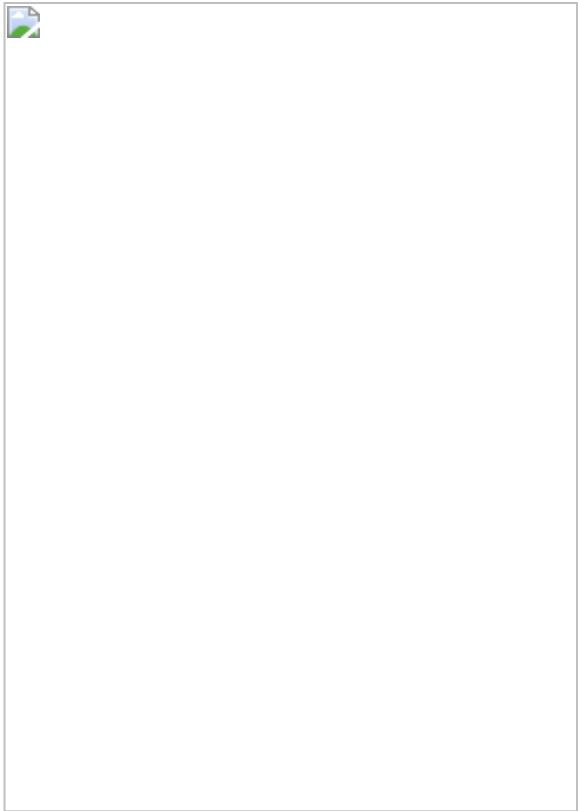
Trump auctions Arctic refuge to oil drillers in last strike against US wilderness

[This land is your land](#)
[Arctic](#)

Trump auctions Arctic refuge to oil drillers in last strike against US wilderness

Sales of drilling rights are the climax to one of the nation's highest-profile environmental battles

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[Emily Holden](#) in Washington

Tue 5 Jan 2021 05.37 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 11.21 EST



Rivers run through the lush tundra valleys of Alaska's Arctic national wildlife refuge. Photograph: Acacia Johnson

In one of its last strikes against the American wilderness, Donald Trump's administration will on Wednesday auction off portions of the [Arctic](#) national wildlife refuge to oil drillers.

The [lease sales](#) are the climax to one of the nation's highest-profile environmental battles. The lands on the northern coastal plain of Alaska are home to denning polar bears and migrating herds of Porcupine caribou that indigenous communities depend on and consider sacred. But the oil industry has long suspected that the ground beneath the plain holds billions of barrels of petroleum.

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Once the leases in the refuge, known as ANWR, are sold to energy companies, they would be difficult to claw back. The incoming president, Joe Biden, could, however, discourage development in the refuge by putting regulatory hurdles in the way of drillers.

The refuge has become central to America's debate over how quickly to stop drilling for and burning fossil fuels as the climate crisis accelerates. Climate experts say there should be no new oil and gas extraction, as the world is

already more than 1C hotter than pre-industrial times. Even if humans stopped using fossil fuels today, the planet would continue to heat.

Oil from drilling west of the refuge, at Prudhoe Bay, has fueled the economic development the state has depended on to fill its coffers and write annual revenue checks to residents. That extraction also led to the most damaging oil spill in history, when the Exxon Valdez tanker spewed millions of barrels off Alaska's southern coast in 1989.

Prudhoe Bay "was the largest oil field ever discovered in North America. Since then we have had more than 1,500 sq miles of oil and gas development in the Alaskan Arctic ... but [ANWR] has been off limits," said Adam Kolton, executive director of the [Alaska](#) Wilderness League.

[Map of existing oil reserves and wilderness refuge.](#)

"For us, it symbolizes just what's at stake here. If you can't draw a line at the tundra and keep this one area of the Arctic off limits, then the question is, where can you draw the line and what protected part or wildlife refuge in the United States will remain off limits?"

President Dwight Eisenhower designated the Arctic refuge in 1960, and in the ensuing decades, the industry and Republicans pushed for drilling there, while the US was trying to reduce its reliance on suppliers in the Middle East. That push continues even though oil is now plentiful, and a fracking boom has made the US a net exporter rather than importer.

Republicans in the US Congress and in Alaska achieved their goal in 2017, when they inserted a provision authorizing drilling into Trump's landmark tax bill.

Trump and congressional Republicans argued that the government's earnings from drilling in the refuge could help pay for the proposed tax cuts, which favored corporations and wealthier Americans. They said development would generate \$900m, although an analysis by the non-partisan watchdog group Taxpayers for Common Sense, based on historical bid data, found that it would bring in just a fraction of that amount – no more than \$27.6m. That would be split between the federal government and the state of Alaska.

“The fact that this was being offered as an offset was definitely insincere at best, and we thought that was just kind of a joke,” said Autumn Hanna, vice-president of the group.

Taxpayers for Common Sense has argued the government should not be leasing any public land to oil and gas drilling now, while prices for the commodities are low and supplies are high worldwide. During the pandemic, oil demand has plunged as businesses have been shut down and people have driven less.

“We’re not opposed to oil and gas drilling, but we’re opposed to short-changing taxpayers,” Hanna said.

Industry interest in developing new oilfields is so low that some have suggested there might not be any bids for some tracts of land on the coastal plain. The former governors Frank Murkowski and Bill Walker have encouraged the state to bid on any unwanted tracts itself, and last week a state-owned economic development corporation voted to authorize bidding up to \$20m.

“If there are no bidders on the lease sales at all, Alaska will likely never be able to develop our oil and gas potential from ANWR,” Murkowski said in an opinion piece in the Anchorage Daily News, where he also noted the oil and gas industry had historically contributed 70% of the state’s revenue.

On Monday, the Trump administration also dramatically expanded the area where the government can lease public land for oil drilling to the west of ANWR.

The plan would allow drilling in 82% of the National Petroleum Reserve-Alaska, an area bigger than the state of West Virginia, according to environmental groups, though the Biden administration could reverse that decision more easily than it could hold off drilling in ANWR.



Anaktuvuk Pass, Alaska, a Native Alaskan community of around 300 people, near Alaska's Arctic national wildlife refuge. Photograph: Acacia Johnson

Native groups in Alaska have fought ANWR drilling proposals with lawsuits. For the Gwich'in, indigenous Alaskans who have migrated alongside the caribou and relied upon them as a food source, the fight is personal. They formed the Gwich'in Steering Committee in 1988 to oppose drilling in the coastal plain, which they call the Sacred Place Where Life Begins.

"We come from some of the strongest people that ever walked this earth. They survived some of the coldest, harshest winters so that we can be here," Bernadette Demientieff, executive director of the committee, said during an AM radio segment last week. "I feel like this is my responsibility as a Gwich'in, to protect the caribou."

Polar bear advocates say the habitat is also critical to a population in dire straits from development and rising temperatures that are melting sea ice. The Arctic is heating at a much faster pace than the rest of the world. Polar bear numbers in Alaska and western Canada [declined 40%](#) from 2001 to 2010, said Steven Amstrup, chief scientist for Polar Bears International.

Map of caribou and polar bear habitats.

“If we want to have the best chance possible of maintaining that population until the time that we stabilize greenhouse gas emissions, we need to protect them on the ground as best we can,” Amstrup said.

Ken Whitten, a former caribou biologist for the state of Alaska, said drilling was likely to displace wildlife. “It’s the core of the Porcupine caribou herd calving area. It’s the major onshore denning place for polar bears in the Beaufort Sea, which is becoming more and more important as the sea ice disappears.”

The plain is a narrow band of land between mountains and the coast, so animals do not have many options when they are forced to relocate, he said. Much of the surrounding area is already being drilled.

“We are a wealthy nation,” Whitten said. “We can afford to leave some areas alone.”

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Electric, hybrid and low-emission cars

Electric cars rise to record 54% market share in Norway

Nordic country becomes first in the world where electric car sales outstrip those powered by other means



Norway exempts fully electric vehicles from taxes imposed on those relying on fossil fuels. Photograph: Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP/Getty Images

Norway exempts fully electric vehicles from taxes imposed on those relying on fossil fuels. Photograph: Jonathan Nackstrand/AFP/Getty Images

Reuters

Tue 5 Jan 2021 09.21 EST

Norway became the first country in the world where the sale of electric cars has overtaken those powered by petrol, diesel and hybrid engines last year, with the German carmaker Volkswagen replacing Tesla as the top battery-vehicle producer, data shows.

Battery electric vehicles (BEVs) made up 54.3% of all new cars sold in the Nordic country in 2020, a global record, up from 42.4% in 2019 and from a

mere 1% of the overall market a decade ago, the Norwegian Road Federation (OFV) said.

Seeking to become the first nation to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars by 2025, oil-producing Norway exempts fully electric vehicles from taxes imposed on those relying on fossil fuels.

The policy has turned the country's car market into a laboratory for carmakers seeking a path to a future without internal combustion engines, vaulting new brands and models to the top of bestseller lists in recent years.

While the sale of BEVs had broken the 50% mark in individual months, 2020 was the first time that fully electric cars outsold the combined volume of models containing internal combustion engines for a year as a whole.

[More than 500,000 full electric cars sold so far this year in Europe](#)
[Read more](#)

“We’re definitely on track to reach the 2025 target,” said Øyvind Thorsen, the chief executive of OFV.

BEV sales accelerated in the final months of 2020, hitting their highest level for any single month in December, with a 66.7% share of the car market.

Volkswagen’s Audi brand topped the 2020 leaderboard with its e-tron sports utility and sportsback vehicles as the most sold new passenger cars in Norway last year, while Tesla’s mid-sized Model 3, the 2019 winner, was relegated to second place.

Electric vehicle sales are expected to continue to soar in 2021, according to industry analysts and car distributors, as more models are brought to the market.

“Our preliminary forecast is for electric cars to surpass 65% of the market in 2021,” said Christina Bu who heads the Norwegian EV Association, an interest group. “If we manage that, the goal of selling only zero-emission cars in 2025 will be within reach.”

Tesla's mid-sized sports utility vehicle, the Model Y, is due to reach the Norwegian market this year, as are the first electric SUVs from Ford, BMW and Volkswagen.

By contrast, cars with diesel-only engines have tumbled from a peak of 75.7% of the overall Norwegian market in 2011 to just 8.6% last year.

New car sales in the country last year were 141,412, of which 76,789 were fully electric.

While the electric market share will keep rising, there is uncertainty around how many cars producers will allocate to Norway as European demand is increasing, said Harald Frigstad, the chief executive of the Norwegian car importer Bertel O Steen.

The seller of Daimler's Mercedes-Benz as well as the Kia, Peugeot, Opel, Citroën, DS and Smart brands, predicted about 70% of its sales would be of fully electric models in 2021.

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Climate change

Climate crisis will cause falling humidity in global cities – study

Research says planting trees in urban areas could mitigate rising temperatures



Half the world's population lives in urban areas but previous climate models have not produced data specific to cities. Photograph: Divyakant Solanki/EPA

Half the world's population lives in urban areas but previous climate models have not produced data specific to cities. Photograph: Divyakant Solanki/EPA

[Weronika Strzyżyska](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 11.00 EST

Urban regions around the world are likely to see a near-universal decrease in humidity as the climate changes, a study has found.

The research suggests that building green infrastructure and increasing urban vegetation might be a safe bet for cities looking to mitigate rising

temperatures.

Half of the world's population lives in urban areas, but cities only account for about 3% of global land surface. Lei Zhao, a scientist from the University of Illinois and the lead author of [the paper published in Nature Climate Change](#), says this has meant that previous climate models have not produced data specific to cities.

"Almost all the models do not have urban representation," Zhao said. "Although cities occupy such a small area, that's where a lot of the human impact [of global warming] takes place. So we closed this gap by providing multi-model climate projections which are specific to urban areas."

Scientists and urban planners have known for a long time that temperatures in cities are higher than in rural areas. Infrastructure such as dark asphalt and concrete surfaces absorb more solar radiation, while reduced tree coverage contributes to what is called the "urban heat island effect". This means that temperatures in cities can be up to 5C (9F) warmer than in the surrounding rural areas.

However, Zhao explains that urban and rural climates differ in more ways. "The urban heat island is one of the reasons why urban warming signal is different from other landscapes," Zhao said. "But it's not just temperature, it is also humidity. A lot of urban climate variables are different from other landscapes."

The model predicts that green infrastructure would be a good investment for nearly all cities. Trees and vegetation help to reduce temperature by releasing water into the atmosphere, which cools down the air. This was seen as having a limited effect in places which are already humid, but the new model predicts that air in most non-coastal cities will become drier in the next century.

This would make surface evaporation more efficient, meaning increased levels of urban vegetation would be more effective at fighting global heating.

Zhao hopes the data will allow urban planners and policymakers to make more informed decisions about mitigating rising temperatures in their cities.

“Some strategy might work for a city, but not necessarily for your city,” he said. “When you look at large-scale projections, you can see if the warming signal is different from other places, and how humidity levels vary, so it can help you form the strategy differently.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.06 - Culture

- Sci-fi writers on building worlds If the aliens lay eggs, how does that affect architecture?
- Promising Young Woman How the Oscar-tipped film shows the limits of #MeToo revenge
- 'I did hate TV' Selina Scott on Trump, Prince Andrew, Frank Bough and the BBC
- Ellen Burstyn It was never my intention to be a movie star
- Shakespeare in a pandemic 'You can't have Romeo and Juliet without touching!'
- Film Battlefield drama 1917 wins 2020 UK box office in pandemic-struck year

'If the aliens lay eggs, how does that affect architecture?': sci-fi writers on how they build their worlds

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Film

How Promising Young Woman shows the limits of #MeToo revenge

The tart Oscar-tipped dark comedy offers an intoxicating revenge plot against bad men. But can insight be found in assuming everyone's worst potential?



Carey Mulligan in *Promising Young Woman*. Photograph: Courtesy of Focus Features/AP

Carey Mulligan in *Promising Young Woman*. Photograph: Courtesy of Focus Features/AP

[Adrian Horton](#)

[@adrian_horton](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 10.04 EST

[Promising Young Woman](#), writer/director [Emerald Fennell's](#) acidic dark comedy which coats an incendiary rape revenge plot with a pastel sheen, runs an alluring, looping trap: Cassie, a singularly obsessed character played with singularly impressive depth by Carey Mulligan, pretends to be near-

passed-out drunk at a bar, plays along to a skeevy man's predatory machinations, then flips the switch when he begins to sexually assault a woman he believes is too drunk to notice or care. "What are you *doing*?" she asks, suddenly stone-cold sober. The first time Cassie pulls the trap, in the film's first sequence, it's not quite shocking – if you've seen the trailer, you know her revenge scheme – but given that it's The OC heartthrob Adam Brody as the aw-shucks predator, Mulligan's archly calibrated facade drop is an enticing and unnerving jolt.

[Promising Young Woman review – Carey Mulligan ignites fiery #MeToo revenge tale](#)

[Read more](#)

I wanted to root for this trap – the film wants you to cheer for this hook – but by the second ruse, as Cassie shocks and condemns another louche loser (this time played by Superbad's Christopher Mintz-Plasse), the thrill of exposure wanes. By midway, when Cassie, on a one-last-revenge grief bender for her unseen best friend (I won't spoil the very bad thing that underpins her rage, but it's not hard to guess from the film's beginning), targets her past medical school dean (Connie Britton) who turned a blind eye to devastating behavior, I had to hit the pause button. The film has been billed as a thrilling revision of the tired rape revenge drama, a #MeToo romp that relishes comeuppance for self-justifying bad men. But Cassie's annihilating obsession – the reduction of her character to the long shadow of the worst thing that's ever happened to her – felt not giddy or revelatory but frustratingly dead-ending. The film didn't feel edgy or provocative so much as, in its singular focus on vigilante justice, a very recent relic of the early, heady days of public #MeToo rage.

Promising Young Woman, with its tart bite and dark fatalism, is deliberately disquieting, but watching it in late 2020 felt unsettling, like a song just out of tune. Its molten core threw me back to late 2017, when the early #MeToo movement flooded with white-hot rage – a constellation of private pains suddenly given vague, if still revelatory, shape in the public forum. There were many deep-rooted hooks to hang outrage on to: the Harvey Weinsteins, which ignited lingering outrage over the [Brock Turner case](#), which was itself reminiscent of the [2012 Steubenville high school gang rape](#) recorded on cellphone footage (a crime and trauma similar to the unseen tragedy at the

heart of Promising Young Woman), which landed in a much different media landscape, along with the story of [Daisy Coleman](#), than the one we occupy now.

But three-plus years removed from the fuse of the [#MeToo movement](#), a decade-plus into the internet's loose flotsam of story after story of horrific, excused, mundane, infuriating cases of sexual assault and our culture's ill-preparedness to discuss it with any psychological nuance, we know there are bad men, bad excuses, bad records. Unmasking is a limited thrill. Promising Young Woman boils an archetypical assault story into its starker shades – vigilante and bad, unchanged people, a woman whose trauma subsumes her personhood. Where is the insight in that exposure? What's left when the rage boils off?

Part of Promising Young Woman's nano-specific anachronism owes to the long pipeline of film development further stretched by the pandemic (after a hyped debut at Sundance, Focus Features pushed its wide release date from April to Christmas Day), and the hyper-velocity of late 2010s internet in which cultural conversations balloon and burst by the day and week. The film has its strengths – Mulligan's performance, how it weaponizes the benefit of the doubt afforded to Cassie's blonde, white femininity, with her feathery bangs, rainbow manicure and bubblegum pink wardrobe. (The fact that the film's commercial premise – a revenge fantasy in which a woman systematically targets nice-seeming men – largely hinges on Cassie's blonde, white femininity goes unmentioned, an undeniable limitation.)



Photograph: Merie Weismiller Wallace/AP

But its problems – setting up easy punches against thinly drawn characters who say and do all the wrong things – glare when compared with other contemporaneous works tackling the shape-shifting ghouls of trauma, the slipperiness of complicity, and the insidiousness of prioritizing power over clarity, such as HBO’s *The Tale*, which explores time and trauma’s fracturing of self-narratives, and one woman’s capacity to change her understanding of what happened to her. Or the finale of HBO’s *I May Destroy You*, which uses rape fantasy as a mechanism for healing without trauma becoming obliterative, Cassie-style dark matter. Last year’s *The Assistant* eschews the bad men-focus of *Promising Young Woman* for a gripping (if tonally opposite) portrait of systemic rot and toxic adjacency at a Weinstein-esque production company.

In other words, all pieces which transmute the same soup of horror into jagged, irreducible edges, that burrow out of rather than into the bifurcation of good and bad people. *Promising Young Woman*’s macabre, candied denouement certainly shocks, but at the cost of surprise; there’s little room to run when both Cassie and the film assumes everyone’s worst potential. That bleakness holds to the early days of #MeToo, when exposure was revelation, when recognition of the scope of toxicity was the story. I’d like to understand the next chapter, to believe in healing, or change, or potential,

or complication, or moving forward, which could also be the sweetest revenge.

- Promising Young Woman is out in US cinemas and will be released digitally in January with a UK release on 12 February
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Television](#)

Interview

'I did hate TV': Selina Scott on Trump, Prince Andrew, Frank Bough and the BBC

[Simon Hattenstone](#)



Selina Scott: 'Some people like being labelled. I certainly don't.'
Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

Selina Scott: 'Some people like being labelled. I certainly don't.'
Photograph: Richard Saker/The Guardian

She was one of television's biggest names, before giving it all up to live on a farm. She talks about her friendship with Princess Diana, the horror of tabloid harassment – and the extraordinary sexism she faced



Mon 4 Jan 2021 11.00 EST

Selina Scott has come in from the cold. She lights a fire and makes herself a cup of tea – black, no sugar. The former “golden girl” of the [BBC](#) lives on a farm in North Yorkshire with a couple of dogs, a handful of rare belted galloway cattle, a waddle of ducks and swans, and the odd otter. The room looks dark and bleak, and the internet isn’t working well, so we struggle to Zoom. “I’m going to move you into another room.” Scott still pronounces room aristocratically as “rum”, but her voice is different from the old days. Back then, it was more of a stately caress, offset by a youthful giggle. Today, her voice is deeper, more flinty, though still with a hint of grandeur. The Yorkshire roots of her childhood have re-emerged and planted themselves firmly in the peaty soil.

It’s 40 years since she made her name presenting News at 10, followed by BBC Breakfast Time, The Clothes Show, The Selina Scott Show for NBC, the magazine show West 57th for CBS and a brief stint at Sky. Scott wasn’t any old presenter. She bore an uncanny resemblance to Princess Diana (or, as she prefers it, the younger Diana bore an uncanny resemblance to her) and, like Diana, she became the nation’s sweetheart. Like Diana, she was hounded by the press – in a way that no other journalist has been. And like Diana she decided to walk away from it all at the peak of her fame. Unlike Diana, she lived to tell the tale.

Over the years the reasons for Scott's departure from the BBC have emerged gradually in a drip-drip of revelations. Rather than cosy, trustworthy Auntie, for Scott the BBC was a hothouse of misogyny, gaslighting and harassment.

This week, she makes a rare foray back into television in the BBC series [Winter Walks](#), filmed last February. She nods to ramblers, swaps notes with a fisherman who has caught a whopping grayling, and shares a pint at sunset with ferret-racing locals in Appletreewick. But this is very much a solitary Scott – a woman in her element in nature. Her face is naturally weathered, and still strikingly beautiful. At 69, the main difference is her hair, now the same silver-grey as the stone-built cottages she passes en route.



Selina Scott in 1983. Photograph: Nils Jorgensen/REX/Shutterstock

These days, she is more likely to be found [campaigned against ageism in TV](#) than appearing on it. She has also [fought to ban the live export of animals](#) – the issue was sufficient to turn her into a Brexiter. “The European Union allows it, of course, because it’s free movement of animals. Boris Johnson has pledged that live export of animals will come to an end.” She is hopeful but sceptical. “Of course, they may shut the front door only to leave the back door open, letting Northern Ireland and Ireland take the animals.”

Scott, the eldest of five children, was born in Scarborough to a journalist mother and police officer father. Despite only having one brother, she grew up with a gang of boys and always stood her ground. She remembers playing cricket when she was tiny and a boy who was batting refusing to leave the crease because he had been caught by her, a girl. “He wouldn’t go. We had this huge argument. He had to go. It wasn’t right. In the end I physically got rid of him.”

She might have appeared placid on TV, but she says has always been a scrapper. Today, she has just had it out with a farmer who parked his tractor in one of her fields for a game shoot. “We had an argument in the middle of the field. He said: ‘Where the hell am I going to park? Can’t park on the road. And I said: ‘But you *can* park on the road. Move it.’” Sure enough, he moved.

The way she talks you would think nobody would dare mess with Scott. But the reality was very different. In 1983, she was a high-profile transfer from ITV to launch BBC’s Breakfast Time alongside the avuncular [Frank Bough, who died last year](#). Looking back, it was the strangest of pairings – a TV marriage made in hell, and a reflection of the times. Bough was 50 but could have passed as an energetic pensioner; Scott was 31 and looked younger. And it turned out that Bough wasn’t quite so avuncular after all. In 1988, he was caught snorting cocaine with sex workers and promptly sacked. After his death, [Scott wrote an article](#) revealing that his behaviour was no better at work, saying he would deliberately undermine her by interrupting mid-question, insisted on getting the last word in, and repeatedly told her how well endowed he was. When Scott didn’t respond positively, he assumed she must be frigid or a lesbian, saying of her: “Even when she rides a bike she keeps her knees together.”

Was there nobody she could complain to? “No, I couldn’t do anything about it. Frank was protected.” Senior management simply wasn’t interested, she says. “They seemed to have no emotional intelligence, and they let men like Frank Bough roam the BBC without any check on them.”

She talks about a victim-blaming culture among the Oxbridge-educated leadership, which she likens to a mafia. “The men at the BBC would always say there was no smoke without fire. If Frank Bough did these things to

these women then they must have encouraged him in some way.” She believes she had to speak out because some of that culture prevails today. “It was my little #MeToo moment.”

Scott says it didn’t take her long to sense something was wrong at the BBC. “I knew pretty soon that there was this malevolence. As soon as I arrived I was treated like an interloper. I wasn’t one of them, and therefore my television life became difficult. There was always a feeling that they were trying to get rid of me.” That’s barmy, I say – after all, she was brought in as a star for her expertise. “Or the way I looked at that time. Or the fact I’d been given a lot of publicity.”



With Frank Bough in 1982. Photograph: PA

She mentions a management memo that was leaked to her after she had stood in for Terry Wogan, presenting his primetime chatshow Wogan. “They were talking about the way I looked, the way I talked, how I walked on to the stage. There was only one person who was in the room who said this is sexist. It was illuminating to see how these men discussed women like me.” Did she challenge them when she found out about it? Not half, she says. “I did my normal and grabbed the producer and said: ‘How dare you?’”

She quit Breakfast Time in 1986, leaving the BBC redfaced. After all, Scott was a prized asset. She was quickly offered another programme, The Clothes Show, to save it further embarrassment. Meanwhile she was headhunted by the US networks. Scott says that, in a way, she is thankful for the way she was treated at the BBC – it gave her the opportunity to make her name in the US.

What made her time on British TV even tougher was the tabloids' obsession with her. When they failed to dig up anything about her love life, they became snide. "I was in the newspapers virtually every day." What did they find to write about? "Hair. The way I dressed. Me asking people stupid questions." Did it get to her? "Of course. It was like constant trolling. The only way I could cope with it, rather like trolling today, was by switching off. I pretended this person that was appearing on television and in the newspapers was really not me."

She says the female journalists were the most vituperative. "It was the Glenda Slagg era. Every Wednesday Jean Rook would sharpen her pen and go to town. I got a letter from her at one point saying: 'Oh dear Selina I do feel so awful that I've got to do this to you, but my editor insists!'" She laughs. "*He* insists! What a lot of rubbish. She was, after all, the first lady of Fleet Street."

Around this time the palace contacted her with an unusual request. "Michael Shea, the press secretary to the Queen, asked if I'd befriend Diana. He thought that I might be able to advise her on dealing with the press, but the trouble was I was going through just the same as she was."

She did befriend Diana, though they preferred to chat about lighter stuff. "We always talked about things like hairstyles, clothes and boyfriends. She had a wonderful sense of humour and I thought that would help her overcome it all, but obviously it didn't."

Scott became friendly with other royals along the way. Is it true that when interviewing Prince Andrew, he asked her out? "Erm, yes." And did she go on a date with him? "No! No!" she says, as if it would be the most ludicrous thing in the world. How did she turn him down? "I just ignored it."

Was she surprised that he became friends with the convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein? “Surprised? No. This is what American multimillionaires do. They buy influence and prestige. I can see how he could have fallen into it. I hope to heaven he told the truth, because of his family more than anything.”

Scott also made a documentary about Prince Charles, and there was a rumour that he also had asked her out. Is that true? “You are a little monkey. I’m not going anywhere near that. Next question.”

That sounds like a yes to me, I say.

“Go on, next question.”



With Diana, Princess of Wales (left) and Carol Barnes at ITN in 1982.
Photograph: PA

So I ask what she’s most proud of from her TV career. “The one that had consequence was the exposure of ivory poaching in Kenya. Going out into the bush with George Adamson a few weeks before he was shot dead by poachers. The programme led to an immediate ban on ivory poaching. I felt I achieved something there.”

There were other successes, notably a documentary made for ITV about Donald Trump in 1995. He expected a puff piece, but she exposed him as a liar who owed the banks hundreds of millions of dollars. Despite everything, she concluded, we write him off at our peril.

In the opening shot, he hugged her tight as he introduced her to a boardroom of decrepit investors. She folded her arms around herself for protection. Did he proposition her? “Yes, I suppose he did.” What did he say? “Well, you can imagine. We were in his plane and ...” Long silence. “I can’t remember, Simon. It’s far too long ago.” Her phone rings. She answers, and returns with a smile. “Saved by the bell,” she says.

Trump hated the documentary. Did he try to destroy her career afterwards? “I think so. Of course, the men at ITV were total cowards. He threatened them with legal action. It was supposed to be shown in the States, but ITV ran scared. And he slagged me off on television.” Did she mind? “Of course. I thought that was absolutely disgraceful. This was a documentary. Would they have done it to someone like Paxman?”

For more than a year, Scott says, Trump wrote her increasingly abusive letters, which she describes as “perverted”. What kind of things did he say? “My career is great, you’re a scumbag, you’re a loser, you’re seedy. Stuff like that. It was just like a stalker. He finally gave up when I said: ‘Stop stalking me mentally.’”

Over the following quarter of a century, Scott made occasional comebacks on TV – but the returns were brief and ended unhappily. In 1997, Sky hired her for a reported £1m a year to present a late-night chatshow, but the show was soon pulled. In 2002, she turned her back on the BBC after denouncing a documentary about her as “shoddy” and “offensive”. In 2008 Scott sued Channel 5 for age discrimination after her contract to do maternity cover for Natasha Kaplinsky was cancelled when the station decided it wanted a younger replacement. She won £250,000 in an out-of-court settlement. How important was it for her to take on Channel 5? “Very. Because television at that time was still about younger women with older men. There wasn’t an older woman anywhere.”

Since then, Scott has largely committed herself to the farm, her cashmere business, and campaigning. Although she acknowledges great moments in her career, Scott's view is not rose-tinted. If anything, there is a sense of melancholy, a muted disappointment, when she looks back. "You suddenly stop and you think, what was all that really about then? That's been a puzzling question. What was the point in it all?"

In 2006, she made a programme called Why I Hate [Television](#) Today. "I did hate TV because I felt there was nothing in it that inspired women like me." Nowadays, she says she doesn't hate television, she's just indifferent to it.

It is 17 years since Scott bought her farmhouse with the purpose of rewilding its 180 acres. She rescued angora goats and produced mohair socks from their wool. Now the goats have died off, and she travels to Outer Mongolia to source cashmere for her clothes business. It may be a solitary life but, she says, she's not lonely. Her phone rings again – a reminder of an event planned for this evening. She still occasionally makes the headlines, but often there's nothing to the story. In 2014, for example, the Telegraph reported that [she was considering standing as Conservative MP for Richmond in Yorkshire](#). It was nonsense, she says – she's not even a Tory.



Outside the Craven Arms pub in Appletreewick in the Yorkshire Dales.
Photograph: Tim Smith/BBC/Atypical Media

One of the things I always wondered was how, at the height of her success, Scott managed to keep her private life so utterly private. She smiles. “I tried very hard. Private life to me meant private. I was able to be independent, do my thing, meet who I wanted to meet, and pretty much got away with it all, and for that I am truly thankful.”

I ask if she has always lived by herself. Her guard goes up. “Errr … I’ve got a ghost I live with at the moment.” And now she’s telling me about how one morning, 10 years ago, she came downstairs and one of her dogs was hiding in the old Tudor chimney while the other had ripped every door apart. “Ever since then the dogs have refused to sleep in the house. I’ve had a priest from Ripon around here to look at it. He said that it’s a benign ghost, a serene ghost, and I said: ‘Well, tell my dogs.’” Does she talk to the ghost? “No I’m not that crackers. Yet. I know it’s around, and it’s in a particular part of the house.”

I try to go back to the previous question. “I’m not going to tell you,” she replies before I’m finished. “Why should I be pigeonholed? Everyone is individual. I’ve told you that at the moment I’m living with a ghost, which is true.”

I don’t think people are pigeonholed like they used to be, I say. Lots of people live on their own because they prefer to. And now Scott becomes very animated. “Marriage and being tied to a particular person is fine for people if that’s what they want, but it can be seen as an achievement that you don’t get married today. I consider it an achievement that I’ve been free to do anything I’ve wanted to do. I’ve chosen who I would like to be with or not be with. This business of labelling, all the way through life, seems a waste. Some people like being labelled.” She pauses for breath. “I certainly don’t,” she says with a fierce, and rather magnificent, conviction.

Winter Walks: Selina Scott is at 7pm on BBC Four on 4 January, and will be available on BBC iPlayer after that

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[Film](#)

Interview

Cinema legend Ellen Burstyn: 'It was never my intention to be a movie star'

[Ryan Gilbey](#)



Aiming to beat Christopher Plummer ... Burstyn, who hopes to be nominated for *Pieces of a Woman*. Photograph: Taylor Jewell/Invision/AP
Aiming to beat Christopher Plummer ... Burstyn, who hopes to be nominated for *Pieces of a Woman*. Photograph: Taylor Jewell/Invision/AP

As she prepares to smash an Oscar record, the great actor talks about drawing on her own suffering, missing her violent mother – and surviving the Hollywood ‘hamburger machine’

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Ellen Burstyn is struggling to make herself heard above the sirens that are screeching across the city. “I live on a road that’s very popular with police cars and ambulances,” she says down the line from New York. She had been trying to tell me about the Oscars when she was interrupted by the racket. If

she is nominated in March – and, with the odds of her winning best supporting actress currently at 5/1, she almost certainly will be – this would make her the Academy’s oldest acting nominee, having turned 88 this month. “At the moment, it’s Chris Plummer,” she says excitedly. “But I would beat him by 42 days! What a great crown that would be to wear.”

If her performance in the Netflix drama [Pieces of a Woman](#) wins her a nomination, it will be her seventh. Over the last 50 years, Burstyn has been recognised for her portrayals of a jaded wife in [The Last Picture Show](#); of a mother whose child is demonically possessed in [The Exorcist](#); and of a widowed waitress who hits the road with her young son in [Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore](#). In [Same Time, Next Year](#), she played a married woman who meets annually with her lover; in [Resurrection](#) she was a car crash survivor who acquires healing powers; and in [Requiem for a Dream](#) she starred as the mother of a junkie who becomes an addict herself.

Her sole win was for Alice, where the range of her performance still astonishes, running from distress and desolation to joy and outright comic pizzazz. Busy on Oscar night with the Broadway run of Same Time, Next Year, she sent Alice’s director [Martin Scorsese](#) to collect the award in her stead.

In truth, she was relieved not to go. “I’m never really comfortable there. Everyone in borrowed gowns, smiling down the red carpet and being interviewed about, oh, I don’t know. But it’s not *this* kind of conversation, I can tell you. ‘Whose dress are you wearing? Whose diamonds?’” Attending is fine, she thinks, if the odds are against you. “I’ve gone other years when I felt more confident that I wouldn’t win. Whereas with Alice, I was not surprised that I won.” She lets slip a naughty laugh, perhaps realising that this might come across as less than humble. Her rivals at the 1975 ceremony included Gena Rowlands for A Woman Under the Influence and Faye Dunaway for Chinatown. The competition will be stiff again if Burstyn is nominated next year, as she is likely to be up against Amanda Seyfried for Mank, and Olivia Colman for dementia drama The Father.

It was Burstyn who picked Scorsese to direct Alice, back in 1973 when her stock was far higher than his. Warner Bros, dazzled by how good she was in the dailies from [The Exorcist](#), offered her any script she wanted. Seizing on

Alice, which had once been proposed as a vehicle for Diana Ross, Burstyn then selected Scorsese, fresh from Mean Streets, to lend the project his freewheeling, improvisatory energy.

I have the impulse to call my mother often. I say it out loud sometimes:
‘Mom, I wish I could call you’

Now, in what might be interpreted as a pleasing act of reciprocation, the director has lent his name to Pieces of a Woman as executive producer – “To make sure the film gets seen”, as Burstyn puts it. She plays Elizabeth, a steely matriarch with a clenched and joyless smile, who pressures her grieving daughter Martha to testify against a midwife after the death of her baby. Hair lacquered into a kind of crash helmet, Elizabeth charges head-first at life, refusing to allow fate the upper hand. The film’s indisputable highlight is a ferocious, eye-popping exchange between mother and daughter. As Martha, played by Vanessa Kirby, wavers over appearing in court, Elizabeth tries to tip the scales with a story about her own past – about her birth, in fact, during the Holocaust, when a doctor advised her mother to simply throw her away.

“That speech kept growing,” she says. “Before I did my take, Vanessa said, ‘Convince me.’ Because her character had been resistant to the idea of court. I did the speech the way it was and then, just as I finished, I had the realisation that I had *not* convinced her as needed. So I carried on talking, and I did that part about, ‘Speak your truth, tell them how it is for you.’ How I said it, I don’t remember. It just came out of me. I was in the scene, you know? The fiction was the reality at that point. When I got to the end, I felt I had, in fact, made her want to go to court.”



Steely matriarch ... with Vanessa Kirby in *Pieces of a Woman*. Photograph: Benjamin Loeb/Netflix

In her 2006 memoir, [Lessons in Becoming Myself](#), Burstyn explains that her preparation for any role involves “taking an elevator down to my inner archive, where I quietly flip through the files until some memory rises up and offers itself”. What did she find down there that was relevant to Elizabeth? “You know, I never talk about that,” she says. “If I do, it loses its power. Personal memories are like tools I can call on for help. If I give it away to you, it won’t work for me any more, so I won’t answer that.” The elevator doors close firmly on the subject.

She will confirm, though, that she has never resorted to the sort of harsh tactics that Elizabeth employs, swatting obstacles away with her chequebook. At one point, she tries to bribe her daughter’s partner, played by Shia LaBeouf, to leave town for ever. “I doubt I would ever do that,” she laughs. “It would have to be extreme circumstances.”

Speaking prior to the [recent allegations](#) about LaBeouf’s abusive behaviour, Burstyn is full of praise for her co-star. “Shia is so fierce about being real. He isn’t standard issue.” I remind her that he once appeared on the red carpet at the Berlin film festival wearing a paper bag with the words “I Am Not a Celebrity” daubed on it. “Oh, I read about that,” she says. “I never quite

understood it.” Has fame ever been a burden for her? “I’ve never been one of those celebrities who got chased down the street by shouting throngs. People are always very nice to me. It hasn’t been at all unpleasant.”



Career-transforming ... in *The Last Picture Show*. Photograph: John Springer Collection/Corbis via Getty Images

The same can’t be said of her life. Burstyn’s childhood in Detroit was marked by abuse of every kind, not least from her violent mother. “I’m surprised by how much I miss her these days, having had such a difficult relationship with her,” she says. “I have the impulse to call her very often. I say it out loud sometimes, ‘Mom, I wish I could call you.’” What would she say? “I think it’s just to go back over the past. I wish I could’ve been more helpful then and understood her point of view, rather than resisting. It would be nice to be able to talk to her about that now. And I do talk. I talk to the mother that lives inside of me.”

Hold on, I’m getting a call from Alec Baldwin. Don’t go anywhere

How did the way she was raised affect her own parenting? “Well, I remember when I was a child having a mental notebook where I would say, ‘I’ll never do *that* when I’m a mother.’ I would make notes about what a good mother should and shouldn’t be. I think my son would tell you I was a

very good mother. I'm sure if my mother and I could sit down and talk about it today, she would say she was sorry. Years later, when I was already an adult, I talked to her about being hit so much. I told her this was not a good thing. She said, 'I'd never do it again, I'll tell you that. Not now I know how much trouble it caused.'" She pauses. "I'm glad she understood that before she left."

Learning to "abide trouble and suffering", she says, has stood her in good stead as an actor. "Otherwise you're afraid to haul up those uncomfortable things in your work." She trained at the Actors Studio in New York in the late 1960s after realising that she didn't want the glitzy, fluffy star roles that lay ahead for her on the path she had been following for 10 years. She craved the tough stuff. She didn't have to be Debbie Reynolds: she could be Marlon Brando.

Burstyn is still intimately involved with the Actors Studio. In fact, she has to field a call from one of her co-directors in the middle of our conversation, to discuss an upcoming board meeting. "Hold on, I'm getting a call from Alec Baldwin," she says. "Don't go anywhere." Her stint there, under Lee Strasberg, led directly to the string of films, including *The Last Picture Show* and *The Exorcist*, that transformed her career – and the whole of US cinema. If she is rarely invoked alongside Warren Beatty, Robert De Niro, Jack Nicholson and Al Pacino as one of the faces of the American new wave, it can only be because she is, rather inconveniently, a woman.



'I was not surprised that I won' ... on Oscar-winning form in Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore. Photograph: TCD/Alamy

Casual moviegoers can recite those very masculine monologues from *Taxi Driver*, *Five Easy Pieces* or *Network*. Less familiar but every bit as scalding is [the scene in *The King of Marvin Gardens*](#), from 1972, in which Burstyn offers her makeup, clothes and a few freshly-snipped locks of hair to a bonfire on the beach at Atlantic City. "They're made out of mink hairs, did you know that?" she says as she sprinkles her false eyelashes on to the flames. "For 20 years, I've been wearing animal hairs on my face."

The sight of a woman dealing fearlessly on screen with age, decaying beauty and disappointment was a chastening one, more uncomfortable for many than the male equivalent. Burstyn's experiences also prove that a woman has far less cultural credit in the bank when things go awry. All the industry clout she had built up during the 1970s evaporated after a pair of box-office flops: *Same Time, Next Year* and *Resurrection*. Two strikes and she was out, more or less, consigned for around 15 years to television, in the days when this was not a prestigious place to be. "That was it, girl, you know!" she said in an interview in 2000. "It's a sin to have your films not make money."

Audacious directors who grew up on her work came eventually to the rescue, calling on her unusual capacity for being both benign and barbed, in

films as diverse as *The Yards*, *Requiem for a Dream*, *Interstellar* and *Wiener-Dog*. She has had few opportunities, though, to be as loose and funny on film as she was in *Alice*. There has been plenty of slush in her career (*The Spitfire Grill*, *Playing by Heart*, *Divine Secrets of the Ya-Ya Sisterhood*) but a distinct dearth of laughs, unless you count the preposterous remake of [*The Wicker Man*](#), where she presided gleefully over the torture-by-bees and eventual immolation of Nicolas Cage.

The vital thing is that she survived Hollywood, a place she once described as a “hamburger machine”. How did she avoid being turned into mince? “It was never really my intention to be a movie star,” she says. “I always wanted to be as good as I could possibly be. That kind of goal leads you in a different direction to wanting to be a star, which can be a frightful experience. The fact that I’m still working at 88 tells me I did what I wanted to do.” The sirens have stopped wailing now. Calm settles over the city.

- [Pieces of a Woman](#) is in cinemas now and on Netflix from 7 January.
-

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[Theatre](#)

Shakespeare in a pandemic: ‘You can’t have Romeo and Juliet without touching!’

Perspex screens, CGI scenery and Covid tests before kissing ... Sam Tutty and Emily Redpath reveal how they filmed a new Romeo and Juliet



‘It’s so impassioned’ ... Emily Redpath and Sam Tutty in rehearsals for Romeo and Juliet. Photograph: Ryan Metcalfe

‘It’s so impassioned’ ... Emily Redpath and Sam Tutty in rehearsals for Romeo and Juliet. Photograph: Ryan Metcalfe

[Chris Wiegand](#)

[@ChrisWiegand](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.29 EST

As the isolated teen in the hit musical Dear Evan Hansen, Sam Tutty is used to “tap-tap-tapping on the glass”, as he sang in [Waving Through a Window](#). But Covid-19 safety measures for the Olivier award-winning actor’s new

production, a modern-day version of [Romeo and Juliet](#), made that literally the case.

Tutty and Emily Redpath play the star-crossed lovers in the filmed theatre production, directed by Nick Evans, which is set in the aftermath of a pandemic. Coronavirus is never mentioned in the production but the masked ball scene features the sort of modern-day face coverings we have grown used to. Throughout rehearsals in London in November the actors had regular temperature checks and stayed socially distanced, often kept on separate sides of a screen.

“Whenever we rehearsed anything that involved close proximity, we had these big Perspex screens,” said Tutty. The actors were filmed individually, against a green screen, apart from the couple’s more intimate dialogue, which was shot in one day. “You can’t have Romeo and Juliet without touching,” joked Redpath, who was tested for Covid along with Tutty before those scenes.

For the rest of the shoot, the actors spoke their lines to a dot on the wall, signifying where the other characters would appear in the final version, which uses CGI lighting and scenery including the backdrop of a stage and auditorium. Tutty described the project as one of the most challenging things he’s experienced because the language of Shakespeare and the camera’s closeups similarly leave one exposed.



Redpath as Juliet and Tutty as Romeo

But this Romeo and Juliet unfolded at such a whirlwind pace that “we had no time to worry,” said Redpath. Rehearsals were partly done on Zoom. “Emily and I would also FaceTime a lot to prepare for the onslaught of lines the next day,” said Tutty. “I’d do one scene, go home and learn the scene for the next day. There was no time to learn the full play, it had to be bite-size.” Neither actor knew the play particularly well before they were cast; Tutty did not properly register what he had signed up for until he was on the way to rehearsals. Redpath, who graduated from Mountview Academy of [Theatre](#) Arts in 2019, called the language of the play “horrific and beautiful. Everything is in there. I wanted to cry all the time – and I did! It’s so impassioned.”

The filming was completed in a fortnight, which is remarkable when you consider that apart from a handful of scenes none of the cast were ever performing together. One scene in the production features 15 actors, all of whom were filmed speaking their lines at different studio sessions.

[Events horizon: the films, music, art and more to get excited about in 2021](#)
[Read more](#)

It all proves, Tutty said, how adaptable UK theatre has become during the challenges caused by the pandemic. “It’s an incredible reflection on how malleable our industry is. We became digital in, like, a month.” High-profile streaming initiatives such as [National Theatre at Home](#) have vastly improved access, particularly for those who live outside London, he said. Redpath agreed that the web has opened up access and opportunities for theatre lovers and practitioners, and added that the industry must take this opportunity to change and restart in a more stable and inclusive fashion.

The project was over so quickly that the actors barely had time to get to know each other and, this being a pandemic production, there were no goodbye drinks or hugs goodbye.

- [Romeo + Juliet, from Metcalfe Gordon Productions, is due to be released later this year.](#)
-

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[Film](#)

Battlefield drama **1917** wins 2020 UK box office in pandemic-struck year

Sam Mendes' first world war thriller was UK cinemas' biggest crowdpuller as total earnings dropped by over 75% as a result of Covid restrictions



Dean-Charles Chapman, left, and George MacKay in **1917**. Photograph: François Duhamel/AP

Dean-Charles Chapman, left, and George MacKay in **1917**. Photograph: François Duhamel/AP

[Andrew Pulver](#) and [Mark Sweeney](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 06.56 EST

In a year devastated by the effects of the coronavirus pandemic, Sam Mendes's first world war drama [1917](#) has emerged as the biggest earner of 2020 at the UK cinema box office, according to the annual report by box office analyst Comscore.

Released in the UK on 10 January, [1917](#) was inspired by anecdotes told to the director by his grandfather, Alfred Mendes, who served on the western

front. It starred George MacKay and Dean-Charles Chapman as two soldiers charged with carrying a vital message across the battlefield, and won three Oscars (for cinematography, sound mixing and visual effects). Aided by its high profile on the award circuit, 1917 earned £44m in UK cinemas.

However, 2020 was a disastrous year for UK cinemas, with mass cinema closures and release cancellations that began with the first national lockdown in March resulting in a drop of 76% from the year before. In total, UK cinemas earned £322.2m in 2020, compared with £1.3bn in 2019. Ironically, the first quarter of 2020 exceeded expectations, up more than 20% on 2019. However, the lockdown saw virtually no cinema activity in April, May and June, before cautious reopenings in early July saw a modest revival, with four consecutive weeks in September and October recording over £70m in total. The second lockdown in November saw box office drop sharply, before reviving again in December as restrictions were relaxed.

A trailer for 1917

Nine out of the top 10 films were released before the pandemic took hold, including the film in second place, Sonic the Hedgehog (£19.3m), as well as Bad Boys for Life (£16.2m, 4th place), Dolittle (15.9m, 5th) and Parasite (£12.1m, 8th). Little Women (£15.3m, 6th), Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker (£11.3m, 9th) and Jumanji: The Next Level (£11m, 10th) were all released in 2019.

The sole title in the list released after March is Tenet, which ended the year in third place with total earnings of £17.4m, arrived in the UK in August as nearly every other Hollywood-produced film had its release date pushed back. While Tenet director Christopher Nolan was lauded for his commitment to attempting to restart audiences' cinemagoing habits, the film's enormous production budget meant that its modest results damaged the prospects for a widespread return to cinemas by the Hollywood studios, and contributed to its producers Warner Bros' decision to release its upcoming blockbusters on its streaming service in the US.



Sole summer release ... Elizabeth Debicki, left, and John David Washington in Tenet. Photograph: Melinda Sue Gordon/AP

Smaller venues, including the majority of independent UK cinemas, fared slightly less badly than cinemas with multiple screens – single-screen venues recording a 68% drop in business, contrasted with 77% for multiplexes with six or more screens. Comscore suggest that “the continued availability of arthouse/independent British titles, event cinema, catalogue and short-windowed titles is a major factor” and that “multiplexes are more reliant on the pipeline of major Hollywood blockbusters” which all but dried up.

Comscore said that while the final cinema admission numbers are still being collated the total is [expected to be in the region of 42m to 43m in the UK](#): the lowest total since records began in 1928, and well below the previous low of 54m in 1984. Cineworld, the UK’s biggest chain, has kept doors to its 127 theatres in the UK and Ireland shut since October, writing off the year when the premiere of No Time To Die was [pushed back again to April this year](#).

Analysts at Omdia forecast a slow return to pre-Covid box office levels. This year the box office is currently forecast to be 40% down on 2019, at about £750m.

“The big movies [this year] start with Bond,” says Tim Richards, chief executive of Vue, the UK’s third-largest cinema chain. “Then there will be three years of [delayed] movies in an 18-month period. There will be pent up demand to go out and go to almost any movie.”

Top 10 films at the UK box office in 2020

- 1.** 1917 – £44m
 - 2.** Sonic the Hedgehog – £19.3m
 - 3.** Tenet – £17.4m
 - 4.** Bad Boys for Life – £16.2m
 - 5.** Dolittle – £15.9m
 - 6.** Little Women – £15.3m (released 2019, £22.1m total)
 - 7.** The Gentlemen – £12.2m
 - 8.** Parasite – £12.1m
 - 9.** Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker – £11.3m (released 2019, £58.2m total)
 - 10.** Jumanji: The Next Level – £11m (released 2019, £36.8m total)
-

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2021.01.06 - Lifestyle

- [Sexual healing Now that I am 86, have I lost the ability to orgasm for ever?](#)
- [Booze fairies The anonymous army of ‘drinkerbelles’ spreading good cheer](#)
- [From exercise to education How to cope with the winter lockdown in the UK](#)
- [Nigel Slater's midweek dinner Cabbage, taleggio and pancetta](#)
- [Kitchen aide My pickled veg is fizzing – is it OK?](#)
- [Consumer champions I got 11 parking fines after a mix-up over Zipcar rules](#)

[Sexual healing](#)[Life and style](#)

Now that I am 86, have I lost the ability to orgasm for ever?

I have always enjoyed a good sex life – until last week, when I found that I couldn't reach a climax. Is this to be expected because of my age?



‘Is it possible my body will not enjoy another orgasmic moment?’ (Posed by models.) Composite: Getty/Guardian Design Team

‘Is it possible my body will not enjoy another orgasmic moment?’ (Posed by models.) Composite: Getty/Guardian Design Team

[Pamela Stephenson Connolly](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 10.53 EST

I am an 86-year old man who has enjoyed a good sex life. But last week I suddenly found I could not achieve an orgasm, no matter how much my wife tried to help or how many porn videos I watched. Am I just going through a temporary orgasm stoppage or have I lost my ability to ejaculate for ever? Is it possible my body will not enjoy another orgasmic moment? Can you help me? I'm desperate.

Age itself is not a cause of anorgasmia or an inability to become aroused or ejaculate. So it is important that you try to reduce your understandable anxiety about this and do some detective work to figure out what has changed since you were last able to climax. Have you changed medications? Have you been taking new over-the-counter medications? Has your stress increased? Have you suffered a bereavement or loss? Have you recently become more anxious or depressed?

Any of these factors can influence your ability to climax. If you think it might be a medication issue, ask your doctor to find an alternative. It's just a matter of discovering the root cause. I know all of us are going through a very difficult time, so it would help to find some at-home methods of relaxation and stress-reduction. Try to exercise in moderation if your doctor allows it. You might also seek a general medical checkup and perhaps request some hormonal supplements. Consider seeking online therapeutic help if you think you would benefit. Age itself is not the problem. You deserve to be able to continue to have pleasure.

- *Pamela Stephenson Connolly is a US-based psychotherapist who specialises in treating sexual disorders.*
- *If you would like advice from Pamela on sexual matters, send us a brief description of your concerns to private.lives@theguardian.com (please don't send attachments). Submissions are subject to our terms and conditions: see gu.com/letters-terms.*
- *Comments on this piece are premoderated to ensure discussion remains on topics raised by the writer. Please be aware there may be a short delay in comments appearing on the site.*

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[Pass notes](#)[Life and style](#)

Booze fairies: the anonymous army of ‘drinkerbelles’ spreading good cheer

Tooth-fairies-for-adults have been leaving gift baskets containing drinks and other treats outside people’s houses. Desperate times call for desperate measures



Comfort and joy ... a gift basket containing drinks. Photograph: Radachynskyi/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Comfort and joy ... a gift basket containing drinks. Photograph: Radachynskyi/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Tue 5 Jan 2021 10.20 EST

Name: Booze fairies.

Age: The origins are a little opaque. But certainly, like many things, booze fairies have become more of a thing in the past year.

And what the hell are they, please? They leave gift baskets containing drinks, secretly, outside people’s houses.

Drinkerbelle? Inevitably.

Do they have wings? Sometimes. Some also wear tutus.

Where and how do they operate? In the US, obviously. They work in groups, on social media and within communities. After sharing their own addresses, and their tipple of choice, participants are assigned other fairies to deliver to. As well as a bottle – and perhaps something else comforting, such as snacks or bath bombs – a basket will contain the address of someone else to deliver to. So beneficiary becomes benefactor.

A kind of self-perpetuating cycle of neighbourliness and goodwill. The magic of fairies and the unknown, with an adult twist. Exactly that. “This has 100% restored my faith in humanity,” Erica Weak, the founder of a group in Greenbrier, Tennessee, [told the New York Times](#). “It’s the sense of not being alone, of knowing someone out there cares about you and will do whatever it takes to put a smile on your face.”

Even if that is a psychoactive drug that causes intoxication and can result in dependence, withdrawal, cause liver and brain damage, as well as increasing the risk of cancer? Obviously booze fairies shouldn’t visit too often, and all the usual health warnings apply.

No, it sounds lovely, and a lot more important, and believable, than the tooth fairy. Let’s get it up and running in Britain then.

Well, that might be tricky. How so?

In case you hadn’t noticed, we’re just going into Lockdown III. Duh, exactly why we need booze fairies more than ever!

Yes, but you can only leave the house for work, or medical reasons or for exercise, once a day. Er ... it is exercise. The bottles? They’re weights! Yes, I always work out in wings, officer.

Hmmm. Well then, it’s work. I’m a booze fairy, this is what I do, deliver booze. No, of course I can’t do it from home, would you ask an Ocado driver to do that?

Very well, sir, madam, carry on. Oh, just one more question: isn't it supposed to be dry ... Oh no you don't. Don't you bloody dare "dry January" me. That got cancelled, officially, when the lockdown came in.

Do say: "Step aside, tooth fairy, the adults have got this one. Vermouth fairy coming through!"

Don't say: "Make mine a nosecco, please."

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[Coronavirus](#)

How to cope with the winter lockdown in the UK

Lockdown in bad weather with little natural light seems daunting but there are routines and techniques that can help us



Regular walks, whatever the weather, can be a useful tool for getting through lockdown. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

Regular walks, whatever the weather, can be a useful tool for getting through lockdown. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty Images

[Nicola Davis](#) Science correspondent

[@NicolaKSDavis](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 11.44 EST

With new national lockdowns coming into force across the UK, we take a look at how to cope – from staying connected to getting out in the open.

Use your daily outdoor exercise time ...

Under the new rules in England you can exercise outside once a day in your local area with one person from another household. “As long as you stay 2 metres away it is also the chance for some social interaction,” said Neil Greenberg, professor of defence mental health at King’s College London.

While wet-weather clothing might be needed, why not take a look at Ordnance Survey maps and go on an adventure along some muddy footpaths, or explore [the signs of nature amid the urban sprawl](#) on your doorstep? And don’t forget that, unlike the first lockdown, playgrounds are open, so children can burn off their energy too.

... but remember exercise at home is unlimited



Joe Wicks is bringing back his online home workouts. Photograph: Martin Rickett/PA

The benefits of exercise can be felt from even relatively short bouts of 15 to 30 minutes at a time, according to Stephen Buckley, head of information at mental health charity Mind.

“Even if you don’t have exercise equipment like treadmills at home, there are still [options](#) for most ages and abilities including cleaning, dancing,

using the stairs and online classes,” he said. Yes – cleaning can make for a great workout.

Joe Wicks is bringing back his [online home workouts](#) for three days a week for lockdown 3.0, while there are plenty of [online classes](#) for yoga, dance, boxing and even – for cycling enthusiasts – “[zwifting](#)”.

Zoom possibilities are endless

The idea of yet another video call might seem unappealing, but a huge number of activities are now being run online – and getting more sophisticated all the time.

Charities such as [Macmillan Cancer Support](#) have created packs for people to host their own murder mystery, art groups are holding [Zoom life drawing](#) sessions, and there is no shortage of quizzes to try out. Pottery, embroidery, cookery and language classes are among other options, and offer the chance to develop a new skill and get to know new people.

But while many may feel the pressure to [make the most of another lockdown](#), Greenberg says we should be wary of attempting too many things at once.

“Rather than setting yourself up to fail, try to set one realistically achievable simple goal and only once you have completed that, set another achievable one,” he said. “If you fail to achieve one of them, simply try again and focus on what you have done, not what you have not.”

Theatre, concerts and other events are also available online – and are sometimes free. Some are live while others are recordings: among them you can romp through the [British Museum’s 2014 Viking exhibition](#), get a front-row seat to [a Met Opera performance](#) or explore the world of ice-age megafauna as part of the Natural History Museum’s [series of online lectures](#).

Create winter routines

With the sun rising late and setting just after 4pm, the prospect of a lockdown in the dead of winter fills many of us with a sense of foreboding.

“If possible, get some nature into your day,” says Buckley. “Take a walk to a nearby park, river or green space and make the most of any outside space you may have, such as a garden. Even something as simple as sitting by a window and watching the birds, or taking care of a pot plant, can be beneficial.

“If you’ve been spending a lot of time at home during the coronavirus pandemic, you may already have a routine of activities. But it may be helpful to think about how you can adapt this for the winter months.

“Trying out a new winter routine might help give you a sense of change if you’re struggling with how long the pandemic is continuing. For example, you could spend time cooking and trying some new winter recipes, or learning a new skill.”

Mental health matters

There is a lot of news. But Greenberg said while it was important to stay up to date on government rules and guidance, it was best to avoid “doom-scrolling” – searching out endless articles and comments on the pandemic.

“There are lots of different opinions on how long it might last, how bad the next virus is ... What happens is you end up fuelling your uncertainty and that leads to more anxiety,” he said.

Turning off news feeds and bright screens a few hours before bed could also help with a good night’s sleep, as could avoiding caffeine and smoking before hitting the hay, said Greenberg, while Buckley added that having a set routine benefitted people.

If people experience ongoing sleep problems they should seek professional advice, Greenberg added. “If you are feeling more anxious you are less likely to sleep and if you don’t sleep as well that is more likely to make you feel more anxious,” he said.

Staying connected is also key during lockdown, said Greenberg. And don’t throw in the towel on plans for the year ahead. “I think the idea of doing that little bit of exercise, finding a new pastime, and not letting yourself say ‘oh

gosh, stuff dry January, I'm drinking because it is terrible' is more important now than ever," said Greenberg.

Coping with working, and schooling, at home



Parents will again have to balance the demands of working with home-schooling. Photograph: Leah Willingham/AP

With adults working from home – and children now joining them – headphones might be a necessity. But experts say a clear work/life balance also matters.

"Make sure you take at least a 30-minute lunch break, ideally getting outside for some exercise, if you can," said Buckley. "Try putting a reminder in your diary when you plan to finish working and communicate this to your colleagues so they know when you're contactable. At the end of the working day, turn off your computer and any other devices so you're not tempted to check work emails and try to take your mind off work by doing something else."

The sentiment is echoed by the charity [Young Minds](#), which emphasised it was also important for children to find mental space.

Buckley noted that parents might find the demand of childcare meant they ended up working late into the evening, something he said could disrupt sleep and mental health. “If your current working arrangements aren’t working for you and your family, speak to your employer about what support they can offer, including the option of working more flexibly, or working reduced hours,” he said.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Nigel Slater's midweek dinnerFood](#)

Nigel Slater's recipe for cabbage, taleggio and pancetta

Give a twist to this ubiquitous winter vegetable by baking slices, then adorn with melting cheese



Winter greens: cabbage, taleggio and pancetta. Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer

Winter greens: cabbage, taleggio and pancetta. Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer



Nigel Slater

Tue 5 Jan 2021 07.00 EST

The recipe

Make a dressing by using 50ml of **olive oil**, a small handful of **parsley** leaves and 10g of grated fresh **horseradish**.

Beat in 2 tbsp of water and then set the dressing aside.

Cut 4 horizontal slices (2cm thick) from a small, tight **cabbage**, then carefully place the slices flat on a baking tray.

Trickle the cabbage slices generously with olive oil and scatter over 150g of diced **pancetta**.

Bake the cabbage slices in a preheated oven at 200C/gas mark 6 for 15 minutes until it has softened.

Cut 200g of **taleggio** into thin slices and place it on top of the cabbage. Then return it to the heat for 5 minutes to melt.

Remove the cabbage from the oven, carefully lift it on to plates using a fish slice, then spoon the dressing over the top.

Enough for 2

The trick

Try to choose a tightly furled cabbage and slice it horizontally so that the core holds the slices together. Be sure to evenly trickle the leaves with olive oil. Return the cabbage to the oven only for long enough to ensure that the taleggio melts, trying not to let it brown.

The twist

If taleggio eludes you, head in the direction of **mozzarella** instead. You could use **cauliflower** in place of the cabbage: steam the cauliflower slices for a few minutes first, until they are tender, the proceed with the rest of the method, as above.

Follow Nigel on Twitter [@NigelSlater](#)

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[Kitchen aide](#)[Food](#)

My pickled veg is fizzing – is it OK?

Upping the (sea) salt and adding vinegar can add longevity to fermented veg – but the fizzing means the bacteria are doing their job

- Do you have a culinary dilemma? Email feast@theguardian.com



Don't get in a tizz with the fizz: it just means the healthy bacteria are happy in their work. Photograph: GMVozd/Getty Images

Don't get in a tizz with the fizz: it just means the healthy bacteria are happy in their work. Photograph: GMVozd/Getty Images

[Anna Berrill](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 09.00 EST

I pickled some small home-grown cucumbers in spiced and sweetened vinegar, packed tightly into a lidded jar. The liquid leaked out of the jar, it had cloudy patches and it was fizzing. Are my pickles still OK?

Helen, Newent, Gloucestershire

What a, er, pickle. Whether or not these cucumbers should be discarded is hard to say without knowing exactly what went into Helen's brine, says [Rachel de Thample](#), author of [The River Cottage Fermentation Handbook](#). What we do know, however, is that pickled cucumbers are tricky to get right, so she should cut herself some slack.

"What's happened is that fermentation has taken place," De Thample says. "The cucumbers most likely had a high water content and, if they were put into the jar whole, then that water will leak out." Obviously, gauging how much water is in your cukes is nigh on impossible, so it's best to salt them the night before. This, De Thample says, draws out excess moisture (you rinse off the salt later) and "helps lower the pH, which creates an environment where the bad bacteria can't multiply." For a fermented brine, you normally add 4% salt (that is, 4g salt per 100ml), but, De Thample says, watery veg can dilute this, so try upping it to 8-10%.

Always use sea salt, too, advises [Kylee Newton](#), author of [The Modern Preserver](#), because "some iodised salt can create a cloudy, white residue." Also check that your brine recipe has a "healthy proportion of 5% high-acid vinegar", Newton adds, "to make your pickles last longer", and always leave it to cool before pouring over the cucumbers. Then add spices (mustard seeds, allspice berries, black peppercorns, coriander or dill seeds) and something from the allium family: "Shallots, onions or spring onions, leeks, garlic [cloves bashed or thinly sliced] or wild garlic [when in season] will add a really lovely back note," De Thample says. And don't be alarmed if your garlic changes colour: "It sometimes goes a greeny/blue [due to a chemical reaction]; it looks freaky, but it's fine."

You don't want to pack that jar too tightly, either: "The vegetables must be completely submerged under the brine with only a 2mm gap between the brine and lid," Newton says, "and I use a chopstick to move out any trapped bubbles that might encourage other bacteria in those spaces." For longer preservation, you're also going to want to store those cucumbers in the fridge.

There are other ways to ease yourself into pickling, too, Helen, so don't lose heart. While it's worth persevering with those homegrown cucumbers, also consider heading to your nearest east European deli come next summer. "A

lot of Polish-style pickles use varieties of cucumbers that are drier and have thicker skins,” De Thample says, “and this guarantees success.” Alternatively, make friends with quick pickles: “My grandmother used to cut cucumbers from the garden, add apple cider vinegar and a pinch of salt, and leave them on the table for a couple hours before dinner.” (You might want to sweeten the deal with a little honey, mind).

- Got a culinary dilemma? Email feast@theguardian.com
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2021/jan/05/my-pickled-veg-is-fizzing-is-it-ok-kitchen-aide>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[**Consumer champions**](#)[**Consumer affairs**](#)

I got 11 parking fines after a mix-up over Zipcar rules

I owe more than £1,600 and cannot get the issue resolved with the car-sharing service



Zipcar's Flex plan lets you pick up and drop off cars in the allocated zones at the end of the trip. Photograph: UrbanImages/Alamy

Zipcar's Flex plan lets you pick up and drop off cars in the allocated zones at the end of the trip. Photograph: UrbanImages/Alamy



[Rebecca Smithers](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

I started using the London-based car-sharing scheme Zipcar at the beginning of lockdown in March as a way to commute safely, and, initially, rated it highly to friends. Its Flex plan lets you pick up and drop off cars in allocated zones at the end of the trip. I noticed I was being charged for trips that were 12-14 hours long as the application's "end trip" button didn't register when I attempted to use it, unbeknown to me. After I got in touch, Zipcar was able to adjust the trips fairly easily.

Fast forward to November and I started receiving parking violation notices from three months previously – tickets related to the trips that did not end correctly. Eleven were sent, each amounting to £130 plus the £15 service charge (for each ticket), totalling more than £1,600.

I tried to get this resolved by adjusting the trips as I had before, but was pushed around to various departments. Finally, I got an email telling me that on its website it states where we are allowed to park in various areas of London. It sent me the section of the contract and explained this was final.

DC, London SW8

Zipcar says its Flex service aims to provide a cheap and convenient way for consumers – charged by the minute – to use cars in the capital. It insisted that different parking rules in London boroughs are made clear to users both through the app and its help centre – with links to the various council websites – and that it does not state that members can park anywhere they like.

However, we think the information online is a little confusing. When selecting “Flex cars” in the app, users are told that the zone where they can collect or drop off a car is highlighted in blue, with any restricted parking areas outlined in red. But it admits that not all restricted areas are outlined in red, so the system does rely on scrupulous checking.

Zipcar looked at your account and insisted you were at fault for the violations which triggered the fines. You were fined eight times for driving in a bus lane, and 13 times for parking in a loading bay/street while restrictions were in force.

It said it had spoken to you several times and tried to explain that you were violating traffic and parking rules, but that you had disregarded the warnings and continued to run up further fines.

Zipcar said: “All Zipcar members must abide by the rules of the road, as they would in their own vehicle. We make it clear on our website, and in our terms of use, that members are required to obey traffic and parking rules as they will be liable for any violations they incur during or as a result of their trip. In this customer’s case, the charges were correctly attributed, as this member has repeatedly broken the rules.”

The total you owe has now risen to £1,740. Since our intervention, Zipcar has agreed a payment plan to allow you to spread out the payments.

We welcome letters but cannot answer individually. Email us at consumer.champions@theguardian.com. Please include a daytime phone number. Submission and publication of all letters is subject to our [terms and conditions](#)

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.06 - Take part

- [Education UK students: tell us how the national lockdown is affecting you](#)
- [Coronavirus How do you feel about shielding in the UK during lockdown?](#)
- [Life and style Are you keeping your Christmas decorations up longer this year?](#)
- [Healthcare workers in the UK Share your experiences during the second wave of Covid](#)

Coronavirus

UK students: tell us how the national lockdown is affecting you

We'd like to hear from students across the UK about how Covid-19 and the national lockdown are affecting you this term. Share your experiences

Guardian community team

Tue 5 Jan 2021 09.21 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 09.22 EST



A student wearing a protective face mask studies on a computer as he sits on a pew at the Votive Church in Vienna, Photograph: Joe Klamar/AFP/Getty Images

With the UK heading into a national lockdown that [could last for months](#), students across the country have been thrown into disarray. Those who travelled home for Christmas may be unable to return to campus until mid-February at the earliest and many of those who stayed at university have reported feeling stressed and isolated.

In accordance with The [Coronavirus Act 2020](#), the devolved administrations of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales have the authority to close universities in their respective nations. With in-person teaching cancelled for many, students are expected to continue their courses remotely either from their home or halls of residence.

We'd like to hear from students about the impact of lockdown measures and Covid uncertainty on their studies, finances and mental health.

Share your experiences

You can get in touch by filling in the form below, anonymously if you wish. 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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UK news

How do you feel about shielding in the UK during lockdown?

We'd like to hear from those who are at high risk from coronavirus and are having to shield during the new national lockdown

Guardian community team

Tue 5 Jan 2021 05.17 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 05.20 EST



A sign is seen to encourage social distancing. Photograph: Naomi Baker/Getty Images

The government have asked those who're high risk from coronavirus to start shielding again as the the new national lockdown gets underway.

New government guidelines advise those who are clinically vulnerable to the disease to stay at home unless they're going outside for exercise or attending a medical appointment.

We would like to hear from those who're most at risk from coronavirus on how they feel about the coming weeks – and how it's been for them so far.

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.

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Christmas

Are you keeping your Christmas decorations up longer this year?

We'd like to hear from people who're planning on keeping their Christmas decorations up longer this year. Tell us why

Guardian community team

Tue 5 Jan 2021 06.12 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 06.14 EST



The Duchess of Cornwall decorates Clarence House Christmas Tree virtually with children From Helen & Douglas House Hospice, on December 16, 2020 in London. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

With 2020 finally over and the new year in full swing, many of us are starting to consider whether it's about time we took the tree down. However, with many working from home, we'd like to find out whether the nation's Christmas trees are set to stay around longer than usual.

There are different schools of thought on when exactly this should be done by. The most proactive of us will have everything down by the time they sit down for Boxing Day dinner but traditionally many wait until twelfth night (5 January) to do so. In Tudor England, decorations usually weren't removed prior to Candlemas (February 2). So, if you want to keep your decorations up – at least you've got history on your side!

We'd like to hear from those who're planning on keeping their Christmas decorations up longer this year. But you're welcome to get in touch if you're keen to get them down too.

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.

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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

Guardian community team

Thu 31 Dec 2020 06.42 EST Last modified on Thu 31 Dec 2020 06.43 EST



A patient in intensive care during the coronavirus pandemic in University Hospital in Coventry, taken during mid December 2020. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

With the UK recording its [highest daily death toll](#) since April on Wednesday, and a new variant of coronavirus spreading rapidly, 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

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.

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2021.01.06 - Explore

- Covid vaccinations Slow start around world brings dose of reality
- Long Covid Many sufferers unable to fully work six months later
- Europe As parts of UK enter third Covid lockdown, how does rest of continent compare?
- Analysis Rishi Sunak builds bridge to post-Covid UK – but will it stand up?
- Late-night TV roundup Stephen Colbert on Trump's Georgia call: 'Like if Watergate and the Ukraine scandal had a baby'
- 'He's a risk-taker' Germans divided over Elon Musk's new GigaFactory
- Nature of the narwhal The one that is good at curving itself to the sky

Covid vaccinations: slow start around world brings dose of reality

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Coronavirus

Many 'long Covid' sufferers unable to fully work six months later

Respondents to global survey report 205 symptoms across 10 organ systems after infection

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

[Natalie Grover](#) and [Ian Sample](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.00 EST



A 57-year-old man who spent 45 days in hospital in Italy with Covid is examined by a rehabilitative cardiology doctor. Photograph: Marco Di Lauro/Getty Images

Many people suffering from “long Covid” are still unable to work at full capacity six months after infection, a large-scale survey of confirmed and

suspected patients has found.

While Covid-19 was initially understood to be a largely respiratory illness from which most people would recover within two or three weeks, as the pandemic wore on increasing numbers reported experiencing symptoms for months on end.

These long haulers – with symptoms affecting organs ranging from the heart to the brain – have no real explanation and no standardised treatment plan for their long-term condition. There is no consensus on the scale and impact of long Covid but emerging data is concerning.

In one of the largest [studies](#) yet, which has not been peer reviewed, [Patient Led Research for Covid-19](#) (a group of long Covid patients who are also researchers) surveyed 3,762 people aged 18 to 80-plus from 56 countries who responded in nine different languages to 257 different questions.

Two-hundred and five symptoms across 10 organ systems were recorded, with 66 symptoms traced over seven months. On average, respondents experienced symptoms from nine organ systems.

“This is a chapter that has not yet been written in the medical textbooks, and barely any major research papers yet published. Part of the progress here is simply inputting large numbers and stats to the existing anecdotal sense of what’s been happening, while aspects feel really quite novel. Nobody can address the condition until we’re better able to narrate what’s happening,” said Danny Altmann, a professor of immunology at Imperial College London.

The analysis was limited to respondents with illnesses lasting longer than 28 days, whose onset of symptoms occurred before June 2020, allowing examination of symptoms over an average six months’ duration.

Roughly 65% of respondents (2,454) reported experiencing symptoms for at least six months. The most likely symptoms to persist after six months included fatigue, post-exertional malaise, cognitive dysfunction (“brain fog”), neurological sensations, headaches, memory problems, insomnia,

muscle aches, palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness/balance issues, and speech and language problems.

Nearly 86% of respondents experienced relapses, most commonly triggered by physical activity, stress, exercise and mental activity.

Other less common symptoms, such as new allergies, facial paralyses, seizures, impaired vision or hearing were important targets for further investigation, said Altmann.

Memory and cognitive dysfunction, experienced by more than 85% of respondents, were the most pervasive and persistent neurological symptoms. They were equally common across all ages and had a substantial impact on respondents' ability to work, the authors found.

Forty-five per cent of respondents reported requiring a reduced work schedule compared with pre-illness, while roughly 22% were not working at the time of the survey due to their health conditions.

But the findings must be interpreted with caution. The majority of respondents were English speaking, white and of higher socioeconomic status. Most participants reported having at least one pre-existing condition such as allergies, migraine and asthma. Fewer than a third of respondents in the survey also had a confirmed Covid-19 infection.

"There may be differences in terms of ... those with confirmed infection and those without," said Dr Tim Nicholson, who is part of a multidisciplinary team at King's College hospital setting up NHS-funded clinics for long Covid.

Respondents were recruited from support groups, so the data is not necessarily representative of the general population, or people from more deprived backgrounds that are at higher risk of getting Covid, said Nisreen Alwan, an associate professor in public health at the University of Southampton.

"People who recover from long Covid are less likely to complete the survey limiting the comparison of those who fully recover to those who don't."

The enduring neurological problems that hospitalised Covid patients can experience have prompted calls for doctors to monitor patients for months after they are discharged.

Neurologists at the University of Brescia in Italy found that a third of 165 former Covid patients recalled for neurological assessment had problems six months after leaving hospital. Their symptoms varied widely from memory and attention issues to sleep disorders, fatigue, tremors and a loss of the sense of smell.

Standard examinations found nearly 40% of the patients had neurological abnormalities that appeared more severe in those hit hardest by the disease. To take account of pre-existing conditions, the doctors assessed the patients in hospital and checked their medical records, but some patients may still have had undiagnosed cognitive problems before they became infected.

In a [write-up of the research](#), which has yet to be peer reviewed and published in a medical journal, the doctors argue that long-term neurological problems seem common even in patients with less severe disease. The findings highlight “the importance of long-term follow-up programmes to properly care for patients” and to nail down the “real impact of Sars-CoV-2 infection on brain health status that is still uncertain”.

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Coronavirus

As parts of UK enter third Covid lockdown, how does rest of Europe compare?

Rules vary from country to country but many European nations face severe restrictions

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



A couple of people walk through a deserted Bull Ring shopping centre in Birmingham, England. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty

A couple of people walk through a deserted Bull Ring shopping centre in Birmingham, England. Photograph: Nathan Stirk/Getty

*[Jon Henley](#) and [Guardian correspondents](#)
[@jonhenley](#)*

Tue 5 Jan 2021 07.29 EST

After a brief and partial relaxation of the rules over Christmas and New Year, many continental European countries have returned to the tough anti-Covid regimes that were imposed this autumn – with some tightening measures further.

According to the [latest update](#) from the World Health Organization, in the final week of 2020 the UK had a 14-day new-case notification rate of 720 for every 100,000 people, more than double that in France, Germany, Italy and Spain but lower than the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark.

France (infection rate 277.5/100,000) lifted its second national lockdown on 15 December, with non-essential shops allowed to reopen but cafes, restaurants, gyms, cinemas and theatres remaining closed. It was replaced with a nationwide 8pm-6am curfew that was eased for Christmas (but not [New Year](#)). The curfew has now been brought forward by two hours in 15 *départements*, mainly in eastern France, with schools returning for the new term as normal on Monday.



Parisians play chess at the Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. Photograph: Kiran Ridley/Getty

Germany (379.1/100,000) has been in a second lockdown since 2 November. The restrictions, which began as a “lockdown light” with only restaurants, bars and entertainment venues closed and some soft-touch rules for social gatherings, were tightened in the run-up to Christmas. Since 16 December, non-essential shops have also been closed, schools and nurseries only offer emergency care, and social gatherings are limited to one other household or a maximum number of five people over the age of 14. The lockdown is expected to be extended until the end of January.

Netherlands (907/100,000) closed bars and restaurants in mid-October, with non-essential shops and businesses, gyms, museums, cinemas and theatres following on 15 December. After a minor Christmas relaxation, people are again advised to stay at home and may have only a maximum of two guests a day. Home working is strongly advised and childcare facilities and all schools, colleges and universities are closed except for the children of key workers until at least 19 January.



An empty street in Amsterdam, Netherlands. Photograph: Piroschka van de Wouw/Reuters

Sweden (815/100,000), whose largely [voluntary approach](#) has been an outlier, last month banned bars and restaurants from serving alcohol after 8pm; limited groups in restaurants to four; ordered shops and gyms to set a

maximum number of customers; moved over-16 education back online; closed non-essential public services such as swimming pools and libraries; and recommended face masks on public transport at busy times. A new law aimed at making it easier for the government to impose further restrictions should come into force from 10 January.

Poland (330.6/100,000) introduced a three-week strict lockdown on 28 December, with the closure of non-essential shops and all arrivals from abroad required to isolate for 10 days. Public gatherings are limited to five people.

In **Hungary** (335.6/100,000), all shops remain open but the country's borders are closed to almost all visitors, including citizens of other EU nations, and a night-time curfew is in force between the hours of 8pm and 5am.



A usually busy street remains empty in Barcelona, Spain. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty

Spain (271.7/100,000) has imposed regional restrictions, with Catalonia among the strictest: from Thursday, people are barred from leaving their municipality, gyms and shopping centres must close, and only essential shops may stay open at weekends. Bars and restaurants can open for

breakfast and lunch, but offer only takeaways at dinner. Madrid, where the 14-day case rate is among the country's highest, has rejected closing restaurants or non-essential shops, instead opting for a light-touch confinement of districts with a higher infection rate.

[I won't make the same mistakes again: Milan mayor on his green Covid recovery plan](#)

[Read more](#)

Italy (337.9/100,000) spent much of Christmas and New Year at home, with people allowed out only for essential reasons or brief visits to relatives. The rules will ease from Thursday when the previous three-tier regional system will return. Restaurants and bars can open until 6pm on Thursdays and Fridays, but must close again at weekends when the whole country will be classed "red". A nationwide 10pm-5am curfew remains and secondary schools will not reopen (at 50% capacity) until at least next week.

Additional reporting by Ashifa Kassam, Philip Oltermann, Angela Giuffrida and Shaun Walker

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Economics

Rishi Sunak builds bridge to post-Covid UK – but will it stand up?

Many stretched businesses and workers are wondering how they can survive

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



Britain's chancellor of the exchequer, Rishi Sunak. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

Britain's chancellor of the exchequer, Rishi Sunak. Photograph: Toby Melville/Reuters

[Richard Partington](#) Economics correspondent

[@RJPartington](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 10.54 EST

Throughout the pandemic, bridge building has been a favourite metaphor of [Rishi Sunak](#) to describe his big-spending economic support packages. Billions of pounds have been spent in furlough wage subsidies, state-backed

loans, business grants and tax cuts to carry the British people through the disruption.

Now, faced with the fresh resurgence of the virus leading to lockdown 3.0 in England, yet another chasm in economic activity must be crossed. The chancellor knows a final push is needed, this time as the Covid vaccines raise hopes that the return to relative economic normality is tantalisingly close.

With that in mind, firms in those sectors of the economy hardest hit by the new lockdown in England and tougher controls in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland will receive a [fresh support package](#) worth £4.6bn, providing grants to companies to help keep them afloat until the spring.

It takes the Treasury's total support during the pandemic closer to £300bn for the current financial year. But what is hoped by Boris Johnson to be the "last phase of the struggle" against Covid-19 is – as the prime minister also recognises – the hardest phase.

Analysts expect the latest measures will confirm a double-dip recession for the UK economy, with the US investment bank JPMorgan downgrading its forecast for the first three months of the year from 0.1% growth to a 2.5% decline in national output.

It is not quite the scale of economic collapse created by the spring 2020 shutdown, when gross domestic product plunged by 25%. But the country's current juncture is worrying because of the cumulative damage over the past nine months. Restrictions this time around are also expected to be tougher than during the relatively light-touch English lockdown 2.0 in November, when more non-essential shops were open and Britain's manufacturing base received a pre-Brexit stockpiling boost.

Schools have been ordered to close, hitting working parents and causing additional disruption, while more restrictions on movement will also combine to make January one of the most difficult months in the pandemic to get through.

After almost a year of stop-start restrictions – and with a somewhat reluctant approach to offering fresh financial support on each occasion – businesses and workers across the country are seriously overstretched. And growing [questions are being asked](#) about the adequacy of Sunak's bridge to prosperity.

The early reaction from business leaders at the start of the latest lockdown is that any extra support is welcome, considering the mounting difficulties for companies after a difficult year.

There are reasons to be hopeful. Unlike the unprecedented chaos of spring 2020 when there was no playbook to reach for, many firms are learning to adapt to life in the time of Covid. The hit to the economy is not expected to be as substantial, the government-backed loan schemes are already up and running, and furlough is a firm fixture of the business landscape – with a [recent extension](#) until the end of April.

The extra support comes on top of this, buying Sunak time to build a more cohesive recovery plan to be unveiled at his spring budget on 3 March.

But there are calls for the chancellor to be more ambitious today, rather than in 8 weeks' time. Sunak notably stopped short of extending VAT cuts and a business rates holiday – two key demands of business groups – while there were also calls to extend furlough beyond April. These demands will inevitably grow louder.

The powerful [Commons Treasury committee](#) warns that significant gaps in support that have existed throughout the pandemic, affecting millions of workers – not least the self-employed – urgently need to be plugged. And at a time of rapid growth in unemployment – with more than 2.6 million people expected to be out of work by the middle of this year – question marks still hang over the £20 per week uplift in universal credit benefit. This is due to be [cut at the end of March](#), threatening to push more families into poverty.

Given the scale of the accumulated problems after the toughest year for the economy in three centuries, and given the proximity of a return to relative normality with help from the vaccine, the chancellor's bridge-building project appears far from complete.

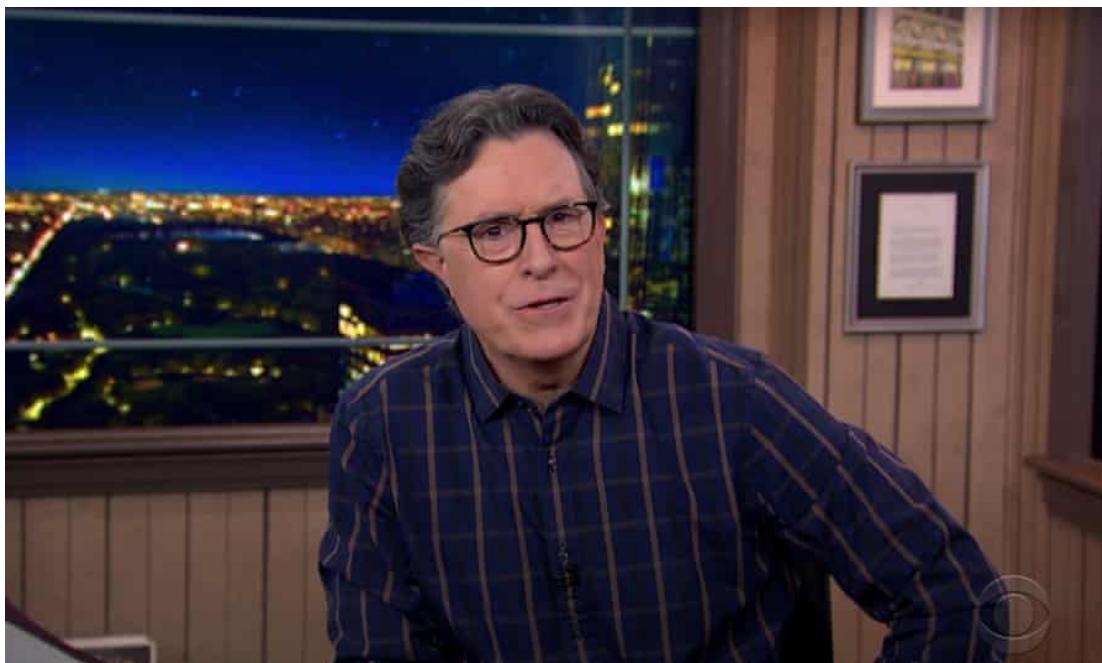
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Late-night TV roundup

Stephen Colbert on Trump's Georgia call: 'Like if Watergate and the Ukraine scandal had a baby'

Late-night hosts unpack Trump's shocking phone call urging Georgia's secretary of state to overturn the election and GOP politicians' refusal to certify the results



Stephen Colbert: 'Buckle up everybody, because this call is like if Watergate and the Ukraine scandal had a baby that they made on the Access Hollywood bus.' Photograph: Youtube

Stephen Colbert: 'Buckle up everybody, because this call is like if Watergate and the Ukraine scandal had a baby that they made on the Access Hollywood bus.' Photograph: Youtube

[Adrian Horton](#)

[@adrian_horton](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 13.00 EST

Stephen Colbert

Late-night hosts returned to the air on Monday evening for the new year, although 2021 was already looking a lot like the 2020 mess just left behind. “We’re off to a fresh start,” joked [Stephen Colbert](#) on the Late Show, “with a raging pandemic and a president who’s trying to steal the election”.

“Turns out 2020 is dropping some bonus tracks,” he added, as on Sunday the Washington Post released a recording of a [phone call](#) between the president and [Georgia’s secretary of state Brad Raffensperger](#), who oversaw the state’s election, recount and recount of the recount. During the [hour-long call](#), which took place on Saturday, Trump explicitly demanded Raffensperger “find” 11,000 votes to overturn Biden’s victory in the state, invoked numerous conspiracy theories, and threatened criminal charges against Raffensperger if he did not assist the president in his attempt to nullify the election.

“Buckle up everybody, because this call is like if Watergate and the Ukraine scandal had a baby that they made on the Access Hollywood bus,” Colbert joked. “When you’re a star, they let you do it!”

[Stephen Colbert: White House to 'stick with its pandemic plan of not having a plan'](#)

[Read more](#)

While the call was ominous – the president pleaded with a state official and his lawyers “fellas, I need 11,000 votes. Give me a break” – the contents were often nonsensical and rambling. “If he wants to steal an election he really needs to sound less like your grandpa complaining about his phone,” Colbert joked.

Seth Meyers

New year, same old conflicts in Washington, reported Seth Meyers on Monday night, as House Republicans and a dozen GOP senators prepared to [vote symbolically](#) to refuse to certify the election results. “Virtually the entirety of the Republican party has started off the year by making it clear, in

case it wasn't clear before, that they're actively trying to destroy democracy," the Late Night host explained. "Also this story is yet another reminder that while we do a big countdown and watch a ball drop, the beginning of new years tend to be a lot like the year that just ended."

"Predictably, 2021 is picking up right where 2020 left off, with the Republican party callously refusing to do anything about the raging pandemic that's killed 350,000 Americans or the botched vaccine rollout, choosing instead to focus on their unhinged attempts to light our democracy on fire," Meyers added, before diving into the Trump-Raffensperger call.

Though congressional Republicans such as senators Ted Cruz and Josh Hawley have claimed election integrity as the reason for sustaining Trump's baseless claims of election fraud, "with this call to Raffensperger, Trump ripped off the mask and revealed what's really going on," Meyers said. "He made it crystal clear exactly what those 140 GOP House members and a dozen senators will be supporting on Wednesday. They're not standing up for election integrity or trying to restore faith in our democracy, they're petty henchmen in a harebrained scheme to steal an election hatched by a deranged wannabe tyrant who talks like a mafia boss with a head injury."

During the hour-long call, Trump threatened Raffensperger with criminal charges and invoked numerous debunked election conspiracy theories. "I just like to imagine what everyone else was doing on the other end of the phone call while Trump was rambling like a lunatic for an hour," Meyers said. "It's like when you put your grandpa on speaker phone while you do household chores and then he just casually confesses to a crime in the middle."

Jimmy Kimmel

"While most of us are back to reality today, Donald Trump is further from it than he's ever been," [Jimmy Kimmel](#) said on Monday night, referencing the Raffensperger call. "I listened to it twice," he said, "I listened to the whole thing like it was a surprise Taylor Swift album."

During the call, the president "tried everything", Kimmel said. "He bragged, he challenged, he threatened, he told the secretary of state he'd come to

Georgia and eat all their peaches, nothing.

“He really is the weakest, whiniest little dictator imaginable,” he added. “If you haven’t listened to it, listen to it, it’s pathetic.”

And yet, numerous congressional Republicans intend to vote in favor of Trump’s attempt to overturn democracy this week, citing baseless election fraud claims. “During his last ‘perfect call’ – the one he got impeached for – Republicans lined up and said ‘we can’t impeach, Congress shouldn’t decide who’s president, the people should decide!'” Kimmel said. “And now these same Congress people are like, ‘what, the people decided on Biden? In that case, let’s let Congress decide who’s the president.'”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2021/jan/05/stephen-colbert-trump-georgia-call-late-night-hosts>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Elon Musk

'He's a risk-taker': Germans divided over Elon Musk's new GigaFactory

The Tesla project will put Grünheide on the map, but some say it is doing 'irreversible' harm to the environment



Elon Musk visiting the construction site in Grünheide. Photograph: Odd Andersen/AFP/Getty Images

Elon Musk visiting the construction site in Grünheide. Photograph: Odd Andersen/AFP/Getty Images



Kate Connolly in Berlin

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

For the past 10 months, Silas Heineken has been flying a drone over one of Germany's biggest building sites [and posting the images on YouTube](#).

The 14-year-old self-named "[Tesla Kid](#)" has built a significant following, as tens of thousands tune in each week to see the latest developments in Elon Musk's GigaFactory as it emerges at speed from the sandy ground of Brandenburg, south-east of Berlin.

"He is a huge visionary who has great ideas, which he has managed to realise," Heineken said in an interview.



Silas Heineken, aka Tesla Kid. Photograph: Silas Heineken

Having hung out on his bicycle to see Musk when he recently visited, the schoolboy sees an electric car factory close to his home in the sleepy town of Grünheide as a huge opportunity for the region.

It is by far the biggest industrial settlement in the area in a century and Brandenburg's economics minister, Jörg Steinbach, has called it a chance for the region "to become a leading energy revolution location in [Germany](#) and Europe". Musk has promised to create 10,000 jobs and turn out about 500,000 cars a year, starting with its Model Y, and construct the world's largest battery plant at the site. His vision will put the region on the map.

Politicians talk off the record of their debt towards Musk, who they say could have easily gone to Asia instead, where labour costs are lower and environmental controls and construction standards less stringent.

But while landowners are among those rubbing their hands with glee, having seen land prices increase tenfold since Musk made public his intentions in November 2019, there are many opponents. Most of them say they like the bosky backwater of Grünheide precisely because it is not on the map, and are horrified when they see – particularly on Heineken's videos, depicting the emergence of the foundry, the pressing plant, the paint shop and the

assembly plant – the speed at which the project is coming along, and the extent of the woodland it has already swallowed up.



Pine logs piled up on the site where Tesla is set to build its new factory.
Photograph: Odd Andersen/AFP via Getty Images

“Grünheide is just a small place of 9,000 souls, bordering a conservation area. Musk’s plans will turn it into a town of 40,000 – it will become like Wolfsburg,” says Werner Klink, referring to the city west of Berlin purpose-built in the 1930s around the production of the VW motorcar.

Klink is a member of the [Grünheide's citizens' initiative](#), a group of locals who are campaigning to stop the project. Construction projects in Germany, he says, usually take time “due to all the permits you need and regulations you must abide by before you even put a shovel in the ground”. Musk has instead chosen the very un-German route of starting the work first and then securing the permits.

“Even if they told him he would not be allowed to continue, he will have already caused so much damage there’s no way he can take the site back to its original state,” Klink argues. “Immense, irreversible harm has been done to the nature, potentially to the groundwater, to the forest, the flora, fauna.”

One hundred hectares of pine trees (the equivalent of approximately 26 football fields) have already been felled, and a further 86 hectares are likely to follow, after a court ruling last month.

The barriers to Tesla come in the form of the sand lizard and European smooth snake, species that live in the woodland, Germany's Nature Protection Union (NABU) has pointed out, and are at the heart of the legal battle to stop the project.

There is also the matter of an outstanding downpayment to the local environment agency of €100m to cover possible remediation costs, which a court also ruled on 18 December was reason to halt the project. Lawyers for Tesla have filed to extend the deadline for payment, the [German newspaper Der Tagesspiegel has reported](#).



Musk touring the site in his white Tesla car. Photograph: Odd Andersen/AFP/Getty Images

Despite 360 objections to the project having been lodged, authorities have effectively allowed it to go ahead by telling Musk he does so at his own risk. The practice is not so unusual in Germany, though on this scale it is unprecedented.

“Musk is a risk-taker, that’s what he does, and he’s banked on the fact they’ll never tell him to demolish his building, particularly when so many jobs are at stake,” says Klink, a retired geophysicist.

He says the speed with which the site has sprung up has left no time to properly inspect the site. “There’s a considerable danger that the digging will contaminate the groundwater. Just one metre below the surface there is salt water and there are signs it’s rising. If it mixes with the fresh water we’ll have a huge problem on our hands.”

A protest in December in front of Axel Springer House in Berlin over the German publisher’s tribute to Musk’s “ambition to make the world a better place” with its eponymous award drew climate activists and environmentalists, including NABU, the Society for Species Protection and the Grüne Liga (green league).

Norbert Heß, the Brandenburg spokesman of the Ecological Democrats (ÖDP), a small political party, has accused the larger Green party of “violating their oath of office” by helping to accelerate the project.

Heß says many aspects of the project have been poorly thought through. Why was consideration not given to the brown coal mining area of Lausitz in the south of Brandenburg, looking for a new raison d’être after Germany’s planned brown coal phase-out, he asks. “The land where the opencast mines are is already stripped of nature,” Heß says.

The Greens, in government in Brandenburg, say they welcome the project because it offers a viable alternative to the diesel motor, as well as creating much-needed local jobs.



The construction site. Photograph: Odd Andersen/AFP/Getty Images

Tesla shies away from talking to the media. It has tried to express that it is well-intentioned in the form of projects such as pledging to plant three times as many trees as it fells, and building fences to protect the lizards and snakes.

It also set up an information kiosk in the town, but that has been sparsely staffed. The coronavirus has reduced communication further.

Most statements come in the form of succinct tweets from Musk himself, such as one in the run-up to Christmas, which simply said: “Thank you Brandenburg and Grünheide” after the mayor doubled his commitment to the project by signing off plans to create a transport system around the plant, which is also to include a park-and-ride facility to transfer workers to and from the factory.

Klink said he has not yet met Musk, who occasionally turns up to see the progress of his project.

“I don’t have any need or desire to meet him,” he said. But he does have a nickname for the Musk sycophants and flunkies: “‘SchließMuskelkriecher’, a play on Musk’s name, mixed with the German both for sphincter and

brown-noser. “At least that’s how our initiative sees it, even if I admit it’s rather rude,” he said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/jan/05/elon-musk-new-tesla-gigafactory-germany>.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

The nature of ...Environment

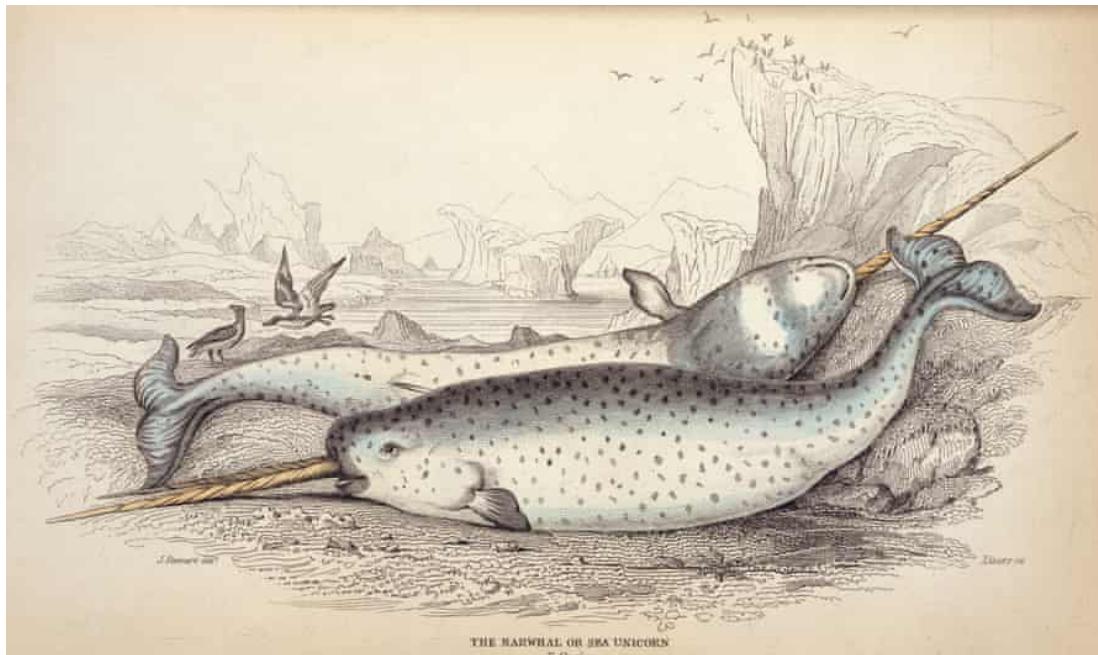
The nature of the narwhal: 'The one that is good at curving itself to the sky'

[Helen Sullivan](#)



‘The whole thing that is great about the teeth of the narwhal is that nothing makes sense’

- The Nature of ... is a column dedicated to interesting animals, insects, plants and natural phenomena



Nobody knows what the tusk is for. The Vikings believed it could cure melancholia.

Photograph: The Natural History Museum/Alamy Stock Photo

Nobody knows what the tusk is for. The Vikings believed it could cure melancholia.

Photograph: The Natural History Museum/Alamy Stock Photo

Mon 4 Jan 2021 11.30 EST

There are some animals about which it is easy to forget the fact that they have teeth, so that every time they flash their grins, it is as though you are seeing a new animal. Dogs, cats of all kinds, sharks and crocodiles are not among these. Horses, rabbits, fish and geese live toothless in my mind.

Narwhals are among the actually toothless, if you discount their tusks. Inside their mouths, which are shaped in a permanently sweet smile, there are no teeth as we understand teeth to be.

But the males have a long, unicorn-like projection protruding – just off centre – from what might be described as their upper lip. I find them quite festive, like ornaments that should be hung on a Christmas tree. Maybe it's their wintry, icicle-like tusk. I try to forget that this tusk is a tooth.

[The nature of the Norwegian lemming: 'bloodthirsty, hairy berserkers'](#)

[Helen Sullivan](#)

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In Moby-Dick, Ishmael describes the narwhal as having: “A very picturesque, leopard-like look, being of a milk-white ground colour, dotted with round and oblong spots of black.” He describes the “peculiar horn”, because it is not in the middle, as “giving its owner something analogous to the aspect of a clumsy left-handed man.”

Nobody knows for sure what the beautiful tusk is for.

“It is striking when you think that this animal decided to take all of its tooth-producing energy and put it into one thing,” Martin Nweeia, a Harvard dentist told the [Smithsonian](#), where he is a member of the Department of Vertebrate Zoology. “With the amount of energy that it takes to produce that one tusk it could easily have 30 to 40 teeth in its mouth doing other things.”

“Tooth-producing energy”; the idea of teeth “doing other things”. It is all quite a lot to chew on.



‘A very picturesque, leopard-like look.’ Photograph: Paul Nicklen/Paul Nicklen

In 2014, Nweeia developed a new theory: the tooth is sensitive, a bit like our teeth when we drink ice water. But because of its spiral shape, it seems to be designed to expose the narwhal tusk to the water, rather than protect them. Nweeia believes that the tusks can sense the salinity of water, which helps them to tell whether icebergs are melting, diluting the sea, or forming, which makes it more salty. This tells them whether they need to leave in order to avoid being trapped in the ice.

“The Nature of ...” is a column dedicated to interesting animals, insects, plants and natural phenomena. Is there an intriguing creature or particularly lively plant you think would delight our readers? Let us know on Twitter [@helenrsullivan](https://twitter.com/5sp1J184CN) pic.twitter.com/5sp1J184CN

— Guardian Australia (@GuardianAus) [January 5, 2021](#)

The Inuit name for narwhals [translates as](#) “the one that is good at curving itself to the sky”, because narwhals often point their tusks up and out of the water (the word “narwhal” comes from the old Norse nár, which means corpse, because they sometimes lie very still, the verb for which is “logging”).

When they are not pointing their faces to the sky or lazing about, they dive to depths of more than a kilometre.

[The secret, sonic lives of narwhals - podcast](#)
[Read more](#)

In Moby-Dick, Herman Melville also wrote that the Danish king’s throne was made from narwhal tusks, which is true. The [throne chair](#), as it is called, is guarded by three life-sized silver lions weighing 130kg each.

In England, at William the Conqueror’s castle in Warwick, there is a narwhal tusk that is said to be the rib of the Dun Cow, the most British mythical beast that ever existed: it is a very large cow that roams the heath and once belonged to a giant.

“The whole thing that is great about the teeth of the narwhal is that nothing makes sense,” said Nweeia in 2012. But vikings believed narwhal tusks,

whatever their purpose for the narwhals, could cure melancholia. Thinking of these porpoises with their tails and tusks pointed cheerfully at the sky, how could you not agree?

“The Nature of ...” is a column by Helen Sullivan dedicated to interesting animals, insects, plants and natural phenomena. Is there an intriguing creature or particularly lively plant you think would delight our readers? Let us know on Twitter [@helenrsullivan](https://twitter.com/helenrsullivan) or via email: helen.sullivan@theguardian.com

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.06 - In pictures

- [Tuesday's best photos Returning art, huskies and brick work](#)
- [Coronavirus England prepares for a wintry third lockdown](#)
- [Enter the void Photographs that find beauty in emptiness](#)
- [Photo essay Why the world's biggest mammal migration is crucial for Africa](#)
- [Sport Life in football's cocoon – a photo essay](#)
- ['Not enough work, not enough money' Can this Kyrgyz village survive without tourists?](#)

Best photographs of the day

Returning art, huskies and brick work: Tuesday's best photos

A man carries bricks in Savar on the outskirts of Dhaka in Bangladesh.
Photograph: Munir Uz Zaman/AFP/Getty Images

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/gallery/2021/jan/05/returning-art-huskies-and-brick-work-tuesdays-best-photos>

England prepares for a wintry third lockdown – in pictures

A bleak Brighton on the first day of the new lockdown. Photograph: David Levene/the Guardian

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Enter the void: photographs that find beauty in emptiness – in pictures

Branching out ... Kumo (Cloud) II, 2019 by Paul Cupido

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The age of extinction

Why the world's biggest mammal migration is crucial for Africa – photo essay

Straw-coloured fruit bats take part in the biggest mammal migration in the world.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/05/why-the-worlds-biggest-mammal-migration-is-crucial-for-africa-photo-essay-aoe>

[The Guardian picture essay](#)

Life in football's cocoon – a photo essay

A fan walks past information signs before Brighton v Southampton on 7 December. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/the Guardian

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Photographing the pandemic

'Not enough work, not enough money': can this Kyrgyz village survive without tourists? A picture essay

Buunisa Termechikova crosses the river in Sary-Mogol on her way home to Burgan-Suu village, Kyrgyzstan. Photograph: Danil Usmanov/UNDP

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/04/not-enough-work-not-enough-money-can-this-kyrgyz-village-survive-without-tourists-a-picture-essay>.

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- ['Worst sequel yet' What the papers say about England's third lockdown](#)
- [Vaccine Unease among doctors as follow-up doses delayed](#)
- [Georgia Biden and Trump hold duelling rallies on Senate runoff eve](#)
- [Georgia runoffs Why do they matter and when are results due?](#)
- ['Fight like hell' Grievance and denialism rule at Trump rally](#)
- [Dakar rally Calls for boycott while Saudi women's right to drive activist in prison](#)
- [Julian Assange WikiLeaks co-founder to seek release from prison after extradition ruling](#)
- [Art Yinka Shonibare to create Leeds memorial for Nigerian killed by police in 1960s](#)
- [Cop26 UK urged to put Alok Sharma in full-time charge of Glasgow climate talks](#)
- [Proud Boys Leader Enrique Tarrio arrested ahead of DC rallies](#)
- [China Authorities move to punish lawyers who helped Hong Kong activists](#)
- [Tanya Roberts Publicist retracts report saying Bond actor had died](#)

- Music festivals Summer events face cancellation without government support

Coronavirus

England Covid lockdown likely to be in place until March, Gove warns

Minister says time needed for vaccine to take effect means restrictions cannot definitely be lifted in mid-February

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

Kevin Rawlinson

Tue 5 Jan 2021 06.04 EST First published on Tue 5 Jan 2021 03.50 EST

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0:33

England's coronavirus lockdown may last until March says Gove – video

The third national lockdown imposed in [England](#) to try to deal with the huge increase in Covid-19 cases is likely to remain in place into March at least, with some measures lasting even longer, the government has indicated.

The Cabinet Office minister, [Michael Gove](#), said he hoped the gradual lifting of restrictions could begin in mid-February, but that the time it took for the vaccines to take effect meant it was likely to be at least another couple of weeks before measures could start to be eased.

“We can’t predict with certainty that we’ll be able to lift restrictions the week commencing the 15 to 22 [February], what we will be doing is everything we can to make sure that as many people as possible are vaccinated so that we can begin progressively to lift restrictions,” Gove told Sky News on Tuesday.

“I think it’s right to say that, as we enter March, we should be able to lift some of these restrictions – but not necessarily all.”

England was placed under a renewed national lockdown – with the most severe restrictions since last March – on Monday. Announcing the measures, Boris Johnson warned that the weeks ahead would be the “hardest yet”.

The prime minister said that closing schools and non-essential businesses and telling people to stay in their homes was necessary to deal with the new variant of the virus.

But ministers have been unable to explain why they waited until some children were already back in the classroom to make the announcement, having insisted only hours earlier that it was safe for them to be there.

