

# UK to host its first global LGBT conference

- Countries across the world invited to London to attend the UK's first global LGBT conference in June 2022.
- 'Safe To Be Me' will be the largest event of its kind and will focus on making progress on legislative reform, tackling violence and discrimination, and ensuring equal access to public services for LGBT people.
- Conference Chair Nick Herbert (Lord Herbert of South Downs) has also been appointed by the PM as the UK's Special Envoy on LGBT rights to promote the conference and champion LGBT equality at home and abroad.

Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, alongside Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab today (16 May) announced the global event, which will bring together elected officials, policy makers, and the international LGBT community including activists, experts, and civil society to protect and promote the rights of LGBT people around the world.

'Safe To be Me: A Global Equality Conference' will take place 27-29 June 2022, coinciding with the 50th anniversary of the first official London Pride marches. The conference will take place in person and virtually, ensuring all can take part.

## **Minister for Women and Equalities, Liz Truss, said:**

"I want everyone to be able to live their life free from prejudice, malice, or violence, regardless of their background or who they choose to love.

"People should be judged on the basis of their individual character and talents alone, and we want to ensure that this message is heard around the world.

"This conference will take aim at the prejudices LGBT people still face, and look at the collective action we can take to tackle those injustices alongside our international friends and partners."

## **Foreign Secretary, Dominic Raab, said:**

"The right to live life without fear and persecution are the bedrock of inclusive and open societies and the UK, as a force for good, will protect and promote these values at home and around the world."

"As co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition, we are already working with 41 countries to defend the rights of LGBT people. We are urging every country to make sure LGBT people can live free from the discrimination and violence that persists today."

The Prime Minister has today announced that Conference Chair Lord Herbert of South Downs will also take on the role of the United Kingdom's Special Envoy

on LGBT Rights. He will promote the conference internationally and lead efforts to champion LGBT equality at home and abroad. He will also be working with the Minister for Women and Equalities to coordinate a year of domestic action on LGBT issues, in the run up to the global conference.

**Lord Herbert of South Downs, said:**

“With our immense soft power, and as a global force for good, the UK has an important role to play in leading international efforts to tackle the violence and discrimination against LGBT people which should have no place in the modern world.

“I am committed to the cause of advancing LGBT+ rights worldwide and I look forward to continuing that in my role as the Prime Ministers Special Envoy and as the Chair of the Global LGBT Conference. At a time when Covid has pulled many of us apart, the conference offers a real chance to bring people together and drive change for good”

Across the world, 69 countries still criminalise consensual same-sex acts. The UK is considered a leader on LGBT equality, having legalised same-sex marriage and introduced one of the world’s most comprehensive legislative frameworks for protecting LGBT people from discrimination.

Evidence suggests that the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the existing inequality LGBT people experience globally, with violence and discrimination a daily reality for some. The UK Government, with our international partners, believes this is the time to take collective, global action.

As co-chairs of the Equal Rights Coalition (ERC), the UK and Argentina will launch the ERC’s first Strategy and Five- Year Implementation Plan at a virtual meeting in July 2021. This comprehensive strategy will increase international action to defend the rights of LGBT people around the world.

In the lead up to the Conference there will be a series of virtual events, bringing together the UK’s key international partners with the first held on 18 May to mark International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT).

The 2021 IDAHOT+ Forum will be an important moment to discuss a range of important issues including LGBT inclusive healthcare and business advocacy. It will also be the beginning of a year-long partnership with Cyprus, our friend in Europe and the Commonwealth.

**Further information:**

- Details of speakers and delegates for the conference will be announced in due course.
- The Conference will be delivered with the UK’s co-chair of the Equal Rights Coalition, Argentina and Cyprus, co-host of the Council of Europe’s LGBTI Focal Points Network IDAHOT+ Forum.
- The Equal Rights Coalition is an intergovernmental coalition of 42 countries that are committed to protecting and promoting LGBT rights globally. It was launched in August 2016, under the leadership of

Uruguay and the Netherlands at the Global LGBTI Human Rights Conference in Montevideo. The United Kingdom took over as co-chair of the ERC on 14 June 2019, in partnership with Argentina.

- The Council of Europe's LGBTI Focal Points Network (EFPN) is a network of 37 Council of Europe member states. It was founded in 2005 and the UK has been an active participant since inception. The EFPN meets twice a year: to celebrate the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT) on/around 17 May and again in the Autumn for a policy roundtable. The UK are the current hosts for the IDAHOT+ Forum until 2022 alongside Cyprus.