And, speaking on Tuesday morning, Gove admitted that ministers had waited until the very last moment, only imposing the restrictions when they had no other choice. He told Sky News: “Closing schools is really the very last resort. None of us wanted to do it. We all know why it’s so important that the children get the best possible education they can.

“But the chief medical officers of all parts of the United Kingdom judged yesterday that we needed to move to level five – the most severe level of alert against this infection. And, faced with that news yesterday, we were left with no alternative other than to take every step that we possibly could.”

Quick guide

Who in the UK will get the new Covid-19 vaccine first?

Show Hide

The UK has become the first western country to license a vaccine against Covid. On 8 December, Margaret Keenan, aged 90, became the the first patient in the world to receive it. The government’s joint committee on vaccination and immunisation has published a list of groups of people who will be prioritised to receive a vaccine for Covid-19. The list is:

- 1 All those 80 years of age and over and health and social care workers.
- 2 All those 75 and over.

- 3 All those 70 and over.
- 4 All those 65 and over.
- 5 Adults under 65 at high risk of serious disease and mortality from Covid-19.
- 6 Adults under 65 at moderate risk of serious disease and mortality from Covid-19.
- 7 All those 60 and over.
- 8 All those 55 and over.
- 9 All those 50 and over.
- 10 Rest of the population.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

[Keir Starmer](#) has said he would back England's new national lockdown. On Tuesday, the Labour leader told BBC Breakfast: "It was inevitable we needed a national set of restrictions. That's why I called for it."

He called for a return to the spirit of last March, saying it was now a race against time to ramp up the national vaccination programme. "We have got a contract with the British people to say these are tough restrictions. In return for that, the government has got to roll out the vaccination programme at speed and accelerate that. This is a huge challenge and I think we need to pull together."

Play Video

1:07

Keir Starmer says anti-vax campaigns and misinformation 'will cost lives' – video

Speaking to BBC Radio 4's Today programme, he said he wanted to see a "vaccination centre on every high street", adding: "The prime minister said

seven weeks – that's to allow the vaccination programme to be rolled out for 13 to 14 million people ... I hope he is not overpromising.”

Gove admitted it was unlikely all 14 million would receive the vaccine in time, while hinting that restrictions would remain in place until they did.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/covid-lockdown-in-england-likely-in-place-until-march-gove-warns>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Politics live with Andrew Sparrow

Coronavirus

UK coronavirus: more than 1m in England infected as UK daily positive tests hit record 60,916 - as it happened

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Coronavirus

'Worst sequel yet': what the papers say about England's third Covid lockdown

Toughest lockdown since March dominates front pages

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



Front pages of the UK papers on Tuesday 5 Jan 2021 as a lockdown is again imposed on England in an attempt to slow the spread of coronavirus.
Composite: Various

Front pages of the UK papers on Tuesday 5 Jan 2021 as a lockdown is again imposed on England in an attempt to slow the spread of coronavirus.

Composite: Various

Helen Sullivan

[@helenrsullivan](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 06.49 EST

Boris Johnson's announcement that England will enter its third national lockdown – and the toughest since March – is splashed across front pages. Some papers focus on the grim weeks ahead, while others highlight the [first doses of the Oxford vaccine](#) being administered outside of clinical trials.

The **Guardian's** headline is “PM imposes new lockdown and warns worst is yet to come”, a reference to Johnson saying that the weeks ahead “will be the hardest yet”. It also gives prominence to schools being closed until mid-February, and the relief felt by teachers over the PM “[bowing to the inevitable](#)”.

Tomorrow's [@Guardian](#): PM imposes new [#lockdown](#) and warns worst is yet to come

- Read our story, by [@jessicaelgot](#) and [@peterwalker99](#), here: [#TomorrowsPapersToday](https://t.co/iqUhVo6hvK) [#COVID19](#)
<pic.twitter.com/JR5loOoNHx>

— Richard Preston (@richardpreston_) [January 4, 2021](#)

The **Times** splashes on “Return to lockdown” and features a shot of Johnson during his speech looking more dishevelled than usual.

Tuesday's Times: Return to lockdown [#TomorrowsPapersToday](#)
<pic.twitter.com/tJfGi1WAdC>

— Helena Wilkinson (@BBCHelena) [January 4, 2021](#)

The **Financial Times** has Johnson “forced into lockdown order” in what its main story calls a “sharp switch in position”.

Just published: front page of the Financial Times, UK edition, Tuesday 5 January <https://t.co/JAhYUc7rCN> <pic.twitter.com/UAqqM8isfd>

— Financial Times (@FinancialTimes) [January 4, 2021](#)

The **Daily Telegraph** quotes Johnson's warning with his optimistic caveat, “but end is in sight”.

Tuesday's Daily Telegraph: 'The weeks ahead will be the hardest yet...but end is in sight' [#tomorrowspaperstoday](#)
pic.twitter.com/gFJGiXxRyV

— Helena Wilkinson (@BBCHelena) [January 4, 2021](#)

The **Daily Express** focuses on the vaccine: "New lockdown is tough ... but vaccine will end struggle". Senior medics have however [warned against over-optimism about the vaccines](#) amid the record new case rises.

Tuesday's Daily Express: NEW LOCKDOWN IS TOUGH... BUT VACCINE WILL END STRUGGLE [#tomorrowspaperstoday](#)
pic.twitter.com/S0j6Dawf0Y

— Helena Wilkinson (@BBCHelena) [January 4, 2021](#)

The **Sun** encourages its readers to give "One last push".

Tuesday's Sun: ONE LAST PUSH [#tomorrowspaperstoday](#)
pic.twitter.com/mIOumvbSWS

— Helena Wilkinson (@BBCHelena) [January 4, 2021](#)

While the **i** chooses a tongue in cheek approach, with "Lockdown 3: the worst sequel yet".

Tuesday's i: Lockdown 3: the worst sequel yet [#tomorrowspaperstoday](#)
pic.twitter.com/4gRizlWvNM

— Helena Wilkinson (@BBCHelena) [January 4, 2021](#)

Vaccines and immunisation

Covid vaccine: unease among doctors as follow-up doses of UK jab delayed

Survey finds medics have concerns about scrapping of second appointments

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Denis Campbell, Robert Booth and Rachel Obordo

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.00 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 03.17 EST



A nurse prepares the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine in Merthyr Tydfil after the government announced it was shifting its vaccination policy to delay the period between administering the two doses from the recommended three to four weeks to 12 weeks. Photograph: Matthew Horwood/Getty Images

Doctors are having their second dose of the Covid vaccine delayed, amid concern from medical organisations about the policy to widen the gap

between injections and the threat to medics and their patients if they are not fully protected.

A survey of doctors across the UK by the campaign group Everydoctor found that medics in many places who had had their first dose of a Covid vaccine had since had their appointments for the second dose cancelled.

The government [announced last Wednesday](#) that it was shifting its vaccination policy to delay the period between administering the two doses from the recommended three to four weeks to 12 weeks, as it made frontline health and care staff a key priority group for vaccination.

The change aims to give as many people as possible some immunity from one jab as soon as possible, rather than half that number maximum immunity with two.

However, doctors' organisations and patients have voiced unease about the strategy, which has led to many hundreds of thousands of people having their booked second appointments scrapped.

While there is evidence from trials of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, circulation of which began on Monday, of greater efficacy among people who were given the second shot later, Pfizer/BioNTech have said there is no evidence for the efficacy of a single shot of their vaccine beyond three weeks.

Dr Julia Patterson, the lead for Everydoctor, said doctors fear that delaying the second dose they need to obtain full immunity could lead to them becoming ill or infecting colleagues or patients.

In a self-selecting survey of 1,318 doctors, 175 (13%) said that while they had received one dose of a Covid vaccine, the appointment for their second dose – booked when they were first inoculated – had since been cancelled. Another 517 (39%) said they had still not been told when they would have their first dose.

“The Covid-19 crisis is escalating and we need to urgently protect those who are working on the frontline. If healthcare workers are left unprotected, they

are at risk themselves, and they may also pass coronavirus on to vulnerable patients,” said Patterson.

“We were pleased to see last week that healthcare staff would now be vaccinated as a priority. However, five days on, many staff members are still in the dark about when they will receive vaccines.” Hospitals should now lay on clinics to immunise as many staff as fast as supplies of both vaccines allow, she added.

Just 388 (30%) of the doctors said they had received their first dose and were still due to have their second as planned, regardless of the change in approach.

Karoline Lamb, 84, said she was “absolutely fuming” that she might not be able to get the second dose of the Pfizer vaccine: “I was so elated when I had the first one. I had no side-effects and I’m booked in for the second one on 21 January, but I’m extremely worried it will be cancelled.”

Lamb, from Chalfont St Giles in Buckinghamshire, is concerned that the first dose risks “becoming ineffective”. “If I don’t get the second one within three weeks, I’m worried the first dose could do more harm than good. Had I known the government might not let me have the second dose in time, I would not have accepted the first one.”

Meanwhile, close to 3.5m doses of the Oxford vaccine are awaiting release after undergoing checks by medical regulators, the Guardian understands, amid calls for the rollout of the jab to be accelerated in what Labour has described as “a race against time”.

The government has said that it already has a batch of 530,000 doses to be administered this week and Sir John Bell, Oxford University’s regius professor of medicine, had said a further 450,000 were due to be available at the start of the week. Several million more doses of the vaccine are understood to have been manufactured in the UK but are yet to be bottled in vials.

The NHS will need to start delivering at least 2m jabs a week from next week if it is to fulfil the Boris Johnson’s plan to vaccinate everyone in the

four highest-priority groups by mid-February. The four groups the prime minister said will have a first dose amount to 13.9 million people in England, according to Nadhim Zahawi, the vaccines minister.

Pascal Soriot, AstraZeneca's chief executive, said on 30 December that his company would be able to provide 2m doses a week.

But Matt Hancock, the health secretary, appeared to play down the possibility of reaching that level when the figure was put to him on BBC Radio 4's Today programme on Monday. Hancock said: "John Bell is a great man, but he is not responsible for AstraZeneca's manufacturing facility."

Labour's shadow health secretary, John Ashworth, said: "Ministers should be going hell for leather to get 2m jabs a week distributed as soon as possible and then scale up further. We know this virus can mutate and could well do so again. We are in a race against time."

An NHS spokesperson said: "The MHRA [Medicines and Healthcare Products Regulatory Agency], JCVI [Joint Committee on Vaccination and Immunisation] and UK chief medical officers have updated the second dose timing guidance, which the NHS has to follow, so as to increase the number of vulnerable people protected against Covid over the next three months, potentially saving thousands of lives. NHS staff are being prioritised for the vaccine now that more supply is coming on stream."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/05/unease-among-doctors-as-follow-up-doses-of-uk-covid-jab-delayed>

[Georgia](#)

'One state can chart the course': Biden rallies in Georgia on eve of Senate runoffs

President-elect speaks at Atlanta rally alongside Democratic candidates Jon Ossoff and the Rev Raphael Warnock

Play Video

1:23

Biden slams Trump's 'whining and complaining' while campaigning in Georgia – video

Joe Biden urged Georgia voters to surprise the nation once again by sending two [Democrats](#) to the US Senate, on the eve of a pair of critical runoff elections that will determine the balance of power in Washington and the scope of the president-elect's ambitious legislative agenda.

Biden, speaking at a drive-in rally in downtown Atlanta alongside the Democratic candidates Jon Ossoff and the Rev Raphael Warnock on Monday afternoon, did not mention Donald Trump's increasingly brazen efforts to overturn the results of the November election, which escalated this weekend when [the president pressured](#) Georgia's secretary of state to "find" enough votes to reverse his defeat in the state. Instead, he focused on what Democrats could accomplish with control of the Senate.

"Georgia, the whole nation is looking to you," he said. "Unlike any time in my career, one state can chart the course not just for the next four years but for the next generation."

Meanwhile Trump, who spoke hours later at a rival rally for the Republican candidates in Dalton, [Georgia](#), continued to deny that he lost the presidential election and to recite debunked claims about election fraud.

“If the liberal Democrats take the Senate and the White House – and they’re not taking this White House,” Trump said of Democrats, “we’re going to fight like hell.”

If Democrats win both seats – no easy feat – the Senate would be evenly divided, with Kamala Harris, the vice-president-elect, serving as the tie-breaking vote. If Republicans win at least one of the races, Mitch McConnell will remain the Senate majority leader, making it far more difficult for the president-elect to deliver on top policy priorities such as healthcare, taxation and climate.

Three million Georgia voters cast ballots during the early voting period, which ended on Thursday – a record for runoff elections in the state. Nearly half a billion dollars has been spent on the twin races, as residents are bombarded with political ads and messaging urging them to vote in Tuesday’s elections.



Supporters listen to Joe Biden as he addresses a campaign rally for Jon Ossoff and the Rev Raphael Warnock in Atlanta, Georgia. Photograph: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

Biden and Trump’s duelling visits to the state on Monday highlight the urgency – and the stakes – of the contests, which will shape the political

landscape for the first years of the incoming administration.

Biden was the first Democratic presidential nominee in nearly three decades to win Georgia, where changing demographics, long-term voter mobilization efforts and a political realignment across the Atlanta suburbs have turned this once reliably Republican southern state into a presidential battleground.

The state has certified Biden's 11,779-vote victory in Georgia, but that hasn't stopped Trump, who has refused to concede his defeat, from continuing to amplify false claims about the state's election process and its results. On Monday, Biden thanked Georgia voters for electing him and joked that he had won the state "three times" because of the two statewide recounts.

In an hour-long phone call to the Georgia secretary of state, [Brad Raffensperger](#), on Saturday, Trump implored him to "find 11,780 votes" – just enough to reverse Biden's victory in the state's presidential election. A day after a recording of the conversation was made public, Gabriel Sterling, a top election official in Georgia, delivered a point-by-point denunciation of the meritless claims and debunked conspiracy theories cited by the president as evidence that the election was stolen from him.

At the rally on Monday, Trump suggested that Pence should use a ceremonial role on Wednesday, when he will preside over the Senate convening to certify the electoral college vote, to reject the outcome of the election. "I hope Pence comes through for us," Trump said, adding he would not "like him quite as much" if he did not.

Alluding to Trump's machinations in recent weeks, Biden said he would never demand loyalty from the state's senators, who he said were elected to serve the people of Georgia and the constitution, not the president.

"Politicians cannot assert, take or seize power," he said. "Power is given, granted by the American people alone."

The tape of Trump's call with Raffensperger has rattled Republicans in Georgia, who were already nervous that Trump's fixation on his electoral loss could depress turnout among his supporters. During a rally in Georgia

last month, Trump devoted considerably more time to airing his own political grievances with the state's Republican leaders than promoting the Republican candidates he was there to campaign for.

With control of the Senate at stake, the races have drawn firepower from some of the biggest names in politics. In a tweet on Monday, Barack Obama cast the runoffs as an opportunity to safeguard democratic institutions from an assault on American democracy.

"We're seeing how far some will go to retain power and threaten the fundamental principles of our democracy," the former president [wrote](#). "But our democracy isn't about any individual, even a president – it's about you."

Earlier on Monday, Pence was in Milner, Georgia, to campaign on behalf of the Republican candidates, David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler. Speaking to supporters at a megachurch, the vice-president made no mention of the call between Trump and Raffensperger. Nor did he reconcile his support for an effort to reverse Trump's defeat with his argument that Republicans need Perdue and Loeffler in the Senate to serve as a bulwark against the incoming Democratic administration.



Raphael Warnock speaks at a campaign rally. Photograph: Edward M Pio Roda/EPA

“We need Georgia to defend the majority,” he said, adding: “A Republican Senate majority could be our last line of defense.”

Pence’s visit came a day after Harris held a drive-in rally with the Democratic candidates Ossoff and Warnock in Savannah. In her remarks, Harris [assailed](#) Trump for his call with Georgia’s secretary of state, calling it a “bald-faced, bold abuse of power” and “most certainly the voice of desperation”.

Trump’s sustained assault on Georgia’s election system has further cleaved the party at the very moment they would benefit from unity. Since the November election, Trump has relentlessly attacked Georgia’s Republican leaders, whom he has accused without evidence of ignoring instances of voter fraud. Last month, Trump called Georgia’s Republican governor, Brian Kemp, a “fool” and said he should resign.

In Atlanta on Monday, Ossoff and Warnock seized the shared stage with Biden to galvanize their supporters one last time before polls opened on Tuesday morning for in-person voting.

Warnock envisioned a “new Georgia” represented by “a young Jewish man, the son of an immigrant, and a Black preacher, the pastor of Ebenezer Baptist church, where Martin Luther King Jr used to serve and where [John Lewis](#) used to worship”.

Ossoff declared that Democrats were on the “cusp of a historic victory”.

Lois Beckett contributed reporting

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[Georgia](#)

Georgia Senate elections: why are they a big deal and when will we have results?

Control of the US Senate – and the fate of the Biden presidency – is on the line in a pair of runoff races



Joe Biden campaigns on behalf of the Democratic Senate candidates in Atlanta, Georgia, on 4 January. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

Joe Biden campaigns on behalf of the Democratic Senate candidates in Atlanta, Georgia, on 4 January. Photograph: Jonathan Ernst/Reuters

[Tom McCarthy](#)

[@TeeMcSee](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

More than 81 million Americans voted last November to install Joe Biden as president. But the fate of the Biden presidency could come down to a pair of runoff US Senate elections happening in the state of [Georgia](#) this Tuesday.

Control of the US Senate is on the line. If the [Democrats](#) win both races, the president-elect will gain a big opportunity to build a progressive legacy. If [Democrats](#) lose one or both races, the country will enter at least a two-year period of divided government, with the Republican Senate majority leader, Mitch McConnell, retaining power and likely frustrating Biden's agenda.

[Republicans divided: Trump creates new splits as party frets about Georgia](#)
[Read more](#)

Why is it such a big deal?

If Democrats win both races, the Senate would be split 50/50, but Democrats would effectively control the body with Kamala Harris, the vice-president-elect, in her role as president of the Senate, breaking any ties in a strict party-line vote.

Who's running?

The Republican candidates include one sitting senator – the wealthy appointee Kelly Loeffler, 50 – and one senator whose term has just ended, David Perdue, 71.

Challenging the [Republicans](#) are fresh faces on the Democratic side. The documentary film-maker Jon Ossoff, 33, a former congressional staffer and failed House candidate, is running to replace Perdue, while Atlanta pastor and first-time candidate the Rev Raphael Warnock, 51, is running to unseat Loeffler.

The runoff races are being held in accordance with state election laws because no candidate in either race won 50% of the vote in the November elections.

Why does the Senate matter?

Control of the Senate would give Biden his best shot at signing major new legislation on key issues such as the climate emergency, immigration, voting rights, poverty and racial justice. But even two Democratic victories in Georgia would not mean that Biden could easily implement a progressive legislative agenda, because centrist Democrats in the Senate might break with the party in close votes.

A Democratic victory in Georgia would also represent a rebuke of Donald Trump and further vindicate activists and organizers who have worked to turn out Democrat voters and make Georgia a battleground state. Biden was the first Democratic presidential candidate to win the state since 1992.

What's Trump's role?

The president is a wild card in the Georgia races. So far his main role has been to attack the integrity of the vote and spread conspiracy theories about the election on Twitter.

State Republicans fretted that the release on Sunday of an audio recording of an [hour-long conversation](#) in which Trump pressured Georgia's secretary of state, Brad Raffensperger, a Republican, to overturn the presidential election result could both discourage Trump loyalists from voting, because Trump says the game is rigged; and put moderates off Trump and the Republican brand.

But an 11th-hour rally by Trump in Georgia on Monday night ensured that the president and his message would be center stage on election day.

Who's ahead?

We don't know. With faith in pollsters badly damaged, political analysts are looking at early voting numbers, mail-in voting and first-time voter totals to try to figure out what's going on. A record 3 million people participated in early voting, which began on 14 December, generally taken to be a good sign for the Democrats. As many as 100,000 of those voters were first-time voters – also thought to be a good sign for Democrats looking to expand the state electorate beyond its traditional Republican roots.

But Republicans say their voters are alert to the stakes and gearing up for big election-day turnout. Republicans in the past have generally been better at turning out voters in off-year and runoff elections.

When do polls close?

Polling places are open from 7am ET until 7pm ET. But with anyone in line by 7pm allowed to cast a ballot, voting could go much later.

When will we have results?

As with the November election, early voting does not necessarily translate to early results. By state law, ballot counting cannot start until polls close at

7pm. Military and overseas ballots arriving as late as Friday could be counted.

That means results could take days, election officials say. The November election in Georgia was extremely close, with Biden's victory in the state not projected by television networks until 10 days post-election.

Analysts warn that another dynamic of the November election, the so-called "[red mirage](#)", could repeat itself this week, with Republicans appearing in the lead on the strength of election day returns, only to lose ground as mail-in and absentee ballots are counted.

How will the winners be announced?

The process will be familiar from the November election. After polling stations close, precinct- and county-level returns will begin to come in. Media organizations will make projections and announce winners as soon as possible.

If the Democrats lose, they may issue statements of concession, while given the trend of national politics, the Republican candidates might not concede if they lose, preferring to feed corrosive false claims of voter fraud. Ultimately the state will certify its election result and send two senators to Washington.

And then it will be over?

No one expects Republicans to accept the election results. If Loeffler and/or Perdue loses, expect a multi-front fight in courts, in the media and in the state capitol, akin to the fight Trump has waged after his November loss.

The scope and anti-democratic stink of that fight was revealed most recently with the release of the [transcript](#) by the Washington Post at the weekend of the call between Trump and Raffensperger. "We believe that we do have an accurate election," Raffensperger ultimately told Trump.

"No, no you don't. No, no you don't," insisted the president. "You don't have. Not even close. You're off by hundreds of thousands of votes."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/05/georgia-elections-candidates-running-polls-results>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Donald Trump](#)

'Fight like hell': grievance and denialism rule at Trump Georgia rally

Unrepentant president urges voters to support Republicans in the Senate runoffs on Tuesday and veers off script with bogus claims of a stolen election

Play Video

1:10

'I hope Mike Pence comes through for us': Trump puts vice president under pressure – video

An unrepentant [Donald Trump](#) has urged voters in Georgia to back Republicans in Tuesday's Senate runoffs and vowed revenge against Republican state officials who refuse to overturn his own defeat.

On a chilly night at a remote airport in Dalton, the US president mercilessly aggravated divisions within his own party, embracing loyalists and castigating perceived traitors. While it was ostensibly a campaign rally on behalf of Senate candidates Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue, he could not resist veering off script to push bogus claims of a stolen election.

"We won the presidential election, we won it big," Trump falsely told a sympathetic crowd, "and we're going to win tomorrow". Loeffler duly joined him on stage and promised to join a dozen other Republican senators objecting to Joe Biden's electoral college win on Wednesday.

Trump noted that the press "didn't like" a [Saturday phone call](#) in which he can be heard badgering [Brad Raffensperger](#), Georgia's secretary of state, to "find" enough votes to thwart Biden's victory there. He promised to punish Raffensperger and state governor Brian Kemp, also a Republican.

"Your governor, your secretary of state are petrified of Stacey Abrams," he said, referring to a Democratic voting rights activist who lost to Kemp in

2018. “What’s all that about? They’re say they’re [Republicans](#). I really don’t think they can be.”

The president added ominously: “I’m going to be back here in a year-and-a-half and I’m going to be campaigning against your governor and your crazy secretary of state.”

Control of the Senate depends on Tuesday’s elections in [Georgia](#) and it remains unclear whether Trump’s shotgun interventions will help or hurt the Republicans’ cause against Democrats Jon Ossoff and Raphael Warnock.

His relentless war on the integrity of the election has triggered party infighting and fears that some disillusioned voters may stay away from what they regard as a broken system. His potentially illegal phone call to Raffensperger, revealed on Sunday, could cause further damage and fire up Democrats.

Trump sought to resolve the contradictions by arguing: “You must deliver a Republican victory so big the Democrats can’t steal it or cheat it away.”

But he went on to spend less time on Loeffler and Perdue’s merits than his own sense of grievance and denialism, reeling off a long list of numbers that he claimed showed he was robbed of victory in Georgia. The state counted its votes three times before certifying Biden’s win by a 11,779 margin. Officials found no significant irregularities.

More than once, Trump read from a script that implied Senate wins are vital to keep a president Biden in check, only to break off and deny Biden’s legitimacy. “They’re not taking this White House. We’re going to fight like hell.”

He also repeatedly claimed that he had won Georgia in 2016 and did so again by an [even bigger margin in 2020](#). “There’s no way we lost Georgia. This was a rigged election. We’re still fighting it.”

Previewing Wednesday’s meeting of Congress to ratify the electoral college vote, he said of Mike Pence, the vice president who will oversee proceedings: “I hope Mike Pence comes through for us.”

Dozens of Trump campaign lawsuits have been tossed by courts including the supreme court. Trump complained: “I’m not happy with the supreme court. They are not stepping up to the plate.”

Trump flew to the venue on his Marine One helicopter, greeted by cheers for what was possibly his last rally as president. Tents outside sold “Stop the steal” flags and shirts. At the small regional airport, two giant US flags hung from cranes, with numerous more flags dotted around the makeshift arena. Two big video screens displayed the message: “Save the Senate & Save America.”

The crowd was warmed up with familiar Trump rally music, some of which gained new poignancy. Queen’s lyrics, “We are the champions, no times for losers” was immediately followed by Frank Sinatra’s “And now, the end is near, and so I face the final curtain ...”

Perdue could not attend because he is in quarantine after coming into contact with someone who has Covid-19 but he sent a video message. Trump and other speakers warned that victories for Ossoff and Warnock would send America down a path of far-left socialism.

The president’s eldest son, Don Jr, urged: “Don’t let Georgia be the starting point for the radical left in the United States Senate because that’s who they’re running. There is no such thing as a moderate Democrat. That party is long gone. It’s now a Marxist socialist party, a communist party.”

Don Jr warned against Republican apathy because of the current election disputes, suggesting that taking their ball home and not voting “would be the dumbest statement in the history of politics”. He pleaded: “Guys, when you’re at a disadvantage, you don’t take your ball home. You fight harder!” His voice cracked with fury on the final word.

The crowd chanted: “Fight! Fight!”

There were also speeches by Trump’s daughter Ivanka and new congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, who has expressed support for the QAnon conspiracy theory. She said: “We’re not going to let Georgia go to two radical socialists.”

Some attendees wore masks but many did not and there was little physical distancing and little concern about Trump's explosive call with Raffensperger.

Clayton Bentley, 60, a retired fraud investigator from Rome, Georgia, was wearing a blue "Trump: Keep America great" cap and tucking into a big bag of popcorn. "I know Trump was only asking about the things going on here," he said. "He said all I need is 11,000 votes. I don't feel like it's a bad thing."

"He was saying let's get to the truth and let's do what's right to get to the bottom of it. I feel that phone call was fine. He's the president; he should be able to call anybody."

Janie Lopez, 42, a counsellor from San Benito, Texas, agreed: "He wants to make sure they cross the i's and dot the t's and this is the final count. He wants to make sure this is a fair election."

Lopez, the daughter of Mexican immigrants, added: "I believe he won the election. How many past presidents have run for a second term and lost? It doesn't happen often."

Susan Huff, 77, also felt that a Trump defeat did not make sense. "I do believe Trump was cheated out of the win. You can't have 73m votes and not win. You can't have rallies like this and not win. Something went wrong somewhere. I'll always believe that."

Huff, a retired school teacher wearing a red "Make America great again" cap, acknowledged that Trump's attempts to discredit the process could deter Republicans from voting in the Senate runoffs.

"Some people have said because of the election in November they won't come out to vote. But I hope they understand that if they don't vote to get these people in, we're in big trouble. I don't want socialism in our country: the only people who make money are the ones at the top."

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Saudi Arabia](#)

Calls for Saudi Dakar Rally boycott while women's right to drive activist in prison

Campaigners say racers will pass jail holding Loujain al-Hathloul while kingdom 'sportwashes' its reputation



Campaigners described the sentencing of Loujain al-Hathloul as 'shameful', pointing out that she was held for almost three years without charge.
Photograph: Reuters

Campaigners described the sentencing of Loujain al-Hathloul as 'shameful', pointing out that she was held for almost three years without charge.
Photograph: Reuters

[Bethan McKernan](#), Middle East correspondent

Tue 5 Jan 2021 00.30 EST

Supporters of women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul, who campaigned for women's right to drive in [Saudi Arabia](#), have called for a boycott of the

Dakar Rally for “sportswashing” the reputation of the conservative kingdom while Hathloul remains in prison.

Racers in the off-road competition – including 12 women – are this week due to pass within a few hundred metres of Riyadh’s Al-Ha’ir prison, where Hathloul is being held.

“Women’s rights activists have endured years in prison, psychological and physical torture, and sexual abuse for campaigning for the right to drive. Many remain in prison to this day,” said Lucy Rae, spokeswoman for Grant Liberty, a human rights advocacy body which campaigns on behalf of Saudi prisoners of conscience.

“It is utterly grotesque that at the same time Saudi authorities will host a motor sport event – including women drivers – while the heroes that won their right to drive languish in jail.”

Amaury Sport Organisation, which runs the rally, did not immediately respond to emailed requests for comment.

Hathloul, one of Saudi Arabia’s [most prominent activists](#), was kidnapped and detained in 2018. She was [jailed last month for five years and eight months](#) in prison after being found guilty of spying and conspiring against the kingdom.

Two years and 10 months of the sentence were suspended by the court and the start of the jail term was backdated, meaning the 31-year-old has only two months left to serve, a move decision makers in Riyadh hope will defuse a potentially damaging early confrontation with the Biden administration.

Campaigners nonetheless described the sentencing as “shameful”, pointing out that Hathloul was held for almost three years without charge. The activist’s parents, who are her legal team, claim their daughter has been subjected to torture and sexual assault during incarceration and held incommunicado for long periods of time. Saudi authorities have repeatedly denied the allegations of ill-treatment.

The Paris-Dakar Rally moved to South America in 2008 after terrorism threats in west Africa. Saudi Arabia became the host last year as part of the kingdom's multi-pronged strategy to open up to the world and wean itself off dependence on oil revenues by 2030.

Riyadh has also embarked on a series of wide-reaching social reforms since Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was appointed heir to the throne four years ago. Women gained the right to drive in 2018, a few months after Hathloul was detained, a decision interpreted as a message that change in the kingdom can only come from the top down.

The kingdom has repeatedly denied that Hathloul was arrested for campaigning for women to be allowed to drive, but instead for attempting to undermine the royal family. The case underlines how little political dissent is allowed within the country.

“No-one should be fooled by the Saudi regime’s attempts at sportswashing ... Racers might not know it, but their participation there is to hide and whitewash the host’s crimes,” said Lina al-Hathloul, Loujain’s sister.

“The PR machine claims that hosting global sporting events is a sign the country is opening up, but the reality is that just a few hundred metres from the course my sister languishes in prison because she campaigned for women’s right to drive. Saudi Arabia needs real reform, real human rights, not this charade.”

As well as Hathloul, three other activists who focused on Saudi women’s right to drive – Mayaa al-Zahrani, Nouf Abdulaziz al-Jeraiwi and Samar Badawi – remain in prison.

- This article was amended on 5 January 2021. The original incorrectly said the rally would pass by Riyadh’s Al-Ha’ir prison on Tuesday. This has been corrected.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Julian Assange

Julian Assange to seek release from prison after extradition ruling

Legal team for WikiLeaks co-founder expected to refer to Covid risk at Belmarsh prison

- [Julian Assange extradition ruling: what happens now?](#)



Assange's legal team is expected to refer to conditions at Belmarsh high-security prison in south London. Photograph: Dan Kitwood/Getty Images

Julian Assange will make a fresh appeal to be released from prison this week after a [British judge ruled that he cannot be extradited to the US](#) to face charges of espionage and hacking government computers.

While district judge Vanessa Baraitser rejected arguments that Assange would not get a fair trial in the US, she blocked extradition on the basis that the [WikiLeaks](#) co-founder was at risk of taking his own life if he were to be held in isolation.

She said it appeared to be impossible to prevent suicide where a prisoner was determined to go through with it, twice referencing Jeffrey Epstein, the US billionaire who took his own life in August 2019 at the New York Metropolitan correctional centre before a trial for sex trafficking and conspiracy charges.

As US authorities prepare to appeal against the ruling, Assange will appear in court on Wednesday for a new bail application.

Play Video

1:26

'The first step towards justice': Julian Assange's partner welcomes extradition ruling – video

His legal team is expected to present evidence to show that Assange will not abscond and will also refer to rates of Covid-19 in Belmarsh high-security prison, where he is being held, as well as conditions which are said to be detrimental to his physical and mental health.

Citing evidence by medical experts about Assange's precarious mental health, Baraitser said on Monday: "The overall impression is of a depressed and sometimes despairing man, who is genuinely fearful about his future. I find that the mental condition of Mr Assange is such that it would be oppressive to extradite him to the United States of America."

There was dismay among Assange's supporters that the ruling was solely based on health grounds, with the judge stating she had no reason to doubt that "the usual constitutional and procedural protections" Assange would be afforded in the US.

Sending Assange across the Atlantic would not breach a bar on extradition for "political offences" Baraitser said.

The case against the 49-year-old relates to WikiLeaks's publication of hundreds of thousands of leaked documents about the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, as well as diplomatic cables, in 2010 and 2011.

Prosecutors say Assange helped the US defence analyst Chelsea Manning breach the US Espionage Act, was complicit in hacking by others and published classified information that endangered informants.

Assange denies plotting with Manning to crack an encrypted password on US computers and says there is no evidence anyone's safety was compromised. His lawyers argue the prosecution is politically motivated and that he is being pursued because WikiLeaks published US government documents that revealed evidence of war crimes and human rights abuses.

Assange's partner, Stella Moris, described the ruling as "the first step towards justice" and called on Donald Trump to halt the extradition efforts. "[The US government] continues to want to punish Julian and make him disappear into the deepest, darkest hole of the US prison system," she said.

There was also mixed reaction from bodies including Amnesty International, which welcomed the ruling, while accusing UK authorities of "having engaged in a politically-motivated process at the behest of the USA and putting media freedom and freedom of expression on trial".

The US Department of Justice said: "While we are extremely disappointed in the court's ultimate decision, we are gratified that the United States prevailed on every point of law raised. In particular, the court rejected all of Mr Assange's arguments regarding political motivation, political offense, fair trial, and freedom of speech. We will continue to seek Mr Assange's extradition to the United States."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jan/04/julian-assange-to-seek-release-from-prison-after-extradition-ruling>

[Yinka Shonibare](#)

Yinka Shonibare to create Leeds memorial for Nigerian who died after police harassment in 1960s

Artist hopes his forthcoming work will act as a ‘fitting legacy’ to David Oluwale



Yinka Shonibare said he hopes his forthcoming memorial will ‘remind people that we live in a multicultural society and diversity is important’.
Photograph: Temilade Adelaja/Reuters

Yinka Shonibare said he hopes his forthcoming memorial will ‘remind people that we live in a multicultural society and diversity is important’.
Photograph: Temilade Adelaja/Reuters

[Lanre Bakare](#)

[@lanre_bakare](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 03.14 EST

The British-Nigerian artist Yinka Shonibare is creating a sculpture in memory of [David Oluwale](#) with the aim of cementing a “fitting legacy” for

the Nigerian who drowned in the 1960s after harassment by police in Leeds.

Shonibare, who was nominated for the Turner prize in 2004 and is known for work that addresses identity and colonialism, said the sculpture would serve as a permanent “hopeful” memorial and a reminder of a dark chapter in the city’s history.

“It’s a fitting legacy to an ordinary man, who will no doubt leave an extraordinary legacy,” he said. “We have to honour him with this small event and hopefully, if people can learn about history, and the mistakes of history, they won’t repeat them.”

Leeds city council and the Arts Council are supporting the work, which was developed after being suggested in 2007 by the author and academic Caryl Phillips, the founding patron of the David Oluwale Memorial Association (DOMA), which has pushed for a memorial for several years.

Dr Emily Zobel Marshall of DOMA said Leeds had a responsibility to “acknowledge, learn from and take inspiration” from the life and death of Oluwale, who she said would leave a legacy of “hope and creativity”.



David Oluwale. Photograph: PA

Oluwale came from Nigeria in the 1960s with hopes of becoming an engineer but died at the age of 38 after persistent harassment by West Yorkshire police officers. The subsequent court case made his name synonymous with institutional racism.

When he was not able to secure a place as a student, Oluwale worked as a tailor, foundry worker and slaughterhouse labourer before being sectioned and institutionalised for eight years. When he emerged he became destitute and homeless on the streets of Leeds, where he was regularly harassed by police officers and eventually his body was found in the River Aire in 1969 after witnesses saw him being chased by officers.

His case is one of the most notorious in the history of British policing and led to two police officers being found guilty of assault, a landmark ruling that is still held up by campaigners as the last time an officer was successfully convicted after a death in police custody. The judge had directed manslaughter charges to be dropped.

Shonibare said that after more than 40 years in the UK he found the unnecessary stopping and searching of young black men “relentless, annoying, and embarrassing”, and hoped the memorial would help remind people about where such treatment can lead.

“I think the memorial will keep that in people’s minds and remind people that we live in a multicultural society and diversity is important,” he said. “People are not actually asking for much: we’re asking for employment, and that you treat us equally. That’s all we’re asking for, I don’t think that’s too much to ask.”

The sculpture is the latest project reflecting on the life of Oluwale, who was memorialised in a play created by Oladipo Agboluaje, performed at the Leeds Playhouse in 2009 and adapted from Kester Aspden’s book of the same name, The Hounding of David Oluwale.

The Shonibare piece is part of a development on a new park planned for Leeds city centre on the site of the former Tetley brewery. It will be unveiled in 2023 to coincide with Leeds’ wider city of culture year.

The announcement of the sculpture follows [Leeds city council's internal review](#) into the city's statues and monuments and the possible connections to slavery, in the wake of the Black Lives Matter protests in summer 2020.

The review found that there were no individuals honoured who were known to be "directly central to the slave trade", but said empire, colonialism and slavery were still "prominent influences within the city's visible heritage". An example it gave included Harewood House, the stately home on the outskirts of the city that was built by the [slave-owning Lascelles family](#).

The support of Shonibare's art work was mentioned in the review as a key recommendation, as well as the commissioning of more works of art that commemorate diverse individuals from Leeds' past.

Councillor Judith Blake, the leader of Leeds city council, said: "This sculpture promises to be a fitting tribute to David and should also be a source of inspiration and pride for the people who continue to work tirelessly to ensure Leeds is a place that offers a warm welcome to all."

- This article was amended on 5 January 2021 to change the headline to more accurately reflect the story.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2021/jan/05/yinka-shonibare-to-create-leeds-memorial-for-nigerian-david-oluwale-killed-by-police-in-1960s>

Cop26: Glasgow climate change conference 2021

UK urged to put Alok Sharma in full-time charge of Cop26 talks

Business secretary should focus on making Glasgow climate summit a success, say experts



Alok Sharma is Cop26 president as well as business secretary but could give up the cabinet role to concentrate on the summit in November. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

Alok Sharma is Cop26 president as well as business secretary but could give up the cabinet role to concentrate on the summit in November. Photograph: Tolga Akmen/AFP/Getty Images

[Fiona Harvey](#) and [Jessica Elgot](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Ministers are facing calls to make the business secretary, Alok Sharma, the full-time president of [the Cop26 UN climate talks](#) to be hosted in Glasgow in November.

Amber Rudd, who as energy and climate secretary led the UK delegation to the [successful Paris climate talks in 2015](#), said: “Alok could do this and do it well. But it will take 100% of his time, energy and persuasion to make it a success.”

A report claimed at the weekend that Sharma, who has led the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) [alongside the post of Cop26 president](#) since a reshuffle early last year, could give up the business role to concentrate on the UN summit. The move would leave the way clear for Sajid Javid, the former chancellor who resigned amid a row with Dominic Cummings, to return to government.

However, government sources insisted no imminent reshuffle was expected because of the seriousness of the coronavirus situation, with changes expected to be delayed to summer or autumn.

The government denied any change was imminent. A spokesperson said: “Alok Sharma remains business secretary and Cop26 president, driving progress to tackle climate change in the UK and around the world ahead of the Cop26 summit later this year.”

Lord Stern, the world-recognised climate economist who is helping to advise the government on Cop26, said Sharma was a strong president. “He is deeply committed to climate action and Cop26, interacts very well with people, is a good listener, and is doing a very good job as Cop president,” said Stern.

Several climate experts said a full-time Cop26 president could be a help with preparations. Sir David King, a former government chief scientific adviser, said: “Good things are happening in BEIS. I hope the incoming secretary of state would continue this. Full-time on Cop26 for Sharma would definitely be a good thing.”

John Sauven, the executive director of Greenpeace UK, said: “Given the critical importance of the [Glasgow climate summit](#) for the future of our world it’s absolutely imperative that the president should be full-time and focused on getting an ambitious outcome.

“With just 10 months to go and in a very difficult external environment, one challenging job rather than two must be the right decision. But this outcome still requires the president to be at the very heart of government. This is one job that can’t be outsourced to a Portakabin in the car park.”

Connor Schwartz, a climate campaigner at Friends of the Earth, added that Boris Johnson must take a more prominent role. “Presiding over international efforts to react to this emergency should of course be a full-time job. But it must also be an all-of-government effort, and it will be down to the prime minister, as well as the COP president, to ensure the conference is a top priority from now until November.”

However, Sandrine Dixson-Declève, the co-president of the Club of Rome, said the [French had led the Paris agreement successfully](#) with the then foreign minister, Laurent Fabius, showing that the role could be combined with a major government post.

She said: “It depends how linked to the government [Sharma would be if made full-time president] and whether he would be sidelined or actually given more clout. Fabius stayed foreign affairs minister and used his position in the run-up to Paris. What’s important now is how Sharma uses the time between now and Cop26.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/05/uk-urged-to-put-alok-sharma-in-full-time-charge-of-cop26-talks>

The far right

Enrique Tarrio, leader of rightwing Proud Boys, arrested ahead of rallies

He was charged with destruction of property – related to his role in burning a Black Lives Matter banner – and a firearms offense



Enrique Tarrio, leader of the Proud Boys, was arrested in Washington DC.
Photograph: Stephanie Keith/Getty Images

The leader of the Proud Boys, the violent far-right group, was arrested in Washington DC and charged with destruction of property and a firearms offense, according to local police.

The arrest of Enrique Tarrio on Monday comes ahead of pro-Donald Trump protests in Washington planned for Tuesday and Wednesday to coincide with the US Congress' vote on Wednesday affirming Joe Biden's election victory.

The demonstrations are organized by the Proud Boys and other rightwing activists, who falsely allege election fraud and want to see the results of the presidential election overturned in Trump's favor.

The property destruction charges are related to Tarrio's [admitted role](#) in burning a Black Lives Matter banner torn from [a historic Black church](#) during a previous pro-Trump protest in Washington on 12 December, which DC police and the FBI said they had been investigating as a [potential hate crime](#). Police said Tarrio, who lives in Miami, Florida, was arrested after his arrival in the District of Columbia on Monday.

DC police said Tarrio had also been charged with possessing two high-capacity ammunition magazines, which were with him when he was arrested. The District of Columbia, which has some of the strictest firearms laws in the nation, bans the possession of firearm magazines that hold [more than 10 rounds of ammunition](#).

Less than three weeks before Biden will be sworn in as president, Trump has been encouraging supporters to continue to protest over the results of an election he refuses to admit he lost.



Enrique Tarrio, leader of the Proud Boys, speaks at a rally in Portland, Oregon, on 26 September. Photograph: Jim Urquhart/Reuters

The National Park Service said it had received three separate applications for pro-Trump protests on Tuesday or Wednesday, with estimated maximum attendance at 15,000 people.

Experts who monitor extremist groups fear the demonstrations could bring [more chaos and violence to the US capital](#), the [Washington Post reported](#), including renewed violent attacks by the Proud Boys on leftwing counterprotesters.

The US capital has mobilized the national guard ahead of the planned protests. Mayor Muriel Bowser requested a limited national guard deployment to help bolster the metropolitan police department, and has asked local area residents to stay away from downtown DC.

Play Video

1:40

‘Firearms are not permitted’, police warn Trump supporters ahead of protest – video

“There are people intent on coming to our city armed,” said Robert Contee, the acting police chief, on Monday.

During a presidential debate in September, Trump was asked to condemn the Proud Boys and other violent rightwing groups linked to white supremacy, and instead told the group to “[stand back and stand by](#)”, adding that “somebody’s got to do something about antifa and the left”.

Over the weekend, Trump retweeted a promotion for the rally with the message: “I will be there. Historic Day!”

At a November rally, which drew about 15,000 people, Trump staged a limousine drive-by past cheering crowds in Freedom Plaza, on Pennsylvania Avenue. And at the December rally, which drew smaller numbers but a larger contingent of Proud Boys, Trump’s helicopter flew low over cheering crowds on the National Mall.

Tarrio’s arrest was first confirmed by [the New York Times](#).

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/enrique-tarrio-rightwing-proud-boys-arrested>

[Hong Kong](#)

China moves to punish lawyers who helped Hong Kong activists

Authorities threaten to revoke licences of pair who assisted group of 12 that tried to flee to Taiwan



Lawyer Ren Quanniu (centre), who represented the citizen journalist Zhang Zhan who reported on Wuhan's Covid-19 outbreak, said his office was raided on Monday. Photograph: Leo Ramirez/AFP/Getty Images

Lawyer Ren Quanniu (centre), who represented the citizen journalist Zhang Zhan who reported on Wuhan's Covid-19 outbreak, said his office was raided on Monday. Photograph: Leo Ramirez/AFP/Getty Images

[Helen Davidson](#) in Taipei

[@heldavidson](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.50 EST

Chinese authorities have threatened to end the careers of two lawyers who assisted 12 activists who tried to flee [Hong Kong](#) for Taiwan last August, [10 of whom were given jail terms](#) by a Chinese court last week.

Ren Quanniu – who also represented the Wuhan citizen journalist Zhang Zhan – and Lu Siwei received notices from local departments of justice on Monday that authorities intended to revoke their licences and they had three days to arrange for a defence hearing.

Accusing each of violating regulations, the authorities cited Ren’s handling of a 2018 case relating to Falun Gong practitioners, and said Lu had made “improper remarks on the internet”. The lawyers believe they are being targeted for their recent work.

In a statement, Ren said his office was raided on Monday by more than a dozen masked individuals claiming to be from the Henan department of justice. He rejected the accusations as a “shameless frame-up” and professional persecution, and demanded the authorities withdraw their action and apologise.

Lu, whose social media accounts have been blocked, accused officials of abusing their power and said he would arrange for a hearing. He urged officials to build a better relationship with lawyers, or they would “certainly be dropping a rock on their own feet”.

The families of the [Hong Kong defendants](#), noting the timing, said the disciplinary action against Ren and Lu was “obviously revenge” and designed to intimidate others.

“For their daring to go against the powers that be, and persistence in upholding the rights of ‘the 12’, the authorities have resorted to ending their professional career and cutting off their livelihoods,” they said in [a statement](#).

“The Chinese authorities are using the case of Lu and Ren as an example to threaten other human right lawyers, such that no one else would dare to participate in politically sensitive cases. Thus the last obstacle hindering the Chinese authorities from persecuting dissidents at will, using the law as an excuse, is removed.”

The high-profile convictions of Zheng and the Hong Kongers drew international condemnation and shone a spotlight on China’s notoriously

opaque legal system, which routinely has conviction rates of about 99% and is frequently used against dissidents and human rights lawyers.

Zhang was arrested for “picking quarrels and causing trouble” over her reports from the city of Wuhan during its 76-day lockdown last year. She was restrained and force-fed in detention after she went on hunger strike, and maintained her innocence, her lawyer had said. She was sentenced to four years in jail.

The 10 Hong Kongers were among a group of 12 who were detained by Guangdong coastguards in August while attempting to flee to Taiwan by boat. They were held incommunicado in a Shenzhen detention centre, and denied access to lawyers hired by their families, including Ren and Lu.

Last week, two minors in the group were returned to Hong Kong custody as the other 10 were sentenced to jail terms of between seven months and three years.

The China Human Rights Lawyers Concern Group called for an immediate reversal of the planned revocations.

“In the process of advancing the rule of law, human rights lawyers speak for the grassroots of society, and the cases they represent are in line with moral and legal principles, but they often become the targets of retaliation by official departments,” it said.

Chinese authorities have a history of targeting human rights lawyers, including the mass roundup and interrogation of about 250 in 2015, some of whom remain in detention or were re-detained. Last month, a court refused to hear an appeal against the four-year sentence for one lawyer, Yu Wensheng, who had publicly called for constitutional reforms including multi-candidate elections.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/05/china-moves-to-punish-lawyers-who-helped-hong-kong-activists>

Film

Tanya Roberts' publicist retracts report that said actor had died

The former Bond girl was mistakenly reported dead after being hospitalised following a fall at her home



Tanya Roberts in 1982's *The Beastmaster*. Photograph: Mgm/Ua/Kobal/Rex/Shutterstock

Tanya Roberts in 1982's *The Beastmaster*. Photograph: Mgm/Ua/Kobal/Rex/Shutterstock

Agencies

Mon 4 Jan 2021 18.56 EST

Tanya Roberts, who played Roger Moore's love interest in *A View to a Kill* and later starred in the sitcom *That '70s Show* as Midge Pinciotti, has been hospitalised after falling at her home.

Her publicist, Mike Pingel, mistakenly reported the 65-year-old dead on Monday, leading multiple outlets, including the *Guardian*, to publish stories

saying she had died. Pingel later told the Associated Press that Roberts was still alive as of 10am in California but was in a poor condition.



Roberts replaced Shelly Hack in Charlie's Angels, joining Jaclyn Smith, centre, and Cheryl Ladd, right, as third Angel Julie. Photograph: Moviestore/Rex/Shutterstock

He had said earlier that Roberts collapsed in her home and was admitted to Cedars-Sinai Medical Center in Los Angeles. Pingel said Robert's husband, Lance O'Brien, told him that he held his wife and she "seemed for him to slip away".

The publicist said he was awaiting further updates on Roberts' condition. Pingel told the PA news agency that the family was waiting for further news from medics, adding: "It does not look good."

The US website TMZ first reported her death, saying she had collapsed while walking her dogs on 24 December and was admitted to hospital.

Born Victoria Leigh Blum in 1955, Roberts grew up in New York before moving to Hollywood in 1977 in search of fame.

Her chance came when she replaced Shelley Hack in the TV series Charlie's Angels, becoming the third Angel, Julie, alongside Jaclyn Smith and Cheryl

Ladd.

One of Roberts highest profile roles was playing geologist Stacey Sutton in 1985's *A View to a Kill*.

Roberts also appeared in such fantasy adventure films as *The Beastmaster* and *Hearts and Armour*.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2021/jan/04/tanya-roberts-representative-says-actress-is-still-alive>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Music festivals

UK music festivals face cancellation without government support

Industry calls for measures including insurance scheme similar to one for TV and film

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Stormzy headlines Glastonbury 2019. The UK live music industry is banking on a summer comeback as the Covid vaccine is rolled out.
Photograph: David Jensen/EMPICS Entertainment

Summer music festivals face cancellation unless the government steps in to provide support, the British music industry has warned.

The call for action came as Emily Eavis, who co-organises Glastonbury festival with her father, Michael, turned to social media to deny that this year's event has been cancelled. "There's no news this end yet, we haven't

cancelled,” she tweeted on Monday after the Spice Girls singer Mel B said Glastonbury was not happening this June.

Emily Eavis (@emilyeavis)

Happy new year to you all!

There's no news this end yet, we haven't cancelled. Will let you know right here as soon as we have an update..

January 4, 2021

Speaking on BBC Radio 5 live, Mel B said: “I know that Glastonbury has been cancelled so a lot of big stage performances are on hold again this year. It’s sad, but we’ve got to get this virus under control.”

The [multibillion-pound live music industry](#) is banking on a summer comeback as the vaccine is administered to millions of people. Last year the pandemic resulted in [a 90% fall in revenues for festivals](#).

However, UK Music, the umbrella organisation representing the commercial music industry, said the government needed to act fast to support the live music industry – including guaranteeing cancellation insurance – or festivals would have to be cancelled.

“Government is rolling out the vaccine and is openly speculating about returning to normal by the spring,” said Jamie Njoku-Goodwin, the chief executive of UK Music. “But there is a serious risk that even if this proves to be a reality, lack of notice and available insurance options will mean much of the 2021 summer music season can’t go ahead. The clock is ticking, and any day soon we could see major festivals and events start pulling the plug for lack of certainty. There will need to be a concerted effort from industry and the government together.”

UK Music’s plan, which is detailed in a report entitled Let the Music Play: Save Our Summer, highlights six key actions the government must take to support the industry.

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The most important is a government-backed indemnity scheme that operates as a form of Covid insurance by providing financial support if festivals are affected by coronavirus, similar to a scheme that has kept film and TV production rolling in the UK. Last month, Germany announced a €2.5bn (£2.3bn) event cancellation fund.

In addition, UK Music is asking for an “indicative” date for when venues and events can move back to full capacity, and an extension to a VAT rate reduction on tickets and business rates relief. In November, it said tens of thousands out of the almost 200,000 people who worked in the industry were at risk of losing their jobs.

In June, Michael Eavis, said Glastonbury festival could go bankrupt if it had to be cancelled again this year. Last month, Emily Eavis said Glastonbury lost “millions” in 2020, adding: “We’re still quite a long way from being able to say we’re confident 2021 will go ahead.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/jan/05/uk-music-festivals-face-cancellation-without-government-support-insurance-coronavirus>

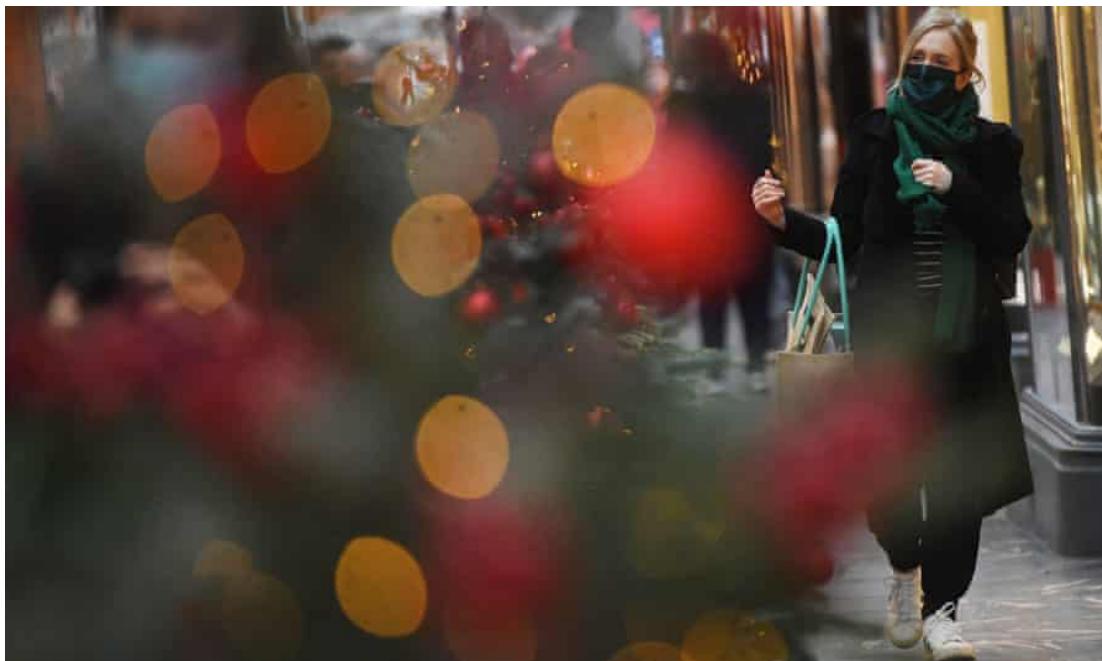
2021.01.05 - Coronavirus

- ['Still at half-capacity' Long Covid sufferers reflect on brutal year](#)
- [Singapore Police will be given access to Covid-19 contact tracing data](#)
- [Zimbabwe Country enters Covid lockdown amid fears over crowded new year parties](#)
- [Live Coronavirus: Italy to keep nationwide restrictions in place; Russia reports 24,246 new cases](#)
- [US Pharmacist who sabotaged vaccine doses 'is conspiracy theorist'](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

'I'm still at half-capacity': long Covid sufferers reflect on brutal year

We speak again to victims of the virus on the slow process of recovery, and the many setbacks they have endured since catching the disease



As London moved into tier 3 shortly before Christmas, the highest Covid risk category, the long-term debilitating effect of the virus is becoming ever clearer. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

As London moved into tier 3 shortly before Christmas, the highest Covid risk category, the long-term debilitating effect of the virus is becoming ever clearer. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Nicola Davis Science Correspondent

[@NicolaKSDavis](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

As weeks have turned to months, and months roll into a year, the shadow cast by Covid-19 continues to lengthen – not least for many of those who have survived the disease.

Earlier this year, some of those who caught the virus early in the pandemic told the Guardian about their ongoing symptoms, from [breathlessness and fatigue](#) to [mental health problems](#) and “[brain fog](#)”.

The testimonies were stark. Among them, Alice* talked of waves of symptoms that she described as being like “a storm”, while Jenny* was left with exhaustion and wrist pain months after infection. For Mirabai Nicholson-McKellar, the ongoing cognitive impairment that came with Covid was “completely crippling”, while Julie experienced hallucinations.

Several months on, we caught up with them to explore just how long “long Covid” can be.

For some, time has been a healer. “I feel incredibly blessed,” said Alice, who had Covid in the UK. After four months, her symptoms have finally gone away – with her recovery, she said, aided by support from her husband and employer. “I was lucky my GP had had long-haul Covid so was incredibly supportive,” she added.

But recovery is a slow process. “I’d say only now – nine months later [after infection] – I’m getting back [to] my normal strength [and] fitness,” said Alice.



Melanie Montano in ER in March. ‘It’s an infinity loop of fatigue and forgetfulness with no clear end in sight,’ she said.

For Dawn in the US, who experienced mental health problems after Covid, the situation is also slowly improving. “I am still in an intensive outpatient program for PTSD and depression, but I will be transitioning to less intense mental health care in the beginning of the year,” she said.

For others, symptoms have taken a turn for the worse. “Now I can barely use the computer at all and I have to do everything with voice activation software,” said Jenny, adding she can only work for short stints at a time.

Jenny, who is in the UK, said she has been referred to both a Covid clinic and, eventually, a neurologist, but there has been little in the way of treatments. “I didn’t really feel like they really offered me anything concrete that could help at any point in the NHS,” she said.

For Julie, in Minnesota, the dismissive attitude of her physician put her off seeking further help. “Most of my cognitive symptoms dissipated over the summer — the delirium, personality changes, paranoia,” she said. But she is still experiencing memory loss and brain fog — and these seem to be influenced by other ongoing symptoms.

“Every few weeks I have a flare-up that mimics my original symptoms: fever, extreme chest pain, cough, weakness,” said Julie, adding that these can be scary and debilitating. “Just this week I had such an intense flare-up that I was too weak to walk to the bathroom without help.”

Nicholson-McKellar, from Byron Bay, Australia, has had a similar experience. “I am still functioning on less than half of my normal capacity,” she said, adding that she still has fatigue, brain fog, insomnia and headaches, and that between carrying out tasks or work she needs to rest. “It makes living and fully interacting with this busy world impossible,” she said.

Melanie Montano from New Jersey in the US, who previously talked to the Guardian about her post-Covid brain fog, is still experiencing symptoms 270 days after testing positive. “It’s an infinity loop of fatigue and forgetfulness with no clear end in sight,” she said.

And for some, new complications have emerged. Lauren Nichols, from Boston, Massachusetts, said she has recently been hospitalised with shingles which was triggered by the impact of Covid on her body.

“As a result I am now partially blind because I had lesions in my eye,” she said, adding she has also been diagnosed with aphasia, meaning she is struggling to recognise words.

However her gastrointestinal symptoms have improved, while the antiviral medication she was given for shingles appears to have helped with some of her long Covid symptoms, such as fatigue.



Lauren Nichols: ‘I am now partially blind because I had lesions in my eye.’

“Covid has changed just about every aspect of my life,” said Julie, who has been too unwell to take up a full-time job, and is currently unable to live independently.

Dawn, who before Covid was an organ transplant coordinator in Philadelphia, has also seen the disease affect her professionally. “I remain out of work and that has been incredibly challenging. Disability [support] was very difficult to obtain – I was denied for months,” she said.

But there are glimmers of hope. Montano said that the effect of her experience on her mental health has led her to adopt healthier self-care habits. “It’s been a transformative experience, re-learning how to honour my emotional needs after months of neglect,” she said.

And Nicholson-McKellar has plans afoot. “Roughly mid-year I will be starting a huge project of building my first home. It’s a little daunting to try to do that in my current foggy fatigued state. So I am really hoping that things start to shift,” she said.

As for Alice, after taking voluntary redundancy, she and her husband are spending a year in their home country of New Zealand.

Julie said that, with a new US president at the helm, she hopes 2021 will bring more kindness and compassion to those seriously affected by Covid, whether because of job losses, the death of loved ones or their own experience of the virus.

“I sincerely hope people who have been dismissing Covid as fake or as a mild illness can come to understand what a devastating, debilitating disease this is and can learn to offer compassion rather than criticism to those who are struggling,” she said.

Nichols agreed, adding that those with chronic illnesses, and women in particular, need to be listened to by the medical community and offered more support, while research and innovation in the area is urgently needed. “I hope that the long haul patients, long Covid patients, aren’t just left to suffer in silence because there is a vaccine out there,” she said. “There’s going to be a whole forgotten population if that is the case.”

**some names have been changed.*

Singapore

Singapore says police will be given access to Covid-19 contact tracing data

Concerns over privacy as TraceTogether scheme is used by almost 80% of the nation's population

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Singapore's minister of state for home affairs said the Covid contract tracing data could be used where 'citizens' safety and security is or has been affected'. Photograph: Roslan Rahman/Afp/AFP/Getty Images

Singapore's minister of state for home affairs said the Covid contract tracing data could be used where 'citizens' safety and security is or has been affected'. Photograph: Roslan Rahman/Afp/AFP/Getty Images

[Josh Taylor](#) and agencies

[@joshgnosis](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 00.16 EST

Singapore has announced its police will be able to use data obtained by its coronavirus contact-tracing technology for criminal investigations, a decision likely to increase privacy concerns around the system.

The technology, deployed as both a phone app and a physical device, is being used by nearly 80% of the 5.7 million population, authorities said, after announcing its use would become compulsory in places such as shopping malls.

The TraceTogether scheme, one of the most widely used in any country, has raised privacy fears but authorities have said the data is encrypted, stored locally and tapped by authorities only if individuals test positive for Covid-19.

[Singapore 'cruise to nowhere' ends after passenger tests positive for Covid-19](#)

[Read more](#)

“The Singapore police force is empowered ... to obtain any data, including TraceTogether data, for criminal investigations,” the minister of state for home affairs, Desmond Tan, said on Monday in response to a question in parliament.

The privacy statement on the TraceTogether website says: “Data will only be used for Covid-19 contact tracing.”

Privacy concerns have been raised about such apps in various places, including Israel and South Korea.

“Concerns have focused on data security issues associated with the collection, use and storage of the data,” law firm Norton Rose Fullbright said of Singapore’s scheme in a review of global contact-tracing technology last month.

Asked about the TraceTogether privacy statement by an opposition MP, Tan said: “We do not preclude the use of TraceTogether data in circumstances where citizens’ safety and security is or has been affected, and this applies to all other data as well.”

[Singapore to offer baby bonus as people put plans on hold in Covid crisis](#) [Read more](#)

Dissent is rare in Singapore, which has been ruled by the same party since its independence in 1965, has strict laws, widespread surveillance and restrictions on public assembly. Serious crime is also rare.

The prime minister, Lee Hsien Loong, has previously said privacy concerns about the technology had to be weighed against the need to curb the spread of the virus and keep the economy open.

Singapore has reported only a handful of local Covid-19 cases in the past few months, and its extensive disease surveillance and contact tracing efforts have won international praise including from the World Health Organization.

Australia based its own contact tracing app, Covidsafe, on the TraceTogether app source code.

The New South Wales Department of Health said last year that one major issue with the app – which would also have privacy implications if used by law enforcement – was falsely identifying close contacts.

“There were neighbours in the same apartment buildings or nearby houses, there were office workers who worked on different floors in the case, there were people who were in different restaurants with the case, [or] that was still on the same street or perhaps a few doors down or even over the road from the case,” researcher Jana Sisnowski [said](#).

With Reuters

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Global development

Zimbabwe enters Covid lockdown amid fears over crowded new year parties

Panic over infection rates mixed with fear of widespread hunger as 30-day shutdown is imposed after people defy ban on gatherings

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Thousands of people attend a music concert to celebrate the new year in Mbare, Harare, on 1 January 2021. Photograph: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP
Thousands of people attend a music concert to celebrate the new year in Mbare, Harare, on 1 January 2021. Photograph: Tsvangirayi Mukwazhi/AP
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[Nyasha Chingono](#) in Harare

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.15 EST

Parties and new year celebrations that attracted thousands of revellers with little social distancing or mask wearing have triggered panic and a strict 30-day national lockdown in Zimbabwe's capital, Harare.

On New Year's Eve thousands of people gathered at Matapi, Mbare, one of Zimbabwe's oldest townships for a dancehall concert, while thousands of others held parties across the city despite a police ban.

[Video footage](#) and photographs showing huge crowds partying with no regard to Covid-19 regulations prompted an outcry on social media, with Zimbabweans questioning why the police had failed to shut down the concert. The Mbare event, which attracted top artists, was held less than a kilometre from Matapi police station.

Police have since arrested people involved in organising the unsanctioned concert, for breaking lockdown rules that ban gatherings of more than 50 people.

“So far, 52 people have been arrested ... for openly defying the government’s Covid-19 measures on health, safety and security,” police said

in a statement.

On the same night, other late-night venues dotted about the city were also crowded with revellers.

Across the country, 2,321 people were arrested on New Year's Day for breaking lockdown measures, including 200 teenagers at a [house party](#) in Westgate, Harare.

"It appears members of the public are taking the Covid-19 pandemic for granted and are no longer taking precautionary measures," the police said.

The events flouting regulations have triggered panic, with Zimbabweans fearing another wave of the virus.



A packed Harare fast food store on New Year's Eve. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

On Sunday Zimbabwe recorded 774 Covid cases, with 571 new infections in Harare. As of 3 January, Zimbabwe had recorded 15,265 cases and 380 deaths.

However, testing is not widespread and cases have been rising rapidly since Christmas as Zimbabweans who work in South [Africa](#) returned home for the

holidays.

Health experts have warned of a rapid rise in new infections, especially in the most populous suburbs where social distancing is impossible, while a government official said Zimbabwe could be “overrun by the virus”.

“We hear UK beds are overwhelmed by Covid-19. Well, that’s them. They say in South Africa that hospital admission thresholds are now quite high – that’s them. But, let me tell you about our own situation: don’t catch the virus if you can avoid it. We are being overwhelmed and overrun by this virus,” the information secretary, Nick Mangwana, said in a [tweet](#).

Zimbabweans with relatives suffering from Covid-19 have pleaded for ventilators as private hospitals continue to charge high rates.

With a fragile health system, where there has been insufficient testing and a lack of preparedness to deal with the virus, health experts have warned of an impending health catastrophe.

In response to the rising cases, the government on Saturday ordered a strict 30-day national lockdown.

The vice-president, Constantino Chiwenga, said Zimbabwe had recorded 1,342 cases and 29 deaths in the past week, “the highest number recorded so far”. He ordered that funerals be limited to 30 people while gatherings such as weddings and church services have been banned for 30 days. The reopening of schools has been postponed indefinitely, while restaurants and bars have been shut down. A 6pm-6am curfew has been introduced.

However, airports will remain open, while intercity travel has been banned with borders open only to commercial cargo and vehicles transiting to other countries.

The lockdown also bans any form of informal trading, which is the mainstay of the economy and how millions of people earn their livelihood.

['We will starve': Zimbabwe's poor full of misgiving over Covid-19 lockdown](#)
[Read more](#)

Zimbabweans who spoke to the Guardian in Harare said the strict rules would plunge families into hunger.

“I used up all my money when I travelled for the Christmas holidays, how do I survive for the next 30 days without selling my wares? These decisions are being made with little regard to how poor people like us are going to survive,” said Esther Marimbire, a vendor from Budiriro, a suburb of southwest Harare.

The 40-year-old said that despite the government’s promises to give struggling families relief during the first lockdown in March last year, her family is yet to benefit. “I was part of the thousands here who registered for relief last year but up to now nothing has come our way. This means the government does not care about our welfare,” she said.

Zimbabwe has nearly [8 million people in need of food aid](#), according to humanitarian organisations, but recent rains have triggered hope of a better harvest following successive years of drought.

Glen Mutasa, 30, of Glen View in Harare, said his small business would suffer under the lockdown. “From the experience of last year’s lockdown that went on for months, hunger is knocking on my door. I cannot risk running battles with the police and soldiers so I will stay at home, but it’s tough.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2021/jan/05/zimbabwe-enters-covid-lockdown-amid-fears-over-crowded-new-year-parties>

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[Wisconsin](#)

US pharmacist who tried to ruin Covid vaccine doses is a conspiracy theorist, police say

Misinformation about the vaccines has surged online as rollout has been susceptible to local disruption

[Ankita Rao](#) and agencies

Tue 5 Jan 2021 09.51 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 19.00 EST



Adam Gerol, the district attorney, speaks as Steven Brandenburg appears at a probable cause hearing in the Ozaukee county justice center. Photograph: Mark Hertzberg/ZUMA Wire/REX/Shutterstock

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A Wisconsin pharmacist convinced the world was “crashing down” told police he tried to [ruin hundreds of doses](#) of coronavirus vaccine, because he

believed the shots would mutate people's DNA, according to court documents released on Monday.

Police in Grafton, about 20 miles north of Milwaukee, arrested Advocate Aurora [Health](#) pharmacist Steven Brandenburg last week, following an investigation into 57 spoiled vials of the Moderna vaccine, which officials say contained enough doses for more than 500 people. The 46-year-old left the vials unrefrigerated.

"He'd formed this belief they were unsafe," Ozaukee county district attorney Adam Gerol said in a virtual hearing. He added that Brandenburg was upset because he and his wife are divorcing. An Aurora employee said Brandenburg had taken a gun to work twice. Charges are pending.

Misinformation about the Covid-19 vaccines has surged online with false claims circulating on everything from the vaccines' ingredients to possible side-effects.

One of the earliest false claims suggested that the vaccines could alter DNA. The [Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine](#) as well as the Moderna vaccine rely on messenger RNA or mRNA, which is a fairly new technology used in vaccines that experts have been working on for years.

Such vaccines help train the immune system to identify the spike protein on the surface of the coronavirus and create an immune response. Experts have said there is no truth to the claims that the vaccines can genetically modify humans.

Jeff Bahr, the Advocate Aurora Health Care chief medical group officer, has said Brandenburg admitted that he deliberately removed the vials from refrigeration at the Grafton medical center overnight on 24 December into 25 December, returned them, then left them out again on the night of 25 December into Saturday.

A pharmacy technician discovered the vials outside the refrigerator on 26 December.

Brandenburg's attorney, Jason Baltz, did not speak on the merits of the case during the hearing. Gerol held off on filing any charges, saying he still needed to determine whether Brandenburg actually destroyed the doses.

Judge Paul Malloy ordered Brandenburg held on a \$10,000 signature bond on the condition that he surrender his firearms, not work in healthcare and have no contact with Aurora employees.

Brandenburg is in the process of divorcing his wife of eight years. The couple has two small children.

According to an affidavit Brandenburg's wife filed, he visited her on 6 December and dropped off a water purifier and two 30-day supplies of food, telling her the world was "crashing down".

He had also said the government was planning cyber-attacks and was going to shut down the power grid.

She added that he was storing food in bulk along with guns in rental units and she no longer felt safe around him.

The incident was one of many significant hiccups in the US distribution of the Covid-19 vaccine, which has been affected by everything from political polarization to a fractured healthcare system.

But as misinformation and supply chain issues abound, the virus is only strengthening its hold. There were 210,479 new cases in the US on Monday, and more than 2,000 deaths. Health systems are breaking under the pressure, with a record number of more than 128,000 people hospitalized, according to Johns Hopkins data.

The US death toll is [approaching 354,000](#).

Last month, the Trump administration promised that at least 20 million people would be vaccinated by 1 January. So far, only around 4.6 million people have received their first dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine, with second doses starting to be administered on Tuesday.

The rocky rollout has been susceptible to local disruption. One pharmacist at a Giant Food store in Washington DC, for example, gave “extra” doses of the vaccine to two shoppers happening to walk by, neither of whom were essential workers or elderly. Other pharmacists have reportedly been throwing out extra liquid in vials which could be used to inoculate more people, according to the Daily Beast.

In some health systems, people have been accused of jumping the line, low-risk workers getting the vaccine before those on the front line.

California, where Los Angeles has seen a huge spike in cases, is trying to execute the massive immunization campaign “with a sense of urgency that is required of this moment and the urgency that people demand”. But so far only about 1% of 40 million residents have been vaccinated, Governor Gavin Newsom said.

The 454,000 doses of vaccine that have been administered in California represent just a third of the more than nearly 1.3m received by the state so far, according to the California Department of Public Health.

US surgeon general Jerome Adams has defended the vaccine rollout, saying 20m doses had been delivered, if not allocated.

“We have to understand that it occurred over the holidays and people in health departments and in hospitals take holiday breaks too,” he said, pointing to 500,000 people being vaccinated every day.

But Republicans are also dealing with an anti-science agenda within their own party, which has made many Trump followers hesitant to take the vaccine despite a push from the president. One poll found Republicans four times more likely not to get the vaccine than Democrats, partly because of a surge in online misinformation.

So far, the federal government has dismissed suggestions it should ramp up its vaccine rollout by administering just one dose to more Americans, as the UK has decided to do.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.05 - Coronavirus uk

- [London Hospital halts urgent cancer surgery due to Covid cases](#)
- [England lockdown What are the new Covid restrictions?](#)
- [Inequality IFS calls for a fairer UK after Covid widens differences](#)
- ['We see huge benefits' Firms adopt four-day week in Covid crisis](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

London hospital halts urgent cancer surgery due to Covid cases

Concern among staff as King's College postpones operations amid shortage of ICU beds

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

[Denis Campbell](#) and [Haroon Siddique](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 13.38 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 12.26 EST



King's College hospital in south London. Photograph: Richard Baker/In Pictures/Getty

One of the NHS's biggest hospitals has had to cancel urgent cancer surgery this week because so many of its intensive care beds are occupied by Covid-19 patients.

King's College hospital in south [London](#) called off all "priority two" cancer operations it was due to perform on Monday and Tuesday. They are procedures that cancer specialists have judged to be urgent and need to be done within 28 days of the decision to undertake them.

The postponement has raised concerns among staff at the hospital, who fear that some of the patients affected may see their cancer spread or become inoperable as a result.

Staff and patients were told over the weekend about the delay, which has been forced on the hospital because so many of the beds in its intensive care unit are occupied by people seriously ill with Covid. Some cancer patients need to spend time in ICU after their surgery, and operations cannot go ahead unless the hospital has enough beds for that.

When told the news, patients were upset and concerned about how the cancellations may affect their health, as were their families, sources said. Some were "distraught", they added. King's is under such strain, with Covid hospitalisations in London rising rapidly, that it is unable to give patients a definite date in the future for their rescheduled surgery.

One member of staff said: "It's important to do these cancer cases within four weeks because they're urgent. If you put cancer surgery off for more than four weeks, that cancer can spread. [The delay can mean that] surgery may become inappropriate, because surgery can no longer get rid of the cancer, and thus the patient's outcome may be worse."

Some patients may be given chemotherapy as a temporary measure, to try to stop the tumour from growing before they have their rearranged surgery.

King's College hospital confirmed it had cancelled priority two cancer operations. A spokesperson said: "Due to the large increase in patients being admitted with Covid-19, including those requiring intensive care, we have taken the difficult decision to postpone all elective procedures, with the exception of cases where a delay would cause immediate harm.

"A small number of cancer patients due to be operated on this week have had their surgery postponed, with patients being kept under close review by

senior doctors.”

King’s is thought to be the first NHS hospital to cancel priority two operations as a result of the intense pressures on hospitals during the fast-deepening second wave of the pandemic. The Observer [reported on Sunday](#) that hospitals in the capital are so overwhelmed with Covid cases that NHS London bosses are poised to tell them to cancel cancer operations in order to concentrate resources on victims of the pandemic. Sir David Sloman, the boss of NHS London, said: “Urgent cancer surgery is not being cancelled in London.”

Sources at King’s said it was “unlikely” to be able to perform urgent cancer surgery on Wednesday, Thursday or Friday.

Cases

Many hospitals in England [have cancelled surgery](#) since the second wave began in September. But until now these have been elective – non-urgent – operations that usually involve less time-critical surgery such as cataract removals and hip and knee replacements, procedures that the NHS seeks to undertake inside 18 weeks.

Sara Bainbridge, a policy chief at Macmillan [Cancer](#) Support, said: “We still must make sure that cancer doesn’t become ‘the forgotten C’ during this time and it is imperative that people expecting tests and treatment face minimal disruption.

“However, if disruption is unavoidable to keep people safe, then cancer patients expecting to undergo surgery this week will be understandably concerned. This decision would represent one of the toughest choices that clinicians will ever make and is a grim indication of how overwhelmed many hospitals are becoming with Covid admissions.”

In another sign of the pressures on King’s, it has cancelled all leave that staff had booked for this week, blaming severe “operational pressures” due to its surge in Covid admissions.

Even staff who are booked to be on agreed leave this week as “compensation” for working over Christmas and new year are being asked if “they are able to postpone their leave and return to site”. The trust also runs the Princess Royal University hospital in Orpington, Kent.

It told staff that the situation it is facing may mean it has to cancel staff leave not just this week, but for all of January.

London, the south-east and east of England are the areas worst affected by the recent surge in Covid infections, which is being driven by the new variant.

The latest [NHS](#) England figures show the number of people in hospital in the capital with Covid reached a new peak of 5,524 on 30 December, even higher than the previous record of 5,201 recorded on 9 April, at the peak of the first wave.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/kings-college-hospital-london-halts-urgent-cancer-surgery-covid>

[Coronavirus](#)

Covid lockdown 3: what are the new coronavirus restrictions in England?

A quick breakdown of the new measures to curb the virus announced by Boris Johnson on Monday night

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



The prime minister said the plan was for England to return to a tier system from mid-February. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

The prime minister said the plan was for England to return to a tier system from mid-February. Photograph: Jacob King/PA

[Rajeev Syal](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 05.02 EST

The prime minister announced on Monday evening that there would be a third national lockdown in England. The regulations will be laid before

parliament on Tuesday, will be subject to a vote on Wednesday and are expected to remain in place until the middle of February.

Downing Street said people would be urged to start following the new rules from Monday evening and not wait for them to become law. The new measures will apply across the whole of England and no exception will be made for those who have been vaccinated. The main changes are:

Stay at home

Everyone will be asked to immediately stay at home and only leave for the following specific reasons:

- To go to work or provide voluntary or charitable services, if you cannot reasonably do so from home – this includes key workers and those in the construction industry.
- To shop for food and/or medicine for yourself or a vulnerable person.
- To provide care or help to a vulnerable person.
- To exercise – see below for specific rules.
- To seek medical care or an appointment or avoid injury, illness or risk of harm, including domestic abuse.
- To meet your support bubble or childcare bubble where necessary, but only if you are legally permitted to form one.
- To attend education or childcare if you are eligible.

Outdoor socialising and exercise

Socialising outside is allowed only with people from your household or bubble. Stay 2 metres from anyone not in your household.

Outdoor exercise such as walking or running can be done with your household or bubble, or with just one person from another household. Exercise should be limited to once a day and you should stay in your local area.

Sporting venues including pools, gyms, tennis courts and golf courses will close, but playgrounds will remain open.

Education and childcare

Schools, colleges and universities will be asked to close with immediate effect, remaining open only to vulnerable children and the children of key workers. Nurseries will be able to stay open.

A-levels and GCSEs will not go ahead as originally envisaged. Higher education provision will remain online until mid-February, with in-person university teaching taking place only for those training to be critical workers, for example medical students.

Support and childcare bubbles will remain as they are under the new lockdown. Children of divorced or separated parents can continue to move freely between both parents' homes.

Retail, hospitality and tradespeople

All non-essential retail, hospitality and personal care services such as hairdressers and salons must shut if not already, and remain closed. Essential retailers, which include supermarkets, pharmacies, garden centres, and builders' merchants, may stay open.

Takeaway venues and restaurants can continue to offer click-and-collect services, but can no longer sell alcohol.

Tradespeople such as cleaners can still visit people's homes. Dentists and opticians can stay open. Driving lessons are suspended.

Public events

Elite sporting events such as the Premier League will be able to continue, but with the same restrictions, but grassroots sport is being put on hold again.

Communal worship can continue, with social distancing. Weddings will be allowed only in exceptional circumstances. There are so far no plans to postpone the local elections.

Older and vulnerable people

Close-contact indoor visits in care homes will not be allowed, but visits involving screens, pods and through windows can go ahead.

If you are clinically extremely vulnerable, you should only go out for medical appointments, for exercise, or if it is essential. You should not attend work.

Enforcement

Police will have powers similar to those in [last year's lockdown](#) to arrest or fine those who breach the rules.

What's next?

The government will be asked to clarify the rules over coming days. The plan is to return to a tier system after mid-February.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/lockdown-no-3-what-are-the-new-restrictions>

[Institute for Fiscal Studies](#)

IFS calls for a fairer UK after Covid brings greater inequality

Thinktank finds the vulnerable hit hardest, and says policies are needed to repair the damage

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

[Larry Elliott](#) Economics editor

Mon 4 Jan 2021 19.01 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 03.07 EST



A volunteer at a Trussell Trust food bank prepares a food parcel. Mortality rates in deprived communities have been around twice as high as in the least deprived. Photograph: HASPhotos/Alamy

A leading thinktank has called for action to make Britain a fairer country after its research showed that the Covid-19 pandemic had led to greater

inequality.

The Institute for Fiscal Studies said the most vulnerable – those on lower incomes, the young, the least-educated and people from [black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds](#) – had been hit hardest by the crisis.

Covid-19 has “cruelly exposed huge variations in how easily we are able to weather threats to livelihoods, to educational progress, to physical and mental health”, the IFS said. “These disparities have been closely correlated with pre-existing inequalities between groups according to their education, income, location and ethnicity – in ways that are often hard to disentangle, but depressingly familiar.”

Eighteen months ago, the IFS launched a [five-year study of inequality](#) headed by the economics Nobel laureate Sir Angus Deaton. In a new year update, the thinktank said the pandemic had thrown up challenges that could not be ducked.

Graph: mortality rate v level of deprivation

The report noted that:

- Mortality rates in the most deprived communities were about twice as high as those in the least deprived. BAME groups were more likely to die than the white majority, in part reflecting their occupations.
- The better-paid and more highly educated had found it easier to cope financially with the crisis. Among graduates, there had been a 7% fall in the number doing any paid work; among non-graduates it was 17%.
- Children from poorer families found it harder to do schoolwork during lockdown, received less online teaching, and have been more likely to miss school since September.
- Elderly people have suffered high mortality rates from Covid-19, but the young have felt the economic consequences, with the under-25s more than twice as likely as older workers to have lost their jobs.

sectors

The IFS said: “We need to do more to ensure greater economic opportunities for minority ethnic groups, and ensure that they are not consigned to low-paid and self-employed occupations. They would benefit disproportionately from policies that, for example, provided greater security for the self-employed and others in insecure work, improved pay and conditions in health and social care, and supported progress through the labour market.”

The report also said that without targeted support for children who had fallen behind as a result of the crisis, the “huge educational inequalities that existed” before the pandemic were almost certain to get worse.

The IFS said the risk of permanent scarring to the younger generation would be reduced if help was provided to school leavers and graduates looking for work and training. Asset prices had been bolstered by Bank of England action to support the economy, making it important for the Treasury to support the young and those without wealth.

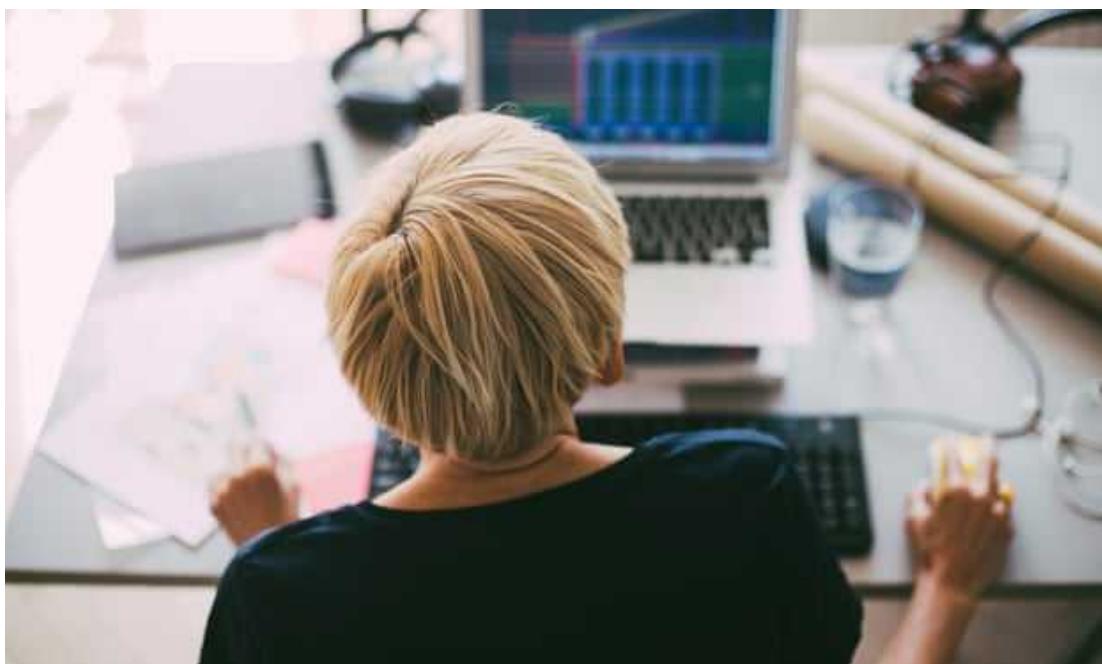
Deaton said: “As the vaccines should, at some point this year, take us into a world largely free of the pandemic, it is imperative to think about policies that will be needed to repair the damage and that focus on those who have suffered the most. We need to build a country in which everyone feels that they belong.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/05/ifs-calls-for-a-fairer-uk-after-covid-brings-greater-inequality>.

Economics

'We see huge benefits': firms adopt four-day week in Covid crisis

Rishi Sunak could prevent steep rise in unemployment if he supports move, says thinktank



The move to a four-day week brought some companies benefits when pay was cut and they were working from home in the Covid lockdown.
Photograph: Maskot/Getty Images

When Target Publishing cut staff pay after the first coronavirus lockdown last year, the magazine group knew it had to make a positive gesture to its employees. So it introduced a four-day week.

"I felt better in myself that I was able to give something back to match the sacrifice everyone had made," says Target's founder and owner, David Cann. Faced with sliding advertising sales and several cancelled projects, the publisher of 20 titles including Natural Lifestyle and Health Food Business had cut pay for its 30 staff by 20%.

But the shift to a four-day week brought immediate benefits for the Essex-based company. What surprised Cann was how much more effectively staff worked and that in July, when the situation had improved, he was able to reinstate everyone's pay and retain the four-day week.

"Of course there were teething problems, but we found meetings were much shorter and we looked at the way staff worked and what they did much more closely to achieve significant efficiencies."

"And from a mental health point of view, we see huge benefits and because everyone wants it to work, you get an upside in higher profits."

When Unilever said in November it would [move staff in its New Zealand office](#) to a four-day week on the same pay, the maker of Dove soap and Magnum ice-cream which employs more than 150,000 people worldwide, gave the kind of high-profile endorsement for flexible working that campaigners have been waiting for.

"Its time has come," says the economist Aidan Harper, who has championed the four-day week with colleagues at the New Economics Foundation (NEF) thinktank and [a growing number of political organisations across Europe](#).

Harper is the co-author of a new book, [The Case for a Four-Day Week](#), that sets out the practical arguments for a reduction in the hours spent at work with no loss of pay.

He said that during much of the 20th-century companies were forced, either by trade union action, government policy or labour shortages to give workers a large slice of the gains in productivity – the output of each worker per hour – but this ran out of steam in the 1980s.

With productivity increases [close to zero since the 2008 financial crash](#) and the pandemic forcing companies like Target to rethink how they deploy their resources, there is a growing expectation that a broader shift to shorter working hours will happen in 2021.

A recent report by the thinktank [Autonomy](#) argued that the chancellor, Rishi Sunak, could prevent a steep rise in unemployment if he supported

companies moving to a four-day week. It said a majority of 50,000 firms studied would be able to cope with the change through higher productivity or by raising prices.

[It urged the government to investigate](#) ways of rolling out a four-day week, starting with the public sector.

A few weeks after the Unilever announcement Awin, an online marketing firm, said its [1,000 employees – including more than 300 based in the UK – would move to a four-day week](#) after trialling several forms of flexible working.

Like Awin, Unilever will trust staff to work more effectively during a 12-month pilot project. This is not based on hope, but on analysis of how 81 white-collar workers in Auckland carry out their day-to-day tasks using the practical lessons from a local advisory firm Perpetual Guardian, itself a four-day week business run by Andrew Barnes, a former boss of £5.7bn turnover investment broker Bestinvest.

Unilever will introduce new project management software to cut down on unnecessary tasks and support faster decision-making. After the trial, the company says it will evaluate the outcome with Sydney's University of Technology business school and look at how a shorter working week could be adopted by the rest of its 155,000 employees [globally](#).

The initiative follows a similar trial by Microsoft in its Japanese operations and Toyota's adoption of reduced hours in several of its factories.



Microsoft said employees increased productivity by 40% when it trialled a four-day week in Japan. Photograph: Swayne B Hall/AP

[Microsoft said in November](#) that employees increased productivity by 40%, more than making up for the 20% drop in attendance by staff. The US tech firm restricted meetings to half an hour and changed many of its working practices as part of a summer project that allowed greater participation by staff teams. The company has yet to reveal what happens next.

Until now the number of organisations taking the plunge is few and progress towards a widespread four-day week culture has so far been glacial, but Harper expects the pressure on companies to review their operations to accelerate take-up in the new year.

“At its recent conference the Scottish National party called on the Scottish government to launch a review of working practices, including the possibility of a four-day week, while [the recent Marmot review](#) into health outcomes put shorter working hours on its list of priorities to cut stress and extend life expectancy,” he says.

Julius Goldthorpe, the co-founder of the recruitment company Four Day Week, says the concept has been growing in popularity but remains a small

part of the jobs market.

“We started out wanting to focus just on jobs that were four days a week, but we were ahead of the curve and within six months had broadened out to take in all forms of flexible working,” he says.

The supermarket chain Morrisons said in the summer it would be [moving to a four-day week](#) at its Bradford headquarters, though it is a more tentative move than the headline announcement suggests.

There was a cut in weekly hours from 40 a week to 37.5 and the company said staff will work nine-hour days to cram the time into a four-day week with a six-hour shift on a Saturday once a month.

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The resulting gain of 2.5 hours is less than the 4.2 hours the NEF believes UK workers should have received from productivity growth since 1980.

Harper, like the economist Lord Skidelsky, who advised Labour’s former shadow chancellor John McDonnell to [adopt shorter hours on a sector by sector](#) basis – rather than a blanket approach - wants the government to swing behind the move to improve the UK’s low ranking among European countries.

Full-time employees in the UK – which make up 74% of the workforce – work longer hours than full-time employees in all other EU countries except Greece and Austria. The EU average was 41.2 hours a week in 2018; the UK’s is 42.5. A four-day week would reduce those hours, but investment is also needed to ensure that productivity gains follow.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/05/four-day-week-covid-crisis>

2021.01.05 - Spotlight

- [From meteor showers to the Olympics 21 things to look forward to in 2021](#)
- ['Everyone is angry, nobody knows anything' Budapest Black Lives Matter artwork sparks rightwing backlash](#)

Life and style

21 things to look forward to in 2021 – from meteor showers to the Olympics

From finally seeing the back of Donald Trump to being in a football stadium – the new year is full of promise



Here's hoping for lots of hugs in 2021. Composite: Getty/Guardian Design Team

Here's hoping for lots of hugs in 2021. Composite: Getty/Guardian Design Team



[Sam Wollaston](#)

[@samwollaston](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

1. It's not 2020 any more!

You probably found a few things to enjoy about last year: you rediscovered your bicycle, perhaps, or your family, or even both, and learned to love trees. And don't forget the clapping. Plus some brilliant scientists figured out how to make a safe and effective vaccine for a brand new virus in record time.

Overall, though, unless you've got some pals in government who gave you a contract to make PPE (even though you're a PE teacher), or you're [Jeff Bezos](#), then the whole shitshow needs to be drop-kicked into the past. Do one, 2020.

2. One sharp scratch ...



A Pfizer/BioNTech Covid-19 vaccine being prepared in York in December.
Photograph: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

... for mankind, one giant leap back towards normality. (OK: two sharp scratches, but let's not get hung up on details.) Unless you're an anti-vaxxer, there's a damn good chance you're going to get jabbed in 2021. You might have already had the vaccine, or the first dose at least.

3. #TrumpOut



On the way out? Donald Trump. Photograph: Win McNamee/Getty Images

Unless he superglues himself to the Oval Office floor, or mobilises 70 million second amendment-toting nuts and stages an actual coup, then the Orange One really is outta the White House and [Joe Biden will be sworn in as the 46th president of the United States of America](#) on 20 January.

Maybe it doesn't have the yes-we-can frisson of 2012, and the overriding emotion is more relief than excitement, but hey, we'll take that.

4. Spring



Snowdrops in a beech wood in Berkshire. Photograph: Vicki Wagner/Alamy

The days are already getting longer. Perhaps you planted bulbs in the garden or a window box and they're already tentatively poking through. That magnolia has buds, a promise of joy to come. Soon the parks and the countryside, still just legally visitable at time of writing, will burst back into life, and the birds will be getting busy, planning new families. Maybe you are too?

If you're in the southern hemisphere you can skip this one ... actually, no, don't. Spring will come again, just a little further down the line. The seasons carry on regardless, obviously, reassuringly. And if you live in New Zealand, you can always feel smug about living in New Zealand.

5. Hugging

Not for a while maybe, and again, this won't be seen by everyone to be something to cheer, but hugging will become an option again. Perhaps it can be an opportunity to rethink the whole thing, establish some new rules. Such as:

- If you feel like hugging someone, and they want to be hugged, then hug on, Huggy Bear.
- But for those awkward, should-we-shouldn't-we situations, let's just say no.

What to do instead though, in a greeting situation say? Air kiss? Too European – we're out of there now. Handshake? The opposite – too Brexit, too [Rees-Mogg](#). Also germs. So let's keep the elbow bump – a reluctant concession to physical contact, but with a little comedy to break the ice. Less risky. See? Another great thing to come out of 2020.

6. Whole faces



Nice to see you ... smiling or scowling. (Posed by a model.) Photograph: alvarez/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Bottom half 'n'all, noses, mouths, chins. So you can tell who someone is and if they're smiling or scowling, instead of trying to guess from their eyes. I know, masks are going to be around for a while yet, and they do have their

advantages (beating facial recognition software, and halitosis). But it's going to be nice to see people again. And no more uncomfortable [maskne](#).

7. Art, innit?



Festivals are on the horizon. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

The culture previews have done this properly, and specifically – shows and books and everything to look forward to this year. In general, though, it's time not just for the body to be reawakened but the soul as well. There will be – have been – tragic cultural losses, and grieving. But the lights in many theatres will come back up again. Even if they don't look exactly the same, there will be live music gigs, operas, festivals! And [blockbusters in the cinema again](#) – welcome back, Mr Bond. People, in a room, sharing a collective experience, these are the things that make it all bearable.

8. Succession



The rap was real ... Jeremy Strong as Kendall Roy in Succession, season two.

Photograph: HBO

Boom ba da da, tinkle tinkle tinkle tinkle, boom ba da da – That's the theme, obviously. Such a great theme, such a great show. [Succession](#) gets its own mention, because the wait for the third series of Jesse Armstrong's sparkling, startling drama has become unbearable.

Remember how it left us? Kendall (Jeremy Strong) seemingly about to fall on his sword and take the blame for the cruise scandal, suddenly turning it and pointing it straight at his father. The sword, pointing the sword at Logan (Brian Cox). Not a real sword, no – a metaphorical one. The rap was real – [remember Kendall's rap](#)? It's impossible to forget Kendall's rap.

The date has not been confirmed but [HBO says it's going to happen in 2021](#). The world needs Succession like it needs the vaccine. It is a sort of vaccination – against boredom.

9. Get Back

Peter Jackson's Beatles doc, put together from [56 hours of unseen footage](#), gets a special mention. Because it looks from [the sneak peek](#) like such a joy

and a giggle. “Hopefully it will put a smile on your face,” says Jackson, introducing it. And it does: J, P, G and R larking about in the studio, with Yoko sitting there, looking Yoko-ish, peaceful. And it’s the Beatles, or “the Bottles” as John calls them, and Peter Jackson, in New Zealand, a little bit smugly. Plus the song could be a message to our own PM, about the EU: Get back, Bojo.

10. Take back (control)

One for the Brits, this (and it is possible some might not think it something to look forward to). We are free of the federal shackles and the tyranny of Brussels at last. Free to reclaim our sovereignty, and our haddock (maybe, I haven’t got to that bit in the trade deal yet).

And if we’re poorer, and our children won’t have the opportunities we had, and we’re less relevant, a forgotten little lorry park on the fringe of Europe, then look on the bright side: we can use powerful vacuum cleaners again, [while the EU is limited to 1,600 watts](#). Ha, suck on that, Monsieur Barnier.

11. The irrelevance of Nigel Farage



Here to stay? Nigel Farage. Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

OK, you won, Nigel. But with victory the reason for your existence disappears, so shut it.

He won't, of course. He can relaunch his party [as Reform UK](#), and [moan about lockdowns](#). And "[patrol](#)" the south coast, bothering boat arrivals. Can't he be deported, under new rules? Farage doesn't sound very English. Can't we put him in one of those dinghies and push him off? He can help himself to some haddock while he's out there.

12. Crowds



Parkruns ... people brought together by something shared. Photograph: Alamy Stock Photo

Not the face-in-an-armpit commuter train, or the tube, but the good crowd: a colony of human ants bigger and more powerful than the sum of its individual parts. People brought together, closer than 2 metres apart, by something shared, and looking at each without fear or suspicion. Those festival fields again, a marathon, [Parkrun](#), all the sports crowds, whatever it is that makes you swarm.

We've had tier 2 tasters – [2,000 at Anfield](#), sounding like many more if not a full Kop in full song, and so welcome after the hollowness of an empty

stadium, punctuated by the sound of boot on ball or [Jürgen Klopp's](#) bark. Or worse even than no crowd: a fake crowd, always late with its reactions, and it doesn't know the best songs. No more fake crowds, please.

13. Sport

It's shaping up to be a busy and brilliant year in sport, with major postponements rescheduled: Euro 2020 (+1) in June, followed by the [Olympics](#) and the Paralympics in Tokyo, and Wimbledon squeezed in among them. One last win for Andy, or Roger, and Serena, obviously. That's the summer sorted.

You want more? 2021's got more: [Women's Euro 2021](#), [Africa Cup of Nations](#), [Champions League](#), [Europa League triumph for Mikel's Gunners](#), [Six Nations](#), [the Ashes](#), the [America's Cup](#) if that's your thing, and don't forget the [Ping Pong World Cup in Houston, Texas](#).

14. A holiday



We do like to be beside the seaside – and Trevone Bay, Padstow, Cornwall, is beautiful. Photograph: John Harper/Getty Images

Come on, you've earned it. Going abroad may seem too much hassle, with international travel in tatters, and bureaucracy [ramped up by Brexit](#) and coronavirus, but we holidayed domestically in the 1950s, so we can jolly well do it again.

Take Cornwall! It's beautiful. Or the Lake District, Wales, Scotland (until it becomes abroad) ... There are so many places to pursue energetic outdoor activities, or visit castles, or whatever it is that your thing is. We might not always have the weather, but by golly we've got the views, and the history and the beaches. And with the money saved on flights you can get a nice bottle of Côtes du Rhône and a big piece of French cheese. Or you could go even homegrown.

15. Mmmm, homegrown cheese



Say cheese ... to a piece of Shropshire blue. Photograph: Picture Partners/Alamy Stock Photo

With all the checks, and paperwork, and hold-ups, there's a chance your favourite French cheese will turn into toe cheese by the time it reaches the supermarket shelf. There's more to British cheese than cheddar, though. I'm no expert but I like rollright and winslade, mainly because they're a bit like French reblochon and vacherin. Some English wine isn't bad, either.

16. Happy birthday ...

... to us, happy birthday to us, happy birthday, dear the Guardian, happy birthday to us. “No former period, in the history of our Country, has been marked by the agitation of questions of a more important character than those which are now claiming the attention of the public,” began the announcement of a new newspaper in Manchester.

That was 1821, a couple of years after the Peterloo massacre; it could so easily have been referring to today. Never has it been so important to listen, to find out, to hold power to account. There may even be some low-key celebrations.

17. More anniversaries to celebrate

Take your pick. It’s 2,500 years since the battle of Plataea, 1,000 years since the birth of Byzantine empress Eudokia Makrembolitissa, 300 years since Robert Walpole became the first British PM, 30 years since Tim Berners-Lee had his idea for a worldwide web, 10 years since the Arab spring. Bob Dylan’s going to be 80 in May – the times they are a-changin’. It’s possible you too might have a birthday in 2021.

18. Heavenly bodies



The Eta Aquarid meteor shower at the Babcock Wildlife Refuge, Florida.
Photograph: Diana Robinson Photography/Getty Images

Nostradamus predicted a comet will come close in 2021, might even collide with the Earth. “In the sky, one sees fire and a long trail of sparks,” the French astrologer wrote. To be fair, he has been wrong.

More reliable astronomical sources highlight the [Eta Aquarids meteor shower](#), produced by dust particles left behind by comet Halley, as one to watch out for. This year, we are told, it will peak on the night of 5/6 May . There will also be a [total lunar eclipse](#) on 26 May, if you’re in the Pacific region, parts of Asia, Australia, or the west of North America.

Nostradamus also warned of massive solar storms, and that “we shall see the water rising and the Earth falling under it”. Oh God – he was predicting climate catastrophe, wasn’t he? This is supposed to be things to look forward to.

19. Pura vida



Arrivals at San Jose's Juan Santamaria airport are greeted with a Pura Vida message. Photograph: Ezequiel Becerra/AFP/Getty Images

With the Orange One gone, we'll at least have a better chance to do something about the climate. Glasgow is hosting the 26th United Nations Climate Change Conference in November, keeping parties on track towards the goals of the Paris climate agreement. They could do worse than follow Costa Rica, which will become the [first country to declare itself carbon neutral](#). It is also set to eradicate single-use plastics. *Pura vida* – pure life – as they say there.

20. Christmas

Just 354 days to go, at time of publication And Christmas 2021 might actually feel something like Christmas. You know, everyone there, Granny not on Zoom but in the room. And the right food, in the right place, not the 10kg turkey over there for those two, and the cake over there. Followed perhaps even by a big night out (remember?) on New Year's Eve. Steady ...

21. 2022

OK, so 2021's going to be an improvement on 2020; it couldn't be worse. But the aftershocks will reverberate for a while. 2022, though, with daylight

between us and 2020, and new hope: 22's going to be even better.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Hungary](#)

Budapest Black Lives Matter artwork sparks rightwing backlash

Officials from Viktor Orbán's rightwing party stoke outrage over two-week installation



The planned art installation by Péter Szalay.

The planned art installation by Péter Szalay.

[Shaun Walker](#) in Budapest

Tue 5 Jan 2021 00.00 EST

It will be only one metre high, and will be on display for just two weeks. Nevertheless, a planned art installation dedicated to the theme of Black Lives Matter is causing uproar in Budapest, where the rightwing, nationalist government of [Viktor Orbán](#) has taken aim at the movement and all it represents.

The installation won a recent tender for public art in Budapest's ninth district, an area on the city's Pest side that combines streets of grand turn-of-the-century buildings with communist-era social housing projects.

“The BLM goals of opposing racism and police brutality are just as relevant in [Hungary](#) as anywhere else,” said Krisztina Baranyi, the ninth district mayor, citing the Orbán government’s relentless campaign against migrants and refugees, as well as the systematic discrimination against Hungary’s Roma minority.

In total, seven pieces were chosen to be displayed for two-week periods next spring in different locations, but it is the BLM sculpture that has created headlines.

The issue was seized upon eagerly by government officials and the government’s stable of loyal media. “Black Lives Matter is basically a racist movement. The racist is not the person who opposes a BLM statue, but the person who erects one,” said Orbán’s chief of staff, Gergely Gulyás.

Commentators on pro-government television chatshows threatened to pull the statue down if it was erected, and compared it to putting up a monument to Adolf Hitler. Others laughed that it was an absurdity given there are few black people in Budapest.



The planned art installation by Péter Szalay dedicated to the Black Lives Matter movement.

Hardly anyone looked at the details of the project. Notably, most pro-government coverage neglected to note that the statue will only be a two-week installation, not a permanent addition to the city.

“This whole scandal is typical of the way pro-government media works in Hungary. Everyone is angry about this and nobody actually knows anything about it,” said Baranyi. An independent, she took control of the ninth district late last year, in municipal elections that [dealt a blow to the monopoly of Orbán’s Fidesz party](#) as Budapest and most of its districts were won by the opposition.

Ahead of parliamentary elections in 2022, the government has been pushing its ultra-conservative credentials hard. Even in a pandemic year, the government has been busy passing legislation to further its positioning as Europe’s biggest champion of rightwing “traditional values” and fight against what Orbán refers to as “loopy liberals”.

In mid-December, the government [amended the constitution](#) to clarify that in a family, “the mother is a woman and the father is a man”, and made it explicit that only heterosexual couples can adopt children. The families minister, Katalin Novák, released a video telling women they “shouldn’t compete with men” or expect to earn the same amount of money. In May, Hungary [ended legal recognition of gender changes](#) for trans people.

The government also recently launched a billboard campaign with the slogan “All lives matter” in Hungarian. Ostensibly, it relates to the fight against coronavirus but it seems likely the decision to use it was a nod to the culture war the government believes it is fighting, particularly as Orbán posted a [video](#) featuring the English-language version of the slogan on his Instagram account.

Péter Szalay, the sculptor behind the BLM project, said that after news of it broke, he had received a threatening email from a well-known far-right figure, promising he would be “punished” if the installation went ahead.

The sculpture, which will be made in 12 pieces using a 3D printer and put together using magnets, is a “paraphrase of the Statue of Liberty”, said Szalay. The figure kneels, lifting her right hand in a fist, and holds a tablet

with the inscription “Black Lives Matter”. There is also an LGBT-rights theme to the installation, with rainbow colours used to illuminate the monument.

Szalay said that despite the government reaction, the work was not meant as a show of support or solidarity with the BLM movement. “It does not declare itself on the side of or against BLM. According to my artistic purpose, it is undecidedly swaying between the two readings,” he said.

The art tender was organised by Baranyi’s deputy, Suzi Dada of [the satirical Two-Tailed Dog party](#). She said she wanted to restart a tradition of public art, something for which the current government has little time. “For Fidesz, culture politics is all about historical memory and memorials, relativising Hungary’s role in the second world war and painting us as victims,” she said.

In the year since she took office, Baranyi said it had been hard to implement new policies, owing both to the coronavirus pandemic and a government funding squeeze that she estimates has shaved off about a third of the district’s budget. In mid-December, she was engulfed in a new scandal when a recording was leaked of her using antisemitic language. She has claimed it was taken out of context and has said she plans to sue public television.

When it comes to the BLM installation, Baranyi said she realised that the government campaign was working well when she stepped into a taxi in recent days. The driver, unaware of the identity of his passenger, began a long and abusive rant about Baranyi, saying he had heard she wanted to build a monument to gay black people.

“I tried to explain to him the real story, and the amazing thing was that he wouldn’t believe me, even though I explained I knew all about it. He said he knew he was right because he had read it in the newspaper,” she said.

- *Additional reporting by Flora Garamvolgyi*

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.05 - Opinion

- [It's back to school for Boris Johnson, the man who refuses to learn](#)
- [Prisoners' lives are being put at risk by officers not wearing face masks](#)
- [The lesson I learned at my local dump? There are beautiful times up ahead](#)
- [Argentina legalising abortion is a victory for women over the abuse of political power](#)
- [There's a simple way to green the economy – and it involves cash prizes for all](#)
- [Covid has exposed how incompetent the British state is, from top to bottom](#)

[**Opinion**](#)[**Coronavirus**](#)

It's back to school for Boris Johnson, the man who refuses to learn

[**Marina Hyde**](#)



As we enter a third national lockdown, it's clear the PM is repeating his own mistakes at a colossal cost to everyone else

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Boris Johnson films his Covid-19 address to the nation, in 10 Downing Street, Monday 4 January. Photograph: Pippa Fowles/No10 Downing Street
Boris Johnson films his Covid-19 address to the nation, in 10 Downing Street, Monday 4 January. Photograph: Pippa Fowles/No10 Downing Street
Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.24 EST

Another series of breakneck U-turns from the government's world-beating driverless car, as the things Boris Johnson said on Sunday turn out not to be true [on Monday](#). I'm sure he means them when he says them, like wedding vows or the sort of nonsense one might insist in a newspaper column. Johnson declared the moment "pivotal" – and he's certainly pivoted. Again. Perhaps we should view the trait positively. In a country that has spent the past few years digging ever deeper into entrenched positions, Boris Johnson may be the last human capable of changing his mind. Unfortunately, not in a competent way. I can't believe that honking "debate me, you coward!" at a virus hasn't worked.

By now, of course, you know [the latest facts](#), because you live in them. That's really the problem with all this for the prime minister. It's just possible that people are going to vaguely notice.

Yet again, we are doing something [entirely inevitable entirely too late](#), meaning it will have to be done much longer and much harder than it would

have had Johnson showed some leadership and grasped the nettle. No one should be in any doubt that we are paying for his weakness and vacillation in lives, in the bitterest economic terms, and in vital freedoms that will end up being lost for greater stretches. It's not that Boris Johnson can't see round corners – it's that he can't see two steps straight ahead of him.

[Lockdown: what are the new Covid restrictions in England?](#)

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What was he waiting for? Better news? Did he think that, having informed Andrew Marr's viewers on Sunday that things were bad and getting worse but he wasn't going to act, some kind of cosmic miracle was going to occur? Perhaps he hoped a Downing Street aide might rush breathlessly into his office on Monday morning and say: "You'll never believe this – the R number has plummeted and we don't need to do the difficult thing after all! Wow, thank God for you. Bravo for having the lack of courage of your lack of convictions. That's why they pay you the big bucks, even though you tell friends your salary is [chickenfeed](#)."

I'm afraid the prime minister's given answer was even more bizarre. On Monday evening Johnson informed the nation that he had sent England's primary school children back to school on Monday morning because "we know how important each day in education is to children's life chances". Well yes, but ... DO ME A FAVOUR. Sending 3 million children back for one day of school – the first day of term, where you don't really do anything too meaningful, other than mix around all your germs then take them back home to another lengthy lockdown. Meanwhile, secondary schools which on Sunday night were supposed to be preparing a testing regime were, by Monday night, supposed to be preparing at least half a term of remote learning programmes. Something they had foreseen weeks ago but been [threatened with legal action](#) for seeking time to do properly. Mindbogglingly, this also seems to be the way Johnson's administration treats civil servants. PoliticsHome [reported](#) that Monday at the Department of Education had featured an all-staff meeting at which it was announced that schools would not be closed, and exams would be going ahead.

But listen, it's not the prime minister's fault, the prime minister explained to the nation last night – it's all down to this guy New Variant, who got

repeated namechecks throughout his sober speech. So sober, in fact, that it was one of those clearly not entirely penned by Johnson, in the manner of the occasional Donald Trump tweet that is very clearly not typed by Trump. Earlier in the day Johnson had warned of “tough, tough weeks” ahead. Maybe Jamie Redknapp’s writing for him now.

Anyway, as Johnson literally pointed out, he would have got away with it if it hadn’t been for pesky New Variant. In his words: “Our collective efforts were working and would have continued to work.” Johnson assured the nation that there was “no doubt” about this. Which is a complete lie, and a useless one.

Like a lot of comically weak men, Johnson is presumed to be an “alpha male” by other inadequates. Only two weekends ago, a prime ministerial aide [panted to the Sunday Times](#): “This is Boris’s world now. The rest of us are just living in it.” Repurposing Dean Martin’s famous line about Frank Sinatra to describe the prime minister is certainly bold. We do, however, undoubtedly all have to live in Johnson’s defective psychology at the worst possible time for it.

[Boris Johnson has a habit of delaying tough choices. In a pandemic, it's lethal | Rafael Behr](#)
[Read more](#)

Indeed (and needless to say), this awful moment for the nation was not without personal vanity for the prime minister. I see Johnson still found time to get his personal Downing Street photographer along to take photos of him as he was [“preparing” to give this address](#). Are you familiar with this guy’s work? I very much enjoy it – cost to the public: £100k a year – and recently marvelled at a series of backstage photos of Downing Street during the final days of the Brexit deal. Is that really half the frame taken up with an out-of-focus Christmas tree and wine bottle, and a poorly lit Boris Johnson reading a piece of paper in the background? [Why yes it is](#). History! I think we all feel its hand on our shoulder. Certainly its finger on the lens.

The only bit of last night’s address to the nation that sounded Johnsonian was the bit I imagine we’ll be hearing most about. This is the section where he promised that “if things go well, and with a fair wind in our sails”, we

will have vaccinated 13.2 million of the most vulnerable people in less than six weeks, by mid-February. This is the entire top four categories of vaccine priority. I would, quite literally, love to see it. But on the form book, who among us does not instinctively feel we will be revisiting that promise in 40 days, only more in anger than in sorrow this time?

So yet again, “we are where we are”, as the oddly blame-free motto of the times runs. And we are, for the third/fourth/twelfth time, where we were. The person who really needs to go back to pandemic school is, of course, Boris Johnson. Has anyone ever learned less from a situation that keeps repeating itself? I feel I have been very unfair to goldfish in this space previously. Our prime minister’s spirit animal is in fact a headless chicken. Then again, the Guinness World Records show that in 1940s Colorado, one farmer decapitated a chicken, and the headless creature nonetheless survived and walked around for a further 18 months. So a year into his handling of the pandemic, there’s everything for Boris Johnson to play for.

- Marina Hyde is a Guardian columnist
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Prisons and probation

Prisoners' lives are being put at risk by officers not wearing face masks

[Eric Allison](#)

Despite a rise in Covid cases in prisons across England and Wales, too many staff still don't use adequate PPE

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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‘Several times in 2020, I heard an expression I thought obsolete: “Happiness is door-shaped”. Back in my days inside, we inmates said that was the philosophy of the bad screws in the worst jails.’ Photograph: Andrew Aitchison/Corbis/Getty

‘Several times in 2020, I heard an expression I thought obsolete: “Happiness is door-shaped”. Back in my days inside, we inmates said that was the philosophy of the bad screws in the worst jails.’ Photograph: Andrew Aitchison/Corbis/Getty

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.30 EST

I was reminded recently that I had passed a somewhat significant milestone on my journey through this existence. A friend asked me when I had started with the Guardian and what the first story I wrote was. I checked back and found my first offering was dated [5 December, 2003](#) – 17 years ago. This means I have been scribbling for a living longer than I spent in prison, which was 16 and a half years on and off –across the previous five decades.

2020 was by far the busiest in this, my second career, because of what I have been recording about the imposition of Covid restrictions that have kept prisoners locked up for 23 hours with no access to rehabilitation, curtailed prison visits and had a severe impact on physical and mental health.

In my debut piece, I used the words “prison” and “sunshine” in the same sentence, something I am unlikely to repeat in the foreseeable future. This is because the news I constantly receive from reliable sources across the penal system in England and Wales, from both sides of the cell doors, has been constantly depressing: prisoners placed in isolation because they had contact with a confirmed Covid carrier yet not had their temperatures taken; family members told that their prisoner relatives have tested positive, then heard nothing from the prison for over two, highly fraught weeks; and much more.

Most damning of all, I have evidence that since the start of the pandemic, prison staff have not worn face masks on a regular basis. And in many jails they are still not doing so.

The letters pages of [Inside Time](#), the well-respected prison newspaper, tell the same story – in letters checked by jail censors – that prison officers coming into prisons day in, day out have not been following this most basic of Covid rules.

In June, I quoted the prisons minister, [Lucy Fraser](#), from a Ministry of Justice (MoJ) briefing, when she said the “success” in dealing with Covid in prisons was due to “our extremely careful handling of the initial phase of the pandemic”.

Did I believe that line then? Absolutely not. Can we rely on the MoJ or Prison Service to relay accurate information on the state of our jails? Not according to the recently retired chief inspector of prisons, Peter Clarke. In

his final annual report before stepping down, [Clarke said](#) he “found it difficult to get accurate information from the Prison Service on the state of Covid restrictions in prisons”.

If the chief inspector of prisons isn’t getting accurate information from the system he inspects, what chance do the rest of us have?

When I put the mask evidence I had collated to the MoJ, a spokeswoman said: “We’ve consistently followed the latest public health advice. All staff have access to PPE and wear masks when social distancing isn’t possible.”

But Mick Pimblett, the assistant general secretary of the Prison Officers Association (POA) told me: “The POA has continually asked HMPS [the Prison Service] for a face mask strategy since the start of the Covid pandemic. In October 2020, HMPS agreed to a strategy with the provision of fluid-resistant surgical masks for staff.”

So, not until October, six months after the outbreak of the pandemic, did the Prison Service develop a face mask strategy.

This could have cost lives. Since March 2020, 72 prisoners and people on probation have died from Covid in England and Wales, according to the [latest MoJ figures](#) published on 18 December. In November there had been a marked increase in the number of prisoners testing positive. At the end of November, 3,460 prisoners had tested positive; a 1,825 increase on the positive tests recorded at the end of October. The MoJ has been testing symptomatic prisoners since April. All prisoners in 28 prisons – covering about a fifth of the population – have been tested since July.

Like the prisons minister, back in June, the POA seems to think it has performed well on behalf of prisoners during Covid. In the summer edition of [Gatelodge](#), the union’s magazine, the national chair, Mark Fairhurst, said: “Nobody should be in any doubt whatsoever that the POA shaped the lockdown within our prisons. Thankfully, at last, both the government and the employer listened to our union and agreed that we had to severely restrict regimes to protect all those who inhabit our secure settings.”

He added in the same article: “I have always maintained that if we are left alone to do our job, we will succeed. Interference from so-called experts is neither welcome nor necessary.”

But some criminal justice experts criticise prisons that have left the vast majority of prisoners locked in their cells, almost round the clock, since Covid began. This appears to be a situation that will be prolonged.

Several times in 2020, I heard an expression I thought obsolete: “Happiness is door-shaped”. Back in my days inside, we inmates said it was the philosophy of the bad screws in the worst jails. When we were locked in, they were sitting contentedly, doing nothing. Now I am hearing it from cons who weren’t born when it was in common use. We seem to have gone back to those days.

Our current prison system is a mainly foul, fetid place, where the sun won’t be shining any time soon.

- Eric Allison is the Guardian’s prisons correspondent
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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/05/prisoners-lives-risk-officers-not-wearing-face-masks-ppe>

[OpinionWalking](#)

The lesson I learned at my local dump? There are beautiful times up ahead

[Emma Beddington](#)



What was once a toxic wasteland now explodes with flora and fauna. A walk there always gives me renewed faith in imagination, determination and humanity



A toxic desert transformed into a haven ... St Nick's nature reserve in York.

Photograph: @StNicksField/Twitter

A toxic desert transformed into a haven ... St Nick's nature reserve in York.

Photograph: @StNicksField/Twitter

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Is it possible to be over walking? All this wholesome outdoor socialising may be healthier, but last week – while slithering over black-ice patches in the dark with a friend, soggy paper cups of mulled wine sloshing, unable even to clutch each other to stay upright – I realised I felt slightly jaded.

There is, however, one York walk that never palls: my daily trip to the dump. Not the actual dump, but the disused one, just behind it. Walk through the industrial estate, past Lidl, a builders' merchant and the recycling centre, duck down a scrubby path by the council vehicle depot and you enter an unexpected wonderland: [St Nick's nature reserve](#).

Until 1974, these 9.7 hectares (24 acres) were a stinking, rat-infested wasteland; the site was contaminated with asbestos and heavy metals, with toxicity levels above national danger levels. Closed and left to its own devices, the area gradually filled with songbirds, insects and plant life. It was protected from development in the 80s by environmental campaigners,

who ensured the preservation of existing trees, planted thousands of new ones and seeded the area with wildflowers.

Thirty years later, it is a carefully maintained warren of narrow paths exploding with flora and fauna: finches, tits and wrens flit through the undergrowth; there are 20 species of butterfly in summer, and baby rabbits lollop in front of passing dogs.

It is not divorced from its history. The charity that manages the site runs an award-winning recycling programme for the city, while the profusion of gnarled, still-fruited apple and pear trees are believed to have [grown from fruit waste discarded by the Rowntree's sweet factory](#).

I get a bit sappy thinking about the imagination and determination that transformed a toxic desert into a haven: it always makes me feel better about humanity. Even at this muddy, unpromising time of year, there are buds peeping through the mulch. Beauty can come from waste; better times are coming.

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OpinionArgentina

Argentina legalising abortion is a victory for women over the abuse of political power

[Giselle Carino](#)

The young Green Wave activists follow in the steps of the grandmothers of the Plaza de Mayo in forcing change



People celebrating in Córdoba, Argentina, after the passing of a bill legalising abortion, December 2020. Photograph: Daniel Bustos/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

People celebrating in Córdoba, Argentina, after the passing of a bill legalising abortion, December 2020. Photograph: Daniel Bustos/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

The women looked like my grandmothers, at least as I remember them. Every Thursday, they would sit on benches in the square, white headscarves covering their hair, and together they would wait or march. The scarves

represented nappies, as if their children were still babies, whatever their age. They were the mothers – and later the grandmothers – of the [Plaza de Mayo](#), in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in the 1970s and 1980s. Once strangers to each other, they occupied the square to wait. They met at police stations and churches, where they went in search of information about their children. What exactly were they hoping to find? Their children – young men and women, students and workers – who had been disappeared by the military dictatorship, which lasted from 1976 to 1983. What they found instead was an unbearable truth: their children had been tortured and killed by the government.

Only later did it occur to me that I must have looked like their disappeared granddaughters, orphaned soon after birth inside the dictatorship's prisons. These women searched for the truth in the Argentine style of politics from below: they took to the street, occupied the square, made their own bodies into a monument to the struggle.

I grew up far from glamorous Buenos Aires, in a rural town in Córdoba. My father is a Catholic deacon there. I was baptised, took first communion, and was confirmed; later I got married – a Catholic woman from the interior of [Argentina](#). In the faith community where I was raised, not much was said about feminism or the sexual revolution ignited by the pill.

In the early 2000s, as an immigrant to the United States, I met women who challenged the Catholic faith based on the lived experience of everyday women. They were Catholic, like my mother, grandmothers and aunts, but they talked about sexuality, contraception and the equality of men and women. One of the movement's leaders was [Marta Alanis](#), a Catholic who told the story of her own clandestine abortion. In 2003, at the close of the National Women's Meeting in Argentina, she tore off a piece of green cloth and put it on her head. Reviving the legacy of the mothers of the Plaza del Mayo, these feminists were the ones who went on to fight for the legalisation of abortion in Argentina. It was the dawn of the [Green Wave](#), a movement of millions of girls and women of all ages and faiths in the streets of Argentina.

On Wednesday 30 December 2020, Argentina's national congress [decided that abortion](#) should no longer be a criminal matter. Women will be allowed

to terminate pregnancies up to 14 weeks – for free in public hospitals – with exceptions made after this point for rape and situations in which a woman’s health is endangered. After 17 years of waiting and 13 draft bills, girls who look like my own daughter are occupying the streets to celebrate this transformative moment for such a sensitive issue in Latin American politics.

I was in Argentina when a [bill nearly passed](#) in 2018; while lawmakers proclaimed their votes in the form of long-winded statements, the mood outside the building was one of joy. As I walked the streets around the congressional palace, where Argentina’s past wealth is on display, I revelled in the immoderate hope of women who could have been the granddaughters of the mothers of the Plaza de Mayo. Like their forebears, they too donned handkerchiefs, now hope-green and sported anywhere – around necks and wrists, hanging from backpacks.

The Covid-19 pandemic kept me from joining the women on the streets last week, but I have watched from abroad as the Green Wave swept across Latin America. The green handkerchief has been used in pro-choice mobilisations in Oaxaca, Mexico, Brasília, Brazil, and Santiago, Chile. If the scarf has long been the symbol of women’s fight against abusive political power in Argentina, now it is also a symbol of hope and feminist transformation. [Abortion](#) has already been approved by women; it is something we practise regardless of a country’s criminal code or our own faith. [Abortion](#) has already been approved in the streets, by generations of women. And now it is law.

- Giselle Carino is the director of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, western hemisphere region

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OpinionCarbon tax

There's a simple way to green the economy – and it involves cash prizes for all

[Henry D Jacoby](#)

The 'carbon dividend' is so elegant that it seems too good to be true. Governments should make it a post-pandemic priority



Illustration: Thomas Pullin/The Guardian

Illustration: Thomas Pullin/The Guardian

Tue 5 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Over the past year – when societies around the world have had to grapple with their greatest challenge in decades – climate change hasn't been at the top of the agenda. But that doesn't mean it's gone away. Far from it – in fact, we just experienced the [hottest September in 141 years](#), and [extreme warmth](#) recorded in the Arctic continues a disturbing trend. When the focus turns back to this ongoing existential threat, hopefully we'll have learned some

lessons from the pandemic about what can be achieved when imaginative thinking is brought to bear.

Our approach towards tackling the climate crisis is necessarily going to be multipronged. But one powerful tool is that of a carbon tax. So far, however, [only a few nations](#) have taken this route. Why?

First of all, how do taxes on carbon work? Basically, they penalize fossil fuels for the CO₂ emitted when they're burned, and in doing so offer a two-part advantage compared with other measures. They make non-polluting industries and products more competitive, and yield a flow of revenue that can be used to calm opposition to emissions reduction.

[Talk is cheap when it comes to climate action. Now the government must deliver | Matthew Pennycook](#)

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Weaning our economies off fossil energy involves making it less financially attractive. In market economies, most personal and business decisions are driven by prices, and wherever a fossil fuel is the cheapest source, and not forbidden, it will continue to dominate. Not only that, but fossil energy is a determined adversary, ploughing money back into research and development designed to push costs down so it can remain competitive, even as renewables become cheaper. A price penalty on fossil emissions counteracts this.

There are several ways to raise the prices of coal, oil and natural gas. For example, you can build a tax-and-trade system, which limits total emissions but encourages emitters to trade their carbon allowances. It's simpler, however, to just tax fossil fuels when they're burned, as it sends a clear price signal to the market, which a variable trading price doesn't. At the moment, taxes on fossil energy are collected across the supply chain, from the point of production, as with US state severance taxes, to final sale, as with gasoline taxes in many countries. It's messy.

For environmental effectiveness, and ease of collection, carbon taxes are best imposed at the earliest point you can: the wellhead or the mine mouth, the refinery output gate, or the port of entry for imports. That way, the

incentive to reduce emissions spreads down through the economy. For example, a US tax of \$50 per metric tonne of CO₂ would raise the price of oil leaving the Texas oil patch by about \$21 a barrel, and increase prices throughout the country for motor fuel and products made using oil-based energy. This would percolate down to your local store: environmentally friendly goods would become relatively less expensive, and carbon-intensive ones would be pricier.

So, if taxes on carbon are so effective, why aren't they more widely used? Well, perhaps it's because of the associations we all have with the "T" word. Tax is when you take money away – from businesses, and once that feeds through into prices, from individuals. No one likes the idea of having less money. Then there are those who argue that adding taxes hurts the economy as a whole. Yes, this ignores the fact that any tax would be less damaging to GDP than the effects of climate change, which is having devastating impacts. But the short-termism built into the economic status quo makes that hard to appreciate.

Yes – no one really likes taxes. They're unpleasant to contemplate, and a hard sell, politically. But what if there was a way all of that could be neutralised? A small but imaginative policy tweak that rendered raising the price of CO₂ pollution not a tax, but a gift?

There are many ways to manage the proceeds from a carbon tax. It doesn't have to simply disappear into government coffers. And that's the secret: it's possible to design systems that achieve what is called revenue neutrality – where every dollar taken in tax is returned to people's pockets. One version of this idea would send the revenue to the public as a per-capita carbon dividend, in an annual check.

For example, in 2020 a \$50 per metric tonne CO₂ tax would return each US household an annual dividend somewhere between \$1,500 and \$2,000. That's more than the pandemic stimulus checks distributed to most US taxpayers in light of the extreme economic situation. And yet it would come every year.

[How will the pandemic affect the sprint away from fossil fuels? | Daniel Yergin](#)

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But what's the point of collecting a tax if you just give the proceeds back? It all comes down to incentives. The tax part of this arrangement would make carbon-intensive goods less attractive, and green ones more so. Environmentally friendly businesses would thrive. Polluting businesses would be incentivised to make their operations less damaging, driving green innovation in the process. Gradually, via the millions of consumer choices made every day, the economy would shift on to a more sustainable footing.

The dividend part would not only make millions of people happy – who doesn't like receiving a check in the mail? – it would have a social impact. Even when you factor in the increased cost of energy and other goods, all but the highest income groups – those who consume the most carbon-intense goods and services – would come out ahead, with the lowest income group benefiting most of all. This result should be especially welcome in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has imposed the harshest penalties on the least advantaged communities and cast a harsh light on underlying disparities in income and wealth.

There are other revenue-neutral designs, but they're not as good – one proposal, for example, involves a tax swap. [Carbon tax](#) revenue could be used to lower a tax on labor, like the payroll tax. But this would be less favorable than a direct rebate to lower-income households. Cutting a corporate tax as part of a tax swap on the other hand, would favor wealthier income groups.

A carbon dividend feels like a novel, unusual idea. There certainly aren't many directly comparable fiscal mechanisms in place. But if now isn't the time to try bold new solutions – when we've seen that governments can move mountains in the right circumstances – then when is? And though it looks radical, the dividend really is just a rather elegant solution to a major problem, which neatly circumvents many of the usual political objections to increased taxation. It might even be the first highly popular tax.

Moving market-oriented economies off fossil energy is going to be a long and difficult struggle. Funds will also have to be found to ease the burden of the energy transition in fossil-dependent parts of the economy, helping

displaced workers and supporting the communities where they live. But marshaling the power of the price system to rebalance the whole economy away from carbon-intensive industries – while supporting those on lower incomes – seems like a wonderful place to start.

- Henry D Jacoby is emeritus professor of management at MIT and former codirector of the MIT joint program on the science and policy of global change

Gary Yohe and Richard Richels contributed to the preparation of this article

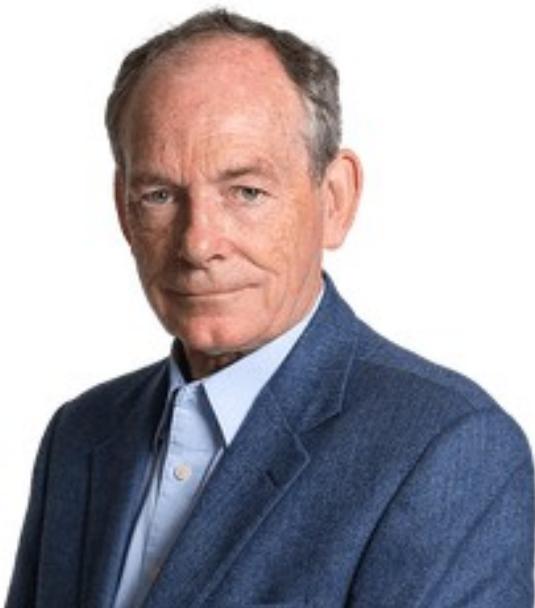
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Opinion](#)[Coronavirus](#)

Covid has exposed how incompetent the British state is, from top to bottom

[Simon Jenkins](#)



It's not just our ministers who are rotten – our whole system of government, from local to national, is at fault



‘The multi-billion pound test-and-trace fiasco resulted from Whitehall’s aversion to local government.’

Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

‘The multi-billion pound test-and-trace fiasco resulted from Whitehall’s aversion to local government.’

Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

Mon 4 Jan 2021 10.20 EST

Come the day of reckoning, who gets blamed? No one could call this week’s reopening of England’s local schools anything but a shambles. The prime minister has declared that all primary schools are “safe … very, very important to stress that” and must stay open. That appears not to apply where they stay shut, as in London and possibly Manchester, Newcastle, Slough, Brighton … and perhaps elsewhere as the week goes on.

The appearance is of a man embattled in Downing Street, wholly out of touch with the country he is governing. Inconvenience, cost and stress are inflicted on millions, with Boris Johnson seemingly concerned only for his daily press conference.

[UK coronavirus live: PM to address nation at 8pm with further steps to tackle Covid; Scotland to lockdown at midnight](#)

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No government in Europe has had an easy ride over the past nine months, but none has had a worse one than Britain's. Indecision on lockdown was followed by chaotic PPE supplies, the “world-beating” [test-and-trace](#) shambles, school exam confusion and now the [multi-form bureaucratic deterrent](#) to potential vaccinators.

British politics likes to keep blame simple. Politicians are entitled to the pleasure of success and the pain of failure. When things goes wrong, we blame the person in charge – be it Johnson, [Matt Hancock](#), Michael Gove or Gavin Williamson. Damn each incompetent, damn the lot of them. That feels better.

Certainly Johnson's lack of grasp over his government is distressing to see. He sacked many of his best colleagues from Theresa May's team and replaced them with nonentities. The nation is paying a high price for a prime minister who puts blind loyalty before ability.

But the current incompetence of British government is due not just to poor ministers. The [PPE contract scandal](#) exposed deep-seated cronyism in state procurement. The decanting of sick elderly people from hospitals into [care homes](#) showed institutional NHS contempt for private care. Last year's [exams algorithm debacle](#) was the result of officialdom's obsession with quantification. The multibillion-pound test-and-trace fiasco resulted from Whitehall's aversion to local government.

[Doctors are our frontline against Covid. Now they lead the fight against its deniers, too | Gaby Hinsliff](#)

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Coronavirus has revealed a country so ill-governed that current politicians cannot be blamed for all of it. The traditional model holds that ministers decide on the general direction of policy and officials interpret and implement it. This balance of roles has been eroded at least since the turn of the century, largely by a ministerial craving for headlines that led to a daily welter of central initiatives, interventions and vanity projects. Officials are expected not to challenge but to obey.

This has clearly affected the calibre and morale of the civil service, with high-profile departures from Downing Street, the Home Office and Foreign Office. Johnson also gave too much prominence to scientists, hoping to blame them if things went wrong, and then found himself in perpetual conflict with them. This in turn allowed Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland to appear blessed with decisive and clear-sighted leadership by contrast.

Come the inevitable inquiry into the events of the past year, it is not only politicians who should carry the can. All the components of Britain's government, central and local, should be tested – the constitution as a whole should be under examination.

- Simon Jenkins is a Guardian columnist
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2021.01.05 - Sport

- [Lampard cannot afford to sail through Chelsea peaks and troughs](#)
- [Chelsea Lampard to be given time amid growing concern](#)
- [Jonathan Wilson Lampard's record leaves him in danger](#)
- [The Rumour Mill Ramos to Man City? Eriksen to Wolves?](#)
- [Southampton 1-0 Liverpool Ings strikes early to deflate former club](#)
- [Jonathan Liew Alisson's rush of blood sums up jaded Liverpool](#)
- [Rugby union European chiefs consider altering tests to save competitions](#)
- [Six Nations England v Scotland set to go ahead without fans](#)
- [How The Karate Kid helped launch MMA careers](#)
- [Marcus Rashford, Guardian Footballer of the Year 'My mum is everything'](#)
- [Covid-19 Elite sport to continue but grassroots games suspended in England](#)
- [Cricket England nervously await Covid test results after Moeen positive](#)
- [Pucovski could make Test debut despite concussion concerns](#)

[Sportblog](#)
[Frank Lampard](#)

Frank Lampard cannot afford to sail through Chelsea peaks and troughs

The Chelsea manager is staying calm amid a slump but he must be proactive and not simply wait for hard work to pay off



[Jonathan Liew](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 03.00 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 07.53 EST



Frank Lampard remains relaxed about Chelsea's recent poor run of form but they need more than a tweak. Photograph: Richard Pelham/NMC Pool

Frank Lampard's autobiography is called *Totally Frank*. It was written in 2006 when the then [Chelsea](#) midfielder was 28, rendering it – at best – *Partially Frank, Prematurely Frank, Avariciously Hasty Frank*.

Anyway, there is a passage in the book from the summer of 2005, when Lampard gets wind of a rumour that the winner of the club's player of the year award gets invited on to Roman Abramovich's yacht. Nothing ventured, nothing gained, Lampard tells himself. And so at one home game he musters the courage to ask the Chelsea owner if the rumour is true. Abramovich laughs hard. Lampard gulps. But eventually, his brazenness is rewarded.

A few days later, the director Eugene Tenenbaum approaches Lampard at training and asks how many days he wants. "A week," Lampard blurts out. Then he thinks: "'Fuck it, I've got this far.' ... 'I'll have two weeks.'" Arrangements are made. Dates are fixed. Flights are booked.

Lampard's fortnight on the Abramovich yacht is recounted in lascivious, longing detail. (By contrast, [the Champions League semi-final defeat against Liverpool](#) a few weeks earlier is dispensed with in a few sentences.) He marvels at the luxurious trappings, the spacious bedrooms, the courteous

staff who bring him unbidden platters of fruit. One evening the Formula One tycoon Eddie Jordan pulls up in his boat and casually invites Lampard and his girlfriend for dinner with Bono. “I’m not a huge music fan,” Lampard admits, which may explain why the pair get on so well.

“It all seemed too good to be true,” Lampard writes. “Me? The lad who struggled to get into the West Ham team, now about to holiday on Sussurro, one of the most expensive private boats at sea? Are you sure? Not bad for a boy from Romford!”

There are two quietly revealing aspects to how Lampard recounts the yacht story and how he rationalises much of his career to date. The first is the rags-to-riches ornamentation, the trope of the humble Essex boy done good: albeit one with a famous footballing father, private schooling and an elite academy background.

The second is a steadfast belief in the ultimate economy of the universe, that what you put in equals what you get out (“nothing ventured, nothing gained”). Luck is something you make for yourself. Put the hours in, approach life with the right attitude and over time the arc of history will always bend towards justice, order and an all-expenses-paid holiday on a billionaire’s yacht.



Lampard with John Terry and Roman Abramovich after Chelsea's title triumph in 2004-05. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/The Guardian

Paradoxically, this is a trait you glimpse most strongly in times of adversity. As Lampard's Chelsea currently endure a mid-season slump, with four defeats in their past six games, it is worth examining the steps that brought them to this point. Early in the season Chelsea were a freewheeling, free-scoring attacking circus. Then in October Lampard moved to tighten up the defence, conceding two goals in nine games.

Now, although results have taken a downturn, Lampard remains supremely calm. "I'm relaxed about peaks and troughs of form," he said after Chelsea's 3-1 home defeat against Manchester City on Sunday. Based on the underlying numbers, he has a point. Since the start of December, Chelsea's expected goal difference is second only to City's, though they have taken seven points from seven games. A tweak or two, a few days' rest and before long the inherent rightness of the universe will reassert itself.

The issue is that when you actually watch Chelsea, you realise they need more than a tweak. There was one attacking move in the second half on Sunday that epitomised this. Mason Mount darted into the left channel and rolled an inviting cross along the six-yard line. But Timo Werner had come short anticipating the cutback, Hakim Ziyech was lurking in his usual position near the corner of the box and so the cross proved harmless.

Three individual players, all doing what came most naturally to them. The result: a shambles. And the logical culmination of a model in which Chelsea have assembled some of the world's greatest attacking talents without much of a clue of how they might fit together. They make nice runs. They do clever things. Often, it all clicks and everyone looks like a genius. But it does not feel like a sustainable formula and you wonder if a more restless and curious coach than Lampard would be more worried about it.

Instead, his public-facing strategy seems to have been one of displacement, such as when he turned on his own players after losing against Arsenal. This, perhaps, is only to be expected. For much of his career Lampard played in strong, title-challenging teams where most weeks you do your

jobs, and you win. If you don't win, by extension, then someone didn't do their job.

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Were he the sort of manager prone to introspection or self-analysis, this might be an appropriate moment for Lampard to reflect that the qualities that earned him the Chelsea job may not necessarily be those best suited to keeping it. After all, this is not a club, and [Abramovich not an owner, that cares to endure peaks and troughs for very long](#).

And yet, the overarching logic of Lampard's life to date suggests the best course of action is simply to work hard, brazen things out and hope for the best. After all, it all seems too good to be true. Me? A rookie manager [who struggled in vain to get Derby promoted](#), now managing one of the biggest clubs in the world, with some of the world's most expensive attacking players? Not bad for a boy from Romford!

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[Chelsea](#)

Lampard to be given time at Chelsea despite concern over recent results

- Manchester City defeat was fourth in past six matches
- Thomas Tuchel possible replacement after leaving PSG



Pressure has increased on Frank Lampard following Chelsea's home defeat against by Manchester City on Sunday. Photograph: Andy Rain/AP

Pressure has increased on Frank Lampard following Chelsea's home defeat against by Manchester City on Sunday. Photograph: Andy Rain/AP

[Jacob Steinberg](#)

[@JacobSteinberg](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 12.23 EST

Frank Lampard is to be given time to prove he deserves to stay in his post as Chelsea's manager despite growing alarm behind the scenes about performances and the club's board being alerted to Thomas Tuchel's interest in the job if it becomes available.

Chelsea's faltering title challenge suffered another setback when they [lost 3-1 at home against Manchester City](#) on Sunday, putting Lampard in danger of being sacked before the end of his second season in charge. Although the humiliating defeat by City is unlikely to result in the 42-year-old being dismissed, he is under mounting pressure and the hierarchy could be forced to act if they fear Champions League qualification slipping from their grasp.

Tuchel, who led Paris Saint-Germain to the Champions League final last season before being [sacked by the French champions](#) last month, has been put forward as a potential replacement.

[Lampard beware: no Chelsea manager has survived worse under Abramovich | Jonathan Wilson](#)

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The pressure on Lampard has grown following a run of four defeats in six games, leaving the board increasingly concerned about the team's lack of progress this season. Roman Abramovich, the owner, gave Lampard over £200m to spend on signings last summer but [Chelsea](#) lie in eighth place after 17 games. They are seven points behind Liverpool in first place and, unless their form improves, face a fight to finish in the top four.

It is believed Lampard, whose contract runs out in the summer of 2022, retains Chelsea's backing for now. Conscious of his legendary status at Stamford Bridge, the club would prefer not to act hastily with their former midfielder. Lampard fared well after replacing Maurizio Sarri in the summer of 2019, overcoming a transfer ban to qualify for the Champions League and reach the FA Cup final. He also earned plaudits for promoting Chelsea's young players.

Chelsea are prepared to give Lampard an opportunity to reverse the slide, especially with the top half of the Premier League table so cramped. They are due to host Morecambe in the third round of the FA Cup on Sunday, though the tie could be postponed as a result of a Covid-19 outbreak at the League Two club, before a trip to Fulham on Friday week offers a chance to return to winning ways in the league.

Yet expectations are higher this season. Although there is an acceptance that injuries to key players have made the task harder, Lampard's inexperience has shown at times. He is in only his third season of management – he had a year with Derby in the Championship before returning to Chelsea – and although he still enjoys support from the dressing room his approach has been questioned privately by some players.

There is concern that Lampard is yet to hit upon his best starting XI and has struggled to integrate Kai Havertz and Timo Werner following their big-money moves from the Bundesliga. Havertz, who has found it hard since testing positive for coronavirus in November, started on the bench against City, who led 3-0 at half-time, while eyebrows were raised at Lampard's decision to start Werner at centre-forward instead of Olivier Giroud or Tammy Abraham.

Werner has gone 13 games without a goal and rarely troubled City's defence, while Lampard's use of Callum Hudson-Odoi was also called into question. There was surprise when Christian Pulisic and Hakim Ziyech, who has just returned from a hamstring injury, started on the flanks instead of Hudson-Odoi, who had impressed in recent outings and scored Chelsea's consolation after coming off the bench.

Chelsea's approach was exposed by City and it is understood that some within the dressing room believe the team do not have a clear identity under Lampard, who criticised his players in public after the [Boxing Day defeat against Arsenal](#).

[Football rumours: Chelsea to replace Frank Lampard? Dele Alli to PSG?](#)
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However, the lack of clear alternatives could buy Lampard time. It is believed Chelsea's top choice was Mauricio Pochettino before the former Tottenham manager replaced Tuchel at PSG.

Tuchel boasts a stronger pedigree than Lampard and took PSG to the edge of European glory before [losing August's Champions League final](#) against Bayern Munich 1-0. Yet while the German has a reputation for playing attacking football, he struggled to cope with the internal politics at PSG.

Julian Nagelsmann is another option, though the 33-year-old German is unlikely to want to leave RB Leipzig until the summer. Max Allegri, the former Juventus manager, is also out of work and has been linked with the job.

The picture will become clearer in the coming weeks. After facing Morecambe and Fulham, Chelsea will want to see how Lampard fares in league games against Leicester, Burnley, Wolves and Tottenham. The first leg of Chelsea's last-16 tie against Atlético Madrid in the Champions League next month could also be pivotal in deciding his future.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[SportblogChelsea](#)

Lampard beware: no Chelsea manager has survived worse under Abramovich

A return of 26 points from 17 games this season and muddled planning has left a club legend looking vulnerable to the sack



Frank Lampard issues instructions as Chelsea are dismantled by Manchester City on Sunday. Photograph: Darren Walsh/Chelsea FC/Getty Images
Frank Lampard issues instructions as Chelsea are dismantled by Manchester City on Sunday. Photograph: Darren Walsh/Chelsea FC/Getty Images



[Jonathan Wilson](#)

[@jonawils](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 05.47 EST

The good news for Frank Lampard is that it's not as bad as José Mourinho's second spell, but that's the only good news. Sunday's [3-1 humbling](#) against Manchester City means Chelsea have taken 26 points from 17 games this season, 50.98% of the points available. Mourinho, in 2015-16, was on 31.25% when the axe fell.

But in terms of final seasons, 50.98 is worse than Andre Villas-Boas, worse than Mourinho first time around, worse than Antonio Conte, worse than Carlo Ancelotti, worse than Maurizio Sarri, Luiz Felipe Scolari, Robert Di Matteo and Claudio Ranieri. If the corridors of Cobham hiss with intrigue, there is good reason. No Chelsea manager under [Roman Abramovich](#) has survived anything like this before.

[Frank Lampard plays down pressure after Chelsea slip to meek defeat](#)

[Read more](#)

It's not even close. Of those nine previous managers who started a season under Abramovich, only Mourinho (II) and Villas-Boas had less than a 60% record when they were dismissed. On Sunday, Lampard made his [familiar](#)

[appeal for patience](#). He referenced last season's transfer ban, the youth of his squad and the great churn of players in the summer, without ever quite mentioning the £220m that was spent.

None of them are unreasonable points, but a club that has spent almost a quarter of a billion pounds would probably expect something better than a capitulation as meek as any by a Chelsea side since [Maurizio Sarri's team lost 6-0 at the Etihad](#) in February 2019. That was a game with an end of days feel about it – and so too was Sunday.

Lampard spoke of the “character” of his side in the second half, and there was a flicker of life late on after the introduction of Callum Hudson-Odoi, but for long periods City passed the ball in front of weary, demotivated opponents; there was mutual acceptance of City’s superiority. Most worrying from a Chelsea point of view was that City have not been doing that to opponents this season – and that this was as close as a club of City’s resources will ever get to being patched together, without seven first-team regulars.

How, then, has it come to this? How can a side that a month ago was extending their unbeaten run to 17 games by drawing at home to Krasnodar have won only one of their last eight (and that [a 3-0 win](#) over West Ham that was nowhere near as convincing as the scoreline might suggest).

The answer may be no more complicated than the fixture list. Chelsea have a lot of very good players and that often is enough to beat weaker sides. Against Sevilla at home (the away game, [a 4-0 win](#), was a dead rubber with both sides already qualified), Manchester United away and Tottenham at home, they shared 0-0 draws with opposition equally content to sit off and take a point.

Only against Southampton and Leeds did they face the sort of awkward opponents a club of their stature needs to beat but capable of hurting them. Goalkeeping and defensive issues cost them against Southampton and [they drew 3-3. Against Leeds](#) they were impressive playing through the press but even then, had Ian Poveda gone down when clipped in the box with the score at 2-1, they might easily have squandered cheap points.



Timo Werner, one of Chelsea's new signings currently struggling to make an impact on the pitch, is tackled by Rúben Dias of Manchester City on Sunday. Photograph: Chris Lee - Chelsea FC/Chelsea FC/Getty Images

The last seven games have been far more testing. What's been evident is that the old issue of defending against the counter has not gone away, as exemplified by City's third goal on Sunday. Had Rodri not wasted a very good headed chance early in the second half, the other characteristic failing from crossed set plays might have been highlighted as well.

Chelsea last season conceded more goals than they had for 23 years. The arrivals of Édouard Mendy, Thiago Silva and Ben Chilwell have strengthened them, and they certainly seem less vulnerable in the air than they were, but structural issues remain. But there are now huge questions at the other end as well.

To speak of a manager not knowing his first XI in the modern age feels anachronistic. Rotation is necessary and the capacity to respond to specific circumstances an asset. But is there any sense at all of a coherent attacking plan? Timo Werner has played in four different roles this season – on the left in a 4-3-3, and through the middle in a 4-2-3-1, a 3-4-3 and, as on Sunday, a 4-3-3; none seem much to resemble how he played at RB Leipzig. Nobody seems to have much idea where Kai Havertz (10 league starts, five different

roles) may fit. It's perhaps not surprising if both look short of both self-belief and belief in general.

[Phil Foden excels in Manchester City's emphatic win over lacklustre Chelsea](#)

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Abramovich may not be so hands on as he was when Mourinho's struggles to accommodate Andriy Shevchenko drove a wedge between owner and manager, but no directors will take kindly to their two biggest summer signings looking quite so peripheral. Familiar rumours of player dissatisfaction have begun to dribble from a Chelsea dressing room that has always been among the leakier in the [Premier League](#).

These remain very unusual times. Empty stands make public discontent harder to gauge. Lampard is still a club legend. In Abramovich era, only Mourinho (I) kept his job after failing to win the title, and then only for six games. He could probably survive missing out again, but only if there were clear signs of development, and probably only if Champions League qualification were secured. Top four, clearly, remains possible; the question of whether Chelsea are heading in the right direction is far more fraught.

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[Rumour Mill](#)[Transfer window](#)

Football transfer rumours: Sergio Ramos to Manchester City or PSG?

Today's fluff is having to juggle its options



Sergio Ramos: a target for Pep Guardiola? Photograph: Eric Alonso/Getty Images

Sergio Ramos: a target for Pep Guardiola? Photograph: Eric Alonso/Getty Images

[Tom Davies](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.22 EST

Pep Guardiola could be due for an eye-catching link-up with **Sergio Ramos**, with **Manchester City** reported to be keeping a beady eye on the Real Madrid veteran's contract situation. The defender's current deal at the Bernabéu runs out in June and he could leave for free if the current haggling over his wages is not resolved. ESPN reports that City regard the 34-year-old Ramos as an "interesting" option in defence, and would be prepared to pony up his considerable wage demands given he would cost nothing in

transfer fees. But fellow big-spenders **Paris Saint-Germain** are also interested.

Christian Eriksen's failure to pull up trees since his move to Internazionale last year has inevitably got the mill churning. Potential suitors include [Arsenal](#), Atlético Madrid, Wolves and the midfielder's former club Ajax. Inter want rid too, so watch this space.

[Men's transfer window January 2021 – all deals from Europe's top five leagues](#)

[Read more](#)

Let us return to the subject of **Arsenal** and German No 10s: the Gunners have “genuine” interest in signing the Borussia Dortmund creative midfielder **Julian Brandt**, according to football.london and the Bundesliga club could sanction a £22m move for the 24-year-old this very month.

Liverpool have been linked with the young Juventus defender **Merih Demiral** as they look to shore up their injury-hit back line. The 22-year-old Turkish international has struggled to make an impact in Serie A this term, making only five appearances, and Juve wouldn't turn down offers of £45m and above for Demiral. The Premier League champions could face competition from **Tottenham**, mind. Talking of Spurs, among the players they may be prepared to ship out this month are Dele Alli (see Rumours *passim*), Danny Rose and the goalkeeper Paulo Gazzaniga, who hasn't played for nearly 10 months.

Manchester United are keen on the free-scoring Sporting Lisbon midfielder **Pedro Gonçalves**, according to the Daily Star. The 22-year-old has scored 11 times for Sporting this season, attracting the attention of Premier League scouts. If United don't land him, there's always [the 19-year-old Ecuador international Moisés Caicedo](#), currently at Independiente del Valle in his homeland.

The form of the Reading full-back **Omar Richards** this season has attracted the attention of **Bayern Munich**, no less. The Telegraph reports that the European champions are in talks with the Championship promotion contenders about a move in the summer. Everton are also keen on the

England under-21 international. **Reading** for their part are eager to secure a loan deal for the young Chelsea attacking midfielder **Izzy Brown**, who is currently at Sheffield Wednesday but struggling for game time.

[Women's transfer window January 2021 – every deal in Europe's top five leagues](#)

[Read more](#)

Elsewhere in the Championship, **Huddersfield** are closing in on a loan deal for the Newcastle winger **Rolando Aarons** in what would be the sixth such move in Aarons's Newcastle career. Steve Bruce will also entertain offers for Henri Saivet, Christian Atsu and Achraf Lazaar.

In the women's Championship, Liverpool are poised to sign the striker **Melissa Johnson** from their promotion rivals Sheffield United. Johnson's 12 goals last season helped Aston Villa gain promotion to the Women's Super League last season before her summer switch to the Blades.

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Premier League

Southampton's Danny Ings finds early winner to deflate former club Liverpool

Ben Fisher at St Mary's

Mon 4 Jan 2021 16.59 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.58 EST

Play Video

1:24

Klopp frustrated by Liverpool's poor run after 1-0 defeat to Southampton – video

For the millions tuning in at home, it was a toss-up between watching the prime minister or witnessing an endearing and exhaustive [Southampton](#) side fell the champions in style. Liverpool were beaten in the league for only the second time this season but Jürgen Klopp spent much of this captivating contest, settled by a nonchalant Danny Ings strike after 112 seconds, pacing the technical area and beyond with all of the self-restraint of Basil Fawlty.

For [Liverpool](#), the painful reality is they have now dropped more points in 17 matches this campaign than they did the whole of last season. It took until the 75th minute for the off-colour visitors to manage their sole shot on target, courtesy of Sadio Mané, but Southampton deservedly savoured victory. Victory moves them to sixth and four points now separate the top seven.

At the final whistle Ralph Hasenhüttl collapsed to his knees and was visibly choked. “It is the first time I have taken points against Jürgen,” Hasenhüttl said. “I was joking with him one month or two months’ ago, at the manager’s meeting, saying: ‘Maybe once I could have a chance to take a point against you.’ It was a special performance and a perfect evening.”

Had the Liverpool captain Jordan Henderson – one-half of an unorthodox centre-back pairing alongside Fabinho – not cleared off the line six minutes

from time, the substitute Yan Valery would have spared Southampton a nail-biting finish. Stuart Armstrong and then Jan Bednarek flung their bodies at the ball in sacrifice and, until being withdrawn late on, Ings was typically selfless, throwing himself into a diving block on halfway as if the last man.

Liverpool were aggrieved not to be awarded a penalty when Georginio Wijnaldum's shot appeared to strike the arms of the Southampton defender Jack Stephens, but Klopp recognised his team served up another wishy-washy performance. They have not scored in their past two matches and are now winless in three after draws against West Brom and Newcastle. "We worry about that," Klopp said. "We know about the situation. We are not silly."

Klopp's admiration for Ings is well documented but perhaps the biggest compliment was the one that awaited him here in the form of the Liverpool manager's lineup.



Mohamed Salah rues a missed opportunity. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/NMC Pool/The Guardian

The Liverpool teamsheet was in effect a game of Spot the Defender and, while it was an unusual centre-back pairing, Klopp pointed towards Henderson's telepathic relationship with Fabinho, albeit "a few yards ahead"

of the Liverpool back line, in his reasoning and also insisted he would take full responsibility if his captain was to be found wanting out of position.

Klopp was happy to bear the brunt of any criticism for his selections, but not for a lukewarm performance. He went ballistic as Andy Robertson was booked and fumed after Liverpool fell behind with less than two minutes on the scoreboard.

James Ward-Prowse dinked a free-kick behind Trent Alexander-Arnold, who was caught ball-watching, and Ings exquisitely lobbed Alisson from the angle. Thiago Alcântara was booked a minute later and Klopp raged. “Wake up,” he roared. If it wasn’t Klopp, it was Hasenhüttl; neither manager required a megaphone to make their voices heard.

Liverpool, in their camouflage mint green, were conspicuous by their absence in a frenetic first half in which they huffed and puffed, failing to test Fraser Forster. When the goalkeeper, making his first appearance at St Mary’s for more than three years, was eventually called into action, the assistant referee flagged Mohamed Salah offside. Salah headed over just before half-time after meeting Mané’s lofted cross but, in truth, Southampton should have headed down the tunnel with a greater advantage.



Ralph Hasenhüttl (second left) sinks to his knees in tears at the full-time whistle as Jürgen Klopp walks away. Photograph: Tom Jenkins/NMC Pool/The Guardian

Nathan Tella, a first-half substitute for the injured Moussa Djenepo, dipped a shot wide and Henderson had to be alert to snare the ball away after Ward-Prowse again brilliantly freed Ings. There were outstanding performances across the board, from Kyle Walker-Peters to Ibrahima Diallo.

By the time the fourth official, Stuart Attwell, signalled for four minutes of first-half stoppage-time, Liverpool craved the whistle. “If you play like we did tonight, you play with fire,” Klopp said.

Klopp waited until 10 minutes after the interval to tweak things, introducing Xherdan Shaqiri in place of the former Southampton midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain, but made his feelings known at the break.

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Alexander-Arnold drove forward with purpose but his cross went unmet and soon after Wijnaldum powered at goal. His shot appeared to strike the arm of the Southampton defender Stephens but the video assistant referee, Andy Madley, saw it differently. Liverpool’s assistant manager Pepijn Lijnders decried it an “unbelievable” decision as Klopp remonstrated with Attwell.

Stephens was fortunate but his block to deny another former Saint, Mané, moments later was magnificent. It was that kind of full-blooded gusto that embodied a gutsy Southampton display.

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Liverpool

Alisson's rush of blood sums up jaded Liverpool and weary wider world



Jonathan Liew

Jürgen Klopp's side lacked efficiency at Southampton and their early-season injury crisis may be catching up with them

Mon 4 Jan 2021 18.45 EST Last modified on Tue 5 Jan 2021 05.14 EST

[Play Video](#)

1:24

Klopp frustrated by Liverpool's poor run after 1-0 defeat to Southampton – video

A few minutes from the end of this game, with Liverpool chasing an equaliser, James Milner fell over in possession. Centre-half Jack Stephens recovered the ball and, with no [Southampton](#) teammate prepared to make a run, ended up reluctantly dribbling the ball out of defence, as if being forced to do so at gunpoint.

Eventually Stephens punted a hopeful long ball over the top to for Yan Valery to chase. At which point, enter Alisson: sprinting heroically out his goal to clear. Except, as Alisson quickly discovered to his horror, he was not going to reach the ball first. And so, having advanced 45 yards, the [Liverpool](#) goalkeeper now simply stopped dead in his tracks, like a man who has just stepped forward to receive communion only to remember that he is not a Catholic.

Ultimately, Valery's rolled shot was scraped clear by Jordan Henderson, and play continued in more conventional fashion. But in a way this curious and faintly comedic passage of play seemed to encapsulate something wider: not just the game as a whole but perhaps the season as a whole, or very possibly the world as a whole. At some point in the last year we have been all of the characters in this scenario: the stumbling Milner, the unenthused Stephens, the impetuous Alisson, the startled Valery. Even the ball itself: grubby, lacking in energy and destined never to reach its intended target.

From the perspective of this title-chasing Liverpool side, however, slowness is becoming something of a recurring problem. Alisson's late metamorphosis into a rush keeper, chasing down a ball he would almost certainly have got to last season, summed this up. They often say the last yard is in the mind, and Liverpool's memories are writing cheques that their tired bodies are no longer able to cash for them.

A little perspective first. This was only Liverpool's second league defeat of the season. They remain top on goal difference. Four of their next six fixtures are at home. And even in this wasteful effort there was still more than enough pressure, more than enough possession, more than enough in the way of openings, for Liverpool to have turned this around on another night.

Play Video

1:24

Klopp frustrated by Liverpool's poor run after 1-0 defeat to Southampton – video

But as Henderson pointed out afterwards, these slow starts are becoming a bit of a problem. So it was that shortly after 8pm, in common with the rest of

the country, Liverpool were made to pay a harsh price for inadequate precautionary measures. Even if there was an element of training-ground cheek to Danny Ings's flick from James Ward-Prowse's free-kick, Trent Alexander-Arnold should have made a far better effort at clearing it.

It would, all told, be a miserable night for Alexander-Arnold: he gave the ball away 38 times, more than any Premier League player this season, and failed to see out the game. But he was far from alone. Andrew Robertson on the opposite flank was just as poor. Mo Salah struggled to get into the game and offered little when he did. The midfield was slack. The press was barely functional. There was not a single shot on target until the 75th minute. We could go on.

Above all, the real issue here was the lack of Liverpool's trademark efficiency: the crosses to nobody, the heavy touches in the final third, everything that was sticking for them last season. They did look brighter in the second half, after what we have to assume was a sober and measured team talk from Jürgen Klopp. But still there was a basic sloppiness on the ball, one that feels a natural consequence of the injury crisis of the opening weeks of the season.

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At the time, Liverpool still had the depth and energy to cover for the absences of Virgil van Dijk and Alexander-Arnold, Joe Gomez and Thiago. This may be the period when they start paying for it. Unlike their title rivals Manchester United, Liverpool do not have banks of experienced reserves sitting on the sidelines. Meanwhile, Sadio Mané has played 12 games in 43 days. Robertson hasn't missed a Premier League or Champions League game since July.

As for Klopp, he can rage – not without justification – about kick-off times and rest periods. But it wasn't the broadcasters who made the decision to play Diogo Jota in a meaningless Champions League dead rubber who then got a knee injury. The good news for Liverpool is that the title remains up for grabs. The bad news is that if they want to win, they'll have to suffer like never before.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Rugby union

European rugby chiefs consider altering Covid test rules to save competitions

- French clubs ask for standardised testing procedures
- Organisers hope next week's games can go ahead

Robert Kitson

Mon 4 Jan 2021 15.42 EST Last modified on Mon 4 Jan 2021 18.40 EST



Further postponements could threaten the Champions Cup. Photograph: Rogan/JMP/Shutterstock

European rugby chiefs are investigating how testing procedures might be altered to prevent Covid-19 causing more disruption to the Champions and Challenge Cup group phases this month. Some French clubs had threatened to boycott the rest of the competition but, for now, organisers are still hoping next week's round of fixtures will proceed as scheduled.

The French clubs have been asking for testing rules to be standardised across the European leagues following recent cancellations on both sides of the Channel. The Top 14 sides are used to their players being tested 72 hours before games, with three or more positive tests for a club leading to the match being called off. A different system is in place in England where Premiership club players are routinely tested on Mondays and contact tracing is more prevalent.

With infection rates rising again across Europe, a meeting of the EPCR Medical Advisory Group, comprising medical representatives of its shareholder leagues and unions, broke up without reaching a final resolution on Monday but it is understood that British players may well end up being tested closer to match day.

Contact tracing, matchday risk assessment, cross-border travel and protocol compliance were also discussed, with independent input from a Swiss-based physician and virologist, Dr Daniel Koch. Despite reports in France that Bayonne have withdrawn from their remaining two Challenge Cup pool games against Leicester and Zebre, EPCR insists it has received no official word from any participating club that it does not intend to fulfil its remaining fixtures.

The bigger picture remains a concern, however, with tighter lockdown restrictions now being put in place across Europe. If cross-border travel, even for professional athletes, becomes trickier it will make life even tougher for the organisers, with no room available within a packed calendar to reschedule the final two rounds of the preliminary stages.

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Further widespread group stage cancellations would clearly threaten the integrity of the entire tournament, with defending champions Exeter already struggling to qualify for the knockout phase after a raft of positive tests forced the cancellation of their game in Toulouse before Christmas.

There are also growing calls for Premiership Rugby to scrap relegation this season on the grounds the bottom end of the table might be unfairly skewed by points awarded for unplayed games. A PRL spokesman insisted there had

been “no votes taken or any decisions made” and said the outlook remained unclear: “It is a very difficult situation and people aren’t in control at the moment. The virus is in control and will dictate what happens”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Six Nations

England's Six Nations opener against Scotland set to go ahead without fans

- RFU had hoped for 20,000 supporters to attend Twickenham
- Union says it has budgeted to stage all games without fans

[Gerard Meagher](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 16.11 EST Last modified on Mon 4 Jan 2021 23.37 EST



Moving the Six Nations to the summer if the British & Irish Lions tour to South Africa cannot take place has not been ruled out. Photograph: Alan Rennie/Action Plus/Shutterstock

The [Rugby Football Union](#) is expecting England's Six Nations opener against Scotland to go ahead next month behind closed doors despite sharply rising numbers of Covid-19 with both governments announcing lockdowns on Monday.

Twickenham is due to stage the Calcutta Cup on 6 February and both the RFU and the [Six Nations](#) are planning for the championship to take place as per its current schedule despite suggestions it could move to summer if the British & Irish Lions tour of South Africa does not take place.

The prospect of the Lions tour going ahead this summer appeared less likely on Monday when the health secretary, Matt Hancock, said he was “very worried” about the South African variant of Covid-19 taking hold in the UK. But it is believed that, while moving the Six Nations to a time when supporters are more likely to be able to attend matches has not been entirely ruled out, it has not been formally discussed by the unions.

The RFU had hoped for around 20,000 fans to be allowed into Twickenham for the Scotland match but the union says it has budgeted for the financial hit of playing England’s Six Nations fixtures behind closed doors and is resigned to doing so next month. “We are committed to the fixtures, monitoring the situation with all parties and planning continues aligned with current guidelines,” an RFU spokesperson said.

The surge in Covid-19 cases across the UK and the continent has already affected the club rugby schedule with four Premiership matches and a host of European fixtures cancelled in the past month. The Six Nations are optimistic, however, that the competing unions’ biosecure bubbles will help to avoid the need for matches to be called off while elite sports teams have exemptions from travel restrictions.

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As far as the Lions tour is concerned, a decision is expected in the coming weeks with discussions continuing into February if required. If the Six Nations is to shift to the July-August window, realistically that decision would need to be made much sooner. Postponing the Lions tour remains the most likely contingency option but even that is fraught with difficulty given the crowded international calendar and the fact it would take place just over a year before the 2023 World Cup, which would hardly please Eddie Jones and the other home nations’ head coaches.

Meanwhile Duhan van der Merwe has signed for Worcester next season, having only recently made his Scotland debut, qualifying on residency. Van der Merwe made his Test debut in October, having completed his three years in Scotland with Edinburgh, but has decided to make the lucrative move to team up with fellow South African Alan Solomons.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

MMA

'There's chunks of wisdom': How The Karate Kid launched MMA careers

As the new series of Cobra Kai starts, Loretta Hunt talks to fighters about how the original film inspired their combat careers



The Karate Kid retains a huge fanbase more than 30 years after its release.
Photograph: Allstar/Cinetext/COLUMBIA

The Karate Kid retains a huge fanbase more than 30 years after its release.
Photograph: Allstar/Cinetext/COLUMBIA

[Loretta Hunt](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.30 EST

“Show me wax on.”

Sean Daugherty watched intently as the moment of truth played out on his parents' television in Youngstown, Ohio. It was the fall of 1984 and Prince's Purple Rain ruled the air waves, every young man had a pair of camo cargo pants and young ladies scoffed up rubber jelly bangles that they stacked up their forearms like Slinkys. Ghostbusters was the blockbuster hit that

summer, but a less ambitious film called [The Karate Kid](#) caught the nine-year-old Daugherty's attention more.

Like the rest of the film's fans, Daugherty was entranced as he watched it on HBO. He had seen plenty of martial arts films before, but this didn't feel quite the same.

"The difference from Bruce Lee and the other Kung Fu films [before The Karate Kid] was that Daniel LaRusso was an American kid, a teenager with problems, so you could relate and identify with him," says Daugherty. "It totally helped me get into martial arts."

The creators of the original Karate Kid film (and the three sequels, cartoon and TV series that followed) couldn't have meant for it to steer athletes into a career of professional fighting, as mixed martial arts didn't even exist in the States at the time. Yet, nearly a decade after LaRusso crane-kicked his way to victory at the All-Valley Karate Championships, Daugherty – by then [an accomplished 18-year-old amateur kickboxer](#) – fought at UFC 2 in Denver, Colorado. Daugherty was ahead of his time – he remained the youngest competitor in the Octagon until Danny Lauzon made his debut at UFC 64, 13 years later.

[Karate Kid Ralph Macchio: 'I'm at peace with the choices I made'](#)

[Read more](#)

Around the same time, nearly 600 miles away, about three hours southwest of Montreal, a young Georges St-Pierre struggled as the local whipping boy of his tiny Saint-Isidore town. St-Pierre had psoriasis that covered his face and body, which made him different. He often lost his lunch money, his clothing and his dignity, he said. Friends were few and far between – in fact, he wasn't that different from the character of Daniel in the Karate Kid.

What St-Pierre did have was coordination and a bottomless well of energy. He started karate at age seven, and though he admits things didn't go as smoothly for him as Daniel at first, the film is one of his favorites because it gave him hope.

“It’s definitely one of the movies that inspired me to start martial arts,” St-Pierre tells the Guardian via email. “I learned karate to escape the bullying.”

In late 2006, St-Pierre won his first UFC title in his 14th pro fight. When he retired in 2017, [St-Pierre had amassed a 26-2 record](#), having won a UFC title multiple times in two different weight divisions. He is considered the most successful UFC fighter to ever come from a karate background.

Karate was the main focus of Michelle Waterson’s childhood, as well. Her brother walked her down the street most days to the community rec center, where she and her siblings learned American freestyle karate, which is a melding of multiple styles.

“It was something that I picked up fast. My father was in the military, so we enjoyed the disciplinary action of it and the respect aspect of it,” says Waterson. “After my first tournament, I realized it was something I wanted to do for the rest of my life.”

Karate tournaments were a Waterson family activity – the entire clan climbed into the car for road trips to Las Vegas and other tournament destinations when they could afford it. Waterson competed in karate from age 10 to 19, as her dresser filled with gold trophies. Along the way, a promoter gave her the nickname “The Karate Hottie” and it stuck. Last September she beat Angela Hill, bringing her record in the UFC to 6-4 and [her overall professional MMA record to 18-8](#).

“I wasn’t born until 1986, so I remember watching [The Next Karate Kid](#) with Hilary Swank first,” says Waterson. “She became empowered by karate and found herself, which is kind of what it did for me.”

Daugherty, St-Pierre and Waterson have all watched Netflix’s Cobra Kai, the continuation of Daniel and his main antagonist, Johnny Lawrence’s, stories 30-plus years after the events of the original film, as well as those of the students they now teach in rival dojos. The series heavily references the films with flashbacks, a glorious 80s soundtrack and returning characters. The scenarios aren’t all believable (a karate fight in a mall?), but neither were those in the original, and the show is well done. [Entertainment Weekly called it “silly smart”](#).

Whatever the recipe, Cobra Kai is a bona fide hit. [Netflix reported that 50m households accessed the first season](#) when it debuted on the platform in August. St-Pierre was among them.

“I’ve watched the first two seasons – it’s hilarious!” wrote St-Pierre. “It illustrates in many ways the way I think. I don’t believe in bad people, I just think some good people get influenced by their environment to do bad things. No baby is born bad.”

Daugherty, today a Brazilian jiu-jitsu and judo black belt who works with fighters at the Strong Style gym in Ohio, also sees the life lessons permeating through the films and series.

“We make jokes about The Karate Kid and its one-liners, but there’s chunks of wisdom in there,” says Daugherty.

Daugherty says he even borrows lines from Mr Miyagi himself when the situation fits.

“If I see a student chasing after [jiu-jitsu] belts, I tell them that belts are for holding their pants up,” he says with a laugh.

Waterson isn’t surprised the films and series are embraced so lovingly in the fight community. Countless fighters watched The Karate Kid and dreamed of becoming a winner. Countless future fighters will watch Cobra Kai, be inspired and find their way back to the little 1984 film that started it all.

“When you get a movie right, it inspires people to change in their real lives. It sparks something in your heart,” says Waterson. “It makes you want to get up the next day and do something different in your life. That’s when you know a movie got it right.”

- *The third season of Cobra Kai is now streaming on [Netflix](#).*

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Guardian Footballer of the Year

Interview

The Guardian Footballer of the Year

Marcus Rashford: 'My mum is everything'

[David Hytner](#)



Marcus Rashford receives the Guardian Footballer of the Year award for 2020. Composite: Guardian/Manchester United

Marcus Rashford receives the Guardian Footballer of the Year award for 2020. Composite: Guardian/Manchester United

The Manchester United forward reflects on an extraordinary year where he improved the lives of millions of people – all, he says, inspired by his mother, Mel



[@DaveHytner](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 07.00 EST

The [Guardian Footballer of the Year](#) is an award given to a player who has done something remarkable, whether by overcoming adversity, helping others or setting a sporting example by acting with exceptional honesty.

Marcus Rashford is mulling over a quite extraordinary 2020 when his words and deeds have made him the only choice to be named as the Guardian's Footballer of the Year. The Manchester United and England forward has excelled on the pitch, as usual, but the day job no longer defines him. How can it do so when he has done more than anyone [to look after the poorest and most vulnerable children in the United Kingdom?](#)

[Megan Rapinoe: ‘Everybody has a responsibility to make the world a better place’](#)

[Read more](#)

The Guardian asks about the influence of his mother, Mel, and in a few short sentences Rashford lays bare the debt he owes to her. “She’s everything,” he says. “Every positive characteristic you see in me is her. If I could describe her in three words it would be strong, protective, undefeated.”

Rashford has been shaped by the love and support Mel gave to him and his four siblings as she raised them as a single-parent in the south Manchester neighbourhood of Wythenshawe. She worked long hours at three jobs and would sacrifice everything for their happiness. But Rashford says he can remember a look he sometimes saw in her as she battled to put food on the table. It was one of anxiety, almost desperation, and it has underpinned much of the campaigning work he has driven.

As a boy, Rashford would rely on breakfast clubs, free school meals and snacks while food banks and soup kitchens were a part of his upbringing, too; he has vivid memories of the trips to Northern Moor to collect Christmas dinners each year. Mel would start cooking when she got back from work in the evenings so at least Rashford was able to have that meal at home. Others are not so fortunate.

Quick Guide

About the Guardian Footballer of the Year award

Show

Marcus Rashford MBE is the Guardian's Footballer of the Year for 2020. Rashford is honoured for forcing the issue of child hunger in the UK on to the national stage; persuading ministers to extend free school meals into the summer holidays; raising money to enable FareShare, the food charity he works with, to distribute nearly 10 million meals for children and families in need; launching the Child Food Poverty Taskforce; and launching a book club to support children's reading. He has made his own experience, living in a home where food was scarce, count. And he has transformed perceptions of what role models in football can achieve.

You can donate to, or volunteer for, FareShare at fareshare.org.uk

The award is given to a player who has done something truly remarkable, whether by overcoming adversity, helping others or setting a sporting example by acting with exceptional honesty. Rashford is the first British player to have won the award in its five year history. Rashford's Manchester United team-mate Juan Mata [was awarded the prize in 2017](#) for helping to

launch the Common Goal movement, where members of the football industry donate 1% of their income to charity projects. The other winners have been [Fabio Pisacane \(2016\)](#), [Khadija “Bunny” Shaw \(2018\)](#) and [Megan Rapinoe \(2019\)](#).

Will Woodward, the Guardian’s head of sport, said: “We are delighted to honour Marcus with this award, for which he was the outstanding choice. His example and campaigning have transformed the national debate about food poverty and fairness, and sparked a movement that has delivered millions of meals to those who need them most.”

Marcus Christenson, the Guardian’s football editor, said: “Most years it is a very difficult decision to decide who should be given the award but this year it was easy. What Marcus has done is nothing short of remarkable. He is a true role model and the children in this country will benefit from his actions for years to come.”

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Rashford felt the worry of food poverty during the school holidays, he knew what it was like to go hungry and so, when the coronavirus pandemic gripped, his thoughts were for the families in similar situations.

“I was concerned for children just like me if the schools closed as part of the national lockdown,” he says. “Without breakfast club and free school meals, I had very little. What would me and my mum have done?

“I’d injured my back last January and spent time with families during the early stages of my recovery through FareShare and it was clear they were as reliant on the food vouchers [for school meals] as the food banks. It wasn’t one or the other. They needed both to survive. I knew what that fear felt like. I knew what fear in my mum looked like. I didn’t want that for any child or any parent.”

FareShare is the charity that collects and distributes surplus food and Rashford partnered with it to help cover some of the deficit in free meals [when schools were temporarily shut at the end of March](#). At first, the target

was to raise £100,000, which would provide meals for 400,000 children. But Rashford also began to worry about what would happen in the summer holidays.



Marcus Rashford and his mother Melanie visit FareShare Greater Manchester at New Smithfield Market. Photograph: Mark Waugh/AP

“He read an article in the Guardian that the voucher scheme was coming to an end,” Kelly Hogarth, Rashford’s right-hand woman at the talent agency, Roc Nation, said. Rashford lobbied Boris Johnson and the government to do something about it.

Rashford’s success has owed much to the tone he has taken on social media, where he has 21.2m followers across Instagram, Facebook and Twitter. He has sought to highlight social injustice, partly by drawing on his own irrefutable experiences, but there has been no trace of anger or bitterness, no attacking of politicians. On the contrary. He has called out people for doing that.

He has wanted unity, for the strength and purity of the message to be everything; not bickering or one-upmanship across political lines or tribal football allegiances to dilute or obscure. It has been about action, not aggrandisement. Then, there is Rashford’s remorselessness. This is a person

who, at the age of six, when he was first scouted by United, said that nothing would get in the way of him fulfilling his dream and playing for them at senior level.

Rashford has said he tried to bring about change with regard to child poverty a few years ago only for his efforts to lack impact because he did not know the full facts around every angle. So he got more clued up, he connected more with the families involved and he pushed again.

The campaign Rashford waged has been undeterred by setbacks, with a big one coming in June when [the government rejected his plea](#) for it to keep paying for £15-a-week food vouchers for some of the poorest families during the summer break. He came back with an impassioned open letter to MPs, urging them to reconsider, [and they did](#). Johnson phoned him to detail a new £120m Covid summer food fund for 1.3m pupils. That night, a banner was spotted in Wythenshawe: Rashford 1 Boris 0.



A banner in Wythenshawe after Boris Johnson agreed to extend free school meals during the summer holidays in England. Photograph: Molly Darlington/Reuters

There would be a [second government U-turn](#) in November thanks to Rashford's perfectly pitched arguments and another call from Johnson to

explain it. This time it related to an extension of the voucher scheme for further school holidays, after it had initially been voted down. Rashford 2 Boris 0. By this point, [Rashford had an MBE](#) and he has helped to raise more than £20m for FareShare.

“I don’t think anyone could have predicted all this,” Rashford says. “But I feel like a lot of people would have learned a lot about themselves in 2020, especially their strength. It’s been a bizarre year for us all but one we can really build upon to not take anything for granted any more. We opened up a lot of conversation and we uncovered inequalities, we showed compassion and empathy. That was really lovely to see.

“Funnily enough there are probably a lot of personal positives people can take from 2020. Surviving this year with Covid impacting mental health and health in general, loss and unemployment, is big enough. Everyone should pat themselves on the back for that because it’s not been easy.”

Rashford has said he tries to keep his football separate from the campaigning but the game being as it is and fans being as they are, it is easier said than done. There will always be those who want players only to play and see any off-the-field interests as distractions.

He has, though, given the critics minimal ammunition by continuing to be influential for United. His 90th minute winner [against Wolves last Tuesday](#) meant he finished the calendar year with 20 goals in 42 appearances for the club. Rashford has only ever known total focus on his football. It is second nature to him. “From a football perspective, I just want the fans in [the stadiums] safe and healthy,” he adds, simply.



Rashford celebrates with Paul Pogba after scoring the winning goal late in the match against Wolves at Old Trafford on Tuesday. Photograph: Michael Regan/AP

And so on Rashford goes, packing everything in, giving everything. He was named as [the figurehead of a taskforce](#) on child food poverty in September and [he launched a book club in November](#) aimed at giving children from lower socio-economic backgrounds the opportunity to embrace reading from an early age. Rashford started reading only at 17 because books were not something his family could budget for.

“There are near 400,000 children in the UK that have never owned a book,” he says. “These are the same children I fight for day in, day out and I wanted to allow them an escapism from anxiety and fear through reading. My books are focused on acceptance and acknowledgment, allowing children to know that many of us have gone through what they are going through but that there is a way to navigate it positively. Ultimately, I just want children to dream because sometimes dreams are all they have. I’m working on my first book now, which will be released in May.”

Rashford, just 23, has a maturity that belies his years but not what he has seen during them. He finishes with a piece of advice for children who might

want to become footballers or dream of accomplishment in any field. And, also, a fervently expressed hope.

“Only stay in competition with yourself,” he says. “Everyone’s journey is different. There is no right way to do it. Train hard and believe in yourself. My wish is that all children start life on an equal playing field in the UK. That no child starts life 20 yards behind any other child and that our children are equipped with tools they need to succeed at anything they put their mind to.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Sport

Elite matches to continue but all grassroots sport suspended in England

- Measures taken after Boris Johnson announces lockdown
- England's golf courses, tennis courts, gyms and pools close



The Women's Super League will continue under the new measures but the Women's FA Cup will stop as it does not have elite status. Photograph: Lexy Ilsley/SPP/Shutterstock

The Women's Super League will continue under the new measures but the Women's FA Cup will stop as it does not have elite status. Photograph: Lexy Ilsley/SPP/Shutterstock

[Sean Ingle](#)

[@seaningle](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 17.15 EST

Professional sport has been given the all-clear to continue after strict new lockdown rules were announced on Monday evening, but there are warnings of a further decline in activity levels for everyone else after golf courses,

tennis courts and outdoor gyms were told they must close for at least seven weeks.

Organised team sport for under-18s is also now on hold under the new rules announced by the prime minister Boris Johnson. And with most indoor gyms and pools already closed under tier 4 restrictions imposed on most of England in December, most people's activity will be restricted to cycling, running or walking outdoors – which is allowed with one other person – or working out at home until 22 February. Disabled sport and elite youth competitions will get exemptions, however, and golf is still permitted in Scotland.

[England's Six Nations opener against Scotland set to go ahead without fans](#)
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While conceding that the measures were necessary to prevent the spread of the new variants of the coronavirus, ukactive, which represents more than 4,000 gyms and leisure centres, also warned they would inevitably “sound the alarm” for jobs and businesses in the sector and warned of the risks to people’s physical and mental health.

The ukactive chief executive, Huw Edwards, said: “The further restrictions show the severity of this new chapter in the fight against Covid-19 and it is crucial they are respected. But we also know that despite positive encouragement from the government, physical activity levels fell sharply and significantly during previous lockdowns. The UK governments must protect this sector before it becomes too late.”

Operators of all sizes across the UK are sounding the alarm that their businesses are unsustainable and facing substantial job losses if they are forced to close again without a comprehensive package of tailored financial and regulatory support.”

Elite sport was given the green light to continue despite more than 50 matches in the Premier League, English [Football League](#) and National League being postponed since Christmas, with the government satisfied with the safety precautions in place for training and competition.

[England nervously await Covid test results after Moeen Ali positive](#) [Read more](#)

There are also no plans for the [Premier League](#) or Football League to impose a “circuit break”, although they are bracing for more postponements in the coming days with all 92 clubs in the first four English divisions having Covid tests this week. Until now only the [Premier League](#) players have been regularly tested, with lower league clubs relying on testing after symptoms emerge and contact tracing.

The Women’s Super League will continue, as will the second tier of women’s football, the Championship, but all other female leagues in England will be suspended, including the Women’s FA Cup, as it does not have elite status.

Football’s policy of keeping calm and carrying on was called into question by the Rochdale chief executive, David Bottomley, who said it was “inevitable” that the Football League would have to temporarily suspend fixtures because of rising coronavirus cases.

He said: “Hospitals across the UK are being told they are to face a massive surge in Covid cases, so who are we in football to be trying to add to that situation?”

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[England cricket team](#)

England nervously await Covid test results after Moeen Ali positive

- All-rounder and Chris Woakes set for period of isolation
- Early positive test a major blow for tourists in Sri Lanka



England's Moeen Ali on the England bus on the team's arrival in Sri Lanka.
Photograph: Ishara S Kodikara/AFP/Getty Images

England are nervously awaiting the results of fresh Covid-19 tests in Sri Lanka on Tuesday after [Moeen Ali](#) emerged as a positive case and also forced teammate Chris Woakes into isolation as a close contact.

Moeen's result was detected during a round of testing that took place upon arrival at Hambantota airport on Sunday morning. The all-rounder, who is asymptomatic, is now required to isolate for 10 days under protocols agreed with the Sri Lankan government and cannot emerge until 13 January.

This effectively rules Moeen out of the first Test that begins in Galle the following day due to a lack of preparation time and is a setback to England's plans; though the 33-year-old has been out of the side for over a year, his 18 wickets were instrumental to a 3-0 series victory on the island in 2018.

Woakes also appears unlikely to feature in the series opener, with the all-rounder required to isolate for seven days and unable to feature in a two-day intra-squad match from Friday that acts as England's solitary warm-up fixture on tour. While Moeen will travel to Galle early and see out his time there, Woakes will remain in the team hotel.

Clearly there is huge concern that further cases will emerge during a tour that was due to take place last March, only to be cut short by the pandemic's initial wave. Since then England have attempted a white-ball tour of South Africa but saw the one-day series called off due to anxiety about positive cases in the team hotel.

The current members of the Test squad have been isolating in their rooms since arriving at the Shangri La hotel in Hambantota on Sunday and can leave only to undertake their first training session tomorrow provided the next batch of test results, due out on Tuesday, are all negative.

While the players passed testing before departure, and a team spokesperson said they were physically distanced during their 11-hour charter flight from Heathrow on Saturday evening, clearly their recent proximity, both during training at Loughborough last week and on the plane, makes further positives possible.

Woakes was deemed a close contact to Moeen after England took the surprise decision to pool private hire vehicles from their homes to the airport, rather than insist on separate journeys. The pair both live in the West Midlands and spent nearly two hours in the same minivan during this trip.

It has not been established whether Moeen has contracted the new variant of Covid-19 that has a higher transmission rate but it is not thought to be a false positive, as was the case for two unnamed members of the England party in South Africa last month.

The cancellation of the one-day fixtures on that tour was chiefly down to collective anxiety in the squad and fears over a delayed return home so close to Christmas. In a move to prevent a repeat of this, England have taken Dr James Bickley, a psychologist from consultancy firm Changing Minds, to Sri Lanka.

Joe Root, the Test captain, has already stated that a small number of positive cases on tour will not automatically force the tour to be abandoned but the emergence of one so early in the trip presents a rocky start to the second half of the winter.

After the Sri Lanka series, which sees both matches played behind closed doors in Galle and counts towards the World Test Championship, the squad is due to travel on to India for four Tests, before five Twenty20s and three one-day internationals.

Speaking before the news about Moeen emerged, Jimmy Anderson declared himself to be in the best physical condition of his 30s and ready to take on a fixture-heavy 12 months that also features two Tests at home against New Zealand, a five-match home series against India and Ashes series next winter.

Anderson, 38, could have called time on his England career after securing his 600th Test wicket last summer but is instead starting out on his 20th year in international cricket. When asked by a local journalist whether this would be his last visit to Sri Lanka as a Test cricketer, he typically refused to rule out a possible return.

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“It could be, but I thought that the last time I was here [in 2018] so who knows?” replied Anderson. “I’ve got myself in really good shape – I’d say I’m in as good shape as I have been in my 30s, if not better to be honest.”

A report in the Sunday Times over the weekend suggested Anderson was in line for a knighthood in the new year honours list but the decision has been deferred to spare him any ridicule come his next tour to Australia.

“I’ve not heard anything. But I’m sure it won’t stop them sledging me, to be honest,” said Anderson. “I pretty much get a big barrage when I go there anyway. I’m looking forward to that, with or without [a knighthood].”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Australia cricket team

Australia will watch anxiously if Will Pucovski makes Test debut against India

[Adam Collins](#)

Justin Langer is upbeat but the fact two neurologists were consulted to pass the concussion-prone batting prodigy fit is cause for concern



Australia's Will Pucovski has been cleared of concussion and is in the selection mix to make his Test debut against India at the SCG on Thursday,
Photograph: David Gray/AFP/Getty Images

Australia's Will Pucovski has been cleared of concussion and is in the selection mix to make his Test debut against India at the SCG on Thursday,
Photograph: David Gray/AFP/Getty Images

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.59 EST

Unresolved as they are, the internal grumbles and logistical queries surrounding this Sydney Test have ceased. Come Thursday morning, it will be in the Harbour City where the show will go on between Australia and

India – a captivating show at that. But this off-field noise has instead been replaced by another confusing poser: is he good to go?

The subject of that question is Will Pucovski. The will he, won't he debate that has cloaked his Test debut has been running for two years, and is coming to a head again with the 22-year-old Victorian readmitted to the Australian squad.

[Australia need David Warner's risk-free Test minimalism against India more than ever | Geoff Lemon](#)

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To recap for the uninitiated, this is one special kid; a right-handed prodigy with an organised technique and a thirst for big runs and big tons. The complication is that the very sound head he has on his shoulders keeps getting hit. He has been concussed nine times since the age of 15. Not always while batting, but often enough for it to be an issue, including four weeks ago in a warm-up game for the touring Indians. That this followed consecutive double centuries to start his Sheffield Shield season was just his luck.

So, is he good to go? Justin Langer says yes. There are a “few boxes” for him to tick in the nets, and the balance of the team still might mean selectors leave him out when they name their final XI, but the Australian coach insists the medical hurdles have all been cleared. And not just stringent protocols that relate to concussion either, but verification from what he described as an “independent” neurologist. “That would be very heartening for him, his family and everyone involved in it,” Langer said. “There’s no reason Will can’t be selected now.”

Of course, that two neurologists have been consulted to begin with is reason enough to prompt a degree of anxiety. Nevertheless, Langer is upbeat. “It’s not necessarily going to have any long-term impact on him,” he declared of the formal assessments. “When you have the medical expertise backing him up, so he’s got evidence that he doesn’t have to worry too much long term, he is going to have to deal with it if things happen but that happens in the game of cricket. So, of course, it is nice to hear the medical experts but for

me, it is even more heartening to hear from Will himself because he's the one who has to do it."



David Warner and Will Pucovski train with the Australian squad ahead of this week's third Test. Photograph: Dan Himbrechts/AAP

What's certain is that Puvocski is going to be relentlessly bounced as an international cricketer. From Langer's perspective, that's nothing new – he already is at the level below and has hit "thousands" of short balls in preparation for this challenge. The counterfactual inquiry, which went unasked, is whether the young man would even be back in the squad had Joe Burns rattled off a chanceless ton at Melbourne with Australia clicking with the bat more generally. So far in this series when Tim Paine's side have been bowled out it has been for 191, 195 and 200. What they would give for Pucovski to replicate what he has done for his state.

As for David Warner, there is an upfront acknowledgment that he will be playing this week short of full fitness after tearing a groin tendon in November. Athletes across all sports routinely take the field with injuries but, usually, we find out about this after the fact rather than two days before the engagement. "His batting will be fine, there might be some different movements he needs to make in the field," Langer said of the pain the 34-

year-old will play through. “If we thought we were taking a big risk on him reinjuring himself then we wouldn’t be taking the risk.”

On top of this, for all Warner’s experience and determination, it is far from ideal that the last time he stepped out for a red-ball engagement was in the SCG Test 12 months ago. That is the same challenge Steve Smith confronted at the start of this series, adding 10 runs in 59 deliveries so far in the two Tests – his leanest run in a decade. “Steve always gets the volume up in practice,” Langer said of his struggling match-winner. “But there’s never, even for the greatest of players, there’s nothing that replaces time in the middle, and we know what a great problem solver he is, we know what a great player he is. Davey will be the same.”

[Berala and western Sydney residents risk \\$1,000 fines if they attend SCG for Sydney Test](#)

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If Warner and Pucovski are given the green light to open together for the first time, it has been all but confirmed Matthew Wade will back to the middle order. This leaves Travis Head in a precarious position. “It’s so hard to fit seven into six,” Langer responded when asked about the South Australian, who fell in familiar fashion in both innings at Melbourne. “He’s one of the guys currently in the team. Whether that changes for this game, I can’t tell you. We’ve got some decisions to make.”

That they do. If we have learned one thing as a community across 2021 so far, it is that there are no guarantees it will be any less tricky than 2020. Clearly, cricket is no different.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/05/australia-will-watch-anxiously-if-will-pucovski-makes-test-debut-against-india-at-scg>

2021.01.05 - From the uk

- [Tommy Pilling Husband from one of UK's first married Down's syndrome couples dies of Covid](#)
- [Morrisons Supermarket sparkles with 8.5% rise in sales over festive period](#)
- [Analysis Assange verdict does little to protect press freedom](#)
- [Extradition ruling What happens now?](#)
- [Next Christmas profits better than expected, buoyed by online sales](#)
- [Michael Morpurgo Author denies 'censoring' Merchant of Venice in children's book](#)
- [Doctor Who Jodie Whittaker speculation rife after reports she will quit](#)
- [Covid vaccine Oxford man, 82, first in world to get Oxford/AstraZeneca jab](#)
- [Coronavirus Scientists appeal for calm over South Africa variant](#)
- [Education Exam board drops only black composer from music A-level syllabus](#)
- [Business FTSE 100 vaccine optimism tempered by prospect of full lockdown](#)

[Southend-on-Sea](#)

Husband from one of UK's first married Down's syndrome couples dies of Covid

Wife of Tommy Pilling ‘utterly devastated’ after partner’s death on New Year’s Day

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[Caroline Davies](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 13.47 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 12.39 EST



Maryanne and Tommy Pilling on ITV’s This Morning in 2018. Photograph: Ken McKay/ITV/Rex/Shutterstock

The husband from one of the UK’s first couples with Down’s syndrome to marry has died from Covid-19, it has emerged.

Tommy Pilling, 62, from [Southend-on-Sea](#), Essex, who had been treated in three different hospitals since early December with a chest infection, died on New Year's Day.

He and his wife Maryanne, 49, married 25 years ago. Family members said she was "completely devastated".

Her sister Lindi Newman, 33, described him as "one of a kind".

She said Pilling and her sister had never been apart for more than a few hours after her mother, Linda Martin, 70, unofficially adopted him and made him part of their family.

"She doesn't remember a life before Tommy," Newman said of her sister. "The day she met him, she had the biggest smile on her face and she couldn't stop talking about him."

Pilling, who had dementia, had been shielding for 10 months, but then was hospitalised with a chest infection on 1 December which led to the couple being separated for the first time. He died on 1 January, after testing positive for coronavirus on 17 December.

Maryanne's mother Linda said: "Tommy has left a vast hole in our lives that nobody will ever fill.

"I considered him as my son and I've never regretted a single moment of the three decades he was in my care."

She praised the NHS staff who nursed him. "I cannot thank the staff enough, their care and compassion was outstanding – especially during these dreadful times," she said. "They were all rushed off their feet but still made time to inform me daily regarding his condition."

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Morrisons

Morrisons sparkles with 8.5% rise in sales over festive period

Champagne and salmon lead the way as expectations rise for UK supermarket sales



Morrisons 2020 Photograph: Morrisons. PR handout free for editorial use.

Strong demand for luxury Christmas favourites helped to drive an 8.5% rise in sales at [Morrisons](#) over the festive period, as the chain kicked off reporting on what is expected to be a bumper trading period for supermarkets.

Morrisons said online sales had tripled and growth was boosted by strong demand for festive favourites such as champagne and salmon as families made the most of the quieter festivities during the pandemic.

Sales in Morrisons established stores rose 7.3% in the nine weeks to 3 January but that was boosted by a 1.2% rise in wholesale sales via the retailer's deal with Amazon and to supply convenience stores.

The group delivered 35,000 of its new food boxes, which can be ordered by phone, in the two weeks before Christmas.

The supermarket was the only one of the UK's four largest chains to gain market share over Christmas, according to analysts at Kantar, as it cut prices and increased home deliveries.

Morrisons said customer shopping patterns were different this year, as Covid restrictions prevented larger gatherings of friends and family. Champagne sales were up 64% compared with last year, while sales of whole salmon rose 40%.

David Potts, the chief executive, said: "Customers were determined to have a good Christmas even if it was quieter than usual."

He said the company had "put its assets at the disposal of the country" and this would include three Morrisons stores hosting vaccination centres in their carparks from Monday. Potts said he had offered up another 37 sites for use if required.

The chain said that despite the "extremely unpredictable current circumstances" it still expected profit for the current year to be in line with expectations.

Morrisons profits are likely to be less than half the £420m to £440m once hoped for after it agreed to pay back £230m of the government's business rates relief.

The company said Covid-19 safety measures, including the cost of covering for vulnerable staff who must now shield at home, would also now rise by £10m to £280m under the latest lockdown rules.

Nearly 7% of staff are currently off work, more than double the typical number for the time of year, because of the impact of test and trace, and the need to self-isolate or shield at home.

Closing in-store cafes and lower fuel sales resulting from the government's "stay at home" decree will hit profits by another £10m. However, the Covid-related hits to profit are largely expected to be offset by the benefit of higher

sales as supermarkets pick up business resulting from the closure of restaurants, pubs and cafes.

The chain has also spent £65m on preparing for the end of Brexit transition this month, including building up stocks of some items to prevent any shortages.

Potts said about 81 product lines, including 22 types of red wine, canned fruit and pasta, were held up in Europe as some hauliers were refusing to travel to the UK because of concerns about the new variant of the Covid-19 virus and additional paperwork resulting from the end of Brexit transition.

But Potts said he was “absolutely not” concerned and expected the goods to be delivered soon. “I don’t think there will be a shortage of red wine,” he said, pointing out that Morrisons sold more than 100 types of red wine. “We are ready for all circumstances,” he said.

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He said it was too early to tell if there would be hold-ups at Channel ports after new rules on trading with the European Union came into force this month, as currently the volume of shipments was very low.

Potts said his main effort to offset issues caused by Brexit would be in considering sourcing more products from the UK. Morrisons sources two-thirds of its goods in the UK and Potts wants to increase that further. “I’m going to be looking for British entrepreneurs starting a company despite the [difficult] time,” he said.

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Julian Assange

Julian Assange verdict does little to protect press freedom

Analysis: ruling appears to extend the scope of British Official Secrets Act on classified information

- [Julian Assange to seek release from prison after extradition ruling](#)



Supporters of Julian Assange cheer outside the Old Bailey in London after a judge ruled he could not be extradited to the US. Photograph: Barcroft Media/Getty Images

Supporters of Julian Assange cheer outside the Old Bailey in London after a judge ruled he could not be extradited to the US. Photograph: Barcroft Media/Getty Images

[Dan Sabbagh](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 14.09 EST

Julian Assange may have won the first round of his extradition battle against the US but lawyers and the National Union of Journalists have warned his

victory had little to do with the protection of journalism and free speech.

A study [of the ruling](#) from the district judge Vanessa Baraitser – which said the WikiLeaks founder [should not be extradited](#) on mental health grounds – appears to extend the scope of the British Official Secrets Act, which governs the leaking and handling of classified government information.

As part of the extradition case, Baraitser had to satisfy herself that Assange would have committed a criminal offence if the acts complained about by the US had instead taken place in the UK.

Critically, Baraitser, decided Assange did in part by “aiding and abetting” Chelsea Manning, a US army intelligence analyst, [who leaked 250,000 US diplomatic cables](#) to him. She cited extracts from a chatlog between the two to justify the argument.

[Julian Assange extradition ruling: what happens now?](#)

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On 10 March 2010, Manning said there was no more information to share on the Guantánamo detainee assessment briefs that she had passed on to Assange, suggesting there were no more leaks to come. Assange’s reply is probably best interpreted as one of general encouragement, writing “curious eyes never run dry in my experience”.

Afterwards, Manning decided to leak many more documents, including the US diplomatic cables a month later. At one point Assange provided a link to a secure drop box to pass on information – of the type used by many media organisations such as the Guardian – “in a specific directory that [WikiLeaks](#) had designated for her use”.

Gavin Millar QC, a specialist media barrister with Matrix Chambers, argues that Assange’s conduct is “exactly what a journalist would do”. He added: “Once you have a confidential source you want to establish what information they have, what access they have, whether they want to disclose it and how you might obtain it.”

At another point Assange used a password-cracking tool to try to gain access to the Pentagon system, after Manning provided an encrypted password. It would have allowed Manning to access a system she already had access to under a different username. The attempt failed, although Baraitser was highly critical of the move.

“This is the conduct which most obviously demonstrates Mr Assange’s complicity in Ms Manning’s theft of the information, and separates his activity from that of the ordinary investigative journalist,” the judge concluded.

Such crude interpretations are helped by the fact there is no formal public interest defence embedded in the various British official secrets acts, a point recognised [last September by the Law Commission](#), which said one should be introduced when the government makes good on its Queen’s speech promise to update the legislation.

In one other area, Baraitser may be on stronger ground. She said Assange broke the Official Secrets Act by publishing unredacted US diplomatic cables in 2011, revealing the names of sources and informants. It was an act [criticised by a wide range](#) of media organisations at the time.

The National Union of Journalists said that while several British journalists have been threatened with prosecution under the act since the 1970s, including the Guardian reporter Amelia Hill [during the phone-hacking scandal](#), until now those threats have never been carried out.

However, what the Assange ruling demonstrates is that the absence of an effective public interest clause makes it possible for lawyers acting for a foreign power – in this case the US – to contend that engaging with a confidential source in possession of classified information is a criminal offence.

Julian Assange

Julian Assange extradition ruling: what happens now?

Decision is another milestone in 10-year fight but focus now shifts to US appeal



Julian Assange making a speech from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy in London in 2016. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters

Julian Assange making a speech from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy in London in 2016. Photograph: Peter Nicholls/Reuters



[Ben Quinn](#)
[@BenQuinn75](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 11.56 EST

Monday's ruling is not the end of a decade-long struggle by [Julian Assange](#) against extradition to the US – but it heralds the beginning of the end.

Over recent weeks, supporters and those close to the [WikiLeaks](#) founder had lobbied and pinned some hopes on Donald Trump granting him a pardon in the final days of his time in the White House, but no Christmas reprieve came via the US president's Twitter account or elsewhere.

After the [ruling at the Old Bailey](#) by district judge Vanessa Baraitser that Assange cannot be extradited from the UK, the focus now shifts to a US appeal, for which leave is expected to be granted in a few weeks time.

After the appeal to the high court, the case could technically go to the supreme court though British legal experts caution that a specific legal point would have to arise for the latter to become involved.

Another option further down the line, for Assange's defenders rather than lawyers for the US, would be the European court of human rights.

In the event of legal rulings continuing to go his way, he will ultimately be discharged from prison, although the long arm of the US would limit his travel prospects beyond the UK for the rest of his life.

Yet more scenarios – based on more than a few hypotheticals and a disconnect with how the British legal system works – meanwhile continue to hover into view. Mexico's populist president, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, told reporters at his daily press conference that he would ask foreign ministry officials to approach their UK counterparts about “the possibility of Mr Assange being freed” so he could accept a Mexican offer of asylum.

[The Julian Assange extradition ruling: right result, wrong reason | Owen Jones](#)

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A somewhat more realisable prospect however would involve the incoming White House incumbent pardoning Assange, although Joe Biden's description of Assange in 2010 as a “[hi-tech terrorist](#)” looms large in some memories.



A placard outside the Old Bailey in London. Photograph: Hannah McKay/Reuters

An intervention by Trump cannot still be ruled out, although he would be an unlikely saviour given the role in which Assange's lawyers sought to cast the president over the course of extradition proceedings at in London last year.

It is almost exactly 10 years since Eric Holder, then serving as US attorney general under Barack Obama and in an administration containing Vice-President Biden, disclosed that he had authorised "significant" actions aimed at prosecuting the WikiLeaks founder over the release of thousands of diplomatic cables from US embassies.

By then, an international arrest warrant had been issued at the request of Swedish authorities who wanted to question Assange about allegations – one of rape and one of molestation – made by two women in Stockholm. He has denied those claims.

After losing an appeal against attempts to extradite him to Sweden, Assange entered the Ecuadorian embassy in London in 2012. He was subsequently [granted political asylum](#) amid claims by his supporters that his removal to Sweden could be followed by a possible onward extradition to the US on potential espionage charges.

A total of 2,487 days inside the embassy passed – during which time Trump's first attorney general, Jeff Sessions, described [Assange's arrest as a priority](#). Suspicions that he had been charged in secret were bolstered when the US Department of Justice [inadvertently named](#) him in a court document.

A diplomatic stalemate between the UK and Ecuador came to an end in April 2019, however, when British police forcibly dragged Assange from the embassy after Ecuador revoked his political asylum. Soon after, a US criminal indictment charging him with conspiring to hack into a secret Pentagon computer network was unveiled.

The first courtroom jostling over a US extradition request brought [an extraordinary claim](#) – that Trump had offered Assange a pardon if he would say Russia had not been involved in leaking Democratic party emails.

Months later, Covid-19 was wreaking havoc across the globe when proceedings resumed in earnest at the high court, with evidence being

largely delivered by witnesses across often fragile remote links.

What has been unquantifiable meanwhile has been the personal toll on individuals involved, with Assange's partner, Stella Moris, accusing the US of tearing their family apart as four weeks of hearings were adjourned at the start of October.

She was inside court 2 of the Old Bailey on Monday as Baraitser remarked in her ruling that the "inevitable impact" any extradition would have on her and their children "is sadly nothing out of the ordinary in the context of extradition proceedings".

But she wept tears of joy when the extradition request was denied. Irrespective of one's view of Julian Assange, the day when his two young sons will be able to spend unlimited time with their father may have been edged closer.

- With additional reporting by Tom Phillips
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jan/04/julian-assange-extradition-fate-remains-unclear>

[Next](#)

Next's Christmas profits better than expected, buoyed by online sales

Chief executive warns that gains will be almost entirely offset by latest Covid restrictions



Retailer reports sales dip was far better than the expected drop of 8%.
Photograph: Steve Paston/PA

[Next](#) has emerged as a winner from a tough Christmas period as sales transferred from shuttered stores to its website, but the fashion chain warned new lockdown measures would wipe out the extra profit it had made.

The retailer's chief executive, Simon Wolfson, said the £28m of additional profit it had made from better than expected sales in November and December would be almost entirely cancelled out by the impact of shutdowns during the important Boxing Day sales period as well as [new restrictions in England and Scotland](#) which complete the closure of the 500 store chain.

The new lockdown had seemed “inevitable”, said Wolfson, adding that while it was easy for people to feel angry with the government, the real culprit was the virus. “What I will be very disappointed by is if we don’t pull every lever to roll out the vaccine as quickly as possible,” he said.

Investors reacted positively to Next’s Christmas trading update, pushing its share price up nearly 10% to more than £75 in early trading on Tuesday, close to the record high of £79.27 set in 2015. By midday Next’s share price was up more than 5% at £72.80 – still the best performer in the FTSE 100.

By contrast, the worst performer was Associated British Foods (ABF), owner of Next’s high street rival Primark, which has no online sales operation. News of the new national lockdown in England pushed ABF shares down nearly 3% to about £21.60 by midday on Tuesday.

Next said the pandemic was also delaying stock deliveries from Asia as there was a shortage of freight containers. “It is not getting it into the country that’s the problem; it’s getting it into a container at the other end,” Wolfson said.

The retailer said many of its deliveries were running two to three weeks late, meaning stock levels were 10% lower than two years ago. All departments were being affected but it would be a much bigger problem if its stores were open, Wolfson said, with stock expected to “return to more normal levels by the end of March”

“I don’t think if you went on to our site you would go, ‘My gosh there’s nothing here’,” said Wolfson. “On some of the best-selling lines we are thinking ‘We wish we had more of that’ but it’s on the water and should be with us in three weeks time. The stock problem and the store closure problem to a degree mitigate each other.”

Sales in the nine weeks to 26 December were 1.1% lower than in 2019 – a far better outcome than the drop of 8% pencilled in by the company back in the autumn. While UK store sales tumbled 43% its online sales were up 36%.

The company said the closure of about half its shops had limited its ability to clear discounted stock after Christmas. It would be able to clear about a quarter of it through its website; however, it would cost the company £5m more than selling it in its shops. The remainder will be sold in its outlet stores.

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At the start of the Covid crisis, [Next](#) had predicted the pandemic would have a disastrous impact on its finances, but sales have held up better than it anticipated, boosted by demand for new home furnishings, loungewear and children's clothing.

Indeed Next is forecasting profits of £670m for the coming year despite assuming its stores will be closed in February and March, which would be within 10% of pre-pandemic levels.

Wolfson also confirmed Next was part of a [consortium bidding](#) for some of the fashion brands owned by Sir Philip Green's stricken Arcadia group but it would not take a majority stake in any deal. The Topshop and Topman owner went [into administration](#) in November putting 13,000 jobs at risk.

"We are only interested in the brands that we think are very, very good," said Wolfson. He suggested if the consortium won it would result in a similar set-up to the one struck for [lingerie brand Victoria's Secret](#), where Next operates the stores and website on its behalf.

Next has proved itself to be one of the industry's most resilient retailers. Its shares have recovered strongly from the collapse seen last year when the UK first went into lockdown.

Years of investment in its home shopping business had enabled Next to weather the storm, said Richard Lim, chief executive of analysts Retail Economics. "These results are likely to set the tone for a polarised view of the retail sector which separates those with impressive online capabilities with those that do not."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2021/jan/05/next-christmas-profits-better-than-expected-buoyed-by-online-sales>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Michael Morpurgo

Michael Morpurgo denies 'censoring' Merchant of Venice in children's book

War Horse author says his Tales from Shakespeare was only ever going to include 10 plays, and he has chosen the ones most likely to appeal to young readers



‘Children will come to this play later’ ... Michael Morpurgo. Photograph: Roberto Ricciuti/Getty Images

‘Children will come to this play later’ ... Michael Morpurgo. Photograph: Roberto Ricciuti/Getty Images

Sian Cain

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Mon 4 Jan 2021 11.26 EST

Michael Morpurgo has denied a Sunday Times report that he “refused” to include The Merchant of Venice in a forthcoming Shakespeare anthology for children due to antisemitism.

The newspaper described the former children's laureate's "21st-century sensibilities" as having prevented the inclusion of the play in Tales from Shakespeare, his retelling of 10 Shakespeare plays for children aged six and older. The Merchant of Venice famously features the Jewish moneylender Shylock, who demands a pound of flesh from the merchant Antonio if a loan is not repaid by his deadline.

Morpugo was quoted as saying: "The play can be antisemitic ... I did feel this was Shakespeare's play and I could not tell it honestly. It would be offensive."

But speaking to the Guardian on Monday, the author of [War Horse](#) and [Kensuke's Kingdom](#) rejected the framing of the decision and denied that he shied away from difficult subject matter for children.

"The notion that I censored this, it is such nonsense. I chose the 10 plays I love the most, that I felt young children would respond to," he said. "To be honest with you, The Merchant of Venice is not a play I enjoy myself. I didn't 'refuse' to include the play, no one told me to do it – I sat down quietly and decided the 10 I would do. It's completely wrong and a knee-jerk reaction."

Morpugo said the book, which will be published next year and was only intended to include 10 of Shakespeare's plays, was focused on plays that had "very strong storylines, and plays that children would be most likely to see at the theatre or study at school". Starting on 8 January, performances of his retellings by the Royal Shakespeare Company will be made available to schools around the UK for free for five weeks.

"There are certain plays, and The Merchant of Venice is one of them, that I believed would not resonate with eight-year-olds. Yes, there was some worry that this might be the first time an eight-year-old reads about a Jew. A story that the Nazis used to portray Jewish people in a bad light – that is not something you put in front of an eight-year-old as their first example of an extraordinary group that has contributed so much to the world and suffered so much," he said. "Now, that is not to say the play does not have merit. But this is not censorship, children will come to this play later, when they'll have some sense of what Jewish people have endured over centuries."

“The point of this project is to bring Shakespeare to the eyes, ears and hearts of children in our time,” said Morpurgo, who grew up reading Charles and Mary Lamb’s retellings, also titled Tales from Shakespeare, which was published in 1807. “You have a writer and the RSC trying to encourage children to go to the theatre - I fail to see how that is offensive or censorship.”

The Sunday Times quoted Chris McGovern, chairman of the Campaign for Real Education, describing Morpurgo’s decision as an example of “the dead hand of political correctness. It is cowardly not to face up to great literature. Of course there is going to be plenty to be offended by in Shakespeare ... children do not want to be protected all the time against great literature.”

“If I had suggested doing Titus Andronicus for primary school children, an eyebrow or two might have been raised. It doesn’t even do for me, and I am 77. It is almost as if anything you do around Shakespeare is treated like holy writ and that is the problem. He was a man of the people and his plays weren’t just for the classroom,” Morpurgo said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/jan/04/michael-morpurgo-denies-censoring-merchant-of-venice-in-childrens-book-tales-from-shakespeare>

Doctor Who

Jodie Whittaker: speculation rife after reports she is to quit Doctor Who

Reports say actor to leave BBC show after three years at end of upcoming series



Jodie Whittaker made history when she became the first female Doctor, making her first appearance in the show's 2017 Christmas special.
Photograph: Startraks Photo/Rex/Shutterstock

Jodie Whittaker made history when she became the first female Doctor, making her first appearance in the show's 2017 Christmas special.
Photograph: Startraks Photo/Rex/Shutterstock

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Mon 4 Jan 2021 06.04 EST

Speculation is mounting over the future of [Jodie Whittaker](#) after reports she will depart Doctor Who at the end of the upcoming series, putting an end to her tenure in the Tardis after three years.

On Sunday, the [Daily Mirror reported](#) that Whittaker intended to leave the BBC show, which returns this autumn, with an anonymous source saying a new Doctor would emerge when the next “regeneration” happens.

A [BBC](#) spokesperson said it would not comment on the reports regarding Whittaker. Her co-stars Bradley Walsh and Tosin Cole left the programme in the New Year’s Day episode.

Whittaker made history when she became the first woman to play the Doctor after she followed Peter Capaldi, making her first appearance in the show’s 2017 Christmas special.

The actor’s time in the Tardis has signalled a step-change in the way the show operates, with Whittaker’s iteration of the show having a reduced number of episodes and a new Sunday night slot.