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## [Prime Minister appoints new Special Envoy on LGBT rights: 16 May 2021](#)

News story

Prime Minister Boris Johnson appoints Lord Herbert of South Downs as the UK's Special Envoy on LGBT rights.



He will lead efforts to champion LGBT equality at home and abroad and will chair the 'Safe to be Me: A Global Equality Conference' in June 2022.

Combatting harassment and violence against LGBT people is a manifesto commitment, and hosting the UK Government's first global LGBT conference allows us to promote equality on the international stage.

Lord Herbert is Chair of the Global Equality Caucus, an international network of parliamentarians & elected representatives dedicated to tackling discrimination against LGBT people. He was a Member of the House of Commons 2005-2019 and was Chair of the UK All-Party Parliamentary Group on Global LGBT Rights 2015-2019.

As Special Envoy, Lord Herbert will bring together the Government's domestic work and supercharge our global leadership on LGBT rights. Focusing on

progressing legislative reform, tackling violence and discrimination, and ensuring equal access to public services for LGBT people. He will also be working with the Minister for Women and Equalities to coordinate a year of domestic action on LGBT issues, in the run up to the global conference.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson said:

I have always been immensely proud to live in a country that is one of the most progressive and liberal when it comes to LGBT equality. The freedom to love who you want is a key British value and a vital component of any democracy.

The pandemic has however exacerbated the existing inequality LGBT people experience globally, with violence and discrimination a daily reality for some. The UK Government, with our international partners, believes this is the time to take collective, global action.

I want to thank Nick for the brilliant leadership he is already playing as Chair of the international conference; and I look forward to continuing to work together in his new role as Special Envoy on LGBT rights

Nick Herbert (Lord Herbert of South Downs) said:

With our immense soft power, and as a global force for good, the UK has an important role to play in leading international efforts to tackle the violence and discrimination against LGBT people which should have no place in the modern world.

I am committed to the cause of promoting LGBT rights worldwide and I look forward to continuing that in my role as the Prime Ministers Special Envoy and as the Chair of the Global LGBT Conference. At a time when Covid has pulled many of us apart, the conference offers a real chance to bring people together and drive change for good.

He will commence his role immediately.

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[Summit to build global confidence in](#)

# vaccines to be convened by the UK Government

- The UK Government will convene a virtual Global Vaccine Confidence Summit on June 2nd, bringing together experts in the public and private sector.
- The Summit will look at innovative solutions to tackle misinformation and support confidence in life-saving COVID-19 vaccines around the world.
- Speakers at the summit will include Health Secretary Matt Hancock and Professor Heidi Larson, Founding Director of the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, with further international speakers to be announced on G7 social channels in the coming weeks

On 2 June, the UK Government will convene the world's first Global Vaccine Confidence Summit in an effort to drive vaccine uptake in the fight against the Covid.

Misinformation continues to pose one of the biggest threats to global recovery from the pandemic by damaging perceptions of the importance, safety, and effectiveness of vaccines.

The UK is working throughout our G7 Presidency this year to improve access to coronavirus vaccines, treatments and tests around the world, and vaccine confidence is a key part of that.

Speakers at the one-day event will include: Matt Hancock, Department of Health and Social Care Secretary of State, UK Government and Professor Heidi Larson, Founding Director of the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine – with more to be announced in the coming weeks.

They will discuss ways the governments, civil society and private sector – including social media companies – can tackle vaccine misinformation and amplify public health messages to improve vaccine confidence.

**Ahead of the Summit, Nadhim Zahawi, Minister for Vaccine Deployment at the UK's Department of Health and Social Care said:**

Vaccines are the route out of the pandemic, and nobody is safe until we're all safe.

This UK-hosted Summit is a significant opportunity for G7 countries to come together with partners across the world to take action to maintain high levels of trust in vaccines and those that provide them.

The monumental vaccination programme in the UK will start us on the road to building back better from Covid-19 and we must work collectively to ensure people across the world can reclaim their lives and livelihoods.

**Heidi Larson, Founding Director of the Vaccine Confidence Project at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine, said:**

I'm delighted to be taking part in the first Global Vaccine Confidence Summit because I know through my own work leading the Vaccine Confidence Project that no single government, academic institution or organisation can tackle this challenge alone.