Whittaker’s Doctor Who tenure has been considered a success, with the launch show being the most watched for a decade with 9 million viewers tuning in. The show has also evolved during her time with [a virtual reality episode](#) released in 2019 and [a mini DIY episode](#) airing in March shortly after national coronavirus lockdown measures came into force.

Whittaker has spoken about the pressure of playing the role, telling a crowd at Comic Con in 2018 that she was “[somehow representing all women ever in playing this part](#)”, while her male colleagues who were new to the show did not have the same attention.

Speculation will mount as to who could follow Whittaker if she is to depart at the end of the 13th series, with the role of the Doctor still one of the most coveted and high-profile acting roles in the UK.

Names said to be in the running for the role include Friday Night Dinner’s Tom Rosenthal, the Death in Paradise star Kris Marshall, the Fleabag creator, Phoebe Waller-Bridge and the Homeland actor David Harewood.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Coronavirus

Covid vaccine: Oxford man, 82, first in world to get Oxford/AstraZeneca jab

Dialysis patient Brian Pinker received jab at Oxford's Churchill hospital on Monday morning

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Matthew Weaver

Mon 4 Jan 2021 07.54 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 03.18 EST

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1:26

First patient receives Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid vaccine – video

An 82-year-old retired maintenance manager has become the first person in the world outside clinical trials to get the [vaccine developed](#) by Oxford University and AstraZeneca.

Speaking after getting the jab at Oxford's Churchill hospital at 7.30am, Brian Pinker, 82, said: "The vaccine means everything to me. To my mind, it's the only way of getting back to normal life."

Pinker, who is a dialysis patient from Oxford, said he was only told on Saturday that he would be getting the jab on Monday.

The government hailed the first injection outside clinical trials of the Oxford vaccine as a "pivotal moment" in the fight against the virus, but senior medics cautioned against over-optimism amid continuing alarm about record new cases.

The health secretary, Matt Hancock, said: “This is a pivotal moment in our fight against this awful virus and I hope it provides renewed hope to everybody that the end of this pandemic is in sight.”

The chief medical officer, Chris Whitty, urged the public not to get carried away. [He tweeted](#): “Vaccines give us a route out in the medium term. The NHS is, however, under very considerable and rising pressure in the short term. We must all follow social distancing for now.”

Prof Andrew Pollard, the head of the Oxford Vaccine Group who was among others who also received the shot on Monday morning, echoed this caution. “It gives us a bit of hope, but I think we’ve got some tough weeks ahead,” he said.

He said that with record daily case numbers, the next few weeks would be a challenge despite the optimism provided by the distribution of Oxford’s vaccine.

“This is a really critical moment. We are at the point of being overwhelmed by this disease,” he said.

Boris Johnson, who [watched health workers get the vaccine at London’s Royal Free hospital](#) on Monday, has promised that tens of millions of people will be vaccinated by spring. Hancock admitted that only 530,000 doses of the vaccine were ready for use this week, but promised the distribution programme was being accelerated.

Speaking to the BBC, he said: “It’s a matter of getting the vaccine as soon as it’s manufactured, and then goes through the crucial safety checks, which obviously are very important and getting it into the NHS and delivered into people’s arms.”

Sam Foster, Churchill hospital’s chief nurse, who administered the first Oxford vaccine, said: “It was a huge privilege. There’s nothing more that the NHS wants to do now is to get this programme going at real scale across the NHS.”

NHS England's medical director, Prof Stephen Powis, said: "The NHS's biggest vaccination programme in history is off to a strong start, thanks to the tremendous efforts of NHS staff who have already delivered more than one million jabs.

"Throughout the pandemic their response has been phenomenal, from introducing world-leading treatments for coronavirus, which have saved patients' lives as well as delivering the very first Covid-19 vaccines outside of a trial in a landmark moment in history, and now rolling out the new Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, chalking up another world first that will protect thousands more over the coming weeks."

Oxford University denied that Pollard, who is 55, had jumped the queue in getting the vaccine of the first day. It said: "In line with the JCVI's priority list, any member of the Oxford University vaccine trials team who are frontline healthcare workers, will be eligible for vaccination. Prof Pollard had been waiting to receive a vaccination in line with this policy."

Pollard said: "It was an incredibly proud moment for me to have received the actual vaccine that the [University of Oxford](#) and the AstraZeneca teams have worked so hard to make available to the UK and the world.

"As a paediatrician specialising in infections, I know how important it is that healthcare workers along with other priority groups are protected as soon as possible – a crucial role in defeating this terrible disease."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/04/brian-pinker-is-first-to-get-oxfordastrazeneca-covid-19-vaccine>

Coronavirus

Scientists appeal for calm over new Covid variant in South Africa

Questions raised over potential effect on vaccines as health secretary says he is ‘incredibly worried’

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Sarah Boseley Health editor

Mon 4 Jan 2021 11.26 EST Last modified on Mon 4 Jan 2021 20.10 EST



The UK health secretary, Matt Hancock, arrives at Downing Street on Monday. Photograph: John Sibley/Reuters

Scientists are appealing for calm following suggestions that Covid vaccines might not protect people against a new variant of the virus that has emerged in [South Africa](#).

Experts say there is no need for panic, even though the health secretary, Matt Hancock, has said he is very concerned about the latest variant of Sars-Cov-2, which has emerged in South Africa and is said to be highly transmissible, as is the [variant first seen in Kent](#).

There have already been a few cases of infection with the [South African strain](#) in the UK.

“I’m incredibly worried about the South African variant,” said Hancock on BBC Radio 4’s Today programme. “That’s why we took the action that we did to restrict all flights from South Africa, and movement from South Africa, and to insist that anybody who’s been to South Africa self-isolates. This is a very, very significant problem.”

Hancock voiced his concern following an interview on Times Radio at the weekend with Sir John Bell, the government’s life sciences champion and a key figure behind the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine, which has [just begun to be used](#) by the NHS.

Bell said he had no worries about the efficacy of the vaccine against the variant that emerged in Kent and was spreading rapidly across the UK. But, he said: “I don’t know about the South African strain. There is a big question mark over that.”

[uk coronavirus cases](#)

Teams at Oxford were looking at both variants to assess whether the vaccine would protect against them.

“The real question is whether the vaccines are going to be adequate,” said Bell. They worked much better than it was assumed they would work in preventing disease, so it was unlikely any mutations in the virus would turn off a vaccine entirely, but viruses adapted to survive.

“We’re now in a game of cat and mouse, because these are not the only two variants we are going to see,” he said.

Experts say mutations of the virus are to be expected, but that it is likely the vaccines will still work to prevent people infected with variants from

becoming severely ill. However, they are watching developments in South Africa closely.

“Viruses mutate and new strains will emerge,” said Prof James Naismith, the director of the Rosalind Franklin Institute. “The so-called South African strain has a number of changes, and scientists are working flat out to understand their significance. Some of the changes are quite significant and thus scientists are paying a lot of attention. We do not yet know enough to say more than this.”

Ravi Gupta, a professor of clinical microbiology at Cambridge University and an honorary professor at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa, has been working on how mutations to the virus are increasing infectivity. There was a need to strike a balance, he said, “between warning people about something that might be important and creating panic, which I think is what is happening”.

Surveillance and control measures needed to be stepped up, he said, and the variant from South Africa, like the variant from Kent, probably had already spread to many countries that did not have the sort of comprehensive genetic sequencing available in the UK and South Africa. But nobody should yet assume the vaccines would be compromised, he said.

“Vaccines are really vital in this fight. We need to get them out as quickly as we can. We think they are still going to be effective,” he said.

Naismith said a climate of fear would help nobody. “For the general public, I would say think about our human nature. Many of us like a good scare and horror stories are part and parcel of human culture, which means such things get a lot of coverage. However, a drumbeat of nightmare scenarios about this new variant does nothing but create anxiety because too little is known and there is nothing we can do about it at the moment,” he said.

Race in education

Exam board drops only black composer from music A-level syllabus

British jazz artist Courtney Pine axed amid Covid-related course changes, says Pearson Edexcel

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Courtney Pine performs at the Royal Albert Hall in west London.
Photograph: Dave Bennett/Getty for Ronnie Scott's

Courtney Pine performs at the Royal Albert Hall in west London.
Photograph: Dave Bennett/Getty for Ronnie Scott's

Harriet Clifford and [Richard Adams](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 05.47 EST

The only black composer has been dropped from the syllabus of a popular A-level music exam from next year, along with the study of jazz, because of

course changes demanded by the coronavirus crisis, according to the examination board involved.

Pearson Edexcel defended its decision to axe the work of the British jazz saxophonist [Courtney Pine](#) along with five others, including the Oscar-winning British composer Rachel Portman, because of “feedback from teachers that the volume of work was too high and needed accelerated change in the light of the Covid-19 pandemic”.

Pine’s album Back in the Day had been [included in the Pearson Edexcel A-level course’s “popular music and jazz” section](#), alongside Revolver by the Beatles and Hounds of Love by Kate Bush. But after next summer Pine’s work will be removed and jazz dropped from the renamed “popular music” category.

[Music education in UK schools devastated by pandemic, survey finds](#)
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In response to the decision, Pine said: “I was deeply honoured to be included in the A-level syllabus, it is a place in the UK education system that I never imagined to be in.

“As a musician that tours the world representing who we are, to have a place in the awareness of our young during these times has been inspiring. I have met so many students who have told me that studying my music has contributed to their musical development, they are as aware as I am of the absence of British jazz composers to the syllabus until now.

“I hope that there will be more UK composers who will be asked to contribute to such an important, influential subject.”

Portman, the first woman to win an Academy award for best original musical score for her work on the 1996 film Emma, has also been removed after [Pearson](#) reduced the number of compositions to be studied from 18 to 12. The Cuban ensemble La Familia Valera Miranda was among those dropped.

Those retained include the US film and television composer Danny Elfman, best known for his theme tune for The Simpsons, along with JS Bach and Igor Stravinsky. Only four women remain on the new syllabus, including the sitar player and composer Anoushka Shankar.

A spokesperson for Pearson said: “We completely agree it is vital pupils get to study music by composers from different cultures and backgrounds. We want to ensure A-level music remains as rich and diverse as possible and will be reviewing this specification again in time for students taking exams from 2022 onwards.”

The exam board [said in its announcement](#) that “although six set works have been removed from the specification and will no longer appear in questions on the exam paper, centres should add these to the wider listening list as they can prove to be valuable pieces” in answering exam questions.

The A-level music syllabus offered by another exam board, AQA, has also been trimmed after Ofqual’s requirement last August “to accommodate potential public health requirements” as a result of the pandemic.

In contrast to Pearson, AQA opted to shrink the amount of performance and composition required from students, without reducing its [set works](#).

The works in AQA’s pop music category include Stevie Wonder and Beyoncé as well as the black British composer [Labrinth](#). Its jazz option includes the work of the Welsh pianist [Gwilym Simcock](#), alongside Louis Armstrong, Charlie Parker and Miles Davis.

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Stock markets

FTSE 100 vaccine optimism tempered by prospect of full lockdown

Hopes of swift economic rebound give way as country heads for tighter restrictions

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The Oxford University/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine was approved by the UK medicines regulator last week. Photograph: WPA/Getty Images

The [FTSE](#) 100 rose strongly on the first trading day of 2021, although optimism over the newly approved Oxford coronavirus vaccine was tempered by the prospect of tougher lockdown restrictions.

The index of Britain's biggest listed companies gained by more than 100 points, or about 1.7%, on Monday, to reach 6,571 after the vaccine developed by the University of Oxford and AstraZeneca was [administered](#)

for the first time since its approval by the British medicines regulator last week.

The index had leapt by almost 3% earlier in the day, but lost ground in the afternoon as England headed for tightened Covid restrictions to counter a resurgence in the pandemic. Wall Street also slipped, with the Dow Jones Industrial Average falling by more than 600 points in early trading in New York before Senate runoff elections in Georgia on Tuesday.

The pound fell by almost 1% against the dollar on the global currency markets to trade at about \$1.35. Weaker sterling can boost the FTSE 100 because many companies in the index generate the bulk of their earnings overseas.

Stock markets across Europe recorded modest gains as investors bet that a swift economic recovery would follow tougher government restrictions to staunch the growth in Covid-19 infections. Ending the day on a downbeat note after falling back from big gains earlier on Monday, France's Cac 40 index closed up 0.7% and Germany's Dax 30 by 0.1%.

Analysts said a lack of widespread disruption for cross-border trade after the end of the Brexit transition had also buoyed markets. Truck movements are, however, below normal for the time of year, after firms rushed to move goods before the transition expired and a last-minute deal was agreed between the UK and the EU before the 31 December deadline.

Tougher government restrictions and the rapid growth in coronavirus infections are however expected to hit the economy at the start of the year. Despite the gains for the FTSE 100 as a whole, shares in banks and housebuilders – which are more sensitive to the domestic hit from tougher Covid restrictions than more international firms in the index – fell sharply.

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Hinesh Patel, a portfolio manager at the investment firm Quilter Investors, said the performance of the FTSE 100 was a reflection of investors desperately hoping that the vaccine could be rolled out quickly. “Otherwise

they may find themselves prematurely embracing the reopening of the economy.”

However, he added: “With Brexit risk appearing as if it is off the table and the start of the Oxford University/AstraZeneca vaccine rollout, many investors are taking the opportunity to catch up on some of the potential opportunities they may have missed prior to Christmas.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.05 - Around the world

- [US Democrats ask FBI to investigate Trump's Georgia phone call](#)
- [Biden inauguration Plane used by Trump due to fly to Scotland](#)
- [Tanker seizure South Korean forces arrive in waters off Iran](#)
- [Slack Messaging service suffers global outage](#)
- [Live Business: markets rise despite fresh nationwide Covid lockdowns in England, Scotland](#)
- [Abu Bakar Bashir Indonesia to release suspected Bali bombings mastermind](#)
- [Brexit Netherlands and Germany refuse entry to UK nationals for non-essential travel](#)
- [France British ex-soldier and 12 others on trial over kidnap of millionaire](#)
- [Italy Government under pressure over economic recovery plan](#)
- [Saudi Arabia Three-year feud with Qatar may be ending as border reopens](#)
- [California Inflatable costume may have caused Covid outbreak at hospital](#)

[**Donald Trump**](#)

Democrats ask FBI to investigate Trump's Georgia phone call

Ted Lieu and Kathleen Rice say: 'We believe Donald Trump engaged in solicitation of, or conspiracy to commit, a number of election crimes'

- [US politics – live coverage](#)

[**David Smith**](#) in Atlanta and [**Joan E Greve**](#) in Washington

Mon 4 Jan 2021 19.08 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 14.26 EST



Donald Trump speaks at a campaign rally for Republican Senate candidates in Valdosta, Georgia, on 5 December 2020. Photograph: Evan Vucci/AP
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Two Democrats have asked the FBI to open a criminal investigation into Donald Trump over [a phone call](#) in which he pressured Georgia state officials to overturn the presidential election in his favour.

The US president [berated and begged](#) Brad Raffensperger, Georgia's top election official, to "find" enough votes to reverse Joe Biden's victory in the state, according to an audio recording made public on Sunday.

The revelation prompted fierce debate over whether the call violated federal statutes that prohibit interference in elections. Ted Lieu of California and Kathleen Rice of New York, in the House of Representatives, demanded a case be opened.

"As members of Congress and former prosecutors, we believe [Donald Trump](#) engaged in solicitation of, or conspiracy to commit, a number of election crimes," they wrote to the FBI director, Christopher Wray. "We ask you to open an immediate criminal investigation into the president."

Under US law, it is a crime to "knowingly and willfully" deprive voters of a free or fair election. Eric Holder, a former attorney general, tweeted: "As you listen to the tape consider this federal criminal statute."

During the hour-long call on Saturday, Trump asserted disproven claims of fraud and raised the vague prospect of a "criminal offence" if the [Georgia](#) secretary of state and other officials did not change the certified vote count.

"All I want to do is this," the president said. "I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have. Because we won the state."

Raffensperger, a Republican, pointed out that Georgia had counted its votes three times before certifying Biden's win by 11,779 votes. "President Trump, we've had several lawsuits, and we've had to respond in court to the lawsuits and the contentions," he said. "We don't agree that you have won."

Trump insisted: "I won this election by hundreds of thousands of votes. There's no way I lost Georgia." He pushed conspiracy theories circulating in rightwing media, including that hundreds of thousands of ballots mysteriously appeared in Fulton county, which includes Atlanta. Officials have said there is no evidence of this.

Play Video

1:18

Listen to excerpts from the call between Donald Trump and Georgia's secretary of state— video

Interviewed on ABC, Raffensperger said: “It was pretty obvious pretty early on that we’d debunked every one of those theories early on but President Trump continues to believe them.”

On Monday afternoon, Gabriel Sterling, the voting systems implementation manager for the Georgia secretary of state’s office, held a press conference during which he refuted, point by point, in detail, Trump and his team’s claims during Saturday’s phone call to Raffensperger.

“This is all easily, provably false,” Sterling said. “Yet the president persists and, by doing so, undermines Georgians’ faith in the elections system, especially Republican Georgians in this case.”

Sterling pleaded with Georgians to vote in tomorrow’s runoff races, urging them to ignore the president’s baseless claims.

The White House had reportedly made 18 attempts to call Raffensperger during the past two months before he relented. Raffensperger said he did so against his better judgment.

“He did most of the talking, we did most of the listening,” he said. “But I do want to make my points that the data that he has is just plain wrong. He had hundreds and hundreds of people he said that were dead that voted. We found two. That’s an example of just his bad data.”

Asked if he considered Trump’s request to be lawful, the secretary of state replied: “I’m not a lawyer. All I know is that we’re gonna follow the law, follow the process. Truth matters, and we’ve been fighting these rumours for the last two months.”

Trump may have violated Georgia state laws by soliciting election fraud. Raffensperger said: “I understand that the Fulton county district attorney wants to look at it. Maybe that’s the appropriate venue for it to go.”

Fani Willis, the Fulton DA, said on Monday she found Trump’s call “disturbing” and said that if she were referred the case, she would “enforce

the law without fear or favour”.

State law is not subject to the presidential pardon power, which Trump has recently used for allies and which some observers think he may try to apply to himself.

As with so many past outrages, Republicans did not condemn the president. Kevin McCarthy, the party’s leader in the House, told Fox News: “The president’s always been concerned about the integrity of the election, and the president believes that there are things that happened in Georgia that he wants to see accountability for.”

The incident echoed a 2019 call in which Trump tried to strong-arm the president of Ukraine to investigate Biden by withholding military support. That led to [impeachment](#) but a repeat seems unlikely just two weeks before Trump leaves office.

Dick Durbin of Illinois, the No 2 Democrat in the Senate, said Trump’s conduct “merits nothing less than a criminal investigation”.

Bernie Sanders, the independent senator from Vermont, [told MSNBC](#): “It is unprecedented. It is the most consequential attack on American democracy in the history of our country … This is what mafia does … This is beyond outrageous. This is not only impeachable, it is certainly a criminal offence.”

The revelations fuelled anxiety that Trump will stop at nothing to cling to power. All 10 living former secretaries of defense published a joint article in the Washington Post [warning that the military](#) should not be used to change the outcome of the election.

Play Video

1:35

Kamala Harris says Trump's call to Georgia secretary of state is 'bold abuse of power' – video

The tape also threatened to upend runoff elections in Georgia that will determine control of the Senate. Republicans Kelly Loeffler and David

Perdue have backed Trump. Party infighting could lead some voters to stay home in protest.

Also on Monday, the top federal prosecutor in Atlanta left his position, a day after the audio recording of Trump's Saturday call was made public, during which the president called him a "never-Trumper".

Byung J "BJay" Pak, who was appointed by Trump, announced his resignation as US attorney for the northern district of Georgia in a statement, which did not say why Pak was leaving or what he planned to do next.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[**Donald Trump**](#)

Official plane used by Trump will fly to Scotland just before Biden inauguration – report

Arrival of military plane president has occasionally used fuels questions over Trump's plans for 20 January

[**Julian Borger**](#) in Washington

Mon 4 Jan 2021 18.05 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 18.03 EST

Play Video

0:45

Trump should not travel to Scotland to play golf, says Sturgeon – video

The murk surrounding Donald Trump's likely whereabouts on his last day as president has thickened considerably with news that an official plane he has used in the past is due to fly to [Scotland](#) the day before Joe Biden's inauguration.

Trump himself is sticking to his refusal to accept his decisive electoral defeat. He has been caught [cajoling election officials to “find” thousands of extra votes](#) and is encouraging his supporters to gather for a “wild” day of protest on Wednesday when Congress is due to ratify the result.

The White House has refused to say what he will do when Biden is inaugurated on 20 January, raising the question of whether Trump will even leave the building voluntarily.

Most Trump-watchers expect him to dodge any event that would involve acknowledging his election loss. They predict he will stage a spectacular diversion to detract from Biden's first day on the job.

Many versions of that scenario have the outgoing president flying to his private club in Florida, [Mar-a-Lago](#). But Scotland's [Sunday Post](#) has reported that Prestwick airport, near Trump's Turnberry golf course resort, has been told to expect a US military Boeing 757 that has occasionally been used by Trump, on 19 January.

The report said that speculation over a possible inauguration day drama has been fuelled by sightings of US military surveillance aircraft circling Turnberry for a week in November, doing possible advance work.

"It is usually a sign Trump is going to be somewhere for an extended period," the Post quoted an unnamed source as saying.

The 757 is a smaller, narrower plane than the Boeing 747-200Bs that are normally designated Air Force One. It is more often used by the vice-president and first lady, Melania Trump, than the president.

There was no immediate response to requests for comment from the White House or Prestwick airport.

Leaving the country before formally leaving office would be unprecedented for a US president.

Flying to Scotland before 20 January would be a way to get US taxpayers to pay for the first leg of a post-presidential holiday. It is also possible the flight was booked as a contingency by a candidate surprised by defeat and unsure what to do.

Multiple reports suggest he will face severe difficulties in his heavily indebted business empire.

New accounts [published on Monday](#) showed Trump's array of golf properties in Scotland lost £3.4m in 2019, though Trump Turnberry showed a modest profit.

Meanwhile his neighbours at Mar-a-Lago have [launched a legal effort](#) to stop him moving there full-time, saying he is precluded by an agreement he signed in the early 1990s converting the estate from a private residence to a club.

Wherever Trump goes on 20 January, it is unlikely the exit will be quiet or particularly dignified. But it will be unlike any presidential departure the country has ever witnessed.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

South Korea

South Korean forces arrive in waters near strait of Hormuz amid Iran tensions

Destroyer moves into region one day after Revolutionary Guards seize a South Korean tanker



The South Korean-flagged tanker MT Hankuk Chemi is escorted by Iran's Revolutionary Guards navy after being seized in the Gulf. Photograph: Tasnim News/AFP/Getty Images

The South Korean-flagged tanker MT Hankuk Chemi is escorted by Iran's Revolutionary Guards navy after being seized in the Gulf. Photograph: Tasnim News/AFP/Getty Images

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo and agencies in Seoul

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.32 EST

South Korean forces have arrived in waters near the strait of Hormuz as pressure builds on Iran to free a South Korean tanker it [seized](#) along with its crew on Monday.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said they had taken control of the South Korean vessel, the Hankuk Chemi, and its 20 crew because it was "polluting the Persian Gulf with chemicals". The tanker is being held at Iran's Bandar Abbas port city.

The Choi Young, a destroyer carrying members of the Cheonghae anti-piracy unit, arrived in the strategically important area on Tuesday, as officials in Seoul sought a diplomatic solution to the standoff.

Officials stressed there were no plans to conduct a military operation to free the crew of five South Koreans, 11 Myanmarese, two Indonesians and two Vietnamese, according to the Yonhap news agency.

[Iran seizes South Korean tanker as tensions with US mount](#)
[Read more](#)

"[The destroyer] is carrying out missions to ensure the safety of our nationals," foreign ministry spokesperson Boo Seung-chan said on Tuesday.

An unnamed official told Yonhap: "The issue should be resolved through diplomacy. The unit is focused on the safety of our people who use the waterway after the seizure."

The Hankuk Chemi's owner said on Tuesday that Revolutionary Guard troops had stormed the vessel and forced it to change course and travel to [Iran](#). That account contradicts Iranian claims that the ship had been stopped for polluting the waters of the Persian Gulf and the strait of Hormuz.

The South Korean foreign minister, Kang Kyung-wha, did not comment directly on speculation that Tehran had seized the vessel to pressure Seoul into releasing billions of dollars of Iranian assets frozen in South Korea as part of US sanctions against the regime.

Kang said her priority was to "verify the facts and ensure the safety of the crew members".

She added: "We have been trying to figure out what happened through the Iranian embassy in South Korea and the South Korean embassy in Iran and are continuing to make efforts to address the situation."

There was confusion over plans to send a senior South Korean official to Iran this weekend to negotiate the vessel's release.

Iranian state TV cited a Tehran government official as saying that the vice foreign minister, Choi Jong-kun, had been due to discuss Iran's demand that \$7bn in frozen funds be released.

However, a foreign ministry official in Seoul told Reuters that Choi's visit was "unclear as of now".

Last Sunday, the Tehran Times newspaper reported Iran was hoping to negotiate an agreement to use the frozen funds to "barter" for coronavirus vaccine doses and other commodities.

The Revolutionary Guards said on Monday the Hankuk Chemi, which was carrying 7,200 tonnes of ethanol, "was seized by our force's [navy] this morning".

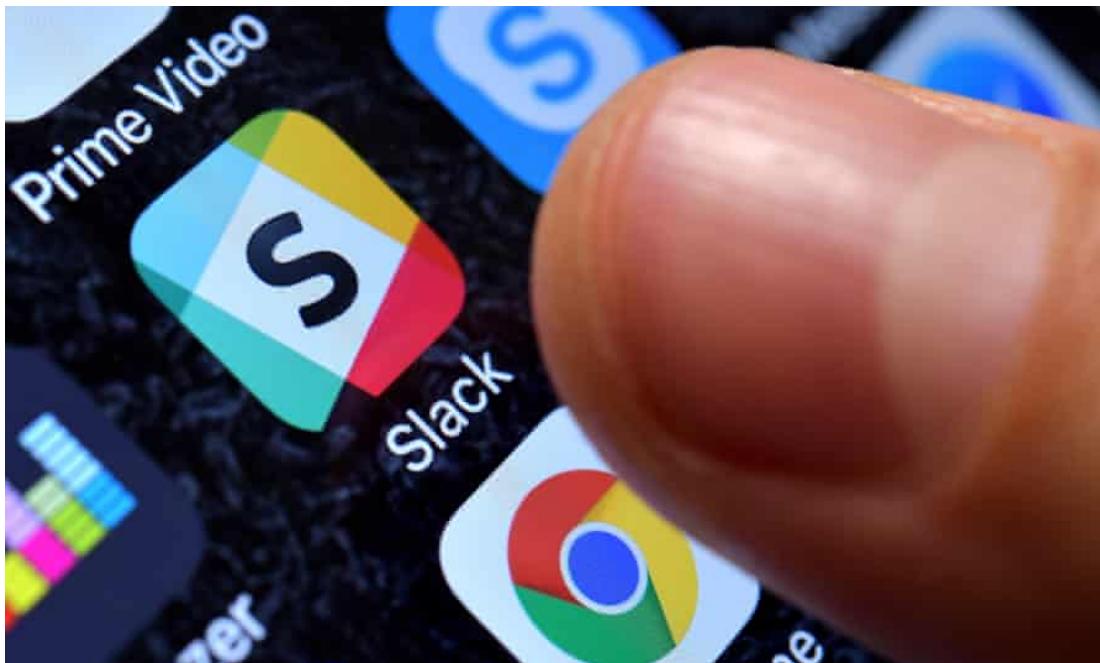
They added: "This tanker was headed from Saudi Arabia's Al Jubail port and was seized due to the repeated infringement of maritime environmental laws."

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Technology

Slack messaging service suffers global outage

Outage disrupts service in the US, Germany, India, the UK, Japan and elsewhere



‘Our team is currently investigating and we’re sorry for any troubles this may be causing,’ Slack said in a statement. Photograph: Sascha Steinbach/EPA

‘Our team is currently investigating and we’re sorry for any troubles this may be causing,’ Slack said in a statement. Photograph: Sascha Steinbach/EPA

Kari Paul and agencies

Mon 4 Jan 2021 12.47 EST

Slack, the [messaging service](#) used by millions of people for work and school, has suffered a global outage on Monday.

The service disruption occurred on the first day back to work for many people returning from the New Year’s holiday, underscoring just how

intensely millions have come to rely on such online services to work and go to school from home during the global coronavirus pandemic.

“Our team is currently investigating and we’re sorry for any troubles this may be causing,” Slack said in a statement.

[Salesforce to buy Slack in \\$27.7bn deal aimed at competing with Microsoft](#)
[Read more](#)

The outage began around 10am eastern time and disrupted service in the US, Germany, India, the UK, Japan and elsewhere. Slack said that people should check [its status site](#) for updates. As of 1pm eastern time many users on Twitter had reported the service was back, though Slack’s website said customers may still be experiencing disruptions.

“Some customers may be able to connect, but may also experience degraded performance,” Slack said in a tweet. “We’re continuing to work to resolve the issue.”

The chat service, which allows for the creation of public and private breakout rooms as well as one-on-one chats, was launched in 2013 and quickly became an omnipresent tool for workplaces. It went public in 2019, opening nearly 50% above its expected price at \$38.50, putting its initial market cap at \$19.5bn. The platform had more than 12m users as of 2020, the last time the company publicized its daily user count. Its market cap is now more than \$24bn.

Monday’s outage came as Slack is in the process of being acquired by cloud-based software company Salesforce.com for \$27.7bn. The deal is aimed at giving the two companies a better shot at competing against longtime industry powerhouse Microsoft. Slack shares were down about 1% late Monday morning.

Slack previously [grappled with outages](#) in 2019. The company revealed in its September earnings report it lost \$8.2m in revenue after issuing credits to customers whose services were disrupted. Its stock tumbled 14% in the aftermath.

Internet service outages are not uncommon, and are usually resolved relatively swiftly. They are only rarely the result of hacking or other intentional mischief.

Google went down briefly in December, with people in several countries unable to access their Gmail accounts, watch YouTube videos or get to their online documents during an outage. In August, Zoom went down just as many students were beginning the school year at home. And in September, Microsoft services had an outage that lasted for five hours.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Business live

Stock markets

Markets lose steam as UK businesses call for larger lockdown support package - as it happened

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Indonesia

Abu Bakar Bashir: Indonesia to release suspected Bali bombings mastermind

Bashir was jailed in 2011 for his links to militant training camps in Aceh province



Indonesian radical Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir enters a courtroom in 2016. Photograph: Darren Whiteside/Reuters

Indonesian radical Muslim cleric Abu Bakar Bashir enters a courtroom in 2016. Photograph: Darren Whiteside/Reuters

Reuters

Mon 4 Jan 2021 17.49 EST

Indonesia will release radical cleric and alleged mastermind of the 2002 Bali bombings Abu Bakar Bashir from prison later this week, the government said on Monday, upon completion of his jail term.

Bashir, 82, who was among Indonesia's most notorious extremists, is considered the spiritual leader of the al Qaeda-linked Jemaah Islamiah (JI)

network. He was jailed in 2011 for his links to militant training camps in Aceh province.

Bashir will be released on Friday “in accordance with the expiration date and the end of his term,” Rika Aprianti, spokeswoman of the corrections directorate general at the law and human rights ministry, said in a statement.

[Australia opposes clemency for Indonesia's radical cleric Abu Bakar Bashir](#)
[Read more](#)

Jemaah Islamiah is accused of plotting several big attacks in Indonesia and includes operatives trained in Afghanistan, Pakistan and the southern Philippines.

Its members are accused of orchestrating the 2002 bombings of [Bali](#) nightclubs, which killed more than 200 people, among them scores of Australians, and an attack on the JW Marriott hotel in Jakarta that killed 12 people a year later.

A senior JI operative believed to have made bombs for both attacks, Zulkarnaen, was among 23 suspected militants arrested last month.

Bashir denied any involvement in the Bali bombings. A lawyer for Bashir did not immediately respond to Reuters' request for comment on his upcoming release.

Security analyst Ridlwan Habib said that though Bashir's stature has weakened, extremists may try to associate their activities with him to gain traction and boost their credibility.

“Bashir is a senior figure in Indonesia’s jihadist movement, and it’s not impossible that his big name could be used,” he said

While seeking reelection, President Joko Widodo in January 2019 had considered an early release for Bashir on health grounds, but scrapped the plan after Bashir reportedly [declined to pledge allegiance](#) to the Indonesian state.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Netherlands

Netherlands and Germany refuse entry to UK nationals for non-essential travel

Thirteen people barred since Brexit because UK no longer exempt from EU Covid-related travel restrictions

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Jon Henley](#) Europe correspondent and [Philip Oltermann](#) in Berlin

Mon 4 Jan 2021 12.53 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 07.12 EST



Coronavirus testing at Amsterdam Schiphol airport. Photograph: Robin van Lonkhuijsen/EPA

More than a dozen UK nationals have been refused entry to the [Netherlands](#) since 1 January because Britain is no longer exempt from Covid-related restrictions on non-essential travel from outside the EU since it left the bloc.

A Dutch border force spokesman confirmed on Monday that up to 13 British citizens had been turned away at Amsterdam's Schiphol airport since Friday because their trips were not necessary and third-country coronavirus regulations now applied.

The news came after British citizens living in Spain were [barred from boarding flights](#) in the UK because the airline said their pre-Brexit residency papers were declared no longer valid, while others were refused entry to Germany.

There were also reports of passengers turned away from KLM flights from UK airports to the Netherlands because they did not have a negative test, their journey did not qualify as essential, or they could not show proof of Dutch or EU residency.

Only a handful of countries with low coronavirus rates are exempt from EU rules barring non-essential visitors from outside the bloc and European Economic Area. The UK was removed from the list at the end of the [Brexit](#) transition period.

"They all had a negative PCR test, but they forgot the basic rule that it must be a necessary trip, for example for work or due to serious personal circumstances," gendarmerie spokesman Robert van Kapel [told the NOS public broadcaster](#).

"People from safe countries are allowed to pass, but the UK is certainly not a safe country right now," Van Kapel said. He added that some of the travellers "only wanted to visit Amsterdam", while one man was planning to fly from Schiphol to Spain for a skiing holiday. "That's just not the intention now," Van Kapel said.

[Cases](#)

EU member states agreed in October to adopt a European council proposal to allow non-essential travel from a small group of countries with lower levels of Covid infections, including Australia, New Zealand, Singapore and South Korea.

European nationals and British citizens living in the EU can still travel from the UK to the bloc with a recent negative test and proof of residence, while EU member states can in theory override the European council recommendations should they wish to.

Few have, however, meaning that as long as the restrictions remain in place, British nationals can now only enter the bloc in certain cases, mainly for urgent family reasons, study, or work – including aid workers, care workers, diplomats, healthcare professionals, military personnel and transport workers.

Since the end of the Brexit transition period at midnight central European time on 31 December, passengers from Britain who have a valid reason to travel to the EU must in any case also have at least six months left on their passport.

They can no longer use EU fast-track passport control and customs lanes, and should be prepared to show a return ticket, provide evidence that they have enough money for your stay, and have their passport stamped.

On Sunday eight Britons living in Spain were turned away from a BA/Iberia flight to Madrid. The airline refused to accept their green cards as proof of residence despite assurances by the British and Spanish governments that the old foreign national identification (NIE) document and the new foreign ID card (TIE) were valid.

A small number of British citizens were also barred from entry into Germany. A Lufthansa spokesman said the airline was aware of a British citizen being stopped from boarding a flight in the UK after failing to prove their residence in Germany.

[Victoria Dobbie tweeted on Sunday](#) that she was stopped from boarding a flight to Munich after Lufthansa rejected her rental contract, work contract and her German tax number as adequate proof of residence.

Britons resident in Germany are not expected to receive new types of residence documents confirming their status for several months and

Germany's federal police have said border staff would also accept rental or work contracts as proof.

There are concerns, however, that ground staff at airports are not qualified to assess the validity of documents and could demand proof residents are not legally required to present. British in Germany, a campaign group, has written to the German embassy in London to express their concern.

A spokesperson for the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said UK nationals who are resident in the EU and hold a residence permit, a certificate of application, or a document identifying them as a frontier worker should not be subject to Covid-19-specific EU travel restrictions.

“They will not need a visa, should not have their passport stamped or be subject to routine intentions questioning, or be required to prove sufficient means of subsistence at the Schengen border,” said the spokesperson. “However, member states may require them to self-isolate or similar on arrival, provided they also require the same of their own nationals.”

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[France](#)

British ex-soldier and 12 others on trial over kidnap of French millionaire

Jacqueline Veyrac, 80-year-old owner of Cannes hotel, was found bound and gagged in car in 2016



Jacqueline Veyrac was kidnapped close to her home in Cannes in October 2016. Photograph: Valéry Hache/AFP/Getty Images

Jacqueline Veyrac was kidnapped close to her home in Cannes in October 2016. Photograph: Valéry Hache/AFP/Getty Images

[Kim Willsher](#) in Paris

Mon 4 Jan 2021 09.55 EST

A former British soldier has gone on trial with 12 others in [France](#) accused of kidnapping a wealthy hotel heiress.

Jacqueline Veyrac, 80, the owner of the five-star Grand Hotel in Cannes, was snatched from the street near her home in October 2016.

She was found two days later having been held bound and gagged for 48 hours in the back of a Renault Kangoo, where she had been forced to sleep on a filthy mattress.

Veyrac, who also owns La Reserve restaurant in Nice, had been the victim of another kidnap attempt three years previously.

The main suspect is Giuseppe Serena, the former manager of La Reserve. Prosecutors claim he held a bitter grudge against Veyrac after she terminated his contract in 2009. He is accused of organising and ordering her abduction in order to extract a ransom with which he would open a new restaurant.

Serena, 67, is also accused of masterminding a failed 2013 kidnap attempt. He is charged with “complicity in kidnapping and attempted extortion as part of a gang” but denies involvement in either plot to snatch the rich hotel owner.

The former British soldier Philip Dutton, 52, is also in the dock accused of involvement in the kidnapping and the 2013 plot. He allegedly intended to demand a 5m euro ransom, intending to keep 10 per cent according to investigators, but was reportedly unable to contact the Veyrac family.

All 13 accused were present in the courtroom at the trial’s opening. Veyrac was expected to attend on Thursday when she is due to testify.

On Monday 24 October 2016, two masked men ambushed Veyrac as she was about to get into her SUV and bundled her into a stolen van. One of the kidnappers allegedly threatened to kill her if she made any noise and she told police she was forced to drink a sedative.

While the van was parked and the kidnappers absent, Veyrac repeatedly kicked the inside of the vehicle, alerting a passerby who rescued her and alerted the police.

Detectives later said Veyrac had behaved heroically by trying to escape her captors several times and refusing the food they offered.

Among the other defendants is the former paparazzo turned private detective Luc Goursolas, 50, known as Tintin, who is accused of fitting a tracking

device to Veyrac's car. He has admitted placing a device but said he knew nothing of the kidnap plan.

The Nice public prosecutor Jean-Michel Prêtre, speaking in 2016, said the kidnapping had been "particularly violent" and that Veyrac had been restrained with plastic cuffs to her ankles and wrists, and had at one point been blindfolded and gagged.

When Veyrac had tried to escape "she was threatened with further violence and her restraints were tightened", he added. "When she was found, she had injuries where she had been tied caused by her trying to free herself ... she suffered a very real ordeal."

Dutton, from Liverpool, told his lawyer he had served in the special forces in the British military and had suffered serious burns in a mine explosion in Afghanistan in 2011. He said he was homeless in Nice and had been sleeping on the beach, where he had met one of the other suspects.

The Grand Hotel on Cannes' celebrated Croisette is popular with celebrities attending the annual film festival and other VIP visitors to the Côte d'Azur.

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Italy

Italian government under pressure over economic recovery plan

Prime minister to meet with coalition party leaders as Italia Viva threatens to quit in dispute over Covid-19 fund



The Italian prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, speaks at a press conference in Rome on 30 December. Photograph: Xinhua/Rex/Shutterstock

The Italian prime minister, Giuseppe Conte, speaks at a press conference in Rome on 30 December. Photograph: Xinhua/Rex/Shutterstock

[Angela Giuffrida](#) in Rome

Mon 4 Jan 2021 09.27 EST

The fate of the Italian government hangs in the balance this week amid a confrontation between the prime minister, [Giuseppe Conte](#), and his coalition ally and former prime minister, Matteo Renzi.

Renzi has repeatedly threatened to pull his small Italia Viva party from the ruling majority unless the government changes tack on how to reboot Italy's fragile economy. Renzi has also called for Conte to relinquish his control

over the secret services and for the government to speed up the distribution of Covid-19 vaccinations.

Conte has so far resisted the pressure, saying last week he was ready to confront Renzi in parliament. However, Conte is reportedly organising a meeting between party leaders, either on Monday or Tuesday, to discuss a possible government reshuffle. The crucial day is 7 January, when Conte will seek support from ministers for the economic recovery plan, which could lead Italia Viva to abandon the coalition and prompt a government crisis.

Renzi, who was prime minister from 2014-16, in effect orchestrated the [Conte-led coalition](#) between the centre-left Democratic party (PD) and Five Star Movement (M5S), after [the collapse of the coalition government of M5S and Matteo Salvini's far-right League](#) in August 2019. Renzi [then left the PD](#) and established Italia Viva, which has two government ministers and attracts about 3% of voters in polls.

He told Corriere della Sera on Monday his ministers were not in government out of “vainglory” but because they had ideas.

[Relatives of Italian Covid victims to file lawsuit against leading politicians](#)
[Read more](#)

“If these ideas are not liked, then we are not like the others – we will leave our [government] seats,” he said. “I understand that in times of populism this sounds extravagant, but you can do politics even without institutional positions.”

Renzi added that it was up to Conte to decide whether the party’s ideas on vaccines, the economy, schools and culture were “noteworthy or not”.

Renzi’s main sticking point is the EU’s recovery fund, of which Italy is set to receive €209bn – the largest share among member states. He fears the opportunity will be squandered.

“I’m in favour of spending it all and spending it well,” he told Il Sole 24 Ore last week. “But if someone wants to spend it badly, they can do so without

us.”

Conte is also facing a challenge from the opposition, with the far-right Brothers of Italy organising a petition calling for a vote of confidence in the government that was signed by 100,000 Italians within a few hours. Brothers of Italy, which participates in elections with the League and Silvio Berlusconi’s Forza Italia, is the only party to have significantly grown in popularity over the last year. If a national ballot were held any time soon, then the trio could win more than 50% of the vote.

With this in mind, and with the country still in the middle of the coronavirus pandemic, experts say Renzi’s manoeuvres are unlikely to lead to new elections. Conte also enjoys a high level of support among Italians in polls.

“I think Renzi wants to create is a reshuffle, to show that he has an independent voice that can produce change,” said Franco Pavoncello, a political science professor and president of John Cabot University in Rome. “He has a small presence in parliament and when you are in a situation of relative weakness, you need to stir things up.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/italian-coalition-government-pressure-covid-economic-recovery-plan-giuseppe-conte-matteo-renzi>

[Qatar](#)

Saudi Arabia set to end three-year feud by reopening borders with Qatar

Land border has been closed since mid-2017 after Qatar was accused of supporting Islamist groups



A giant image of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, adorns a tower in the state's capital, Doha. Photograph: Kamran Jebreili/AP

A giant image of the Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, adorns a tower in the state's capital, Doha. Photograph: Kamran Jebreili/AP

[Julian Borger](#) and agencies

Mon 4 Jan 2021 16.30 EST

Saudi Arabia will reopen its land and sea borders with Qatar, in the first steps toward [ending a diplomatic crisis](#) that has deeply divided regional US allies since 2017.

Kuwait's foreign ministry announced the move on Monday, as part of a deal towards resolving a [political dispute](#) that led Riyadh and its allies to impose a boycott on Qatar.

The state-run Kuwait news agency reported the announcement, saying [Saudi Arabia](#) would open its borders with Qatar from Monday evening. According to several reports, Qatar will, in return, drop its lawsuits against Riyadh and its allies, as part of a broader agreement to defuse tensions, due to be signed on Tuesday.

Qatar's only land border has been [mostly closed since mid-2017](#), when Saudi Arabia, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain launched a blockade against the tiny Gulf state, accusing it of supporting Islamist groups in the region and of having warm ties with Iran. Kuwait has been mediating between Qatar and the four Arab states.

The lifting of the embargo by Saudi Arabia paves the way for Qatar's ruler to attend a summit of Gulf leaders on Tuesday that will be held in the kingdom's desert city of Al-Ula and chaired by the Saudi monarch, King Salman.

The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) summit will be “inclusive”, leading the states towards “reunification and solidarity in facing the challenges of our region”, Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was quoted as saying in remarks carried by the Saudi state-run news agency.

The foreign minister for the [United Arab Emirates](#), Anwar Gargash, said he welcomed “a return to GCC unity at tomorrow’s summit”.

The decision by the close US allies comes in the final days of the Trump administration’s time in office, and just ahead of president-elect Joe Biden’s swearing-in. Bader al-Saif, assistant history professor at [Kuwait](#) University, suggested that the Trump team was claiming disproportionate credit for ending the standoff.

“Quite astounding how the current US admin is trying to milk “achievements” out of the region before it departs, whether in its push for normalization agreements or now claiming the current breakthrough,” Saif [said on Twitter](#), adding that, though the Trump administration “played a role alongside Kuwait”, it had also been “part of the problem”.

Many Gulf experts have argued that Donald Trump and his son-in-law Jared Kushner's personal support for the Saudi crown prince emboldened Riyadh to attempt its stranglehold on Qatar four years ago. Karen Young, resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute and a scholar on the political economy of the Gulf, argued that "the breakthrough likely has more to do with a changed reality in Washington and Saudi need for recalibration; as well as changed fiscal reality of GCC states."

Young said that Qatar was needed in the GCC "tent" but pointed out that the Gulf rivals' broader visions for the region were still at odds.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

California

Inflatable costume may have caused Covid outbreak at California hospital

Dozens of health workers have tested positive and one has died since staffer wore fan-powered outfit



The Kaiser Permanente San Jose medical center in northern California, where at least 44 emergency department staffers recently tested positive for Covid. Photograph: Anda Chu/AP

The Kaiser Permanente San Jose medical center in northern California, where at least 44 emergency department staffers recently tested positive for Covid. Photograph: Anda Chu/AP

[Vivian Ho](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 15.44 EST

An inflatable costume worn on Christmas to cheer up patients is being investigated as the possible cause of a coronavirus outbreak – and at least one virus-related fatality – in a hospital in northern [California](#).

At least 44 emergency department staff members at the Kaiser Permanente San Jose medical center tested positive for the virus between 27 December and 3 January, according to a statement from the hospital. One emergency department employee who had been working on Christmas “has passed away as a result of Covid-19 complications”.

The hospital is looking into whether the fan on an “air-powered” costume could have spread droplets. A staff member had briefly donned the costume in the emergency department on Christmas Day.

“Any exposure, if it occurred, would have been completely innocent, and quite accidental, as the individual had no Covid symptoms and only sought to lift the spirits of those around them during what is a very stressful time,” the hospital said. “If anything, this should serve as a very real reminder that the virus is widespread, and often without symptoms, and we must all be vigilant.”

[California reaches 25,000 coronavirus deaths during deadliest month yet](#)

[Read more](#)

Santa Clara county, home to San Jose, has just 27 intensive care unit (ICU) beds remaining for all of its 1.9 million residents. Like the rest of the state, the region has seen its hospitals stretched thin in the recent surge. Marco Randazzo, a Santa Clara emergency room doctor, said on 31 December that some hospitals in the region were forced to care for ICU patients in the emergency department because their ICU departments were full. “Oftentimes the only way we can move a patient to the ICU is when a Covid patient has died,” Randazzo said at a press briefing.

The emergency department at the Kaiser Permanente San Jose medical center is undergoing a deep cleaning, the hospital said, and officials were moving quickly to test all emergency department employees and physicians. None of the staff members who tested positive would return to work.

Some employees at the emergency department had received a Covid-19 vaccine just days before the incident. They had not had their second shot before they were infected.

“During this period, even as vaccine is beginning to be provided in our communities, it is crucial that everyone continue to protect themselves and each other by continuing to use masks, hand washing, avoid gatherings, and practice social distancing,” the hospital said.

Statewide, California has reported more than 2.4m coronavirus cases, with 26,635 people dead.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.05 - Climate crisis

- [New-sprung The project turning PPE offcuts into Covid patient mattresses](#)
- [Indonesia Bali's beaches buried in tide of plastic rubbish during monsoon season](#)

Global development

New-sprung: the project turning PPE offcuts into Covid patient mattresses

Cheap, hygienic and sustainable, the mattresses made by Indian fashion designer Lakshmi Menon also generate income for rural women

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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[Amrit Dhillon](#) in New Delhi

Mon 4 Jan 2021 05.46 EST Last modified on Mon 4 Jan 2021 05.49 EST



Lakshmi Menon with her mattresses made of scraps left over from PPE manufacture: ‘It was the best material I could have wished for.’ Photograph: Courtesy of Lakshmi Menon

At the height of the pandemic in the Indian state of Kerala, fashion designer Lakshmi Menon, 46, heard that every new Covid care centre had to have 50 beds. Mattresses were in short supply. Every time a patient was discharged, the mattress had to be incinerated. “I thought: that’s a lot of mattresses and a lot of burning,” says Menon.

Menon’s solution was to collect the mountains of plastic pieces from factories that make PPE – all the little bits left over after cutting. Women then braid the bits into rope-like plaits 6ft long. The braids are laid out in a zigzag and the ends tied together. The result is a light, soft, washable, hygienic mattress for just 300 rupees (£3) – half the price of a normal one.

The women of Arayankav near Kochi, where Menon lives on a rubber plantation, get jobs, the environment is protected and Covid clinics get mattresses – “*shayya*” in Sanskrit.



Women in Kerala plait scraps into mattresses. Photograph: Courtesy of Lakshmi Menon

The idea of using waste scraps came to her when she was driving to Kochi in February and saw children sleeping on the road. A few days later, she visited a friend who runs a fashion house and saw heaps of waste fabric of different sizes.

“That’s when I thought I could use braiding to make mattresses for the homeless. Braiding allows you to use every single bit of fabric of different sizes. Even the tiniest bit can be incorporated and everyone knows how to tie a plait,” she says.

In March, she made 20 mattresses and handed them out to homeless families. Then lockdown happened. Her friends in [design and fashion lost business overnight](#). Workers were laid off and things looked grim.

Menon forgot about the fabric mattresses, until she went to a friend’s tailoring unit in July and saw that he had started making PPE. In the corner lay a mountain of plastic pieces. Menon’s eyes gleamed.

“I picked them up and found they were cleaner, softer and more dust-free than fabric scraps. It was the best material I could have wished for,” she says.

Her friend was delighted when Menon took the scrap pieces. He had been struggling with how to dispose of them because burning was out of the question.

At the same time Kerala, overwhelmed by the pandemic, ordered the setting up of 50-bed Covid centres across the state and village councils scrambled to find enough mattresses.

Apart from the Covid centres that have bought them, Menon is working with NGOs to provide *shayyas* to homeless shelters and rough sleepers on the principle that “everyone deserves a good night’s sleep”. India’s 1.7 million homeless people normally sleep on the ground, usually on a thin mat.

Students in India who are part of [Enactus](#), the international not-for-profit organisation set up by accountancy firm KPMG, are working on making the mattress widely available.

“We also feel that yoga centres might be interested in buying them as they are soft and light and easily rolled up,” says Ishartek Pabla, operations head of Enactus at Shaheed Sukhdev College of Business Studies.



Stdudents at a Kerala school making mattresses for the local Covid care centre. Photograph: Courtesy of Lakshmi Menon

Menon is unlikely to meet a shortage of raw material. [India](#) has become the world's second-largest PPE manufacturer, with more than 1,000 manufacturers producing 4.5m pieces a day, the country's textile ministry announced this week.

Menon's *shayya* has been taken up by UN staff who will include it in a list of Covid innovative ideas that can be easily replicated.

Several Indian corporations have also contacted her. "These big companies have to fulfil their corporate social responsibility objectives and the mattress provides a good way of proving income for rural women in a sustainable way with no need for any equipment. Nothing really. Just a bit of space," says Menon.

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Indonesia

Bali's beaches buried in tide of plastic rubbish during monsoon season

Tourist drawcards Kuta and Legian beaches are being overwhelmed by up to 60 tonnes of plastic rubbish every day

Play Video

0:42

Bali's famous beaches covered in plastic garbage – video

Bali's famous beaches are being strewn by plastic rubbish in what experts say is becoming an annual event thanks to monsoon weather, poor waste management and a global marine pollution crisis.

Authorities are struggling to keep up with the tide of rubbish washing up on beaches at Kuta, Legian and Seminyak, where about 90 tonnes of rubbish was collected on Friday and Saturday.

Wayan Puja, from the Badung area's environment and sanitation agency, said: "We have been working really hard to clean up the beaches, however the trash keeps coming. Every day we deploy our personnel, trucks and loaders."

He said more than 30 tonnes of rubbish was removed on Friday from beaches in Kuta, Legian and Seminyak and the amount doubled to 60 tonnes on Saturday.

The Indonesian government launched a national strategy in April 2020 to combat the "looming crisis" of plastic waste that was affecting the country's marine environment and economy.

Dr Denise Hardesty, a principal research scientist at Australia's CSIRO science agency and an expert on global plastic pollution, said there was a "tremendous amount" of plastic currently being collected from the beaches and it was getting worse each year.

“It’s not new and it’s not surprising and it happens every year, and it’s been growing over the last decade,” said Dr Denise Hardesty, a principal research scientist at Australia’s CSIRO science agency and an expert on global plastic pollution.

Hardesty has worked with marine pollution researchers in Indonesia and is one of the experts working with the [Indonesia](#) government on its action plan.

The rubbish had likely not travelled far, she said, and there would be many other beaches on the Indonesian archipelago suffering a similar fate.

Bali’s beaches in the southwest tended to catch rubbish when monsoonal rains and winds blow each year from west to east.

But Hardesty said the increasing amount of plastic washing up was in line with the global rise in the production of plastic.

Beaches around the globe were seeing an increase in waste, “but in monsoonal countries we do find a much stronger seasonal affect.”

Hardesty said community groups and individuals were becoming more active in trying to cut the use of plastics and there was a suite of approaches being used to tackle the problem.

CSIRO was also hoping to roll out a new method in Indonesia that uses remote cameras and [artificial intelligence to track litter and identify hot spots](#).



A surfer stands before mounds of garbage on Bali's famous Kuta Beach
Photograph: Komang Erviani/AAP

Dr Gede Hendrawan, the head of the centre for remote sensing and ocean sciences at Bali's Udayana University, said a major problem was Indonesia's ineffective rubbish handling systems.

"The biggest problem is actually the trash handling hasn't been effective in Indonesia. [Bali](#) has just started to reorganise it, also Java has just started," he said.

Bali's governor, Wayan Koster, urged serious action to clean up the beaches which are a huge tourist drawcard.

More than a million Australians visit Bali every year, and the island is also popular with Chinese visitors.

"The Badung administration should have a trash handling system at Kuta Beach that is complete with adequate equipment and human resources so they can work quickly to clean up the trash washed onto the beach," the governor said.

"Moreover, in the rainy season when there are tourists visiting, the trash handling systems should be working 24 hours a day. Don't wait for

tomorrow.”

Thousands of tourists would normally be in Bali at this time of year, but the coronavirus pandemic has halted overseas travel and there are few visitors.

Indonesia has also closed its borders to all foreign arrivals for two weeks from 1 January in a bid to halt the spread of the new strains of Covid-19.

Bali’s economy has been hit hard by the pandemic which has decimated its tourist industry with only domestic arrivals.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/balis-beaches-buried-in-tide-of-plastic-rubbish-as-monsoon>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.05 - Culture

- Book of the day In the Land of the Cyclops by Karl Ove Knausgaard review – anaemic essays
- TV tonight More Gregg Wallace than you can possibly handle
- History of Swear Words review Nicolas Cage curses through shallow Netflix series
- Graphic novels Paul at Home by Michel Rabagliati review – sweet sorrows
- Costa book awards Lee Lawrence's memoir of his mother's shooting by police wins prize
- Gerry Marsden How You'll Never Walk Alone came to define Liverpool FC's spirit

Book of the dayKarl Ove Knausgård

In the Land of the Cyclops by Karl Ove Knausgaard review – anaemic essays

With a few exceptions, the acclaimed Norwegian novelist's musings on literature, philosophy and the cosmos too often drift into abstraction



Karl Ove Knausgaard: diehards will appreciate his childhood reminiscences.

Photograph: Federico Gambarini/dpa/AFP via Getty

Karl Ove Knausgaard: diehards will appreciate his childhood reminiscences.

Photograph: Federico Gambarini/dpa/AFP via Getty

[Rob Doyle](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

The essay collection is having a moment. Weariness with the 20th-century novel's puppet-show contrivances – to which Karl Ove Knausgaard's *My Struggle* series was itself a response – has incited new interest in a hitherto marginal genre. Many are having a go at it, fewer are doing it well. Knausgaard's new collection, which covers literature, contemporary art,

photography, nature writing and loose cosmic musings, does not show him to be a first-rate practitioner of the form.

In the Land of the Cyclops heightens the suspicion that Knausgaard fulfilled his authorial project with the completion of his six-part autofictional epic in 2011. Everything since then has had the feel of an addendum or miscellany – not least his 400-page collaborative book of emails about football, [Home and Away](#). The Seasons Quartet, in which glum Knausgaard considered a different concept or object each day (Pain, Buttons, Labia), left the impression that his worldwide acclaim had, as we say in Ireland, given him notions. Indulged as a wide-eyed sanctifier of the commonplace, at times he resembled the laughable writer in Martin Amis's novel *The Information*, who, beneficiary of sudden success, takes to gazing performatively at apples and stones, the better to project the childlike wonder befitting a literary sage.

With no recollected or imagined world to earth his perceptions, his thoughts spool out untethered and inconsequential

A lengthy review here of Michel Houellebecq's novel [Submission](#) opens with a plodding explanation of why Knausgaard has never before read the author, and labours on under the presumption that we are as interested in the underqualified reviewer as we are in his subject. He's better on *Madame Bovary*, and on much surer footing in a long essay on his compatriot [Knut Hamsun](#)'s “dirty modernism”. A piece about reading Kierkegaard in Beirut also begins with an admission that Knausgaard is a newcomer to the Danish philosopher (presumably a commissioning editor liked the symmetrical headline possibilities – *Knausgaard on Kierkegaard*). He has little to say on Kierkegaard's thoughts that can't easily be found elsewhere – and none of it is as lively as an excruciating anecdote about his reading a passage from *My Struggle* in which he slashes his face to impress a woman to a war-shocked Middle Eastern festival audience.

It's a reminder that *My Struggle*'s best episodes worked on the level of scandal and salaciousness – a several-thousand-page slab of Nordic reality TV in gossipy, oversharing prose. Knausgaard *can* be engaging on art and photography (subjects include [Cindy Sherman](#), [Anselm Kiefer](#), [Francesca Woodman](#)), but as a novelist turned philosopher-critic, he often reads as an Aristotelian particularist trying to be a universalising Plato. Whenever he

looks up from the concrete, sensuous and personal, he drifts into watery abstraction. His essays are wide ranging in the sense that they tend to cover too much ground. One, *Idiots of the Cosmos*, skips between identity politics, *War and Peace*, Pascal's horror of the infinite, the northern lights and much else besides, but none of it really sticks. With no recollected or imagined world (of childhood, adolescence, manhood) to earth his perceptions, his thoughts spool out, untethered and inconsequential. At his worst, Knausgaard the essayist is a monological bore.

[Karl Ove Knausgaard: ‘Writing is a way of getting rid of shame’](#)

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An exception is the pugnacious title piece. It reads like an allegory of cancel culture, until you realise he's talking about Sweden. Knausgaard's adopted home seems to be at the vanguard of punitive, curtain-twitching philistinism. With wary indignation he details how the national press have slandered him as a paedophile, a misogynist and a Nazi, and compared him to [Anders Breivik](#). "So what was my crime? I wrote a novel." He rehearses commonsensical positions that now require defending even beyond priggish Scandinavia: art should convey the messily actual and not just the ideal; fictive description does not entail the act of condoning, and so on. Clearly, this stuff really rankles: in *Home and Away* he also tore into the intolerance and self-righteousness of Swedish liberals (it was the feminist youth leagues who were having a go at him in that instance).

The Knausgaard diehard will appreciate the reminiscences of childhood journeys and youthful misadventures, even if some of these are recycled. He retells a prophetic dream that was central to [Some Rain Must Fall](#), the darkly riveting fifth volume in *My Struggle*, as well as the shattering event the dream augured: a malicious false rape accusation. But here we discern the core weakness of *In the Land of the Cyclops*: the first time round, Knausgaard locked us inside the breathless first-person cockpit of his autofiction; here, the dream and the horror it prophesied are bookends to lengthy, under-controlled and largely bloodless musings on literature, schizophrenia, Dante, [Tycho Brahe](#) and the Icelandic sagas. "I hate myself," Knausgaard announces unbidden in a diaristic piece titled *At the Bottom of the Universe*. I never hated him, but I did find myself hoping he'd take a hint

and let me usher him out of the door, so I could collapse into my armchair, knackered.

- Rob Doyle's latest book is [Threshold](#) (Bloomsbury)
 - *In the Land of the Cyclops* by Karl Ove Knausgaard (translated by Martin Aitken) is published by Harvill Secker (£20). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](#). Delivery charges may apply
-

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[TV tonight](#)[Documentary](#)

TV tonight: more Gregg Wallace than you can possibly handle

The veg salesman turned everyman presenter tours South Africa on ITV then visits a Leicester sock factory on BBC Two. Here's what to watch this evening



Leopard spotting ... Gregg Wallace and Dr Will Fowlds. Photograph: ITV

Leopard spotting ... Gregg Wallace and Dr Will Fowlds. Photograph: ITV

[Ammar Kalia](#), [Phil Harrison](#), [Ellen E Jones](#), [Graeme Virtue](#) and [Paul Howlett](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.20 EST

South Africa With Gregg Wallace

7.30pm, ITV

Gregg Wallace has escaped the MasterChef kitchen for a jaunt around South Africa in this new six-part food-themed travelogue. Wallace brings his brash

narration to the stunning safari landscapes of the Amakhala game reserve in this opening instalment of his 3,000-mile journey. Here, Wallace stares agog at warthogs and giraffes before snacking on some beef biltong and sampling the open-fire stew potjiekos. He then heads out with Dr Will Fowlds to track a leopard. **Ammar Kalia**

Inside the Factory

8pm, BBC Two

Yet more from Wallace. He explores the crazy world of sock manufacture this week, visiting a factory in Leicester whose methods seem to owe more than a little to Wallace and Gromit. Cherry Healey, meanwhile, has drawn the short straw, investigating smelly feet and what can be done about them.

Phil Harrison

Who Wants to Be a Millionaire: A Very Major Scandal

8pm, ITV

This mini-series looking back at famous wins on the high-drama quiz show culminates – how else? – with the scandal of Charles “The Coughing Major” Ingram. [It was creditably dramatised by ITV last year](#), but how will the recollections of the real Tarrant differ? **Ellen E Jones**

How to Lose Weight Well

8pm, Channel 4



Following the science ... Dr Helen Lawal and Dr Javid Abdelmoneim.
Photograph: Channel 4

Dr Helen Lawal and Dr Javid Abdelmoneim return with their series debunking fad diets in favour of science. Tonight, sisters Lesley and Debra from Essex test diets followed by the celebrities Adele and Rebel Wilson: Lesley tries the slow-eating [Mayr Method](#), while Debra is on the citrus-heavy Sirtfood diet. **AK**

Cheetah Family and Me

9pm, BBC Two

The wildlife cameraman Gordon Buchanan is in South Africa's Tswalu Kalahari reserve for this two-part series investigating the threats faced by the world's fastest land animal. He begins by tracking a mother cheetah, Savannah, and discovers how the Kalahari's recent drought has made survival difficult. **AK**

Ben Fogle: New Lives in the Wild

9pm, Channel 5

The series in which Ben Fogle embeds with people living off the grid returns for a ninth season. On a Welsh mountainside, the Watkinson family are attempting to self-sustain on a 1.6-hectare (four-acre) plot full of salvage, wild flora and a biodigester called Biff. It looks demanding, but Fogle mucks in. **Graeme Virtue**

Film choice



Two's company ... Bill Murray and Jaeden Lieberher in *St Vincent*.
Photograph: Allstar

St Vincent (Theodore Melfi, 2014), 12.55am, Channel 4

Bill Murray playing a cantankerous drunk, but secretly harbouring a big, soft heart? What a surprise. Comfortably familiar though the setup is, Murray and Jaeden Lieberher, playing the 12-year-old he grudgingly agrees to babysit, create a plausible and charming bond. **Paul Howlett**

Live sport

Cricket: Melbourne Renegades v Adelaide Strikers 8am, BT Sport 1. Big Bash League from Adelaide Oval.

Cricket: South Africa v Sri Lanka 8am, Sky Sports Main Event. Third day of the second Test in the series.

EFL Cup football 7pm, Sky Sports Main Event. Spurs welcome Brentford in the first semi-final.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[US television](#)

History of Swear Words review – Nicolas Cage curses through shallow Netflix series

The divisive actor teaches us a filthy lesson in a throwaway series that boasts some funny moments yet not quite enough for it to seem worthwhile



Nicolas Cage in History of Swear Words. Photograph: Adam Rose/Netflix

Nicolas Cage in History of Swear Words. Photograph: Adam Rose/Netflix

[Charles Bramesco](#)

[@intothecrevasse](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 03.19 EST

There's really no public speaker more captivating than [Nicolas Cage](#), either the maligned genius or inspired fool of the acting world, depending on who you ask. Part of it can be explained, what with his speech patterns so thrillingly unpredictable, emphases placed on syllables no one would have ever thought to punch like a drunken boxer. But part of it feels more mystical, owed to the shamanic magnetism making his straight-to-video

action potboilers so strangely engrossing. He casts a spell with even the most mundane sentences, and can turn a four-letter outcry howled to the heavens into an obscene aria. If you're going to make a miniseries about the complex phenomenon of curse words, both their dignified academic history and their forbidden juvenile lure, you be hard-pressed to find a better host than the Cage.

[Will Nicolas Cage's Superman finally get to fly in The Flash?](#)

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He brings more gravitas to the proceedings than this broad, slight project could have hoped for. His infrequent appearances, mostly kept to intros or outros with the occasional check-in for some gamely delivered narration from a plush living room set, perk up the six 20-minute installments that can otherwise read as inessential and uneven. These exegeses on the origins and evolving significance of English language's naughtiest words can be amusing and they can be edifying, but only in fits and starts that come too sparsely for a run time this compact. Mostly, the attempts at comedy or academic rigor split an unkind distance – not quite as informative as an actual article, not quite as funny as an actual standup routine.

Each episode takes an all-angles look at an array of profanities, the lightly irreverent tone precluding the inclusion of racial slurs or other button-pushers. They're more oriented around the simple and immediate pleasures of foulmouthery: cathartic lung-topping screams of "fuck", utterances of "shit" through a devilish grin, dozens upon dozens of creative genital euphemisms. A baseline appreciation for the inherent humor of cussing will make the handful of minimally witty animated skits illustrating the various etymologies go down much easier. Lacking that, these interludes will scan more as rightly cut segments from Drunk History, not nearly as clever about the mixing of stiff-lipped antiquity with modern dirtiness. The average wit level tops out at schoolyard, typified by jokes that end with the teller's mouth full of soap.

The laughs are best left to the professionals. The producers and Netflix's talent department have rounded up a who's who of the saltiest comics working today for commentary and personal perspectives. Such renowned pottymouths as Sarah Silverman and Nikki Glaser wax rhapsodical on the

versatility and visceral thrill of a well-deployed C-word, while Joel Kim Booster and Patti Harrison pop in to familiarize squarer audiences with the gay and trans communities' reappropriation of derogatory hate speech. (Watching Harrison try to maintain a diplomatic professionalism while explaining her distaste for the gender-essentialist liberalism of the pussy hat movement ranks among the series' most delectable moments.) Those viewers somehow still unaware that many women and gay men have largely stripped "bitch" of its power by using it to refer to each other will be stunned, having taken the first step on a long overdue journey of enlightenment.

The open-endedness of the topics allows for plenty of tangents, where we find much of the best material. There's time enough for some musings on the absurd and arbitrary rating system of the Motion Picture Association of America (with not one, but two explanations of what the Hays Code is), the powder-keg provocation of Fuck Tha Police and the unlikely congressional campaign of one Dick Swett. Character actor Isiah Whitlock Jr stops by for a tribute to the expletive he has made his own, culminating in his illustrious career's longest "sheeeeeit!" ever. The general vibe of loose informality makes any overtures towards the scientific seem tedious and unnecessary, as in an overlong sequence dubiously "testing" the efficacy of swearing to diminish pain. Kicking back and talking some literal shit should be enough.

And yet this premise lacks the basic heft required to anchor a miniseries, instead leaving the impression of a collection of lengthy YouTube videos. Its existence appears to be motivated by little more than its potential to attract clicks, in keeping with Netflix's reputation as a place where anything capable of holding a human attention span for longer than two minutes will get a green light. The saving grace dispelling the aura of disposability is Cage, the sheer magnitude of his screen presence lending the whole operation a higher credibility. He's living proof that there's a lyrical poetry to the unsubtle art of cursing, and that that primal magic isn't so simply conjured. Repeated enough times, the many "fuck"s turn into noise.

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- History of Swear Words is now available on Netflix

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Graphic novel of the month Comics and graphic novels

Paul at Home by Michel Rabagliati review – sweet sorrows

In this latest instalment of the melancholy Paul series, our nerdish hero is lonely and adrift – as well as bleakly funny



Paul at Home: ‘It could hardly have arrived at a better moment’. Illustration: Michel Rabagliati

Paul at Home: ‘It could hardly have arrived at a better moment’. Illustration: Michel Rabagliati



Rachel Cooke

@msrachelcooke

Tue 5 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

If the latest volume in the long-running, semi-autobiographical *Paul* series by the Quebecer cartoonist [Michel Rabagliati](#) is by far the saddest of these wonderful books, it's also much the better for it. No one writes, or draws, the nerdish white male quite as Rabagliati does, but in this volume, as his titular hero finds himself adrift in middle age, there's a special richness: a melancholy that has its perfect expression in his monochrome pages. A story of loneliness and loss, it could hardly have arrived at a better moment. Who knew that I would find Paul's daily dread so soothing? Who would ever have guessed that his crotchety musings on such subjects as sleep apnoea, mobile phones and internet dating would suit my present mood so marvellously well?

Paul is a successful illustrator and comic book writer. At the Quebec book fair, his signing queue is long, and the fans in it (mostly) devoted. But his outward success has little bearing on the rest of his life, which has fallen into what can only be described as decay; a decline symbolised by his mouldering back-yard swimming pool, and the rotten old apple tree that stands next to it. His back aches, he sleeps badly and, thanks to a disaster with a tooth, his head aches permanently.

Meanwhile, there's the grey tundra that is his emotional life. He and his wife have divorced, and his beloved daughter is about to go and live in London. Should he start dating, as both his shrink and his elderly mother insist that he must? Though he tells himself he isn't ready, in reality he's just afraid. He feels old before his time. The few women who do come his way can hardly believe he's only 51.



A page from *Paul at Home*. Photograph: Michel Rabagliati

His mother, though... At the heart of this book is a fine portrait of a stoical, reserved and sometimes rather difficult woman who lives alone in a retirement flat. Paul recognises her indomitability, and traces it back to the days when, as a young woman, she wouldn't leave the house without lipstick and a squirt of Femme Rochas on her wrists. But for him, their encounters now are edged with sorrow, not only because her cancer may have returned, but because so little seems to separate them at this point; his own isolation is hardly any less pronounced than hers.

Does this sound depressing? If so, all I can say in mitigation is that *Paul at Home* (translated by Helge Dascher and Rob Aspinall) is also blackly funny, whether our narrator is obsessing over the typeface of street signs, or giving yet another talk to bored students at a school where the teacher who booked him mistook him for someone more famous.

And there are moments of solace, too. Eventually, the apple tree comes down. In its place, Paul plants a cherry, and though digging a hole for it half kills him, there's optimism in its blossoming – a simple line drawing Rabagliati accompanies not with his own words, but with lines from a favourite song of his mother's, Petula Clark's *Downtown*. The world, we understand, is still out there, and when he's done grieving, he'll get back to it.

- *Paul at Home* by Michel Rabagliati is published by Drawn & Quarterly (£18.99). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Costa book awards

Lee Lawrence's memoir of his mother's shooting by police wins Costa award

The Louder I Will Sing wins best biography, with other prizes including best novel for Monique Roffey and posthumous poetry honour for Eavan Boland

- [‘My mum was more than the woman shot by police’: read an extract from The Louder I Will Sing](#)



Lee Lawrence, outside the family home where his mother, Dorothy “Cherry” Groce was shot and paralysed by police in 1985, in Brixton, London.
Photograph: Donald Michael Chambers/The Guardian

Lee Lawrence, outside the family home where his mother, Dorothy “Cherry” Groce was shot and paralysed by police in 1985, in Brixton, London.
Photograph: Donald Michael Chambers/The Guardian

[Alison Flood](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 14.30 EST

Debut author Lee Lawrence has won the Costa biography award for a memoir about his lengthy quest to find justice for his mother, who was left paralysed after being shot by London police in 1985.

['The man who shot my mum is still living his life': Cherry Groce's son on life after police brutality](#)

[Read more](#)

Lawrence saw off competition from authors including Booker winner Julian Barnes to win the £5,000 biography category for *The Louder I Will Sing*. Judges for the Costa prize called it “a revelatory book and a terrific story” which is “acutely timely and exceptionally important”.

The memoir tells of how his mother Cherry Groce was shot by police looking for Lawrence’s brother in her Brixton home on 28 September 1985, when Lawrence was 11 years old. “In the middle of that hot pot of boiling-over rage, terror, confusion and noise, I realised they were police officers. The man who’d shot my mum was a policeman,” he writes. “Mum was wheezing on the floor, her face creased with pain, with worry. I can’t breathe, she kept saying. I think I’m going to die. I can’t feel my legs.”

The bullet shattered Groce’s spine, and she never walked again, with the wrongful shooting triggering two days of rioting. When she died in 2011, the pathologist found that it was bullet fragments left in her spine that caused the renal failure which killed her, with Lawrence writing of his lengthy battle to get the police to recognise their wrongdoing.

On Monday, Lawrence said he was “taken aback” by his win. “For me, writing the book was more of a mission, it was just about getting our story out there, a narrative that hasn’t been told before, and for people to get a bit more of an insight into my mum, to understand we were just a normal family living in Brixton,” he said. “One of my mantras was courage over fear, because it was a scary process to allow myself to be so vulnerable, so exposed. To be recognised in this way is like a bonus for me, something I wasn’t expecting.”

Lawrence, a social change advocate who created the company Mobility Transport, which provides accessible transport for disabled people, said he

hoped the win would gain attention from “people who might not necessarily have looked at a book like this, who will learn something about what we went through, and maybe have more empathy about how people are treated differently just because of their skin colour and the area they happen to live in”.

The author, who today consults with the Metropolitan police to help improve community engagement, first thought about writing the book as a teenager, after seeing documentaries about the Brixton uprisings focus on the events of 1981, but skim over Groce’s story. “My mum’s story is just as important as what happened in 1981, why was there nothing about it in detail?” he said. “But it wasn’t until my mum passed in 2011, and I got hold of the internal investigation report into my mum’s shooting, I knew I had to start documenting what’s going on.”

Four other authors also won Costa prizes on Monday evening. The £5,000 Costa award for best novel went to Monique Roffey for [The Mermaid of Black Conch](#), in which a fisherman’s singing attracts a centuries-old mermaid. Roffey’s seventh novel, described by judges as “a story of rare imagination and exciting scale – an adventure and a fable, a glorious myth that tells a far bigger story”, beat titles including Susanna Clarke’s long-awaited *Piranesi* to the prize.

The Costa first novel award was won by Ingrid Persaud for [Love After Love](#), which is set in Trinidad around the unconventional household of Betty Ramdin, her shy son Solo and their lodger, Mr Chetan. Persaud’s story was described by judges as “an exuberant, outstanding novel, teeming with life, full of unforgettable characters and written with such brio and style”.

The poetry award was won by the late Irish writer Eavan Boland for her final collection, *The Historians*, which judges said contained “some of the finest lines of poetry written this century”. Boland is the third poet to win the category posthumously, joining Ted Hughes and Helen Dunmore.

The children’s book award went to Natasha Farrant for *Voyage of the Sparrowhawk*, in which two children set off from England to France in the wake of the first world war. “We loved everything about this remarkable,

special, delightful book – pure heavenly escapism and a purely joyful read,” said judges.

More than 700 books were submitted for this year’s Costa awards, which recognise the most enjoyable books in five categories. One overall winner will be chosen later this month as the Costa book of the year, winning £30,000.

Since the book of the year prize was introduced in 1985, it has been won 12 times by a novel, five times by a first novel, eight times by a biography, eight times by a collection of poetry and twice by a children’s book. Last year’s award went to Jack Fairweather’s biography *The Volunteer: The True Story of the Resistance Hero who Infiltrated Auschwitz*.

2020 Costa book award winners

Novel: The Mermaid of Black Conch by Monique Roffey

First novel: Love After Love by Ingrid Persaud

Biography: The Louder I Will Sing by Lee Lawrence

Poetry: The Historians by Eavan Boland

Children's books: Voyage of the Sparrowhawk by Natasha Farrant

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Music

How You'll Never Walk Alone came to define Liverpool FC's spirit

The Rodgers and Hammerstein number became a football anthem via the late Gerry Marsden, bringing euphoric determination to every era of Liverpool FC from Shankly to Klopp



Gerry Marsden sings prior to Liverpool v Blackburn Rovers in 2010.
Photograph: Michael Regan/Getty Images

Gerry Marsden sings prior to Liverpool v Blackburn Rovers in 2010.
Photograph: Michael Regan/Getty Images



[Tim Jonze](#)

[@timjonze](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 11.00 EST

“It never stops creating goosebumps,” is how Liverpool manager [Jürgen Klopp describes it](#). “It never stops feeling really special.”

Our team’s anthem – [Gerry and the Pacemakers’ You’ll Never Walk Alone](#) – was not the reason Klopp came to Liverpool, but he’s talked about the moment he first heard it ringing out around the ground, and how that reassured him that he’d made the right choice to move to Merseyside. Indeed, if you could condense Klopp’s entire philosophy into one song – sticking together when times get tough, trust in the abilities of others, a conviction that better days are ahead – it would be You’ll Never Walk Alone. It’s been the club’s anthem since it topped the UK charts in 1963, providing joy and comfort during the triumphs and tragedies of the decades that have followed. Fans are now [mourning the death, at 78, of the man who sang it – Gerry Marsden](#).

You’ll Never Walk Alone was not Marsden’s song – it started life as a show tune from the 1945 Rodgers and Hammerstein musical Carousel. Marsden fell in love with it as a kid and the timing of the local lads’ hit version couldn’t have been better. The lyrics about solidarity and togetherness –

“when you walk through a storm, hold your head up high, and don’t be afraid of the dark” – made perfect sense for a club that was in the process of being rebuilt by the legendary [Bill Shankly](#) on a bedrock of socialist beliefs.

To hear it in the ground is to witness a 12th man warming up on the touchlines: spine-tingling for the home side, a wave of intimidation for the opposition. No wonder other teams have adopted it, including Celtic, Feyenoord and – funnily enough – Klopp’s two former German clubs Borussia Dortmund and Mainz. At home it rings out before kick-off. During away matches, it’s brought out to drag the team over the line when victory is within touching distance. The song has attained mythical status: when Liverpool found themselves 3-0 down at half time against AC Milan in the 2005 Champions League final – as close to a lost cause as a football match gets – [the fans serenaded Istanbul’s Atatürk Olympic Stadium](#) with an especially stirring version. We all know what happened next.

You can easily argue that You’ll Never Walk Alone is what provides the link from Shankly to [Dalglish](#) to [Benítez](#) to Klopp, a kind of musical bootroom outlining the Liverpool way: that a team’s success, no matter how swashbuckling the style, is not simply a result of signing outstanding talent, but rather fostering a harmonious spirit of togetherness that runs through the club, from the players and manager through the kit room, canteen staff, fans and wider community.

But it has a deeper meaning, too. After the 1989 [Hillsborough disaster](#), when 96 football fans lost their lives, the song’s lyrics offered comfort, but also determination – “walk on through the wind,” it urges, “walk on through the rain … and you’ll never walk alone”. This is a city that refused to back down in the face of establishment cover-ups and calls to “move on”. In 2009, to mark 20 years since the tragedy, Marsden himself [led an emotional version of the song](#) at Anfield during the memorial concert.

Back in March 2020, shortly after the pandemic forced the UK into lockdown, Klopp spoke about hearing NHS workers on the frontline [singing the song while on duty](#). “I was sent a video of people in the hospital just outside the intensive care area and when they started singing You’ll Never Walk Alone I started crying immediately,” he said. “It’s unbelievable. But it

shows everything, these people not only work but they have such a good spirit.”

Perhaps that’s the song’s ultimate magic – that it transcends its status as arguably the most famous terrace anthem in the world and offers solace and solidarity to anyone faced with adversity. As the lyrics promise: “At the end of the storm / There’s a golden sky / And the sweet silver song of the lark.” It’s a message we can all surely do with hearing right now.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/jan/04/how-youll-never-walk-alone-came-to-define-liverpool-fc-spirit-gerry-marsden>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.05 - Lifestyle

- [Travel through a lens Hamburg's giant cranes create a beach scene like no other](#)
- [A kitchen in Rome Rachel Roddy's recipe for rice and cabbage soup](#)
- [Comfort and joy 10 hearty, delicious vegan meals for an icy January – from lasagne to tiramisu](#)
- [How we met She stood right next to me. I assumed she fancied my PhD student](#)
- [Fat felines We all love a 'chonky' cat – but the online trend has to end](#)

[Travel through a lens](#)[Travel photography](#)

Hamburg's giant cranes create a beach scene like no other



Volleyball in the water at an urban beach, Hamburg. Photograph: Celia Topping

Volleyball in the water at an urban beach, Hamburg. Photograph: Celia Topping

Our series on evocative travel images continues with Celia Topping's shot of a carefree volleyball game at an urban beach

Celia Topping

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.30 EST

I'd only been to Hamburg once before: in the depths of winter, when hunkering down in a dingy St Pauli bar was the main aim of the trip. But Hamburg in summer is a different story.

On a sweltering day in August, I hired a bike and went west, out of the city centre, along the River Elbe. I had been told there were urban beaches along the river and I was keen to take a look.

It seemed like all of Hamburg was on the beach that day. But what made it extraordinary was the backdrop

Away from the city's hustle, I stopped to admire a cheerful-looking red lighthouse at the water's edge. A terrace of cafes and restaurants looked over the river, with waiters rushing to and fro with large trays of beer and snacks for their many customers. Over the other side I could see a long stretch of sand, teeming with sunseekers.

A narrow path led behind the restaurants, parallel to the beach. On my right were dainty, picture-perfect wooden houses, with roses around the door and parasols peeking jauntily from windows. Gardens belonging to the houses were on the other side of the path to my left, with families playing on the grass and elderly couples sipping cool drinks in the shade.

['It symbolises the end of the year and the new one beginning': folk dance in Romania](#)

[Read more](#)

Beyond the gardens was a beach scene like no other. A strip of sand, maybe 50 metres wide, was packed with people sunbathing, building sandcastles, playing beach games and generally doing what people do on beaches. It seemed like all of Hamburg was on the beach that day. But what made it extraordinary was the backdrop. Immense container ships cruised past, causing waves to crash on the shore for excited young children to jump over. And on the far side of the river stood colossal industrial cranes, like giant metal beasts, surveying the sun-drenched spectacle.

I walked a little further, past the Ahoi Strandkiosk, and found a spare metre of sand to myself. A group of friends were enthusiastically playing volleyball in the water in front of me. I took a crafty shot, thinking they might not appreciate having their photo taken. But it soon became apparent that no one on this gorgeous summer's day gave a hoot about some woman taking photos on a crowded beach. I snapped away at everything and everyone. This scene is a favourite because of the moment of carefree happiness captured between friends, against the backdrop of the city's harbour giants – those majestic metal cranes.

- *Celia Topping is a photographer and journalist based in Berlin and London*
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[A kitchen in RomeFood](#)

Rachel Roddy's recipe for rice and cabbage soup

Somewhere between a soup and a risotto, this soothing dish is one to win over cabbage sceptics



Rachel Roddy's rice and cabbage soup. Photograph: Rachel Roddy/The Guardian

Rachel Roddy's rice and cabbage soup. Photograph: Rachel Roddy/The Guardian



Rachel Roddy

@racheleats

Mon 4 Jan 2021 06.00 EST

The problem with liking cabbage so much is that I often smell of it. Not the most charismatic way to start a column, I know, especially the first of the year – happy new year! – but it is the truth, and a significant part of my eating life. As a child, I discovered that liking cabbage carried a risk: that of being called smelly, although this didn't stop me eating all my school lunch, then offering to finish my friend's. Young trauma faded into twentysomething worries about my sulphurous hair, although this didn't stop me eating the cabbage soup I prescribed myself. But then, in my early 30s, I found myself living in a building that, thanks to a trattoria serving a typically Roman and therefore cruciferous menu, smelled more strongly of cabbage (also of broccoli, chicory and spinach) than I did. It was like meeting a kindred spirit, only made of bricks and cement; I fitted right in.

I am exaggerating, of course – but only slightly. Our building is a cabbage and broccoli bong much of the time; the sulphurous scent hanging around the courtyard and communal stairwells like fruit flies around half a melon in high summer. The smell is not alone: the bread shop, the bar dispatching espressos, bins and various degrees of home cooking all compete for airspace. But the scent of cabbage prevails. And I like the pong as much as

the flavour of this great, green vegetable named after a head, especially deep-green savoy, with its blasted leaves and tree-like rib that taste like chlorophyll, iron, mustard and nutty butter.

If the smell is a bother, though, there are ways and whole websites dedicated to what Jane Grigson describes as the [original sin](#). A cup of coffee with a tablespoon of vinegar left near the pan; a slice of bread soaked with vinegar positioned near the pan is likewise said to soak up unwanted smells; a bowl of water with bicarb; or half a potato. Ingredients added to the cabbage while cooking can also help: vinegar, milk, bay leaves, potato. Maybe the Neapolitans, the original *mangiafoglia* (leaf eaters), know this. Or maybe it is simply that bay and potato made such good additions to a *minestra di verza e riso*, or *virz'e rise*, a soothing dish of cabbage with rice and parmesan that is somewhere between a soup and a risotto. The slow cooking of the cabbage in butter (which is my non-traditional addition) and oil reduces it almost to a cream, which, having given its scent to the room (and the cup of coffee with vinegar), is softly vegetal and savoury thanks to the umami power of a parmesan rind (one of the best seasonings known to soup, as well as a soft, chewy fringe benefit for the cook).

The Neapolitan friend who taught me how to make this dish refers to it as a *toccasana*, a cure-all, and I agree. And while it isn't a please-all, it is certainly a dish to win over cabbage sceptics. It's also cheap, generous and, smells aside, one that fits in.

Rice and cabbage soup – *minestra di verza e riso*

Serves 4

1 large savoy cabbage

5 tbsp olive oil

20g butter

1 onion, peeled and thinly sliced

1 garlic clove, peeled and minced

2 bay leaves

Salt and black pepper

30g parmesan, grated, plus 1 parmesan rind

200g rice (carnaroli or vialone nano)

Trim the base of the cabbage, pulling away any tough leaves, then cut in quarters, remove the core and slice the rest into fine ribbons.

In a heavy-based pan, warm the oil and butter, then add the cabbage, onion, garlic and bay leaves, and stir well so everything is coated in oil. Cook for a few minutes, then lower the heat, cover the pan and leave to cook gently for 45 minutes, or until the cabbage has collapsed completely.

Mash the cabbage with a fork so it breaks up, then add a litre and a half of water, a pinch of salt and the parmesan rind. Bring to a boil, then reduce to a simmer and cook for 15 minutes.

Add the rice and simmer, stirring often, for 20 minutes, or until the rice is tender. I order that the final consistency is soft and thick, but still soupy, so you may need to add more water. Stir in the parmesan and lots of freshly ground black pepper, then serve.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/food/2021/jan/04/rachel-roddey-recipe-for-rice-and-cabbage-soup>

How to live nowVegan food and drink

Comfort and joy: 10 hearty, delicious vegan meals for an icy January – from lasagne to tiramisu



A homemade vegan pulled pork sandwich ... fools omnivores. Photograph: Brent Hofacker/Alamy Stock Photo

A homemade vegan pulled pork sandwich ... fools omnivores. Photograph: Brent Hofacker/Alamy Stock Photo

Whether you fancy a pulled ‘pork’ sandwich or a filling chana masala, these are the meat-free recipes to get you through the first chilly weeks of the year



[Stuart Heritage](#)

[@stuheritage](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 09.02 EST

At this time of year, the air is colder, the nights are longer and all anyone really wants is something warm and comforting to eat. However, if you happen to be vegan, your options can still be embarrassingly limited. Still, never fear, here's the pick of the best vegan comfort-food recipes around.

Tofu katsu sando

Let's begin with Meera Sodha, who is the vegan writer of the moment. Her [New Vegan series](#) in the Guardian is full of delights, but the standout remains her [tofu katsu sando with celeriac and apple slaw](#) from last January. It's essentially a tofu cutlet, coated with panko breadcrumbs and fried – but it's the curried vegan mayonnaise with the celeriac and apple slaw that really make it. As she says, "it's carb-on-carb action, and a satisfying sandwich of contrasts".

Lasagne

I am not a vegan, but I have tried [Justine Pattison's vegan lasagne](#), and it is every bit as satisfying as any of its meatier counterparts. As you would

expect, nutritional yeast does a lot of the heavy lifting when it comes to cheesiness here, but the white sauce (made with almond milk) and the filling (lentils, mushrooms, aubergine and courgette) pack so much punch that you would barely even notice.



Vegan lasagne ... every bit as satisfying as its meatier counterparts.
Photograph: IriGri8/Getty Images/iStockphoto

Garlic butter parmesan spaghetti

On a similarly pasta-based kick, the Cheap Lazy Vegan (my kind of vegan) website has a recipe for [vegan garlic butter parmesan spaghetti](#). It doesn't really need explaining as the dish has one of those titles that's just a list of ingredients. However, it's worth saying that the "parmesan" is a blend of powdered cashew nuts, garlic and nutritional yeast. It is also worth pointing out that this is the sort of comfort food I could happily eat out of a bucket.

Vegan pulled pork sandwiches

Tasty's recipe for [vegan pulled-pork sandwiches](#) highlights its ability to fool omnivores. That's not really the point, but it's easy to see why it might. It substitutes pork for jackfruit, but treats it in much the same way, slow-cooking it with cumin, chilli powder, paprika, Worcestershire sauce and

liquid smoke before spooning it into a bun. I believe this is what people used to call “dirty food” in 2017 – a moment that, thankfully, seems to have passed.

Chana masala

Everyone knows that curries are more or less foolproof for vegans, but Olive magazine’s [chana masala recipe](#) really goes out of its way to meet your comfort-food needs. The star of the show are the two full tins of chickpeas that provide the dish with a heft that can sometimes go missing in the absence of animal products. Serve with a roti and you’ve got the makings of a cosy night in.



Chana masala ... meets all your comfort-food needs. Photograph: Brent Hofacker/Alamy Stock Photo

Braised sausage all-in-one

Weird to say it, but Nick Knowles (yes, the gameshow man off the telly) also does a surprisingly good line in vegan food. A case in point is his [braised sausage all-in-one with cherry tomatoes, cannellini beans and cider](#).

Admittedly this is a recipe that will live or die depending on the quality of vegan sausage you use, but pick a good one and its treatment here – simply

roasted over veg, beans and a fat glug of cider – will make a tremendous easy dinner.



Lowly Food's vegan Sunday roast.

Sunday roast

There's a question mark over whether a roast dinner counts as comfort food – personally I'm of the opinion that the time-consuming slog of preparing it heavily counts against the comfort you take from eating it – but in this instance I'm happy to go with the crowd. Lowly Food has a recipe for [vegan Sunday roast with all the trimmings](#), but the main attraction is its harissa roast cauliflower: a head of cauliflower, painted with spices and baked for an hour, it's relatively easy and quite delicious.

Cheesecake

And now for pudding. It turns out that 90% of all vegan dessert recipes are for “cheesecake” made with various Philadelphia substitutes. That said, the [recipe that Solla Eiriksdottir provided](#) for this paper in 2018 is one of the best you'll find. The crust is nuts and mulberries, the filling is nuts and probiotic powder and the topping is pure blueberry. Magic.



Cheesecake ... pure magic. Photograph: Simon Bajada

Tiramisu

Gaz Oakley has managed to [veganise tiramisu](#); no small feat, given that a tiramisu is essentially the dairy mother lode. The trick is a combination of coconut cream and vegan cream cheese, and the results – especially topped with a pile of grated chocolate – are truly spectacular.

Chocolate and salted caramel tarts

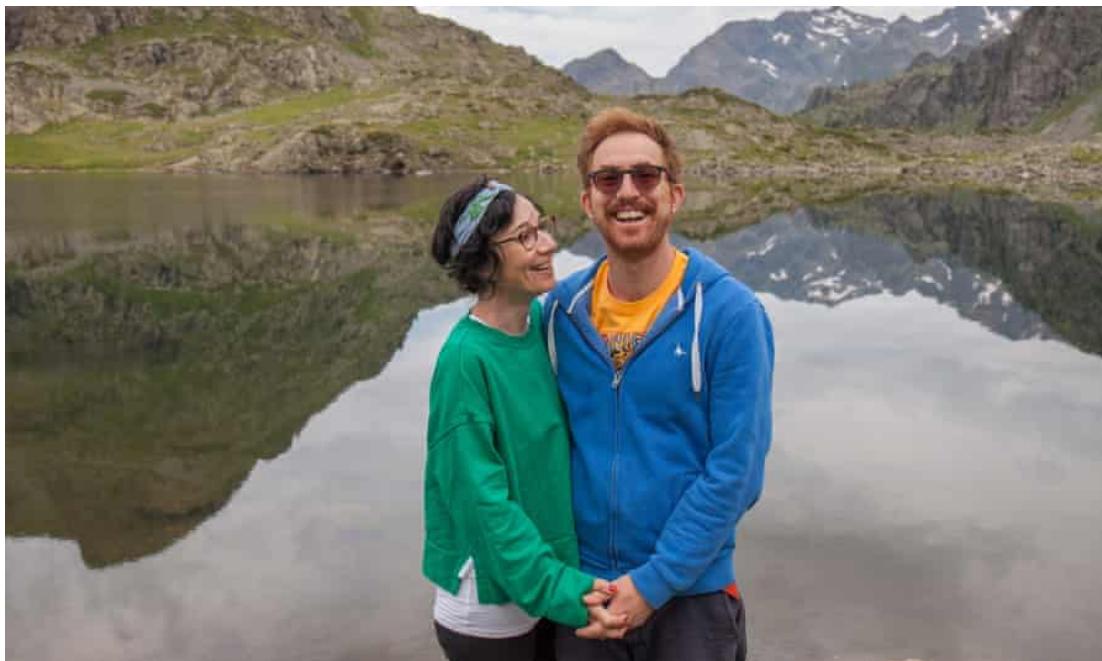
Finally, Lazy Cat Kitchen's [vegan chocolate and salted caramel tarts](#) are an absolute work of art. Heavy on coconut milk, the tarts are elegant and delicate, and gooey enough to make your non-vegan friends think you've fallen off the wagon. Which is usually quite a patronising thing to say, but in this instance it's true.

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How we metLife and style

How we met: ‘She stood right next to me. I assumed she fancied my PhD student’

Neuropsychologists Chris Moulin and Céline Souchay, 47, fell in love after a conference in 2004. They live with their sons in Grenoble



‘We’re kindred spirits’ ... Chris and Céline in the Alps in 2008. Photograph: Davy Berruyer

‘We’re kindred spirits’ ... Chris and Céline in the Alps in 2008. Photograph: Davy Berruyer

[Lizzie Cernik](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 08.32 EST

Although Chris Moulin and Céline Souchay met at a scientific conference in France in 1999, they didn’t make a lasting impression on each other at the time. “I remember that Chris had long ginger hair,” says Céline. “I asked him some questions about a presentation he gave, but couldn’t understand

his response, because my English wasn't good." She says he sounded "a bit posh and pretentious", but it was "probably due to the language barrier".

By 2004, Céline had moved from France to Plymouth to work as a lecturer, while Chris was living and working in Leeds. In September that year, he invited her to a British Psychological Society conference he was organising in the city. Although he had read her work, he didn't recall having met her five years earlier. "She stood right next to me at the evening reception and I assumed she must fancy my PhD student," says Chris. But Céline thought he was amazing. "I didn't recognise him, but he looked so trendy and happy. I was frustrated, because I wanted to speak to him, but there were lots of people around. I stood nearby to show I was interested." Although there was a spark, they kept things professional. "I asked him to read something I had written, as an excuse to keep in touch."

In January 2005, Chris invited Céline to another conference, in London. "I took her around the city to see the sights," he says. That was when they discussed previous conferences and realised they had met before. By this time, Chris knew he wanted to be with Céline, but was coming out of another relationship. "I tried to explain that we were breaking up and sorting out the mortgage." They stayed in touch via text message and shortly afterwards Céline applied for a job in Leeds. The pair became a couple when she went for the interview, then moved in together after she got the job.

The following February, Céline proposed to Chris. Desiring something fuss-free, fun and different, the couple arranged a surprise wedding five months later. It took place in Bristol, Chris's home town. "We pretended it was so our parents could meet," says Chris. "Céline's parents were visiting, and we told both sets of parents to dress up so that we could go to the [Wills Memorial Building](#)." Instead, they took them to [Bristol Register Office](#). "My mum was worried she didn't have a hat for the surprise wedding," laughs Chris. "Céline translated the ceremony for her parents line by line."

The couple's sons were born in 2007 and 2009. In 2012, they moved to France. They live in Grenoble with their children, two cats, a dog and three chickens. Although their relationship has been happy, it has been complicated by Céline's health problems. In 2010, she went to hospital after becoming seriously ill; Chris was told she wouldn't survive. "They didn't

know what was wrong, so they prepared me for the worst and told me to say goodbye,” he says. Céline underwent emergency surgery to repair damage to her colon, which was linked to a genetic condition that her doctors still don’t fully understand. “I did recover, but now live in chronic pain, which impacts our everyday life,” she says. Since Covid hit, the couple have been shielding. “We’ve noticed how much casual discrimination there is towards people with illness and disabilities throughout the pandemic,” says Chris.

Despite the difficulties of the pandemic and Céline’s condition, they adore each other’s company. “I don’t like staying in bed, so we work on lots of projects together, like doing up houses,” says Céline. Chris loves his wife’s positive nature and dark sense of humour. “Everything has been an adventure with her. She’s motivated and inspired me on every level.” Céline appreciates her partner’s patience. “He’s also really artistic, and plays music. When we first met, he made me a CD of all his own songs.” As well as working in the same field, they share the same interests in music and film. “We were on the same page from the start,” says Chris. “We’re kindred spirits.”

Want to share your story? Tell us a little about you, your partner and how you got together by [filling in the form here](#).

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[Pass notes](#)[Cats](#)

Fat felines: we all love a ‘chonky’ cat – but the online trend has to end

Over the last few years, the internet has thrilled to pictures of chubby pets. But now experts are calling for a new era of cat shaming and determined dieting



Infelicitous feline ... an overweight cat. Photograph: Petra Wegner/Alamy
Infelicitous feline ... an overweight cat. Photograph: Petra Wegner/Alamy
Mon 4 Jan 2021 10.00 EST

Name: Fat cats.

Age: Probably no older than 10, given their propensity to die young.

Appearance: Fat.

Surely you mean delightfully cuddly. Oh, who's a pretty boy then? Roll over and let me tickle your tummy. Don't be so ridiculous. That's just the sort of attitude that is KILLING CATS.

What are you on about? The internet is now full of pictures of fat cats that their owners think are adorable but are actually health disasters, barely able to fit through a cat flap, let alone jump on to a ledge. In fact, the only time they jump is when their owner fills their feeding bowl.



The cat sat ... Photograph: Benoit Daoust/Alamy Stock Photo

That's not ideal. In any case, flabby felines should not be encouraged, as, I'm afraid to say, Instagram accounts such as [Round Boys](#) and [Round Animals](#), with their hundreds of thousands of followers, do.

And who is kicking up a fuss about meaty moggies? The pet food company Purina, part of Nestlé, seems to have got this ball rolling.

That's odd – you would think such companies would want to sell as much as pet food possible. Fat cat capitalism. Quality, not quantity, is Purina's mantra. Libby Sheridan, veterinary technical affairs manager at Purina UK and Ireland, says cat owners have a "skewed perception" of what constitutes a healthy weight. "People think their pets should be cuddly," she says. But cuddliness can kill! "It's particularly an issue with cats," says Sheridan.

Why? The fat finger of blame is being pointed firmly at the internet craze for posting pictures of tubby tabbies. Not just Round Boys on Instagram, but the Facebook group [This Cat Is Chonky](#), which is devoted to the larger cat and has amassed more than 850,000 members since its launch [in May 2018](#).



Poor Tom ... a red American wirehair. Photograph: Maria Fedotova/Getty Images

Chonky? Internet-speak for chunky. The “chonk scale” became a meme in 2018, with “chonkness” measured on a BMI chart that went from “A fine boi” to “OH LAWD HE COMIN”.

Sounds fun. Indeed, and rule one of Chonk club is: “No chonk shaming.” But the new pet puritans reckon some pet (and owner) shaming is now in order.

Brutal. Any exceptions? Fat cats on diets are probably OK. A cat called Bronson has amassed [267,000 followers on Instagram](#) since his owners, Megan Hanneman and Mike Wilson, brought him home from a cat shelter in Michigan almost three years ago, when he weighed 15kg (33lb). They have charted his weight loss online, and he is now only half the cat he was. “A big cat on a diet is a guilt-free way to follow an obese cat,” says Wilson. Cat porn with a purpose.

Not to be confused with: The pictures of fat dogs, penguins, seals and hedgehogs that also abound online.



Tabby tummy trouble ... Photograph: Nikki O'Keefe Images/Getty Images

Do say: “C'mon, kitty, time for your hour on the treadmill.”

Don't say: “Purrfect!”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/shortcuts/2021/jan/04/fat-felines-chonky-cat-online-trend-internet-chubby-pets-shaming-dieting>.

2021.01.05 - Take part

- Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine Are you getting it this week in the UK?
- Coronavirus Share your experiences of test and trace in the UK
- Parents in England How have you been affected by the delay to schools reopening?
- Teachers How you are preparing for Covid testing?

Coronavirus

Are you getting the Oxford/AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine this week in the UK?

We'd like to speak to people who are due to be given the coronavirus vaccine developed by Oxford University and AstraZeneca in the coming days

Guardian community team

Mon 4 Jan 2021 06.06 EST Last modified on Mon 4 Jan 2021 06.08 EST



Brian Pinker, 82, receives the Oxford University/AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine at the Churchill Hospital in Oxford. Photograph: Reuters

Brian Pinker, an 82-year-old retired maintenance manager has become the first person in the world outside clinical trials to receive the [vaccine developed](#) by Oxford University and AstraZeneca.

We would like to hear from anyone else who received the vaccine on Monday or later this week. How do you feel about it?

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

Share your experiences of test and trace in the UK

We'd like to speak to contact tracers working in the NHS's test and trace system, and those who have been reached by tracers

Guardian community team

Fri 24 Apr 2020 05.26 EDT Last modified on Mon 4 Jan 2021 06.30 EST



Nurse in full PPE at a testing centre in Lincoln. Photograph: Terry Harris/Rex/Shutterstock

With news that contact tracers in England are [under pressure](#) and failing to meet targets, there are continued concerns around the effectiveness of the UK's test and trace system.

We would like to hear about your experiences of the test and trace system, from contact tracers working in the system to those who have been reached.

Share your experiences

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Schools

Parents in England: how have you been affected by the delay to schools reopening?

We would like to hear from parents about childcare after some local authorities closed schools the day before children were due to return

Guardian community team

Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.03 EST Last modified on Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.04 EST



A sign hangs on the gate of St Anne's Catholic Primary school in Caversham, Reading, informing parents that the school is closed due to insufficient staffing levels. Photograph: Steve Parsons/PA

In parts of England, parents face more uncertainty as [some local authorities delayed the reopening of schools](#) due to the rise in coronavirus cases in the country.

The day before children were expected to return, most of those in Essex were asked to stay at home on Monday after the council said it would unilaterally close schools to most pupils until at least Wednesday.

We would like to hear from parents who have been affected by the delay of schools reopening. Have you been able to find last-minute childcare? Do you have any concerns?

Share your experiences

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Schools

Teachers in England: how you are preparing for Covid testing in schools?

We would like to hear from teachers about the preparations being made in their schools, and from parents about the possibility of more homeschooling

Guardian community team

Tue 29 Dec 2020 08.09 EST Last modified on Tue 29 Dec 2020 08.15 EST



The government is yet to decide whether schools in tier 4 should reopen on Monday as planned. Photograph: David Bagnall/Alamy Stock Photo

Amid the debate about whether or not English schools should re-open in January after scientific advisors urged a delay to the start of the new term, it was announced that [members of the armed forces will be deployed to support coronavirus testing](#) operations for thousands of school and college students in England.

We want to hear from teachers in England about how they are getting ready for testing in schools. What challenges do you face and what concerns do you have?

We would also like to hear from parents and how they feel about the prospect of more homeschooling if schools do not re-open on Monday.

Share your experiences

You can get in touch 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 before we publish, so please do leave contact details.

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2021.01.05 - Explore

- [Weatherwatch Greenhouse gases actually cool the upper atmosphere – but that just proves global warning](#)
- ['It was as if life started again' Terror attack survivors find new hope](#)
- [Science Weekly Looking up in wonder: humanity and the cosmos \(part one\)](#)

WeatherwatchUK weather

How greenhouse gases are actually cooling Earth's upper atmosphere

At high altitudes, carbon dioxide releases energy into space, making the atmosphere contract



A halo forms around the sun above a statue in Singapore. This happens when light from the sun passes through ice crystals in the upper atmosphere.
Photograph: Roslan Rahman/AFP/Getty Images

A halo forms around the sun above a statue in Singapore. This happens when light from the sun passes through ice crystals in the upper atmosphere.
Photograph: Roslan Rahman/AFP/Getty Images

[Jeremy Plester](#)

Tue 5 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

In all the discussions about climate change, one thing is often overlooked – the upper atmosphere of Earth is actually cooling while the lower atmosphere grows warmer, and this strange paradox is a clear fingerprint of greenhouse gases at work.

Carbon dioxide in the lower atmosphere helps trap heat from the sun's solar energy reflected off the Earth's surface and so, like a greenhouse, the lower atmosphere grows warmer. But at high altitudes it is a different story, because the upper atmosphere is so thin that the carbon dioxide releases its energy into space and so the upper atmosphere cools. And that cooling is also making the upper atmosphere contract.

Past studies have shown that the cooling trend is driven by greenhouse gases, as well as shifts in the [Earth's magnetic field](#) and the roughly 11-year cycle in the sun's solar activity. A [recent study](#) disentangled these different factors by simulating the upper atmosphere at 100-500km altitude from 1950 to 2015. The results confirmed that rising carbon dioxide levels were the main driving force cooling the upper atmosphere. Shifts in the Earth's magnetic field and variations in the solar cycle played much smaller roles.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2021/jan/05/how-greenhouse-gases-are-actually-coolingearths-upper-atmosphere>

World news

'It was as if life started again': terror attack survivors find new hope

Christine and Sébastien met via a survivors' group after being caught up in separate attacks in London and Paris



Christine Delcros and Sébastien Besatti first made contact online, exchanging messages on the survivors group Life for Paris. Photograph: David Fritz Goeppinger

Christine Delcros and Sébastien Besatti first made contact online, exchanging messages on the survivors group Life for Paris. Photograph: David Fritz Goeppinger

[Kim Willsher](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 09.44 EST

For most of the world, 2020 was a year of disease and death. For Christine Delcros and Sébastien Besatti, survivors of separate terror attacks in London and Paris, it brought love and a desire for life – feelings they thought they had lost forever.

“We know 2020 has been an annus horribilis for most people, but for us it has been a renaissance. A time to live again. It seems crazy to have found such happiness out of such dark times,” Besatti says in an interview with the Guardian.

Delcros agrees: “I thought my heart was broken for all time, that my romantic life was over. Then I met Sébastien.”

The pair, who were brought together by a terror survivors’ group, smile and look at each other. Their scars do not show today, but they are there just below the surface.

For Delcros, 48, a tall, graceful woman with the delicate frame of a classical dancer, the trauma was physical and psychological. In June 2017, she was in London for a romantic weekend with her fiancé Xavier Thomas, 45. The couple were strolling across London Bridge heading for the Shard skyscraper to enjoy a cocktail overlooking the city skyline when a terrorist at the wheel of a van ploughed into them.

The force of the impact flung Thomas into the River Thames, from where his body was recovered three days later. Delcros suffered a smashed pelvis and devastating injuries to her legs and back, requiring surgery and months of treatment to learn to walk again.

Besatti, 39, survived the November 2015 attack on the Bataclan, where concert-goers were among 130 people killed and more than 400 injured in a deadly wave of bombings and shootings in Paris.

Afterwards he was revealed to have saved a pregnant woman hanging from a window in a desperate attempt to escape the terrorists. Besatti, who was held hostage and forced to watch as the jihadist attackers continued to shoot at anyone who moved, was physically unscathed but deeply traumatised.

Sitting in the living room of their small Paris apartment, the pair are kind and solicitous. They have a newfound faith in the world, having emerged from tragedy and darkness into the light, blinking at their own good fortune.

Delcros, on leave from her civil service job with the Paris fire brigade, weeps as she recalls losing Thomas, who was the love of her life. Besatti hands her tissues and gently touches her shoulder. The gesture says: I am here if you need me.

“Xavier had booked a table where we would have a magnificent view. He always thought of these things. But I had a bad feeling, a premonition that something bad was going to happen,” she says.

The couple were staying at the Four Seasons hotel and decided to walk to the Shard across London Bridge. It was 9.30pm.

“It had been a lovely day, but I just kept thinking something was going to happen. Then there was a surreal moment of seeing the lights of a van coming along the pavement and zigzagging so as to hit people. I said to myself, that’s it. That is how one dies,” Delcros says.

It was the latest in a wave of 2017 attacks in the UK that killed 35 people in six months, including 22 at the Manchester Arena. Youssef Zaghba, who was at the wheel of the van, and two other terrorists who leapt out to stab people at Borough Market were shot dead by police.

At an inquest in 2019, Delcros told how she was still “madly in love” with Thomas.

Besatti had been made redundant from his job as a journalist on a local newspaper in Marseille, when he travelled to Paris to attend the Eagles of Death Metal concert with his best friend, Jean-François. Determined not to miss a second of the concert, they had avoided the bar and were standing centre-stage when three gunmen armed with Kalashnikovs stormed the Bataclan.

“The band was playing Kiss the Devil when they started shooting at the crowd. People went down like dominos. I felt a bullet go over my head; there were people dying all around me, bodies all over the ground. I thought: if I stay here I will be shot,” he says.

As the killing continued, Besatti ran behind the black stage curtain. Unable to find the emergency exit, he ran upstairs to the balcony.

“I climbed out of a window but it was too high to drop so I went back in. I noticed a woman hanging into thin air from another window. She was shouting: ‘Help, help, I’m pregnant. Someone catch me.’ Her fingers were slipping and she was going to fall so I pulled her inside.”

Besatti was held hostage with other concert-goers until police stormed the Bataclan, killing the gunmen. “One of the terrorists kept his gun on me while another shot anyone who moved downstairs,” he recalls. “Afterwards, everyone treated me as a hero for saving the pregnant woman, but I only did what anyone would do.”

He and Delcros both struggled to make sense of their lives after the attacks. They first made contact online, exchanging messages on the survivors’ group Life for Paris. Then in March 2019 Besatti invited Delcros to the Alpine ski resort Les Deux Alpes, where he was working in a bar. She accepted.

“It was mad. I didn’t tell anyone. It was as if I’d lost my head. But when I walked into the bar where he was working, it was like a spell. I was under his charm. He held me in his arms and I couldn’t move,” she says.

Besatti says: “I couldn’t take my eyes off her; my life changed in an instant. It was as if it started again. She told me she felt her heart would never love again because what had happened was so brutal, but it was a renaissance for both of us.”

As [France](#) went into lockdown, the pair returned to Paris and moved in together. They have been inseparable ever since.

Delcros says the London attack has made her particularly spiritual and that she now feels Thomas’s presence as a guardian angel.

“I felt I would die of grief, that I would never love again. But each time I have been most desperate and in the most despair, he has helped me and answered my call,” she says. “A few days before we met online I asked

Xavier for a miracle and he sent me Sebastien like a saviour. I feel Xavier is always with me, looking after me.”

Besatti nods. Is he at all jealous? “I know Xavier is irreplaceable for Christine and she speaks as if he is still alive, but I cannot be jealous of someone who is no longer here to love her,” he says.

They are impatient to escape Covid restrictions, to go out, see friends, visit the coast and surf.

“We are different people now. Before we were in our own personal hell, now we see life. Thanks to Christine I have vanquished my demons. It’s like we have been given a second chance and we are starting a great adventure together,” Besatti says.

Delcros agrees. “We were two lost souls who by some miracle, some magic, found each other. And now we just want to live.”

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Science Weekly

Science

Looking up in wonder: humanity and the cosmos (part one) – podcast

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.05 - In pictures

- [Plastic fantastic Vintage carrier bags](#)
- [The big picture London gets the right kind of snow in 2009](#)

Plastic fantastic: vintage carrier bags - in pictures

Some of artist Aaron Thompson's collection of vintage carrier bags.
Photograph: All images courtesy of Aaron Thompson

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The big pictureArt and design

The big picture: the right kind of snow, London 2009



Greenwich Park, London, 2009.
Greenwich Park, London, 2009.

A rare white-out in London, captured by Peter Marlow in 2009, found sledgers running for the hills as the city ground to a halt



[Tim Adams](#)

[@TimAdamsWrites](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

In the 30-odd years that I've lived in London, I can think of only half a dozen proper sledging days. The capital's comical lack of preparedness for white-outs is, of course, a source of amusement for other, snowier parts of the country. But then, why prepare for something that never happens? (Until it does.)

Peter Marlow's picture of Greenwich Park from [February 2009](#) recalls a day on which schools were closed for all the right reasons and public transport slithered to a predictable halt. The headline in the London *Evening Standard* read: "It's -5 and we're going nowhere!" But that wasn't quite true. Everyone with a tea tray in the cupboard or an underused toboggan in the attic fetched it out and trudged to the nearest hill.

In fact, the snowfall of 2009 was so "severe" on the day of Marlow's picture that newspapers dispatched correspondents to report how it felt. In the *Guardian*, [Stuart Jeffries described](#) a hushed metropolitan epiphany: "As I walked towards Hampstead Heath, I heard whoops and cheers. The heath was like Narnia. My God, I told myself as I walked through a heavenly avenue with snow-laden branches bejewelling my steps, this is the most

beautiful city in the world! (I was delirious, high on pheromones, snow bonkers, and in need of a good slap.)”

At the time, Britain was knee-deep in its last crippling crisis. Credit had recently crunched. Days before, RBS had just reported the biggest loss in British corporate history. And the World Health Organization had just identified a potential global pandemic, originating in pig farms in Mexico, that became known as swine flu. For a day at least, though, sledgers could abandon anxiety and let gravity do its thing. In this current bleakest of midwinters, looking at Marlow’s picture, three irrational thoughts came to my mind, in no particular order: let it snow, let it snow, let it snow.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.05 - Most viewed

- [England to enter toughest Covid lockdown since March](#)
- [Tuesday briefing: England enters third national lockdown](#)

Coronavirus

England to enter toughest Covid lockdown since March

Boris Johnson says restrictions will last at least seven weeks, with schools closing until February half-term

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
- [England lockdown: what are the new Covid restrictions?](#)

[Jessica Elgot](#) and [Peter Walker](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 16.39 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 15.07 EST

Play Video

1:45

Boris Johnson urges people to stay home as England braces for third national lockdown – video

England will enter its toughest nationwide lockdown since March, with schools closed until mid-February, as [Boris Johnson](#) warned that the weeks ahead “will be the hardest yet”.

As [new figures](#) put the UK on course to exceed 100,000 Covid-related deaths before the end of the month without urgent action, the prime minister said once again that people must stay at home, with exercise limited to once a day. All non-essential shops were told to close from Monday night.

The lockdown will last for at least seven weeks, with measures to be reviewed during half-term week. Any relaxation would not come into effect before 22 February.

Just a day after urging millions of pupils to return to the classroom, Johnson announced all schools would switch to remote learning until the February

half-term, and GCSE and A-level exams were unlikely to go ahead as planned.

The prime minister said parents would “reasonably ask why we did not make this decision sooner”, adding: “I completely understand the inconvenience and distress this late change will cause millions of parents and pupils up and down the country.”

Graphic: Covid alert levels

In an 8pm address to the nation, the prime minister said he hoped that 12.2 million of the most vulnerable in society – care home residents and staff, frontline health and social care workers, all over-70s and the clinically extremely vulnerable – would get their first vaccinations by mid-February. The vaccines minister, Nadhim Zahawi, later said these four groups added up to 13.9 million people in England.

The UK was entering “the last phase of the struggle”, Johnson said, adding: “With every jab that goes into our arms, we are tilting the odds against Covid and in favour of the British people.”

The crackdown comes amid catastrophic figures for hospital admissions in England and warnings of a grim death toll by the end of the month. Johnson said:

- On 4 January, there were 26,626 Covid patients in hospital in England, up 30% on a week earlier.
- The peak of admissions in the first wave was 18,374 on 12 April; the country is now 40% above that level.
- Across the UK, there were 80,664 positive tests on 29 December, with the case rate three times higher than at the start of December.

According to a Guardian analysis, there have been 91,453 deaths in the UK with Covid-19 on the death certificate or within 28 days of a positive test. Given the current trajectory, the UK could reach the grim milestone of 100,000 deaths before the end of the month, experts warned.

On Monday, the UK's chief medical officers recommended that the Covid alert move to its highest level, from 4 to 5, meaning there is a "material risk of healthcare services being overwhelmed" and necessitating extremely strict social distancing.

"We are not confident that the NHS can handle a further sustained rise in cases and without further action there is a material risk of the NHS in several areas being overwhelmed over the next 21 days," the chief medical officers of the four nations said, while urging those who still need emergency care for other illnesses to seek treatment.

Other UK leaders also announced new restrictions. All schools in Wales will be closed until at least 18 January, while mainland Scotland will be placed in full lockdown from midnight on Monday for the duration of January. The first minister, Nicola Sturgeon, said it was "no exaggeration to say that I am more concerned about the situation we face now than I have been at any time since March last year".

Northern Ireland also looks set for new curbs, with Arlene Foster, the first minister of Northern Ireland, saying the region faces a "very dire situation".

In his address to the nation, Johnson laid the blame for a third national lockdown squarely on a new, faster-spreading variant of the virus – despite widespread ongoing criticism of the government's slowness to act.

"There is no doubt that in fighting the old variant of the virus, our collective efforts were working and would have continued to work," Johnson said. "But we now have a new variant of the virus. It has been both frustrating and alarming to see the speed with which the new variant is spreading."

Play Video

8:42

Boris Johnson announces strict new national lockdown for England – watch in full

Even in the past 36 hours, the prime minister had insisted schools were safe to open in most areas of the country. "There is no doubt in my mind that schools are safe," he told the BBC's Andrew Marr on Sunday.

However, the prime minister was unable to identify what he believed had changed since the preceding days, when most schools had been told to remain open – only saying in his address that schools were likely to act “as vectors for transmission, causing the virus to spread between households”.

Under the new lockdown, people in England will be ordered to stay at home from Tuesday and advised to leave only once a day for exercise. MPs are expected to vote the tough new measures into law from Wednesday, although businesses were advised to close from Monday night.

Across the country, people must now leave home only for work – and only if it is impossible to work from home – and for essential food and medicine. Exercise with one other person from a different household is permitted but the advice is to stay local and limit activity to once a day.

Other reasons to leave home will be limited to seeking medical care, fleeing the threat of harm and providing essential care.

All primary schools, secondary schools and colleges will be closed apart from for the children of key workers and vulnerable children. “We recognise that this will mean it is not possible or fair for all exams to go ahead this summer as normal,” Johnson said. “The education secretary will work with Ofqual [the regulator] to put in place alternative arrangements.”

Nurseries, alternative provision and special schools will remain open and existing rules for childcare support bubbles will continue, but students will not be able to return to university and will be expected to study online from their current residence until mid-February. In-person teaching can take place for a limited number of critical courses, such as medicine.

All non-essential retail and hospitality must close or remain closed. Restaurants and other premises can continue to offer deliveries or takeaways, but alcohol will no longer be permitted for takeaway or click and collect amid concerns about people congregating around pubs and bars.

Places of worship can remain open and offer communal worship – subject to social distancing – as can playgrounds, but outdoor sports venues, tennis courts and golf courses must close. Outdoor team sports will not be

permitted, but professional sports, including the Premier League, may continue.

Those who are clinically extremely vulnerable will be advised to shield themselves as much as possible and should not go to work even if they cannot work from home, the government will advise.

The lockdown is set to come into effect in law as soon as possible, with regulations to be laid out on Tuesday and voted through parliament on Wednesday – although MPs have been warned not to attend parliament and told to participate remotely.

However, Johnson said the new rules should be followed from this evening, and businesses and the public should not wait for regulations to be passed.

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Guardian morning briefing

Tuesday briefing: England enters third national lockdown

Commuter in London as tier 5 lockdown restrictions come into effect.
Photograph: Joseph Okpako/Getty Images

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- [Coronavirus Hancock: England could face tighter Covid lockdown rules within 24 hours](#)
- [Live UK coronavirus: Matt Hancock 'incredibly worried' about South African Covid variant](#)
- [Schools Parents face week of uncertainty over reopenings](#)
- [Syria Detainees' families forced to pay huge bribes to corrupt officials - report](#)
- ['I just want 11,780 votes' Trump pressed Georgia to overturn Biden win](#)
- [Live US politics: Trump pressured Georgia's secretary of state to 'find' votes](#)
- ['Give me a break' Trump's call to Brad Raffensperger: six key points](#)
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Coronavirus

Johnson: 'no question' England will need tougher Covid lockdown rules soon

Prime minister says measures will be announced ‘in due course’ but gives no timetable

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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Play Video

1:43

Boris Johnson says there is ‘no question’ England will need tougher Covid lockdown rules – video

Boris Johnson has said there is “no question” the government will need to toughen coronavirus restrictions even more to cope with fast-rising infection levels, but gave no timetable for when this might happen.

[Matt Hancock](#), the health secretary, indicated earlier that it could happen within the next 24 hours, pointing to a likely move for the remaining areas of England under tier 3 rules into the new, highest level of tier 4.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to Chase Farm hospital in north London to coincide with the first use outside trials of the new Oxford/AstraZeneca coronavirus vaccine, Johnson agreed action was needed.

“If you look at the numbers there’s no question we will have to take tougher measures and we will be announcing those in due course,” he said.

On how quickly the new vaccine can be given to people around the country, the prime minister said the key factor was supply.

“We have the capacity; the issue is to do with supply of the vaccine,” he said. “It’s not so much a manufacturing issue although that’s part of it. Each batch needs to be properly approved and quality controlled.”

In an earlier round of interviews, Hancock defended the government’s decision to keep open many schools in England, which is being [defied by many councils and parents](#), saying closing schools was “an absolute last resort due to all the negative impacts of that decision”.

Play Video

1:25

Matt Hancock says tougher coronavirus restrictions 'down to people's behaviour' – video

It comes as a joint statement from six unions representing teachers and other school staff condemned the “chaotic handling” of the reopening of schools after Christmas, with some parents only learning what would happen with their children’s school on Sunday evening.

But Hancock rejected accusations that the government was again acting too slowly to curb the spread of Covid-19, now being accelerated by the arrival of a new, more easily transmissible variant.

“We have moved incredibly fast to take action when necessary, including on Boxing Day, so we don’t shy away from decisions, difficult as they are,” he told BBC Radio 4’s Today programme. “We have shown that we’re prepared to move incredibly quickly, within 24 hours if we think that is necessary. And we keep these things under review all the time.”

Hancock indicated that one immediate move could be to shift more areas still under the previous highest level of Covid restrictions, tier 3, [to tier 4](#), under which most shops are also closed.

Asked whether the government could act within 24 hours, Hancock said: “We look at the data on a daily basis, and we can see at the moment there are significant rises, especially in the areas that are still in tier 3. But I also come back to this broader point, that it’s on all of us. The thing that stops the

spread of the disease is people not coming into contact with other people. That is the sad truth of it.”

Labour has [called for a full national lockdown](#) for England with immediate effect, citing the scale of increase in coronavirus case numbers, and the resultant impact in terms of hospital admissions and deaths.

While Hancock accepted it was “right to say the NHS is under significant pressure”, he said this was not necessarily greater than during the first Covid peak in spring, as although numbers in hospital were greater, there was also increased capacity.

Speaking shortly after an 82-year-old man became the first person in the world to [receive the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine](#) outside clinical trials, Hancock said he was “incredibly worried” about another variant of the virus, seemingly originating in South Africa, which some scientists have said could be resistant to current vaccines.

In another interview with Sky News, Hancock said the use of the new vaccine marked “a real pivotal moment” in efforts to combat Covid.

The government faces intense pressure over schools, with the joint statement from unions saying the current plan “is exposing education sector workers to serious risk of ill health and could fuel the pandemic”. The statement said: “The government’s chaotic handling of the opening of schools has caused confusion for teachers, school staff and parents alike.”

But, speaking to Sky News, Hancock said: “It is clear that the proportion of teachers who catch coronavirus is no higher than the rest of the population. So there is clear public health advice behind the position that we take and that is what people should follow because, of course, education is very important as well, especially for people’s long-term health.”

The shadow education secretary, Kate Green, told Today that tougher government action was needed. “It is very clear that the government has lost control of the virus. We’re seeing a really alarming rise in cases and in the spread of the infection,” she said.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

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Coronavirus

UK Covid: Boris Johnson tells people to stay at home as England enters third national lockdown — as it happened

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Schools

Parents face week of uncertainty over school reopenings in England

Local authorities scramble to delay return to classrooms amid rising coronavirus infection rates

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[Robert Booth](#), [Richard Adams](#) and [Helen Pidd](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 15.04 EST Last modified on Sun 3 Jan 2021 23.37 EST



Primary schools across London and the south-east of England will remain closed until 18 January due to high coronavirus infection rates. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/REX/Shutterstock

Parents face more disruption and uncertainty as local authorities across the country scramble to delay schools reopening in the face of rising

coronavirus infection rates and the UK prime minister, [Boris Johnson](#), admitted that more could be shut in the coming weeks.

On the day before millions of children were set to return to their classrooms, Essex council said it would unilaterally close schools to most pupils until at least Wednesday and Kent county council joined England's largest education authority in Birmingham in asking the education secretary to allow primaries to stay closed. They said the argument for reopening amid high infection rates "does not stack up".

Education bosses in Newcastle, Gateshead and Manchester also said they would support primary schools that decide not to fully reopen. Some primary schools in Slough have confirmed they will not reopen this week and Brighton and Hove city council has advised primary schools not to return in person, except for vulnerable or key workers' children.

The moves came as [Labour called for a national lockdown within 24 hours](#), warning the virus was "out of control". While stopping short of calling for all schools to close, the party's leader Keir Starmer, said it was "inevitable" more would need to do so.

His comments came after Johnson [warned lockdown rules were "about to get tougher"](#) and acknowledged that school closures could be part of measures to quell infections, as official figures showed another 54,990 laboratory-confirmed cases of coronavirus in the UK and a further 454 deaths.

But the prime minister also urged parents to send their children to primary schools this week: "I understand people's anxieties but there is no doubt in my mind that schools are safe and that education is a priority."

Primary schoolchildren were due to return to classrooms starting on Monday in all but 60 high-infection "contingency" areas, which include all of London and large areas of Essex and Kent, as well as parts of East Sussex, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire.

[UK Covid cases](#)

Secondary schools are due to stay closed this week to all but vulnerable children and those with parents who are key workers. They will only reopen next week for pupils in years 11 and 13 facing GCSE and A-level exams. They are expected to reopen more fully from 18 January.

However, Gavin Williamson, the education secretary, said on Sunday that reopenings would only happen “in areas where we have not had to apply the contingency framework”, opening the door for secondary schools in more hard-hit areas to remain shut to the majority of pupils into the second half of January.

The Department for Education is making preparations for more remote learning and said it expects to deliver more than 50,000 laptops and tablets to schools on Monday and more than 100,000 in total during the first week of term.

A DfE spokesperson said: “Children’s education has consistently been a national priority, which is why we want classrooms to reopen wherever possible in the new term. [Schools](#) will continue to implement appropriate safety measures to help mitigate the risk of transmission. As we’ve said, we will move to remote education as a last resort, with involvement of public health officials, in areas where infection and pressures on the NHS are highest.”

The government was criticised for [failing to deliver on a promise](#) to deliver laptops to disadvantaged children in the first lockdown.

Councillor Garry Bridges, in charge of education at Manchester city council, stressed “the best place for children is to be in school” but said the current strategy of closing schools only in the south showed “a London-centred focus”.

“We are not giving blanket advice to schools to remain closed currently but will work with individual schools to make the right decision for their circumstances and support them in any way we can,” he said.

[Andy Burnham](#), the mayor of Greater Manchester, urged the government to allow “local flexibility” in deciding which schools to open to most pupils

and to “let headteachers come to a balanced judgment based on what’s happening”.

Ian Ward, the leader of Birmingham council, and Jayne Francis, the council member for education, told Williamson in a letter: “The new strain of the virus and the rising case levels in the city mean we are deeply concerned about the return of children to primary schools, special schools and alternative provision next week.”

But the government pushed back on Sunday by refusing to allow Cumbria to keep its primary schools closed. Covid infections are doubling every four to five days in parts of the county and the council asked for approval to keep its primary schools closed for a fortnight.

“This is disappointing news and I feel that this is the wrong decision for Cumbria and for our families and communities,” said Stewart Young, the council leader.

The TUC criticised the government’s “last-minute” approach to schools reopening, and called on employers to offer furlough to all parents affected by closures. The organisation said it was concerned that not all bosses were aware that caring responsibilities were an acceptable reason to furlough, so many would have no choice but to take unpaid time off work to look after children, or leave jobs altogether.

The uncertainty over school openings has been fuelled by starkly competing interests. The Children’s Commissioner for [England](#), Anne Longfield, on Sunday issued a warning about children’s mental health and said new school closures marked “a serious moment for children”. She said any closures must be for “the absolute minimum of time” and called for teachers to be vaccinated “as a priority”.

However, on 22 December the government’s Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) group concluded “R [the reproduction number for the virus] would be lower with schools closed”. It said the biggest effect would be if secondary schools were shut. The Independent Sage group of experts [last week](#) called for the closure of schools for at least a month for most children.

All four of England's main teaching unions, including the National Education Union (NEU), the Association of School and College Leaders and the National Association of Head Teachers, have called for schools to remain closed to all but eligible pupils. The move is also backed by Unison and GMB, representing the majority of other school staff.

"It is not good enough to always be behind the curve, playing catch up with new strains of Covid, seeing hospital admissions rise and cases numbers spiral out of control," said Kevin Courtney, the joint general secretary of the NEU.

The government has also been called upon to urgently rethink its approach to exams. Speaking on Sunday, Johnson suggested for the first time that A-levels and GCSEs may not take place in England this summer, telling Marr: "We've got to be realistic about the pace of which this new variant has spread ... and we've got to be humble in the face of this virus."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/03/parents-face-week-of-uncertainty-over-school-reopenings-in-england>

[Syria](#)

Syrian detainees' families forced to pay huge bribes to corrupt officials - report

Report says arrest and extortion of Syrian population is major source of funding for Assad regime



A satellite image of the Saydnaya prison complex, outside Damascus. The report surveyed more than 1,200 former prisoners and family members.
Photograph: EPA

A satellite image of the Saydnaya prison complex, outside Damascus. The report surveyed more than 1,200 former prisoners and family members.
Photograph: EPA

[Joshua Surtees](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Families of detainees in Syrian prisons are routinely forced to bribe officials to be allowed to visit them or to win their release, according to a [report](#) that reveals the vast scale of extortion in the detention system.

The sums involved – rising as high as £2m in one jail - are likely to be helping senior members of the Assad regime avoid sanctions, a survey of more than 1,200 former prisoners and family members suggests.

A report by the Association of Detainees and the Missing in Sednaya Prison (ADMSP) says guards, judges, members of the military and in some cases middlemen receive cuts as part of a corrupt network that feeds large amounts of cash into the country's security apparatus.

About a quarter of those surveyed said they had been asked for extortion money. Some paid a few thousand dollars or less, while others – particularly families living in exile – paid up to \$30,000 (£22,000). Officials at one jail extorted about \$2.7m in total, the report suggests.

Diab Serrih, the report's author and ADMSP co-founder, said the money ended up in the pockets of corrupt officials, warlords and what he called the “deep government ruling [Syria](#) behind the scenes”.

“It’s an industry of detention,” he said. “The Syrian regime is built on security and intelligence branches. They pay poor salaries to encourage corruption and the bribes finance this infrastructure of detainment.”

Serrih claimed the system was endorsed by figures within the regime, many of whom are subject to sanctions and unable to hold bank accounts abroad. The total amount in bribes is likely to be much higher than that revealed in the report.

According to estimates by humanitarian watchdogs, between 100,000 and 250,000 people were arrested or forcibly disappeared, beginning before the uprising against [Bashar al-Assad](#) in 2011. That number had sharply escalated by the end of 2012.

Tens of thousands of people are believed to have been tortured or killed in Syrian jails since the Arab spring began. Sednaya prison, a military facility on the outskirts of Damascus, has long been considered one of the most formidable institutions in Syria.

Serrih was detained in 2006 after forming a youth opposition group and spent five years as a political prisoner before being released in 2011 as the regime cleared jails of opponents to make room for an influx of activists and protesters. He spent his childhood in the Sednaya area before moving to Damascus. After first fleeing to Turkey, he now lives in the Netherlands.

The report says forced disappearance is a major strategy of the Syrian state, designed to control and intimidate people. “Arrest and monetary extortion of the population constitute a great source of funding of the state, and its repressive apparatus specifically,” it says.

The report calls for the international community to pressure supporters of the regime, particularly Russia, into revealing the fate of the disappeared and to allow families to visit those still alive. It also demands that officials reveal where the dead were buried and allow DNA testing of remains so that victims can be returned to their families.

Ahmad is one former prisoner who thought he would never see his family again. He was detained in nine different prisons in three years and his family paid \$30,000 in bribes to get him out.

“Like many families, mine kept paying \$1,000 here and \$1,000 there, hoping they were giving it to a person who could get them information,” he said. “Eventually they paid a large sum to a lawyer who told them that some of it will go to a judge and some to the security forces.”

Abdullah was 19 and planning to desert the army, where he was serving his compulsory military service, when he was stopped at a checkpoint in October 2012. He was taken to prison, tortured and interrogated.

“Every day, four or five people would die and be taken out of the cell,” he said. “They mostly starved to death. Guards would enter the cell and carry out summary beatings, leaving the prisoners in a state of mental terror.”

In court he was convicted of stealing weapons and terrorism charges, and sentenced to 15 years in Sednaya. Food was given to prisoners sometimes, he said, but not if guards were in a bad mood. Talking and reading was

forbidden, and torture was meted out to prisoners who were Sunnis but not those from Assad's Alawite sect.

"My parents hired a lawyer to cut my sentence to six years," Abdullah said. "The lawyer paid \$10,000 dollars in bribes. Me and my three brothers are still working to pay off the debt."

Many families have spent thousands of dollars trying to obtain news of their loved ones but received nothing in return.

Nadia, a Syrian refugee in Lebanon, said she last saw her husband when he travelled to Damascus in December 2012 to renew identity papers. "He was in a car with his father and seven others," she said. "The last thing we heard was that they had reached Homs. All nine disappeared."

In 2016 a neighbour told Nadia that a nephew in the military could help release her husband and father-in-law in exchange for cash. To raise the money, she sold land and a house in Syria, borrowed money from relatives and even sold her jewellery.

"We paid \$5,000," said Nadia. "Later, we were told that their release was imminent but that another \$5,000 was needed. After the payment was made through a western Union transfer, they disappeared. It was a scam.

"It felt like it was so close and all in my hands, and when it didn't happen, I broke down."

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[**Donald Trump**](#)

'I just want 11,780 votes': Trump pressed Georgia to overturn Biden victory

- Trump asked secretary of state to recalculate vote in phone call
- [Republican push to keep Trump in power seems doomed](#)

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York and [Richard Luscombe](#) in Miami

Sun 3 Jan 2021 17.40 EST First published on Sun 3 Jan 2021 14.10 EST

Play Video

1:18

Listen to excerpts from the call between Donald Trump and Georgia's secretary of state— video

In an hour-long phone call on Saturday, Donald Trump pressed Georgia secretary of state Brad Raffensperger to “find” enough votes to overturn Joe Biden’s victory there in the election the president [refuses to concede](#).

The Washington Post [obtained](#) a tape of the “extraordinary” conversation, which Trump [acknowledged](#) on Twitter.

Amid widespread outrage including calls for a second impeachment, Bob Bauer, a senior Biden adviser, [said](#): “We now have irrefutable proof of a president pressuring and threatening an official of his own party to get him to rescind a state’s lawful, certified vote count and fabricate another in its place.”

The Post published [the full call](#).

“The people of [Georgia](#) are angry, the people in the country are angry,” Trump said. “And there’s nothing wrong with saying, you know, um, that

you've recalculated."

Raffensperger is a Republican who has become [a bête noire among Trump supporters](#) for repeatedly saying Biden's win in his state was fair. In one of a number of parries, he said: "Well, Mr President, the challenge that you have is, the data you have is wrong."

Trump said: "So look. All I want to do is this. I just want to find 11,780 votes, which is one more than we have. Because we won the state."

He insisted: "There's no way I lost Georgia. There's no way. We won by hundreds of thousands of votes."

Trump's contempt for democracy is laid bare. Once again. On tape

Adam Schiff

Trump did not win Georgia, which went Democratic for the first time since 1992. Its result [has been certified](#). Attempts to pressure Republicans in other battleground states have failed, as have the vast majority of challenges to results in court.

Despite promised objections from [at least 12 senators](#) and a majority of House Republicans, Biden's electoral college victory will be ratified by Congress on Wednesday and the Democrat will be inaugurated as the 46th president on 20 January. Trump will then leave the White House – where he remained, tweeting angrily, all weekend.

Edward B Foley, an Ohio State law professor, told the Post the call was "inappropriate and contemptible" and should prompt moral outrage. In an email to the Guardian, University of Richmond law professor Carl Tobias said Trump might be "in legal jeopardy after Biden is inaugurated".

Play Video

1:35

Kamala Harris says Trump's call to Georgia secretary of state is 'bold abuse of power' – video

“For example, if the justice department or US attorneys believe that Trump violated federal law or if local prosecutors in states, such as Arizona, Georgia, Michigan and Wisconsin, where Trump may have engaged in similar behaviour with state or local election officials, believe that Trump violated state election laws, the federal or state prosecutors could file suit against Trump.”

Noah Bookbinder, executive director of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, went further, calling for Trump to be impeached a second time, little more than two weeks before he leaves office.

“The president of the United States has been caught on tape trying to rig a presidential election,” Bookbinder said. “This is a low point in American history and unquestionably impeachable conduct. It is incontrovertible and devastating.

“When [the Senate acquitted President Trump](#) for abusing his powers to try to get himself re-elected [in February 2020, regarding approaches to Ukraine for dirt on Biden], we worried that he would grow more brazen in his attempts to wrongly and illegally keep himself in power. He has ... Congress must act immediately.”

Democratic chairman of the House judiciary committee, Jerry Nadler, said in a statement that Trump “remains profoundly unfit for office” and “may have also subjected himself to additional criminal liability”.

In [a tweet](#), Adam Schiff, the lead prosecutor at the impeachment trial, said: “Trump’s contempt for democracy is laid bare. Once again. On tape. Pressuring an election official to ‘find’ the votes so he can win is potentially criminal, and another flagrant abuse of power by a corrupt man who would be a despot, if we allowed him. We will not.”

Nancy Pelosi, the California Democrat [elected](#) House speaker for a fourth term, set out strategy for the election certification in a memo to colleagues.

“Over the years,” she wrote, “we have experienced many challenges in the House, but no situation matches the Trump presidency and the Trump disrespect for the will of the people.”

Chuck Schumer, the Senate minority leader, took a shot at Ted Cruz, the Texas Republican leading calls for an “emergency audit” of the election.

“You want to investigate election fraud?” the New Yorker [tweeted](#). “Start with this.”

Adam Kinzinger, a Republican congressman from Illinois, [tweeted](#): “This is absolutely appalling. To every member of Congress considering objecting to the election results, you cannot – in light of this – do so with a clean conscience.”

Stacey Abrams is laughing about you. She’s going around saying, ‘These guys are dumber than a rock’

Donald Trump

White House chief of staff Mark Meadows and Cleta Mitchell, a Republican lawyer, were also on the call, during which Trump ran through debunked claims regarding supposed electoral fraud and called Raffensperger a “child”, “either dishonest or incompetent” and a “schmuck”. Characteristically, he also threatened legal action.

“You know what they did and you’re not reporting it,” Trump said. “You know, that’s a criminal offence. And you know, you can’t let that happen. That’s a big risk to you and to Ryan [Germany], your lawyer. That’s a big risk.”

Referring to [runoffs on Tuesday](#) that will decide control of the Senate, Trump said: “You know, the people of Georgia know that this was a scam.

“Because of what you’ve done to the president, a lot of people aren’t going out to vote, and a lot of [Republicans](#) are going to vote negative, because they hate what you did to the president. OK? They hate it. And they’re going to vote. And you would be respected, really respected, if this can be straightened out before the election.”

Republican incumbents Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue, [seeking to beat](#) Democrats Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff, have ranged themselves

behind Trump. But Georgia Republicans fear his attacks could suppress turnout as Democrats work to boost their own.



Democratic Senate candidate Raphael Warnock bumps elbows with Stacey Abrams during a rally with Joe Biden in Atlanta. Photograph: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

Early voting has reached unprecedented levels and on Sunday, former gubernatorial candidate Stacey Abrams told ABC's This Week: "What we're so excited about is that we haven't stopped reaching those voters. Millions of contacts have been made, thousands of new registrations have been held. We know that at least 100,000 people who did not vote in the general election are now voting in this election."

Trump told Raffensperger: "Stacey Abrams is laughing about you. She's going around saying, 'These guys are dumber than a rock.'"

The [Democrats](#) seized on the call.

"That is a direct attack on our democracy," Ossoff said, at a rally in Savannah. "If David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler had one piece of steel in their spines, one shred of integrity, they would be out here defending Georgia voters from this kind of assault."

In a statement, Warnock said: “Senator Loeffler has a responsibility to speak out against the unsubstantiated claims of fraud, to defend Georgia’s elections, and to put Georgia ahead of herself. She has not and never will.”

Perdue and Loeffler did not immediately comment.

Trump told Raffensperger he knew the call wasn’t “going anywhere”. The state official ended the conversation.

On Twitter, Trump said Raffensperger “was unwilling, or unable, to answer questions such as the ‘ballots under table’ scam, ballot destruction, out of state ‘voters’, dead voters, and more. He has no clue!”

Twitter duly applied a disclaimer: “This claim about election fraud is disputed.”

Raffensperger also responded: “Respectfully, President Trump: What you’re saying is not true.”

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[US politics live](#)

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Trump speaks at Georgia rally ahead of runoff elections - as it happened

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[**Donald Trump**](#)

Trump's phone call to Brad Raffensperger: six key points

Conversation between president and Georgia's secretary of state laid bare Trump's determination to cling on to power

Play Video

1:18

Listen to excerpts from the call between Donald Trump and Georgia's secretary of state— video

Donald Trump has been recorded pressuring Georgia's secretary of state to overturn US president-elect Joe Biden's victory in the state, in a tape obtained by the [Washington Post](#).

The conversation is mainly between Trump and [**Brad Raffensperger**](#), Georgia's Republican secretary of state, but Trump allies including Mark Meadows, the White House chief of staff, and attorney Cleta Mitchell were also present, as was Ryan Germany, Raffensperger's general counsel. Here are the main points:

1. Trump sought to change the election result

On the call Trump pressed Raffensperger to “find 11,780 votes”.

“The people of [Georgia](#) are angry, the people in the country are angry,” Trump said. “And there’s nothing wrong with saying, you know, um, that you’ve recalculated.” He later pleaded: “So what are we going to do here folks? I only need 11,000 votes. Fellas, I need 11,000 votes. Give me a break.”

Joe Biden won Georgia. The result [has been certified](#) and Biden’s electoral college victory will be ratified by Congress on Wednesday.

2. Trump tried to intimidate Raffensperger

Trump insisted: “There’s no way I lost Georgia. There’s no way. We won by hundreds of thousands of votes.” He went on to suggest that Raffensperger could face a criminal investigation. “You know what they did and you’re not reporting it,” Trump said. “You know, that’s a criminal offence. And you know, you can’t let that happen. That’s a big risk to you and to Ryan [Germany], your lawyer. That’s a big risk.”

3. Trump applied pressure over Georgia runoffs

Trump told Raffensperger that if he did not act by Tuesday he would be harming the chances of Georgia Republicans David Perdue and Kelly Loeffler in this week’s runoff elections, which will determine whether the Democrats or the Republicans control the Senate. Referring to the runoffs in the call, Trump said, “You would be respected, really respected, if this can be straightened out before the election.”

4. Raffensperger continued to stand up to Trump

Raffensperger is a Republican who has pushed back against Trump and insisted Biden’s win in Georgia was fair. Responding to Trump, he said: “Well, Mr President, the challenge that you have is, the data you have is wrong.”

When Trump claimed that over 5,000 ballots were cast in the state by dead people, Raffensperger responded: “The actual number was two. Two. Two people that were dead that voted.”

5. Trump may have committed a crime

The University of Richmond law professor Carl Tobias said Trump might be “in legal jeopardy after Biden is inaugurated”. In an email to the Guardian, he wrote: “For example, if the justice department or US attorneys believe that Trump violated federal law, or if local prosecutors in states such as Arizona, Georgia, Michigan and Wisconsin, where Trump may have engaged in similar behaviour with state or local election officials, believe

that Trump violated state election laws, the federal or state prosecutors could file suit against Trump.”

Richard H Pildes, a constitutional law professor at New York University, told the Washington Post: “The president is either knowingly attempting to coerce state officials into corrupting the integrity of the election or is so deluded that he believes what he’s saying.” Trump’s actions may have violated federal statutes, he said.

Michael R Bromwich, a former federal prosecutor in the US Attorney’s Office for the Southern District of New York, wrote: “Unless there are portions of the tape that somehow negate criminal intent, ‘I just want to find 11,780 votes’ and his threats against Raffensperger and his counsel violate 52 U.S. Code 20511.”

6. Trump refused to back down

On Sunday Trump [tweeted](#): “I spoke to Secretary of State Brad Raffensperger yesterday about Fulton county and voter fraud in Georgia. He was unwilling, or unable, to answer questions such as the ‘ballots under table’ scam, ballot destruction, out of state ‘voters’, dead voters, and more. He has no clue!”

Twitter labelled the tweet with the disclaimer: “This claim about election fraud is disputed” and Raffensperger responded to Trump’s claims with a tweet saying: “Respectfully, President Trump: What you’re saying is not true.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/04/trumps-phone-call-to-brad-raffensperger-five-key-points>

[**Donald Trump**](#)

Leave military out of it, former defence secretaries tell Trump

Unprecedented letter calls on voted-out president to accept Joe Biden's election victory amid growing fears over his behaviour



Among the signatories was James Mattis, who served as defence secretary in the Trump administration
Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

Among the signatories was James Mattis, who served as defence secretary in the Trump administration
Photograph: Leah Millis/Reuters

[Julian Borger](#) in Washington

Sun 3 Jan 2021 20.16 EST

All 10 former US defence secretaries still living, including two who worked for [Donald Trump](#), have called for the president and his supporters to accept he lost the election and warned against attempts to involve the military in his increasingly desperate efforts to overturn the result.

In an unprecedented joint letter published in the [Washington Post](#), the defence secretaries addressed the worst fears of what could happen in 17

days of Trump's administration remaining before Joe Biden's inauguration: an attempt by Trump to foment a crisis with the aim of triggering a military intervention in his last-ditch struggle to hold on power.

"Efforts to involve the US armed forces in resolving election disputes would take us into dangerous, unlawful and unconstitutional territory," the letter said.

['I just want 11,780 votes': Trump pressed Georgia to overturn Biden victory](#)
[Read more](#)

"Civilian and military officials who direct or carry out such measures would be accountable, including potentially facing criminal penalties, for the grave consequences of their actions on our republic."

Among the signatories were James Mattis and Mark Esper, who both served as defence secretaries in the Trump administration. Esper [openly contradicted Trump](#) in June by insisting there were no grounds for invoking the Insurrection Act, which allows for the deployment of US troops on American streets in extreme circumstances.

Dick Cheney, defence secretary under George HW Bush, and vice-president to his son, George W Bush, and Donald Rumsfeld, defence secretary in the younger Bush's administration, also signed. The other signatories were William Perry and William Cohen, defence secretaries in the Bill Clinton administration; Leon Panetta, Chuck Hagel and Ashton Carter, who served under Barack Obama; and Robert Gates, who served under both the younger Bush and Obama.

"Transitions, which all of us have experienced, are a crucial part of the successful transfer of power. They often occur at times of international uncertainty about US national security policy and posture," the former defence secretaries wrote. "They can be a moment when the nation is vulnerable to actions by adversaries seeking to take advantage of the situation."

They called on the current defence secretary, Christopher Miller, and his officials to resume cooperation with the Biden transition team, [who had](#)

complained their briefings had been cut off and the Pentagon had ceased answering their inquiries.

The [Washington Post quoted](#) Eric Edelman, a former US ambassador and defence official, as saying the genesis of the remarkable letter was a conversation he had with Cheney about how the military might be used in coming days.

There are concerns over unrest on Wednesday when [a dozen Republican senators](#) say they will challenge the normally routine congressional ratification of the electoral college result.

Trump has urged his supporters to rally in Washington, tweeting: “Be there, will be wild!” The far right Proud Boys are expected to be among the pro-Trump crowd in the capital.

Cohen told the Post he was concerned by the mention of the possibility of martial law by the former Trump national security adviser Michael Flynn, especially after Trump’s use of the military and other federal forces to remove protesters outside the White House in June.

“It’s a very dangerous course of action that needs to be called out before it happens,” Cohen said.

“[It is] so important to see the country’s secretaries of defence sending this message,” wrote Risa Brooks, a Marquette University associate professor studying civil-military relations and political violence. “The civilians who run the military need to be front and centre in conveying this message to the public and not leave it to the military alone.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/jan/04/leave-military-out-of-it-former-defence-secretaries-tell-trump>

Malaysia

Nora Quoirin's family express dismay as coroner rules out others' involvement

Fifteen-year-old went missing overnight while on holiday with her family in Malaysia in 2019



Nora Quoirin. Her parents criticised aspects of the police response to her disappearance in Malaysia Photograph: AP

Nora Quoirin. Her parents criticised aspects of the police response to her disappearance in Malaysia Photograph: AP

[Rebecca Ratcliffe](#) and agencies

Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.37 EST

The family of Nora Anne Quoirin, the London schoolgirl found dead during a holiday in a Malaysian jungle, have said they are “utterly disappointed” after a coroner ruled that no third party was involved and that she probably died as a result of misadventure.

The coroner, Maimoonah Aid, ruled out homicide, natural death and suicide on Monday and said the French-Irish 15-year-old probably got lost after

leaving her family's cottage on her own.

"After hearing all the relevant evidence, I rule that there was no one involved in the death of Nora Anne," Maimoonah told a court in the city of Seremban. "It is more probable than not that she died by misadventure."

[Nora Quoirin inquest: father says teenager had no survival instinct](#)
[Read more](#)

Maimoonah said there were no suspicious circumstances prior to the disappearance, no ransom request and no signs of intrusion into the family's chalet. The teenager probably left the family accommodation "on her own and subsequently got lost in the abandoned palm oil plantation", she said.

"For me to speculate and presume of her actions and involvement of a third party without any proof, that would be a breach of my duty so the inquiry is hereby closed."

Nora's parents, who had hoped for an open verdict and were listening from their home in London, said in a statement: "Once again we see that justice struggles to support the most vulnerable in society, only engaging with special needs at a surface level, and not at the level that truly reflects children like Nora.

"We believe we have fought not just for Nora but in honour of all the special needs children in this world who deserve our most committed support and the most careful application of justice.

"This is Nora's unique legacy and we will never let it go."

Nora, from Balham, south London, went missing overnight while on a family holiday at a resort in Seremban, south of Kuala Lumpur in August 2019. She had been sleeping in a bedroom with her brother and sister, but when the family woke one morning they found that she had disappeared. She was barefoot and wearing just underwear. A large window in the family's chalet was found open.

After a 10-day search, [Nora's body was discovered](#) unclothed beside a stream in dense jungle, 1.2 miles (1.9km) away from the resort where she

had been staying. An autopsy concluded that Nora was likely to have died of starvation and stress after spending seven days in the jungle.

Police said their investigations found no signs that Nora had been abducted, and the Malaysian authorities later classified the case as “requiring no further action”. However, Nora’s parents pushed for an inquest, stating that many questions regarding her disappearance remained unanswered.

During the inquest, which began in August, a senior police official, Mohamad Mat Yusop, said he saw nothing suspicious when inspecting the chalet where Nora had been staying and he believed she had climbed out of the window.

Nora’s parents, who spoke through a video link, questioned these conclusions and criticised aspects of the police response. Meabh and Sebastien Quoirin repeatedly stressed it would have been completely out of character for her to have wandered off alone.

Her parents spoke of how Nora had a neurological condition that meant she would have struggled to venture so far. Nora, who was 15, was born with holoprosencephaly, which affected both her balance and mobility, and her family described her as vulnerable.

During the search operation, a recording of Meabh calling her daughter’s nickname – Nora Bean – was played out across the jungle, because her parents feared she would not answer a stranger’s call.

Her mother told the coroner’s court that she doubted Nora, who weighed 30kg (4st 10lb), would have been strong enough to open and climb out of the chalet window. Nora had never wandered out of their front door at home, the court heard.

At the time of Nora’s disappearance her parents had warned repeatedly that they believed she had been abducted, but police continued to treat the incident as a missing person case.

Meabh said she feared crucial evidence had been lost because police were too slow to investigate the possibility of a criminal element, and described

problems with the response. The officer sent to take a statement from her struggled to communicate in English, she said, while some police officials were “quite rude and arrogant”.

Both parents said they had heard muffled whispering inside the family’s chalet on the night her daughter disappeared. They had been half-asleep at the time and so did not act.

The resort’s owner, Haanim Bamadhaj, told the inquest that a window in the chalet was broken and could be opened from the outside.

Almost 50 witnesses gave evidence to the inquest, including a British pathologist who conducted a second autopsy on Nora’s body. He did not challenge the conclusions of the autopsy completed in Malaysia, but said it was impossible to completely rule out the possibility of a sexual assault due to the condition of her remains.

During her ruling, Maimoonah focused on the fact the family were probably exhausted after a long journey from Britain.

“The family [were] all jet-lagged and tired,” she said. “Nora Anne had also shown her level of tiredness increase.”

This made it likely that the teenager, in a “strange and new place”, had wandered out of the family’s accommodation of her own accord on their first night at the resort, she said.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/nora-quoirin-inquest-coroner-rules-out-involvement-of-others-in-teenagers-death-malaysia>

Medical research

Spider-Man-style medical gun spins out 'skin substitute' for burns

Israeli firm claims device allows patients to move freely and does away with painful dressings



A demonstration of Spincare at the OurCrowd Global Investor Summit in Jerusalem in February. Photograph: Nir Alon/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

A demonstration of Spincare at the OurCrowd Global Investor Summit in Jerusalem in February. Photograph: Nir Alon/Zuma Wire/Rex/Shutterstock

[Oliver Holmes in Jerusalem](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 02.57 EST

Doctors in [Europe](#) and Israel have begun using a medical gun that spins out a protective web to cover burns and wounds, hoping the breathable “skin substitute” will help patients recover without the need for painful bandage changes.

Nanomedic, the Israeli company that designed [the Spincare system](#), claims its device gives patients increased mobility – often essential for burn

rehabilitation – and the ability to shower, a process that can be difficult with traditional bandages. The translucent layer it produces allows medics to examine the wound without touching it, the firm says.

Rob Lyon, the managing director of the UK-based distributor for Spincare, said burns could be extremely difficult to dress, making the application of bandages agonising.

“Spincare is a contactless device,” said Lyon, whose company, Regen Medical, specialises in burns and wound healing products. The protective mesh, Lyon said, “mimics the skin”, which allows patients to move around more easily.

Electrospinning, the technique the device employs, involves using electricity to create nano-fibres from a solution, and has been in use for years, including in the medical field. Nanomedic says its device, however, is much smaller than the large electrospinning machines previously available, meaning it can be carried to a patient’s bedside.

Gary J Sagiv, the company’s vice-president for marketing and sales, said hospitals in Germany and Switzerland had used the product for facial wounds, where large bandages could be burdensome. Others, he said, had applied it to wounds on people with diabetes, [who can develop chronic foot sores that can lead to amputation](#).

Unwilling to provide a price, which he said differed depending on which country it was sold in, Sagiv claimed Spincare was cost-effective for hospitals compared with other advanced wound care bandages.

Baljit Dheansa, a doctor in the UK who specialises in burns and scarring, said he had used Spincare on five patients at Queen Victoria hospital in Sussex, with positive results on superficial burns. “You have this fine whitish thing on that’s fairly robust and seems to cope with most things,” he said.

With deep burns, it was less effective, he said, but clarified that Nanomedic had not claimed Spincare would be useful for deep burns.

Dheansa said the product arrived at a time of debate within the medical community on whether the traditional approach of regularly changing bandages to assess wounds was counterproductive. Several specialist bandages already being used by doctors do not need to be changed often.

“Spincare is the same sort of concept – the idea of protecting a wound and letting nature do what it will do,” he said. “Although it’s not absolutely novel in the sense that it’s a stick-on dressing that stays stuck, it’s novel way of applying it. And in some respects, it’s probably a little bit easier.”

“You get your laser-guided weapon system … you just spin,” he joked, referring to the laser pointer on the tip of the medical gun to help the user aim.

Queen Victoria hospital has agreed to buy more single-use capsules for the product, according to Dheansa, and he hopes to produce research on its effectiveness.

“What we try as much as we can is to take a fairly independent view of these things. Although a company will say it does this and does this and does this, we’ve come in fairly innocently and independently and said, you say this but let’s actually see what it does.”

So far, Dheansa said, Spincare “does what it says on the tin”.

“With this kind of dressing, in the right circumstance, it just means the patient doesn’t have to learn about how to do dressings, and they are bit more flexible and don’t have to worry so much. And sort of relax a bit more.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/spider-man-style-medical-gun-spins-out-skin-substitute-for-burns>

South Korea

South Korea's population falls for first time in its history

Ageing population and low birth rate create demographic tipping point in Asia's fourth-largest economy



South Korea's birth rate dropped to a record low of 0.92 in 2019.
Photograph: Yonhap/EPA

South Korea's birth rate dropped to a record low of 0.92 in 2019.
Photograph: Yonhap/EPA

Justin McCurry in Tokyo

Mon 4 Jan 2021 02.23 EST

South Korea's population has fallen for the first time in the country's history, as it battles an ageing population and chronically low birth rate.

The latest census figures, released at the weekend, show the population stood at 51,829,023 at the end of December, down from 51,838,023 from the previous year.

South Korea's [population](#) had risen every year over the previous decade, although the growth rate had declined from 1.49% in 2010 to 0.05% by 2019, according to the Yonhap news agency.

[Politician scolds female professor for not having child](#)

[Read more](#)

Data reported by Yonhap showed the country recorded 275,815 births in 2020, compared with 307,764 deaths.

The trend, which has also led to a [population decline in neighbouring Japan](#), is adding to pressure on the government to address the long-term demographic challenges posed by a rapidly ageing society and one of the lowest [fertility](#) rates in the world.

"Amid the rapidly declining birth rate, the government needs to undertake fundamental changes to its relevant policies," the interior ministry said.

As its overall population shrinks, [South Korea](#) – Asia's fourth-largest economy – is also experiencing a rise in the number of older people, with those aged 60 and over accounting for 24% of the total.

Depopulation is not confined to ageing rural regions; the population of the country's capital, Seoul, fell by just over 60,000 last year, Yonhap said.

The administration of the president, Moon Jae-in, recently announced initiatives to encourage couples to have bigger families, including a one-off payment of 1m won [£675] for pregnant women and monthly cash allowances for children aged under 12 months.

But critics say the measures do little to tackle much bigger financial obstacles to having more children, such as high education and housing costs.

Pressure on family finances aside, some experts have pointed to growing [opposition among South Korean women](#) to conforming to social norms by raising children and caring for ageing in-laws while their husbands work.

In 2018, just over 22% of South Korean women who were single or had never married said they thought tying the knot was a necessary part of life,

compared with almost 47% a decade earlier. That shift is reflected in a drop in the number of marriages, from 434,900 in 1996 to 257,600 last year.

South Korea's birth rate – the average number of children a woman has during her lifetime – dropped to a record low of 0.92 in 2019, the lowest among all members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. That is well below the rate of 2.1 it needs to keep its population stable, and a sharp drop from 50 years ago, when the birth rate stood at 4.53.

If current trends persist, the government predicts South Korea's population will drop to 39 million by 2067, when more than 46% of the population will be aged over 64.

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[Kashmir](#)

Public outrage grows after Indian army kills three in Kashmir

Families rebut claims victims, aged 16 to 22, were militants while ex-chief minister calls for investigation



Ghulam Mohammad Lone, father of Zubair Ahmad, 22, who was killed by the Indian army. Photograph: Kamran Yousuf

Ghulam Mohammad Lone, father of Zubair Ahmad, 22, who was killed by the Indian army. Photograph: Kamran Yousuf

Aakash Hassan in Pulwama and [Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 00.00 EST

Surrounded by mourners who gathered in his garden, Mushtaq Ahmad Wani fell to his knees with a grief-ridden scream. “They killed my only son and buried him far away in the mountains,” he cried out.

Wani, a 42-year-old fruit merchant living in Below, a small village near Pulwama in the Indian region of [Kashmir](#), had been driving home on Wednesday when he received a message from the police, requesting a

photograph of his 16-year-old son, Athar Mushtaq. Mushtaq, a student, had left home the previous afternoon.

By the time Wani reached home, he was given the news that made his heart shatter. Mushtaq was dead, killed by the Indian army on Tuesday night. They claimed he was one of three militants who were part of Kashmir's long-running insurgency and who were planning an attack on the region's main city of Srinagar.

But Wani was confused and angry. His was certain his son was no militant.

[Indian police charge army officer with killing three Kashmir civilians](#)
[Read more](#)

"He had called his sister and told her that he had gone to [nearby] Pulwama town and would return by the evening or stay for the night at a friend's place," said Wani. "He told her his phone might get switched off because of low battery."

Wani was not alone. The parents of the other two killed in the same purported gunfight have also disputed the army's version of events and claimed that their sons, Aijaz Maqbool Ganai, 20, and Zubair Ahmad Lone, 22, were not militants at all.

All three families of Mushtaq, Ganai and Lone are claiming they were innocent, killed by the Indian army in a staged encounter and their deaths passed off as a successful anti-militancy operation. The military has a history of grave human rights abuses and extrajudicial killings in Kashmir and news of the deaths prompted mass protests across the region. Mehbooba Mufti, former chief minister of Kashmir, has called for an investigation into the deaths.

The Indian region of Kashmir has been home to a long-running dispute between India and Pakistan and insurgents have been fighting Indian rule since the early 1990s. Thousands, including civilians and militants, have been killed in the violence, and Indian army officers are often given rewards for the capture and killing of militants, either in financial pay-offs or promotions.

The incident comes [days after a rare police investigation](#) where an Indian army officer was indicted for the extrajudicial killing of three Kashmiri labourers in a staged gunfight in July 2020. The officer was found to have shot the civilians, placed weapons on their dead bodies before “stripping them of their identities and tagging them as hardcore terrorists”.

It is unusual for the families of known militants to profess their innocence. Locals who join the insurgency in Kashmir usually announce their recruitment into militant ranks on social media, often accompanied by a picture of them clutching a gun, but none of the three had done this. Those who join without such announcements are still usually listed by the police and the army, and their details, including pictures, are kept on record. However, local police admitted the three “were not mentioned in our list of terrorists” and had no previous arrests. Nevertheless, the police and military maintain they were “hardcore associates of terrorists”.



Mohammad Maqbool Ganai shows a picture of his son, Aijaz Maqbool.
Photograph: Kamran Yousuf

The families said neither they nor their sons had ever been arrested and government forces had never raided their residences, which is commonplace for families of known rebels or their suspected associates.

Ganai, who was a close friend of Mushtaq, had reportedly spent the past month studying at home. He had been advised by a doctor to take bed rest because of prolapsed disc in his back and so had not left home for the past 35 days, according to his father, Mohammad Maqbool.

Ganai had left home on Wednesday morning to submit an exam form, said Maqbool. He had later called his mother to tell her he would likely stay at his friend Mustaq's home that evening.

"How can one become a militant in two hours?" said Maqbool, who is an officer serving in the local police.

Lone did not know either Mushtaq or Ganai, according to his family, and lived in a village 15km away. The distance between the homes of the three and the location of the killings is about 70km, a one-hour drive.

"I believe they were picked up, made to call home forcefully and then killed," alleged Lone's father, Ghulam Mohammad, 63, whose other two sons are also serving in the police.

[Kashmir protests erupt after alleged cover-up of death in custody](#)

[Read more](#)

The Indian army said intelligence led to them to the alleged three militants who they claimed were hiding in a house in the outskirts of Srinagar on Tuesday evening, and "lobbed grenades and fired indiscriminately" as soldiers besieged them. The following morning, the army had said they killed three militants armed with a rifle and two pistols.

The police claimed the three killed were asked to surrender but they refused. But the families were keen to point out that, in contrast to what often occurs when militants are cornered by Indian army officers, no family member was called down to the site to persuade the three to surrender or contacted at all.

Outside police headquarters, almost 50km away from their homes, the three families gathered at the gates after hearing of the deaths, wailing and beating their chests as they demanded justice for what they believed was the murder of their sons.

They pleaded with the police to hand over the bodies, which were instead taken to Sonamarg, 120km north of their homes, and buried there. The authorities in Kashmir have buried more than 100 militants in remote villages, without ascertaining their identities, citing coronavirus-related restrictions. Only a few members of each family were allowed to attend the burial.

According to the few family members allowed to see the bodies, all three had bullet marks in their chest area and it seemed they were shot from a close range.

The police said that they would investigate the families' claims but public outrage has continued to grow. In a letter to Jammu and the Kashmir lieutenant governor, Manoj Sinha, Mufti said incidents of fake encounters brought "disrepute" to the armed forces and were "a grave violation" of human rights.

"Questions are also looming over this encounter and there are conflicting versions and reports from police and the army," she wrote. "Justice can be served only if it is swift and therefore I request you to initiate an impartial investigation into the matter immediately."

On Saturday, as the first snow of the year fell on Kashmir, Wani dug an icy grave in the village cemetery. If the body of his son was not returned for burial, he said, he would lie in the grave himself.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/public-outrage-grows-after-indian-army-kills-three-in-kashmir>

Music industry

UK music streaming hits a high note amid the lows of Covid

Lewis Capaldi leads the way as format accounts for more than 80% of music consumption in 2020

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Lewis Capaldi singing on Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve.
Photograph: Gilles Mingasson/ABC/Rex/Shutterstock

The angst-laden ballads of [Lewis Capaldi](#) were the biggest soundtrack of pandemic Britain, industry figures for 2020 show, as streaming of music shot up by more than 20% in lockdown.

Streaming accounted for more than 80% of overall music consumption in the UK last year, when people listened to 139bn audio streams, up from

114bn in 2019. CD sales fell by almost a third year on year, although the fringe market in vinyl and even audio cassettes continued to rise.

UK artists led by Capaldi, Harry Styles and Dua Lipa accounted for eight of the top 10 albums. Nearly 200 artists were streamed more than 100m times, with the BPI hailing a new wave of diverse talent fuelling music industry growth, including acts such as Aitch, AJ Tracey, Headie One, J Hus and KSI.



The Weeknd performs for the 2020 American Music Awards on 22 November 2020 in Los Angeles. Photograph: AMA2020/Getty Images

The 24-year-old Scottish singer-songwriter's *Divinely Uninspired to a Hellish Extent* was the most streamed album for a second successive year in the UK, with tracks whose lyrics appositely spoke of "day bleed[ing] into nightfall" in isolation. Capaldi also recorded two of the top 10 selling singles, a chart topped by The Weeknd's *Blinding Lights*.

According to record labels' association the BPI, consumption was up for a sixth successive year, with the equivalent of 155m albums sold, up 8.2% on [last year](#). The figures have been recalibrated to include an element of video streaming weighted alongside other paid audio streams.

The increase in listening came as the live sector was all but wiped out by lockdown rules to combat the pandemic – and in spite of a dip in demand at the start of the first lockdown in spring.

The BPI said that streaming was fuelled by labels' increasing investment in A&R, or artists and repertoire, the talent scouting and artistic development side of the industry. A&R spending rose above £250m in 2019, bringing in more diverse talent from rap, hip-hop, dance and other genres.

The BPI's chief executive, Geoff Taylor, said: "A new wave of British talent is capitalising on the immediacy of streaming to achieve fantastic success, measured in the hundreds of millions, even billions of streams. Record labels are investing heavily in new artists to secure the future of British music, boosting the UK's exports and soft power."

He added: "The performance of recorded music in 2020 was remarkable, and reminds us how important music is to our country, even when our lives are disrupted."



Sales of vinyl records continue to grow in 2020, with oldies from happier times including Fleetwood Mac's Rumours among the top sellers.
Photograph: CBW/Alamy

The top 10 streaming artists in 2020 each achieved more than half a billion streams in the UK alone, while 8,000 different acts now total more than 1m streams annually.

CD sales slumped a further 31% to 16m units in the UK, although the BPI said the format was resilient and still played a key role. Drew Hill, the managing director of distributor Proper Music, said they remained a “kingmaker”, with most number one albums still getting there by having the most physical sales.

Sales of vinyl records continued their resurrection as a premium and collectors’ format, increasing for the 13th consecutive year, by 11.5% to 4.8m copies purchased. Top sellers were the reissued albums of happier decades: Fleetwood Mac’s Rumours, followed by Oasis and Amy Winehouse.

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An even unlikelier, if very niche, revival has been the audio cassette, whose UK sales almost doubled to 157,000 copies, led by Lady Gaga’s Chromatica.

Hill added: “As we celebrate this streaming boom, it’s important we also remember the ongoing fan demand for something tangible and recognise that streaming and physical music coexist quite happily.”

Meanwhile, Taylor said it was critical that the government supported venues and festivals during the continued Covid restrictions until the sector could re-emerged, with live revenues being a significant part of many artists’ income. Despite the growth in streaming, he said: “Any satisfaction we can take is tempered by the devastating impact of the pandemic on live music. We renew our calls on government to support our culturally important venues, nightclubs and festivals until they can safely reopen.”

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[Iran](#)

US aircraft carrier stays in Gulf after Pentagon claims Iranian 'threats' against Trump

Pentagon reverses decision to pull USS Nimitz out of Persian Gulf after 'recent threats issued by Iranian leaders'



The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea in formation as they transit the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. Photograph: Elliot Schaudt/US NAVY/AFP/Getty Images

The aircraft carrier USS Nimitz and the guided-missile cruiser USS Philippine Sea in formation as they transit the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. Photograph: Elliot Schaudt/US NAVY/AFP/Getty Images

Agence-France Presse

Mon 4 Jan 2021 00.13 EST

The United States has reversed a decision to bring an aircraft carrier home from the Persian Gulf, with the Pentagon saying that due to "recent threats" by [Iran](#) the USS Nimitz would stay in position.

The Nimitz has been [patrolling Gulf waters](#) since late November. In a statement issued on 31 December the acting US defence secretary, Christopher C Miller, had ordered the vessel to “transit directly home to complete a nearly 10-month deployment”.

[Iran flew surveillance drone over US aircraft carrier near Persian Gulf](#) [Read more](#)

The New York Times, quoting US officials, said this move was part of a “de-escalatory” signal to Tehran to avoid a conflict in President Donald Trump’s last days in office.

However, Miller issued a new statement on Sunday changing course. “Due to the [recent threats issued by Iranian leaders against President Trump](#) and other US government officials, I have ordered the USS Nimitz to halt its routine redeployment,” he said.

“The USS Nimitz will now remain on station in the US central command area of operations. No one should doubt the resolve of the United States of America.”

Miller did not elaborate on the threats involved.

His statement came one year after a US drone strike in Baghdad killed the [Iranian commander Qassem Suleimani](#) and his Iraqi lieutenant Abu Mahdi al-Muhandis.

Thousands of Iraqi protesters chanted “revenge” and “no to America” on Sunday. The [anniversary of the Baghdad drone strike](#) was also [marked across Iran](#) and by supporters in Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.

[Iran vows to retaliate against any 'enemy action', one year after Suleimani killing](#) [Read more](#)

Trump unilaterally withdrew the US from a landmark nuclear deal with Iran and world powers in 2018 and launched a “maximum pressure” campaign against Tehran, reimposing and reinforcing sanctions.

The two countries have twice come to the brink of war since June 2019, most acutely after the killing of Soleimani.

Days after the Suleimani assassination, Iran launched a volley of missiles at Iraqi bases housing US and other coalition troops. The US refrained from any further military response.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/us-aircraft-carrier-stays-in-gulf-after-iranian-threats-against-trump>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[UK news](#)

Sir Brian Urquhart, who helped establish the United Nations, dies aged 101

Former army major was UN's second staff member after its founding in 1945 and worked as principal adviser to five secretaries general



Sir Brian Urquhart, pictured with the former US president Jimmy Carter.
Photograph: Linda Schaefer/AP

Sir Brian Urquhart, pictured with the former US president Jimmy Carter.
Photograph: Linda Schaefer/AP

Agencies

Sun 3 Jan 2021 20.35 EST

Sir Brian Urquhart, the British diplomat who played a role in the establishment of the [United Nations](#), has died aged 101.

Urquhart was the second staff member hired by the UN following its founding in 1945 and worked as a principal adviser to five UN secretaries

general in his 41-year career.

Urquhart's son, Thomas, confirmed he died at his home in Tyringham, Massachusetts, on Saturday but did not provide a specific cause, the New York Times reported.

Born in Bridport, Dorset, Urquhart joined the army following the outbreak of the second world war, rising to the rank of major and participated in planning the airborne aspect of Operation Overlord.

[UN to bring in monitors to observe Libya's widely flouted ceasefire](#)
[Read more](#)

After the war he served as a British member of the preparatory commission that established the UN framework.

At the UN he directed 13 peacekeeping operations, recruited 10,000 troops from 23 countries and instituted peacekeeping as one of the core tenets of the organisation.

The UN secretary general, Antonio Gutteres, said: "Sir Brian's imprint on the United Nations was as profound as that of anyone in the organisation's history.

"As an aide to secretary general Dag Hammarskjöld he helped to define the UN's scope of action in addressing armed conflict and other global challenges. And as a close associate of Ralph Bunche, the renowned UN official and Nobel peace prize winner, Sir Brian helped to establish and then propel international peacekeeping into wide-ranging use."

Urquhart joined the Ford Foundation after he retired and wrote books and frequent commentaries for the New York Review of Books and other publications. His books include a 1987 autobiography, *A Life in Peace and War*, as well as books on United Nations leaders and operations.

He is survived by his wife, five children, a stepson, 14 grandchildren and 10 great-grandchildren.

With the Press Association and Associated Press

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/04/sir-brian-urquhart-who-helped-establish-the-united-nations-dies-aged-101>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Music

Geoff Stephens, chart-topping pop songwriter, dies aged 86

Musician who had UK and US No 1s with the New Vaudeville Band, David Soul and more died from pneumonia after surviving Covid-19 last year



Geoff Stephens, pictured circa 1970. Photograph: Ronald Spencer/Daily Mail/Rex/Shutterstock

Geoff Stephens, pictured circa 1970. Photograph: Ronald Spencer/Daily Mail/Rex/Shutterstock

[Ben Beaumont-Thomas](#)

[@ben_bt](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.56 EST

Geoff Stephens, the prolific Grammy-winning British songwriter behind hits such as Winchester Cathedral and The Crying Game, has died aged 86.

In a message confirming the news to Variety, his family wrote: “Dad survived Covid-19 in the spring but passed away with my Mum, his wife of 63 years, by his bedside, following a bout of pneumonia.”

Born in north London in 1934, until his early 30s Stephens dabbled in music with an amateur theatrical group alongside work as a teacher, printer and air traffic controller. His first hit was Tell Me When, a Top 10 hit for the Birmingham beat group the Applejacks in 1964, and that year he also signed the unknown Donovan to his first record contract, co-producing his debut album that featured Top 5 single Catch the Wind.

In 1964, he also wrote The Crying Game for Dave Berry, another Top 5 hit that would go on to become the theme for Neil Jordan's movie of the same name (along with a successful cover by Boy George).

In 1966, he formed the New Vaudeville Band, a group of session musicians, to perform his song Winchester Cathedral – a deliberately nostalgic throwback to British music hall amid the melee of swinging London. It was a surprise No 1 in the US (vying with the Beach Boys' Good Vibrations to reach the top) and Canada, and reached No 4 in the UK; it won a Grammy for best contemporary song plus an Ivor Novello songwriting award. Frank Sinatra later recorded his own version.

The New Vaudeville Band had another UK Top 10 hit with Peek-a-Boo, and their 1967 song There's a Kind of Hush became a transatlantic hit for Herman's Hermits that year, and for the Carpenters in 1976.

Stephens wrote songs for a wide variety of 1960s British stars, including Tom Jones's No 5 hit Daughter of Darkness, the Hollies' Sorry Suzanne (No 3 in 1969), and Scott Walker's Lights of Cincinnati. His songs were also recorded by US country artists including Wayne Newton and Crystal Gayle, and he co-wrote three songs performed by Elvis Presley: Heart of Rome, This Is Our Dance and Sylvia.

His song Knock Knock, Who's There reached No 2 for Mary Hopkin in 1970, and also reached second place in the Eurovision song contest that year. The 1970s would see him write UK No 1 hits for David Soul and the New Seekers, as well as songs for Hot Chocolate and more. He also collaborated with lyricist Don Black on the musical Dear Anyone.

Among those paying tribute was Tim Rice, who hailed Stephens' hits and described him as "a major talent and lovely chap".

His is survived by wife Pam Stephens, son Paul, and daughters Jenny and Ruth.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/jan/04/geoff-stephens-chart-topping-pop-songwriter-dies-aged-86>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.04 - Coronavirus

- Live Coronavirus: Thai PM urges people to 'just stay home'; Singapore will let police access contact-tracing data
- Boris Johnson PM urged to ensure all pupils have digital resources
- UCL Students told to 'stay away for at least seven weeks' over Covid fears
- Israel Palestinians excluded from Covid vaccine rollout
- Japan PM considers new state of emergency for Tokyo amid Covid resurgence
- 'I'm 100% more politicised' Generation Z and the Covid pandemic
- Restaurants Covid pandemic drives 163% rise in job losses in UK in 2020

[Coronavirus live](#)

[Coronavirus](#)

European Medicines Agency 'not ready' to approve Moderna vaccine – as it happened

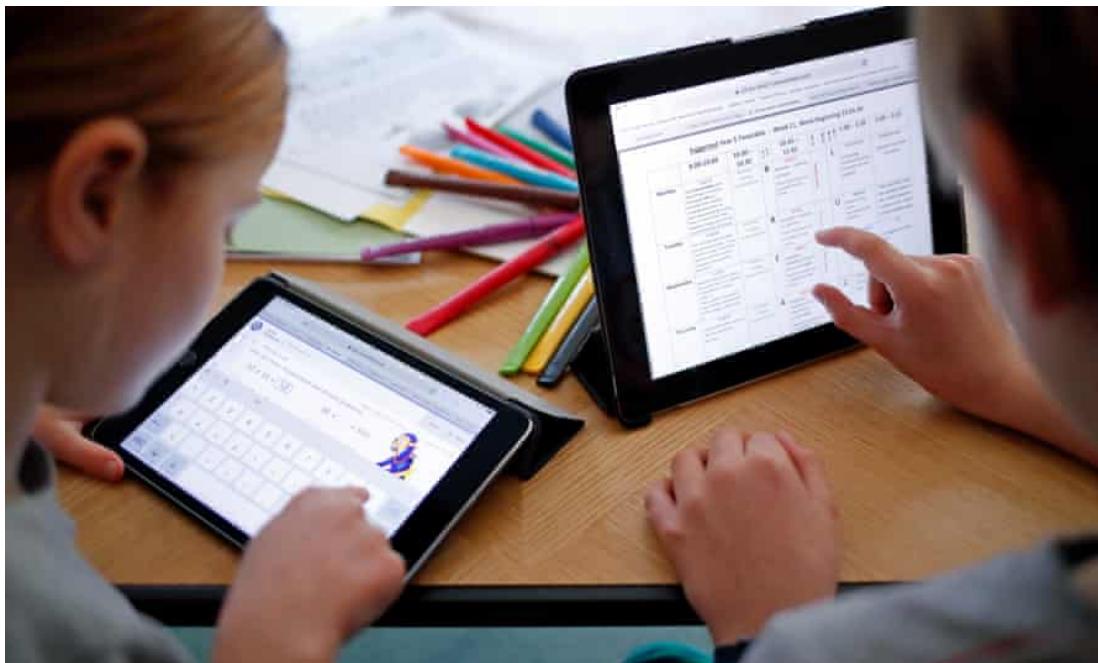
This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/live/2021/jan/04/coronavirus-live-news-us-deaths-pass-350000-as-india-authorises-two-vaccines>

Education

MPs urge Johnson to ensure all pupils have digital resources for home learning

Letter to PM says those on ‘wrong side of the digital divide’ need help as English secondaries stay closed

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



Only 51% of households earning between £6,000 and £10,000 have internet access, essential for home schooling. Photograph: Max Mumby/Indigo/Getty Images

Only 51% of households earning between £6,000 and £10,000 have internet access, essential for home schooling. Photograph: Max Mumby/Indigo/Getty Images

[Clea Skopeliti](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Hundreds of thousands of pupils should be provided with the devices or broadband connection they lack for remote learning during the pandemic, a group of senior public figures has said, after the education secretary admitted that [some schools may remain closed for weeks](#).

In a letter coordinated by the Labour MP Siobhain McDonagh, MPs, unions and charities called on [Boris Johnson](#) to take action to help “children on the wrong side of the digital divide”. Public figures including the former prime minister Tony Blair and three ex-education secretaries also signed the letter.

McDonagh said Ofcom estimates that 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 and that more than 880,000 children live in a household with only a mobile internet connection.

[Parents face week of uncertainty over school reopenings in England](#)
[Read more](#)

“Children on the wrong side of the digital divide have neither the data nor the devices to log in from home when their schools close,” the Labour MP said. “In a country with free state education, no child’s education should be dependent on their internet connection.”

Only 51% of households earning between £6,000 and £10,000 have internet access, McDonagh added, citing data from the Office for National Statistics.

From Monday, the first official day of the new term in England, all mainstream secondary schools and colleges will be closed, other than to vulnerable children and those with parents who are key workers. They will reopen next week only for pupils in years 11 and 13 facing GCSE and A-level exams and are expected to reopen more fully from 18 January.

In 60 contingency areas, primary schools will be similarly closed until 18 January. All schools in London will remain closed, while pupils in some parts of Essex, Kent, East Sussex, Buckinghamshire and Hertfordshire will also be taught remotely.

However, just three days after declaring he was “absolutely confident” that all schools would reopen, the education secretary, [Gavin Williamson](#), admitted on Sunday that secondary schools within the 60 “contingency areas” may stay closed to most pupils after 18 January.

The government has rebuffed calls made on Saturday by teaching unions to [keep all primary schools closed](#), with Johnson advising parents that they should “absolutely” send their children in on Monday morning.

Several local councils have urged the government to allow schools to remain closed in other areas, with councils in [Birmingham](#), Cumbria and Kent among those writing to Williamson.

Southampton city council clarified that there would be no fines at present for parents who wish to keep their children at home due to concerns about Covid-19, while Durham county council [said](#) it would “support all [its] schools in their decision to remain open or to close based on individual risk assessments and national guidance”.

Access to electronic devices has been a constant issue throughout the pandemic for some deprived pupils. Last October, just two days after the government imposed a legal duty on schools to provide remote education to pupils affected by Covid, [headteachers across England were told](#) that their allocations of laptops for disadvantaged pupils had been slashed by around 80%.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/04/mps-urge-johnson-to-ensure-all-pupils-have-digital-resources-for-home-learning>

Higher education

UCL tells students 'stay away for at least seven weeks' over Covid fears

University College London, UK's largest campus, defies official call for earlier return

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

Richard Adams Education editor

Sun 3 Jan 2021 09.15 EST Last modified on Mon 4 Jan 2021 05.36 EST



Arrows mark a one-way entry and exit system at UCL's main building in central London. Photograph: Kirsty Wigglesworth/AP

University College London, the UK's largest campus, has told its students to avoid returning until the end of February at the earliest because of the rapid spread of the new Covid-19 variant in the capital.

The move puts UCL at odds with the guidelines issued by the [Department for Education](#) last week, which called for most students to stay away from campuses in England until 25 January, with only those on courses such as medicine or nursing allowed back initially.

UCL's order extends the DfE's return period by a month until 22 February and the university has said it could be further extended until March because of its concerns over safety. Other London institutions are likely to follow the move.

UCL's students were [informed about the delay in a joint message](#) from the university's incoming provost, Michael Spence, and his outgoing counterpart, Michael Arthur.

Noting that "in London, the number of cases is rising rapidly and our partner hospitals are at or beyond their capacity", they wrote: "We want to be honest and transparent with you about the decisions we are making.

"Our current and most realistic assessment is that it is unlikely that case rates will have reduced sufficiently to allow students to return to campus before at least mid-February, and quite possibly the end of March.

"We will therefore be moving all teaching and other face-to-face, in-person activities online from the start of term until the end of reading week. There will be no in-person teaching on campus until Monday 22 February, at the earliest (except for a small number of exempt subjects).

"We are aware that this is later than the government is advising but we believe this is the most responsible course of action in this complex situation."

The message concludes by strongly advising students not to come to campus until after the middle of February. "If you stayed in London over the winter break or you have already returned, you should remain here and not travel home again," they were told.

"We are advising you not to travel, as we do not want to accelerate transmission of the virus and put everyone at greater risk. By remaining

where you are, you will be helping to protect each other and get the pandemic under control.”

UCL has nearly 44,000 undergraduate and postgraduate students, making it the largest conventional university in the UK. Only the Open University has more students enrolled.

The universities minister for England, Michelle Donelan, sent a message to students on New Year’s Eve telling most not to return until 25 January and advising them to take two tests for Covid-19 before using university facilities.

Donelan also told international students preparing to travel from overseas that they should “consider whether they in fact need to travel to the UK” during the spring term.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/education/2021/jan/03/ucl-tells-students-stay-away-for-at-least-seven-weeks-over-covid-fears>

[The ObserverIsrael](#)

Palestinians excluded from Israeli Covid vaccine rollout as jabs go to settlers

Human rights groups accuse Israel of dodging obligations to millions in occupied territories who may wait months for vaccination



Vaccinations in progress in Ashdod, Israel last month. Photograph: Amir Cohen/Reuters

Vaccinations in progress in Ashdod, Israel last month. Photograph: Amir Cohen/Reuters

[Oliver Holmes](#) in Jerusalem and [Hazem Balousha](#) in Gaza

Sun 3 Jan 2021 04.30 EST

Israel is celebrating an impressive, [record-setting vaccination drive](#), having given initial jabs of coronavirus shots to more than a 10th of the population. But Palestinians in the Israeli-occupied West Bank and Gaza can only watch and wait.

As the world ramps up what is already on track to become a [highly unequal vaccination push](#) – with people in richer nations first to be inoculated – the

situation in Israel and the Palestinian territories provides a stark example of the divide.

Israel transports batches of the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine deep inside the West Bank. But they are only distributed to Jewish settlers, and not the roughly 2.7 million Palestinians living around them who may have to wait for weeks or months.

“I don’t know how, but there must be a way to make us a priority, too?” said Mahmoud Kilani, a 31-year-old sports coach from the Palestinian city of Nablus. “Who cares about us? I don’t think anybody is stuck on that question.”

Two weeks into its vaccination campaign, Israel is [administering more than 150,000 doses a day](#), amounting to initial jabs for more than 1 million of its 9 million citizens – a higher proportion of the population than anywhere else.

Vaccine centres have been set up in sports stadiums and central squares. People over 60, healthcare workers, carers and high-risk populations have priority, while young, healthier people who walk into clinics are sometimes rewarded with surplus stock to avoid the waste of unused vials.

The prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, has told Israelis that the country could be the first to emerge from the pandemic. As well as [a highly advanced healthcare system](#), part of the reason for the speed could be economics. A health ministry official said the country had paid \$62 a dose, compared with the [\\$19.50 the US is paying](#).

Meanwhile, the cash-strapped Palestinian Authority, which maintains limited self-rule in the territories, is rushing to get vaccines. One official suggested, perhaps optimistically, that shots could arrive within the next two weeks.

However, when asked for a timeframe, Ali Abed Rabbo, director-general of the Palestinian health ministry, estimated the first vaccines would probably arrive in February.

Those would be through [a World Health Organization-led partnership called Covax](#), aimed at helping poorer countries, which has pledged to vaccinate 20% of Palestinians. Yet vaccines intended for Covax have not yet gained “emergency use” approval by the WHO, a precondition for distribution to begin.

Gerald Rockenschaub, the head of office at WHO Jerusalem, said it could be “early to mid-2021” before vaccines on the Covax scheme were available for distribution in the [Palestinian territories](#).

The rest of the doses are expected to come through deals with pharmaceutical companies, but none have apparently been signed so far.

Despite the delay, the authority has not officially asked for help from Israel. Coordination between the two sides halted last year after the Palestinian president [cut off security ties](#) for several months.

But Rabbo said “sessions” with Israel had been held. “Until this moment, there is no agreement, and we cannot say there is anything practical on the ground in this regard,” he said.

Israeli officials have suggested they might provide surplus vaccines to Palestinians and claim they are not responsible for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, pointing to 1990s-era interim agreements that required the authority to observe international vaccination standards.

Those deals envisioned a fuller peace agreement within five years, an event that never occurred. Almost three decades later, Israeli, Palestinian and international rights groups have accused Israel of [dodging moral, humanitarian and legal obligations](#) as an occupying power during the pandemic.

Gisha, an Israeli rights group, said Palestinian efforts so far to look elsewhere for vaccines “does not absolve Israel from its ultimate responsibility toward Palestinians under occupation”.

[How has Israel launched the world’s fastest Covid vaccination drive?](#)
[Read more](#)

The disparities could potentially see Israelis return to some form of normality within the first three months of this year, while Palestinians remain trapped by the virus. That may have a negative impact on Israel's goal of herd immunity, as thousands of West Bank Palestinians work in Israel and the settlements, which could keep infection rates up.

In Gaza, an impoverished enclave under an Israeli-Egyptian blockade, the timeframe could be even longer than in the West Bank. The strip's Islamist rulers, Hamas, have been unable to contain the virus and are enemies with Israel and political rivals with the Palestinian Authority.

Salama Ma'rouf, head of the Hamas-run Gaza press office, estimated vaccines would arrive "within two months", adding that there was coordination with the WHO and the Palestinian Authority.

Heba Abu Asr, 35, a resident of Gaza, jolted when asked how she felt about others getting the vaccine first. "Are you seriously trying to compare us with Israel or any other country?" she asked. "We can't find work, food, or drink. We are under threat all the time. We do not even have any necessities for life."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/03/palestinians-excluded-from-israeli-covid-vaccine-rollout-as-jabs-go-to-settlers>

[Japan](#)

Suga considers new state of emergency for Tokyo amid Covid resurgence

Japan's capital is battling a second wave of infections, just 200 days out from hosting the already-delayed Olympic Games

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



Visitors wearing protective masks wait to offer prayers on the first business day of the New Year at the Kanda Myojin shrine in Tokyo. The Japanese capital is suffering a renewed surge in Covid-19 infections. Photograph: Issei Kato/Reuters

Visitors wearing protective masks wait to offer prayers on the first business day of the New Year at the Kanda Myojin shrine in Tokyo. The Japanese capital is suffering a renewed surge in Covid-19 infections. Photograph: Issei Kato/Reuters

[Justin McCurry](#) in Tokyo

Sun 3 Jan 2021 23.29 EST

Japan's prime minister, [Yoshihide Suga](#), has said the government is considering declaring a state of emergency in the greater Tokyo region amid a sharp rise in [coronavirus](#) cases in and around the capital.

Suga, whose handling of the pandemic has seen his [approval ratings plummet](#) in recent weeks, has come under pressure to take action to address the recent surge in infections.

At the weekend, the governor of Tokyo, Yuriko Koike, and the governors of nearby Kanagawa, Chiba and Saitama prefectures urged the government to declare a localised state of emergency.

[Fresh fears for Tokyo Olympics as host city sees surge in Covid-19 infections](#)

[Read more](#)

Suga's administration, however, is reluctant to introduce any measures that could harm the world's third-biggest economy, which has rebounded after the first state of emergency brought many businesses to a standstill due to sharp falls in shopping and spending on travel and entertainment.

His predecessor, Shinzo Abe, [declared a state of emergency](#) in Tokyo and several other parts of the country in April that was later expanded nationwide during the first wave of Covid-19 infections.

Concern is mounting that record cases in Tokyo will soon place an unmanageable strain on the city's hospitals.

The city reported a record 1,337 cases last Thursday; on Sunday, the number of people with severe symptoms rose to 101, just four fewer than the highest total seen in late April.

Tokyo is by far the worst affected of Japan's 47 prefectures, and, along with three neighbouring prefectures, accounted for more than half the nationwide total on Sunday.

While Suga consults government health experts, bars and restaurants in Tokyo could be asked to close by 8pm from later this week as an interim

measure, the Kyodo news agency said, adding that establishments that followed the advice would be eligible for compensation.



Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga held a New Year's press conference at his official residence in Tokyo on Monday. Photograph: Yoshikazu Tsuno/AP

Suga conceded that current advice to close at 10pm had failed to have an impact in Tokyo, but noted that similar measures appeared to be working in the cities of Sapporo and Osaka.

"Even during the three days of the New Year's holiday, cases didn't go down in the greater Tokyo area," Suga told reporters on Monday. "We felt that a stronger message was needed."

It isn't clear what form a second state of emergency would take. In the spring, non-essential businesses and schools were asked to close and people were encouraged to avoid non-essential outings. Japan's local and national authorities do not have the legal powers to enforce European-style lockdowns.

[Japan and France report cases of coronavirus variant found in UK](#)
[Read more](#)

[Japan](#) has experienced [far fewer cases and deaths](#) than the US and many parts of Europe, but the recent wave of infections – plus the discovery of a new, more contagious variant of Covid-19 – has raised doubts about [Tokyo's ability to host the Olympics](#) in 200 days' time.

Suga recently insisted the already postponed Games, due to open on 23 July, would go ahead, but opinion polls show a majority of people believe they should be cancelled or postponed again. [Tokyo 2020](#) organisers and the International Olympic Committee have agreed that a second postponement is not an option.

Tokyo accounted for 816 of the 3,100 new infections reported in Japan on Sunday, bringing the city's total caseload to 62,590.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/suga-considers-new-state-of-emergency-for-tokyo-amid-covid-resurgence>

The Covid generation

Generation Z and the Covid pandemic: 'I'm 100% more politicised'

Clockwise from top left: Holly Ronicle, Dylan Kawende, Oliwia Charowska, Aadam Patel, Jack Payne. Composite: The Guardian / The Observer / Guardian Design Team

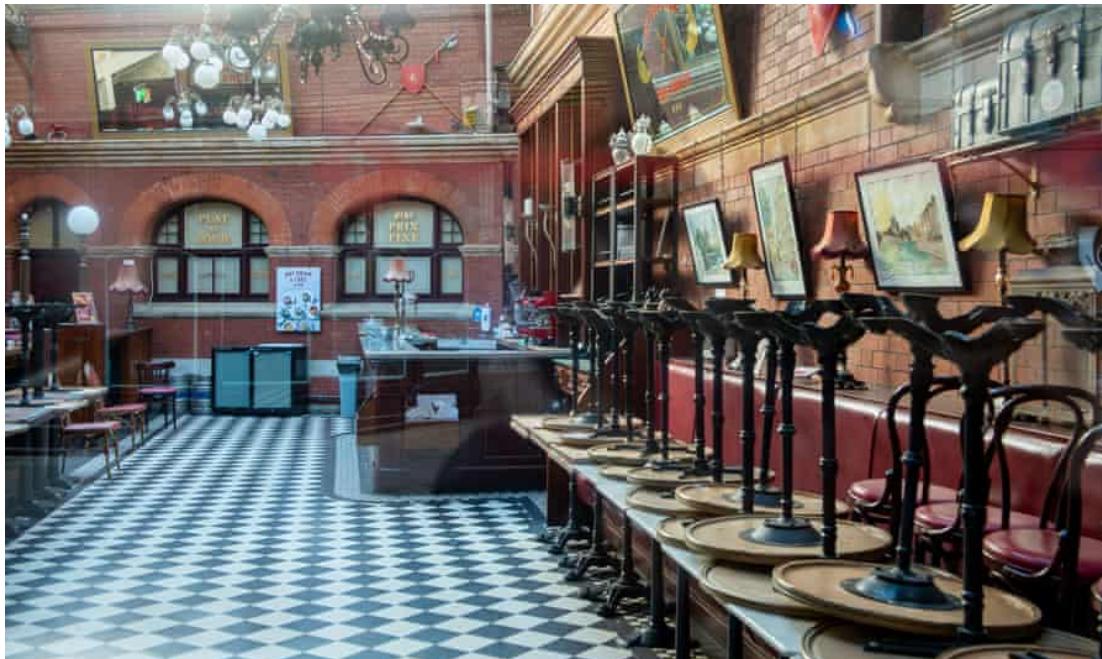
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Hospitality industry

Covid pandemic drives 163% rise in restaurant job losses in UK in 2020

Data also reveals that branch closures by hospitality firms increased by more than 75%

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



A Cafe Rouge restaurant forced to close under coronavirus restrictions in Windsor, Berkshire. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

A Cafe Rouge restaurant forced to close under coronavirus restrictions in Windsor, Berkshire. Photograph: Maureen McLean/Rex/Shutterstock

PA Media

Mon 4 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

UK restaurants and casual dining firms recorded almost 30,000 job losses in 2020 as the Covid-19 pandemic drove a 163% jump in redundancies.

Data compiled by the Centre for Retail Research (CRR) revealed that 29,684 jobs were lost across fine dining, independent businesses and large multiple casual-dining chains during the year.

It represents a sharp increase from 2019, when 11,280 job losses were reported across the sector, after firms were hit by two national lockdowns, local lockdown restrictions, curfews, changes to service rules and recently strengthened tier measures.

The CRR also said branch closures by hospitality firms had increased by 76% to 1,621, compared with 922 in 2019.

It highlighted major closure proposals and redundancy plans at companies such as Pizza Express, SSP Group, Casual Dining Group, The Restaurant Group and Mitchells & Butlers during the year.

As a result of the tier adjustments that came into effect in England on New Year's Eve, 22,082 restaurants are in tier 4 and are all closed except for takeaway, and 4,946 are in tier 3. Only five restaurants in the Isles of Scilly remain open for diners, according to the real estate adviser Altus Group.

Prof Joshua Bamfield, the CRR's director, said the pandemic had accelerated a major shake-up of the sector that was already taking place.

"The sector experienced rapid growth in outlets during 2014 to 2017 as successful chains added additional branches, but they frequently paid too much, while maintaining quality standards proved difficult," he said.

"The need to cut costs caused by over-expansion, increased competition and weak consumer demand produced a crisis in the industry before the pandemic."

A separate report last week showed that the UK high street had shed 177,000 jobs in 2020, with a further 200,000 expected to be lost this year as the pandemic continues to hit the sector.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.04 - Coronavirus uk

- [Analysis Is it wise for England to mix and match Covid vaccines?](#)
- [Jo Stevens Outpouring of support for MP in hospital with Covid](#)
- [Explainer How is the Oxford Covid vaccine being deployed in England?](#)
- ['It makes me want to cry' Voices of hospital staff on the Covid frontline](#)

Vaccines and immunisation

Analysis: is it wise for England to mix and match Covid vaccines?

US experts warn against plan to give different second jab if supplies run low

- [Coronavirus – latest updates](#)
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The decision in England and Scotland to allow one person to receive both vaccines is certainly pragmatic but there's not much science behind it.
Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

The decision in England and Scotland to allow one person to receive both vaccines is certainly pragmatic but there's not much science behind it.
Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

[Sarah Boseley](#) Health editor

Sun 3 Jan 2021 12.39 EST

The UK is setting the pace around the world in the approval and use of Covid vaccines but, while other countries watch intently, not all are yet

prepared to embrace what looks like public health pragmatism rather than strict adherence to evidence.

Britain is the first country in the world to approve and [use the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine](#), just as it was first with Pfizer/BioNTech's. In a further trailblazing decision, it is giving everyone a first shot of either of those vaccines, with the second shot delayed to 12 weeks afterwards instead of the three- or four-week interval in the trials.

And now it has emerged that NHS staff have permission, in limited circumstances, to mix and match the vaccines. With two different vaccines being used and supplies not guaranteed – particularly of Pfizer's, which is in high demand around the world – the [NHS in England has said people can be given a different second dose from the first](#), if absolutely necessary. So those who got the Pfizer jab first time around might – if supplies have run out (or if there is no record of which they had first) – be given the AstraZeneca version, says Public Health England's Green Book for health staff on vaccine use. Scotland is following suit, although Wales says it will not.

But in the US in particular, which has already been critical of the UK approach to vaccines, there is scepticism.

Trials of the mix-and-match approach to boosters have not been done, although they are planned. In the [New York Times](#), John Moore from Cornell University commented that British officials “seem to have abandoned science completely now and are just trying to guess their way out of a mess”.

The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has said that the authorised Covid-19 vaccines “[are not interchangeable](#)” and that “the safety and efficacy of a mixed-product series have not been evaluated. Both doses of the series should be completed with the same product.”

The New York Times article sparked a transatlantic row, with the BMJ demanding a prominent retraction of a headline suggesting vaccine mix and match was officially approved. That was “seriously misleading”, said the BMJ editor, Dr Fiona Godlee.

It's not official policy, said Dr Mary Ramsay, Public Health England's head of immunisations. "We do not recommend mixing the Covid-19 vaccines – if your first dose is the Pfizer vaccine you should not be given the [AstraZeneca](#) vaccine for your second dose and vice versa."

But on the "extremely rare occasions" where the same vaccine is unavailable or it is unknown which jab the patient received, it is "better to give a second dose of another vaccine than not at all".

That and the 12-week spacing are real-world responses to an epic crisis, in an attempt to give some immunity to the rampaging new variant of the coronavirus as quickly as possible to as many people as possible.

The US has had doubts about the UK approach already. Neither the US nor Europe is rushing to authorise use of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine. Both seem to be waiting for more evidence from a large trial taking place in the US. Both were also sceptical of the UK's rush to authorise the [Pfizer](#) vaccine, although they have also now done so. The US has also approved the Moderna vaccine, designed and made in the US, with substantial funding from Operation Warp Speed. It's a similar vaccine to Pfizer's and will help ramp up the vaccination effort.

Europe has given Pfizer's vaccine conditional marketing authorisation, whereas the faster procedure used by the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Authority in the UK means that each batch must be assessed and certified as it is delivered. The same goes for AstraZeneca's vaccine, which is why the NHS has only 530,000 doses to use this week, out of the 4m promised.

The availability of vials and syringes around the world may also hold things up. As vaccines are approved and production speeds up, there will be increasing demand for these. It is possible that other countries too may be forced into pragmatic decisions like those of the UK.

- This article was amended on 5 January 2021. The Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine received conditional marketing authorisation from the EU, rather than "emergency" authorisation.
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2021/jan/03/analysis-is-it-wise-for-england-to-mix-and-match-covid-vaccines>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Labour

Jo Stevens: outpouring of support for MP in hospital with Covid

Matt Hancock, Keir Starmer and Mark Drakeford among those to send well wishes to shadow culture secretary

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



During the pandemic, Jo Stevens has lobbied for more support for the culture sector, which she said was in ‘complete despair’. Photograph: Kirsty O’Connor/PA

During the pandemic, Jo Stevens has lobbied for more support for the culture sector, which she said was in ‘complete despair’. Photograph: Kirsty O’Connor/PA

[Helen Pidd](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 12.04 EST

Politicians from across the political divide have sent best wishes to the Labour MP and shadow culture secretary Jo Stevens, who is [being treated in hospital for coronavirus](#).

The Cardiff Central MP has been “laid low with Covid for a while”, according to a statement from her team on New Year’s Eve.

On Saturday, they [tweeted from her account](#): “Jo has asked us to let you know that she is being treated in hospital for Covid. Thanks for all your good wishes, we will give an update when we can.”

The 54-year-old was elected at the 2015 election, winning the seat back for [Labour](#) from the Liberal Democrats. She was shadow secretary of state for Wales for a short while under Jeremy Corbyn.

She is the fourth MP known to be taken to hospital with Covid, including the prime minister, Boris Johnson, who ended up intensive care in April. Her Labour colleagues Yasmin Qureshi and Tony Lloyd were also admitted to hospital, [with Lloyd spending 10 days](#) on a ventilator in an induced coma.

Qureshi, the MP for Bolton South East and a shadow minister for international development, said she had been left “anxious and concerned” after being taken by ambulance to her local hospital in October. [In an interview with the Guardian](#) last month she described the “unbearable pain” caused by coughing fits and pneumonia as the disease took hold.

News of Stevens’s illness prompted well wishes from across the House of Commons.

The health secretary, Matt Hancock, said he wished Stevens a “speedy recovery”.

The Labour leader, Keir Starmer, tweeted: “Get well soon Jo, a dear friend and colleague.”

Mark Drakeford, Wales’s first minister, said: “All of our thoughts and best wishes are with Jo for a speedy recovery. Thank you to Jo’s constituency team for continuing to support Cardiff Central constituents at this difficult time.”

In November she wrote to the culture secretary, Oliver Dowden, calling for the government to [clamp down on platforms that host “anti-vax” content](#).

During the pandemic, Stevens has lobbied for more support for the culture sector, which she said was in “complete despair”.

She told MPs in October: “In arts and culture, experienced, skilled and talented live performers, and the people who create, produce and make those economically successful events happen, are being treated by the Treasury as though their jobs were mere hobbies.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/03/jo-stevens-outpouring-of-support-for-mp-in-hospital-with-covid>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Coronavirus

How is the Oxford Covid vaccine being deployed in England?

With jab to be administered to public for first time, we look at key questions about its rollout

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

Sarah Boseley Health editor

Sun 3 Jan 2021 09.10 EST Last modified on Sun 3 Jan 2021 23.37 EST



Doses of the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid-19 vaccine are logged by a technical officer at the Princess Royal hospital in Haywards Heath, England. Photograph: Gareth Fuller/AP

The biggest vaccination programme in the UK's history will receive a [major boost on Monday](#), with the first use of the Oxford/AstraZeneca Covid

vaccine. Here we look at some key questions about how it will be deployed in England.

Can I get my first shot on Monday?

Probably not. Any new vaccine use will begin cautiously, however loud the fanfare around the arrival of the [Oxford/AstraZeneca jab](#). The importance of this vaccine cannot be overestimated, because it is stored at normal fridge temperature and can be taken out and transported to care homes and wherever else it is needed very easily. But the first doses will be given at just a few hospitals “for surveillance purposes”, NHS England has said. That is just in case of any glitches, such as the [allergy issue](#) that arose when the NHS started using the Pfizer/BioNTech vaccine. That has now been resolved, incidentally, with guidance that people with allergy histories are fine, unless they are specifically allergic to any of the ingredients in either of the vaccines.

The photo opportunities on Monday are likely to take place in Oxford hospitals, because the university invented the vaccine. But the Royal Free hospital NHS foundation trust in London, Guy’s and St Thomas’, University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay, Brighton and Sussex and the George Eliot hospital NHS trust will all start using the jab on Monday. Then later in the week, GP-led vaccination centres around the country will be sent supplies. There are 700 of these in England at the moment; another 180, plus 100 more hospitals, will start deploying the vaccine this week, says [NHS](#) England.

Who is top priority to get the Oxford/AstraZeneca jab?

Care home residents and the staff looking after them are at the top of the list, as has been the case. But this has been difficult to do so far because the [Pfizer vaccine is not easy to store](#) and transport, because of a requirement to keep it at -70C in the longer term. This time, this group can be the main focus. GPs are being offered £10 for every care home resident they can vaccinate by the end of January.

Who has been vaccinated so far?

Official figures from NHS England – as opposed to politicians' pronouncements – show that about 750,000 people have been vaccinated in England in the first three weeks since the Pfizer vaccine came online, of whom 524,439 were over 80. The over-80s and NHS staff are the second priority group. Ministers say about 1 million people have received a vaccine.

Will things speed up now that we have the Oxford vaccine?

Hopefully, yes, because at a rate of a quarter of a million people being vaccinated each week in England, it will take all year to get through the most vulnerable – basically everyone over 50 and people with underlying health issues. The health secretary, Matt Hancock, says he is aiming for 2 million a week in the UK soon and rising.

There may still be hold-ups. There is enough of the Oxford/AstraZeneca vaccine for 4 million people, but most of it is not yet in vials in its finished form and nor has it all been batch-certified, as required under the temporary emergency approval given by the UK regulator. Only 530,000 doses are ready to go into people's arms across the UK on Monday.

Why is the second dose being delayed and will it leave people at risk?

This is public health pragmatism. The goal is to bring down the numbers of people vulnerable to infection as fast as possible, which will push down the amount of virus in the population and allow some restrictions to be lifted sooner. The reasoning is that both vaccines reach a high level of efficacy after the first dose – over 80% for the Pfizer jab and 70% for AstraZeneca's. In the case of [AstraZeneca](#), it seems there is evidence that protection lasts up to 12 weeks and maybe beyond. The second shot serves not to increase that protection, but to keep it going for longer. With the Pfizer vaccine, there is no publicly available evidence that the protection continues beyond three weeks, because the trial volunteers all got their second dose at that time.

People who receive a delayed second shot of the Pfizer vaccine will not be at 95% protection, but if the government is right, they will enjoy a high level of protection nonetheless and there should be less virus around. However, we will all have to continue with social distancing and mask-wearing until most people have had two shots.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/03/how-oxford-coronavirus-vaccine-being-deployed-england-uk>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

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

‘It makes me want to cry’: voices of hospital staff on the Covid frontline

Three healthcare workers describe the realities of struggling against a rising tide of coronavirus cases

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



Junior doctor Pushpo Hossain: ‘There are times when we just collectively break down.’ Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

Junior doctor Pushpo Hossain: ‘There are times when we just collectively break down.’ Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

[Tom Wall](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Pushpo Hossain

Junior doctor

Pushpo Hossain is in the eye of the capital's Covid storm. The ward where the junior doctor cares for severely ill coronavirus patients is having to limit oxygen and consider who gets the hard-to-come-by non-invasive ventilators.

The number of Covid patients is “going up exponentially,” she says in her hospital accommodation after another gruelling 13-hour shift. “We are so short staffed and we don’t have enough of the non-invasive ventilator machines that can hold patients until they can be transferred to intensive care units [ICUs].”

Hossain, 31, and her colleagues in the south-west London hospital where she works have to make almost impossible decisions about who gets what and who gets moved.

“We do a risk-benefit analysis based on age, number of comorbidities and sometimes based on the amount of resources we have,” she says. “[A patient] could be an ICU candidate, but we don’t have a bed. Our hands are tied. It makes me want to cry.”

This weighs heavily on the staff, who are battling fatigue, stress and exhaustion. Hossain rarely has time to eat properly and struggles to stay hydrated because she is so busy. Two of the five doctors on her ward are off with Covid, leaving the remaining three covering their shifts. “There are times when we just collectively break down. There are times when we can’t take it any more,” she says. “I remember me and the nurses just held each other in the clinical room.”

Oxygen for patients has already been limited because the hospital’s supply system was approaching the point where it would shut down. “We have the oxygen to give everybody, but we don’t have the delivery system. The system would crash if too many people were sucking in oxygen in a high concentration,” Hossain says. “That would be disastrous, because that would mean the entire hospital oxygen supply would be cut off.”

Her greatest fear is that even more people turn up in need of oxygen, pushing the system over the edge: “We would possibly have to evacuate and

transfer all these patients that need oxygen to some other hospital – and most of the hospitals are in the same situation.”

Epsom and St Helier University [Hospitals](#) NHS trust said that pressure on services was very high and had reached the limit of what the 80-year-old infrastructure could cope with.

It added that a new vaporiser, which will treble its piped oxygen supply, is due to be up and running by 11 January.



Nurse Laura Duffell: ‘It’s got very bad, very quickly.’ Photograph: Andy Hall/The Observer

Laura Duffell

Nurse

It is supposed to be Laura Duffell’s first day off since Christmas Day, but she has been called back in because the major teaching hospital where she works is in danger of being overwhelmed by surging Covid admissions.

“I wasn’t supposed to be at work today,” she says. “It’s got very bad, very quickly. Over this last week it’s escalated massively ... we went from 130 Covid patients to 500.”

Duffell, who is a paediatric nurse, says the south-east London hospital where she works is full, with intensive care beds being moved into operating theatres and recovery wards.

“We’re juggling which patients go where constantly: are they sick enough to go to intensive care? Or could we put them in a high-dependency ward? Where are we going to get ventilators from and where are we going to get the nurses trained to use them? It’s hour by hour,” she says. “It’s far worse than any winter I’ve ever experienced and we’re barely even in January yet.”

Her department worked hard over the summer to get through waiting lists after operations for sick children were cancelled but she fears they may soon be in the same situation again. “Unless something changes, we are going to be in a position where patients that don’t have Covid suffer,” she adds.

The new coronavirus variant, which is thought to be behind the spike in cases, appears to be spreading more quickly among under-20s, including secondary school age children. Duffell has been forced to turn over two paediatric wards to children with the disease. “We had the odd child here and there last time, but in this wave we are getting a lot of positive younger people,” she says. “We have one Covid ward for children already and we are just setting up a second one.” However, [there is no evidence that children are getting any sicker with the virus than during the first wave](#), or that children’s wards nationally are being overwhelmed.