To ensure the high levels of vaccine uptake needed to help end this pandemic, we need true cross-sectoral input to build trust across the various relationships – from scientists and health authorities to business partners and communities.

As we look ahead to preparedness for future pandemics, now is the time to think about building foundational trust to support vaccine confidence for the future.

**Caroline Dinenage, Minister for Digital and Culture at the UK's Department of Culture, Media and Sport said:**

In the UK we have mounted a major public information campaign to arm people with the truth about vaccines in response to a rising tide of falsehoods online. We've worked closely with social media companies to identify, remove and respond to this dangerous disinformation. We know these are challenges faced across the globe and we look forward to discussing our approach with our G7 partners and like-minded countries.

**Wendy Morton, Minister for Global Health at the UK's Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office said:**

Global equitable access to coronavirus vaccines is key to eliminating the threat of the virus in the UK as well as overseas. That's why the UK is one of the largest country donors to the COVAX Advance Market Commitment, helping to make vaccinations available to all.

The Global Vaccine Confidence Summit is an opportunity for the international community to build trust in vaccines, as these are key to a global recovery. No one is safe until everyone is safe.

The Summit will enable global partners to focus their efforts on vaccine

confidence as a key driver of vaccine uptake; the role that insight and behavioural science can play in addressing the threat of health misinformation; and how global collaboration can deliver trustworthy communications.

The Global Vaccine Confidence Summit will be held virtually on Wednesday 2 June.

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## [UK troops seize Daesh arms cache in Mali peacekeeping operation](#)

UK troops deployed to Mali as part of the UN's peacekeeping mission have seized a cache of weapons hidden by suspected Daesh terrorists who had been threatening local communities.

The operation, which was the first of its kind by UN forces in Mali, is a clear demonstration of how British peacekeepers have been making an impact in the UN's mission to protect civilians during their first six months in the country.

The British force launched the Mission-approved "cordon and search" operation in early May in a village close to the border with Niger, after receiving intelligence about violent extremists operating in the area. The extremists had been intimidating local communities, extorting money and assaulting people who refused to comply with their demands, meaning UK forces were able to respond to protect them under the UN's peacekeeping mandate.

Minister for the Armed Forces James Heappey said:

This was the first operation of its kind by UN forces in Mali, demonstrating how UK personnel have made a significant contribution to the mission during their first six months in the country.

Removing the weapons and disrupting the terrorist operation will make a real difference to the local community and importantly the intelligence collected will help develop our understanding and help to prevent the threat from armed groups in the future.

The UK Task Group provides the UN with a highly specialised long-range reconnaissance capability, conducting patrols in remote areas, gathering intelligence and engaging with the local population to help the UN understand and respond to threats and fulfil its mandate to protect civilians.

Acting on information they had gathered, around 100 soldiers from the Light Dragoons and Royal Anglian Regiment, supported by a specialist Royal Engineer

search team, were cleared by UN HQ to move into the village and search several buildings of interest. The operation took place during incredibly challenging conditions, including a sandstorm that reduced visibility to 30m, over 50C heat and soldiers carrying up to 45kg of equipment.

Upon searching the area, they found a hidden cache of terrorist material, including AK47 rifles and hundreds of rounds of ammunition, along with camouflage clothing, radios, mobile phones and hundreds of litres of fuel. The weapons and intelligence collected were then passed to the UN Mine Action Service, UN Police, and Malian authorities, who will use the information gathered and then destroy the materials.

A cell of suspected fighters from Daesh-affiliated group Islamic State in the Greater Sahel (ISGS) fled by swimming across the River Niger before the peacekeepers arrived, leaving behind what they would consider valuable resources.

Camouflage clothing, AK47 magazines and radios found in the search (MoD Crown Copyright)

Lieutenant Colonel Tom Robinson, Commanding Officer of the Light Dragoons, said:

This operation is a tangible example of how UK soldiers, as part of the UN Force, are making a real difference to protect the people of Mali who are living in one of the most vulnerable regions in the world.

Using intelligence gathered during our patrols, we focussed on where terrorist groups were intimidating local people and were then able to find and seize the weapons and supplies, disrupting their harmful influence on local communities and gathering more information that will help interrupt further extremist activity.