The deepening crisis is taking a personal toll on frontline nurses like Duffell, who currently has no days off on her roster. She misses her family intensely: “I feel like I’ve abandoned [them]. My kids are really supportive but they make comments about how I’m never around. The guilt is immense. But what can you do?”

David Higgins

Gastroenterologist

Gastroenterologist David Higgins usually carries out elective endoscopies, which are a diagnostic pathway for cancer, but he worries that he may soon have to stop so his wards can accommodate more Covid patients.

“There are more and more demands on our staff to go and cover other wards and ICUs. And ICU has expanded into half of our endoscopy unit, which has massively reduced our capacity to do diagnostic cancer and therapeutic cancer work,” he says. “We are in the midst of discussions about what we do. How do we maintain the cancer work and deal with Covid?”

I don’t remember seeing corridors full of people the first time

David Higgins

Soon he may have to choose between treating Covid patients or cancer patients. “That’s effectively what we’re having to think about because the hospital is in meltdown. Do we divert resources and people to deal with the Covid crisis or maintain cancer pathways?”

The consequences for stopping cancer pathways are, however, stark he says – “delayed diagnoses and poor survival”.

The situation in the Hertfordshire hospital where Higgins (not his real name) works is deteriorating fast. “I’ve been down to A&E this morning. It’s proper carnage. Corridors are wards and we are talking about whether we use ambulances as cubicles,” he says. “I had to see someone today in a corridor. It was awful.”

The scale of the crisis is unprecedented and feels worse than even the first wave. “We expanded into different areas but I don’t remember seeing corridors full of people the first time,” he says.

Lots of staff are off sick and demands are growing daily. “We are being asked to work more and more. Healthcare workers are fairly robust and resilient, but there are limits – we’ll find out where they are this winter.”

- This article was amended on 4 January 2021 to add further context about the Covid-19 second wave and children, and to provide a link to [a news release](#) from the Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health; in addition, text stating that the new variant “appears to be hitting younger people harder” was changed to say it “appears to be spreading more quickly among under-20s, including secondary school age children”.
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This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/03/it-makes-me-want-to-cry-voices-of-hospital-staff-on-the-covid-frontline>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.04 - Spotlight

- Games picks for 2021 Refreshingly modern dinosaurs and a cyberpunk cat
- Creative chops Innovator who recycles millions of disposable chopsticks into furniture
- Subtle and soothing An obsession with Thai massaman curry – plus the recipe
- 'I passed out with the lack of oxygen' Truth of Heathrow stowaways' tragic journey
- 'Can you sing?' The taxi driver in Taiwan offering free rides for karaoke
- The Covid generation Youth organisations in England face wholesale closure
- 'This is where I need to be' The UK women defying fishing stereotypes

Refreshingly modern dinosaurs and a cyberpunk cat: our games picks for 2021

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/games/2021/jan/04/games-picks-for-2021>

[The upsideWorld news](#)

Waste not, wontons: innovator recycled 32m restaurant chopsticks

Felix Böck started small but has built up a business that transforms the utensils into everything from new dining tables to staircases



Wall decor by ChopValue. Photograph: ChopValue
Wall decor by ChopValue. Photograph: ChopValue

[Ashifa Kassam](#)

[@ashifa_k](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 00.00 EST

The idea was born over trays of sushi. Felix Böck, then a PhD student at Canada's University of British Columbia, was venting his frustration over the scant interest in his proposal to use waste wood from demolition and construction sites. How, he wondered, could he convince people that there's no such thing as waste, but rather just wasted resources?

Chopsticks in hand, Thalia Otamendi, the woman who is now his fiancée, looked at him. "She said: 'Felix, maybe you just have to start with

something small,”” said Böck. “And maybe it’s the chopstick.”

He started working on the idea the next day, sketching out plans for ChopValue, a startup aimed at creating a second life for used chopsticks. The plans soon coalesced into actions; recycling bins were dropped off at restaurants across Vancouver, methods were perfected to clean the utensils and a process was developed to transform the chopsticks – most of which are made from bamboo – into sleek household items that [range from tablet stands to tabletops.](#)



Felix Böck was frustrated by the wood wasted on building sites. Photograph: ChopValue

Four years on, ChopValue has recycled more than 32m chopsticks – diverting them from landfills and creating employment for 40 people. “These chopsticks travel 6,000 miles to arrive on your dining table for 20 to 30 minutes,” said Böck, 31. “You can’t possibly feel good about throwing them out afterwards.”

The startup has expanded its footprint across North America, with its process – which uses heat, steam and pressure to transform the chopsticks into wooden tiles – now also being used in Calgary, Montreal and Los Angeles.



A chopstick staircase. Photograph: Paul Grdina/ChopValue

Chopsticks are sourced from hundreds of restaurants as well as locations such as shopping centres, airports and universities; in Vancouver alone ChopValue said it collects around 350,000 used chopsticks a week.

“When you walk into a restaurant and you ask them to place a recycling bin for chopsticks, they still give you the exact same look as they gave me on day one,” said Böck. “I think it’s because it’s one of these little things that we neglect. But the moment someone reminds us of that problem that’s right in front of us, it creates that immediate Aha! moment.”

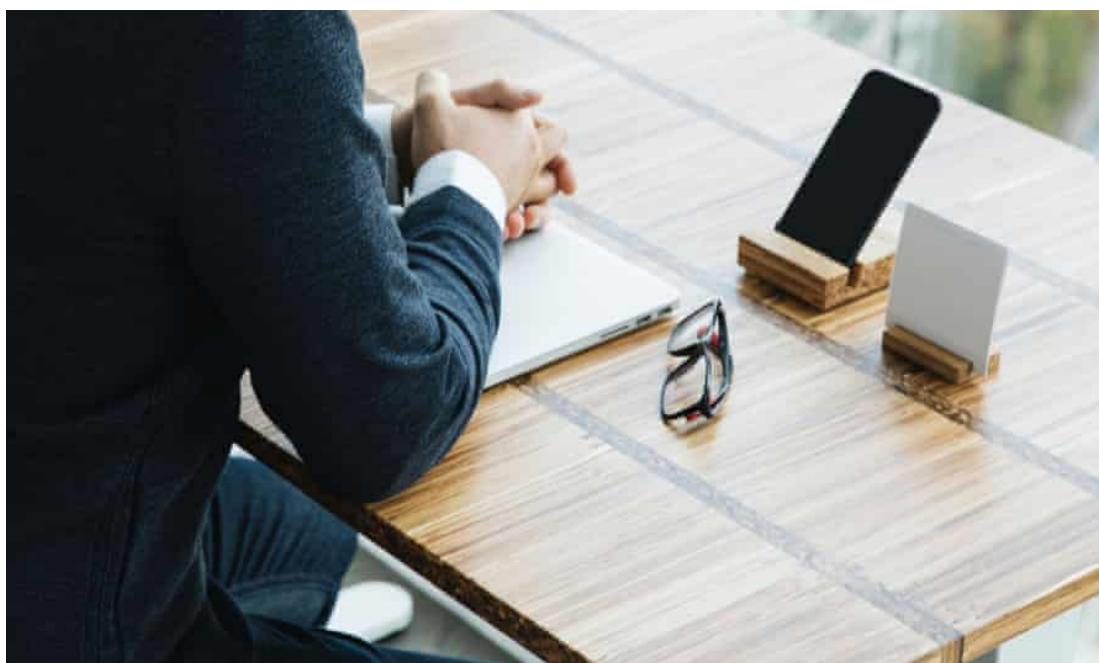
Among the first companies to collaborate with ChopValue was Pacific Poke, a chain of restaurants based in western Canada. “We thought it was a great idea. We were like, why didn’t anyone else think of this?” said co-founder Dong Lam. “We’re selling a couple of hundred bowls a day so you can imagine how many chopsticks that adds up to over time.”

The restaurant chain has become a fine example of the circular economy that ChopValue is seeking to foster, with most of its locations featuring [artwork and tabletops](#) made from chopsticks once used at the restaurant.

At ChopValue, the focus is now on exporting their model. “We do want to mass produce, just on a local scale,” said Böck. His aim is a network of

franchises where chopsticks could be sourced from local restaurants and transformed in nearby microfactories with the finished products sold locally.

Currently the company's products are sold on its website and through partnerships with retailers such as Nordstrom in the US. With each item comes a hint of its previous life, detailing the 886 chopsticks that went into making a butcher's block or the 9,600 chopsticks used for a work-from-home desk.



A chopstick workstation from ChopValue. Photograph: ChopValue

“We’ve made money since day one,” said Böck. “We obviously reinvested every dollar we made into growth because we feel that the responsibility right now is to expand the concept globally.”

His hope is that ChopValue – and the “crazy idea” behind it – will prompt people to reconsider what they see as waste. “There’s this cheesy saying that every small action matters,” he said. “But I think we’re proving that in a fairly practical and exciting way.”

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Bangkok holidays](#)

Subtle and soothing: my obsession with Thai massaman curry – plus the recipe



Massaman curry. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer
Massaman curry. Photograph: Jean Cazals/The Observer

A literary interview over dinner in Bangkok led to the mild, Muslim-influenced dish becoming a fixture in our writer's London kitchen

[Ed Cumming](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 01.30 EST

In 2015 the Observer Magazine sent me to Thailand to [interview the novelist Lawrence Osborne](#). He first went to Bangkok for the cheap dentistry, but found the city so conducive to work that he stuck around. Like many expats, Osborne lives in the central Asoke district, just off the busy Sukhumvit road. He writes late at night, when the chaos and heat of the daytime have died down and the only sounds are tree frogs and the odd barking dog. We conducted the interview over dinner at [The Local](#), a quiet one-storey Thai restaurant round the corner from his flat, and it was there that I had my first

massaman curry, at the grand old age of 28. I'd eaten plenty of Thai food, so I'm not sure how I managed to last so long without trying it, but I succumbed at once. Compared with some of the restaurant's other dishes, which were so fiery I wanted to call the police, this had a deep warmth that was rich and reassuring rather than a gun to the head.

Although it has been a Thai staple for hundreds of years, massaman originated in India, or possibly Persia – accounts differ – and often features cumin, cinnamon, cloves and cardamom along with the more familiar galangal, chillis, shrimp paste and lemongrass. "Massaman is not meant to be spicy," says Sirachai Kularbwong, the chef at [Singburi](#) in Leytonstone, east London – quite possibly the UK's best Thai restaurant. "The ideal profile should be initially slightly sour, then becoming sweet and savoury. The point is to taste the subtle fragrances and spices that went into the dish." For shop-bought paste, he recommends the Mae Ploy brand.

Since that night in Bangkok my bastardised massaman has become a fixture at home: a one-pot, one-hour doddle. You can use any protein you like, and with the addition of potatoes it's as hearty as any hotpot, but far more impressive to serve to guests – whenever we're allowed to have them again.

Chicken massaman curry

Serves 4

A splash of vegetable oil

2 red onions, cut into wedges

600g chicken thighs, bone-in

400ml can of coconut milk

5 tbsp massaman curry paste

3 tbsp fish sauce

3 tbsp palm sugar or soft light brown sugar

2 star anise

1 tbsp tamarind paste

1 cinnamon stick

A squeeze of lime

400g new potatoes or big potatoes cut into 2.5cm chunks

Peanuts, roasted for a few minutes in a pan

To garnish

Crispy shallots, coriander, lime wedges

To serve

Jasmine rice

Heat the vegetable oil in a casserole dish for a few minutes until it shimmers. Sear the onions and chicken pieces, then set aside. The chicken doesn't need to cook through yet.

Heat 2 tbsp of coconut milk in the casserole dish until bubbling, then add the curry paste and cook over a low heat, stirring regularly for a minute or two until fragrant. Stir in the rest of the coconut milk, fish sauce, sugar, star anise, tamarind paste, cinnamon stick and a squeeze of lime, then add the potatoes and chicken. Simmer for about 25 minutes, or until the potato chunks are cooked through. Add the onion wedges and peanuts about 10 minutes from the end.

Garnish with crispy shallots, chopped coriander and lime wedges, and serve with jasmine rice.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from [https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/jan/04/my-obsession-with-thai-massaman-Curry-bangkok](https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2021/jan/04/my-obsession-with-thai-massaman Curry-bangkok)

Documentary

'I passed out with the lack of oxygen': truth of Heathrow stowaways' tragic journey

A man who died falling from an aircraft while attempting to reach the UK had a friend on the same flight who survived and speaks in a new Channel 4 film, *The Man Who Fell from the Sky*



Themba Cabeka, who now goes by the name Justin, and survived the flight from Johannesburg in 2015, in *The Man Who Fell from the Sky*.
Photograph: Postcard Productions

Themba Cabeka, who now goes by the name Justin, and survived the flight from Johannesburg in 2015, in *The Man Who Fell from the Sky*.
Photograph: Postcard Productions



[Ben Quinn](#)
[@BenQuinn75](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.17 EST

An almost unbearably painful moment comes halfway through a new [Channel 4](#) documentary about the extraordinary story of a man who survived stowing away on a flight from Johannesburg to London – and his friend who didn't make it. It happens when the daughter of the man who died is presented with the first photo of him she has ever seen by the makers of *The Man Who Fell from the Sky*. The film-makers had travelled to his native Mozambique, attempting to piece together the desperate bid for a new life he made in 2015.

“She doesn’t recognise him,” says her mother, Anna, as 11-year-old Chemilla looks at a picture of Carlito Vale on a mobile phone. As tears flow, Anna adds: “I am very grateful to all the people who continue to recognise that he’s a human being.”

Vale’s tragedy started to come to light when his body [was found on a roof below the Heathrow flight path](#) after he had fallen from a BA jet’s landing gear as it approached the runway after an 8,000-mile journey. But little has been known about the man who survived – until now.

Like other journalists who [flocked to the area around Heathrow](#) in west London after Vale's remains were found in the summer of 2015, I wanted to know more not just about him but about the survivor who remained in a critical condition. A few months later, [I learned more about Vale](#) after speaking to the founder of an orphanage where he grew up who wanted to thank those who had left flowers at the scene near Heathrow.



Carlito Vale, who died in 2015 when he fell from the wheel well of an aircraft as it approached Heathrow airport on a flight from Johannesburg.
Photograph: Facebook

Vale's was a young Mozambican whose initial venturings abroad took him to Uganda and South [Africa](#). But despite the efforts of many journalists, the fate of his companion in the UK has remained untold. That changes in *The Man Who Fell from the Sky* when the documentary maker Rich Bentley finally meets Themba Cabeka – who now goes by the name Justin – on a street corner in Liverpool.

Justin has been living in the UK for the past five years, and has been granted leave to remain. His story is all the more poignant at a time when men, women and children are drowning in the Channel, people who, like Justin and Vale, desperately try to reach Britain in search of a better life.

“I thought it was worth it,” the 30-year-old told me in December. “Because of my situation, and what I was going through it was the only choice that I had to survive.”

In *The Man Who Fell from the Sky*, the story of Cabeka and Vale’s journey to the UK slowly unfolds over the course of a five-year project undertaken by producer Bentley and director Sam Forsdike. In their previous documentary *The Stranger on the Bridge*, [the pair followed a man on his search for the stranger](#) who stopped him taking his life from Waterloo Bridge in London. Their latest – an impressive mix of gumshoe journalism and social commentary – has similar aspects but is more sweeping in its ambition.

To begin, we are told that there have been up to 109 recorded stowaway attempts involving aircraft wheel wells and that London is the most common target destination. Since October 1996, there have been at least 16 reported instances of people stowing away on flights that have come through London. And those are the ones we know about. Interviews included feature west London residents who were abruptly reminded of the realities of the global south when a stowaway fell from the sky above them.

The breakthrough comes on Christmas Eve 2019, when a man to whom Bentley had spoken three years earlier called to say he had “found” Cabeka.



Themba Cabeka, now Justin, and producer Rich Bentley in *The Man Who Fell From the Sky*. Photograph: Postcard Productions

Before that is an interview with a pilot who was landing a flight from Delhi at Heathrow in 1996 when an Indian teenager fell from the wheel well. "In terms of warmth and in terms of oxygen, he might as well be outside," says Bentley during a scene in which he climbs into the wheel well of a decommissioned jet while the same pilot looks up from the ground. That teenager's name was Vijay Saini, and his body was only found three days later. His brother Pardeep, who was then 22, survived the 10-hour journey from Delhi in freezing temperatures and was given compassionate leave to stay in Britain for a year after appealing to the Home Office.

Nineteen years after the brothers Vale and Cabeka put their plan to reach the UK into effect when they scaled the perimeter fence at the international airport in Johannesburg, climbing into a BA aircraft after selecting it in the belief that the journey would be shorter than alternative flights to the US. Coverage in 2015 had focused on the suspicion that the pair must have had inside help from a Johannesburg airport worker, but Cabeka insists they did it alone.

[Heathrow stowaway who fell to death identified as Mozambican migrant](#)
[Read more](#)

“I was not far from the engine. The engine was opposite but outside. You could feel it outside when it was rotating,” he says, and sustained burn marks after wrapping his arms through cabling. He still remembers the last words that Vale uttered to him. “He said: ‘We made it,’ and then I passed out with the lack of oxygen.”

It was the cabling that saved his life, as he managed to remain on board while his friend plummeted to the ground as the landing gear opened. His next memory was of lying on the tarmac at Heathrow, semi-conscious and with a shattered leg.

“I could see the guards. They carried me up and the next thing, I woke up in hospital,” Cabeka recalls in the documentary. Six months of treatment following, according to Justin, after which a police officer showed him a picture of Vale. “He said: Do you recognise this person? I said: ‘He’s my friend, Carlito.’ He said: ‘No, he did not make it.’”

He was a good guy who liked to do his own thing, quietly

Cabeka, who never knew his mother and was brought up by his grandmother, was left alone at the age of 13 or 14 when she died in 2009. Years later, he met Vale on the street and offered him space in the tent where he lived. “He was a good guy who liked to do his own thing, quietly,” recalls Cabeka in the documentary.

The plan to reach Europe by air started when Vale came back one day to their camp with a pile of books on topics such as engineering and aviation. “[The books] were talking about different planes and I took down all the details, so I knew if we want to go in the plane, there was another way you could use it. We had an idea now,” adds Cabeka. While proud of their plans, neither man was aware of the danger, including the very immediate threat of succumbing to a lack of oxygen.



The wheel well of a decommissioned passenger jet is inspected in *The Man Who Fell from the Sky*. Photograph: Postcard Productions

“It didn’t even matter to me. I just wanted to be out from where I was. Everything was just falling apart, so we decided: ‘Let’s just get out of the country. Let’s go somewhere else.’”

Today, Cabeka lives with the life-changing injuries he sustained when he fell after the plane had landed. When we first see him, it’s a shot from behind as he moves on his crutches along the streets of Liverpool. After a period of homelessness in London, he has come to find some sort of happiness in Merseyside and has been able to begin slowly making new friends and attempting to forge a career in hip-hop.

“It’s easy here. The people here are gentle and nice,” he says after the filmmakers finally meet him. But he is still haunted by memories of Vale, his “brother”, adding: “We’ve come a long way together. He’s gone but he’s still my friend because nobody else is going to take his place.”

It is one of the final notes of sadness in *The Man Who Fell from the Sky*, though it leaves you in awe of the lengths to which humans will go in search of a better life for themselves and those they love. It’s no bad thing to be reminded of that.

- The Man Who Fell from the Sky is on [Channel 4 at 10pm on 4 January.](#)
-

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/jan/04/i-passed-out-with-the-lack-of-oxygen-truth-of-heathrow-stowaways-tragic-journey>.

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Taiwan](#)

Taxi driver in Taiwan offers free rides in return for singing karaoke

Tu Ching Liang's videos of warbling passengers have been viewed millions of times

Play Video

3:00

The karaoke taxi driver turning passengers into 'superstars' in Taiwan – video

Tu Ching Liang adjusts his yellow novelty hat, as disco lights bounce off the medical mask across his face, and speeds up his taxi.

“No one is as lucky as me, walking out the door every day rushing to go to work and not make any money,” he says, laughing.

It's a cold day in central Taipei. Three weeks of near constant rain have worn people down and they morosely splash through shallow puddles and struggle with their umbrellas against the wind. But inside Tu's yellow taxi – identifiable from the outside by a pink neon star on the dashboard – it's warm and we're listening to a previous passenger gleefully warble Despacito.

In a city that loves to sing you can find karaoke just about anywhere, including in numerous taxis. The local taxi app even has “karaoke” as a selection alongside “English-speaking driver” or “wheelchair accessible”. Stumble off the pavement and into a car, and you might find a microphone thrust into your hand and an iPad ready to play Youtube clips of any song you can think of, with lyrics.

But Tu, 57, will tell you he's the famous one.

“I've been driving a taxi for 27 years, giving money [as rewards for singing karaoke] for eight years, and filming videos for six years. I've filmed 10,000

videos,” he says.

“I was on TV shows from 10 different countries.”

To get into Tu’s taxi is to make a deal. Sing for your chauffeur. If you don’t sing you don’t get a discount, and you can’t win any prizes, or start recording an interview for the Guardian ... I panic and can’t think of a song so Tu chooses for me and it’s a punishment: Celine Dion’s My Heart Will Go On.

Tu says many people are too embarrassed to sing, but he pushes them anyway. “It’s to train their courage. To train them become a superstar,” he says with phenomenal optimism.

He only occasionally gives forewarning that the speakers are on the outside of the car and turned up loud.

If Tu likes a singer’s effort he’ll discount the trip for them, sometimes giving a cash prize. Usually, people tip him more than the fare would have been.



Tu Ching Liang is a karaoke taxi driver in Taipei, Taiwan, where passengers sing for a discounted ride or just the glory. Photograph: Helen Davidson/The Guardian

What began nearly a decade ago as a game, offering passengers a discount if they could guess a song title, has evolved into something of a social media empire. Cameras inside Tu's car capture every performance – the good, the bad, the shy, the drunk – which he uploads to YouTube. Some have been watched more than 2m times.

"I'm an international influencer," he says, erupting into laughter again.

As we drive around the eastern districts looking for passengers Tu scrolls through some of his favourite and famous passengers. He claims to have discovered the singing career of [Edward Chen](#), a Taiwanese actor and heart-throb who Tu claims (with some creative licence) was given a recording contract after [his karaoke taxi performance](#).

"People pay to go to concerts and see people sing, but here they pay me to sing to me," he says. His dream is to one day have Ed Sheeran as a passenger.

The car pulls up outside a bar and Tu pulls out the microphone. "Anyone wants to be on TV? Anyone? You can get on British media. Do you want to? Can you sing?"

It's mid afternoon and there are no takers. "People at night are more brave," he says.

In these pandemic days, Taipei life is comparatively normal by international standards – [until last month, it hadn't recorded a locally transmitted case since April](#) – but there are no tourists because of the border restrictions. Tu says it hasn't affected him too much even with competitors driving around, and he mostly relies on local business.

"Taiwanese love singing," he says. "So it's normal there are many [taxis with karaoke]. But it's hard to both film and sing, like what I do. And police can fine me for the speakers outside. That's also difficult."

At the end of the day Tu agrees not to inflict my murder of the Titanic song on the internet, but he can't help having one last laugh, and as he drives away the recording blasts through the taxi's external speakers. Maybe it's the

weather-induced despondency, or maybe everyone is just used to seeing Tu in the traffic, but thankfully no one seems to notice.

Additional reporting by Pei Lin Wu.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/04/training-their-courage-taiwan-taxi-driver-offers-free-rides-for-karaoke>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The Covid generation](#)[UK news](#)

Youth organisations in England face wholesale closure

Two-thirds of small groups at risk as pandemic leaves 1.5 million young people in critical need of help

- [Generation Z and Covid: ‘I’m 100% more politicised’](#)



Thirty-one per cent of youth organisations say they might have to shut their doors in the next six months. Composite: Joaquin Corbalan pastor/Alamy/Guardian Design Team

Thirty-one per cent of youth organisations say they might have to shut their doors in the next six months. Composite: Joaquin Corbalan pastor/Alamy/Guardian Design Team

[Amelia Hill](#)

[@byameliahill](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 07.00 EST

England faces a wholesale closure of youth organisations, leaving a generation of vulnerable young people without life-changing support, according to research.

Almost two-thirds of youth organisations with incomes under £250,000 say they are at risk of closure, with 31% saying they might have to shut in the next six months.

The forced withdrawal of support officially recognised as “essential” comes at a time when the pandemic has left more than 1.5 million vulnerable young people in critical need of help, the research by the charity UK Youth found.

[Generation Z and the Covid pandemic: 'I have pressed pause on my life'](#)

[Read more](#)

The responses from 1,759 youth organisations in England revealed that 58% are operating at a reduced level, with a further 20% temporarily closed or preparing to permanently close.

The predicted closures come against a backdrop of years of chronic underfunding that has already forced at least 763 youth centres to shut since 2012. A further round of major cuts to local authority youth services is expected in the near future.

“There are 1.6 million children from a vulnerable family background for whom support is either patchy or non-existent. Just over half of these children are ‘invisible’ to services,” said Anna Alcock, the head of engagement and advocacy at UK Youth. “Youth work could be the only answer to helping these children; a preventative service that provides support before problems arise.”

The preliminary data, which will be at the centre of a more in-depth report published later this year, is in line with recent research by the National Youth Agency (NYA) which found many youth charities are “running on empty”.

“Youth services simply do not have the capacity or enough funding to meet young people’s vastly increased needs,” said the NYA’s chief executive,

Leigh Middleton. “They have depleted reserves and incomes slashed by half or more.

“We are calling for greater investment in frontline youth services right now, sustained throughout any lockdown and regional tier emergency measures.”

Anne Longfield, the children’s commissioner for England, said the research was “shocking but sadly, not surprising”.

“A major funder said to me recently that he had wanted to substantially invest in youth provision but when he had sought applications, he found most of the services he wanted to support had already closed down,” she said.

Areas suffering the most significant cuts in spending on young people have recorded larger increases in knife crime and drug-related crimes, said Longfield.

“Youth services are the last line of defence for vulnerable children,” she said. “If these children have a bad time at home and don’t have the structure of school, for whatever reason, and then you take away youth services too, they’re completely on their own, with nothing protecting them from physical abuse, self-harm and drug use, being exploited and groomed.”

Tom Madders, the director of campaigns at YoungMinds, said: “For lots of young people, youth clubs are a lifeline. Without early support for their mental health, young people’s needs often escalate, sometimes resulting in crisis and more acute intervention.”

Just over £34m of the emergency £750m coronavirus fund for charities was directed to children and youth charities. The government’s £500m youth investment fund to help transform and increase capacity of the youth sector, confirmed in the Conservative manifesto in December 2019 and due to start in April 2020, has yet to be spent.

In addition, the government has delayed its review of the statutory duty for local authorities to secure local youth services until summer 2021 and has

suspended reporting by local authorities on funding of youth services until 2022.

Matthew Hussey, the public affairs manager of the Children's Society, said another missed opportunity was the chancellor's spending review in December.

"It was a chance to place children's services, which include council-led support for young people like youth work, on a sustainable footing and give councils the resources they need to rebuild the support so needed by children and young people," he said.

A government spokesperson said: "We recognise the impact that the coronavirus pandemic has had on young people, which is why we recently announced a £16.5m fund for the youth sector and have provided more than £60m to children's and youth organisations as part of a wider multibillion-pound support package for charities."

But the NYA said that referring to a range of different funding pots and commitments to youth work "simply disguises the paucity of funding specific to the youth sector" and the limited ways funding can be used: the £16.5m, for example, can only be claimed against revenue/losses from the second national lockdown".

Middleton said: "The government response confuses the picture by referencing general funding 'for young people'."

Collapse of youth services

There has been a [71% cut in spending on children and youth services](#) across England in less than a decade.

Over the same period, local authority spending on crisis intervention services for children and young people has risen from £5.6bn to £7.2bn – a 29% increase.

At the start of the decade, crisis intervention accounted for 58% of local authority spending on children and young people's services. This had risen

to 78% by 2018 to 2019.

There is a north-south divide: between 2010-11 and 2018-19, spending in the north of England fell three times as fast as in the south: -9% compared with -3%.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/03/youth-organisations-in-england-face-wholesale-closure>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Fishing

'This is where I need to be': the UK women defying fishing stereotypes

Not-for-profit Women in Fisheries aims to get more women involved in male-dominated industry



Amy Rose, fishing in Newlyn, said her girlfriends were excited about her job. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian

Amy Rose, fishing in Newlyn, said her girlfriends were excited about her job. Photograph: Jonny Weeks/The Guardian



[Sarah Marsh](#)

[@sloumarsh](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 10.33 EST

Superstition among fishing crews has traditionally said that women on ships are bad luck – and it is among many of the reasons women in the fishing industry are in short supply.

Now though, they are being urged to join Britain's fishing fleet by the first UK organisation to emerge that is actively encouraging women to join the fishing industry.

UK [Women in Fisheries](#) was set up last month to get more women involved as fleet managers, skippers, commercial fishers, fishmongers, processors or gutters, among other roles.

It comes after the BBC Radio 4's Today programme sparked a row for using the term “fisherpeople” in a news report. The Europe editor Katya Adler's gender-neutral description during a package on Brexit talks caused some listeners to note that women only fill a fraction of the jobs, pointing to a study finding only 2.7% are female.

Fishing, and control of who fishes in UK waters, became a central part of the Brexit negotiations and some industry leaders claim the deal struck with

Brussels will do long-term damage to their prospects.

Laney Black, 48, one of the co-founders of UK [Women](#) in Fisheries who works on a trawler, says she would love to see more women involved. Black trawls for langoustines and works 18-hour shifts most days.

“Our days are dependent on the tide and the moon and the weather but on an average day we would be leaving harbour around teatime, so 4 or 5pm, and by the time we return to land with langoustines cleaned up it is around an 18-hour shift. It’s mostly a night shift but can vary – sometimes a day shift dependent on tides,” she said.

The aim of their new not-for-profit company is to bring women who fish together. “We are drawing the plans for it at the moment but the main goal is to mentor and support, and give training for women in all sectors of the fishing industry,” she said.

The inspiration behind the project came to Black after she was involved in a government-funded study a year ago that meant she met more women who work on boats. “I found it inspiring to meet women who had up until now a very solitary career,” she said.

Black added that it was hard to tell how many women fished but she did not know many others on trawlers. She said women “don’t realise it is something they can or want to do”.

“It’s very male-dominated,” she said. “The old-fashioned views about women on boats is an issue. At careers day [in school] you never have anyone coming up telling you that you can work in fishing ... It still seems to be a taboo but it does seem to be changing and we are trying to combat that kind of thinking.”

Another woman who has been promoting fishing through [her Instagram](#) account is Ashley Mullenger, 33, who has been commercially fishing off Norfolk for more than two years. “About 11 years ago I booked an angling trip and I went out and had a light bulb moment and thought ‘this is where I need to be’. The skipper could not get rid of me after that till eventually he

said just turn up when you want and jump on and have a go and asked me to work on a commercial boat, gutting fish.”



Ashley Mullenger: ‘I had a lightbulb moment and thought this is where I need to be.’ Photograph: Graeme Robertson/The Guardian

Her work is very physical. “It’s a long day,” she said, which means it can be a hard industry for mothers. “If you’re at sea 12-16 hours that will make it hard [for women with children]. You need a good support network to help you.”

“It is a very male-dominated industry and a lot of women may be intimidated by that but that may be their own preconceptions. Everyone I have met in the industry – mostly men – are really supportive.”

Women who fish were “few and far between”, she said, but she would like to see more getting involved.

Amy Isobel Rose, 31, works in Newlyn, a fishing town in south-west Cornwall, and said she had worked at sea on yachts since she was 21. “I came back to Penzance last year with the intention of having a year off at home then going back to yachting at the start of this year, which of course was ruined by Covid.”

“Having grown up in Penzance, I went to school with most of the fishermen or their kids, so it was just a case of convincing one to take me to sea. Eventually, Danny, my current skipper, agreed to.

“He thought I just wanted to go for a jolly, but as soon as I let the lines go from the quay he said he knew he could take me seriously and I’ve been fishing with him since.”

Her duties involve line handling, net repairs, gear maintenance and wash-downs. “Physically, I’m finding it hard at the moment, but that’s more because I’ve done zero exercise for the past couple of years, whereas these guys have been fishing for years and are used to the physical demands,” she said.

She added that fishing did not always appeal to women as it can be a very physically demanding, smelly, dirty job with erratic and unsociable hours.

“None of my girlfriends has expressed an interest for giving it a go, but they’re all stoked on me being out here.”

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/jan/03/this-is-where-i-need-to-be-the-uk-women-defying-fishing-stereotypes>

2021.01.04 - Opinion

- ['Open all schools!' 'Close all schools!' What England really needs is creative thinking](#)
- [Wonder Woman 1984 is a smug, dishonest let-down. How very 2020](#)
- [If the pandemic taught us anything, it is that 'care' has to be central to politics](#)
- [Cartoon Rebecca Hedin on the UK's coronavirus surge](#)
- [Guardian view on Trump's strategy Overturn result, cheat democracy](#)
- [Trump's Republicans have dumped Lincoln – they're the Confederacy now](#)

[**Opinion**](#)[**Coronavirus**](#)

'Open all schools!' 'Close all schools!' What England really needs is creative thinking

[John Harris](#)



The pandemic has sparked a shouting match. Instead we should be working out how to keep everyone in education safe



Illustration: R Fresson/The Guardian

Illustration: R Fresson/The Guardian

Sun 3 Jan 2021 10.32 EST

The [crisis](#) enveloping schools, and the noisy resentment it has sparked, reflect just about every aspect of England's Covid-19 story. The education secretary, Gavin Williamson, has taken the government's grim mixture of [arrogance and incompetence](#) to new depths. When Boris Johnson was [interviewed](#) by Andrew Marr today it was striking to see so much of the conversation devoted to schools, but there was a wearying familiarity to the vagueness of the prime minister's position on urgent issues. The fact that there is no clear line even on the proposed opening of all schools in England a fortnight from now hardly answers people's need for clarity and leadership.

Yet again councils, who are only too aware of local realities, have objected to edicts from Whitehall. In London, boroughs that rejected the demand that their primary schools open on 4 January forced yet another [government U-turn](#). Meanwhile, as concerns grow about the [new variant](#) spreading via schools, talk of "a switch to online learning" is now common – yet this could exacerbate many hard realities that have emerged during the pandemic. For plenty of families, "connectivity" amounts to a pay-as-you-go

smartphone running on a mobile network; in millions of cases, remote learning is a completely vain hope.

Though the past nine months have seen contrasts in leadership between England and the rest of the UK, none of the four nations has realigned its education system to anything like the extent the pandemic demands. In [Scotland](#), [Wales](#) and [Northern Ireland](#), teachers' unions have responded to plans to open schools this month with the same scepticism and opposition seen in England. But clearly, there are levels of rancorousness and disarray on display in the English system – gripped by stubborn and nostalgic Tory thinking for more than a decade – that set it apart. Hit by something as big as the pandemic, it was probably always going to teeter into failure.

Beyond the immediate crisis over what should happen to schools, the extremities of the pandemic have yet to shift one key article of Tory faith: that pupils must still prepare to sit GCSEs, A-levels and most of the Sats that kids in English schools take when they are 11. Though the [Scottish](#) and [Welsh](#) governments have called off this summer's exams, ministers in Westminster are apparently [hellbent](#) on pressing ahead, albeit with a few supposedly generous [tweaks](#). Even as normality continues to collapse, the government insists that exams are the “best and fairest way for young people to show what they know and can do” and that SATs provide “[vital information](#)”.

Last week, I spoke to Michelle Sheehy, the co-headteacher of Millfield Primary in Brownhills, near Walsall – somewhere I have visited twice in recent years, [reporting](#) first on cuts to school budgets, then the pandemic’s [impact on education](#). The tyranny of Sats, she told me, means some of her staff will soon have to spend long hours teaching year 6 pupils the kind of “test technique” (how long to spend on questions, what to look for when they’re reading) that will maximise their scores. Right now, such things seem laughably irrelevant.

When they begin secondary school in September, her current year 6 students will be assessed anyway. “Children will be coming back to school having not had time with their friends and their families – if they’ve been in isolation, they haven’t been able to see their close relatives,” she says. “There’s so much we need to do with them to get their spirits up and negate

the effects of the virus. I don't want to spend that time preparing them for Sats.”

Since the arrivals of Michael Gove and Dominic Cummings at the Department for Education (DfE) in the early years of the coalition government, the schools system in England has somehow been both increasingly fragmented and woefully centralised. The curriculum has become far too old-fashioned and inflexible, highlighted by loud complaints from teachers about the closing down of space for initiative and invention.

Though Williamson's surreal incompetence is clear, the crisis his reign at the DfE has prompted goes much deeper. As we have been reminded, education needs to be resilient, adaptable, and run on the expertise and passion of those who actually deliver it. But by marginalising councils, killing teachers' morale, favouring the old-fashioned over the forward-looking, and scoffing at the more nurturing child-centred aspects of education, the Tories built a system that failed on all these counts.

The anxieties Covid-19 has loaded on to teachers and support staff, and the arduous realities of their work in the pandemic, are still underappreciated. Vaccinations for people who work in schools and a functioning testing system for staff and pupils are now matters of huge urgency. But there are also ways that schools could deliver at least some education in safer circumstances than the standard classroom that should have been tried way before this new meltdown.

Indeed, what makes the start of this term all the more anguished for parents, children and teachers is the fact that, before the arrival of the latest Covid peak, far too much time was spent shouting about either closing schools to 99% of kids, or insisting they somehow deliver the closest possible approximation of “normal” education. More creative thinking failed to gain any momentum.

From unions and some enlightened politicians there have been proposals for “Nightingale schools”, which might shift lessons to new, larger spaces (think of all the empty theatres, cinemas and music venues), but they have come to nothing. In Belgium and Denmark, schools have moved some of their operations to public buildings and outdoor locations. In many US states,

teaching has been shifted into the open air – which has continued amid snowy weather in Maine, Colorado and New Hampshire. In the balmy conditions of the first lockdown, why wasn't an expansion of that approach not widely trialled in the UK, so it could have been used even in the winter?

[The government has pitted England's schools against health. It didn't have to](#)
[| James McAsh](#)

[Read more](#)

The questions go on. Though there are now promises of a million laptops and tablets for poorer households, why has the government failed so pathetically so far? Could the idea of blended learning, whereby pupils go to school part-time in smaller classes, finally achieve more prominence? Given that the internet does not reach many households, why hasn't television been more thoroughly used to make up for the interruptions to schooling?

There are plenty of reasons to feel downcast about the state we are in, but this one is particularly painful. No field of policy is more important than state education, and in the past year a whole set of dated and rigid ideas about education has been tested to destruction. It is now time to come up with something new.

- John Harris is a Guardian columnist

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[Opinion](#)[Film](#)

Wonder Woman 1984 is a smug, dishonest let-down. How very 2020

[Emma Brockes](#)



Three years after a truly inspiring superhero film, Patty Jenkins' sequel uses faux feminism to push a reactionary agenda



Gal Gadot and Kristen Wiig in Wonder Woman 1984. Photograph: Clay Enos/AP

Gal Gadot and Kristen Wiig in Wonder Woman 1984. Photograph: Clay Enos/AP

Mon 4 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

I remember very clearly, three years ago, going to the cinema to see [Wonder Woman](#). It was an afternoon showing and the entire experience – slinking off work while the kids were at school, paying extra for the posh seat, walking out on to the street two hours later confident that, if push came to shove, I could probably bend metal – reminded me how transporting big movies can be. Superhero franchises are, for the most part, made by men for men, but this movie, directed by Patty Jenkins, felt like a rare exception. It was almost pitiful: how gratifying – moving, in fact – it was to see a woman at the centre of a [\\$150m \(£108m\) movie](#).

Sentimentality for a commercial beast of that size was probably always misguided, like celebrating the “empowerment” of women pole dancing in clubs run by men. If [Wonder Woman](#) didn’t feel cynical, it was still formulaic and subject to the usual requirements; it is hard to imagine Batman fighting crime in a suit that ended at the bum-line. And yet, it seemed to me, you could tell there was a woman in charge. If the fight

scenes at the top of the movie had a slightly porny aesthetic, the intended audience was other women. For once, it wasn't about the men.

Cut to the release, on Christmas Day in the US, of [Wonder Woman 1984](#). Because of the pandemic, the movie opened simultaneously in cinemas and for streaming on HBO Max, and while the budget had gone up to [\\$200m](#), most of the other details were consistent with the first movie, with Jenkins directing, Gal Gadot as Wonder Woman and Chris Pine, looking more like Tom Hollander with each passing year, as the love interest. A lot of women I know, particularly those with young daughters, sat down that afternoon ready, once again, to lose their hearts and vaguely wonder if they should start weight training.

It's a big, dumb movie, not an arthouse adaptation of essays by Mary Wollstonecraft. Still, the fact it's so bad isn't only disappointing but enraging. It's not merely that the script is terrible and that in the first half of the movie, after an encouraging opening scene, hours seem to go by in which nothing happens. It's not that, for long stretches, Gadot has nothing to do but look passively into space, pining for her dead boyfriend. It's not even that WW 1984 commits the ultimate sin of engaging Robin Wright, jamming her into gladiator gear, then dispensing with her services in the first five minutes of the film. It's that all of these fails are presented with the smug, dishonest air of a movie that purports to be critiquing the very thing it is selling us.

Hilariously, towards the end Wonder Woman 1984 delivers an anti-capitalist message – as if trying to launder a largely conservative movie through a quick liberal spin cycle. The problem with the US and the world, it suggests, is that nobody wants to work any more, they just want to snap their fingers and see their dreams come true. Wonder Woman herself learns this lesson the hard way when, for a brief spell, she wins her heart's desire – no, not world peace, a cure for cancer, or as in the first movie, the defeat of an evil overlord, but the return of the dead boyfriend. Here is a woman who can stop bullets with her wrist plates but oh, hi, let's give the guy with no powers not only two-thirds of the movie, but most of the fight scenes and the job of saving the superhero. On top of everything else, it makes no sense.

The worst thing about Wonder Woman 1984, however, is probably the role occupied by Kristen Wiig. I'll keep it vague to avoid spoilers, but her heart's desire involves transcending the shame of being a dowdy nerd men ignore to becoming more in line with someone who looks like Gadot. The movie punishes her relentlessly for harbouring this shallow, misguided dream while promoting the hell out of the notion that for women, male attention is the only metric that matters.

Who cares, right? If the extra \$50m on the budget pushed a filmmaker who has, in the past, been mildly interesting back into formula, why should anyone be surprised – and it's at least in line with the conventions of the genre. The aggravating thing is that by using faux feminism and other tropes of social justice in the service of a reactionary movie, the insult is far worse than if Wonder Woman 1984 was bad in the regular ways – although, oddly, it does make it a movie very much in the spirit of the age. Pure and simple, it's gaslighting.

- Emma Brockes is a Guardian columnist
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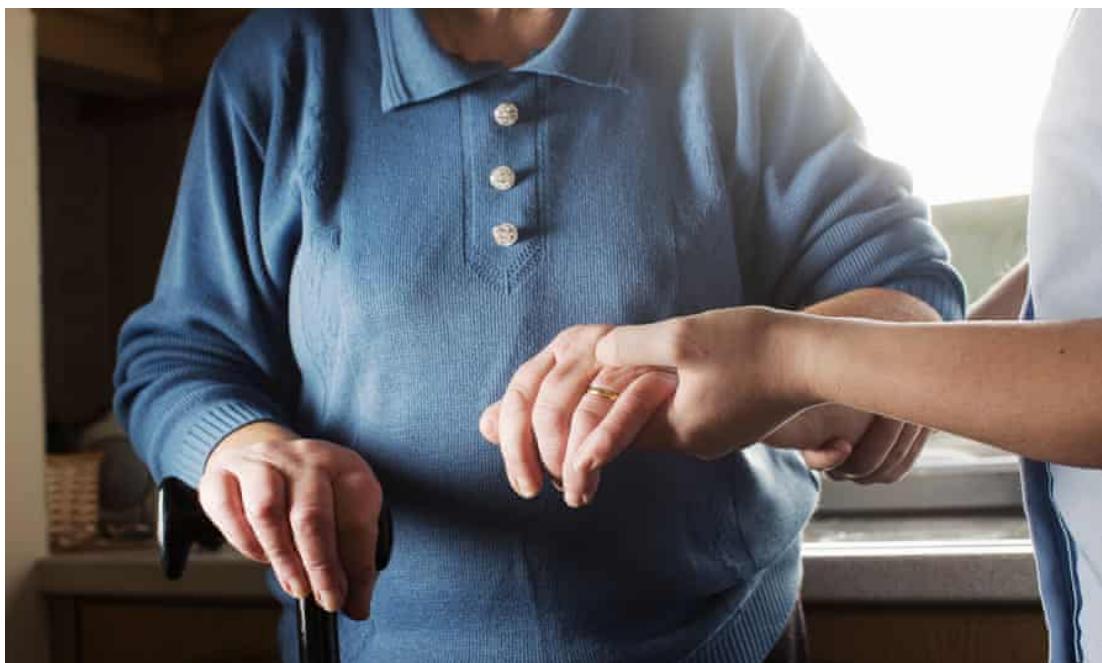
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OpinionCare workers

If the pandemic taught us anything, it is that 'care' has to be central to politics

[Lynne Segal](#) and [Andreas Chatzidakis](#)

Care work, paid or unpaid, is mostly unsupported. For this to change, state institutions must themselves become caring



‘Different forms of care in the home, on the street or at work are practically and structurally interconnected.’ Photograph: Image Source/Alamy Stock Photo

‘Different forms of care in the home, on the street or at work are practically and structurally interconnected.’ Photograph: Image Source/Alamy Stock Photo

Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

As we reflect on 2020, many tell us that it was a [lost year](#), a year to forget. That’s not quite how we see things. What has been invaluable about the past 10 catastrophic months is that this pandemic has brought the issue of care to

the very centre of public discussion. This very old word is newly fashionable, and with some unexpected twists.

We have always [undervalued the work of care](#). Historically, most hands-on caring has been marginalised as women's "unproductive" housework or, more recently, offloaded as underpaid work, largely shouldered by precarious, often immigrant workers. Sexism combines with racism to further devalue this vital work. Decades of welfare cuts followed by the savage austerity policies initiated in 2010 have produced a lack of adequate care provision now evident at every level in British life, from cradle to grave.

Cuts to the NHS, its selective privatisation and the removal of nursing bursaries had already left massive shortages of hospital beds, doctors and nurses. It's why we have seen such uneven infection rates and exceptionally high mortality levels throughout this pandemic – more than double that of Germany. As Richard Horton, the editor of the Lancet, noted, Britain was already "[the sick man of Europe](#)" well before Covid-19 appeared.

This is why, in 2017, five of us from differing academic backgrounds formed the [Care Collective](#), and wrote [The Care Manifesto](#) to highlight just how uncaring our society has become. The ongoing calamity of social care, especially for the disabled and elderly, is merely the nadir of this systemic carelessness. With public services weakened or outsourced, often to global corporations, paid care workers are themselves facing intolerable and precarious working conditions, curtailing any continuity of care. The resulting provision often mocks the very name of care, with so little security for either the cared-for or the care workers.

Meanwhile, many corporations have been busy promoting themselves as caring through numerous "carewashing" and "[coronawashing](#)" campaigns. Others have been making massive profits from outsourced "care" and, more recently, failing [test and trace systems](#). Combating such systemic carelessness requires a radical approach: we must begin to place care and wellbeing at the centre of politics. This starts with expanding public health provision and empowering local communities to deal with our ongoing health emergencies, and continues with pioneering new ways of ensuring social and environmental wellbeing. In a growing global movement

promoting [radical municipalism](#), for example, we see councils pursuing approaches such as the “[Preston model](#)”, seeking to insource hitherto outsourced local infrastructures, while offering support for alternative forms of ownership and economic cooperation.

Placing care at the heart of politics also requires us to recognise that “hands-on” care does not exist in a vacuum. The reason care is in such a multifaceted crisis today is because of the stubborn interconnectedness of everything around it. To be able to cook a nutritious meal for our loved ones, for instance, we need to have access to appropriate housing, kitchen equipment and ingredients sourced in our local (digital or physical) marketplace. Our vegetables may be locally produced, fairly traded or, conversely, unfairly traded and at risk of relying upon extreme labour exploitation in their supply chain. Different forms of care in the home, on the street or at work are practically and structurally interconnected.

Working to create more caring communities requires that they be more democratic, too; forging a society where everyone feels their voices are being heard. It also requires collective engagement in making them heard, as opposed to indulging in [consumerist](#), individualist and apolitical lifestyles. For example, whereas most accounts of “care economies” primarily (and narrowly) focus on workers in the care sector, a 2020 report by the Women’s Budget Group also explicitly [embraces broader issues](#) of gender equality and environmental sustainability. Our manifesto argues for a truly capacious understanding of care, one that encompasses all the economic and ecological challenges feeding into it.

As we begin a new year, many of us are at last paying more heed to caring. But we have seen little material change. We clapped for carers and other essential workers, yet have seen no pay increases, better conditions or reduced working hours. Good caring, paid or unpaid, requires time, patience and flexibility, as well as ample support and resources – exactly what is usually lacking in unsupported home care and a lot of marketised care. It is still mothers, for instance, who have been [most over-burdened](#) throughout this pandemic. For all this to change, we need state institutions and communities to themselves become caring, to help to nurture and enable all our capacity to give and receive care.

This is why we call for an expanded notion and language of care if we are ever to appreciate all that it really involves. “If you have the words, there’s always a chance that you’ll find the way,” as Seamus Heaney reflected. We are never outside the social, we are not the autonomous individuals some fantasise themselves to be. There is only interdependence in human existence, as we lean towards and upon each other, as well as on all that sustains the world we inhabit.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Guardian Opinion cartoon

Coronavirus

Rebecca Hendin on the UK's coronavirus surge – cartoon

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[Opinion](#)[US politics](#)

The Guardian view on Trump's strategy: overturn result, cheat democracy

[Editorial](#)

The US president is seeking to bring down a system that defeated him



‘A classic demagogue, Mr Trump is signalling to his supporters that they, like him, should refuse to respect the election’s outcome and reject Mr Biden’s presidency.’ Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP

‘A classic demagogue, Mr Trump is signalling to his supporters that they, like him, should refuse to respect the election’s outcome and reject Mr Biden’s presidency.’ Photograph: Patrick Semansky/AP

Sun 3 Jan 2021 13.25 EST

This week, Donald Trump will [undermine democracy](#) in the US by supporting the claim that Democrat Joe Biden did not fairly win last November’s presidential election. A peaceful handover of power in a democracy requires losing candidates and their followers to admit defeat.

But Mr Trump has manufactured a controversy purely to maintain power and to overturn a legitimate election.

US courts have repeatedly [thrown](#) out Mr Trump's evidence-free cases. This has not stopped the president's [accomplices in Congress](#). They, backed by Mr Trump's vice-president, on Wednesday plan to challenge Mr Biden's win to force a debate and votes in Congress. Some scholars point to a historical precedent as offering a [slim, perhaps vanishing, chance](#) that the nightmare will continue. Mr Trump will not let an opportunity pass to relitigate an election he lost.

For the good of America, he must fail. The alternative is ultimately the collapse of political norms and civil strife. A classic demagogue, Mr Trump is signalling to his supporters that they, like him, should refuse to respect the election's outcome and reject Mr Biden's presidency. There is a well-grounded fear that [protests could erupt](#), some of them armed. Mr Trump might call out the national guard or send [federal agents](#) to deal with demonstrations. This chaos, Mr Trump no doubt hopes, will pave the way for an autocratic takeover.

Mr Trump is a sore loser who cannot stand that he was beaten in a fair election. He should move on but sees no reason why he should yield. After all, Mr Trump has not been punished for his transgressions against tradition, decency and the law. Instead, he has been [rewarded](#). He thinks he can get away with almost anything. The Republican party has [only itself to blame for incubating Trumpism](#), a parasitical ideology that threatens to take over the host.

Mr Trump has thrown open the door to the argument of power rather than the power of argument in US electoral politics. With the help of social media, the president has polarised the electorate, building a "counter Republic" online, in which anger and fear are motivating emotions. In this world, the US apparently is being engulfed by [socialism and liberal values](#). Mr Trump sells his chimerical fight as a necessary one, even if it cheats democracy itself. This has allowed him to frame the undoing of a presidential election as just an extension of other anti-democratic Republican tactics – such as [gerrymandering](#) and voter suppression – to constrain political opponents.

Politicians in the US need to give up on the fantasy of a Trump second term. Questioning the integrity of the presidential election without proof of wrongdoing threatens the idea of liberal democracy. It leaves the US distracted by canards when its real problems are painfully obvious. No one outside of Trump's orbit thinks that Washington DC ought to play host to rival inaugurations on 20 January. Mr Trump is not embracing chaos to express dissent. He is seeking to bring down the system that defeated him.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |



[Opinion](#)[Republicans](#)

Trump's Republicans have dumped Lincoln – they're the Confederacy now

[Lloyd Green](#)

Never mind sedition – for the *secession* caucus, defeat by Barack Obama's successor and a black woman is just too much to bear

- [Trump pressed Georgia official to overturn Biden victory](#)



Ted Cruz adjusts his mask. Photograph: Getty Images

Ted Cruz adjusts his mask. Photograph: Getty Images

Mon 4 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

On Wednesday, the Republicans' transition to the party of the [Confederacy](#) will be complete. A day after [Georgia's runoff elections](#), at least a dozen lawmakers in the Senate and more than half of the party's House membership will [seek to overturn](#) the results of the 2020 election and disenfranchise the majority of US voters. A coup attempt in all but name, this is how democracy dies.

['Traitors and patriots': Republican push to keep Trump in power seems doomed](#)

[Read more](#)

Sadly, [a statement issued on Saturday](#) by seven sitting senators and four senators-elect dispelled any doubts about the nexus between the end of the US civil war, more than 150 years ago, and Donald Trump's desperate attempt to cling to power. Predictably, America's racial divide again stands front and center.

After regurgitating for the umpteenth time unproven and unsubstantiated charges of electoral fraud, the senators invoked [the election of 1876](#). Back

then, the Democrats contested the outcome, conceding after the Republicans agreed to halt Reconstruction.

As framed by Ted Cruz and his posse, “the most direct precedent” for their actions “arose in 1877, following serious allegations of fraud and illegal conduct in the Hayes-Tilden presidential race”. In their telling, “elections in three states” were “alleged to have been conducted illegally”. Left unsaid is that after the end of Reconstruction, Jim Crow and the toxic legacy of “separate but equal” followed.

To these Republicans the right to vote is only for some of the people, some of the time

To quote Mississippi’s William Faulkner, “[The past is never dead. It’s not even past.](#)” Senators from states that were part of the Confederacy, or territory where slaveholding was legal, provide the ballast for Cruz’s demands. At least one senator each from Alabama, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Texas is on board.

Apparently, Trump’s defeat at the hands of Joe Biden, formerly vice-president to the first black man in the White House, and Kamala Harris, a black woman, is too much for too many to bear. Said differently, to these [Republicans](#) the right to vote is only for some of the people, some of the time – those people being this president’s supporters.

Trump’s equivocation over Charlottesville, his debate shoutout to the Proud Boys and his worship of dead Confederate generals are of the same piece. The vestiges of an older and crueler social order are to be [maintained](#), at all costs.

Likewise, the reluctance of Trump appointees to the federal judiciary [to affirm the validity of Brown v Board of Education](#), the supreme court ruling that said school segregation was unconstitutional, is a feature not a bug.

As for the Declaration of Independence’s pronouncement that “All men are created equal”, and the constitution’s guaranty of equal protection under law, they are inconveniences to be discarded when confronted by [dislocating demographics](#).

“Stand back and stand by,” [indeed](#).

Since the civil war, [there has always been a southern party](#), frequently echoing strains of the old, slave-owning south. Practically, that has meant hostility towards civil rights coupled with wariness towards modernity.

To be sure, southern did not automatically equal neo-Confederate, but the distinction could easily get lost. And to be sure, the Democrats were initially the party of the south. During debate over the 1964 Civil Rights Act, Republicans gave Lyndon Johnson the votes he needed. Not anymore.

Cruz and Josh Hawley, the Missouri senator who kicked off the attempt to deny the electoral college result, are the products of places like Harvard, Stanford and Yale. John C Calhoun, the seventh vice-president, argued in favor of slavery and the right of states to secede. He went to Yale too. Joseph Goebbels [had a doctorate](#) from Heidelberg. An elite degree does not confer wisdom automatically.

For the record, Cruz also clerked for a supreme court chief justice, William Rehnquist. Hawley did so for John Roberts.

[A disputed election, a constitutional crisis, polarisation ... welcome to 1876](#)
[Read more](#)

On Sunday, as the new Congress was being sworn in, [a recording emerged](#) of Trump unsuccessfully browbeating Georgia’s secretary of state into finding “11,780 votes, which is one more than we have”. From the sound of things, Trump’s fear of [prosecutors](#) and creditors, waiting for him to leave the White House, takes precedence over electoral integrity.

[Back in May](#), after Deborah Birx, the White House coronavirus response coordinator, predicted 240,000 deaths from Covid, and as armed protests to public health measures grew, an administration insider conveyed that Trump’s America was becoming a “bit” like the “late” Weimar Republic. Eight months later, the death toll is past 350,000 and climbing unabated.

Come nightfall on 6 January, the party of Abraham Lincoln will be no more. Instead, the specters of Jim Crow and autocracy will flicker. Messrs Trump,

Cruz and Hawley can take a collective bow.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.04 - Sport

- [Premier League Ten talking points from the weekend's action](#)
- [Chelsea 1-3 Man City Foden excels in emphatic win](#)
- [Chelsea Lampard plays down pressure after defeat](#)
- [Barney Ronay City's experiment in fun a lesson for Lampard](#)
- [A golden year for sport? 2021 is already looking like 2020](#)
- [NFL Four teams that deserved to make the playoffs more than Washington](#)
- [NFL Giants seethe after Eagles pull QB from Washington game](#)
- [Athletics Coe shrugs off concerns that Nike track spikes give unfair advantage](#)
- [Darts Price sweeps Anderson aside to clinch first world title](#)
- ['It will go to the wire' Klopp predicts fierce Premier League title fight](#)
- [Talking Horses Harrington must make cutting basic errors a BHA focus](#)

Ten talking points from the weekend football Premier League

Premier League: 10 talking points from the weekend's action

Arteta finds captaincy material in Tierney, Eze's intensity impresses for Palace and Newcastle pine for Saint-Maximin



Crystal Palace's Eberechi Eze; West Ham's Angelo Ogbonna and Kieran Tierney of Arsenal. Composite: Getty/EPA

Crystal Palace's Eberechi Eze; West Ham's Angelo Ogbonna and Kieran Tierney of Arsenal. Composite: Getty/EPA

[Guardian sport](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

1) Tierney a leader in waiting for Arsenal

Eighteen months after his arrival from Celtic, Kieran Tierney has overcome injury and homesickness to emerge as such an influential player at Arsenal that Mikel Arteta sees him as a future club captain. "I think he can be," said Arteta following the left-back's dominant performance in the 4-0 win at

West Brom. “He has the respect and admiration of every member of the staff and every player. It’s just the way he is. He does it in a natural way. He’s a really shy boy but he represents all the values that are in the DNA of this club. He’s a natural leader. You see how he behaves on the pitch. And when he talks he says the right thing. He’s someone who is exactly what he looks for.” Tierney opened the scoring with a wonderful solo goal at the Hawthorns and never relented, setting up Alexandre Lacazette for Arsenal’s fourth. “He can still improve but at the moment he is a real threat in attack and is doing really well defensively also,” added Arteta. “This is the type of contribution we need.” **Paul Doyle**

- *Match report:* [West Brom 0-4 Arsenal](#)

2) Spurs still need to share the goals around more

All felt well with the world for José Mourinho and Tottenham after their 3-0 victory over Leeds snapped a four-game winless streak and there was no surprise that Son Heung-min and Harry Kane were on the scoresheet. Their goals gave them 12 and 10 respectively for the [Premier League](#) season, but although Mourinho was pleased to see Toby Alderweireld score his first of the campaign, the statistics show that, Son and Kane apart, the team have managed only seven goals in the competition. The productivity from midfield is simply too low for a team with aspirations to challenge for the title and although Steven Bergwijn, Tanguy Ndombele and Pierre-Emile Højbjerg got into scoring positions against Leeds, they could not finish. Bergwijn is a particular worry, having failed to score all season and been guilty of high-profile misses. “We need him to score,” Mourinho said. “We know he has the ability for that.” **David Hytner**

- *Match report:* [Tottenham 3-0 Leeds](#)



Toby Alderweireld celebrates scoring a rare goal with his prolific teammate Son Heung-min against Leeds. Photograph: Julian Finney/Reuters

3) Gündogan sparks City's masterclass

Manchester City's sublime front three will receive much of the credit for their stylish swatting-aside of Chelsea but less heralded players behind them merit as much praise. Of City's starting XI on Sunday only Raheem Sterling and Kevin De Bruyne have been at the club longer than Ilkay Gündogan, yet the German has often gone under the radar. He was the beating heart of City's midfield at Stamford Bridge and typified their superiority in that area, driving in the excellent first goal that kickstarted a devastating and decisive 25 minutes from his side. Chelsea's defence was obliging once again, which will intensify the clamour for fresh recruitment but many of their problems here were down to basic lapses in concentration rather than deficiencies in ability or pace. City's attackers were able to escape their markers with ease and at will to remind us they are firmly in the title reckoning. **Tom Davies**

- Match report: [Chelsea 1-3 Manchester City](#)

4) Villa look fit for purpose despite defeat

Aston Villa had chances to win at Old Trafford on Friday night but lacked ruthlessness, particularly in the closing moments when Matty Cash and Keinan Davis were stymied by a David de Gea save and an Eric Bailly block. There is, though, a wider picture in play that Dean Smith can be proud of. Villa's manager is constructing a Premier League-proof team in the purest sense of the term. Jack Grealish is the star as he again illustrated in an authoritative display, but the captain also has support. Ollie Watkins is a credible No 9, Anwar El Ghazi has four goals in his past six Premier League outings, while John McGinn's midfield scheming complements Grealish. And in defence Tyrone Mings may have been culpable for Anthony Martial's opening header, failing to clear the cross, but here was a rare error from a centre-back who provides leadership and whose muscularity embodies a physicality that is a further vital component of Villa. **Jamie Jackson**

- Match report: [Manchester United 2-1 Aston Villa](#)

5) Eze excels in all areas and can become a regular

Eberechi Eze stole the show against Sheffiled United as Crystal Palace returned to winning ways. But rather than his brilliant solo goal just before half-time, Roy Hodgson was most impressed with the 22-year-old's second-half display. "He showed the intensity and the concentration and determination to defend properly to make certain we weren't under the cosh in any way," said the former England manager. Eze was left out of the starting lineup by Hodgson after Palace let in 10 goals in two matches against Liverpool and Aston Villa but with Jeffrey Schlupp looking set for a spell on the sidelines, the £19.5m summer signing from QPR will surely be handed more opportunities in the coming weeks. "The whole of the team are helping him improve his game," said Hodgson. "He had to make one further step up when he came into the Premier League." **Ed Aarons**

- Match report: [Crystal Palace 2-0 Sheffield United](#)

6) Saint-Maximin's cult-hero status enhanced by absence

Steve Bruce says Allan Saint-Maximin is “difficult to manage”, while the winger reportedly drove his former manager at Nice, Patrick Vieira, to distraction but there are good reasons why “Saint-Max” is a cult hero on Tyneside. The brilliant yet unpredictable Frenchman is a game-changer who enables Newcastle to win games they do not always deserve to and his absence with coronavirus and its after-effects is being keenly felt. While Saint-Maximin convalesces in France, Callum Wilson is becoming isolated in Bruce’s attacks and Newcastle are on the sort of disappointing run which can easily suck teams into relegation scraps. Since he last appeared in the first team before contracting Covid-19 in late November, Bruce has desperately missed the outlet his improvisation-rich maverick invariably provides and surely sympathises with the adage about absence making the heart grow fonder. **Louise Taylor**

- *Match report: [Newcastle 1-2 Leicester](#)*



Callum Wilson cut an isolated figure against Leicester. Photograph: Paul Ellis/Reuters

7) Zeqiri could be the focal point Brighton need

Before Saturday, Andi Zeqiri had played only 18 minutes of football for Brighton. The September signing from Lausanne has had to bide his time

and, at 21, still has raw edges to smooth over. But he had an instant effect when coming on at half-time against Wolves with his side 3-1 down, his first touch bringing a header from which Neal Maupay won a game-changing penalty. Zeqiri is a tall, bustling striker with a decent line in hold-up play; in other words the kind of focal point Brighton, who too often flounder when they reach the penalty area, require. He created space for others in a far more convincing second half from the Seagulls and should have scored, too, when he blasted over after Adam Webster had hit the bar. While it would be a stretch to say he will propel Brighton away from relegation bother single-handedly, Zeqiri showed enough to suggest he can play a key role for Graham Potter. **Nick Ames**

- *Match report: [Brighton 3-3 Wolves](#)*

8) Wolves' lack of control raises questions about Nuno

At what point will questions be raised on the future of Nuno Espírito Santo? His closeness to the owners' special adviser, the recently crowned "agent of the century" Jorge Mendes, would seem to make him more copper-bottomed than most managers but this has been a disappointing season. At Brighton, a team without a home win all season, Wolves showed a distinct lack of the controlled football that has characterised Nuno's reign. With the scores at 3-3 from the 70th minute, Brighton looked the likelier winner until Owen Otasowie, the Wolves substitute, missed a glorious chance with the very last kick. Despite scoring three goals at the Amex, Wolves lack firepower after the loss of Raúl Jiménez to injury and the sale of Diogo Jota. "I am disappointed with me, with everybody," Nuno said afterwards. January transfer activity might spell out how much faith Mendes et al have in him.

John Brewin

9) West Ham invite parallels with Moyes's Everton

After taking his first points from Goodison Park since leaving in 2013, David Moyes spoke of a desire to recreate at West Ham what he built with Everton. There were unmistakable parallels in that respect on Friday as a supremely well-organised and committed team, marshalled by the

outstanding Angelo Ogbonna, defied a ridiculous fixture schedule to claim a merited first win in five games. The potency of a Liverpool-born left back, Aaron Cresswell, echoed the influence of Leighton Baines for Moyes's Everton, while the collective spirit throughout the West Ham ranks – evident in the impact of big-name substitutes such as Andriy Yarmolenko – was another similarity and the mark of a team with substance. "To get this result in a third game in six days, and in a third away game in four over the Christmas period, says an awful lot about the boys," said Moyes. "They know that if you don't come along you will be left behind but everyone is contributing." **Andy Hunter**

- *Match report: [Everton 0-1 West Ham](#)*

10) Covid-hit Fulham face fixture headache

The postponement of successive Fulham matches demonstrate the the behind-the-scenes battle clubs face in stemming the tide of Covid-19. Questions of players' personal responsibility are being raised. Reports that Aleksandar Mitrovic had attended a new year party with the Crystal Palace midfielder Luka Milivojevic were deeply unhelpful to a club that [engaged the ire of José Mourinho](#) when their game at Tottenham was called off last Wednesday. Once three of Mourinho's players were [found to have broken protocols](#), then Spurs' higher ground was lost. But where Fulham might fit their two games in hand into a concertinaed schedule is a significant query considering a distinct lack of breathing room in the calendar. For Burnley's part, the club's new majority owners, ALK Capital – and new chairman, Alan Pace – were denied a first game at the helm. The Americans have arrived in English football during a time of turmoil. **John Brewin**

Pos	Team	P	GD	Pts
1	Liverpool	16	17	33
2	Man Utd	16	9	33
3	Leicester	17	10	32
4	Tottenham Hotspur	16	14	29
5	Man City	15	11	29
6	Everton	16	6	29

7	Aston Villa	15	13	26
8	Chelsea	17	11	26
9	Southampton	16	6	26
10	West Ham	17	3	26
11	Arsenal	17	1	23
12	Leeds	17	-3	23
13	Wolverhampton	17	-6	22
14	Crystal Palace	17	-7	22
15	Newcastle	16	-8	19
16	Burnley	15	-11	16
17	Brighton	17	-7	14
18	Fulham	15	-10	11
19	West Brom	17	-28	8
20	Sheff Utd	17	-21	2

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Premier League

Phil Foden excels in Manchester City's emphatic win over lacklustre Chelsea



Phil Foden of Manchester City (left) celebrates scoring the second goal against Chelsea with Kevin De Bruyne. Photograph: Andy Rain/Reuters

Not even in his worst nightmares can Frank Lampard have imagined this. A showdown that was billed as an opportunity for Chelsea to reassert their title credentials ended in ignominious defeat after first-half strikes from Ilkay Gündogan, Phil Foden and Kevin De Bruyne as [Manchester City](#) served notice of their own aspirations to move within striking distance of the top two.

To say that Chelsea were outplayed here is a serious understatement. If not for some crucial interventions in the second half from their goalkeeper, Édouard Mendy, the final scoreline could have been much more embarrassing for Lampard, who has now seen his side pick up just [four points from their last six matches](#) as they slumped to a fifth league defeat of the season.

Yet while he must find a solution quickly as the pressure grows having spent more than £200m on new players in the summer, Pep Guardiola's side are building some impressive momentum that means they cannot be discounted after a third straight win that was achieved despite missing [a number of players due to Covid-19](#).

The inclusion of 35-year-old goalkeeping coach Scott Carson on the bench was an illustration of the difficulties facing City before kick-off.

Benjamin Mendy was also named as one of just eight substitutes despite the club [promising to open an internal investigation](#) into him breaching coronavirus regulations on New Year's Eve, while Sergio Agüero was again not deemed fit enough to start. Oleksandr Zinchenko and Foden were recalled and USA goalkeeper Zack Steffen was handed his first Premier League start after it was confirmed that Ederson, Ferran Torres and Eric García have also tested positive for Covid-19.

By contrast, Lampard had no such problems and made five changes to the side that drew disappointingly against Aston Villa, with Hakim Ziyech back from injury to start for the first time since the victory over Leeds here last month alongside Timo Werner and Christian Pulisic in a rebooted attack. The returns of Thiago Silva and Kurt Zouma to the heart of Chelsea's defence would usually have been a welcome sight for their manager having seen his side revert to former bad habits in recent weeks but they were torn apart in a scintillating first-half performance by the visitors.

Guardiola – who turns 50 in a fortnight – said this week that he has been reconsidering whether to stay in management for longer than he had originally planned having already committed to extend his stay at City.



Manchester City's Ilkay Gündogan scores the opening goal. Photograph: Shaun Botterill/Reuters

They have now conceded only three times in their last 11 matches in all competitions since losing to Tottenham in November and seemed to have come prepared to counterattack against opponents who have made a habit of failing to break teams down in the big matches.

Chelsea certainly started with intent, although it was short-lived. Having weathered the early storm with ease, City should have gone ahead in the 15th minute when Foden's precise through ball played in De Bruyne but he uncharacteristically dragged his shot wide. Nonetheless, it seemed to galvanise the visitors and after Raheem Sterling had also tested the [Chelsea](#) defence, Gündogan slotted home the opening goal under no pressure after being set up by Foden.

The England midfielder was again in the thick of the action as City doubled their lead two minutes and 37 seconds later, with De Bruyne – employed as false nine by his manager – providing the pass for him to turn past Mendy at his near post. Down on the touchline, Guardiola could hardly contain himself. His plan was reaping dividends.

Chelsea tried desperately to hit back but, having failed to muster a single shot on target inside the first half hour, they were made to pay again when De Bruyne slotted home after Sterling's breakaway effort came back off the post. It was the first time they had conceded three first-half goals at Stamford Bridge since against Burnley in August 2017 and Lampard left the pitch at half-time looking like he had seen a ghost. Surprisingly he sent out the same team for the second half as Chelsea looked to at least salvage some pride. Once more, however, it was City who assumed control. Zinchenko's shot was well-saved by Mendy and the goalkeeper had to be at his best to deny Rodri's header from a De Bruyne free kick.

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Lampard finally introduced Callum Hudson-Odoi and Billy Gilmour into the fray after 20 minutes of the second half, with the strangely off-the-pace N'Golo Kanté one of those to make way. But even with Werner again labouring in attack, there was mysteriously no sign of top scorer Olivier Giroud as Steffen remained largely a spectator for the whole match until Hudson-Odoi's late consolation strike. The goalkeeper can hardly have wished for an easier introduction to the [Premier League](#).

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[Chelsea](#)

Frank Lampard plays down pressure after Chelsea slip to meek defeat

- ‘I’ll always feel heat,’ he says after Manchester City run riot
- ‘A month ago everyone was asking about a new contract’



‘When City turned up the heat in the first half, our players didn’t react,’ said Frank Lampard. Photograph: Andy Rain/AFP/Getty Images

Frank Lampard insisted he does not feel his job is under threat after an insipid performance in a [3-1 home defeat by Manchester City](#) left him under mounting pressure with Chelsea in eighth place.

Pep Guardiola’s side scored thrice before half-time without reply and will move to within a point of the leaders, Liverpool, if they win their game in hand. But [Chelsea](#) are way adrift in the title race after a fourth defeat in six matches, despite spending more than £200m in the summer.

“I expected periods of difficulties this year because it doesn’t come that easily,” Lampard said. “Whether that puts pressure on me is regardless because a month ago everyone was asking whether I will be signing a new contract. In quick succession over a tight and busy period we have lost four games of football so the pressure remains constant in this job. My job is to try and lift the players so they can match the levels that [Manchester City](#) showed today.”

Roman Abramovich, the Chelsea owner, has been swift to sack managers in the past, not least when he feels Champions League qualification may be in danger. The club are three points off fourth place but have played at least a game more than all but one of the sides above them.

Chelsea went unbeaten for 14 matches earlier in the season but Lampard said his team were a work in progress compared with Guardiola’s.

“When City turned up the heat in the first half, our players didn’t react for the goal,” he said. “I think that is a confidence issue but this is the level we want to get to.

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“We’re in a tough period at the moment – I played here for a long time so I understand that the minute you lose a few games in a short period of time, then everyone asks questions. The expectations are different this year because we spent a lot of money but this club has to take some pain to get where we want to get to … I’ll always feel heat. I felt heat when we were on our good run, because I know that round the corner can be a negative.”

City face Manchester United in a Carabao Cup semi-final on Wednesday and Guardiola is delighted with their recent resurgence. “The way we won leagues and titles and other things is the way we played today,” he said. “The tempo we have missed in the past, today we recovered it.”

[Sportblog](#)
[Premier League](#)

Manchester City's experiment in fun is a lesson for Frank Lampard

Chelsea's expensively-assembled unit lacked intensity and were vulnerable to Pep Guardiola's exhilarating side



Manchester City were in scintillating form at Stamford Bridge. Photograph: Ian Walton/AP

With 43 minutes gone at Stamford Bridge Phil Foden could be seen gliding through the debris, the ruined city walls of Chelsea's right flank.

There were two sky blue shirts waiting inside him for an invitation to score. Foden skimmed the ball inside to Ilkay Gündogan, who chose that moment to perform a reverse-pirouette, mid-air heel-dink that pinged just past the post.

In that moment the game seemed to sag a little, to lose its clear edges. [Manchester City](#) were 3-0 up at the time. They were breezing along,

exhilarated by their own movement. This was different, though. This was a Premier League team having fun. Actual fun. That's going to hurt.

Foden had already scored City's second goal, made by another surge down the left followed by two moments of brilliance. First he did something unusually clever, leaping back onside as Kevin De Bruyne's initial pass broke back to him.

De Bruyne then produced a moment of cruelty, waiting, waiting some more, then slipping the decisive pass through César Azpilicueta's legs. Foden scored with a pinged first-touch, the ball making a lovely crisp clang as it hit the pole in the corner of the net.

Either side of which City were exhilarating. They scored three goals in 16 minutes. They left Chelsea's full-backs wheeling in confusion. They romped and pranced. They had fun. And at times this looked like a real-time experiment: what happens when a long-term sporting project, with the same ideas, the same fully loaded plan at every level, meets a punt on talent and celebrity.



Kevin De Bruyne drifts away from Chelsea's Billy Gilmour. Photograph: Marc Atkins/Getty Images

Two things happened here. The key point, before wheeling out the great creaking finger of blame, is that City were wonderful, a fully networked team speaking to itself in some internalised high-speed code.

This looked like a Pep-tribute XI before kick-off as City lined up with six midfielders and one converted full-back. But this was something different, evidence of Guardiola's own changes this season. City took the minor share of possession. But they still had 11 shots on goal in the first half, and at times seemed to toy with their opponents.

Foden embodied this clarity of purpose. In the first half he touched the ball 18 times, but scored one, made one and romped up and down the left like a Labrador puppy. At half-time Guardiola could be seen babbling in Foden's ear as he walked off, spitting out tips, instructions, praise. This was showboat-coaching, the managerial equivalent of flicking the ball up on your knee before you volley it into an open goal. We get it, Pep. You can do this stuff.

The second thing that happened was [Chelsea](#) just fell away. City pressed and found – no resistance. Oh, Frank. Before this fixture Olivier Giroud had suggested Frank Lampard had been working on “every tactical part” of City’s game. This, Giroud suggested, was a special project for Lampard, a chance to peer over the tactical pince-nez and lock brain-horns with the don of modern keep-ball.

In the event Lampard sent out his glitziest forward line, a high-grade Werner-Ziyech-Pulisic trident, albeit one with a combined six league goals this season. The idea seemed to be that Chelsea would break quickly and take advantage of spaces on the flanks. Guess what? The exact opposite happened. City broke into Chelsea’s spaces, and twanged the holes in Chelsea’s own flanks.

Lampard will perhaps be tempted to blame the “character” of his players once again. He might be better served taking his lessons. Defeats are also useful. They water the ground.

Was it a good idea to conjure an alternate front three that has barely played together yet, and with little success when it has? Why would you ask

Azpilicueta to play as an exposed, half-speed right-back against the great overloaders? Why not respond once it becomes clear your team are struggling to deal with three inside forwards and no No 9?

There were five high-priced Lampard-era starters in this team. The entire structure lacked intensity, their weak spots vulnerable to City's strengths. There was no adjustment as the light blue shirts began to twirl and dance through the lines.

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City's third goal felt like the most painful moment for the pre-game Lampard tactical study group. De Bruyne headed a loose ball to Raheem Sterling and suddenly Sterling was off, Demba Ba-ing his way into vast open empty acres of green space. Where, you wondered, had the entire Chelsea team gone? De Bruyne ended up spanking the ball into the net.

All things being equal, Lampard is now in the blue zone for Chelsea managers, that phase where a profit and loss equation is applied to points and progress and money spent. If his name was Big Phil Scolari or Carlo Ancelotti he might be in trouble. For Chelsea and their manager this was a lesson. Will they find the time, and indeed the will, to take it on?

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SportblogOlympic Games

A golden year for sport? 2021 is already looking like 2020 – with a bitter twist

[Sean Ingle](#)



The Olympics and Euros will likely take place in pared back form, but the overall landscape is looking a lot more like it was in 2020 than we were expecting just a month ago



Two hundred days before the scheduled start of the Olympics, Japan's borders remain shut. Photograph: Kim Kyung-Hoon/Reuters

Two hundred days before the scheduled start of the Olympics, Japan's borders remain shut. Photograph: Kim Kyung-Hoon/Reuters

Mon 4 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Do you know how many days there are until the [Olympic Games](#) get under way? Precisely 200. Imagine it. The darkness of the Tokyo skyline. A lone runner scampering up a giant staircase, torch in hand. A roar from the 60,000 fans inside Japan's National Stadium. Then raging illumination. It will be some sight ... if it happens. Meanwhile this year's other sporting mega-event, football's European Championship, is barely five months away, but still there remains an expectation that millions of fans will be able to travel safely to 51 matches across 12 European cities.

Back in the real world, Japan has shut its borders until the end of the month, the Tokyo metropolitan government has asked the central government to declare a state of emergency, and most of Europe is in ever-tighter lockdown. Increasingly it feels like an act of faith, rather than science, to expect the Olympics and Euros to take place with every familiar frill, as if the last 12 months were just a bad dream. Already there are echoes of the great shutdown of 2020. The World Athletics Indoor Championships, scheduled for China in March, have been pushed back again.

[Fresh fears for Tokyo Olympics as host city sees surge in Covid-19 infections](#)

[Read more](#)

The British Boxing Board of Control has cancelled all fights in January, while the English football fixture backlog is growing by the day. The Lions' tour to South Africa [is also in doubt](#), with all parties agreeing that a tour without hordes of travelling fans is neither desirable nor commercially viable. In fact, as we slip into a new year it is time to confront another hard truth. The sporting landscape is looking a lot more 2020 than we were expecting a month or two ago – but with a brutal twist: it looks like it will be those at the grassroots and community level, and the poorest and most marginalised, who will suffer most of all.

On the plus side, several sources inside the International Olympic Committee and British Olympic Association insist that the Tokyo Olympics will take place in some form in 2021, despite the challenges of 11,000 athletes from across the globe congregating in one place. There is simply too much money at stake for it not to happen. The same surely applies to the Euros. But both events are likely to be pared back and stripped of many of the peripheral joys that make major sporting events such fun to attend.

But we should not be blind to the fact that Covid restrictions are hitting athletes from poorer countries hardest. In Papua New Guinea, for instance, there is only one high-performance training facility – which is currently a coronavirus isolation centre. It has meant that Dika Toua, a national hero who is hoping to become the first female weightlifter to compete at five Olympics, has had to train in a makeshift shipping container with no roof, during her country's rainy season.

The situation is even worse for the country's best shooter Danny Wanma. He has been unable to get access to ammunition and so, for the best part of a year, he has been “dry firing” — practising the motions without actually shooting.

Meanwhile when it comes to grassroots activity in Britain, the situation is also bleak. We all know the benefits of exercise and activity for people's physical and mental health. Yet during the first lockdown, an Active Lives

survey found that nearly 14 million people in England did less than 30 minutes' exercise a week, a measure that includes everything from brisk walking to high intensity interval training. Worse still, that was a rise of three million compared with the same period a year before.

[That survey](#) also found that the pandemic had disproportionately affected certain marginalised parts of society, in particular Black, Asian and minority ethnic groups and lower socio-economic groups. With much of the country back in tier 4, the figures for this winter are likely to be even worse.

[Back to the future: Team GB gear up for delayed Tokyo Games](#)

[Read more](#)

Last week, [the Save Our Sports campaign](#) warned that much of the sport and activity sector – which employs nearly 600,000 people in the UK and contributes £16bn to the economy annually – was struggling. According to the Sport and Recreation Alliance and ukactive, there are thousands of swimming pools, leisure centres and gyms who fear they will not survive a prolonged period in tier 4 without government help.

Of course the great unknown here is how quickly people can be vaccinated – although it hardly inspires confidence when the government repeatedly over-promises and under-delivers. The health secretary Matt Hancock has claimed life could get back to normal after Easter. But that would require around 2m vaccines a week, while at present about 300,000 are being provided.

A final point. Just before Christmas, the government gave UK Sport £352m to help British athletes prepare for the 2024 Paris Olympics. You can understand why. UK Sport has been a rare success story, and politicians love basking in the reflective glow that comes when a nation wins medals.

Yet even Olympians have to start somewhere, whether it is in poorly-lit pools or dingy sports halls. In October the government provided £100m to help publicly owned leisure facilities – many of which are in the poorest parts of the country – stay afloat. The fear is with national debt rising, and greater priorities elsewhere, it will not dip into its pockets again to help those most reliant on community provision – and thus will fail to reap

significant social, physical and mental health return on investment that often flows from it.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

NFL

Four teams that deserved to make the NFL playoffs more than Washington

Washington made the postseason with a losing record by virtue of winning the putrid NFC East. There were better teams whose seasons ended early



The Miami Dolphins looked like they were set for a playoff appearance until the wheels came off in their final game of the season. Photograph: Adrian Kraus/AP

The Miami Dolphins looked like they were set for a playoff appearance until the wheels came off in their final game of the season. Photograph: Adrian Kraus/AP

[Hunter Felt](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.30 EST

And so the Washington Football Team, with a record of 7-9, are into the NFL playoffs as NFC East winners. It would be churlish to begrudge Washington their place in the postseason: head coach Ron Rivera has had to cope with a cancer diagnosis, quarterback Alex Smith has come back from a

horrific injury that almost cost him his leg and they have a defense that looks like it could dominate the division for years to come. And yet ... they're 7-9, and benefited from the Philadelphia Eagles [pulling starter Jalen Hurts](#) in the middle of Sunday's game, which Washington won 20-14. There are teams that will feel deserve they deserve a shot at the Super Bowl this year at Washington's expense. Here's a look at some of them.

1) Miami Dolphins (10-6, 2nd in the AFC East)

What a brutal, brutal ending for the [Miami Dolphins](#). All Miami needed to do was to beat the Buffalo Bills, who had already clinched a playoff spot, to make the playoffs. Instead, the Bills demolished them 56-26. Even then, the Dolphins still could have made the postseason with an Indianapolis Colts' loss.

Unfortunately, the Colts beat the woeful 1-15 Jacksonville Jaguars, who will be a little less woeful when they pick Trevor Lawrence in the draft later this year. It has to be a deflating season for Miami, who looked like they would capitalize on the New England Patriots' long-awaited fall. When they benched Ryan Fitzpatrick for rookie quarterback Tua Tagovailoa, they looked like a better team, but then Tagovailoa started to play, well, like a rookie. His three interceptions against Buffalo will provide plenty of fuel for those who believe that the Dolphins shouldn't trust him as a starter in his second season.

['Sickening': Giants seethe as Eagles pull QB Hurts in decider against Washington](#)
[Read more](#)

That feels [unfair](#). While it would make sense to have Fitzpatrick, or a similar veteran quarterback, on the roster as insurance, they should head into this summer with Tagovailoa as their Plan A. It feels like a disappointment right now, but they should remind themselves that a 10-6 record is a marked improvement over the 5-11 record they had last season. And, going forward, they have a great coach in Brian Flores and a solid defense.

2) Arizona Cardinals (8-8, 3rd in the NFC West)

The Arizona Cardinals' loss to the Los Angeles Rams was doubly painful: not only did it result in their own elimination it also meant that the Chicago Bears, who had an identical 8-8 record, had won one of the wildcard slots.

The results are even tougher to take for Cardinals fans since the Bears lost their final game of the season. So, Chicago won despite losing. Maybe losing the game but winning a postseason spot is the best-case scenario as there were rumors heading in that the Bears would keep Mitch Trubisky as their quarterback with a victory over the Packers. They may have just [avoided that scenario](#).

3) Las Vegas Raiders (8-8, 2nd in the AFC West)

The Raiders had a better record than any team in the NFC East and, it should be noted, were playing in a clearly tougher division. After all, the Raiders had to face the NFL-leading Kansas City Chiefs who went 14-2 this season. One of those two Chiefs losses was against these very same Raiders back on 11 October. One could argue that they deserved a shot in the postseason, although one could also argue that [they were the victims of their own mistakes](#).

4) Minnesota Vikings (7-9, 3rd in NFC North)

There were three non-NFC East teams that ended their season with a 7-9 record: the [Minnesota Vikings](#), the Los Angeles Chargers and the New England Patriots. All three teams ended up in third place in their respective divisions but that record would have been good for a share of first place in the NFC East. It's still a losing record mind you, but, hey, the 2010-11 Seattle Seahawks went 7-9 in the NFC West and they managed to win a playoff game.

Which of these teams would have had a better shot at following in those Seahawks' footsteps? Well, we're looking at a team that will need a little luck and that absolutely [counts the Chargers out](#). The Patriots? It's really difficult to make the case that New England deserve even more playoff appearances than they have already had. Let's give this final spot here to a

Vikings team that possibly underperformed but still looked like they could be a postseason threat. Quarterback Kirk Cousins is capable of randomly having huge games, while wide receiver Justin Jefferson finished the season breaking the Super Bowl era record for receiving yards by a rookie.

“We probably weren’t good enough of a football team this year to be in the playoffs,” head coach [Mike Zimmer said](#) after the Vikings’ 37-35 win over the Detroit Lions on Sunday. Maybe he was right, but maybe they just didn’t happen to be in the right division this season.

NFL wildcard round match-ups

Byes: Green Bay Packers and Kansas City Chiefs

AFC: Baltimore Ravens (No 5 seed) at Tennessee Titans (4); Cleveland Browns (6) at Pittsburgh Steelers (3); Indianapolis Colts (7) at Buffalo Bills (2).

NFC: Tampa Bay Buccaneers (5) at [Washington](#) (4); Los Angeles Rams (6) at Seattle Seahawks (3); Chicago Bears (7) at New Orleans Saints (2).

MVP of the week

Lamar Jackson, QB, Baltimore Ravens. It looks like Jackson is ready for the playoffs. He threw for three touchdowns during a blowout 38-3 win over the Cincinnati Bengals. Beyond the 113 passing yards he accumulated, he also ran for an additional 97, which helped ensure he became the first quarterback with back-to-back 1,000 yard rushing seasons.

Video of the week

Stefon Diggs out here filming a free commercial for the American Dental Association [#Bills #Dolphins pic.twitter.com/mirQSUjZsd](#)

— John Breech (@johnbreech) [January 3, 2021](#)

Week 17 is when things end up a little looser in the [NFL](#), especially when your team has already clinched a postseason berth. There’s no better

example than this clip of Buffalo Bills wide receiver Steffon Diggs flossing on the sidelines during Sunday's game against the Miami Dolphins.

Stat of the week



Tampa Bay came to regret their decision to play Mike Evans after they had already clinched a playoff spot. Photograph: Mike Ehrmann/Getty Images

The Tampa Bay Buccaneers' Mike Evans finished the season with more than 1,000 yards. With that the wide receiver became the first player to pass that milestone in [each of their first seven seasons](#). Breaking the record may have come at a cost, however. On the very next play, Evans was taken off the field with a knee injury.

[NFL round-up: Browns beat Steelers to clinch first playoff spot in 18 years](#)
[Read more](#)

The Buccaneers had already clinched a playoff spot and were playing for nothing but seeding heading into the game. Head coach Bruce Arians had already suggested that [he would have rested Evans](#) if he had clinched this record before Game 17. So, there's a lot of second-guessing going on in Tampa Bay right now, despite their 44-27 victory over the Atlanta Falcons.

Quote of the week

“It’s an honor to break Randy Moss’s record. Him being a Hall of Famer and just being so dominant in this league, to break his record is truly a blessing. It’s truly crazy to be in this position” – Minnesota Vikings wide receiver Justin Jefferson [after setting the rookie record for receiving yards.](#)

Jefferson came up big in the Vikings’ 37-35 win over the Detroit Lions, adding 133 yards to his receiving yard total. He had 1,379 for the season, blowing past both Randy Moss’s franchise record of 1,313 and Anquan Boldin’s overall record of 1,377. He did it while wearing cleats that paid tribute to Moss, something which the legendary receiver acknowledged on Twitter.



— Randy Moss (@RandyMoss) [January 3, 2021](#)

Elsewhere around the league

-- A worrisome moment in the middle of the Arizona Cardinals’ game against the Los Angeles Rams as quarterback Kyler Murray left the field with an ankle injury and had to be replaced by backup Chris Streveler. Meanwhile, the Rams put in John Wolford, making his pro debut, filling in for an injured Jared Goff. Murray eventually re-entered the game, but it was not enough as the Rams beat the Cardinals 18-7, eliminating Arizona from the playoffs. The Rams will now face the Seattle Seahawks in the playoffs. It’s a shame things didn’t end up better for Streveler, who threw for both a touchdown and interception in the game, but the former CFL Winnipeg Blue Bombers quarterback still has the NFL’s greatest Wikipedia page bio photo.

Okay, I’ve seen the pictures of Cardinals backup QB Chris Streveler, currently in the game for Kyler Murray, but it didn’t register on me that this one is the one on his WIKIPEDIA PAGE.
pic.twitter.com/WViOYtZyZa

— Hunter Felt (@HunterFelt) [January 3, 2021](#)

-- The Cleveland Browns just barely hung on against a Pittsburgh Steelers team that was resting many of their regulars. They pulled out with a 24-22 victory to ensure their first trip to the playoffs in 18 years, something which they deserve to celebrate. It wasn't anything resembling a decisive victory which doesn't bode well for the Browns considering that their opponent in their wildcard game will be these very same Steelers – and next time don't expect Pittsburgh to rest any starters.

-- One for the record books: Derrick Henry became just the eighth player in NFL history to rush for [more than 2,000 yards in a season](#). Aaron Rodgers or Patrick Mahomes will probably be named MVP this season, but there's a very good argument that Henry is a deserving candidate.

-- Before Sunday's game, there came the unsurprising report that the New England Patriots are planning [to move on from quarterback Cam Newton](#), who has failed to impress during his first season in New England. There's a very real possibility that this could be the end for Newton, who was once the most exciting player in the NFL. Whatever his future, he excelled on Sunday against the New York Jets, throwing three touchdowns.

-- Speaking of the Jets, Sam Darnold threw two interceptions against the Patriots, making it more likely New York will go for Justin Fields with the No2 overall pick in the draft. Whoever starts as the Jets quarterback next season, he won't be coached by Adam Gase. Gase was fired by the team on Sunday night. It was a predictable end for a coach who only the Jets ownership thought was a good hire. At the start of the season, Jets CEO called Gase a "brilliant offensive mind". They went on to finish 2-14 with the league's worst offense.

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New York Giants

'Sickening': Giants seethe as Eagles pull QB Hurts in decider against Washington

- Giants relied on Eagles win over Washington for playoff place
- Philly opted to replace starter with back-up during game



Jalen Hurts scratches his head on the sideline after being pulled from the Eagles' loss to Washington. Photograph: Chris Szagola/AP

Jalen Hurts scratches his head on the sideline after being pulled from the Eagles' loss to Washington. Photograph: Chris Szagola/AP

[Guardian sport](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 23.46 EST

The New York Giants reacted in fury after their arch-rivals, the [Philadelphia Eagles](#), made several questionable decisions during their regular season finale against Washington.

The Giants had beaten the Dallas Cowboys earlier on Sunday, meaning they would win the NFC East – and a place in the playoffs – if the Eagles beat [Washington](#). The Eagles, perhaps with an eye on a better position in this year's draft, sat a number of starters. Then, with the game finely balanced in the fourth quarter, Eagles coach Doug Pederson replaced starting quarterback Jalen Hurts with the team's third-stringer, Nate Sudfeld. Sudfeld promptly lost a fumble and threw an interception as [Washington](#) won the game 20-14 and sealed the NFC East.

[NFL round-up: Browns beat Steelers to clinch first playoff spot in 18 years](#)
[Read more](#)

“This is sickening,” wrote Giants receiver Darius Slayton on Twitter. “You play the game to win point blank period JJ Watt said it best the other day outside of how it effects us this just disrespectful to the game.”

Why on gods green earth is Jalen Hurts not in the game

— Darius Slayton (@Young_Slay2) [January 4, 2021](#)

“I think the eagles just hate us more than washington. That's only thing that could make sense right?” added Slayton’s teammate, Golden Tate. Running back Saquon Barkley wrote: “Can someone make it make sense to me what's going on.”

Pederson, meanwhile, insisted Sudfeld deserved his chance. “Nate has been here for four years and I felt he deserved an opportunity to get some snaps,” Pederson said after the game.

Washington [will now play the Tampa Bay Buccaneers](#) in next week's wildcard round. The Giants, meanwhile, ended the season with a 6-10 record.

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[Athletics](#)

Sebastian Coe shrugs off concerns that Nike track spikes give unfair advantage

- Contentious shoes worn by numerous recent record-breakers
- World Athletics chief does not want to ‘suffocate innovation’



Joshua Cheptegei broke the men's 10,000m record in October wearing Nike ZoomX Dragonfly spikes. Photograph: José Jordan/AFP/Getty Images

Joshua Cheptegei broke the men's 10,000m record in October wearing Nike ZoomX Dragonfly spikes. Photograph: José Jordan/AFP/Getty Images

[Sean Ingle](#)

[@seaningle](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 17.00 EST

Sebastian Coe, the president of [World Athletics](#), has dismissed concerns that Nike's controversial new track spikes, which have produced a spate of recent world records, could provide an unfair advantage at the Olympics.

[The Great Shoe War has switched lanes to the track but Nike still leads the field](#)

[Read more](#)

Lord Coe said he was “pretty calm” about the game-changing spikes and did not want to “stifle innovation” despite Joshua Cheptegei and Letesenbet Gidey breaking the men’s 10,000m and the women’s 5,000m records [within an hour of each other in October](#). Both were wearing Nike ZoomX Dragonfly spikes, billed as the “fastest shoes ever”.

With Mo Farah and Sifan Hassan also [breaking the men’s and women’s one-hour records](#) wearing new Nike shoes in Brussels in September, there have been suggestions that the company could enjoy a similar dominance on the track as it did in the marathon between 2016 and 2019, with other brands potentially taking years to catch up.

However, Coe said he was confident that history would not repeat itself. “I’m not sitting in fear of that,” he added, stressing that it was a good thing for shoe manufacturers to try to outdo each other.

“I remember a period in the mid-2000s where Adidas were the kings of the podium, particularly in distance,” he said. “So these things come in cycles. And there is a built-in dynamic where shoe companies mercifully are still investing a lot of money into the research and development of shoes. And I’m pleased they’re doing that.”

[Running reaches crossroads as Nike-led footwear arms race infects mainstream](#) | Jonathan Liew

[Read more](#)

Last year World Athletics introduced new rules for track spikes, limiting the use of plates and restricting the sole to be no thicker 30mm. However, Coe said the organisation also had a system that could “permanently review these spikes” if they were proved to be unfair. Coe also denied that the succession of world records on the road in recent years – including, most recently, four men running inside the half-marathon best [in November](#) – was undermining the sport.

“I don’t think we’ve reached that point where world records are being handed out like confetti,” he insisted. “And if I go back to the 1930s I still marvel at Rudolf Harbig who ran 1:46 and bits for 800m on a cinder track. And I still marvel at Peter Snell, who ran world records and some significantly sub-1:45s on grass tracks. Meanwhile Derek Clayton ran a world marathon record [2:09:36] in shoes that you wouldn’t have gone for a stroll with in your local park.

“At the moment I’m pretty calm about this. And the balance of judgment here is always – and I guess this is a personal instinct of mine as well – that we shouldn’t be in the business of trying to suffocate innovation.”

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

PDC World Championships

Gerwyn Price sweeps Gary Anderson aside to clinch first PDC world darts title

- Welshman enjoys comfortable 7-3 final win
- Victory lifts Price to world No 1 ranking

[Jonathan Liew](#) at Alexandra Palace

Sun 3 Jan 2021 17.08 EST Last modified on Sun 3 Jan 2021 23.37 EST



An emotional Gerwyn Price takes the trophy, with final victory also seeing him confirmed as the new PDC world No 1. Photograph: Adam Davy/PA

The result itself was no shock. What nobody could remotely have foreseen – with the possible exception of Gerwyn Price himself – was [the jaw-dropping manner in which it occurred](#). In becoming world champion for the first time, the 35-year-old Price produced one of the most complete, most emotionally

draining, most implausible performances ever seen on the Alexandra Palace stage.

His 7-3 destruction of Gary Anderson was notable not just for what it was, but for what it portended: the birth of a new superstar of darts, the first player to seriously challenge the [supremacy of Michael van Gerwen](#), the first new world No 1 since van Gerwen took over from Phil Taylor seven years ago. As Price steamrollered the two-times world champion Anderson, what stood out above all was the sense of utter certainty: a display of brawn and bottle and unerring brilliance that at times genuinely defied belief.

It is this same certainty, this same sense of predestination, that has propelled Price from the ranks of the journeymen to the pinnacle of the sport in just a few short years. A few weeks after Van Gerwen won his first title in 2014, Price emerged from hundreds of anonymous hopefuls to win his tour card at a leisure centre in Wigan.

The Welshman's first few years in the sport were largely unremarkable. For many in his home country, he was still best known as a former rugby union hooker for Neath.

And even if Price never turned on himself, plenty of others did. To this day, his brash celebrations at the oche and unabashed self-confidence ensure him a healthy chorus of boos wherever he goes. Two years ago he earned a £10,000 fine for celebrating violently in Anderson's face at the 2018 Grand Slam of Darts. For this, and for many other reasons, perhaps [the tag of pantomime villain](#) will never quite leave him.



Gerwyn Price's stunning start gave him plenty of wiggle room in some nervy late exchanges. Photograph: Adam Davy/PA

For this reason too it is legitimate to wonder whether Price might have benefited from the lack of a crowd to get on his back. Yet by the same token, to see him come within millimetres of a sacred nine-dart finish, to see him cramp within sight of the finish line as Anderson reduced his deficit from 6-1 to 6-3, it was only natural too to lament the atmosphere and drama a paying audience would have lent the scene.

Even so, the Price who sits on top of the world on Monday morning is a player who has conquered the sport on his own terms. His sixth-set average of 136 was the highest ever seen in a world championship final. And yet as he weathered a late charge from Anderson, missing 11 darts for the match, you could see the tempests raging within him, feel the intensity in every dart he hurled. Victory was greeted with a roar of relief and exhaustion, the culmination of a journey that few who witnessed it will forget in a hurry.

It was a contrast of styles: of temperaments and outlooks and approaches to the game. Price, the first-time finalist, marched on to the stage purposefully, eyeballing the dancers, puffing out his sizeable chest like a man barging straight to the front of the queue at Sports Direct. A few yards away, a diffident and unhurried Anderson was carefully removing his spectacles

from their case. Price took first blood. Anderson hit straight back, nailing a 128 finish to turn the tide.

Already the tension in both right arms was palpable. Finals tend to be won by front-runners: not since [Taylor blitzed a young van Gerwen in 2013](#) has a player won from two sets behind. Which is why Price's next move was decisive.

First he went 2-1 ahead with legs of 12, 13 and 14 darts. Next he stretched his lead out to 3-1, then 4-1, then 5-1. He hit his first 10 darts at double-top. In the biggest match of his life, Price was finishing like a man who had forgotten how to miss.

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It was around this time that we began to notice something strange about Price. He was barely celebrating. We realised now just how much of his on-stage theatre was mere puffery, plumage, performance. Now, utterly absorbed in his mission, Price the persona had receded entirely. Price the player had taken over.

Perhaps it was no surprise that Price deflated a little near the end. Two match darts went begging, then three, six, nine. "I've never felt pressure like that in my life," he admitted later.

But finally, after Anderson had missed two darts for the 10th set, Price walked all the way down to the trophy, composed himself, and nailed double-five to win the title and a cheque for £500,000.

Over in the Netherlands, you can bet that Van Gerwen will have been looking on too: marinading, reflecting, plotting his way back to the top. A new golden era of the sport may just be upon us.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/03/gerwyn-price-sweeps-gary-anderson-aside-to-clinch-first-world-title-pdc-world-championships>

Liverpool

'It will go to the wire' – Jürgen Klopp predicts fierce Premier League title fight

- 'If you are neutral you will love it,' says the Liverpool manager
- He does not plan to sign central defensive cover despite injuries

Louise Taylor

Sun 3 Jan 2021 17.30 EST Last modified on Sun 3 Jan 2021 23.37 EST



Jürgen Klopp watches from the touchline during Liverpool's goalless draw at Newcastle. He has predicted a close race for this season's league title.
Photograph: Peter Powell/EPA

[Jürgen Klopp](#) has acknowledged this season's title race is too close to call and seems likely to go to the wire.

"This season is a tough one for the supporters," said Liverpool's manager as he prepared to take his defending champions to Southampton on Monday

night. “If you are a neutral you will love it. Our season so far is good but I’m not surprised it is this close. This year is tough.

“I am pretty sure it will go right to the wire. It is tough for all of us [challenging teams], which is the reason why it’s so close.”

[Liverpool](#) lead Manchester United on goal difference before the match against Southampton, and a host of clubs are within touching distance of the top.

Thiago Alcântara, following a highly encouraging cameo performance after stepping off the bench in the [0-0 draw at Newcastle](#) last Wednesday, is in contention to begin influencing Liverpool’s fortunes for the better by potentially starting at Southampton.

The Spain creative midfielder has made only three Premier League appearances for Liverpool since arriving from Bayern Munich, with a [positive Covid-19 test](#), followed by a knee injury, limiting his availability.

Klopp remained understandably coy about the midfielder’s likely role at Southampton. “Unfortunately I have not known Thiago that long. A few months only. He played 20 minutes for us [at Newcastle] which was special and was about creating, which is his best skill. He has only had two sessions with the team [since his injury].

“We will see, he played 20 minutes against Newcastle and I don’t know how he’ll react. We will see. He has a chance. The boys who have done the job in midfield so far [in his absence] did exceptionally well so it is not that we cannot survive if Thiago does not start the next game. But it is very good he is now fit and obviously in contention. I like that a lot.”

The Fiver: sign up and get our daily football email.

With Virgil van Dijk likely to miss the majority of the second half of the season – if not all of it – after anterior cruciate ligament surgery in October, Joe Gomez likely to be sidelined until late spring by the after-effects of another knee operation and Joël Matip expected to miss Liverpool’s next

four games with groin trouble, Klopp is desperately short of central defensive options.

At Newcastle he fielded the versatile, but out-of-position, Fabinho and the inexperienced Nathaniel Phillips at the heart of his back four but Klopp – who also has the 19-year-old centre-back Rhys Williams in his squad – indicated he was unlikely to sign cover during the current transfer window and preferred to promote from within.

“We have solutions within the squad but, if we can do something in the window, I don’t know,” he said. “It is like that. It is a very difficult transfer window. Not all of the clubs have real money. Doing something makes no sense. Doing the right thing makes sense. So far we really liked what we have done. We have three centre-halves at the moment. I liked Nat [Phillips] at Newcastle. He’s a clever boy and is using his ability to help us a lot.”

Southampton will be without goalkeeper Alex McCarthy for the visit of Liverpool after he tested positive for Covid-19. The 31-year-old is self-isolating.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2021/jan/03/jurgen-klopp-premier-league-liverpool-title-race>

[Talking Horses](#)[Horse racing](#)

Talking Horses: Julie Harrington must make cutting basic errors a BHA focus

New chief executive has a huge in-tray, as Covid ravages racing's finances, but the sport could help itself by stopping blunders



Julie Harrington starts work at the British Horseracing Authority this week.
Photograph: Charles Platiau/Reuters

Julie Harrington starts work at the British Horseracing Authority this week.
Photograph: Charles Platiau/Reuters

[Chris Cook](#)

[@claimsfive](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

Back in the days before the Grand National fences had their fangs filed down a bit, the famously foolhardy Duke Of Alburquerque once rode in the race with a freshly broken collar bone, [having recently had 16 screws removed from a leg](#). The heedless, devil-may-care spirit with which he approached the starting tape that day hopefully now imbues Julie

Harrington, who will start work this week as chief executive of the British Horseracing Authority, tasked, among other things, with helping to right the sport's finances before they keel over entirely.

Covid-19 has been sapping racing's capital reserves at a rate of about £2m a month and the immediate future is no less perilous than it was for the Duke as Nereo carted him towards Becher's Brook. The return of crowds, above a token few thousand, seems a long way off and talk of racecourse closures has been in the air for months, while easy movement of horses between Britain, France and Ireland can no longer be taken for granted, thanks to the combined threat of the virus and Brexit.

[Seeyouatmidnight rolls back the years to win Veterans' Handicap Chase](#)
[Read more](#)

In the near future Harrington will be expected to persuade the government of racing's case for an improved income from bookmakers through the levy system. She must also handle the sport's response to the gambling review, which has obvious potential to make a huge impact on an industry that depends so much on betting for its appeal and its income.

Those, clearly, are the headline issues that will dominate her thoughts. But I hope she finds time to tackle racing's shocking propensity for basic organisational mistakes that continue to damage its reputation and test the commitment of its followers.

[These have included a three-year-old winning a race for two-year-olds](#), judges at [Sandown](#) and [Kempton announcing the wrong result](#) after scanning the print and another incorrect result being announced because the [photo-finish equipment was pointing at the wrong winning post](#). Nick Rust, the outgoing chief executive, sought to reassure concerned members of the public with talk of technology and "second checks" being introduced to eliminate errors but new snafus kept turning up late into his reign.

Most embarrassingly, two horses were confused with each other when they ran in a top-class juvenile race [at Newmarket in October](#), carrying each other's jockeys, with the result that Snowfall was declared to have finished third when in fact Mother Earth had done so. The end of 2020 brought two

instances of photo-finish prints that were not sufficiently clear to show which horse had won, while 10 horses, including a winner, have had to be disqualified since June because their jockeys failed to weigh in. Other incidents at Sandown and [Fontwell](#) have shown up the [inadequacies of the flag-waving systems](#) in place to alert jockeys to mid-race problems.

We can debate where responsibility lay for any one of these issues but, if the regulator does not shoulder the burden of eliminating them in future, no one else will. The BHA has to get better at anticipating what can go wrong and forestalling problems, instead of continually reacting to bad news and promising that lessons will be learned.

Soon after he was installed, Rust announced targets including racecourse attendance of 7m by 2020. As it turns out, the 2020 figure will not bear looking at, but attendance had already been falling each year, to 5.6m in 2019. Horses in training, on the other hand, were up by 5% from 2015 to the start of 2020, one of several successes to which the outgoing chief executive can point.

Harrington will surely have no interest in spelling out any such ambitions. Like the Duke at Aintree in 1974, clearing each obstacle that presents itself will be hard enough.

Monday's best bets

The form of the Evan Williams stable has picked up significantly since the meagre returns of November (three wins from 84 runners) and the Vale of Glamorgan trainer could have a good day to start Welsh National week. He sends three to Fakenham that are all fairly strong in the market with the yard's principal jockey taking over from a claimer on each.

Sabbatical (12.55) hasn't shone in two starts over fences so far but looks the type and fared well enough in a point two years back. He's fairly treated on his hurdles form and is available at 100-30 for a modest contest with the cheekpieces reapplied.

Quick Guide

Chris Cook's tips for Monday

Show

Lingfield

12.10 Noble Queen 12.40 Mutahamisa (nap) 1.10 Royal Birth 1.40 Gold Standard 2.10 King Of Clubs 2.40 Globe Theatre 3.10 Lady Of York 3.40 Caribeno

Fakenham

12.25 I'm So Busy 12.55 Sabbatical (nb) 1.25 Shantung 1.55 Miss Zip 2.25 Mac Kayla 2.55 Love The Leader 3.25 Guinness Affair

Wolverhampton

3.50 Dubai Paradise 4.20 Amazing Amaya 4.50 Inevitable Outcome 5.20 Lleyton 5.50 Termonator 6.20 Shimmering Dawn 6.50 Baileys Warrior 7.20 Plunger 7.50 Revolutionary Man

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Miss Zip (1.55) steps back to the distance at which she was winning last spring and is 11-4 favourite, having opened at 4s last night. The 8-1 shot **Mac Kayla (2.25)** has more to prove but this is just her second try in a handicap and Williams has won at a modest level with no fewer than five of her siblings.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/sport/2021/jan/04/talking-horses-julie-harrington-must-make-cutting-basic-errors-a-bha-focus>

2021.01.04 - From the uk

- [Grenfell Tower inquiry Step up and face scrutiny, minister tells cladding firm bosses](#)
- [Gerry Marsden Gerry and the Pacemakers frontman dies aged 78](#)
- [Obituary Cheeky figurehead of Merseybeat band that vied with the Beatles](#)
- [Reading murder Five teenagers held over stabbing of boy, 13](#)
- [Ladbrokes Owner Entain rejects £8bn bid from US partner MGM](#)
- [Tony Blair 'I would have voted for Boris Johnson's post-Brexit trade deal'](#)
- [Durham Naturists criticise police over Facebook post about arrest](#)
- [Scotland Edinburgh zoo may have to send giant pandas back to China](#)
- [WikiLeaks Julian Assange partner: extradition would be 'unthinkable travesty'](#)
- [Essex Man and teenager charged with murder of 83-year-old](#)
- [Politics Boris Johnson says tier restrictions are 'probably about to get tougher'](#)

[Grenfell Tower inquiry](#)

'Step up' and face Grenfell inquiry, minister tells cladding firm bosses

Stephen Greenhalgh said executives should not 'hide behind' rarely used French law



Grenfell survivors and their supporters at a protest in London last month, calling for the French government to intervene. Photograph: Guy Smallman/Getty Images

Grenfell survivors and their supporters at a protest in London last month, calling for the French government to intervene. Photograph: Guy Smallman/Getty Images

[Robert Booth](#) Social affairs correspondent

Sun 3 Jan 2021 11.19 EST

The UK government has demanded that executives who supplied combustible cladding to Grenfell Tower "step up to the plate" after their refusal to give evidence to the public inquiry into the disaster provoked anger among the bereaved and survivors.

On Sunday, Stephen Greenhalgh, the building safety minister, escalated a legal and diplomatic dispute over the position taken by three current and former executives at the French division of the US company Arconic. He told them to stop hiding behind an arcane French law.

Arconic made the polyethylene-filled aluminium composite panels that were the main cause of the spread of the fire, which killed 72 people. The witnesses, based in [France](#) and Germany, are wanted by the inquiry to account for their role in manufacturing, testing and marketing the cladding, which is now banned on high rise homes in the UK.

The former executives Claude Wehrle and Peter Froehlich, alongside Gwenaëlle Derrendinger, a current employee, are citing the rarely used 53-year-old French blocking statute and are refusing to attend six days of cross-examination due this month. Two UK-based Arconic witnesses will give evidence.

In 2009, Wehrle [shared with Arconic colleagues](#) images of a burning tower fitted with similar panels to those it sold to Grenfell “to show you how dangerous PE [polyethylene] can be when it comes to architecture”. In 2015, he emailed colleagues: “PE is dangerous on facades, and everything should be transferred to fire-resistant as a matter of urgency.”

Greenhalgh spoke out on Twitter after a months-long deadlock in which the witnesses have [resisted calls by the inquiry](#) to “do the right thing” and ignored warnings that non-attendance runs the risk of “adverse inference and criticism”. The inquiry has been communicating directly with the French government via the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office to try to get them to appear.

Greenhalgh tweeted: “Time for these [@arconic](#) executives to step up to the plate + appear before the [#GrenfellTower](#) Inquiry rather than hide behind the 1968 French Blocking Statute.”

In November, the inquiry said it would “empty-chair” the trio if they did not attend. It would set out email evidence relating to their actions and frame the questions they needed to answer.

A fourth Arconic executive, Claude Schmidt, has said he will only give evidence if the inquiry accepts “certain conditions”, which have not been made public. The inquiry said last month they were largely unacceptable.

Schmidt still works for Arconic. Grenfell United, the survivors and families group, has said “there is no way Arconic staff should be dictating terms about what they are asked or not asked”.

The row over the witnesses’ appearance has been rumbling since before November, when the inquiry publicly revealed their refusal. Counsel to the inquiry, Richard Millett QC, said “neither Arconic nor any of those witnesses has provided any evidence that there is a real risk of prosecution under the French blocking statute”. Last month, the bereaved and survivors mounted a protest outside the French embassy in London, and the French government said it did not believe the blocking statute applies. Arconic Architectural Products (AAP) said it “continues to fully cooperate with the inquiry”.

“The individuals who have declined to participate … have taken the advice of separate counsel and AAP does not have any influence on those decisions,” a spokesperson said. “The three witnesses who are represented by the company’s counsel are prepared to provide evidence, including Claude Schmidt.”

The inquiry is due to resume on 11 January.

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Music

Gerry Marsden, frontman of Gerry and the Pacemakers, dies aged 78

Singer known for hits You'll Never Walk Alone and Ferry Cross the Mersey dies after short illness

- [Gerry Marsden obituary](#)



Gerry Marsden shot to fame in the 1960s as the leader of Gerry and the Pacemakers. Photograph: Mirrorpix/Getty Images

Gerry Marsden shot to fame in the 1960s as the leader of Gerry and the Pacemakers. Photograph: Mirrorpix/Getty Images

[Helen Pidd](#) North of England editor

Sun 3 Jan 2021 13.07 EST

Gerry Marsden, the lead singer of [Gerry and the Pacemakers](#), known for hits including You'll Never Walk Alone and Ferry Cross the Mersey, has died at 78 after a short illness.

He shot to fame in the 1960s as the leader of the Merseybeat band at a time when [Liverpool](#) was the centre of the musical universe.

Marsden's family said in a statement on Sunday: "Gerry died earlier today after a short illness in no way connected with Covid-19. His wife, daughters and grandchildren are devastated."

He went into hospital on Boxing Day after tests showed he had a serious blood infection that had travelled to his heart. His daughter Yvette Marbeck told the PA news agency: "My sister Vicky and myself have always been very, very proud of Dad ... He was our hero, wonderful."

She added: "It was a very short illness and too quick to comprehend really. And his heart has taken some battering over the years. He had a triple bypass, an aortic valve replacement and ironically he also had a pacemaker.

"I am just devastated and heartbroken. Unfortunately, he died in hospital, which was devastating for us because we were not allowed in due to the current regulations."



Gerry Marsden in 2009. Photograph: Dave Thompson/PA

The Pacemakers topped the British charts in 1963 with their first three singles, How Do You Do It?, I Like It and You'll Never Walk Alone, a

Rodgers and Hammerstein composition from the musical *Carousel*. The song became the anthem of Liverpool FC, sung from the Kop at every game. [The club tweeted](#): “It is with such great sadness that we hear of Gerry Marsden’s passing. Gerry’s words will live on forever with us. You’ll Never Walk Alone”.

Gerry and the Pacemakers played regularly alongside the Beatles. Both groups were part of Brian Epstein’s Liverpool-based management stable.

They played together for the first time in June 1960 – when the Beatles were still the Silver Beetles – and in December that year they were contracted to play a four-month stint in Hamburg, prompting the group to give up their day jobs to become professional musicians. “We went over with the Beatles and had a good laugh,” Marsden later recalled.

The group’s first hit, *How Do You Do It?*, was first recorded by the Beatles in 1962, but rejected by them and given to Marsden’s band by the producer, George Martin, becoming their first No 1 in April 1963.

Sir Paul McCartney paid tribute to his old friend on Twitter:

My sympathies go to his wife Pauline and family. See ya, Gerry. I’ll always remember you with a smile. - Paul

— Paul McCartney (@PaulMcCartney) [January 3, 2021](#)

Sir Ringo Starr tweeted: “God bless Jerry Marsden peace and love to all his family.” He then tweeted: “Gerry. Gerry.”

The Cavern Club, where both bands regularly played, [tweeted](#):

Devastated to hear of the passing of Gerry Marsden earlier today.

The word legend is often overused but Gerry was not only a legend, but also a very good friend of The Cavern. pic.twitter.com/74HQZP4gio

— The Cavern Club (@cavernliverpool) [January 3, 2021](#)

Ferry Cross the Mersey was released in late 1964 and reached No 8 in the UK. In 1989, Marsden topped the charts with a new version of the song recorded with fellow Merseyside artists the Christians, Holly Johnson and McCartney in aid of the victims of [the Hillsborough disaster](#), in which a crush of Liverpool fans at a stadium in Sheffield resulted in 96 deaths.

Marsden married his wife, Pauline, in 1965 and the couple had two daughters.

His version of You'll Never Walk Alone [re-entered the charts](#) in March at the start of lockdown, after he encouraged people to sing it from their doorsteps during the weekly [Clap for our Carers](#). Captain Tom Moore [topped the charts in April with his own version](#) recorded with Michael Ball and an NHS choir to raise money for health service charities.

- This article was amended on 3 January 2021. An earlier version incorrectly stated that How Do You Do It? reached No 1 in April 1962.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2021/jan/03/gerry-marsden-frontman-of-gerry-and-the-pacemakers-dies-aged-78>

[Pop and rock](#)

Gerry Marsden obituary

Leader of the chart-topping 1960s Merseybeat band Gerry and the Pacemakers whose hits included You'll Never Walk Alone

- [Gerry Marsden, frontman of Gerry and the Pacemakers, dies aged 78](#)



Gerry Marsden, second from left, with Gerry and the Pacemakers, from left, Freddie Marsden, Les Chadwick and Les Maguire. The band reached No 1 with their first three singles. Photograph: Everett Collection / Rex Features

Gerry Marsden, second from left, with Gerry and the Pacemakers, from left, Freddie Marsden, Les Chadwick and Les Maguire. The band reached No 1 with their first three singles. Photograph: Everett Collection / Rex Features

[Adam Sweeting](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 13.18 EST

With his toothy grin and cheeky manner, Gerry Marsden, who has died aged 78, was one of the prime movers of the Merseybeat sound of the early 1960s. For a time, Marsden's band, Gerry and the Pacemakers, were vying

with [the Beatles](#) as Britain's top pop group, both of them part of [Brian Epstein](#)'s Liverpool-based management stable.

In 1963 the Pacemakers topped the British charts with their first three singles, [How Do You Do It?](#), [I Like It](#) and the Rodgers and Hammerstein composition [You'll Never Walk Alone](#) (which became the theme tune of Liverpool FC). In this respect the Pacemakers had outstripped the Beatles, who did not manage to reach No 1 until their third single, [From Me to You](#). It was only in 1984 that the Pacemakers' feat was repeated, coincidentally by another Liverpool group, [Frankie Goes to Hollywood](#). Aptly, the B side of Frankie's first big hit, Relax, was [a version](#) of Marsden's composition Ferry Cross the Mersey, a [Pacemakers hit](#) from 1965.

After their dazzling early salvo of hits, Gerry and the Pacemakers could not match the extraordinary trajectory of the Beatles, but, as Epstein predicted: "Gerry will be with us for a great many years because you cannot exhaust natural ability." The group enjoyed further successes with Marsden's song [I'm the One](#), which reached No 2 in 1964, the poignant ballad [Don't Let the Sun Catch You Crying](#) (written by Marsden and credited to the whole band, and which reached No 6 in 1964) and Ferry Cross the Mersey, which made No 8 in early 1965.

Ferry Cross the Mersey was the theme of the film of the same name, scripted by the Coronation Street writer [Tony Warren](#) and starring the group playing thinly fictionalised versions of themselves. The song gave the group a No 6 hit in the US in 1965, but it was their last Top 10 appearance on either side off the Atlantic, and their last chart entry in Britain was [Walk Hand in Hand](#), which reached 29 at the end of 1965.



Gerry and the Pacemakers - with Gerry Marsden second from left - playing at the Cavern Club in Liverpool in the 1960s. Photograph: GAB Archive/Redferns

Marsden was born in the Dingle district of Liverpool, to Mary (nee McAlindin) and Frederick Marsden. He attended Our Lady of Mount Carmel school, and at the Florence Institute youth club learned both how to box and how to play the guitar. At 14, he joined a skiffle group, the Red Mountain Boys, with his brother [Freddie](#) (who was two years older) on drums, Les Chadwick on guitar, and Arthur Mack (real name McMahon) on piano.

They renamed themselves the Mars Bars, hoping to obtain sponsorship from the Mars confectionery company. Instead, Mars demanded that they change their name, and in 1959 the group became the Pacemakers. In June 1960 they played for the first time with the Beatles (then the Silver Beetles) and in December that year they were contracted to play a four-month stint in Hamburg, prompting the group to give up their day jobs and become professional musicians. "We went over with the Beatles and had a good laugh," Marsden later recalled. "All they had over there were oompah bands ... we took over this music, and they loved it." In 1961 Les Maguire replaced McMahon.

They played on the same bill as the Beatles numerous times over the following year, and on 19 October 1961 the two groups joined together to play at Litherland town hall as the Beatmakers. In June 1962 they were signed for management by Epstein. In December that year the Beatles producer [George Martin](#) saw them play at the Majestic Ballroom, Birkenhead, and signed them to the Columbia label (then part of EMI). Martin had recorded How Do You Do It? with the Beatles in 1962, but they did not like the song and Martin took it to Marsden and co. It became their first No 1 hit, in April 1962, selling half a million copies.

In May 1967, with their chart appeal waning, the band announced their intention to quit, with Marsden planning to take over the lead role in the West End musical Charlie Girl from Joe Brown. The following month he released his first solo single, [Please Let Them Be](#), which failed to chart. In 1968 he made his move to the London stage, and released the single Liverpool, a duet with his Charlie Girl co-star [Derek Nimmo](#). After the show ended in 1971, Marsden starred in another West End production, Pull Both Ends (1972). In 1970 he was given a regular slot on the children's TV programme The Sooty Show.



Gerry Marsden in 2009. Photograph: Dave Thompson/PA

In 1973 he put together a new Pacemakers for the British Re-Invasion Show at Madison Square Garden, New York, where they appeared with other British pop contemporaries including the Searchers and Herman's Hermits. In 1974 the lure of the concert stage, and requests from fans, proved irresistible. He went back on the road with another version of the Pacemakers, and released the single [Remember \(The Days of Rock and Roll\)](#) as Gerry Marsden and the Pacemakers. Marsden would continue to undertake tours with the band as well as cabaret shows in Europe, the US and Australia, while keeping up his TV work.

In 1985 he oversaw the recording of You'll Never Walk Alone by [the Crowd](#) – a host of show business names, including [Bruce Forsyth](#), [Peter Cook](#), Rick Wakeman, Dave Lee Travis, Motörhead and many more – to raise funds for victims of the fire at Bradford City football stadium in May that year. It reached No 1 in June, making Marsden the first artist to top the British charts with two versions of the same song.

On 18 April 1989, Marsden recorded another charity effort, when he joined Paul McCartney, the Christians, Holly Johnson and Stock, Aitken and Waterman in a new version of [Ferry Cross the Mersey](#) three days after the Hillsborough disaster, which cost the lives of 96 Liverpool fans. Marsden delivered an emotional performance of the song at the Liverpool-Everton FA Cup final at Wembley Stadium that year.

In 1993 he published his autobiography, I'll Never Walk Alone, co-written with the former Melody Maker editor [Ray Coleman](#). The book became the basis of the stage musical Ferry Cross the Mersey, which went on tour in the UK, Canada and Australia.

In 2003 Marsden was appointed MBE for services to charity, and in 2010 received an honorary fellowship from [Liverpool](#) John Moores University. He underwent heart surgery in 2003 and 2016, and in 2018 he announced his retirement.

Nevertheless, he made a surprise appearance with Take That at their concert at Anfield on 6 June 2019, and sang [You'll Never Walk Alone](#) to celebrate Liverpool's Champions League win over Tottenham a few days earlier.

He is survived by his wife, Pauline (nee Behan) whom he married in 1965, and their daughters, Yvette and Victoria.

- Gerard “Gerry” Marsden, singer, songwriter and actor, born 24 September 1942; died 3 January 2021
-

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[UK news](#)

Reading killing: five teenagers held over stabbing of boy, 13

Boy was pronounced dead at scene of attack in Bugs Bottom conservation area



Police at the scene in Bugs Bottom fields, Emmer Green, Reading, where a 13-year-old boy died after being stabbed on Sunday. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

Police at the scene in Bugs Bottom fields, Emmer Green, Reading, where a 13-year-old boy died after being stabbed on Sunday. Photograph: Jonathan Brady/PA

[Damien Gayle](#)
[@damiengayle](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 11.11 EST

Four boys and a girl have been arrested on suspicion of conspiracy to commit murder after a 13-year-old boy was stabbed to death in a wildlife conservation area in Reading.

Those arrested are all aged 13 and 14 and are from Berkshire.

Police officers found the victim shortly before 4pm on Sunday at Bugs Bottom fields, close to St Barnabas Road, Emmer Green, after reports of a stabbing. The boy died of his injuries at the scene, police said.

Thames Valley police on Monday identified him as Oliver Stephens, a pupil at the nearby Highdown school, after floral tributes were laid near the scene of the killing paying tribute to the teenager and he was named in press reports.

The five suspects remained in police custody on Monday morning. Det Supt Kevin Brown, the head of Thames Valley police's major crime unit, said: "This remains a very active investigation and a large scene-watch remains in place."

Police have appealed for witnesses, including anyone who may have seen people leaving the area quickly, or any motorists or cyclists with dash-cam or head-cam footage of the area between 3pm and 4.30pm, and any walkers with photographs taken in the area around that time.

"Similarly, many families walk in the area, and so if anybody has taken photographs within the area around that time, please check these and contact us if you have picked up anything suspicious," Brown said.

"I would also be keen to hear from anybody with CCTV footage in the area, please can you check this and again contact us with anything that may be able to help us in this investigation."

Family liaison officers were said to be supporting the victim's family. Reading's area commander, Supt Nick John, said the force would leave "no stone unturned" in the investigation into the "shocking incident".

Rachel Cave, the headteacher of Highdown school, confirmed that Oliver had been a pupil. "For a life to be ended at such a young age is a total tragedy," she said. "Our thoughts and prayers are with his family."

"Many have been deeply affected by this tragedy. In normal circumstances we would open the school and welcome in students for support before the

start of the term.

“We are currently unable to do this of course but are arranging counselling support and will be establishing an electronic book of condolence. Highdown is a supportive and close-knit community. We will work together over the coming days and weeks.”

Bugs Bottom fields is a managed wildlife conservation area covering nearly six hectares of meadows, edged with small woodlands, on the northern outskirts of Reading. The area around the site was developed for housing in the 1990s, with many residents commuting to London for work.

Pictures circulated by the PA Media news agency on Monday morning showed the entire site had been cordoned off by police and a forensic tent erected. Plainclothes detectives were conducting house to house inquiries, according to the Sun.

Residents said Bugs Bottom was often used by local people to walk their dogs. One told a reporter from Berkshire Live she felt worried taking her children to the park.

“It’s extremely worrying,” said the woman, who was not named. “I’ve got children and they love going to the park. But I don’t feel it’s safe to take them there any more after this.

“Certainly we won’t be going for a few weeks now. It’s a lovely park and they love going there and climbing trees and playing, but I don’t feel it is safe for them.”

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Ladbrokes

Ladbrokes owner's shares leap after it rejects £8.1bn MGM bid

Entain is target of US casino partner seeking to expand online operations

Rob Davies and Jasper Jolly

Mon 4 Jan 2021 08.06 EST First published on Mon 4 Jan 2021 03.20 EST



Ladbrokes would be valued at more than £8bn in the offer from MGM Resorts. Photograph: Liam McBurney/PA

The gambling company behind Ladbrokes and Coral has rebuffed an £8.1bn takeover proposal from its US partner, MGM Resorts, as the arrival of legal sports betting in the US continues to fuel transatlantic dealmaking.

Entain said the offer from MGM, the owner of the Bellagio casino in Las Vegas, significantly undervalued the company and its prospects.

Shares in Entain, which owns a host of online betting brands and more than 3,300 high street bookmakers, closed up 25% at £14.16 on Monday, suggesting traders think MGM could increase its offer beyond the £13.83 bid on the table.

MGM swooped for Entain just a few months after the US operator's rival Caesars Entertainment bought William Hill for £2.9bn, underscoring the [appetite for UK firms' technology and experience](#) in the newly regulated US gambling market.

Since the US supreme court legalised sports betting in 2018, [a flurry of British firms have established beachheads](#) in the US, exploiting expertise gleaned from years of operating freely in the UK.

But state laws have required them to do so in partnership with local US casino operators that typically hold the limited number of sports wagering licences to be awarded.

Analysts said US casino investors were no longer happy to share the spoils and were looking to buy out their British partners instead.

Alun Bowden, the head of European markets at the US-based gambling consultancy Eilers & Krejcik Gaming, said it made sense to spend billions on knowhow that UK firms already possessed.

“The US market is moving so quickly that to spend one or two years building that up, at the absolute minimum, is just time nobody has to spend,” he said. “The casino firms probably underestimated the growth of both the online gambling market there and the impact on share prices. I think everyone did.”

“Two years ago they were happy to do joint ventures and effectively lease the brand for a revenue share deal to European operators. Now they really want to have full ownership of their involvement in the market.”

Entain, which was known as GVC until shareholders [voted for a name change](#) last month, started a 50/50 joint venture, BetMGM, with MGM in

2018, offering online sports betting and casino games in the growing number of US states where it is legal.

Before the supreme court overturned the ban on sports betting, Nevada – home to Las Vegas – was the only state where it was allowed. A further 18 states have joined Nevada, and more are either expected to follow suit or are already doing so. The California market alone is thought to be worth more than the UK's.

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Darin Oliver, the managing director of the gambling advisory business Simply Alpha Capital and a former deputy director of licensing at the Alderney gambling control commission, predicted in 2018 that MGM would eventually buy Entain.

He agreed that MGM's bid undervalued Entain and suggested the joint venture could eventually be hived off and would be worth “billions of dollars” alone if it were floated on the stock market.

“The sports betting market in the US is going crazy,” he said. “There are limited entrants, the valuations are very high and there’s a belief that you need to get in early and establish spots.

“Covid hasn’t been a drag because the market sees it as being a temporary thing that won’t have an impact on behaviours. If it does, it’s most likely to increase online sports wagering than reduce it.”

Oliver said some other British or European firms were less exciting targets for a highly regulated US firm because they still operated in so-called “grey markets”, territories where gambling is not legal.

Entain “is perfect for a US gambling operator to acquire since it’s likely to not have any dirty laundry in it. It’s the last man standing in that department,” he added.

Under UK takeover law MGM has until 1 February to either announce its firm intention to make an offer or to withdraw. MGM Resorts was

approached for comment.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Tony Blair](#)

Tony Blair: I would have voted for Boris Johnson's post-Brexit trade deal

Former Labour prime minister reveals he would have backed Keir Starmer in Commons vote



Tony Blair” ‘There was a case for abstaining and there was a case for voting for it because the alternative’s no-deal.’ Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

Tony Blair” ‘There was a case for abstaining and there was a case for voting for it because the alternative’s no-deal.’ Photograph: Yui Mok/PA

[Simon Murphy](#) Political correspondent

[@murphy_simon](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 09.25 EST

Tony Blair, who was one of the most prominent campaigners for a second referendum on EU membership, has said he would have backed Boris Johnson’s post-Brexit trade deal with Brussels in the Commons.

The former prime minister revealed he would have supported the Labour leader, Keir Starmer, who [whipped his MPs to vote in favour of the prime](#)

[minister's agreement](#) with the EU last week before the end of the transition period.

Starmer – who also backed remain during the 2016 vote as well as calling for a second referendum in 2019 while serving as the shadow Brexit secretary – faced pressure from his own party ranks over his decision to support the deal, despite [criticising it as “thin”](#).

Three Labour junior frontbenchers resigned after defying Starmer and refusing to vote for the agreement. They were among [36 of the party's MPs who abstained](#). One Labour MP went further and voted against the deal, which sailed through the parliamentary approval process on 30 December.

Starmer, who before becoming leader last year accepted that Johnson's election victory at the end of 2019 “blew away” the case for a second [Brexit](#) referendum, had declared Labour's support for the prime minister's trade deal with the EU after an agreement was reached on Christmas Eve.

Asked if he would have voted for the deal in the Commons, Blair – [among the most high-profile members of the remain camp](#) during the 2016 Brexit referendum – told Times Radio on Sunday: “I would have backed the leader on this. I mean, look, it's a tactical question for the Labour party because the problem is ... it's open to your opponents to say that if you don't back the deal, then you're voting for no deal.”

He continued: “I would have backed the leader on it. Look, there was a case for abstaining and there was a case for ... voting for it because the alternative's no deal.”

He added: “I don't think it particularly matters to the Labour party either way. I think what does matter is that we're still in a position where we're pointing out what the problems with this deal are.”

Separately, [in a piece published on Sunday](#), Blair argued that though he was “passionately opposed” to Brexit and that he had not changed his mind about its “wisdom”, it was now “reality” and “we must make the best of it”.

Meanwhile, Johnson confirmed he would continue as prime minister after Brexit and sought to play down issues with red tape over trade after the UK formally severed ties with the EU following the end of the transition period at 11pm on Thursday.

“Of course, there are going to be changes and we’ve made that clear,” the prime minister told the BBC’s The Andrew Marr Show on Sunday, adding: “Actually, I think there’s a great opportunity for British SMEs [small and medium-sized enterprises] and exporters of all kinds.”

He continued: “What we’ve seen is many companies in this country not exporting in the way that they could … the tragic reality of … business life is that there is some bureaucracy. We’re trying to remove it but we have a massive opportunity to expand our horizons and to think globally and to think big.”

Asked if he would carry on as prime minister after Brexit, Johnson said: “Yes.”

The prime minister added: “We now have freedoms that we haven’t had for 50 years and there are lots of reasons to be very positive about this otherwise grim new year.”

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County Durham

Naturists criticise Durham police over Facebook post about arrest

Naturist group say post suggested public nudity was illegal and could put them at risk of harassment



Durham constabulary headquarters. Police guidance says passive public nudity is not illegal unless there is an intention to cause harassment, alarm or distress. Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

Durham constabulary headquarters. Police guidance says passive public nudity is not illegal unless there is an intention to cause harassment, alarm or distress. Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP/Getty Images

[Helen Pidd](#) *North of England editor*

Sun 3 Jan 2021 10.10 EST

A group of naturists have accused police of putting them at risk after wrongly suggesting it was illegal to walk around naked.

Three Rivers Outdoor Club, a naturist club based in the north-east of [England](#), complained about a Facebook post by Durham constabulary, following reports of a naked man walking around Waldrige Fell, near Chester-le-Street.

Officers arrested the man on suspicion of outraging public decency and brought him in for questioning. The force [posted a summary of the incident on Facebook](#). He was later released without charge.

The club, which organised naked swimming and rambling outings in non-Covid times, said the Facebook post suggested public nudity was illegal and did not mention any reason for the arrest other than the nudity.

Police guidance says that passive public nudity is not illegal unless there is an intention to cause harassment, alarm or distress.

The College of Policing says naturists only break the law if they “commit sexual offences or use disorderly behaviour that they intend to or are aware may be disorderly within the hearing or sight of a person likely to be caused harassment, alarm or distress”.

Nonetheless, the minority of people who decide to test the law have often found themselves in trouble with police – [notably Stephen Gough](#), known as the “naked rambler”, who was sent to prison several times after repeatedly breaching legal orders to keep his clothes on.

A spokesperson for Three Rivers Outdoor Club [told the Newcastle Chronicle](#): “Our events are usually a liberating and joyful experience, but during one walk last summer, one of the ramblers had water thrown over them, whilst the assailant told the group that they shouldn’t be walking naked in public.

“It is wrong for Durham police to post misleading reports that suggest that public nudity is illegal, and it puts us at greater risk of harassment in future.”

The club said Durham constabulary refused to change the post and complained that the force’s professional standards department would not register a complaint about the post being discriminatory.

In response, the force said: “We received several calls from members of the public reporting an elderly man walking naked on Waldridge Fell on 14 and 15 September, who was later identified and arrested on suspicion of outraging public decency. Following a medical assessment, it was

considered that it was not in the public interest to pursue the matter and he was subsequently released with no further action.

“Over recent years, there have been several sexual and public order incidents reported on Waldridge Fell, which have led to concerns from local residents and councillors.

“We often use Facebook as a means of communicating with our residents and to inform them of issues that are relevant to their area. This particular post was uploaded to reassure the local community, and to show them that we are taking their concerns seriously.”

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Edinburgh

Edinburgh zoo may have to send giant pandas back to China

Financial pressure from Covid leaves zoo struggling to afford £1m-a-year lease



Yang Guang, one of Edinburgh zoo's two giant pandas. The zoo's 10-year contract with the Chinese government expires next year. Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

Yang Guang, one of Edinburgh zoo's two giant pandas. The zoo's 10-year contract with the Chinese government expires next year. Photograph: Murdo Macleod/The Guardian

PA Media

Sun 3 Jan 2021 09.57 EST

Edinburgh zoo's giant pandas may have to return to China next year at the end of its 10-year contract with the Chinese government, due to financial pressures.

The Royal Zoological Society of [Scotland](#), which runs Edinburgh zoo and the Highland Wildlife Park, faced enormous financial pressure when it was forced to close for three months during the summer.

It costs about £1m a year to lease a mating pair. David Field, the society's chief executive, said the charity would have to "seriously consider every potential saving" including its contract for two giant pandas, Yang Guang and Tian Tian.

Field said: "The closure of Edinburgh zoo and Highland Wildlife Park for three months due to Covid-19 has had a huge financial impact on our charity because most of our income comes from our visitors.

"Although our parks are open again, we lost around £2m last year and it seems certain that restrictions, social distancing and limits on our visitor numbers will continue for some time, which will also reduce our income.

"We have done all we can to protect our charity by taking a government loan, furloughing staff where possible, making redundancies where necessary and launching a fundraising appeal. The support we have received from our members and animal lovers has helped to keep our doors open and we are incredibly grateful."

The zoo was not eligible for the government's zoo fund, which was aimed at smaller zoos.

Field added: "We have to seriously consider every potential saving and this includes assessing our giant panda contract and the cost of their daily care. At this stage, it is too soon to say what the outcome will be. We will be discussing next steps with our colleagues in China over the coming months."

The zoo is part of a number of conservation projects, including a scheme to reintroduce Scottish wildcats. However, Field said projects such as that may also have to be scrapped because of Brexit and being unable to apply for EU grants.

He said: "We received a £3.2m grant from the EU Life programme to support our Saving Wildcats partnership project, which aims to restore

wildcats in Scotland by breeding and releasing them into the wild.

“Wildcats are on the brink of extinction in Britain and this is the last hope for the species’ survival.

“As we are no longer part of the European Union, our charity is no longer eligible to apply for funding from programmes like EU Life, which have proven critical for our wildlife conservation work and wider efforts to protect animals from extinction.

“We have a leading conservation genetics laboratory at Edinburgh Zoo which supports conservation projects around the world, and suddenly access to both funding and other researchers for this cutting-edge science has disappeared.

“While the full impact is yet to be seen, we are also facing increased challenges around moving animals between zoos, many of which are part of important European endangered species breeding programmes.”

The programme is about £900,000 short, meaning it may have to be cancelled.

Field said: “We still need to reduce costs to secure our future. It may be that some of our incredibly important conservation projects, including the vital lifeline for Scotland’s wildcats, may have to be deferred, postponed or even stopped.

“Yang Guang and Tian Tian have made a tremendous impression on our visitors over the last nine years, helping millions of people connect to nature and inspiring them to take an interest in wildlife conservation.

“I would love for them to be able to stay for a few more years with us and that is certainly my current aim.”

Julian Assange

Julian Assange partner: extradition would be ‘unthinkable travesty’

Stella Moris speaks out on eve of ruling on whether WikiLeaks founder can be sent for trial in US



Julian Assange gestures from a prison van as he leaves an earlier extradition hearing in May 2019. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Julian Assange gestures from a prison van as he leaves an earlier extradition hearing in May 2019. Photograph: Neil Hall/EPA

Haroon Siddique

Sun 3 Jan 2021 07.19 EST

Julian Assange’s partner has said a decision to extradite the WikiLeaks co-founder to the US would be “politically and legally disastrous for the UK”, on the eve of the judge’s ruling.

Assange, 49, faces an 18-count indictment, alleging a plot to hack computers and a conspiracy to obtain and disclose national defence information in a case [critics have decried as a dangerous attack on press freedom](#).

At the Old Bailey on Monday, the district judge Vanessa Baraitser will deliver her decision on whether he should be extradited to face the charges in the US, where his lawyers say he faces up to 175 years in jail if convicted. The US government says the sentence is likely to be between four and six years.

Before Baraitser's ruling, Stella Moris, who has two children with Assange, said a decision to allow extradition would not only be an "unthinkable travesty" for her partner but would damage cherished British freedoms.

Timeline

Julian Assange extradition battle

Show

June 2010 - October 2010

WikiLeaks releases about 470,000 classified military documents concerning American diplomacy and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. It later releases a further tranche of more than 250,000 classified US diplomatic cables.

November 2010

A Swedish prosecutor issues a European arrest warrant for Assange over sexual assault allegations involving two Swedish women. Assange denies the claims.

December 2010

[He turns himself in to police in London](#) and is placed in custody. He is later released on bail and calls the Swedish allegations a smear campaign.

February 2011

A British judge rules that Assange can be extradited to Sweden. Assange fears Sweden will hand him over to US authorities who could prosecute him.

June 2012

He takes refuge in the Ecuadorian embassy in London. He requests, and is later granted, political asylum.

November 2016

Assange is questioned in a two-day interview over the allegations at the Ecuadorian embassy by Swedish authorities.

January 2017

WikiLeaks says Assange could travel to the United States to face investigation if his rights are 'guaranteed'. It comes after one of the site's main sources of leaked documents, Chelsea Manning, is given clemency.

May 2017

Swedish prosecutors say they have closed their seven-year sex assault investigation into Assange. British police say they would still arrest him if he leaves the embassy as he breached the terms of his bail in 2012.

January 2018

Britain refuses Ecuador's request to accord Assange diplomatic status, which would allow him to leave the embassy without being arrested.

February 2018

He loses a bid to have his British arrest warrant cancelled on health grounds.

March 2018

Ecuador cuts off Assange's internet access alleging he broke an agreement on interfering in other countries' affairs.

November 2018

US prosecutors inadvertently disclose the existence of a sealed indictment against Assange.

2 April 2019

Ecuador's President Lenin Moreno says Assange has '[repeatedly violated](#)' the [conditions of his asylum](#) at the embassy.

11 April 2019

[Police arrest Assange at the embassy](#) on behalf of the US after his asylum was withdrawn. He is charged by the US with 'a federal charge of conspiracy to commit computer intrusion for agreeing to break a password to a classified U.S. government computer.'

1 May 2019

[He is jailed for 50 weeks](#) in the UK for breaching his bail conditions back in 2012. An apology letter from Assange is read out in court, but the judge rules that he had engaged in a 'deliberate attempt to evade justice'. On the following day [the US extradition proceedings were formally started](#).

13 May 2019

Swedish prosecutors announce they are [reopening an investigation into a rape allegation](#) against Julian Assange.

13 June 2019

Home secretary Sajid Javid reveals he has [signed the US extradition order for Assange](#) paving the way for it to be heard in court.

24 February 2020

Assange's [extradition hearing begins](#) at Woolwich crown court in south-east London. After a week of opening arguments, the extradition case is to be adjourned until May. Further delays are caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

15 September 2020

A hearing scheduled for four weeks [begins at the Old Bailey](#) with the US government expected to make their case that Assange tried to recruit hackers to find classified government information. If the courts approve extradition, the British government will still have the final say.

1 October 2020

Judge Vanessa Baraitser adjourns the case.

26 November 2020

Stella Moris urges Donald Trump to pardon Assange before he leaves office.

4 January 2021

A British judge rules that Assange cannot be extradited to the US. The US has 15 days to appeal against the judgment.

Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

“It would rewrite the rules of what it is permissible to publish here,” Moris [wrote in the Mail on Sunday](#). “Overnight, it would chill free and open debate about abuses by our own government and by many foreign ones, too.

“In effect, foreign countries could simply issue an extradition request saying that UK journalists, or Facebook users for that matter, have violated their censorship laws. The press freedoms we cherish in Britain are meaningless if they can be criminalised and suppressed by regimes in Russia or Ankara or by prosecutors in Alexandria, Virginia.”

The case against Assange relates to [WikiLeaks’s publication of hundreds of thousands of leaked documents](#) about the Afghanistan and Iraq wars, as well as diplomatic cables, in 2010 and 2011.

Prosecutors say Assange helped the US defence analyst Chelsea Manning breach the Espionage Act, was complicit in hacking by others and published classified information that endangered US informants.

Assange denies plotting with Manning to crack an encrypted password on US Department of Defense computers and says there is no evidence anyone's safety was compromised.

His lawyers argue the prosecution is politically motivated and that he is being pursued because WikiLeaks published US government documents that revealed evidence of war crimes and human rights abuses.

Kristinn Hrafnsson, the WikiLeaks editor-in-chief, said: “The mere fact that this case has made it to court let alone gone on this long is an historic, large-scale attack on freedom of speech.

“The US government should listen to the groundswell of support coming from the mainstream media editorials, NGOs around the world such as Amnesty and Reporters Without Borders and the United Nations who are all calling for these charges to be dropped.”

Assange has been held in the high-security Belmarsh prison since police carried him out of the Ecuadorian embassy in London, where he had taken refuge for seven years, and arrested him for breaching his bail conditions.

The UN special rapporteur on torture, Prof Nils Melzer, who has visited him in Belmarsh, has said Assange is showing all of the symptoms associated with prolonged exposure to psychological torture and should not be extradited. The court heard he had been diagnosed with Asperger’s syndrome, and psychiatrists for the defence said he suffered from severe depression and was a high suicide risk.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2021/jan/03/julian-assange-partner-stella-moris-extradition-unthinkable-travesty-wikileaks>

UK news

Man and teenager charged with murder of 83-year-old in Essex

Leighton Snook, 28, and 16-year-old who cannot be named will appear in court over death of Donald Ralph



Leighton Snook will also face charges of theft of a motor vehicle and possession of an offensive weapon. Photograph: Essex police

Leighton Snook will also face charges of theft of a motor vehicle and possession of an offensive weapon. Photograph: Essex police

PA Media

Sun 3 Jan 2021 07.54 EST

A 16-year-old boy and a 28-year-old man have been charged with the murder of a pensioner who was strangled at his home.

The teenager, who cannot be named for legal reasons, and the man, Leighton Snook, are due to appear at Colchester magistrates court on Monday accused of killing Donald Ralph, 83.

The victim's body was found at his home in the village of Aldham, near Colchester, Essex, on Tuesday.

Essex police said a postmortem found he had died from strangulation.

Snook, of no fixed address, and the 16-year-old, from Leicester, have both been charged with murder and theft of a motor vehicle, while Snook also faces a charge of possession of an offensive weapon.

Essex police previously said Ralph's car, a blue Volvo V50 which was stolen from outside his home, was later found in Hastings, East Sussex.

Two men, aged 30 and 39, and a 21-year-old woman, have been released on police bail after being arrested on suspicion of assisting an offender.

Ralph's family have described him as a man who loved being in the countryside and was "very young at heart".

His niece, Tina Ralph, said: "He was a man who loved all things countryside, particularly fishing and the Norfolk Broads, as well as being an avid bird lover.

"He loved horse racing and spent many a happy Saturday having a little flutter.

"Don was a unique character, who will be much missed by his wide circle of friends and all his family."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/jan/03/man-and-teenager-charged-with-murder-83-year-old-donald-ralph-essex>

Boris Johnson

Coronavirus restrictions 'probably about to get tougher', says Boris Johnson

Prime minister says he is ‘fully reconciled’ to prospect of stricter measures in England in weeks ahead

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

Simon Murphy and **Haroon Siddique**

Sun 3 Jan 2021 05.59 EST Last modified on Sun 3 Jan 2021 10.32 EST

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0:39

Boris Johnson 'reconciled' to prospect of UK coronavirus restrictions tightening – video

Boris Johnson has raised the prospect of even tougher lockdown measures, including school closures, being imposed in England in the coming weeks to stem surging Covid-19 rates.

Amid concerns over pressure on the NHS and the higher transmissibility of the new coronavirus variant, the prime minister revealed he was “fully reconciled” to potentially having to “do things in the next few weeks that will be tougher”.

He also acknowledged that the coronavirus curbs were “probably about to get tougher”.

Nearly eight in 10 people in England are already under “stay at home” tier 4 measures, which include the closure of non-essential shops and strict one-to-

one outdoor meeting limits between households, but Johnson suggested stricter curbs could be introduced.

Asked whether it may be necessary to introduce tougher “tier 5” restrictions in the near future, Johnson told the BBC’s The Andrew Marr Show on Sunday: “It may be that we need to do things in the next few weeks that will be tougher in … many parts of the country … I’m fully, fully reconciled to that. And I bet the people of this country are reconciled to that.”

UK coronavirus cases

Asked what “tougher” might mean, Johnson said: “Until the vaccine really comes on stream in a massive way, we’re fighting this virus with the same set of tools.”

Pressed again on what it might mean and if, for example, it could include March-style restrictions on daily exercise or a curfew, Johnson replied: “You’ve spoken about tier 5, I haven’t said that, but there are obviously a range of … tougher measures that we would have to consider.”

Asked what they would be, the prime minister said: “I’m not going to speculate now about what they … would be, but I’m sure that all our viewers and listeners, will understand … clearly, school closures, which we had to do in March, is one of those … things… It’s not something we necessarily want to do.”

Acknowledging that the situation was “very difficult”, Johnson added: “We’re entirely reconciled to doing what it takes to get the virus down and … that may involve tougher measures … in the weeks ahead.”

“What we’re doing now is using the tiering system, which is a very tough system … and, alas, probably about to get tougher, to keep things under control. But we’ll review it.”

He added: “And we have the prospect of vaccines coming down the track in their tens of millions … and that, I think, is something that should keep people going in what I predicted, back on your show in October, will be a very bumpy period right now. It is bumpy and it’s going to be bumpy.”

Despite warning of stricter measures on the horizon, and in the face of [pressure from education unions](#), Johnson separately urged parents to send their children into primary schools on Monday in areas of the country where they are still set to open.

Sir Mark Walport, who sits on Sage (the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies) and was formerly the UK government's chief scientific adviser, said it was "pretty clear" more restrictions would be needed to prevent transmission of the virus.

"It is going to be very very difficult to get under control without much tighter social distancing measures," he told Marr.

Those measures could potentially include closing schools, he said, adding: "We know that transmission occurs within schools, we know that a person between 12 and 16 is seven times more likely than others in a household to bring the infection into a household, and we know that there was a small dip in the amount of transmission in schoolchildren after the half-term, which then went up again when they went back."

Minutes from the Sage meeting on 22 December showed the group feared that even with full lockdown and closure of all schools, it might not bring the R number below one in the presence of the new variant.

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2021.01.04 - Around the world

- [Bitcoin Cryptocurrency hits record high on 12th anniversary of creation](#)
- [Brazil 33-metre vagina artwork draws far right's ire](#)
- [Live Business: markets boosted as Oxford vaccine rollout begins](#)
- [Tesla Manufacturer almost hits 500,000-car delivery target for 2020 despite pandemic](#)
- [Iran Tehran steps up nuclear plans as tensions rise on anniversary of Suleimani's killing](#)
- [Ireland State broadcaster apologises over TV comedy depicting God as rapist](#)
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Bitcoin

Bitcoin hits record high on 12th anniversary of its creation

Cryptocurrency passes \$30,000 as financial institutions express growing interest

Graeme Wearden

Sun 3 Jan 2021 12.18 EST Last modified on Sun 3 Jan 2021 23.37 EST



The price of bitcoin is rising as more investors see the cryptocurrency as a store of value. Photograph: Pavlo Gonchar/Sopa Images/Rex/Shutterstock

[Bitcoin](#) has surged to a record high amid rising interest from investors and claims that the volatile cryptocurrency is on the way to becoming a mainstream payment method.

Having quadrupled in value during 2020, bitcoin began 2021 strongly by breaking through the \$30,000 (£22,000) mark for the first time, less than three weeks after first trading above \$20,000.

On Sunday, it hit a new high of more than \$34,800, on the 12th anniversary of the bitcoin network being created.

bitcoin surge

Bitcoin's rapid climb has rekindled memories of previous parabolic rallies and crashes. [During 2017, it leapt from about \\$1,000 to peak over \\$19,000](#), before tumbling to below \$4,000 by the end of 2018.

But this latest rally comes as some financial institutions show growing interest in bitcoin as an asset class, and as its supporters argue that it is supplanting gold as a store of value.

“The number keeps going up as the market has seemingly never been more bullish,” said Paolo Ardoino, the CTO of cryptocurrency exchange Bitfinex. “We see a very bright future ahead for all bitcoin holders.”

With the US dollar at its lowest level since spring 2018, advocates of cryptocurrencies claim they protect against inflationary money-printing by central banks, which launched unprecedented stimulus programmes last year amid the Covid-19 pandemic.

“Some will argue that there is more to come from both gold and bitcoin, especially if governments keep piling up debts and central banks do their best to fund that borrowing through the backdoor with quantitative easing, zero interest rates and bond yield manipulation, thanks to the scarcity value relative to cash,” said Russ Mould, the investment director of UK investment platform AJ Bell.

“Others will argue neither gold nor bitcoin have intrinsic value, as they do not generate cash,” he added.

Bitcoin received a boost from PayPal last autumn, when [the bank announced it would allow customers to buy, sell and use](#) the cryptocurrency. Analysts said this could be driving the price surge, by creating a shortage as PayPal buys up newly created bitcoins.

There are more than 18m bitcoins in existence, created by the miners who provide the computational power underpinning the blockchain, which

records transactions made using bitcoin. The system has a hardwired maximum of 21m coins.

jack (@jack)

Happy birthday [#Bitcoin](#)

[January 3, 2021](#)

Sunday's latest record high came 12 years to the day after Satoshi Nakamoto, the pseudonymous creator of bitcoin, created the first entry in the bitcoin blockchain.

This "genesis block" included a headline from the 3 January 2009 edition of the Times, reading: "Chancellor on brink of second bailout for banks".

City firms have shown more interest in bitcoin recently. In December, the UK investment management firm Ruffer said it held £550m in bitcoin, as a hedge to the risks in a "fragile monetary system and distorted financial market".

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The hedge fund managers Stanley Druckenmiller and Paul Tudor Jones have also backed bitcoin as a financial asset. Druckenmiller argued that it could have "a lot of attraction as a store of value to both millennials and the new west coast money".

Sceptics warn that the crypto boom could be heading for trouble. The economics professor [Nouriel Roubini](#), a long-time critic of bitcoin, insists it has no intrinsic value.

"The price of bitcoin is totally manipulated by a bunch of people, by a bunch of whales. It doesn't have any fundamental value," [he told Yahoo Finance just before Christmas](#). "We're close to the point where the hyperbolic bubble is going to go bust."

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2021/jan/03/bitcoin-hits-record-high-on-12th-anniversary-of-its-creation>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Brazil](#)

The vagina dialogues: 33-metre artwork draws far right's ire in Brazil

Juliana Notari's hillside sculpture sparks clash between Bolsonaro-supporting right and leftwing cultural community



Artist Juliana Notari installed the artwork, entitled Diva, in rural art park in Pernambuco, Brazil. Photograph: Juliana Notari

Artist Juliana Notari installed the artwork, entitled Diva, in rural art park in Pernambuco, Brazil. Photograph: Juliana Notari

[Tom Phillips](#) in Rio de Janeiro

Sun 3 Jan 2021 13.17 EST

A 33-metre reinforced concrete vulva has sparked a Bolsonarian backlash in [Brazil](#), with supporters of the country's far-right president clashing with leftwing art admirers over the installation.

The handmade sculpture, entitled Diva, was unveiled by [visual artist Juliana Notari](#) on Saturday at [a rural art park](#) on the grounds of a former sugar mill in Pernambuco, one of Brazil's most culturally vibrant states.

In [a Facebook post](#), Notari said the scarlet hillside vulva was intended to “question the relationship between nature and culture in our phallocentric and anthropocentric western society” and provoke debate over the “problematisation of gender”.

“Nowadays these issues have become increasingly urgent,” the artist added in what appeared partly to be a reference to the increasingly intolerant climate in Jair Bolsonaro’s Brazil.

That comment was immediately borne out by the angry and often obscene reactions to Notari’s art, as thousands of critics – many seemingly Bolsonaro supporters – flooded the artist’s Facebook page with their ire. “Who do you lefties think you’re fooling? Apart from useful idiots on the left, of course,” one of the more restrained detractors wrote.

Bolsonaro’s US-based political guru, the professional polemicist Olavo de Carvalho, weighed in with [a customarily foul-mouthed tweet](#).

Many responded more positively to Notari’s resin-covered sculpture, which took 11 months to build. “There’s a lot to think about in this work,” tweeted the celebrated trans cartoonist Laerte Coutinho.

Another fan wrote: “I loved it! An intimate part of us exposed with such beauty. We need more such works that elevate feminism and its nuances.”

Kleber Mendonça Filho, a film director from Pernambuco, [praised Notari](#) for responding to such a conservative moment in Brazilian history with a gigantic vulva. “The reactions to your work are a mirror [of society], a success,” he tweeted.

Since taking office in 2019, Bolsonaro has repeatedly maligned culture, painting artists – [many of whom oppose his government](#) – as decadent spongers who milk public funds to peddle communist garbage. A succession of renowned artists died last year, many from Covid-19, and [Bolsonaro responded with silence](#).

- This article was amended on 5 January 2021 because an earlier version, in two instances, referred to the sculpture as of a vagina, when vulva was the

correct term.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/03/the-vagina-dialogues-33-metre-artwork-draws-far-rights ire-in-brazil>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Business live

Currencies

Markets boosted as Oxford vaccine rollout begins – as it happened

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[Tesla](#)

Tesla almost hits 500,000-car delivery target for 2020 despite pandemic

The manufacturer delivered 499,550 cars in 2020, thanks to an end-of-year sales bump

- [UK carmakers have three years to source local electric car batteries](#)
- ['Peak hype': why the driverless car revolution has stalled](#)



Tesla CEO Elon Musk at the company's Shanghai factory in January.
Photograph: Aly Song/Reuters

[Tesla](#) reported record deliveries of its electric cars in the last three months of 2020, coming within a whisker of achieving the half-million target for the year set by its chief executive, Elon Musk.

The California-based manufacturer's annual sales rose by 36% after a final quarter that exceeded analysts' expectations, delivering a total of 499,550 cars in 2020.

[Tesla](#) delivered 180,570 electric vehicles between October and December, falling just short of the overall target Musk had set at the beginning of the year, before the start of the coronavirus pandemic.

Covid-19 forced the shutdown of the company's Fremont US assembly plant in the spring, but Musk urged employees to increase production to hit the target, and last week offered incentives including free "self-driving" options worth \$10,000 (£7,300) on Tesla cars whose paperwork and delivery was completed in the last days of December.

Despite apparently missing the target, Tesla said it had "produced and delivered half a million vehicles, in line with our most recent guidance", and Musk hailed it as a "major milestone".

He tweeted: "So proud of the Tesla team for achieving this major milestone! At the start of Tesla thought we had (optimistically) a 10% chance of surviving at all."

Elon Musk (@elonmusk)

So proud of the Tesla team for achieving this major milestone! At the start of Tesla, I thought we had (optimistically) a 10% chance of surviving at all. <https://t.co/xCqTL5TGlE>

[January 2, 2021](#)

More than 509,000 cars were made by the manufacturer in 2020. Production of its Model Y SUV has also begun in [its Chinese plant in Shanghai](#), with deliveries expected to begin shortly, Tesla said.

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Tesla's share price, [which rose eightfold in 2020](#), ended the year at more than \$705, valuing the company at \$669bn – 20% of which is owned by Musk himself, who is the [world's second-richest man](#). It overtook Toyota earlier in the year as the world's most valuable carmaker and last month [joined the prestigious Wall Street S&P index](#), immediately becoming its sixth most valuable listed company.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

The ObserverIran's nuclear programme

Iran steps up nuclear plans as tensions rise on anniversary of Suleimani's killing

As Tehran moves on uranium enrichment, Washington braces for retaliation a year after the Quds Force commander's assassination



A crowd at the tomb of Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force commander Qassem Suleimani on Saturday. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

A crowd at the tomb of Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds Force commander Qassem Suleimani on Saturday. Photograph: Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

[Emma Graham-Harrison](#) and agencies

Sun 3 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

Iran has announced [plans to enrich uranium up to 20% purity](#), just a step away from weapons-grade levels, as tensions with the US ratchet up during the final days of Donald Trump's presidency.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) confirmed it had been notified of Iran's decision to increase enrichment at the Fordow facility, buried in a mountainside to protect it from military strikes, although Tehran did not say when the process would begin.

The weekend also marks the first anniversary of a US drone strike that killed top general [Qassem Suleimani](#), with Washington apparently bracing for possible retaliation.

After the US stepped up military deployments and threatening language, Iran's foreign minister, Javad Zarif, accused it on New Year's Eve of trying to set up a "pretext for war".

In an apparent attempt at de-escalation the Pentagon has abruptly withdrawn the aircraft carrier Nimitz from the region, [the New York Times](#) reported.

The US president-elect, Joe Biden, has made clear that he hopes to revive the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, which was abandoned by Trump in 2018. The deal limited Iran to enriching uranium to 3.67%. It also called for Fordow to be turned into a research and development facility.

[EU foreign ministers pave way for revival of Iran nuclear deal](#)
[Read more](#)

Iran began violating the deal in 2019, in response to America's withdrawal and imposition of sanctions. But it has also signalled a desire to rejoin the deal, in return for sanctions relief.

November's IAEA report, the latest available, said that Tehran was still allowing inspections, and although it was enriching uranium beyond 3.67%, it was not exceeding a 4.5% threshold.

Other signatories of the deal, including the EU, France, Germany, UK, China and Russia, have been playing for time, hoping the agreement could be restored under Biden.

The German foreign minister, Heiko Maas, has said the change of administration in the US means that there is "a last window" for progress

that “shouldn’t be wasted”.

But Biden will be managing a very high-stakes relationship – and attempting to rekindle an always-controversial deal in the face of significant opposition inside both countries – at a time when the domestic fight against Covid is sucking up huge amounts of government time and energy.

Iran originally began 20% enrichment under former hardline president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, heightening concerns that it was pursuing a nuclear weapons programme, although Tehran has always insisted it has only peaceful aims.

The 2015 deal aimed to extend the country’s breakout time for creating a nuclear weapon from a few months to at least a year. If Iran resumes the higher level of enrichment, the international tensions that preceded the agreement could return.

The latest move came after Iran’s parliament passed legislation following the November assassination of a top nuclear scientist, in [an attack blamed on Israel](#).

The new law calls for the country to produce at least 120kg of 20% enriched uranium a year – a key step towards weapons-grade, which is 90% enriched – and put an end to IAEA inspections designed to check its programme is only for peaceful use.

Ali Akbar Salehi, the US-educated head of the civilian Atomic Energy Organization of Iran, offered a military analogy to describe his agency’s readiness to take the next step in uranium enrichment.

“We are like soldiers and our fingers are on the triggers,” Salehi told Iranian state television. “The commander should command and we shoot. We are ready for this and will produce [20% enriched uranium] as soon as possible.”

He said natural uranium in centrifuges at Fordow would need to be switched out for material enriched to 4% if the further enrichment was to proceed. “It should be done under IAEA supervision,” Salehi added.

Fordow is nestled in mountains near the holy city of Qom, about 90km south-west of Tehran.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/03/iran-nuclear-plans-tensions-anniversary-qassem-suleimani-killing>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Ireland](#)

Irish state broadcaster apologises over TV comedy depicting God as rapist

RTÉ New Year's Eve show included mock news report about God implicated in sexual harassment case



RTÉ's headquarters in Dublin. The broadcaster received more than 1,000 complaints from viewers about the show. Photograph: Niall Carson/PA
RTÉ's headquarters in Dublin. The broadcaster received more than 1,000 complaints from viewers about the show. Photograph: Niall Carson/PA

Rory Carroll Ireland correspondent

[@rorycarroll72](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 07.42 EST

Ireland's state broadcaster, RTÉ, has apologised after an outcry over a television comedy sketch that depicted God as a rapist.

A countdown show on New Year's Eve included a mock news report about God being the latest prominent figure implicated in a sexual harassment scandal.

“The 5bn-year-old stood accused of forcing himself on a young Middle Eastern migrant and allegedly impregnating her against her will, before being sentenced to two years in prison, with the last 24 months suspended,” said the newsreader. “Following the news, movie producer Harvey Weinstein requested a retrial in Ireland.”

The 23-second segment by Waterford Whispers News, a [satirical news website](#), prompted more than 1,000 complaints to RTÉ and condemnation by Ireland’s Catholic primate archbishop, Eamon Martin.

“This outrageous clip should be removed immediately & denounced by all people of goodwill,” he tweeted. “To broadcast such a deeply offensive and blasphemous clip about God and Our Blessed Mother Mary during the Christmas season ... is insulting to all Catholics and Christians.”

1. I am shocked that producer/editor of 'NYE Countdown Show' [@RTE @RTEOne](#) didn't realise how deeply offensive was a mocking 'news report' accusing God of rape & reporting his imprisonment. This outrageous clip should be removed immediately & denounced by all people of goodwill.

— Eamon Martin (@ArchbishopEamon) [January 1, 2021](#)

In a statement, [RTÉ apologised](#) and said it would respond to complaints according to statutory rules. It did not promise to remove the sketch from the RTÉ Player.

“RTÉ recognises that matters which can cause offence naturally differ from person to person, within comedy and satire in particular. Having reviewed the feedback and complaints received up to this point, RTÉ wishes to apologise to those who were offended by the segment.”

The group Atheist Ireland defended the broadcaster's right to transmit material deemed offensive and cited a [2018 referendum](#) that removed a prohibition on blasphemy from the constitution.

The last prosecution for blasphemy in Ireland was in 1855 when a priest who accidentally burned a Bible was prosecuted and later acquitted. In 2015

police investigated comments made by Stephen Fry on television in which the comedian described God as “capricious”, “mean-minded”, and an “utter maniac”. Gardaí dropped the investigation after deciding insufficient numbers of people had been outraged.

Once a deeply conservative society in thrall to the Catholic church, Ireland has in recent years turned secular and liberal with the legalisation of gay marriage and abortion in popular votes, and the ascent of a gay taoiseach.

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

US Congress

New Congress sworn in as Georgia runoffs loom and Trump runs amok

- Pelosi re-elected speaker amid extraordinary political turmoil
- [Trump pressed Georgia to overturn Biden win – report](#)
- [US Senate on a knife-edge as Georgia runoffs loom](#)



Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell participates in a swearing-in for the 117th Congress, as his wife, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, holds the Bible in the Capitol on Sunday. Photograph: Reuters

Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell participates in a swearing-in for the 117th Congress, as his wife, Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao, holds the Bible in the Capitol on Sunday. Photograph: Reuters

[Martin Pengelly](#) in New York, [Richard Luscombe](#) in Miami and agencies
Sun 3 Jan 2021 17.10 EST

Congress convened for its 117th session on Sunday, swearing in lawmakers amid extraordinary political turmoil as Republicans [worked to overturn Joe Biden's victory](#) over Donald Trump, [crucial Senate runoffs](#) in Georgia

loomed and the coronavirus surge imposed severe limits on familiar Capitol ceremonies.

['Traitors and patriots': Republican push to keep Trump in power seems doomed](#)

[Read more](#)

The Democrat Nancy Pelosi was re-elected as House speaker. But most attention was focused on the Senate, where Mitch McConnell could be carrying out his final acts as Republican majority leader.

If Democrats John Ossoff and Raphael Warnock unseat Republicans Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue in [Georgia](#) on Tuesday, the chamber will split 50-50. As vice-president, Kamala Harris would then hold a deciding vote, boosting Biden's hopes of legislative success.

In an extraordinarily acrimonious campaign, early voting has shattered runoff records, with 3m ballots cast. African American turnout, critical to the Democrats' chances, has been robust: about a third of ballots have come from self-identified Black voters, up from around 27% in the November contests which did not produce conclusive winners.

On Sunday Stacey Abrams, the defeated Democrat in the 2018 Georgia gubernatorial election who now advocates for voting rights, told ABC's This Week her party "did very well in vote by mail, we did very well in early vote, but we know election day is going to be the likely high-turnout day for Republicans, so we need Democrats who haven't cast their ballots to turn out.

"What we're so excited about is that we haven't stopped reaching those voters. Millions of contacts have been made, thousands of new registrations have been held. We know that at least 100,000 people who did not vote in the general election are now voting in this election."

Harris was to campaign in Georgia on Sunday, with Biden following on Monday. Trump has alarmed Republicans with attacks on GOP state officials and the integrity of the runoffs, as part of his baseless claims of electoral fraud in November. In [a bombshell report](#), the Washington Post

detailed a Saturday call in which Trump pressured Georgia secretary of state Brad Raffensperger to overturn the presidential result, saying a failure to do so could damage Republican chances in the Senate runoffs.

Nonetheless, on Monday Trump will rally in support of Loeffler and Perdue.

Perdue continues to quarantine after contact with a Covid-19 infected person. Nonetheless, the four candidates have been at each others' throats.

On Fox News Sunday, Loeffler, a keen Trump ally, aired allegations at Warnock regarding a child abuse investigation and domestic violence and continued to deny his claims she enriched herself in [stock dealings](#) following private Covid-19 briefings.

“Why has he refused to denounce Marxism and socialism?” Loeffler said. “He’s attacked our police officers calling them gangsters, thugs and bullies, he said ‘You can’t serve God and the military’, he’s praised Fidel Castro [and] Karl Marx.”

Warnock and Ossoff have seized on allegations of stock-dealing impropriety by Perdue, who [dumped assets damaged by the pandemic](#) and bought cheap stock that Covid-19 restrictions then caused to soar in value.

In contests in which the Black vote is so important, race has also assumed a central role. Warnock is senior pastor of Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, where Martin Luther King Jr once preached. Loeffler has run attack ads using pieces of Warnock’s sermons.

“The Republican attack is not just against Warnock, it’s against the Black church and the Black religious experience,” the Rev Timothy McDonald III, pastor of First Iconium Baptist Church in Atlanta and assistant pastor of Ebenezer from 1978 to 1984, told Reuters.

McDonald described Warnock’s views as consistent with the church’s opposition to racism, police brutality, poverty and militarism.

“I don’t care what you think about Warnock,” he said. “We’ve got to defend our church, our preaching, or prophetic tradition, our community involvement and engagement. We’re going to defend that.”

Loeffler said in a tweet last month she was not attacking the church. “We simply exposed your record in your own words,” she wrote.

Ossoff courted controversy when he recently accused Loeffler of “campaigning with a Klansman”. In fact Loeffler posed, she said unknowingly, with a former member of the far-right group.

Asked on CNN’s State of the Union if it was “important for candidates to tell the truth”, Ossoff said: “It is. And it’s even more distressing that this isn’t an isolated incident.



Kelly Loeffler speaks in McDonough, Georgia on Sunday. Photograph: Alex Wong/Getty Images

“Kelly Loeffler has repeatedly posed for photographs and been seen campaigning alongside radical white supremacists. And I believe they’re drawn to her campaign, because her campaign has consisted almost entirely of racist attacks on the Black Lives Matter movement and on the Black church.

“...And it’s happening at the same time that Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue and Georgia Republicans are mounting a vicious assault on voting rights in Georgia, lawsuit after lawsuit to disenfranchise black voters, purge the rolls, remove ballot drop boxes.

[Georgia Senate runoff elections: how they work and why they matter](#) [Read more](#)

“And I believe that one of the reasons we’re seeing such record-shattering turnout … is that Georgians are defying those efforts to rip away their voting rights and standing up and saying, ‘We’re going to make our voices heard.’”

Developments in Washington have also touched the Georgia races. Loeffler and Perdue both backed Trump’s demands for Congress to increase \$600 Covid relief payments to \$2,000, which McConnell blocked.

Ossoff leapt on the opportunity to point out Perdue’s “hypocrisy” for opposing last year’s first relief payment of \$1,200 and “obstructing” efforts to provide further direct relief for more than eight months.

Whichever of the candidates wins a passage to Washington will join a new Congress already home to a politician from the extremities of Georgia politics. Among House newcomers sworn in Sunday was [Marjorie Taylor Greene](#), who has supported the Q-Anon conspiracy theory and was among a group of Republicans who visited Trump at the White House recently, to discuss the attempt to undo the election.

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[The Observer](#)[Arms trade](#)

Lethal airstrikes in Yemen ‘left off’ confidential UK record

Ministers under pressure to say why attacks involving civilian casualties have been excluded from log of alleged humanitarian breaches



Shoes and slippers belonging to victims of a Saudi-led airstrike at a mourning ceremony in Sana'a, Yemen, in October. Photograph: Yahya Arhab/EPA

Shoes and slippers belonging to victims of a Saudi-led airstrike at a mourning ceremony in Sana'a, Yemen, in October. Photograph: Yahya Arhab/EPA

[Jamie Doward](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 02.30 EST

The government is under pressure to explain why a series of air strikes in [Yemen](#), many involving civilian casualties, have not been recorded in its confidential log of alleged breaches of international humanitarian law (IHL).

The existence of the database, which has been kept by the Ministry of Defence since 2015, emerged only when the government became embroiled in a legal challenge over its decision to grant UK arms manufacturers export licences to sell weapons to [Saudi Arabia](#) for use in Yemen. The challenge came amid claims the weapons were being used in breach of IHL.

By last July [more than 500 possible](#) breaches had been recorded in the database. But human rights groups allege that the true number of breaches in a conflict in which Saudi-led forces have conducted more than 20,000 air strikes must be much higher.

The government refuses to publish the database, making it impossible to know which incidents have been recorded. Defence sources suggest this is because it contains information from a wide range of assets, some of which are considered so sensitive they cannot be made public.

However, parliamentary questions have established that [a number of air strikes](#) in possible breach of IHL, recorded by human rights groups and NGOs in Yemen, have not been included.

Last October, Labour's shadow international trade secretary, Emily Thornberry, tabled a series of questions about a range of incidents identified by the [Yemen Data Project](#), a not-for-profit initiative maintained by security, human rights, and humanitarian experts which is considered to be the most extensive record of air strikes available.

Among the attacks identified by the project, which the MoD confirmed were not included on the database, were those in January 2018 on a bridge and a market in Al-Mufdhah area, Qaflah Athr district, resulting in the killing of 17 people and injuries to more than 20 others, and a September 2015 air strike on a funeral gathering in Khabb wa ash Sha'af district in which 30 people died.

The MoD has confirmed that a majority of the incidents Thornberry asked about were not recorded on its database.

"There must be a full investigation into why these incidents have not been included, especially when all of the attacks are on civilian infrastructure and

have had a civilian death toll,” said Andrew Smith of Campaign Against Arms Trade.

“These people deserve recognition and they deserve justice. This raises questions about the robustness of the UK’s processes, but also underlines the appalling way in which this terrible war has been conducted.”

In July Trade Secretary Liz Truss insisted that any potential breaches of international law committed by Saudi-led forces did not constitute a pattern and were ‘isolated incidents’.

But CAAT said the gaps raised questions about the MoD’s commitment to tracking the incidents and whether it was ignoring evidence that the Saudi-led attacks were part of a broader campaign.

“Since this brutal war began, Saudi-led forces have shown a total disregard for the lives and rights of people in Yemen,” Smith said.

“The civilian cost has been devastating, but that has not been enough to convince Boris Johnson and Liz Truss to end the arms sales that have fuelled the destruction.”

[Yemen airstrikes kill 31 civilians after Saudi jet crash](#)
[Read more](#)

The UK has supplied more than £5bn of weapons to Saudi Arabia since the conflict in Yemen began.

In September a UN report claimed that the UK and other countries providing arms to Saudi Arabia were potentially “aiding and assisting” war crimes by the country’s forces in Yemen.

“As we approach the sixth anniversary of the conflict, it is more important than ever that these arms sales are stopped, and so is the UK’s complicity in this brutal war,” Smith added.

An MoD spokeswoman said: “The UK is deeply concerned by the ongoing conflict and humanitarian crisis in Yemen. We fully support the peace

process led by the UN Special Envoy and urge the parties to engage constructively with this process.

“A political settlement is the only way to bring long-term stability to Yemen and to address the worsening humanitarian crisis.”

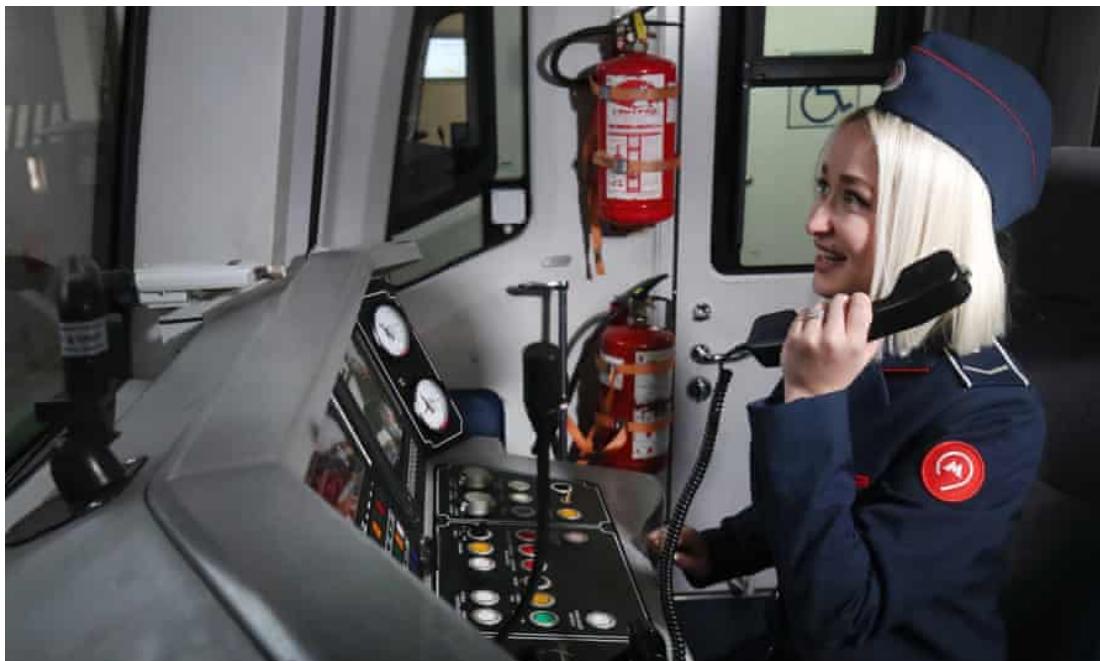
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Russia](#)

Moscow metro hires first female train drivers in modern history

Role of train operator removed from government's register of jobs deemed harmful to women's health



A female train driver uses the phone inside the cab of a train in the maintenance depot on Line 4 (Filyovskaya Line) of the Moscow metro.
Photograph: Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS

A female train driver uses the phone inside the cab of a train in the maintenance depot on Line 4 (Filyovskaya Line) of the Moscow metro.
Photograph: Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS

Agence France-Presse in Moscow

Sun 3 Jan 2021 13.02 EST

The [Moscow metro](#) has hired female drivers for the first time in its recent history, following changes in Russian legislation prohibiting women from many professions.

The Russian capital's transport system, which oversees the sprawling metro network, said in a statement that "the first female electric train drivers in modern history started working for the Moscow metro."

Built in the Soviet era as a communist showpiece, the metro's trains were historically operated by men because the work was listed on the government's register of jobs deemed harmful to women's health.



Barbie dolls in Moscow metro-branded boxes bearing the message 'You can be anything you want to be'. Photograph: Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS

The ban on access for women to many professions was widely criticised and a labour ministry decree in September last year cut the number of exclusively male professions from 456 to about 100.

The justification that driving metro trains was dangerous because it meant being underground for long periods came under fire because the metro also employs women as cleaners, cashiers and escalator monitors.



Female train drivers pose for a group photograph in the maintenance depot on Line 4 (Filyovskaya Line) of the Moscow metro. Photograph: Vyacheslav Prokofyev/TASS

The Moscow transport department said that, because of the automation of mechanical processes, operating trains was no longer “associated with heavy physical exertion”.

The previous register was approved in 2000 and banned women from mining and metalworking jobs, but also from positions such as bus driver, sailor, parachutist, auto mechanic, and even maker of wind instruments. The new register opens many of these roles to females.

Russian Railways, the country’s railway monopoly, previously said it would also begin employing female train drivers in 2021.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jan/03/moscow-metro-hires-first-female-train-drivers-in-modern-history>

2021.01.04 - Climate crisis

- [The world in 2021 How global politics will change this year](#)
- [Child labour, toxic leaks The price we could pay for a greener future](#)

[The ObserverWorld news](#)

The world in 2021 – how global politics will change this year



From top left, Bobi Wine supporters in Uganda; Israeli forces disperse Palestinians in Gaza with teargas; Jill Biden with president elect Joe; a fire blazes near Canberra, Australia. Photograph: AP and Getty Images

From top left, Bobi Wine supporters in Uganda; Israeli forces disperse Palestinians in Gaza with teargas; Jill Biden with president elect Joe; a fire blazes near Canberra, Australia. Photograph: AP and Getty Images

Donald Trump's departure will alter the face of geopolitics. The climate crisis and Covid response will affect all nations – while others face very particular challenges. [Observer](#) correspondents examine the 12 months ahead

[Emma Graham-Harrison](#), [Hannah Ellis-Petersen](#), [David Smith](#), [Helen Davidson](#), [Jon Henley](#), [Jason Burke](#), [Andrew Roth](#), [Oliver Holmes](#), [Tom Phillips](#) and [Graham Readfearn](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 06.00 EST

A potent mix of hope and fear accompanies the start of 2021 in most of the world. Scientists have created several vaccines for a disease that didn't even have a name this time last year. But many countries, including the UK and the US, are still stumbling through the deadliest period of the pandemic.

The shadow of Covid will not begin to lift, even in richer countries, for months. Britain was the first to approve a vaccine and has secured extensive supplies, yet Boris Johnson's suggestion that life might be returning to normal by Easter is widely seen as optimistic. Other countries, particularly in the south, face a long wait to get vaccines, and help paying for them. The rebuilding of economies shattered by Covid everywhere will be slow; even countries that managed to contain it have taken a hit, from Vietnam to New Zealand.

But when the immediate threat is over, the world will face other major challenges that in a normal year would have dominated the headlines. Perhaps most urgent – though not always seen as such by politicians – is the climate crisis. Wildfires and extreme weather have focused attention on the costs of a warming world, and the narrowing window to cut emissions and prevent catastrophic global heating.

In November, world leaders are due to meet in Glasgow for a key summit. As it was delayed for a year because of the pandemic, there is mounting pressure for them to agree significant new steps.

Greener growth is a priority for new US president Joe Biden, once he has met his first campaign promise to defeat Covid. His ability to influence this and other issues will be determined in no small part by [special elections](#) for Georgia's two Senate seats on 5 January. Control of the Senate hinges on the results. Biden must also consider how to rebuild his country's reputation abroad, after Donald Trump's aggressive "America First" project saw him retreat from international obligations and attack multilateral institutions such as Nato. Ties with Beijing, which have deteriorated rapidly under Trump, are also likely to be a particular focus.

After moving quickly to contain coronavirus, [China](#) has returned to growth already, and a trade deal with the EU in late December is a reminder of how attractive its economy remains to global investors. But there is still

resentment in many countries over China's handling of the earliest days of the pandemic and an apparent reluctance to allow an independent international investigation into the origins of Covid-19.

The country's communist leadership has also come under increased scrutiny over human rights abuses, from a sweeping security law used to [crush Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement](#), to internment camps for Muslim minorities in far western Xinjiang province.

By the end of his term Trump had upended decades of policy, taking a hard line against Beijing on trade and diplomatic issues, including bolstering military and political support for Taiwan. Biden is expected to seek a less confrontational approach.

With Trump gone, 2021 will also see tests for other populist strongmen. Israel's Benjamin Netanyahu will face his fourth general election in two years while corruption cases continue. Brazil's Jair Bolsonaro heads into the third of a four-year term, but as pandemic payouts come to an end, his popularity could take a nosedive. Below, our correspondents around the world take a look in more detail at what 2021 may hold. **Emma Graham-Harrison**

United States: a return to reality?



Joe Biden has made tackling coronavirus his top priority. Photograph: Mark Makela/Getty Images

Joe Biden faces the most daunting, overflowing inbox of any new US president since the second world war when he takes office on 20 January.

The coronavirus pandemic has killed more than 346,000 Americans. The economy is struggling with unemployment at 6.7% and thousands queueing at food banks. Demands for racial equity and justice are more urgent. Russia is suspected of the [biggest ever cyber-attack on the US government](#). America is divided, its fragile democracy in need of repair. And the climate crisis cries out for leadership.

Biden, at 78 the oldest US president ever elected, has made it clear that taming Covid-19 is the No 1 priority. America, reeling from a historic failure of leadership by Donald Trump, has 4% of the world's population but 19% of the world's deaths and more than 100,000 people in hospital. Biden recently warned that the "darkest days" in the battle against the pandemic "are ahead of us, not behind us".

The former vice-president has promised to sign an executive order on the day he is sworn in to require people to wear masks on buses and trains crossing state lines and in federal government buildings. He also aims to

reopen most schools in his first 100 days. And he has set a target of 100 million vaccinations over the same period.

But among Biden's challenges is to win over those fearful that the vaccine is unsafe, as well as conspiracy theorists determined to sow distrust in it. Indeed, America's disinformation pandemic may prove even more contagious and stubborn than the coronavirus if a certain former president continues to tweet from the sidelines, and if rightwing media outlets continue to amplify him.

In this scenario, what began as "alternative facts" at the start of the Trump administration could develop into "alternative realities" under Biden, fuelling hyperpartisanship in Washington and rendering the country almost ungovernable.

David Smith

Europe: treading carefully



Angela Merkel's departure will dominate German politics this year.
Photograph: Thomas Imo/Photothek via Getty Images

With Brexit done and dusted largely to the EU's satisfaction, Covid vaccination under way and a more amicable – and predictable – US

president in the White House, 2021 should by rights be an easier year for [Europe](#).

But its own internal difficulties, along with the continuation of global geopolitical developments that long predate the crises of 2020, seem likely to make this year, too, a tricky one for the bloc to negotiate.

The divide between many western member states and the governments of Poland and Hungary continues to widen, with 2020's row over [Brussels's attempts to tie the EU budget to respect for the rule of law](#) laying bare deep-seated cultural differences on core European issues such as immigration and liberal values.

Meanwhile, Germany, along with France the EU's economic and political powerhouse, risks being preoccupied for much of the coming year by the [departure of Angela Merkel](#) and the choice of her successor as chancellor, with elections due in September and possibly months of coalition talks thereafter.

The Netherlands, an increasingly influential EU player particularly following the UK's departure, also has parliamentary elections in 2021. In both countries, the Eurosceptic far right – effectively sidelined by the coronavirus pandemic for much of 2020 – could play a significant role as economic crisis replaces health crisis. Neither Germany's AfD or Geert Wilders's Party for Freedom look likely to end up in government – but they could well sway the policies of more mainstream rivals seeking to capture far-right votes, potentially influencing future dynamics in Brussels.

Looking abroad, relations with two increasingly prickly near-neighbours, [Russia](#) and Turkey, do not look set to get any easier either, with neither Vladimir Putin nor Recep Tayyip Erdogan looking to soften their anti-EU stance. And with a more integrated European foreign policy – despite much talk of “strategic European autonomy” – still some way off, the geopolitical rivalry between the US and China will force Europe to tread a delicate path between principle and self-interest.

Add to that the need – in the aftermath of a pandemic – to take unpopular steps to tackle the climate crisis; a disputed drive for a common European

defence and security policy; and growing transatlantic tensions over the EU's plans to curb the excesses of the US tech giants, and 2021 looks, for Europe, not much easier than 2020. **Jon Henley**

Africa: new voices



Ugandan presidential challenger Bobi Wine and his daughter Subi at his home in Kampala. Photograph: Sumy Sadurni/AFP/Getty Images

From the very first weeks, 2021 in Africa is going to be a year of intense politics and noisy protests as new voices of the young and dissatisfied across the continent fight to be heard, new leaders seek to assert themselves and older ones try to hang on to power.

There are huge problems – the devastating impact of Covid on communities and economies, growing insecurity in many regions, and environmental crises – and big questions are being asked by hundreds of millions of young people about their futures.

Many analysts saw 2020 as a year when democracy suffered, with incumbents in countries from [Tanzania](#) to Guinea using a mixture of the security services, populist sloganeering and new laws to muzzle dissent.

This year the same tactics may finally fail to silence vocal opposition groups – or may usher in a new period of repression.

Later this month, a presidential election in Uganda will pit a 76-year-old veteran politician against a 38-year-old former reggae singer. Most analysts expect Yoweri Museveni, who has been in power since 1986, to win against the charismatic Bobi Wine, but, with [dozens already dead after police shot opposition supporters](#) and any number of tricks used to give the president a crushing advantage, there will be profound questions over the legitimacy of any victory.

Wine draws his support from the young and the urban – two of the fastest-growing constituencies everywhere in Africa – and represents a new generation of leaders calling for an end to endless elections won by ruling parties or leaders, corruption and patronage politics.

Later in the year, Ethiopia is likely to go to the polls to elect a new parliament. Here, in the continent's second-most populous state, there is a different dynamic. Prime minister Abiy Ahmed represents that new generation of forward-looking leaders. The 44-year-old Nobel prize winner spearheaded the push to sideline the ageing rulers who had been in charge for 30 years and forced through reforms. But in November Abiy launched a [bloody military campaign](#) against the hardline remainder who resisted his efforts to remake the nation. Will the postponed parliamentary elections reinforce his reforming zeal? Or reinforce what critics say are his authoritarian tendencies? The coming year will tell us. **Jason Burke**

China: back in the game



People wearing face masks at a Beijing ceremony to mark the 71st anniversary of the founding of People's Republic of China in October.
Photograph: Carlos García Rawlins/Reuters

China starts the year on a social and economic rebound from the virus outbreak, but with drastically poorer international relationships, and a global community that is far less reluctant to act against it. Last year began badly, with Beijing's attempts to cover up the coronavirus outbreak causing reputational damage which wasn't fixed by later attempts to rebuild bridges with masks, PPE, and [vaccines](#). The World Health Organization is preparing to send an investigative team to Wuhan early in 2021, urged by countries like Australia [to be “robust” in its inquiries](#).

Mounting evidence suggests the government will continue with its authoritarian moves on ethnic minorities in Xinjiang and Tibet, and its expansionist activities in border areas. Huge numbers of people are [expected to leave Hong Kong](#) for resettlement or asylum in the UK, Europe, Australia, and nearby Taiwan, where many have already fled. A dozen who were caught attempting to flee went on trial last month.

Regional neighbours will watch the continuing military buildup and [threats to disputed islands](#) in the South China Sea and to Taiwan. Further afield, there has been no resolution of diplomatic and trade disputes with [Australia](#),

the UK, Canada, and the US. Biden promises to remain tough on China, albeit without the unpredictable and publicly hostile diplomacy of Trump, but there is no sense of China backing down, even in the face of [sanctions](#) and international opprobrium.

Domestically, China has ambitious emissions goals to work on, and will set its agenda with the adoption of its 14th five-year plan in the spring. Culture-shaping cases will roll on, including a reckoning with [China's #MeToo movement](#), and the [reining in of Alibaba's Jack Ma](#), who dared to become powerful outside the party system. **Helen Davidson**

Israel: Bibi to the rescue?



A Palestinian demonstrator hurls stones at Israeli troops during a protest against Jewish settlements. Photograph: Mohamad Torokman/Reuters

Israel is [set to hold its fourth general election](#) in the space of two years as a protracted political crisis barrels into 2021.

Despite repeated attempts, parliamentarians have been unable to form stable governments, in large part due to the loathing, distrust, but also glorification of one man: Benjamin Netanyahu.

The 71-year-old prime minister, who has dominated Israeli politics since the mid-1990s, has managed to repeatedly block rivals from taking his seat.

Now, with Israel's traditional opposition having [largely been obliterated](#), Netanyahu faces what could be an even more perilous threat from a group of former allies who broadly share his nationalist, rightwing ideology.

[Naftali Bennett](#), a far-right former leader in the Israeli settler movement who has worked in Netanyahu-led governments, heads the Yamina party and seeks to become the next prime minister. Meanwhile, Netanyahu's former protege, Gideon Saar, broke ranks last month to create the New Hope party.

Avigdor Lieberman, once a lieutenant of Netanyahu and infamous for [his anti-Arab views](#), is also seeking to dethrone the Israeli leader, known locally as "King Bibi".

What seems increasingly certain is that whoever leads Israel's next government will continue to take a hard line on the continuing occupation. While a new US administration offers the prospect of renewed negotiations, few predict a significant change in the status quo.

Polls show Netanyahu's Likud party could still emerge as the largest faction in parliament, and with the country of 9 million speeding ahead with mass vaccinations, the prime minister hopes by the time of the election in March he will be seen as the nation's saviour.

However, his reputation could take a further dent in February, when witnesses are due to give testimony in his corruption trial. While Netanyahu denies the charges, he [faces three separate cases, which include accusations of bribery and fraud](#). **Oliver Holmes**

Latin America: pivotal moments



Jair Bolsonaro has so far avoided domestic criticism of his handling of the Covid crisis. Photograph: Evaristo Sa/AFP/Getty Images

Latin America's most polarising ruler, the Brazilian president Jair Bolsonaro, faces a crunch year in 2021 – the third of his four-year term – and will do so without the support of his most important foreign ally, Donald Trump.

The far-right renegade has so far managed to dodge responsibility for [Brazil's dire response to the Covid-19 epidemic](#), which has killed more than 195,000 Brazilians, while also shaking off a succession of scandals involving his family.

Polls show Bolsonaro still enjoys the approval of about 37% of the electorate – widely attributed to emergency coronavirus payments to tens of millions of citizens. But those payments cease in January, with many observers convinced that severe economic, political and social turbulence lies ahead, as public anger swells.

“The pandemic is genuinely coming to an end,” Bolsonaro claimed before Christmas, as the number of coronavirus infections and hospital admissions again soared. The president’s problems may only be beginning.

Venezuela's [humanitarian and economic crisis](#) will also enter a new chapter in 2021, as Joe Biden enters the White House and turns away from Trump's "maximum pressure" campaign. Venezuela's authoritarian leader, Nicolás Maduro, has resisted that two-year crusade and Biden is certain to seek new, less confrontational solutions for what advisers reportedly consider his main diplomatic challenge in the western hemisphere.

Quite what those solutions might be remains unclear – although negotiating with Hugo Chávez's successor to secure free and fair elections appears to be the plan.

In the short term, the historic exodus of impoverished Venezuelan citizens – which has already robbed the South American country of more than 5 million people – will continue, as the coronavirus crisis pushes [Venezuela](#) deeper into hunger and deprivation. For now, Maduro seems firmly in control, his leadership apparently strengthened by the botched effort to unseat him. But in a country as fractured and volatile as [Venezuela](#), perhaps not even he would want to predict where his year might end. **Tom Phillips**

India: Modi marches on



Women, including widows and relatives of farmers believed to have killed themselves over debt, protest against farm bills passed by India's parliament,

at Tikri border near Delhi. Photograph: Anushree Fadnavis/Reuters

Indian prime minister Narendra Modi is going into 2021 without resolving what many are describing as his biggest political challenge yet: the farmers' [protests](#), in which thousands have spent weeks camping on roads around Delhi, demanding that new agricultural laws be repealed. Discussions between farmers and Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata party (BJP) are in deadlock at present, but they are nonetheless the first time that a civilian backlash has brought the government to the negotiating table.

Yet even with agricultural turmoil, Modi's popularity rating remains touchably high, consistently staying above 70%, paving the way for his government to continue the implementation of its Hindu nationalist agenda with increasing fervour in 2021, and to begin the campaign for a 2024 election victory.

Violence against Muslims, carried out by local hardline Hindu nationalist groups, continues to rise; just a few days before the new year, a mosque in the state of Madhya Pradesh was vandalised by a rightwing mob. With India's main opposition party, Indian National Congress, perceived as weak, rudderless, and divided by infighting, there remains little to get in the way of Modi's Hindu nationalist agenda permanently reshaping [India](#).

The pandemic allowed Modi's government to tighten its authoritarian grip, in particular through the arrests and harassment of government critics and activists, and this crackdown on civil society is expected to continue, if not escalate, going into 2021.

Of the 154 journalists in India who were arrested, detained or interrogated in the past decade, 40% of these instances happened in 2020. Many of the hundreds of activists and journalists arrested in 2020 under the guise of draconian anti-terror laws are still languishing behind bars, denied bail.

However, the greatest immediate looming disaster for India this year is likely to be an economic one. India was the Asian economy worst affected by Covid-19, pushing the country into its first recession. Almost 50% of the country reported a drop in income and it is estimated that up to 400 million people could be pushed back into poverty. **Hannah Ellis-Petersen**

Russia: freezing out opposition



Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny must choose between exile and jail if he returns to the country. Photograph: Dimitar Dilkoff/AFP

This year will bring a standoff between Vladimir Putin and the opposition leader Alexei Navalny, as the government seeks to keep Navalny out of the country [by threatening him with years in prison](#) should he return. Navalny has been in Europe since August recuperating from being poisoned by Russia's FSB security service. Putin is likely to be keen to punish Navalny for embarrassing revelations about the FSB hit squad, including a taped confirmation from one of the agents obtained by Navalny himself. In the final days of 2020, Russia's investigative committee accused the opposition politician of fraud, effectively giving him the choice of remaining in exile or returning to a prison sentence.

Online investigations have been one of the few cracks in Putin's control over internal politics in Russia. Investigative reports from Proekt, a new online outlet, suggested that Putin had a secret child with a lover and had been secretly working from Sochi in a room built to resemble his Moscow office. Another outlet, iStories, claimed Putin's former son-in-law had [bought shares worth \\$380m](#) for just \$100 shortly after he married Putin's daughter. Now the government is targeting those kinds of reports and the journalists

behind them. In late December, the Duma quickly passed new laws that would let regulators block YouTube and other foreign social media and punish media who made “slanderous” comments, including accusations of major crimes like embezzlement.

The effects of global climate change wreaked havoc on Russia’s Siberian and Arctic regions last year, as rising temperatures sparked forest fires, caused crop failures, and even played a role in the [largest diesel spill in Arctic history](#). Temperatures are rising more quickly in these regions than elsewhere on Earth and the potential for tragedy is clear. In June, the remote town of [Verkhoyansk](#) recorded temperatures of 38C, the highest ever recorded within the Arctic Circle.

Sea ice failed to re-form until late in the year in the Laptev Sea, where scientists believe that frozen methane deposits are being released that could speed further warming. In the same year, shipping through Russia’s Northern Sea Route, which knocks weeks off travel from northern Europe to Asia, hit record levels because of the lack of ice. The impact of climate change on this delicate region is no longer remote: it has become an urgent problem for Moscow and millions of Russians. **Andrew Roth**

Australia: feeling the heat



Firefighters try to contain a blaze in New South Wales last February.
Photograph: Sean Davey/EPA

Australia has a split personality, selling itself as a land of beaches, coral reefs and quirky marsupials while driving its major export industries of coal, liquid natural gas and iron ore. But that cognitive dissonance is starting to show. In 2021, Australia will have China and the climate crisis on its mind.

The country will have to [reassess diplomatic relations](#) with its biggest trading partner, Beijing, which has banned or laid tariffs on exports including coal, barley, wine, timber, beef and seafood. About 40% of Australia's foreign trade is with China.

Tensions have become ever tighter as Australia blocked several Chinese business dealings and angered Beijing with a new defence pact with Japan. PM Scott Morrison's call for an investigation into the origins of the coronavirus, whether reasonable or not, further soured relations.

But what to do about coal? Australia sold A\$13.7bn (£7.7bn) of the stuff to China in 2019, but now Beijing is saying no. Global investors are also saying no to the climate-warming fossil fuel.

Communities and [wildlife are still recovering](#) from the wildfires of late 2019 and early 2020 that roared after the country's hottest and driest year on record.

Australia will come under further pressure domestically and internationally to bring in effective climate policies, especially a mid-century net-zero emissions target which the Conservative-Liberal coalition government has so far resisted.

Without clear signs of ambition, Australia risks carrying a reputation as a fossil-fuel exporter and international climate change pariah to the Glasgow climate talks.

Meanwhile the effects of climate heating continue to threaten the country. Will the Great Barrier Reef escape coral bleaching? Will Australia be

burning again – literally or figuratively – as its diplomats head to Glasgow? **Graham Readfearn**

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The Observer](#)[Green economy](#)

Child labour, toxic leaks: the price we could pay for a greener future



Digging for cobalt in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 60% of the world's supply is found. Miners often breathe in cobalt-laden dust, which can prove fatal. Photograph: Sebastian Meyer/Corbis via Getty Images

Digging for cobalt in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where 60% of the world's supply is found. Miners often breathe in cobalt-laden dust, which can prove fatal. Photograph: Sebastian Meyer/Corbis via Getty Images

Our mission to create cleaner living using natural resources could itself cause widespread environmental harm, scientists now warn

[Robin McKie](#) Science Editor

Sun 3 Jan 2021 03.15 EST

The battle to stave off Earth's looming climate crisis is driving engineers to develop hosts of new green technologies. [Wind and solar plants](#) are set to replace coal and gas power stations, while electric cars oust petrol and diesel

vehicles from our roads. Slowly our dependance on fossil fuels is set to diminish and so ease [global heating](#).

But scientists warn there will be an environmental price to pay for this drive to create a world powered by green technology. Prospecting for the materials to construct these devices, then mining them, could have very serious ecological consequences and major impacts on biodiversity, they say.

“The move towards net zero carbon emissions is going to create new stresses on our planet, at least in the short term,” said Prof Richard Herrington, head of earth sciences at the Natural History Museum, London. “We are going to have to learn how to consider profit and loss with regard to ecosystems just as we do now when we are considering economic issues.”

Metals such as lithium and cobalt provide examples of the awkward issues that lie ahead, said Herrington. Both elements are needed to make lightweight rechargeable batteries for [electric cars](#) and for storing power from wind and solar plants. Their production is likely to increase significantly over the next decade – and that could cause serious ecological problems.

In the case of cobalt, 60% of the world’s supply comes from the Democratic Republic of the Congo where large numbers of unregulated mines [use children as young as seven](#) as miners. There they breathe in cobalt-laden dust that can cause fatal lung ailments while working tunnels that are liable to collapse.



Miners in the DRC pull up a bag of cobalt – vital for the production of rechargeable batteries. Photograph: Sebastian Meyer/Corbis/Getty Images

“Men, women and children are working without even the most basic protective equipment such as gloves and face masks,” said Mark Dummett of Amnesty International, which has investigated the cobalt-mining crisis in DRC. “In one village we visited, people showed us how the water in the local stream that they drank was contaminated by the discharge of waste from a mineral processing plant.”

Then there is the issue of lithium mining. World production is set to soar over the next decade. Yet mining is linked to all sorts of environmental headaches. In the so-called Lithium Triangle of South America – made up of Chile, Argentina and Bolivia – vast quantities of water are pumped from underground sources to help extract lithium from ores, and this has been linked to the lowering of ground water levels and the spread of deserts. Similarly in Tibet, a toxic chemical leak from the Ganzizhou Rongda Lithium mine poisoned the local Lichu river in 2016 and triggered widespread protests in the region.

Nor will these ecological problems be confined to specialist metals, analysts have pointed out. They say that rising demands for traditional materials such as cement – for building hydro-electric dams – or for copper, to provide

cables to link wind and solar farms to cities and to build electric cars, could also cause widespread environmental damage unless care is taken.

Our growing appetite for copper provides a striking illustration of the issues. Thousands of tonnes are needed to create wind or solar power devices while electric vehicles use two or three times more copper than those powered by a diesel or petrol engine. As a result, the world's appetite for copper is likely to jump by more than 300% by 2050, according to one recent report.

"You need tens of kilograms more copper for an electric car compared with one with a petrol engine," said Herrington. "That means, if you want to turn all the UK's 31m cars into electric vehicles you would require about 12% of the world's entire copper output – just for Britain. That is an unrealistic demand, given that we are hoping to be making electric cars only within a decade."

Harrington said it was inevitable that there would be an expansion in mining and in providing energy for refining ores which, combined, would have real environmental impacts. "We are going to have to do that in a way that creates profits but also serves people and the planet."



A Volkswagen ID.3, part of the company's efforts to break into the burgeoning electric car market. Photograph: Sean Gallup/Getty Images

In addition to these issues, the proposed expansion of nuclear power in the UK – to satisfy demand no longer met by coal or gas plants – is likely to lead to the creation of increased amounts of nuclear waste. However, the UK still has no method for safely storing nuclear waste underground and relies on keeping highly radioactive remnants from power plant operations above ground. These stores may have to be expanded significantly in future.

One solution put forward to these green technology problems would be to limit the exploitation of resources on land and turn instead to the sea to gather the materials we need. Several promising marine sources have been pinpointed, with the most attention focusing on metal nodules which litter some parts of the ocean floor. These potato-sized globs of mineral are rich in copper, cobalt, manganese and other metals. According to the International Seabed Authority, some deposits contain millions of tonnes of cobalt, copper and manganese.

[David Attenborough calls for ban on 'devastating' deep sea mining](#)
[Read more](#)

As a result, several organisations are now surveying the most promising of these deposits, in particular the Clarion-Clipperton Zone in international waters in the Pacific Ocean. These could be hoovered up using robot submersibles that would criss-cross the 4.5m sq km that make up the zone.

However, recent research by marine scientists have also revealed that despite the Clarion-Clipperton Zone's depth – it lies between 4,000 and 5,500 metres below the surface – the ocean floor there is also rich in sea-life. One survey, in 2017, found more than 30 species new to science living on the zone's abyssal plain, most of them xenophyophores – considered the world's largest living single-celled organisms.

Hoovering up the nodules could devastate these life forms, marine scientists have warned. “At present, we still don't have enough data about the sea floor to be sure what the impact would be of mining there,” said Adrian Glover, a deep-sea ecology researcher at the Natural History Museum.

“However, when we do, it's going to be a big question for society. If these are environments rich in biodiversity that could be easily damaged, will it be

better or worse to exploit them compared with exploiting our [rainforests](#) on land? That could be a very difficult issue to resolve.”

- This article was amended on 4 January 2021 because an earlier version referred to ‘abysmal plain’ when abyssal plain was the intended reference.
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.04 - Culture

- [TV tonight Dramatic twists abound in forensics crime drama](#)
- [Book of the day Ghost Town by Jeff Young review – a book of beauty and longing](#)
- [The Great New Year Bake Off review Seasonal special gives old favourites time to shine](#)
- [Hope springs Why we might get two years' worth of quality films in 2021](#)
- [The Prophets by Robert Jones Jr review Outstanding debut](#)
- [Sunset Boulevard review Hollywood musical is milder than Wilder](#)

[TV tonight](#)[Television & radio](#)

TV tonight: dramatic twists abound in forensics crime drama



Molly Windsor as Emma in *Traces*. Photograph: Vishal Sharma/BBC/UKTV
Molly Windsor as Emma in *Traces*. Photograph: Vishal Sharma/BBC/UKTV

Molly Windsor goes on the hunt for her mother's killer in *Traces*. Plus: Rick Stein indulges his passion for Cornwall. Here's what to watch this evening

[Ammar Kalia](#), [Ellen E Jones](#), [Graeme Virtue](#), [Jack Seale](#) and [Paul Howlett](#)
Mon 4 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Traces

9pm, BBC One

The dramatic twists abound in this series starring Molly Windsor as forensics student Emma. She soon discovers that the fictional case study she is learning about refers to her own mother, who was murdered when Emma was seven and whose killer was never found. We open on the revelation,

which prompts her to reconnect with her estranged father, Drew (John Gordon Sinclair), while questioning her course tutors Sarah Gordon (Laura Fraser) and Kathy Torrence (Jennifer Spence) on their unsettling choice of topic. **Ammar Kalia**

Rick Stein's Cornwall

6.30pm, BBC Two

It's a very special Celtic corner of the British isles, and restauranteur Rick Stein knows it. His passion for Cornwall is rooted in personal history, which we get a sense of at the family home at Trevose Head, and as he recreates his mother's apple charlotte pudding with spoils from a heritage orchard. **Ellen E Jones**

24 Hours in Police Custody

9pm, Channel 4

The ticking-clock cop doc returns for a two-parter that seems like a true-crime podcast waiting to happen: a Cambridgeshire woman is accused of trawling dating sites to find someone to kill her ex-husband. DS Mike Barnshaw is tasked with untangling what seems like a black widow web. **Graeme Virtue**

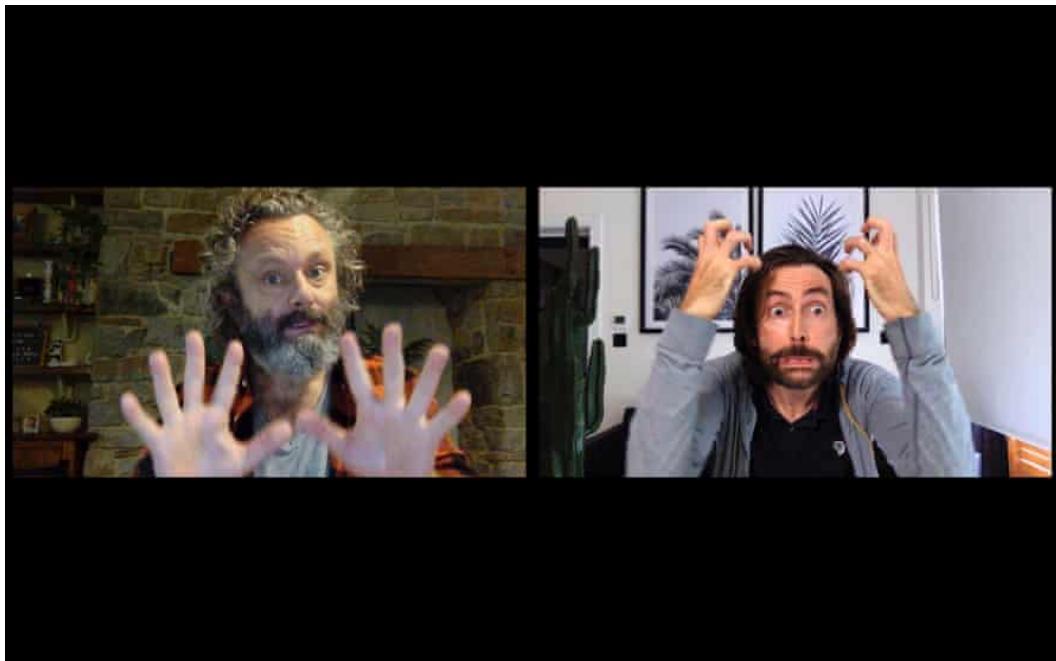
The Cabins

9pm, ITV2

This social bubble-friendly new dating show from ITV2 has all the makings of a horror movie: two singletons trapped in a remote winter cabin for 24 hours. Let's hope there is more chemistry than chaos though as after their lock-in, the couples decide whether they want to remain together for longer or be sent straight home. **AK**

Staged

9.45pm, BBC One



David Tennant and Michael Sheen in *Staged*. Photograph: BBC/Staged Films Ltd

David Tennant and Michael Sheen return for a second season of their lockdown, Zoom-themed comedy. Playing larger than life versions of themselves over video call, this forthcoming season will see Tennant and Sheen negotiating with their haphazard American agent Tom (*Parks and Recreation*'s Ben Schwartz). **AK**

The Man Who Fell From the Sky

10pm, Channel 4

Desperate migrants stowing in aeroplane landing gear usually ends in tragedy – as in 2015 when a frozen, crushed body hit the ground in south-west London. But there was a second man who survived. Film-maker Richard Bentley's search for him prompts a long political and spiritual journey. **Jack Seale**

Film choice



Little Men.

Little Men (Ira Sachs, 2016) 2.20am, Film4

This intimate, humane drama from Love Is Strange director Ira Sachs centres on the friendship of adolescents Jake (Theo Taplitz) and Tony (Michael Barbieri). It's a beautiful thing, until Jake's parents (Greg Kinnear, Jennifer Ehle) fall out with Tony's mother (Paulina Garcia) over a rent hike.

Paul Howlett

Today's sport

Cricket: South Africa v Sri Lanka Second day of the second test in the series. **7.55am, Sky Sports Cricket**

Premier League football: Southampton v Liverpool Top-flight clash. **7pm, Sky Sports Main Event**

German football: Fortuna Dusseldorf v SC Paderborn Second-tier clash from Merkur Spiel Arena **7.30pm, BT Sport 1**

- This article was amended on 5 January 2021 to correct a photo credit provided by the BBC. The photo of Molly Windsor in Traces was taken by Vishal Sharma, not Des Willie as originally stated.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2021/jan/04/tv-tonight-dramatic-twists-abound-in-forensics-drama>

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Book of the dayAutobiography and memoir

Ghost Town by Jeff Young review – a book of beauty and longing



A man on the Mersey ferry in 1954 with the Liver Building in the background. Photograph: Bert Hardy/Getty Images

A man on the Mersey ferry in 1954 with the Liver Building in the background. Photograph: Bert Hardy/Getty Images

The lecturer and playwright revisits the Liverpool streets of his youth in this Costa prize-shortlisted meditation on loss

[Anthony Quinn](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Retracing his past through the labyrinth of old Liverpool, Jeff Young has conjured a book of plangent beauty and longing. *Ghost Town* is in essence a memoir, but within its short span it contains multitudes: a meditation on loss, a family album, an ode to the power of reading, a loving memorial to a city, and a long goodbye. Young is a playwright-essayist-lecturer of local renown whose work deserves national recognition and may get it: the book was recently shortlisted for the [Costa biography award](#).