The operation is the first targeted "cordon and search" operation, acting on intelligence proactively gathered, to be carried out by UN forces in Mali. It demonstrates how the UN mission to Mali (MINUSMA) is working to protect civilians, support Malian authorities to maintain security and protect UN personnel from threats posed by terrorists.

Swedish Colonel Markus Hook, Commanding Officer of the UN Mission's Mobile Task Force, of which the UK troops are a part, said:

This Cordon and Search Operation was the first of its kind in a long period of time for MINUSMA.

It was based on information which suggested that a specific location within a village was being used for weapon storage by non-



compliant armed groups which were harassing the local population.

The operation was a direct and timely response to intelligence, and it serves as a telling example of how we are proactively fulfilling our mandate to protect civilians.

The 300-strong UK Task Group deployed to Mali in December 2020 to support the UN mission, which is made up of over 13,000 peacekeepers from 56 different countries and works to support peace efforts, encourage security sector reform, protect civilians and promote human rights.

The Sahel is one of Africa's poorest and most fragile regions. It is marked by chronic poverty, instability, high levels of gender inequality, and is highly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Terrorist violence and conflict have been sharply on the rise in recent years.

The UK is one of the largest humanitarian donors to the Sahel. In 2020 the UK gave £14.65 million in humanitarian aid to Mali and is currently in the process of increasing the size of the UK embassy to reinforce our diplomatic strength in the country.

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## **£11.6 million for Swindon as government funds vital new road**

- multimillion-pound investment will help fund new road linking New Eastern Villages development with existing local road network
- planned works include new roundabout, signalised junction and footway – all of which will ease congestion and improve local journey times
- funding reiterates government commitment to levelling up transport infrastructure across the country as we build back better

Swindon will benefit from a multimillion-pound road scheme to provide fast journeys between the town and the planned New Eastern Villages development, Transport Minister Baroness Vere announced today (15 May 2021).

The project – supported by £11.6 million of funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) and led by Swindon Borough Council – will include a new access road between the A419 Commonhead roundabout and the southern end of the new development, enabling the construction of 4,150 new homes.

A footway and shared-use path will run either side of the new road, ensuring ease of access for pedestrians and cyclists, while a new signalised junction at Commonhead and mini roundabout at Wanborough village will help manage traffic flow in the area.

The total cost of the scheme is £30.5 million, with DfT contributing £11.6 million and Homes England providing £18.9 million. Works are due to be completed by autumn 2022.

Transport Minister Baroness Vere said:

Our funding towards this new road scheme will help make the New Eastern Villages site a reality, providing a huge boost to Swindon's economy by supporting thousands of new homes and jobs.

This new scheme has been planned with everyone in mind and will ensure fast and smooth journeys for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians across the area.

As we build back better from the pandemic, we will continue to invest in our infrastructure to boost connections, drive regeneration and level up regions across the UK.

As part of the scheme, Wanborough will see the mini-roundabout realigned on Rotten Row, to encourage motorists to reduce their speed, as well as more pedestrian crossings and parking spaces. Better signage will also be put in place to help ensure heavy goods vehicles avoid travelling through the village.

The full New Eastern Villages development programme is set to bring 8,650 new homes to Swindon, along with 40 hectares of employment land, new shopping facilities and supporting services, as well as green corridors to enable healthy lifestyles and more active travel.

Councillor Gary Sumner, Swindon Borough Council's Cabinet Member for Strategic Infrastructure, Transport and Planning, said:

The Southern Connector Road is an essential part of the infrastructure required to deliver the New Eastern Villages and I'm extremely pleased that we have managed to secure complete funding from the Department for Transport and Homes England for this really important link road.

We are investing £72.5 million into the road network around the New Eastern Villages, most of which has been secured from government. This investment in Swindon's future is a great vote of confidence for our town.

Sophie White, Homes England's Director of Infrastructure Grants, said:

We are committed to working with local authority partners to help them meet their housing needs by supporting the delivery of new infrastructure. This funding unlocks critical housing sites by

providing road, pedestrian and cycle access routes for the New Eastern Villages communities that will be built in coming years. It supports the Council's vision by providing much-needed infrastructure improvements in Swindon.

[The Housing Infrastructure Fund](#) is helping to meet the government's target of 300,000 new homes across England by providing local authorities with grant funding for new infrastructure, to unlock new homes in areas that need them the most.