Born in the late 1950s, the author is just old enough to remember the terraced streets of his Everton neighbourhood before it was razed to the ground. He can still sense the ghosts – of his blind grandfather, of his parents, of his sister Val – as he takes long, obsessive walks around a city that has been disappearing all his life. It's partly the Liverpool of Terence Davies's cine-memoir *Distant Voices, Still Lives*, a place of tenderness and togetherness but also of violence and trauma: a stay in a grim fever hospital as an eight-year-old comes back to trouble him. An “invisible boy” who hated school, Young found a refuge, a whole world, in books, none more formative than *A Kestrel for a Knave*. Inspired by Billy Casper with his hawk, he discovers through reading a spirit of creativity that is close to love. Unlike Billy, he will transcend his “scrapheap education” and thrive.

Young doesn't just absorb books, he inhabits them and identifies his own life in their pages

Doubles, alter egos, shadow selves throng this narrative. Young doesn't just absorb books, he inhabits them and identifies his own life in their pages. When he starts as a filing clerk in a council office it coincides with his reading of Kafka, and suddenly he becomes as fearful as Josef K of being picked on and punished (he didn't know at the time that in a Liverpool council office nobody could care less). Other writers and artists animate the city before he knew it, “a kaleidoscope of muses” such as De Quincey and Rimbaud, Melville, *Gerard Manley Hopkins* and *Malcolm Lowry*. Later, *Bob Dylan is photographed* among kids on a cobbled dock street when he plays Liverpool in 1966.

The author haunts the places where beloved landmarks have disappeared, recent ones such as the old Futurist cinema on Lime Street, which so moves him that he sets a play there, or the grand Victorian market, “a place you might have found in Barcelona or Athens”, torn down in the 1960s and replaced with the concrete Alcatraz of a shopping precinct. The sepia tones of melancholy that dominate give way here to something strident – a black rage that boils and spits at the planners and property developers who have trashed the city's architectural heritage in favour of a “bogus Futuropolis”. As Young knows, this council-licensed vandalism reverberates. When you obliterate noble buildings and streets you cut people off not only from a sense of beauty, but a sense of belonging. As he wanders about, Young

listens to Mingus's Goodbye Pork Pie Hat, its mournful trudge a complement to his mood, "like the soundtrack to this wounded city".



The derelict Yates's Wine Lodge, where artist Richard Wilson carved a revolving ovoid automaton from the wall. Photograph: Jeff Young

And yet greatness remains. Oriel Chambers and 16 Cook Street (that magical spiral staircase!) are the work of Peter Ellis, an 1860s architect of such vision that the city never allowed him to build again. Young calls him his "hero" and even goes to live in Falkner Square, Ellis's own stamping ground. He also pays a nice tribute to the extraordinary artwork of Richard Wilson, who carved a revolving ovoid automaton from the wall and window of a [derelict Yates's Wine Lodge](#) in Moorfields, a witty and very Liverpudlian wonder that once seen could never be forgotten. There is resilience, there is invention. You just have to know where to look.

To be honest, while reading this book I felt like I might have glimpsed my own ghost, possibly in The Grapes on Mathew Street, or in Philip, Son and Nephew's bookshop, now long gone. You can take the boy out of Liverpool... Jeff Young, like any compulsive elegist, courts the mockery of the realist: "It was all fields round here once." I'm as guilty as he is. [Liverpool](#) does that to you.

- *Klopp: My Liverpool Romance* by Anthony Quinn is published by Faber (£12.99)
 - *Ghost Town: A Liverpool Shadowplay* by Jeff Young is published by Little Toller (£16). To order a copy go to guardianbookshop.com. Delivery charges may apply
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[TV review](#)[The Great British Bake Off](#)

The Great New Year Bake Off review – seasonal special gives old favourites time to shine

Four familiar faces return to troll an overstuffed nation with delicious-looking, butter-heavy sweet treats



Bake for more ... Helena, Henry, Nancy and Rahul. Photograph: Arjun Singh Panam/ Love Productions

Bake for more ... Helena, Henry, Nancy and Rahul. Photograph: Arjun Singh Panam/ Love Productions



[Rebecca Nicholson](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 16.00 EST

Lately, it seems like the Bake Off franchise has been put to substantial use by Channel 4. Since series 11 ended, we've had recaps and festive shows, seemingly by the week. The Great New Year Bake Off (Channel 4), the last of two seasonal specials, brings back Nancy, Rahul, Helena and Henry, all stellar parts of their respective years, to demonstrate that there's plenty of heat in those ovens yet. This is a Now That's What I Call Bake Off special, an opportunity to get the band back together once again.

The Bake Off proved – that's a bread pun, and I believe that having to point it out means it's a successful one – to be a national tonic as the pandemic months dragged on. Everything that made it so eminently watchable, and everything that has given it this seemingly limitless lifespan, felt utterly right in 2020. It was kind, comforting and funny, and it spoke to our growing national appetite for chasing down flour and eggs, and attempting to whip up a cake or a biscuit, if not quite in the shape of the Louvre, then at least as something vaguely edible. It feels appropriate that it should take us into 2021, too.

Traditionally, this time of the new year sees a mea culpa for December's excesses while more puritanical sensibilities surface: no booze, healthier

eating, perhaps even greater numbers of Veganuary participants. So putting a show like this on, full of drinking gags and delicious-looking, butter-dependent sweet treats, is borderline trolling. I will take it, happily. And one of those bao buns, too, thanks.

Nancy's return to the tent after her victory six years ago is a triumph. (Whether it is actually a triumph, I don't know – previews are sent out without the winner of the episode being revealed.) Nancy is one of the few historical contestants with the ability to put Paul Hollywood on the back foot, and she continues to speak with brilliant plainness. She tries to make a bao, or a "bayo", and ends up with what she describes, quite fairly, as steamed pitta breads. When Noel Fielding says he will make tea and asks how many sugars she wants, she shoots back: "What, in a gin and tonic?" After Prue praises her Caribbean-inspired crumble, she fixes Paul with A Look and harrumphs: "What about you?"

Rahul is at the other end of the Bake Off spectrum: still endlessly apologetic, still fond of a story that goes on and on. Rahul is a nuclear scientist, and – as when doctors go on reality TV shows – you always end up secretly hoping for him to do well, and also, not to have to give up the day job. Rahul's enthusiasm for absolutely everything is irresistible. "Such a good invention, isn't it?" he marvels, having learned of the existence of apple corers. After winning his series, you might expect Rahul's nerves to have faded, but he admits that he is more nervous than ever. And they may tease him for his wordiness, but his story about his 21st birthday, involving giant rats and a roof garden in Calcutta, deserves its own hour-long special.

The 21st-birthday cake is an ingenious idea for a showstopper, because it incorporates the best bits of challenges, combining the varying ages of contestants, and thus different reference points, and personal stories. Henry, dry as ever, says he is treating it as his 21st birthday, as he was in lockdown when the real event happened. Helena, whose regular goth-offs with Fielding reach new heights, makes a cake that is half confectionery, half activity centre. It is celebratory, and it has the familiarity of hanging out with old friends.

Matt Lucas has more than settled in to hosting duties. His arrival seemed to signal a slightly higher level of smut than the Sandi Toksvig era allowed for,

though that's not to say I blame him. This episode reaches a peak of innuendo when Nancy is talking to the cameras outside and it begins to rain. "Don't get your fluffy wet," she tells the soundman. Later, the judges are informed that yes, they can eat the balls. Plums, I must inform you, are squeezed. I'm not saying it's big, I'm not saying it's clever, but times are tough, and if we need smut to get us through it, then smut will have to do.

These smaller episodes, featuring four bakers, rather than the packed tent that we are used to, are much more about the personalities than they are about the bakes, and that is fine, too. These bakers represent everything that the Bake Off has to offer. It is less instructional – although I did learn that adding cornflour to the stewed fruit in a crumble will help bind it and make it less sloppy, and that ice-cream tends to be over-flavoured because the ice freezes the taste buds – but that means there is more time for stories involving giant rats and a roof garden in Calcutta.

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[Steve Rose on filmFilm](#)

Hope springs: why we might get two years' worth of quality films in 2021

If everything goes to plan, this year we'll get two awards seasons in one – after a lengthy cinema hiatus, it'll be all feast, no famine



I'll drink to that ... Mads Mikkelsen in *Another Round*. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

I'll drink to that ... Mads Mikkelsen in *Another Round*. Photograph: Landmark Media/Alamy

[Steve Rose](#)

[@steverose7](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

After the [Rocky-level beating](#) the film industry took in 2020, here's a potential silver lining for 2021: we might never have it so good. Especially if we mean quality dramas and exciting new stories – the type of things people complain the movies don't do enough of. Of course, a lot depends on

cinemas reopening and anticipated films living up to the hype but, hey, it's hope!

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One thing we can be sure of: as a result of the Great 2020 Shutdown, we're effectively getting two awards seasons in one year. Traditionally, the cut-off date for awards eligibility is the end of the year, after which the feast of quality releases turns to a famine of duds and rejects.

This year, however, the whole season has been [pushed back two months](#), culminating in the Academy Awards on 25 April. Eligibility deadlines have been extended to the end of February. As a result, the usual Jan/Feb dumping ground won't apply. All feast, no famine. Then, just six months later, assuming things return to normal, we're ramping up for next year's awards, which means the end of 2021 will also be stacked with decent movies.

That's the theory, at least. We've already got a promising batch of buzzed-about titles to look forward to in the coming months: Chloé Zhao's Frances McDormand-starring docu-fiction [Nomadland](#), Regina King's directorial debut [One Night in Miami](#), Indian epic [The White Tiger](#), emotional tour de force [Pieces of a Woman](#), Mads Mikkelsen's drinking drama [Another Round](#), Carey Mulligan thriller [Promising Young Woman](#) (which premiered a whole year ago at Sundance). Later in the year, awards season 2022 contenders could include new movies from heavyweights like Damien Chazelle, Joel Coen, Jane Campion, Guillermo del Toro, Ridley Scott and Paul Thomas Anderson, not to mention long-awaited marquee movies such as [Dune](#) and [West Side Story](#).

If 2020 was good for anything it was sorting the wheat from the chaff – not just at the awards end but across the board. The good stuff we were promised last year we should be getting this year: Wes Anderson's [The French Dispatch](#), Edgar Wright's [Last Night in Soho](#), [Roger Michell's The Duke](#), Joanna Hogg's [The Souvenir: Part II](#), David Lowery's [The Green Knight](#) and indie hits [Minari](#) and [Zola](#). And if [Parasite](#) really did break down

the one-inch barrier of subtitles, there's a backlog of festival-tested international cinema awaiting, too.

There's the separate question of whether these end up in cinemas or on streaming, and whether anyone will have the inclination to see them after such a screen-heavy 2020. And let's not get carried away: this time next year we could well be grousing, like Statler and Waldorf, that they don't make 'em like they used to. But for now let's at least be excited about the slightly greater likelihood of seeing a decent movie at the cinema this year. Surely we've earned it?

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[The ObserverFiction](#)

The Prophets by Robert Jones Jr review – outstanding debut

This unflinching tale, about two men falling in love on a Mississippi plantation, draws its poetry from ancestral voices



Robert Jones Jr: delivers ‘tender, close-up intimacy’. Photograph: Alberto Vargas

Robert Jones Jr: delivers ‘tender, close-up intimacy’. Photograph: Alberto Vargas

[Holly Williams](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 04.00 EST

In a letter to the reader at the start of Robert Jones Jr’s debut novel, he says he was compelled to write the book after hearing voices insisting he ask the question “Did Black queer people exist in the distant past?” and then share the answer: of *course* they did.

The whispering was that of his ancestors, while the voices of [James Baldwin](#) and [Toni Morrison](#), too, seemed to reach out and encourage him from their

writing.

Those two names come up repeatedly in advance publicity for *The Prophets*: the blurb hypes hard that Jones possesses a similar lyricism to those literary giants in his love story between two enslaved men, Isaiah and Samuel, on a plantation in Mississippi.

The Prophets is indeed an outstanding novel, delivering tender, close-up intimacy, but also a great sweep of history. The novel names chapters after books of the Bible, but what really frames it are poetic sections written in the mysterious, eternal voices of seven ancestors, speaking out from the darkness. And while the bulk of the narrative takes place on the plantation, told from multiple characters' perspectives, it is also interwoven with scenes set within a matriarchal African tribe. Their brutal enslavement and transportation to America grimly follows.

This novel is – necessarily – not an easy read. Jones's writing style is lyrical, but he doesn't shy away from the gut-churning horrors of slavery. He writes that *The Prophets* is perhaps more “a witnessing” than a book. It certainly asks that the reader bear witness to things they might rather turn away from – but it is a fine piece of fiction, too.

There are no easy platitudes about how love triumphs over suffering here

Jones has a knack for a proverb-like turn of phrase (grief is “wet in the eyes, trapped on the tongue, broken in the palms”), and his descriptions have a rich, distinctive vividness: backs are “juicy with the marks left by whips and disapproving glances”; wildflowers burst in shades of blue “perfect enough to hurt feelings”. The same layered detailing is applied to the characters’ emotional and spiritual lives – memories and magic, visions and voices thicken their experiences, and make his storytelling ripe and heady.

At times, this can be overdone. There are too many convoluted metaphors tangled in their own imagery. Its lustrousness is his writing’s great strength, but there are still places where less would be more.

Jones is also ambitious in the scope of his storytelling – and he delivers a lavish polyphony of conflicting fears and desires, slipping between the perspectives of a large cast of characters. Different instances of same-sex love thread throughout *The Prophets*, but it is the relationship between Samuel and Isaiah that gives the book its heartbeat, and a little softness amid all the hardship.

There are no easy platitudes about how love triumphs over suffering here, however; suffering suffuses every page. Even in moments of sweetness, there's also a glowering, looming dread. What is remarkable, Jones suggests, is that humans do still love, even when the most terrifying threats hang over them. Even when knowing their oppressors will never allow them a happy ending.

- *The Prophets* by Robert Jones Jr is published by Riverrun (£18.99). To order a copy go to [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com). Delivery charges may apply

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Lockdown cultureTheatre

Sunset Boulevard review – Hollywood musical is milder than Wilder

Available online

Andrew Lloyd Webber's version of the 1950 film is smartly staged by Leicester's Curve, starring Ria Jones and Danny Mac



Devotion and despair ... Ria Jones as Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard* at the Curve, Leicester. Photograph: Marc Brenner

Devotion and despair ... Ria Jones as Norma Desmond in *Sunset Boulevard* at the Curve, Leicester. Photograph: Marc Brenner



[Chris Wiegand](#)

[@ChrisWiegand](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 19.01 EST

When screenwriter Joe Gillis swerves into the driveway of 10086 Sunset Boulevard, he discovers a forgotten mansion with a ghost of a tennis court and an empty pool “where Clara Bow and Fatty Arbuckle must have swum 10,000 midnights ago”. In [Billy Wilder’s 1950 film](#), the house itself is compared to Dickens’s Miss Havisham rather than its once illustrious inhabitant, Norma Desmond, the silent screen queen jilted by an industry in thrall to the talkies. The residence, which ensnares Gillis as he is employed as script doctor for Desmond’s comeback, is both museum and mausoleum for her stardom. It is key to representing how the sun has set on her career.

The 1993 London production of [Andrew Lloyd Webber’s musical](#) based on the film had an elaborately atmospheric mansion design by John Napier. But this concert version, filmed at Leicester’s Curve just before Christmas, unfolds on a spartan circular stage without so much as a gilded divan. Using video projections to evoke the Los Angeles locations, Nikolai Foster’s production instead promotes Curve’s own building to star status: scenes take place backstage, in the balcony, around a 16-piece orchestra, up in the rigs of the fly tower and even underneath the raked seating.



The effect of a sound stage ... Jones and Danny Mac as Joe Gillis.
Photograph: Marc Brenner

This venue, [completed in 2008](#), can't rival old Hollywood for glamour and never manages to evoke the lost world of picture palaces, but some of its more anonymous areas, with accompanying bits of tech and tripod floor lamps, give the effect of a sound stage. If we lose the sense of the mansion's stultifying atmosphere, the approach offers an imaginative alternative to all the static streamed theatre productions we've seen since the pandemic struck. It's a dynamic presentation of a production whose run was cancelled in early December by the region's tier 3 restrictions.

With its motifs of jazz for Gillis and tango for Desmond, Lloyd Webber's score nods to the film's Oscar-winning original by Franz Waxman, and captures the pell-mell buzz of the movie industry and feverish excitement of bit players looking to make it big. His lush, romantic melodies convey Desmond's melancholic fantasies and that mix of nostalgia and hope particular to its New Year's Eve setting, yet the musical never captures the sheer deadpan cynicism of the film. That's not just down to the score. Wilder's film noir casts a long shadow and [Christopher Hampton](#) and Don Black's lyrics can't match the hard-boiled bitterness of William Holden's voiceover narration in the original or its quickfire dialogue (an exception

comes in the reprise of the song Every Movie's a Circus: "They shot my screenplay ... they shot the thing dead").



Tailor-made makeover ... Sunset Boulevard. Photograph: Marc Brenner

"I believe in self-denial," sings Danny Mac as Gillis in Let's Have Lunch, the line both a sardonic take on his cash-strapped status and an acknowledgement of his sense of unfulfillment. But the musical keeps a distance from the movie's more twisted moments – such as Gillis's nightmare vision of himself as a chimp dancing for pennies – and it is only when he gives Hollywood hopeful Betty Schaefer a tour of his palazzo prison that you sense the bile rising in Mac's Gillis. Fans of his [One Night Only tango on Strictly](#) in 2016 will wish he was given more moves. The musical jettisons the queasier aspects of Gillis's relationship with Schaefer, excellently played here by Molly Lynch, and you feel the impossibility of the pair's future together keenly.

As Desmond, Ria Jones – who originated the role at the Sydmonton festival in 1991 – is more eccentric than abrasive, her warmth for Gillis seemingly purer than that of Gloria Swanson's Desmond (all steely glare and clenched teeth) in Wilder's movie. The song New Ways to Dream has the bonus of showing us this Desmond in close-up, with Jones's hands and eyes alike flickering with silent-screen magic.

Foster tells the story with split screens, freewheeling shots and straight-to-camera addresses from Mac and Jones, while Douglas O'Connell's video design overlays the action on stage with street scenes and, less successfully, sections of script and a blizzard of screenwriting buzzwords. Lee Proud deftly choreographs companion routines for Gillis's high-class makeover (featuring a chorus of waistcoated tailors with tape measures) and Desmond's desperate preparations for her comeback (with a cameo for her feted astrologist).

[Andrew Lloyd Webber at 70: how a ruthless perfectionist became Mr Musical](#)
[Read more](#)

The performance that stands out, and manages to capture both the musical's romanticism and the movie's darkness, is Adam Pearce as Max Von Mayerling, Desmond's fiercely protective servant and former husband. Pearce's rumbling baritone reaches an achingly devotional high note as he insists she is still the greatest star of all, even though he is the only one writing her fan letters.

- [Sunset Boulevard is available online until 9 January.](#)
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2021.01.04 - Lifestyle

- [Readers' top tips My travel dream for 2021](#)
- [21 places to go in 2021 The holidays we're dreaming of this year](#)
- [Consumer champions A 'Morrisons' van hit my car – but it turned out to be Ocado](#)
- [Prove me wrong Sci-fi movies leave me empty. Isn't the real world dramatic enough?](#)
- [Jay Rayner Eating out is one of the bright sparks to look forward to this year](#)
- [Dear Mariella I've retired and my sex drive has fallen. I'm letting my wife down](#)
- [Nigel Slater recipes Vegetarian fritters, chips and dips](#)

Readers' travel tips Travel

My travel dream for 2021: top 12 readers' tips



The Ala Archa region of Kyrgyzstan. Photograph: Ferdi Merkx, E-in-Motion/Getty Images

The Ala Archa region of Kyrgyzstan. Photograph: Ferdi Merkx, E-in-Motion/Getty Images

Our tipsters yearn to visit UK coasts, cities and countryside, plus exotic journeys on the Silk Road and a Sahara freight train

- [21 places to go in 2021](#)

Guardian readers

Sun 3 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

Winning tip: A perfect 'stan

Covid willing, we'll be heading to Kyrgyzstan. It's at that perfect point where the infrastructure supports a great travel experience, but it's not become spoiled by tourists. Bishkek is modern and vibrant, and in the

stunning rural areas it's possible to stay with nomads living the traditional life. It's one of the most beautiful countries in the world, with delicious locally sourced food. [Kyrgyz community-based tourism](#) proved an affordable way to experience the life of horse-riding nomads living in yurts, and the money goes into the community itself.

Minnie Martin

Where the map takes us, Wester Ross



Evening sunlight over Achnahaird Bay, Wester Ross.

Photograph: Lorraine Yates/Alamy Stock Photo

The west coast of Scotland is our wild goal. During the neverending house tidy of 2020, we found the Gairloch & Ullapool area OS map and pored over it – a bit of geography home learning for my son, who liked the wriggly contour lines and the consonant-heavy names of the lochs and mountains. We'll take the high road to Gairloch to see orca and minke ([Hebridean Whale Cruises](#), £64 adult, £35 child), stay in a [wooden wigwam at Sands campsite](#) (from £52pp), and walk to the beach humming the Skye boat song.

Nancy Gladstone

Profile

Readers' tips: send a tip for a chance to win a £200 voucher for a Sawdays stay

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Guardian Travel readers' tips

Every week we ask our readers for recommendations from their travels. A selection of tips will be featured online and may appear in print. To enter the latest competition visit the [readers' tips homepage](#)

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Was this helpful?

Thank you for your feedback.

Island dream, Lundy



The MS Oldenburg landing on Lundy. Photograph: Backyard Production/Getty Images

My son, daughter and I have been making lists of where we want to go since the first lockdown. We've booked a few days on Lundy for next August in the hope that it will be safe to travel again by then. It only involves a five-

hour drive to Ilfracombe, Devon, and then a couple of hours on HMS Oldenburg (which for my three-year-old boy will be the holiday made before we even get there). We'll stay in [Castle Cottage](#), in the keep of a castle built by Henry III in 1250. There's nothing to do but explore cliffs, beaches and lighthouses, and look for the crashed bomber plane in the heather. And there's no internet.

Kate Attrill

All a-Twitter for York



An 800-year-old figure of Christ returned to York last year and on display at the Yorkshire Museum. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

I'd love to go to York and visit the Yorkshire Museum as their wonderful [tweets](#) – mainly about odd or mysterious items in their collection – have kept me entertained and brought history alive this year. A pint or two in the city's ancient pubs and a wander home to characterful lodgings would just cap a cultural visit off nicely!

Liz

Mind-Boggling Whitby, North Yorkshire



Boggle Hole YHA near Robin Hood's Bay. Photograph: Ian Bottle/Alamy

Low cost and close to home, a stay with the YHA at Boggle Hole is always a welcome relief. A converted watermill with a reception, bar and cosy sitting room complete with a log fire and leather couches, it's in a pebbled cove overlooking the sea, with wooded cliffs on either side. Go in spring or early autumn and the prices are as low as £29 a night. Walk across the sandy beach to Robin Hoods Bay or over the jagged cliffs to Ravenscar to see the seals.

Safiya El-Gindy

Golden Glasgow



Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow. Photograph: Black Jake/Getty Images

I long for the wide expansiveness of Glasgow boulevards: west-facing, bathed in the golden glow of light glancing off sandstone. I long for the cobbled alleyways, armpit-piled bookshops, curiosity shops crammed with treasure; and also the glitz, glassy, high street emporiums filled with unafforded luxuries. I long for views of the university, the Campsie Fells, the high flats, the rivers snaking through. And the tearooms, pubs, gastropubs, curry houses, Asian street food haunts, delis and restaurants high end and greasy spoon. It's only two hours away but has been impossibly out of reach. I long for full immersion, to be sated by all its gritty, impossibly romantic, unabashed grandeur.

Fiona

Simply sublime, Cotswolds Way



The Cotswold Way at Crickley Hill. Photograph: Alamy

In 2021 I want to carry on enjoying the benefits of the simple pleasures of travelling that 2020 led us to – like walking and talking. I want to walk the Cotswolds Way from Broadway to Bath, breathing in fresh air, wondering at big skies, scanning rolling hills in the distance while getting fitter without going to gyms or swimming in chlorinated pools or using mobile apps. Its 120 miles should take about a week, staying in village pubs along the way. Travel, like life, should be about connecting reality to your imagination by inspiration, which can come in the purest, most simple of forms.

Nick

Faroës football

My dream is to fulfil a Covid-delayed bucket-list trip to see the ultimate sporting underdog story, and take my football-crazy nine-year-old on a once-in-a-lifetime trip. We will be travelling to see the Faroe Islands play an international match on home turf. They're due to play Scotland on 12 October in a World Cup qualifier. Fly into the capital, Torshavn, and you can walk to the stadium. Hire a car for the full Faroes experience: it's the bird-watching capital of Europe. [Hotel Streym](#) in Torshavn has Atlantic views and doubles from £90.

John Connolly

Harvest festival with a difference, Ukraine



Harvest time on a farm near Lviv, Ukraine. Photograph: Martin Charlesworth

It will take the best part of a day and a half but here's my plan: a few buses, some trains and a flight from my home in the Ribble valley to Ukraine, crossing the Polish border at Przemyśl. I'm expecting Lviv to be "bruised but not broken" as the Ray Davies song goes, with coffee, cake and *varenky* (dumpling) culture still largely intact. I plan to go in August for the Saviour of the Apple feast, an Eastern Orthodox celebration of harvest. The reason for going is not necessarily the destination or the festival but the sweet joy of a long journey to a foreign land and interaction with strangers at long last.

Martin Charlesworth

Totally ore-some, Mauritania

The iron ore train, Mauritania

For 2021, I want to travel somewhere that is remote with low population density and gives me an adrenaline rush. After a bit of research, I've chosen to go on the iron ore train in Mauritania. The 700km journey on a cargo train from the north of the country to the west coast takes around 34 hours. This

train is among the world's longest and heaviest and riding it is totally free. From time to time, I look at the photos and videos of the journey on the internet and instantly get goosebumps. See for yourself. It's total madness.

Venkata K C Tata

Silk Road: Samarkand to Baku



The Registan place in Samarkand, Uzbekistan. Photograph: Andrey Vishin/Alamy

As we enter 2021 with unbridled hope and optimism for a better year filled with limitless freedom and a vaccinated global population, never have I wanted more to return to completing my journey of the Silk Road, started in 2019. Beginning in Xi'an and Kashgar, China, I headed west to Almaty, Kazakhstan, before crossing over into Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. My trip allowed just enough time to reach dazzling Samarkand in Uzbekistan. My trip ended at the Shah-i-Zinda necropolis, a breathtaking marvel from which I hope to restart my adventure in 2021. My aim is to reach Tehran, from where I will return to Baku, one of my favourite cities, for a deserved cup of coffee.

Scott Strachan

Mountain overload, Georgia



Kazbegi, Georgia. Photograph: Franka Hummels

I want to be overwhelmed by Georgia's Kazbegi region again. I want to get so exhausted by marvellous hikes – where I will not meet a soul – that the next day will be spent on a balcony with a book that gets little attention because the mountains take my breath away. I will only leave that balcony to eat terrific vegetarian Georgian food, with the same view. That balcony I left and want to return to is at [Rooms Hotel](#), where doubles go for \$100 – steep by Georgian standards but worth it and not as steep as those mountain slopes.

Franka Hummels

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21 places to go in 2021: ‘The holidays we’re dreaming of this year’

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Consumer champions**Money**

A 'Morrisons' van hit my car – but it turned out to be Ocado

The delivery lorry that hit my car and drove off, turned out to be operated by a different company



A delivery lorry which had all the Morrisons markings turned out to be 'outsourced' to Ocado
Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP via Getty Images

A delivery lorry which had all the Morrisons markings turned out to be 'outsourced' to Ocado
Photograph: Oli Scarff/AFP via Getty Images



[Rebecca Smithers](#)

Mon 4 Jan 2021 02.00 EST

In early November I left my house to find that the front wing of my car had been smashed. Thankfully, a neighbour had left a note on my windscreen. Apparently, a [Morrisons](#) delivery van had crashed into my car the previous evening and driven off without stopping.

I contacted Morrisons' customer services later that day, which forwarded my details and photos of the damage to its insurance team. Since then I have heard nothing. I have forwarded a quote for the repair (for over £1,400) and contacted customer services a number of times (typically left on hold for 20 minutes plus). Replies to emails say "someone will come back" but nobody ever does. I don't have time, and don't feel I should be, chasing this when it was not my fault.

RS, London W7

The first thing that worried us was how you would be able to prove that it was definitely a Morrisons van. Your witness didn't take a photo, but was happy to have their details put into the police report you compiled.

Morrisons told us it had fully investigated the complaint and concluded that it did not operate the van. It confirmed to you separately that the van had

Morrisons livery on it, but was a delivery outsourced to [Ocado](#), so a matter for it to deal with. It expedited your submission to the relevant operator's insurance team and marked it for their urgent attention.

Morrisons said: "Due to the high volume of incoming queries, this complaint took longer than it normally would to get resolved and we're really sorry that it got held up. We always strive to get things right, but on this occasion we got it wrong. The operator's insurance team is working to get this resolved."

Morrisons has since offered you £200-worth of vouchers, which you accepted. Meanwhile, your insurance company has agreed to pay for the damage as a no-fault claim, so your premium won't go up.

Bizarrely, an insurance company acting on behalf of Morrisons (not Ocado) contacted you to ask for details, so you have sent the police report, and also forwarded their email to your insurer. You won't be out of pocket, but you shouldn't have been put through the hoops like this over damage that was not your fault.

And a final goodbye ...

After seven and a half years sharing the hot seat with Miles Brignall, I am stepping down from the Consumer Champions column as I leave the Guardian. I would like to thank you for sending in your problems. In doing so, you have helped us expose issues of national importance. Over the years I have been thanked with the odd box of chocolates or bunch of flowers, but in these challenging times I suggest that readers who appreciate our work and our column – and the power of independent journalism – [make a contribution](#) to the Guardian. Goodbye, good luck and keep those letters coming in. RS

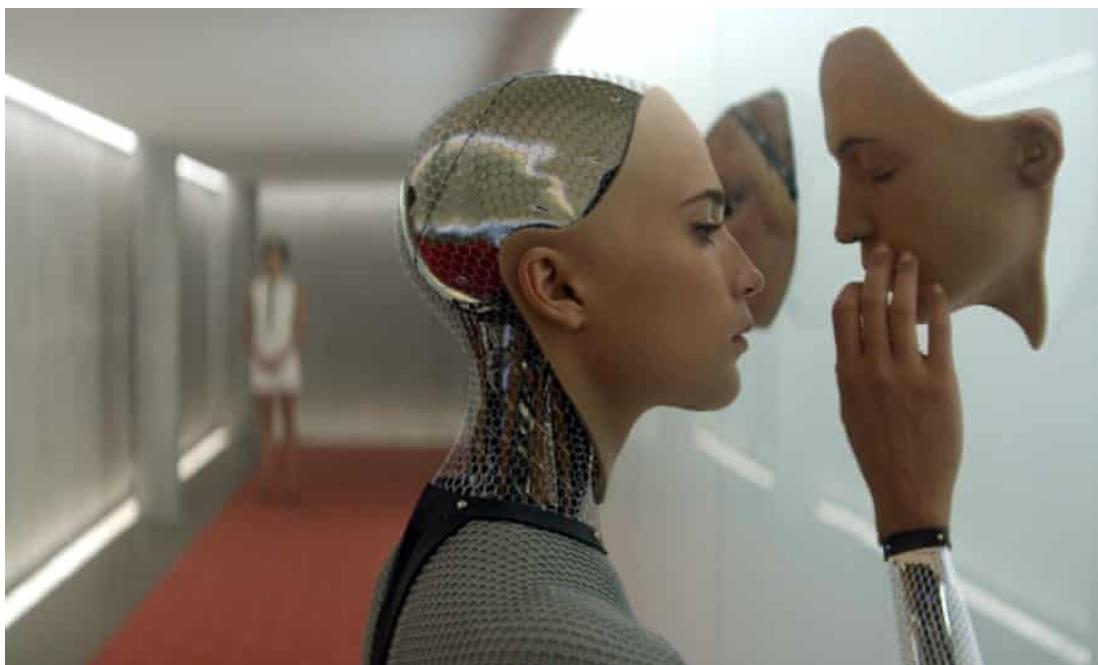
We welcome letters but cannot answer individually. Email us at consumer.champions@theguardian.com. Please include a daytime phone number. Submission and publication of all letters is subject to our [terms and conditions](#)

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Prove me wrong Science fiction and fantasy films

Sci-fi movies leave me empty. Isn't the real world dramatic enough?

Science fiction is just a bunch of loud noises, special effects and unbelievable plotlines, argues **Alison Rourke**. **Shelley Hepworth** tries to prove her wrong



Sci-fi movies such as *Ex Machina*, which explores the vexed issue of artificial intelligence, can be important cautionary tales for the human race, argues Shelley Hepworth. Photograph: Allstar Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo

Sci-fi movies such as *Ex Machina*, which explores the vexed issue of artificial intelligence, can be important cautionary tales for the human race, argues Shelley Hepworth. Photograph: Allstar Picture Library/Alamy Stock Photo

[Alison Rourke](#) and [Shelley Hepworth](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 11.30 EST

Alison: Shelley, I think sci-fi movies are a waste of time. If I'm going to spend a couple of hours watching something, I want the characters, and how they relate to each other, to be the hero of the story. When I watch sci-fi, it seems like the machines, the special effects and the fantasy are the main point of the film. I know for some people that's about escapism, but how can it provide an escape if what's on screen is fundamentally unattainable in real life?

Sorry, but it just leaves me empty. Prove me wrong, Shelley.

Shelley: Ali, that's like saying historical stories are about horses and carts! You've got it all wrong. Sci-fi isn't about escapism, it's about us. These fantastic worlds are just exaggerated versions of the world many of us already live in. Putting particular technologies under a fictional microscope enables us to explore the moral and ethical conundrums these technologies raise long before they become mainstream. Often these films are cautionary tales about paths we could – but shouldn't – traverse.

For your sci-fi movie homework, I'd like you to watch Gattaca (1997), starring Uma Thurman and Ethan Hawke. The film is set in an imaginary future, when the genetic selection of desirable traits for potential offspring is common. While on the surface, genetic selection that can eradicate disease might sound beneficial, the dystopian outcomes are obvious when viewed through the eyes of a character whose family couldn't afford to buy him the highest IQ and a healthy heart.

A film like Gattaca gives people a framework for thinking about genetic selection when it confronts us in the real world – like it did [in 2018 when Chinese researchers confessed to gene-editing twins](#). Let me know what you think.

[What is the most prescient science fiction film?](#)

[Read more](#)

Other good examples are Blade Runner (1982) and Ex Machina (2014), which consider our moral obligations to artificial intelligence. The Net

(1995) explores the consequences of a world in which our entire identities are digitised. And Her (2013) looks at the emotional fallout from spending too much time interacting with a virtual assistant like Siri or Alexa.

At their heart, these films aren't about technology at all, but rather what it means to be human.

Alison: Would it be churlish of me to point out that three of the five films you have recommended were from last century? Are good sci-fi films that rare? I write as I am watching Gattaca and I wish I could say I have been persuaded. Is it a cautionary tale or is it a look into someone else's imagination? It tells the story of genetic selection and an underdog who cheated the system to try to achieve his dream.

What I don't understand is why that storyline has to be set in an imagined time in the "not-too-distant future". Far from making the potential pitfalls of genetic selection ring true, in my view the dystopian nature of the story undermines its credibility. Because it's happening in a world that does not reflect our own, it's easy for the viewer to dismiss the ideas as fantasy.

Blade Runner is a distant blur from the 80s for me. Yes, I saw it, but remember little else other than Harrison Ford was in it. I rewatched the trailer just now, which said it was supposed to be set in 2019. That undermines its credibility right there.

I guess I also feel that so many of these movies are about men and patriarchy and who is the strongest, meanest, richest or most powerful. Frankly, it just makes me angry that those themes dominate not only this life, but any life set in the future.

- Prove Me Wrong is a new summer series in which Guardian Australia colleagues argue over whose tastes on popular culture, food and leisure activities are right ... and whose are wrong.**

| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

[Jay Rayner on restaurantsFood](#)

Eating out is one of the bright sparks to look forward to this year



Roll on 2021: Mark Hix at the Fox Inn, his new venture. Photograph: Matt Austin

Roll on 2021: Mark Hix at the Fox Inn, his new venture. Photograph: Matt Austin

New ventures by chefs in the suburbs promise a return to vitality for the restaurant sector



[Jay Rayner](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

Let's start with the good news. For the UK's restaurant sector, 2021 will be better than 2020. This is only because, short of your actual Godzilla rising from the depths just off Folkestone at the same time as a chunky asteroid wilfully redirects itself to slam into, say, Birmingham, laying waste to everything within a 500-mile radius, it's hard to imagine it being worse. And even then, it will only be better for the ones who have survived. A [recent survey](#) by various industry bodies found more than 70% of hospitality businesses expected to close, if the current Covid-19 restrictions stayed in place unchanged. We have already seen a number of casualties. Michel Roux Jr's restaurant at Parliament Square has gone, for example and, as [reported here](#) recently, chef Mark Hix has seen his whole London restaurant group close.

Happy days. A look forward to the coming year should, of course, be full of lip-smacking accounts of twists on double-fried Korean chicken wings, deep dives into the compelling cooking styles of hitherto neglected regions of west Africa or India, or nerdy experiments with live fire cooking. And in the next 12 months, I hope there will be lots of that. A great meal out can also be an education.

But in looking ahead, it's worth recalling the sign that was posted on the wall of Bill Clinton's 1992 presidential election campaign war room. It read "It's the economy, stupid." For restaurants everything about the coming year is about the economy. If you're a well-capitalised restaurateur who survived the ravages of the past 12 months, then there may well be a sunny glow on the horizon. As one major player put it to me: "The first three months will be as bad as 2020. In the second three months, the cavalry are coming. The last six months are likely to be the best we've ever had."



Game on: roe deer hotspot. Photograph: Matt Austin

Predicting a boom may be the product of wishful thinking. Then again, the third decade of the last century was referred to as the Roaring Twenties for a good reason. After the ravages of a world war and then a pandemic much more fatal than Covid-19, there was a pent-up appetite for fun. Many in the business are confident that history will repeat itself. One of the great inequities of this pandemic is that, while millions were thrust into grinding poverty, many weren't. Those who remained fully employed while working from home, often found their outgoings plummet. Not spending money on travelling into work could quickly stack up. Throw in the lack of weekday sandwich lunches – farewell to many city-centre Prets – and suddenly the bank balance is looking surprisingly plump.

There will be a desire to spend, which has to be good both for the economy in general and hospitality in particular. Neil Macleod of Mission Mars, the company behind Manchester's Albert's Schloss, a beer hall serving up crispy pork knuckles, bratwurst and hot and cold running drag queens, is certainly thinking like this. "A substantial volume of guests have sufficient confidence in the safety measures in place to make a visit," he says. "And, together with the impact of vaccine availability, that builds confidence that there will be strong demand come spring." Hence, they have expansion plans. Last summer they managed to open Zumhof in Digbeth, Birmingham. In the coming year they have eyes on venues in Leeds and Newcastle.

Meanwhile in London, Wolseley operators Corbin & King will finally be able to open their long-delayed relaunch of the Manzi's name, with a seafood brasserie off Soho Square they describe as "fun and affordable". Fruits de mer and moules all round. There's also big investment promised for fancy food court ventures. The company behind Scottish restaurant and butchery company [Mac & Wild](#) is opening a 16,000sqft site boasting eight restaurant brands in the new Edinburgh St James development. In Manchester, the [Escape to Freight Island](#) site, which opened last year with multiple food outlets, has announced £2m of new investment, and the City of London will see the UK's first outpost of [Eataly](#), with 40,000sqft of Italian food outlets.



Expansion plans: Manchester's Albert's Schloss. Photograph: Rebecca Lupton

The real challenge for many such businesses is that they are often in city centres, places many of us have lost a habit of visiting. Footfall may return, but it will take time. So let me make one positive prediction: we will see a rise in intriguing new ventures by young chefs in the suburbs. As restaurateur Jeremy King put it recently in an interview with the [Big Hospitality](#) website: "There are going to be an awful lot of empty spaces... and I'm hoping they will give all the amazing new chefs and restaurateurs the chance to do something." I'm already hearing that rents outside city centres have plummeted due to a lack of demand.

I don't know what any of them will be, but here are some new ventures that are definitely upcoming in 2021. Sam and Georgie Pearman, who already run two food pubs, will reopen the [Double Red Duke](#) in the Oxfordshire village of Kelmscott, with the assistance of Richard Turner, a veteran of Pitt Cue and Hawksmoor. Expect a charcoal grill working overtime and a killer steak and kidney pudding with oyster and bone marrow gravy. And you can't keep Mark Hix down for long. He's reopening [the Fox Inn](#) at Corscombe, Dorset, a sister business to his Oyster and Fish House at Lyme Regis. He's promising rabbit brawn with piccalilli and a gamekeeper's hotpot.

Graeme Cheevers, who won a Michelin star while head chef of the Isle of Eriska Hotel, says he's hoping to do it again at [Unalome](#) in Glasgow on what was the Sisters restaurant. Chef [Emily Scott](#) will see her pop-up at the Watergate Bay Hotel in Cornwall go permanent from March with a seafood and plant-based menu, including the likes of roasted scallops with truffle butter, and buffalo mozzarella panna cotta with basil and tomatoes. And back in London there's a [brave plan](#) to relaunch the [once legendary](#) Langan's Brasserie.



Colour mix: savoury panna cotta at Watergate Bay. Photograph: Beth Druce

It's a random selection, but proof that, despite it all, there remains a willingness to try. That's a cause for optimism. Because restaurants don't just feed us and bring us together. As well as providing serious careers, the hospitality industry has historically been a source of mass employment. It provides temporary jobs for people working on other things: students paying their way through university, actors between jobs, painters struggling over their art. Restaurants, hotels and pubs are [part of an economic web](#) that helps underpin our very cultural life. There are many reasons why we need the hospitality industry to fight its way back to good health in 2021; a good dinner is only one of them.

Email Jay at jay.rayner@observer.co.uk or follow him on Twitter [@jayrayner1](https://twitter.com/jayrayner1)

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Dear MariellaSex

I've retired and my sex drive has fallen. I'm letting my wife down

Don't equate your self-worth with your business success, says Mariella Frostrup. Rediscover your lust for life and your libido will return



'I think I am diminished in her eyes now that I don't work.' Photograph:
Gravity Images/Getty Images

'I think I am diminished in her eyes now that I don't work.' Photograph:
Gravity Images/Getty Images



[Mariella Frostrup](#)

Sun 3 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

The dilemma My wife and I have had a good marriage, share interests and have wonderful children. I am 18 years older than her and recently retired from a successful career.

We both had a high sexual drive, but for some years have been sleeping apart because I snore. Our sex life never really recovered and – to make matters worse – my desire has gone off a cliff. We have tried, but I usually can't get a sustainable erection – even if I take Viagra.

She wants an active sex life, which makes me feel I am letting her down as, for many years, we had sex daily. I think I am diminished in her eyes now that I don't work. I knew she was proud of my achievements running a substantial business. We are financially comfortable, but she often seems dissatisfied. I sometimes think she would like things to be like they were, as our children go on to make their own lives and we have less contact with other family and friends because of Covid. I am not sure what to do. I would like for us to look forward to a long, happy retirement, but this sexual mismatch seems like a substantial obstacle.

Mariella replies An obstacle? Or simply a divergence before your paths join again. It can't have been easy to open up on a subject that many men experience but few feel bold enough to admit. In middle age the diminishing spark of desire is just one of many indignities that descend on men and women, making you wonder if longevity is the gift it's made out to be or an unwelcome extension fraught with difficulty and frustration.

We live longer, our bodies atrophy, our lives change course and the people we've managed to rub along with for decades become all the more precious. I'm not saying any of that to increase your load. Learning to carry weight on our shoulders is a life skill like any other, and it stands us in good stead when our bodies age, our hopes and dreams are inevitably tempered and the world starts to feel as if it's filled with less potential. It's the point where we need to dig deep to find reserves of strength, courage and wisdom because those are the qualities that won't just sustain us through brief turbulence but will help us to fly into maturity with equanimity, confidence and a renewed sense of purpose.

An end to separate bedrooms is a good place for you to start

I'm worried because I feel you've lost sight of your spark and the lust for life that's going to fuel your future. Instead of celebrating a successful union that's held together through who knows what stresses, you're doubting your relationship's ability to survive a dip in desire that is eminently fixable. Most onerously you've started equating your value to your wife as inseparable from your role as successful hunter-gatherer, forgetting that the former is what has brought you to this point.

That you can now kick off your work shoes and enjoy downtime with your lifelong partner is a great success story. If you imagine that others see you diminished it can become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Viagra is definitely not the only answer; you may be surprised to discover how much control your brain has over that part of your body. In maturity you're discovering that which should be drilled into us all from the start: sex and desire are inextricably connected to what's happening in our heads and we have the ability to control one by using the other – a skill-set that usually works best when employed from the top down!

I know that there are treatments available should you wish, but why not start by separating your self-worth from your successful career? It's a badge of honour that you've succeeded in life so far but that's not who you are, it's just what you've made. As a credential to carry you through to whatever life next throws at you, business success has currency but it's not the sum of your parts. And because you've retired doesn't mean you need to embrace the life of a sloth. Now is your chance to step into the world and find interests and activities that you've not had time for in the past.

I can't think of a better time to get more intimately acquainted with what makes you tick. Seek out a therapist to talk you through the predictable struggle you're experiencing in switching from one life path to another. The return of your libido will probably follow and if not, [Relate runs courses](#) for older people seeking help with sexual issues – .

Try to think more broadly when it comes to what might be coming between you and your wife. An end to separate bedrooms would be a good practical place to start, or at least visitation rights. Snoring is not a minority activity after all. I entirely empathise with your wife's pursuit of a good night's sleep, but there are less drastic solutions than separate rooms and, as human beings, far greater tortures many have to endure. I've found a pair of silicone earplugs a good remedy. Wanting your marriage to survive and setting your heart on ensuring it does are two different scenarios. I suggest you opt for the latter.

If you have a dilemma, send a brief email to mariella.frostrup@observer.co.uk. Follow her on Twitter [@mariellaf1](#)

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Nigel Slater recipes Food

Nigel Slater's recipes for vegetarian fritters, chips and dips



Crunch time: celeriac and butternut squash fritters with mint pesto.

Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer

Crunch time: celeriac and butternut squash fritters with mint pesto.

Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer

Eaten as soon as they're ready, crisp oven chips and golden butternut fritters make for a satisfying impromptu feast



Nigel Slater

Sun 3 Jan 2021 05.30 EST

We sit on high stools by the hob, lowering batter-dipped vegetables into bubbling oil, eating them as they emerge, hot and crackling from the pan. There are tangles of grated celeriac threaded with pumpkin and parsley, a pesto sauce for dipping and dish of sea salt. We eat (or perhaps I should say “wolf”) our parcels as each becomes ready, bobbing to the surface, the grated vegetables turned into crisp, unruly fritters.

Another day, we eat chips cooked in the oven, each long, fat finger of potato in a coat of semolina – I use fine polenta – and Lebanese za’atar with its notes of dried wild thyme, sesame and oregano. As they rustle on to our plates, there is a tiny bowl of garlic sauce, a dip of red pepper, olive oil and egg at their side. I make it in the style of mayonnaise, adding the oil drip by emerald green drip, into a purée of grilled red peppers, egg yolk and a fat, juicy clove of chalk-white garlic.

Neither of these events could be called dinner or even lunch. They were impromptu feasts, cooked on whim, eaten without ceremony and served with that most delicious of all seasonings – a hefty dose of salacious gossip.

Celeriac and butternut fritters with mint pesto

These fritters are made to be eaten the moment they are ready. Test one first by dipping it in the oil, you get some stray pieces, but they should hold together. If they refuse, add a little more flour to the mix. It is worth getting the mint and basil sauce made first – it will keep in the fridge for a few days.

Makes 8-10, serves 4

celiac 300g, peeled weight

pumpkin or butternut 300g, peeled weight

onions 2, small

garlic 2 cloves

eggs 3

plain flour 5 tbsp

parsley a handful, chopped

For deep frying:

groundnut or sunflower oil

For the sauce:

basil leaves 30g

mint leaves 20g

garlic 1 clove

olive oil 5 tbsp

pine nuts 2 tbsp

parmesan grated

Coarsely grate the peeled celeriac. If you have a julienne attachment on your food processor, use that. Transfer to a bowl then repeat with the peeled pumpkin or butternut and add to the celeriac.

Peel the onions and slice thinly. Peel and crush the garlic, then add, together with the onions, to the vegetables.

Separate the egg yolks and their whites, putting the latter in a large bowl. Beat the yolks lightly with a fork then add to the grated the vegetables. Now introduce the flour and chopped parsley, a grinding of both sea salt and black pepper – be generous with the pepper – tossing everything together, making sure the vegetables are well coated.

Beat the egg whites until thick and frothy – they don't need to stand in peaks – then stir into the mixture making sure they are well incorporated.

Pour enough oil into a deep-sided pan to fry the fritters. It is important to leave plenty of room for the oil to bubble up safely. Bring the oil to 150C. Take a double tbsp of the mixture, squeezing it in your hand to release any excess batter, then, using a draining spoon or spider, lower it into the hot oil. (If you hold the tangle of vegetables briefly in place in the oil with the spoon, the fritters will hold together more readily.) If they come apart, add a little more flour to the mix. Repeat with more of the mixture. It is important not to overcrowd the pan – I usually fry a maximum of three at a time. Fry for 2 or 3 minutes, then turn the fritters to cook the other side. Keep the colour on the pale side of golden. Lift them out with a draining spoon or spider, and keep hot while you fry the next batch.

Make the sauce: put the basil and mint leaves in a food processor, add the garlic, pine nuts and olive oil and process to a creamy paste. Transfer to a bowl, add the grated parmesan. Serve with the fritters.

Oven chips with za'atar, garlic sauce



Oven chips with za'atar and garlic sauce. Photograph: Jonathan Lovekin/The Observer

Make sure you bake them in a single layer, not piled on top of one another.
Store the extra sauce for a day or two in the fridge.

Serves 4

For the chips:

baking potatoes 1 kg

groundnut oil 100ml

semolina 90g

za'atar 1 ½ tbsp

For the sauce:

garlic 1-2 cloves

grilled peppers 100g, from a jar or can is fine

egg yolks 2

lemon juice 1 tsp

olive oil 200ml

Bring a deep pan of water to the boil. Peel the potatoes, cut them into 1cm-thick slices, then cut each into long chips the width of your little finger. Cook in the boiling water for 7 minutes. Drain and pat dry. Set the oven at 230C/gas mark 8.

Pour the groundnut oil into a mixing bowl, add the chips and toss to make sure they are well coated. Put the semolina in a large mixing bowl, add the za'atar and a generous seasoning of salt, then lift out the chips and toss them in the herbed crumbs. Line a large baking sheet with baking parchment, then add the chips in a single layer. Bake for about 30-35 minutes until crisp (start testing for doneness after 25 minutes.)

For the sauce: peel the garlic and put it in a food processor with the grilled pepper, egg yolks and lemon juice. Process to a purée, then with the motor still running pour in the oil a little at a time. Alternatively, process to a purée as above, transfer to a bowl then whisk in the olive oil with a balloon whisk, a little at a time. Check for seasoning then pour into small bowls to serve with the chips.

Follow Nigel on Twitter [@NigelSlater](#)

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

2021.01.04 - Take part

- [UK residents How will you be impacted by Brexit?](#)
- [Coronavirus in the UK UK supermarket workers: how have you been affected by the second wave?](#)

Brexit

UK residents: how will you be impacted by Brexit?

We'd like to hear from people living in the UK about how Brexit will impact them

Guardian community team

Thu 31 Dec 2020 11.21 EST Last modified on Thu 31 Dec 2020 11.22 EST



Ursula von der Leyen and Charles Michel show the signed Brexit trade agreement. Photograph: Johanna Geron/Reuters

With the Brexit deal [signed into law](#) on Thursday morning, the UK's relationship with the EU is set to change dramatically on 1 January.

We'd like to hear how you will be impacted by Britain's departure from the EU, particularly those working in industries which will be directly impacted, such as farming, pharmaceuticals and haulage. We'd also like to hear from people working in small businesses, and those who travel often.

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.

If you're having trouble using the form, click [here](#). Read terms of service [here](#).

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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

Coronavirus

UK supermarket workers: share your experiences during the second wave of coronavirus

We'd like to speak to supermarket workers about how they're coping with the second wave of coronavirus, and how it compares to the first

Guardian community team

Fri 1 Jan 2021 08.44 EST Last modified on Fri 1 Jan 2021 08.45 EST



Shopping during the Coronavirus lock down, London, UK Photograph: Guy Bell/REX/Shutterstock

As much of the UK comes under ever-increasing restrictions due to the second wave of coronavirus, we'd like to find out how workers in essential shops, such as supermarkets or chemists, are coping.

How are you finding the second wave, how does it compare to the first? Are you finding that people are abiding by the rules or is it difficult to enforce social distancing? Do you feel there are enough safety measures in your workplace?

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.

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2021.01.04 - Explore

- 'I lived on Mars. Or the closest thing to it' The woman who lived like an astronaut for months
- Starwatch Crescent moon slips past Spica in early morning sky
- Do we have to age? The scientist who believes getting old is a disease that can be treated
- 'I passed out with the lack of oxygen' Stowaway tells how he survived 11-hour flight to UK in new film
- 'Peak hype' Why the driverless car revolution has stalled
- Adut Akech From Kenyan refugee camp to the international catwalk

The ObserverSpace

I lived like an astronaut for months in isolation



Is there life on Mars?: Kate Greene in her spacesuit on the volcano of Mauna Loa, with the geodesic dome she called home in the background.
Photograph: Sian Proctor

Is there life on Mars?: Kate Greene in her spacesuit on the volcano of Mauna Loa, with the geodesic dome she called home in the background.
Photograph: Sian Proctor

Kate Greene had a headstart in coping with lockdown cabin fever after living inside a geodesic dome at 8,000ft, as part of a space experiment

Kate Greene

Sun 3 Jan 2021 07.00 EST

Once upon a time I lived on Mars. Or the closest thing to it. At the time I was a science journalist and not necessarily an obvious choice for the mission. And yet I found myself on it. This was 2012 and Kim Binsted, professor of information and computer sciences at the University of Hawaii,

along with Jean Hunter, professor of biological and environmental engineering at Cornell, had put out a call for “almost” astronauts to participate in a four-month “Mars” mission.

Binsted and Hunter wanted a crew who could technically qualify for space flight, according to Nasa, in terms of education and experience. They were also looking for astronaut-like personalities who, according to Binsted, feature “thick skin, a long fuse and an optimistic outlook”. Nearly 700 people applied worldwide.

Somehow they chose me and so, between April and August 2013, I lived with five other not-really-astronauts in isolation, all of us making various Martian concessions, like mostly bathing with wet wipes, forgoing real-time social media and zero access to fresh fruits or vegetables.

We lived inside a large, white geodesic dome off an access road at 8,000ft on the Hawaiian volcano of Mauna Loa. The scene was very red, very rocky. Very Mars. There was limited electricity and water. We could only leave the dome wearing bulky, cumbersome, space suit-like outerwear. While we had an emergency mobile phone, our sole regular contact with Earth was through email. And since Mars is extremely far away, our email transmissions were delayed by 20 minutes each way to mimic the actual communication lag to be experienced by Martian explorers. It wasn’t your typical Hawaiian vacation.

All for science, though. Binsted and Hunter’s main research question regarding food was this: might it make sense to allow astronauts to cook their own meals once they’ve landed on Mars? Data has shown that astronauts on six-month missions on the International [Space](#) Station eat less over time and lose weight, making them more prone to illness and injury. Binsted and Hunter wanted to measure the importance of cooking, and meals in isolation more generally – how food affects a crew’s physical, mental and social health.

On Earth it might be obvious that food is more than just sustenance for a body, that it plays a psychological, social and cultural role, and that it nourishes the spirit and our relationships with others. But to ask complex questions about the role of food on a Mars mission and base a brand-new

Mars analogue around these questions? It's pretty radical, actually. And so, for this food study, we ate a combination of pre-prepared meals, as well as meals we cooked in our small yet well-equipped Martian kitchen.

We logged the changes in our appetites and weights and took tests to measure our ability to breathe through our noses and to identify odours, all of which relate to hunger and food satisfaction. There were nearly a dozen other experiments, too – trying out antimicrobial socks, tests of mental acuity, behavioural surveys, the list goes on. We lived and breathed survey questions for four months. Four months of isolation. Four months of the same people, same seats at the table, same clothes, same smells, same routines, same view outside the one-and-only window looking out on to the same rocks. No sunshine on our skin, no fresh air in our lungs. I don't want to overstate the difficulty – we were never in any mortal danger. But there were some aspects of the experience that I did find trying.

I missed face-to-face conversations with my wife. I longed for a change of scene and better indoor lighting. A swim in the ocean or a pool. A walk in the woods.



'Now, more than ever, we know that isolation can be life-altering in all its forms': writer Kate Greene today. Photograph: Michael Sharkey/The Observer

We were warned about the effects of isolation in small and large ways. The small ways: brief mentions during our pre-mission conference calls about tensions that arise between crew members and their friends, family and mission support back home. The large ways: the multiple hours-long discussions to discover what our breaking points would be. Would we abandon the mission if we got a sudden job offer? If someone back home got sick? If someone died? If we got sick? How sick? Mentally? Physically? If we lost faith in our crewmates or the project entirely? And how did we plan to manage the well-documented challenges of isolation? These challenges included, but were not limited to, something scientists have called “third-quarter” syndrome, in which the itch to be anywhere but inside the dome with your five best friends flares hot when the end is in sight but not quite within reach. Diaries from Arctic and Antarctic expeditions suggest that it’s a special time, three-quarters into your mission. You’ve become used to your routines and found a rhythm, but the hard reality of being cut off from others, the demands of your duties and the quirks of your crewmates have started to wear on you.

Here, I was guilty, somewhat predictably. As a writer, I tend to notice the little things. Minor, finely detailed irritants snuck up on me and then kept flicking the back of my head. The number of times in a row I replaced toilet paper in the first-floor bathroom. The cadence of a crewmate’s hard-soled sandals galloping down the stairs, remarkably consistent and always so loud. I also wondered why one of my crewmates kept swinging her crossed leg under the table at every meal so as to ever-so-gently tap me in the shin with her fuzzy slipper, seeming to reach across an incredible distance to make such slight contact, even after I’d tucked my legs well under my chair. But what I really wondered was, why I couldn’t ask her to stop?

Does all this make me sound a little unstable myself? Unsuited to living in an isolated environment with other people? Maybe. But I know I wasn’t alone. One crew member complained of another’s frequent throat clearing. Another suspected that his position on the chore chart was unfair because it gave him too many back-to-back heavy tasks. Then, when he traded with one of us and found himself in an even worse chore lineup than before, he became more frustrated.

Our crew got along reasonably well – I’d say functionally most of the time and even jovially harmoniously on occasion – but some personalities did clash. There were a couple of yelling bouts and some isolation-within-isolation events –that is, going to a room and staying there for a longer than culturally accepted period of time. We’d developed our own culture for what was socially expected, but for some of the crew whose personalities weren’t well suited to the agreed-upon social interactions, this proved to be a strain. Most of us are still on good terms, though a couple of us don’t speak to others. One of us moved to New Zealand about a year after and hasn’t been in much contact since.

Yet while we were together, our mission depended on our faith in and understanding of one another, our conversational shorthands, knowing when we were serious and when we were joking, and the subtext and motivations behind it all.

How unsettled I felt in the first few days back, answering interview questions from news media and from people in general. It might sound strange, but I wondered who I could trust. I had spent more than four months building a particular and insular kind of camaraderie with my crewmates. But how to be with other people? Outside that dome, suddenly I wasn’t so sure.

I’ve become a stranger to that person who first entered the Mars dome

We have all known discomfort, dislocation, sadness, loneliness, or the frustration of feeling isolated in some way or another. Here on Earth, there are many isolations, some torturous and immoral, some useful, some natural, some finite, others indefinite. And, of course, the one that impacted our world for most of 2020 and beyond – the pandemic – cloistering us in fear, shrinking our geographies for the sake of stemming the spread. More than ever we know isolation can be life-altering in all its forms.

I didn’t know it at the time but, over the years, I have come to realise this: Mars changed me. The science of that mission spilled over and mixed with the personal experience of the project. The quotidian survey questions such as, how hungry are you? How full? Who did you interact with the most today? The least? What was the best thing about your day? What was the

worst? Somehow began to feel like larger inquiries relevant not just to an astronaut on a space mission, but to me, personally, or to anyone.

Issues like communal versus individual food stores, whom you trust, how to behave when privacy is at a premium and when resources are scarce. These are exactly the issues that are relevant to larger communities, to nations and the entire world. Somehow the research questions on an imagined Mars mission have sprawled beyond their intended bounds. I could see how they were about everything and all of us.

In the days and weeks after our return, my crew and I ate fresh fruits and vegetables that crunched in our mouths, we swam in the ocean, and we debriefed with Binsted, sharing some of our more personal and poignant observations during the mission, all in service, we believed, of a better imagined future trip to Mars. Those early days back home are something of a blur, though I do recall the intensity of certain sensations. Loud noises easily startled me.

It took days for me not to notice even the slightest breeze on my skin. For a long time too, I struggled to find the best way to convey my experience. I avoided the immediate media flurry, the phone and television interviews. I simply couldn't find the soundbites. I had come into the experiment as a journalist and as a kind of citizen-scientist. Most news reporting aims for a kind of objectivity and to tell a story with authority. But to me, the story of my Mars felt shifty, my telling of it variable. I didn't feel comfortable saying I knew what any of it really meant. And it wasn't just about what happened on the mission or inside the dome. It's reverberated out, touching everything in my life. The HI-SEAS mission did indeed change what I think about space exploration. But it also helped me to pay more attention, generally. I'm talking about my relationships here, to people and to my home planet that, I must admit, I never saw with as much clarity as I did in those first few weeks immediately after the mission ended.

In the years since, I've become a stranger in many ways to the person who first entered that Mars dome on Mauna Loa. I write less journalism, more essays and poetry – more interested, I suppose, in the subjective and associative, in mystery and in looking at a thing from the side rather than straight on. I've changed jobs, gone back to school and moved across the

country. I've made and lost friends. My oldest brother has died. My long relationship with my wife has ended, and I am, for the first time in 14 years, living on my own, thinking a lot about the meaning of home, the meaning of exploration and isolation, of collaboration and partnership, of the various ways stories are told, and of beginnings and ends.

When an astronaut comes back, Earth isn't where it was. The whole system has shifted from underneath and all around, which is of course just the imperceptible hurtling of our local galactic arm. "There is no there there," as Gertrude Stein said of Oakland, which as an adult she found unrecognisable from the city of her childhood. It's like anything, though. You leave and come back, and home isn't what it was. But sometimes leaving is the only way to know it was ever home in the first place.

Extracted from Once Upon a Time I Lived on Mars: Space, Exploration and Life on Earth by Kate Greene, published by Icon Books on 7 January at £14.99, available from the [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com) at £13.04

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Starwatch
Astronomy

Starwatch: Crescent moon slips past Spica in early morning sky

Virgo's brightest star is 250 light years away, with a diameter more than seven times larger than the sun's

[Starwatch star chart moon and Spica 4 January 2021](#)

This week, the waning crescent moon slides past Spica, the brightest star in the constellation of Virgo, the virgin. The passage takes place in the morning sky.

The chart shows the view looking due south from London at 6am (GMT) on the morning of 7 January. [The moon](#) will have 40% of its visible hemisphere illuminated, having just passed its last quarter phase.

Beyond 7 January, Spica will rise more or less at the same time each night, but the moon will rise later and later. The percentage of its lit surface will decrease as it approaches closer to the sun. Towards the end of next week, it will be reborn in the evening sky as a new moon.

The star Spica is situated about 250 light years away, and is one of the 20 brightest stars in the night sky. Its diameter is 7.5 times larger than the sun's, and it shines more than 20,000 times more brightly.

From Sydney, Australia, the moon and Spica will be situated in the north-eastern sky on the morning of 7 January.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/jan/04/starwatch-crescent-moon-slips-past-spica-in-early-morning-sky>.

The ObserverAgeing

Do we have to age?



‘I think we are very likely to have a drug that treats ageing in 10 years’: biologist Andrew Steele. Photograph: Phil Fisk/The Observer

‘I think we are very likely to have a drug that treats ageing in 10 years’: biologist Andrew Steele. Photograph: Phil Fisk/The Observer

The biologist Andrew Steele thinks ageing is a disease that can be treated. But if we had a cure for getting old, what would that mean for us?



Alex Moshakis

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Sun 3 Jan 2021 03.00 EST

When the biologist Andrew Steele tells people his thoughts on ageing – that we might one day cure it as if it were any other disease – they are often incredulous and sometimes hostile. Once, at a friend’s wedding, he left a group of guests mildly incensed for suggesting that near-future humans might live well into their 100s. A similar thing happens at dinner parties, where the responses are more polite but no less sceptical. He understands the reaction. We think of ageing as an inescapable fact of life – we’re born, we grow old, so it goes. “That’s been the narrative for thousands of years,” he says, on a video call. But what if it didn’t have to be?

Steele began professional life as a physicist. As a child, he was fascinated by space, the way many scientists are. But he has spent the past three years researching a book about biogerontology, the scientific study of ageing, in which he argues the case for a future in which our lives go on and on. Steele considers ageing “the greatest humanitarian issue of our time”. When he describes growing old as “the biggest cause of suffering in the world,” he is being earnest. “Ageing is this inevitable, creeping thing that happens,” he says. He is wearing a button-down shirt and, at 35, a look of still-youthful optimism. “We’re all quite blind to its magnitude. But what do people die

of? Cancer. Heart disease. Stroke. These things all occur in old people, and they primarily occur *because of* the ageing process.”

Steele defines ageing as “the exponential increase in death and suffering with time,” and he thinks it would be helpful to “finally grapple with this raw quantity of suffering.” The human risk of death doubles every seven or eight years. We tend to breeze through the first five or six decades of life relatively unscathed, health-wise. Maybe we wake up at 50 with an ache, or slightly sagging skin, but still we are generally considered unlucky if we discover a tumour or develop arthritis or suffer heart problems. The death of a 50-year-old from disease is a premature death.

But at some point in our 60s a kind of cliff edge appears, and often we have no choice but to stumble over it. Easy movements become hard. We begin to lose our hearing and our sight. Frustrating and embarrassing things start to happen. *Why can't I feel the tips of my toes? What on earth has happened to my hip?* The body has worked tirelessly for years, and the cumulative internal effects of that action – the problematic buildup of aged, “senescent” cells; the dangerous mutations of other cells; the steady decline of the immune system; the general wearing-down of the body’s structures – suddenly predispose us to a variety of age-related diseases: cancer, cardiovascular disease, hypertension, dementia. A 10-year-old’s risk of death is 0.00875%. At 65, the risk has risen to 1%. By the time we turn 92 we have a one in five chance of dying that year. For decades we are mostly fine, Steele says, and then, all of a sudden, we’re not.

“The dream of anti-ageing medicine,” Steele writes in his book, *Ageless: The New Science of Getting Older Without Getting Old*, “is treatments that would identify the root causes of dysfunction as we get older, then slow their progression or reverse them entirely.” These root causes are what biogerontologists call hallmarks. “Cancer isn’t a hallmark of ageing,” Steele says now. “But it’s caused by several of the hallmarks of ageing.” If scientists can address those hallmarks, “we can come up with treatments that slow down the whole ageing process, deferring diseases into the future.”

The hope isn’t that we get to live longer for the sake of it, it is that we live longer in good health. Some people call this longevity; Steele refers to “increasing a person’s ‘healthspan’”. “There’s this misconception when you

talk to people about treating ageing,” he says. “They imagine they’re going to live longer but in a state of terrible decrepitude, that you’re going to extend their 80s and 90s so they’re sat in a care home for 50 years. That doesn’t make sense from a logical perspective or a practical one.”

I say, “What would be the point?”

“Exactly!”

“It’s just more pain...”

“Nobody would want it,” he says. Then he raises an eyebrow. “It’s surprising that people would actually think *scientists* would want that.”

Humans have been searching for a cure for ageing for thousands of years. Herodotus wrote of the Fountain of Youth in the 5th century BC; countless people have made lengthy, futile quests for life-extending elixirs. Until recently, very little was known about why we age and how. “For a long time, scientists looked at it and thought, ‘Oh God, this is going to be some immeasurably complex process that we can’t possibly hope to study in a lab’,” Steele says, which “dissuaded research”. Until the 1960s, it was generally accepted that our role on this Earth was to produce children, and that once we’d succeeded in that undertaking, our bodies, fulfilled of function, would be left to slowly fade.

But in the past three decades biogerontological research has accelerated, and recent successes have sparked excitement. A 2015 study, published by the Mayo Clinic, in the US, found that using a combination of existing drugs – dasatinib, a cancer medicine, and quercetin, which is sometimes used as a dietary suppressant – to remove senescent cells in mice “reversed a number of signs of ageing, including improving heart function”. A 2018 study that used the same drugs found that the combination “slowed or partially reversed the ageing process” in older mice. In another study, the drug spermidine extended the lifespans of mice by 10%, and studies using the drug rapamycin have extended the healthspans of mice, worms and flies, though it comes with problematic side-effects, including the suppression of the immune system and the loss of hair. Last year, scientists in Texas transplanted stem cells from young mice into elderly ones, adding three

months to their average lifespans, which in equivalent human terms could be worth more than a decade.

To Steele this is all thrilling. “The pace of change has been dizzying,” he says of recent developments. Though it is the fact that human trials have begun that excites him most. After the success in mice, the first trial aimed at removing senescent cells in humans began in 2018, and others are ongoing. A more recent study found that a combination of hormones and drugs appears to help rejuvenate the thymus, which contributes to the immune system but “degenerates rapidly with age”. Next year, a landmark trial will begin to investigate whether metformin, a drug used to treat diabetes, might in fact delay the “development or progression of age-related chronic diseases – such as heart disease, cancer and dementia.”

In *Ageless*, Steele writes, “This collection of evidence is tantalising, and foreshadows a future where ageing will be treated.” He also writes: “This future may not be far away.” When I ask him what he means by not far away, exactly, he smiles. “Scientists are rightly sceptical,” he says, but “it’s important to say that a lot of significant breakthroughs could happen in the lifespan of people alive today.”

I ask, “Can you be more specific?”

Eventually, he says, “I think we are very likely to have a drug that treats ageing in the next 10 years.”

Steele believes we will be hopelessly unlucky if scientists don’t make a breakthrough within that time, given how many human trials are in progress or upcoming. And although these breakthroughs won’t result in treatments that extend our lives by 100 years, they will give us enough extra time to ensure we’re alive for subsequent breakthroughs, subsequent treatments, subsequent additions in lifespan and so on. Our lives will be extended not all in one go but incrementally – one year, another year, suddenly we’re 150. In *Ageless*, Steele talks of a generation of people that grows up expecting to die but, thanks to an accumulation of new treatments, each more effective than the last, just doesn’t. “One after another,” he writes, “lifesaving medical breakthroughs will push their funerals further and further into the future.”

What Steele is talking about isn't immortality; people will continue to die. Science won't help if, looking down at your phone, you walk out into the road and get hit by a car. Or if you fall off a ladder and break your neck. Or if you are unlucky enough to be hit by a missile in a war zone. Or if you contract a virulent infectious disease that has no vaccine. But it *will* result in lifespans that are significantly longer than what we currently consider normal.

I want to see healthy older people able to play with their great-grandkids

I ask if Steele expects there to someday be lots of 150-year-olds wandering around, as healthy as 20-year-olds.

“Yes,” he says, “if it all works.”

I say, “200-year-olds playing football in the park?”

“Why not?” he says. “The trouble is, saying we’re going to have 150-year-olds walking around looking like 20-year-olds, it’s weird. It sounds sci-fi. It sounds a bit creepy. Ultimately, I don’t want this because I want to have a load of 150-year-olds looking like 20-year-olds, I want it because those 150-year-olds won’t have cancer, they won’t have heart disease, they won’t be struggling with arthritis. They’ll still be playing with their grandkids, their *great*-grandkids even. It’s about the health and lifestyle benefits.”

When Steele brings up his work with people, the question he gets asked most often is: “What about overpopulation?” He has a go-to answer he thinks highlights the ridiculousness of the question. “Imagine we’re staring down the barrel of 15bn people on Earth,” he says. “There are *lots* of ways to try and tackle that problem. Would one of them be: invent ageing?”

That he is asked this question so frequently frustrates him. More so, he is bothered by the implication that what he is suggesting is somehow weird or inhuman or unholy, rather than ultimately helpful for society. “If I’d just written a book about how we’re going to cure childhood leukaemia using some amazing new medicine,” he says, “literally nobody would be like, ‘But isn’t that going to increase the global population?’”

He shakes his head.

“What I’m saying is, ‘Here is an idea that could cure cancer, heart disease, stroke...’ Curing any one of those things would get you plaudits. But as soon as you suggest a potentially effective way of dealing with them altogether, suddenly you’re some mad scientist who wants to overpopulate us into some terrible environmental apocalypse?”

Steele considers this a major hurdle in biogerontology’s potential success – our “incredible bias toward the status quo” of ageing as an inevitable process, and our inability to accept it as preventable. “If we lived in a society where there was no ageing, and suddenly two-thirds of people started degenerating over decades, started losing their strength, started losing their mental faculties, and then succumbing to these awful diseases, it would be unthinkable. And of course, we’d set to work trying to cure it.”

He makes reference to the pandemic. “The coronavirus exemplifies the problem we have in terms of funding science, in trying to confront these kinds of challenges. Because it’s so acute, because it all of a sudden appeared on the scene and the entire global economy was dragged to a halt, we see this very clear, current, present need to do something about it. And yet if you look at ageing, or even climate change, these are slow-moving disasters, and so they’re easy to miss.” It is not lost on him that ageing-related drugs might have reduced the impact of the coronavirus, given it is a disease that is particularly life-threatening among older populations. To this end, he thinks biogerontology will eventually dramatically change the role of medicine, from being primarily reactive to primarily preventive. “We’ve somehow unintentionally drifted into this state in society where we end up treating endpoints, almost in a state of panic, at the last minute,” he says, “rather than preventing them beforehand.”

Steele considers *Ageless* a call to arms, and is hopeful it presents enough evidence to finally convince the public – as well as regulators, who currently don’t define ageing as a disease, which makes it difficult to receive support for trials – that ageing is a problem to be fixed. There is a “kneejerk reaction” to biogerontology, just because “it sounds strange,” he says. “We place ageing research in this separate category – socially, morally, ethically,

even scientifically. When, actually, it's just an extension of the normal goals of modern medicine."

Writing a book on ageing, it turns out, is a good way to make you reappraise your own lifestyle. These days, Steele is running more than he used to, and he has begun to watch what and how much he eats. "It's not like I was ever a massive couch potato," he says. "But, equally, I have tried to optimise things." In the absence of anti-ageing drugs, he suggests we all do the same. "It seems that a lot of the sort of basic health advice that everyone can recite – do some exercise, don't be overweight, try to eat a broad range of foods, don't smoke – all that stuff basically slows down the ageing process."

I tell him I've spoken to people who are taking several unproven supplements a day, hoping to eke out a few more years, and of others who, ahead of the trial, are already taking the experimental drug metformin.

"Given that I'm in my 30s," he says, "I think the case against metformin is stronger than the case for. The evidence is suggestive, but it's not conclusive. And there's a spectrum. There are people who are experimenting with senolytics. There was the case of the biotech CEO who went to Colombia and had gene therapy. But the data in humans just isn't there." He adds: "The same is true of so many of these supplements and health foods. If any of these things did have a substantial effect, we'd know about it."

When I ask him what he thinks of the anti-ageing industry – all of those creams and serums that promise rejuvenation, our modern-day elixirs – he says, "I'd like to completely obviate it." If the breakthroughs do come, they are likely to significantly change the structure of our time on Earth. We are used to the three-act life: we are young and learn, we are middle-aged and work, we are old and retire. But what happens if we live another 100 years? Might we go back to school at 60, or switch careers at 105 or, at 40, decide to take some kind of 20-year soul-searching hiatus, knowing we'll have a century or more to do other things having returned from whatever wilderness we had run away to?

And what about death? At one point during our conversation, I ask Steele if he imagines a time when dying becomes a choice. He thinks the question is overblown. "Because death is inevitable people have rationalised it as

something that drives life, or gives life meaning, or adds some sort of poetry to the human condition,” he says. “But I think, broadly speaking, death is bad. If there was less death in the world, I think most people would agree that was a good thing. And though my passion for treating ageing isn’t driven by reducing the amount of death, it’s driven by reducing ill health in later life, it’s driven by conquering disease, it’s driven by getting rid of suffering, if there’s less death as a side-effect? I don’t think that’s a bad thing.”

Ageless: The New Science of Getting Older Without Getting Old by Andrew Steele is published by Bloomsbury at £20. Buy it from [guardianbookshop.com](https://www.guardianbookshop.com) for £17.40

Three hallmarks of ageing

The root causes of ageing are called hallmarks. Treat these and you slow ageing.

- 1. Genomic instability** As we age, we accumulate genetic damage. Simply, over time, our DNA gets mangled. It is thought that if scientists can find a way to repair that damage, they will then be able impact the ageing process.
- 2. Cellular senescence** The longer we live, the more chance we have of experiencing a build-up of senescent (old) cells, which tend to hang around in the body and can contribute to the onset of age-related diseases.
- 3. Mitochondrial dysfunction** Mitochondria are ‘organelles’ that generate the energy our cells need to power necessary biochemical reactions. It has been found that mitochondrial dysfunction can accelerate ageing.

This article was downloaded by **calibre** from <https://www.theguardian.com/science/2021/jan/03/observer-magazine-do-we-have-to-age-biologist-andrew-steele>

Migration

Stowaway tells how he survived 11-hour flight to UK in new film

South African man, now known as Justin, speaks for first time of friend Carlito Vale, who died after 430-metre fall, in Channel 4 documentary



Justin said he was shocked when police told him that Carlito Vale had not survived the journey. Photograph: Postcard Productions

Justin said he was shocked when police told him that Carlito Vale had not survived the journey. Photograph: Postcard Productions

[Ben Quinn](#)

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Sun 3 Jan 2021 06.32 EST

A South African man who survived an 11-hour flight from Johannesburg to London after hiding in a plane's undercarriage has told of the last words he exchanged with a friend whose body fell from the same British Airways flight as it came in to land at Heathrow.

“He said: ‘We made it,’ and then I passed out with the lack of oxygen,” said the man, who was then known as Themba and who has spoken publicly for the first time about the desperate journey both men undertook in 2015.

While he survived and has been living for the past five years in Liverpool, where he goes by the name of Justin, the young Mozambican migrant who came with him died from multiple injuries after falling 430 metres (1,400ft) from the flight in June 2015.

The man who died [was named in the Guardian in 2016 as Carlito Vale](#), who had grown up in an orphanage in Mozambique’s second city, Beira, and who had ventured to Uganda and South Africa before attempting to find a new life in London.

The men had prepared to stow away on a BA flight on the runway in Johannesburg by studying aircraft designs in a book, Justin told the Guardian. This week, his story and that of Vale will be told in a [Channel 4](#) documentary, *The Man Who Fell from the Sky*.

“We thought we could go for Delta, but we thought let’s go for a shorter [flight] … let’s take one to London,” said Justin. Neither had any idea how dangerous their plan was.

While it has long been believed that the men may have had inside help to gain entry to the airport, he insists that they did it alone, jumping over perimeter fences and putting on layers of clothing in preparation.

“I was not far from the engine. You could feel it outside when it was rotating,” he told the documentary-makers. He sustained burn marks after wrapping his arms through cabling, which ultimately prevented him from falling out. “You could even see the houses down there when the plane was flying.”

The next thing he can remember is waking up on the runway in London, with a shattered leg.

Vale and Justin, who grew up in a poverty-stricken township in Johannesburg and suffered violence at the hands of gangs while living on the

streets, had dreamed of a fresh start in Europe. Vale planned to bring his family members over from [Mozambique](#) after a few years.

“I remember when I spoke to Carlito … he said that he wanted to be a DJ and that he was going to go back and get his daughter after a few years,” said Justin. “I really wished the best for him, and so I thought it was a good idea for us because we were looking for a better future.”



Carlito Vale with his mother. Photograph: Facebook

He recalled the moment, after waking up in a hospital bed, when police investigators showed him a photograph of Vale.

“When the plane landed, I fell out and remember thinking that Carlito must still be in it,” he said. “But then later they showed me the passport and said: do you know this guy? I said yeah. They told me that he didn’t make it, and I was shocked.”

Justin has embraced a new life in Liverpool and is slowly building up a new circle of friends while harbouring hopes of pursuing a musical career.

“I find it is easy here, because the people here are gentle and nice,” he tells documentary-maker Rich Bentley in the film, after they first meet on a street corner in Liverpool. “Everyone has their own situations and they leave

because of something that is happening in their backgrounds," he says, as immigration once again makes headlines with the deaths of people crossing the Channel in small vessels.

- [The Man Who Fell from the Sky is on Channel 4, 10pm, Monday 4 January](#)
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| [Section menu](#) | [Main menu](#) |

'Peak hype': why the driverless car revolution has stalled

Self-driving cars

'Peak hype': why the driverless car revolution has stalled

As Uber parks its plans for robotaxis, experts admit the autonomous vehicle challenge is bigger than anticipated

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- [UK carmakers have three years to source local electric car batteries](#)



From left: a Cruise self-driving car; a woman reads inside an autonomous Volvo; a Waymo driverless vehicle. Composite: Reuters/Volvo/Getty/AP

By 2021, according to various [Silicon Valley luminaries](#), [bandwagoning politicians](#) and leading cab firms in recent years, self-driving cars would

have long been crossing the US, started filing along Britain's motorways and be all set to [provide robotaxis](#) in London.

1 January has not, however, brought a driverless revolution. Indeed in the last weeks of 2020 [Uber](#), one of the biggest players and supposed beneficiaries, decided to park its plans for self-driving taxis, selling off its autonomous division to Aurora in a deal worth about \$4bn (£3bn) – roughly half what it was valued at in 2019.

The decision did not, Uber's chief executive protested, mean the company no longer believed in self-driving vehicles. "Few technologies hold as much promise to improve people's lives with safe, accessible, and environmentally friendly transportation," Dara Khosrowshahi said. But more people might now take that promise with a pinch of salt.

Play Video

0:29

Uber dashcam footage shows lead up to fatal self-driving crash – video

Prof Nick Reed, a transport consultant who [ran UK self-driving trials](#), says: "The perspectives have changed since 2015, when it was probably peak hype. Reality is setting in about the challenges and complexity."

Automated driving, says Reed, could still happen in the next five years on highways with clearly marked lanes, limited to motorised vehicles all going in the same direction. Widespread use in cities remains some way further out, he says: "But the benefits are still there."

The most touted benefit is safety, with human error blamed for more than 90% of road accidents. Proponents also say autonomous cars would be more efficient and reduce congestion.

Looking back, Reed says "the technology worked ... people had the sense, it does the right thing most of the time, we are 90% of the way there. But it is that last bit which is the toughest. Being able reliably to do the right thing every single time, whether it's raining, snowing, fog, is a bigger challenge than anticipated."

[Waymo](#), the Google spin-off that has led the field, could be a case in point: having quickly wowed the world with footage of self-driving cars, the subsequent steps have appeared small.

In October last year it announced the public could now hail fully driverless taxis, “in the near term” without a safety driver in any car – although the range remains limited to the sunny suburbs of Phoenix, Arizona, whose every centimetre has been mapped by [Waymo](#) computers.

Play Video

5:04

Waymo trials its self-driving cars outside Phoenix, Arizona – video

Elsewhere, robotaxis have stalled. Like Uber, the cab firm Addison Lee had staked out [bold ambitions](#), signing up with the UK autonomy pioneer Oxbotica in 2018 to get robotaxis into London by 2021.

That deal was quietly dropped in March last year, under new ownership. Addison Lee’s chief executive, Liam Griffin, said: “Driverless cars are best left to the OEMs [manufacturers], and don’t form part of our current plans.”

The launch of an autonomous taxi service by Ford has also been postponed at least a year to 2022 because of the pandemic.

“Globally, Covid-19 has delayed trials and launches of connected and automated vehicles,” says Mike Hawes, the chief executive of the Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders.

Regulatory changes could still allow developments such as Automated Lane Keeping Systems being rolled out in 2021 across everyday cars.

“ALKS is the first version of automated driving technology which could prevent some 47,000 serious accidents over the next decade, while creating up to 420,000 new jobs,” Hawes said.

The system could let the car [take control on UK motorways](#) this year – although insurers are trying to talk the government out of giving the go-ahead.

Alexandra Smyth, who leads on autonomous systems at the Royal Academy of Engineering, said: “There’s lots of progress and interesting developments with regulations and codes of practice – all important components that sit alongside the technology itself. But realistically there are still going to be errors and things that don’t perform as we hoped. Public trust will be one of the major hurdles.”

Fears were stoked after [Uber’s self-driving car killed a pedestrian](#) in Arizona in 2018. And despite Elon Musk’s continuing bold claims for Tesla, and reports that Apple is still secretly pushing to develop a [personal autonomous vehicle by 2024](#), the law is unlikely to [permit drivers to relinquish the wheel](#) soon.

According to Christian Wolmar, the author of Driverless Cars: On a Road to Nowhere?, problems such as social acceptance, cybersecurity and cost have never been addressed.

He says: “People do not want to replace the car outside the front door with an app it’s just not a viable concept. I think more and more people are sceptical of the model that we’ll all be in robocars soon. Instead, the industry is now talking about specific uses.”

If Oxbotica’s Paul Newman, one of the Oxford University professors pioneering Britain’s autonomous industry, has any doubts over the long term, he is not showing it – although he says the level of autonomy where “occasionally there might be a remote assist” is a far more achievable ambition than a world where the machines can entirely get on with it.

Oxbotica is running a fleet of autonomous Ford Mondeos on public roads in a trial in Oxford – but the technological progress, he says, is not about robotaxis: “It’s purely about the software, it’s agnostic about the vehicles.”

The driverless car world, he says, is “a great moonshot”: cars are a huge market but also the hardest to transform, long after autonomous mining or rail or shuttle services are in place.

Newman compares the progress with mobile phones, recalling the first he saw, wielded by Danny Glover in the 1987 film Lethal Weapon, which was

the size of a small suitcase.

“Is a future of driverless cars coming? Assuredly as mobile phones. This is the normal cycle that technology goes through. We’re still moving along that graph,” he said.

“We’ve gone through the flashy stage, when we’ve said it’s six months away ... Now we’ve got engineers saying this is properly hard.”

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The ObserverFashion

Interview

Adut Akech: ‘I was just this shy kid’

[Sirin Kale](#)



‘I want to see real change’: Adut Akech wears green dress by [loewe.com](#) and platforms by [erdem.com](#). All jewellery by Vintage Mercedes-Benz.

Photograph: Campbell Addy/The Observer

‘I want to see real change’: Adut Akech wears green dress by [loewe.com](#) and platforms by [erdem.com](#). All jewellery by Vintage Mercedes-Benz.

Photograph: Campbell Addy/The Observer

Adut Akech’s rise from Kenyan refugee camp to the international catwalk has been remarkable. She talks about her ‘fashion dad’ Edward Enninful and why she wants to see proper diversity in the fashion industry

Sun 3 Jan 2021 05.00 EST

All the best supermodels have fairytale origin stories. They are bullied at school: too tall, too flat-chested, too strange-looking. Boys prefer their more comely peers. They grow up believing themselves to be unlovable, even social outcasts. And then an outsider swoops in – perhaps at an airport (Kate

Moss), in Primark (Jourdan Dunn), or McDonald's (Gisele Bündchen). The scout plucks them from obscurity and drops them into a life of international travel, money and acclaim. Their self-doubt is sloughed away like dead skin. Bullies stand chastened. The supermodel triumphs.

Moss and co don't have anything on Adut Akech's origin story. Their childhoods are the Pixar remakes of her Grimms' fairytale. Akech was born as her mother fled civil war in South Sudan and raised in a refugee camp in Kenya. At seven, she moved with her family to Australia. When she arrived, she didn't speak any English, "I was this tall, super-shy, awkward kid," she says. "I had a weird name, and a gap tooth."

She began modelling in 2016, while still at school. Now 20, she has already bagged 16 *Vogue* covers internationally, including five September issues; fronted advertising campaigns for Marc Jacobs and Moschino; been named Model of the Year by the British Fashion Council; and closed shows for Saint Laurent and Valentino (in a glorious purple gown that resembled almost exactly an enormous Quality Street). Hers is the classic supermodel origin story, on steroids: a tale of war, displacement, emigration and triumph against the odds. But Akech herself downplays her remarkable journey. "I'm very proud of myself," she says, modestly. "And my mum is happy, which is the main thing."

Akech is swaddled in a thick blanket that protects her against the cold of an unheated studio. We are here to discuss, among other things, a recent comedy sketch she made for Mercedes-Benz, a social media spot whose underlining message is to "spark positive reflection at the end of a challenging year". In it, Adut is a beacon of hope. When we talk she is poised and positive. And, as befits a woman born and raised in three countries, who began travelling the world in her teens, her accent wanders across different continents. "I'm a citizen of the world," she says, with a faintly Australian accent, "but my identity is South Sudanese before anything."



'I don't know many people in London, but Edward is my family here': with Vogue's Edward Enninful. Photograph: Richard Young/REX/Shutterstock

Of her early years in a refugee camp in Kakuma, Kenya, Akech recalls an ordinary childhood interspersed with occasional moments of terror. "I remember just being a kid," she says, "trying to make the most of life. We didn't have much. But I knew something was off; that even though we were at home, we weren't at home. There would be nights where there were people coming who wanted to take us from our parents, or kill all of us. The whole camp would be so fearful. Everyone would pack their things, and wait for the heads-up to leave."

She doesn't remember life before the camp. She was born on Christmas Day 1999, as her mother made the perilous journey out of South Sudan. "I was born on the way to Kenya," she says, "and I haven't been to Sudan since." (She hopes to return one day, to set up a social enterprise and reconnect with her extended family.) When all you've known is a refugee camp, life in corrugated-iron shelters feels normal. "I didn't know I was in a refugee camp," she says. "It was just a community of South Sudanese people – one big family." Eventually, Akech's mother was able to secure asylum in Australia, where she had relatives. They moved to Adelaide when Akech was seven.



Golden moment: tulle dress and green platforms by mollygoddard.com; ring by Vintage Mercedes-Benz jewellery. Photograph: Campbell Addy/The Observer

The early years in Australia were not always easy. Anxious to fit in, she let her classmates call her by her Christian name, Mary, rather than Adut, her legal name, by which she was known among her family. “For some reason,” she says, drily, “it was so hard to say my name, or they would say it in funny ways, and it just made me feel insecure I suppose, or bad.” She decided to go back to her own name as her modelling career took off. “I decided if I was going to do this modelling thing I was going to go with my own name,” she says. “Adut. I wasn’t insecure about it any more. Since then, I’ve always been Adut. No one calls me Mary.” After a pause, she adds: “Also, my name is actually very, very sick! There’s no other Adut in this industry that I have met yet. It’s unique. It’s a beautiful name, and it’s the name my family gave me, and people are going to have to learn how to say it properly.”

When Akech moved to Australia, she made her mother a promise: that she’d finish school and buy her a car and a house. Fitting schooling around the demands of modelling was exhausting. “I’d do my homework on flights and not sleep,” she says. At her debut fashion week, in Melbourne in 2016, she walked in 16 shows. Within a month she was being flown to Paris by Saint

Laurent. It was a stratospheric rise, and yet Akech had promised her mother she'd keep up with her schoolwork.

"Dropping out of school for modelling was not an option," she says, shaking her head. The next year was a blur of exhaustion. "On shoots, I'd be doing my homework during breaks. I'd stay up late to make sure I was getting good grades, even though I would be jet lagged." She finished school in 2017 and flew to Paris to close the Saint Laurent spring/summer 2018 show almost immediately.

Akech credits her indefatigable work ethic to her mother. After arriving in Australia as a refugee, Akech's mother worked in a laundry, as a supervisor. "She'd wake up at 4am and come home at 10pm." Last November, after years of nagging, Akech finally persuaded her mother to take some time off. "It's weird for her," she says, "because she's always worked. But I said, 'No, Mum! You need to give yourself a break.'" She talks about her mother often; her face lights up as she does. "I'm like a mini version of my mum," she explains. "Everything I am is exactly who she is."



'We don't talk about fashion. We talk about life': with her 'fashion mum' Naomi Campbell. Photograph: Everett Collection Inc/Alamy Stock Photo

Akech's modelling career almost ended in her teens, after her mother came under sustained pressure from their extended family in 2016. "They'd say, 'She's going to fail at it like all the other girls, and if she drops out of school, it's your fault.' Uncles and aunties and cousins and everyone were telling me not to do it." The perception, says Akech, "was that all models do is walk around in front of people naked – that it was not an actual career." Eventually, to save her mother from the criticism, Akech offered to quit. "I could see how it was affecting her," she explains, "and I wanted them to shut up and leave her alone." But her mum said no. "She told me, 'I know you'll regret it later,'" Akech remembers, "'and what kind of mother would I be if I let you give up on something I know you can do, and you love doing?'"

2020 was a comparatively quiet year for her – Covid-19 put the fashion industry on hiatus, and it is only recently that she has returned to full-time work. After a relentless three years, the enforced calm of the pandemic was an opportunity to spend four months in Australia. As Akech is close to her large family – she has five siblings; her father died – it was a silver lining. "It was so nice," Akech exclaims. "I missed my mum's home cooking so bad. I really feel like I made up for so much lost time with my family in those four months."



'People are afraid of being called out': cream and yellow dress by zimmermannwear.com. Photograph: Campbell Addy/The Observer

Last year, Akech completed the trio of promises she made her mother as a child, buying her a new house in an Adelaide suburb. (Akech bought her mother her dream car, a Nissan, in 2018.) “It’s one of my proudest achievements,” she says. “For the longest time, my mum worked nonstop for us, so being able to buy her the dream house meant everything to me.” During lockdown, Akech turned her skills to DIY. “My other siblings would go to school during the day,” she says, “so my mum, my sister and I would go to her new house and spend most of our day there, renovating it, before picking up my other brothers and sisters from school. My siblings are going to grow up in that house, so I wanted to make it amazing.”

During the summer, Akech travelled to the UK and spent two months staying at the home of her friend, mentor, and so-called “fashion dad”, British *Vogue* editor [Edward Enninful](#). “I don’t know many people in London,” she explains, “but he’s my family here.” Akech would walk Enninful’s Boston terrier, Ru, near his London home. “Ru!” Akech exclaims. “I spent so much time with Ru. We were always in the house. I’d go on walks with him sometimes, when the weather was nice.”

If Enninful is her fashion father, [Naomi Campbell](#) is her fashion mother. “She’s like a second mum to me,” Akech says. The two women first met on the set of a Pirelli calendar in April 2017 – afterwards, Campbell made it her business to look out for Akech, often seeking her out backstage. She goes on, with a trace of incredulity in her voice: “I used to idolise these people. Then I met Edward and Naomi, and not only were they nice, but they became my family.” Campbell doesn’t give Akech modelling advice – they talk about normal stuff. “We don’t even talk about fashion much,” she says. “We just talk about life.”

When Akech is on the catwalk, she blocks out everyone, apart from Enninful. “I get stage fright when I see people,” she explains. “The only person I notice on the runway is Edward. If I look around and get nervous it’s going to show. So I just think about what I’m going to eat after the show, when I’m going to go to bed, to distract my mind from freaking out that I’m going to fall over.” She references Campbell’s 1993 fall on the Vivienne Westwood catwalk. “Although, of course, if I fall, I want it to be as iconic as Naomi’s.”



‘If a little dark-skinned South Sudanese refugee who comes from absolutely nothing can do it, so can you’: feather dress by halpernstudio.com.
Photograph: Campbell Addy/The Observer

In 2019, Akech was included on the cover of British *Vogue*’s “Forces for Change” issue, guest-edited by the Duchess of Sussex. Megan called Akech at her home in Australia. “She was so sweet,” Akech says. “I remember her saying that I was inspirational... I was like, ‘Wow, OK, I’m doing good. If people like her find me inspirational, I’m doing something correct.’”

Akech is a longtime diversity campaigner. She’s spoken about her experience as a refugee for the United Nations and championed the representation of darker-skinned models in the industry. Her impassioned speech at the Fashion Awards 2019, as Ennifful and Valentino’s creative director Pierpaolo Piccioli beamed on from the wings, brought the house down. “Never doubt yourself or let the world convince you that things are not possible,” she told the assembled audience of industry professionals, voice cracking, resplendent in a bottle-green Valentino gown. “If a little dark-skinned South Sudanese refugee who comes from absolutely nothing can do it, so can you.”

When *Who* magazine used an image of another model to illustrate an interview with Akech in 2019, she criticised the magazine on Instagram.

“Not only do I personally feel insulted and disrespected, but I feel like my entire race has been disrespected, too,” [she wrote](#), to her 1.1 million followers. When asked about it, she credits social media for giving people the platform to chastise brands and publishers for racially insensitive missteps. “People are afraid of being called out,” she tells me, “and thank God to social media, for that.”

She credits her strong sense of self-belief to the experience of growing up around people who looked just like her. “Where I’m from,” she says, of her early years in Kenya, “no one said, ‘You’re too black.’ We were all black there.” But I get the impression that fighting for industry-wide representation – Akech has spoken repeatedly of how dispiriting it is when stylists don’t know how to deal with Afro hair, makeup artists don’t have the right shades for her skin, or backstage dressers confuse her with other dark-skinned models – can be tiring. “Now I don’t like to talk about diversity any more,” she says, of her hopes for the fashion industry. “I feel like I’ve said it over and over. I just want to see real change.”

Mercedes-Benz teamed up with Adut Akech on a high-fashion gameshow parody in December 2020. Watch it on [Instagram](#)

Makeup by Bernicia Boateng using Tom Ford, Sable, NARS and MAC; hair by Charlotte Mensah at Premier using Charlotte Mensah Manketti Oil Haircare Range; nails by Robbie Tomkins at Premier using the Dior Manicure Collection and Miss Dior Handcream; fashion assistant Peter Bevan; shot at Big Sky Studio

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- [The weekend's best photos Paragliders and tai chi](#)
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- [A world alive with beauty The best of the 2020 wildlife photography awards](#)
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A paraglider flies over Mam Tor in Derbyshire. Photograph: Danny Lawson/PA

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Animals and plants reclaim Scotland's abandoned spaces: photo essay

Trees and shrubbery have reclaimed much of the extensive derelict site of the Beardmore naval construction works at Dalmuir. Photograph: Murdo MacLeod/The Guardian

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Guardian morning briefing

Monday briefing: England councils scramble to keep schools closed

Beatrix Potter school in Wandsworth, London, where primaries are to stay closed along with secondaries. Photograph: Wiktor Szymanowicz/Rex/Shutterstock

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OpinionBrexit

Letters: we're out of the EU but we'll be back

Leaving the European Union is not an irreversible decision



Boris Johnson signs the Brexit trade deal. Photograph: Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

Boris Johnson signs the Brexit trade deal. Photograph: Leon Neal/AFP/Getty Images

Sun 3 Jan 2021 01.00 EST

I found Will Hutton's suggestion that in 2029 there could be a referendum on EU membership most encouraging ("[I was one of the millions opposed to Brexit. I've seen nothing here to change my mind](#)", Comment). I am 76 and perhaps I will live long enough to vote Remain again, hopefully resulting in the UK rejoining the EU. I could then die knowing the UK had seen sense and that my grandchild would enjoy all the benefits of being part of the EU.

Virginia Brown

Talgarth, Powys

The *Observer* provided valuable analysis on the Brexit deal. The deal is essentially one of damage limitation, with the negatives overwhelmingly outweighing the positives. Particularly disheartening were Fintan O'Toole's analogies with death – "funereal mode" and "moment of finality" ("[So long, we'll miss you – we Europeans see how much you've helped to shape us](#)", Comment). However, whereas death is final, leaving the EU is clearly not irreversible, as upliftingly made clear by Will Hutton.

When the reality of [Brexit](#) has an adverse impact on the personal circumstances of the electorate, sentiment will undoubtedly change. One thing is inevitable: the 2016 referendum on EU membership will not be the last.

David Newens

Milton Keynes

Tim Adams's thought-provoking "adieu" to the EU ("[We're out of the European Union. Just how did we get here?](#)", Focus) is a timely warning that previous breaks with Europe, notably the 1533 schism from Rome, have, far from opening minds to a more cosmopolitan outlook, resulted in creating centuries of fear, nativist intolerance and even the persecution of those on the losing side.

As the Erasmus programme, which encourages inter-European learning, is closed to British students, can we now expect other iconoclastic pogroms to eradicate all signs and memories of EU influence in this country, whether it be regional assistance grants, funding of the arts or initiatives such as European capital of culture or disabled access city awards? Does a similar fate to Tudor recusants now await the 48% Remainders if they dare to express nostalgic thoughts about ending our 47 years of EC/EU membership?

Paul Dolan

Northwich, Cheshire

Shame the guilty in Goa

Thank you for drawing attention to the environmental destruction facing Goa's forests ("[Fury as Goa's rare wildlife park faces invasion by rail and road](#)", World). It is all too easy for us in the west to wring our hands and then look away. Instead, we should find out which western financial

institutions are backing the coal and infrastructure projects involved. Investment banks, pension funds, insurers and reinsurers are increasingly sensitive about being involved in unsustainable businesses. Lobby groups such as Greenpeace and Unfriend Coal do a good job in highlighting the guilty parties and help people like us to take our business elsewhere.

Garry Booth

Halesworth, Suffolk
Sutton, London

Not all can afford TV licence

In his letter, David Flower says that it is beyond him why anyone would want to risk all that the BBC gives us “to save the cost of one cup of coffee per week” (“The BBC is worth every penny”, [Letters](#)). This reminded me of something that I once read in a *Daily Mirror* column by Keith Waterhouse back in the 1980s. Waterhouse said that you could always tell when you were being conned whenever anyone reduced the cost of something to so many cigarettes per day.

I am glad that Mr Flower can easily afford his TV licence. Millions of the poorest people in the UK cannot. Ask the Trussell Trust whether it thinks the one in every 50 families in the UK that it says is now accessing food banks, or the 800,000 people and rising who have been made redundant this year, can afford to spend £157.50 a year on a TV licence that they might otherwise spend on heating, food or electricity?

Dr Kenneth Smith

London E2

Teachers raise aspirations

In her article ([“With a deal done, can No 10 turn ‘levelling up’ into more than a nebulous phrase?”](#), Comment), Isabel Hardman writes: “Young people growing up in struggling towns are still told by their teachers or parents that people from their area don’t go to top universities or into certain well-paid jobs. One north-west MP explains, ‘We need to attract better teachers from elsewhere because when you just take from the pool of people in the local areas, it’s no surprise that the aspiration level is the same.’”

I am a teacher and I don't recognise the teachers who are being talked about. I have taught for 25 years and have never had a conversation with any student where I have tried to lower their aspirations and discourage them from applying to top universities or kept secret the fact that there are "certain well-paid jobs" that they might apply for. Why on earth would anyone do that, let alone a teacher?

I work in the north-west (though I am originally from "elsewhere", which might, according to this, make me one of the "better" teachers). I would love to invite the north-west MP to spend a day with us and see the work we do daily to raise aspirations. Perhaps they could volunteer to take part in the government's mass testing scheme, due to be rolled out in schools soon, while they are there.

Suzanne Davies
Chorltonville, Manchester

Impostors all?

Full marks to Jacinda Ardern for her openness about impostor syndrome ("[Some pretty smart women claim to be racked by impostor syndrome. Do men just not get it?](#)", Comment). However, I feel Catherine Bennett has made an issue of sexism out of something that has very little, if anything, to do with gender. In doing so, she does a disservice both to male sufferers and to female leaders, not all of whom are afflicted. To use David Cameron, Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees-Mogg as a typical representation of male power is absurd, given that all three were Eton-educated Tories. Would she also suggest that Gandhi was arrogant and brimming with egotism or that Margaret Thatcher was full of self-doubt?

Steve Clarke
Northampton

Don't judge a book...

It was wonderful to read of the support for independent bookshops in Barcelona, and that readers value bookshop owners' suggestions for what they might enjoy next, rather than being given advice by an algorithm ("[In a](#)

[year of forced solitude, Catalans rediscover the companionship of books](#)”, World).

In either case it's essential that the expert understands what a given book is about. I remember finding an early edition of *The Elephant Man* (the reminiscences of Sir Frederick Treves, the Victorian surgeon who helped the deformed Joseph Merrick) in the foreign travel section of a secondhand bookshop in Hay-on-Wye, among volumes on the delights of India and Nepal. There must be many similarly amusing mistaken identities waiting to raise a smile on bookshop shelves or in the “minds” of algorithms. *Fifty Shades of Grey* for the home improver?

Tina Rowe

Ilchester, Somerset

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Table of Contents

[The Guardian 2021.01.06 \[Wed, 06 Jan 2021\]](#)

[Headlines tuesday 5 january 2021](#)

[Coronavirus Strict restrictions could last months, Boris Johnson signals](#)

[England Pupils without laptops can still go to school in lockdown](#)

[Vaccines Rollout 'may not hit target pace for two weeks'](#)

[Education Pressure mounts on Williamson after BTECs reversal](#)

[Alfie Dingley Mother fears son could die as Brexit stops medical cannabis supply](#)

[Live Georgia polls close in race for control of US Senate](#)

[Full report Georgia voters head to polls in critical Senate runoffs](#)

[Senate runoffs Trump's Georgia call electrifies voters](#)

[Khairi Saadallah Man viewed extreme Isis content before Reading knife attack, court hears](#)

[Hong Kong Dozens of pro-democracy figures arrested in sweeping crackdown](#)

[Jacob Blake Officers will not be charged in shooting that left Black man paralysed](#)

[Julian Assange Doubts emerge in US over future of Assange extradition case](#)

[Shukri Abdi Family of refugee schoolgirl who drowned sues police](#)

[Environment Severe climate-driven loss of native molluscs reported off Israel's coast](#)

['One of the greatest' Manchester City legend Colin Bell dies at the age of 74](#)

[Change in the weather German storm names to be more diverse](#)

[2021.01.06 - Coronavirus](#)

[Live Coronavirus: WHO chief 'disappointed' after China blocks' Wuhan visit; 1 in 50 infected in UK](#)

[Vaccines No data to support UK delay of second dose, says WHO](#)

[WHO China blocks entry to team studying Covid's origins](#)
['Useful' Police chief calls for power to enter lockdown breakers' homes](#)

[Life without Covid Nations that have sidestepped the pandemic so far](#)

['I feel so worn down' Reactions to England's new Covid lockdown](#)

[Grammys Awards postponed weeks before ceremony](#)

[2021.01.06 - Coronavirus uk](#)

[Labour Former chair criticised for raising doubts over vaccine](#)

[Media BBC to expand educational shows in response to UK Covid lockdown](#)

[Rail transport Services likely to be halved as lockdown hits UK travel sector](#)

['I have never felt safe' UK shielders on new lockdown](#)

[2021.01.06 - Spotlight](#)

[The long read Burning the furniture: my life as a consumer](#)

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