

[Priya Lakhani OBE appointed as Non-Executive Board Member to DCMS](#)

News story

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden CBE MP has appointed Priya Lakhani as a Non-Executive Board Member for a term of three years



Priya Lakhani OBE is the Founder CEO of CENTURY Tech, an artificial intelligence education technology company that develops AI-powered learning tools for schools, colleges, universities and employers across the world.

In 2008, Priya left her career as a barrister to launch a fresh cooking-sauce business, which through its charitable foundation provided millions of meals and thousands of vaccinations to the underprivileged in India and Africa, and funded several schools.

Priya was awarded Business Entrepreneur of the Year by the Chancellor in 2009 and Officer of the Order of the British Empire in 2014. She was a business advisor to the UK's coalition government, was appointed to the UK government's AI Council in 2019.

In 2018, Priya co-founded the Institute for Ethical AI in Education, which helps to enable learners to benefit from AI in education in an ethical way.

Published 22 April 2021

[BRIT Awards to go ahead with live](#)

audience as latest event in Government research programme

The 2021 BRIT Awards ceremony will go ahead with a live audience as the latest addition to the government's Events Research Programme, which looks at how venues can restart large events and welcome crowds back safely this summer.

The BRIT Awards with Mastercard will return to London's The O2 arena on Tuesday 11 May with an audience of 4,000 people and live performances from Dua Lipa, Headie One, Arlo Parks and BRIT Rising Star Award winner Griff, among other acts to be announced.

Audience members will not be socially distanced or required to wear face coverings once seated in the arena, however they will be required to follow existing Government guidance when travelling to the venue and adhere to rules set out by the event organisers.

All attendees must have proof of a negative lateral flow test result to enter the venue. As part of the wider scientific research on the trial events, attendees will also be asked to take a test after the event to gather further evidence on the safety of indoor settings, reduced social distancing and the removal of non-pharmaceutical interventions like face coverings.

They will also have to provide contact details for NHS Test and Trace to ensure everyone can be traced in the event of an audience member receiving a positive test after the event.

Culture Secretary, Oliver Dowden, said:

The BRITs are always a big night in the music calendar, but this year's awards will be particularly special. They will reunite live audiences with the best of British talent for the first time in a year, while providing a vital opportunity to see how we can get large crowds back safely as soon as possible.

Music connected us when we were separated by this pandemic, and now it's going to help bring us back together again.

The research gathered from this year's BRIT Awards will build on the evidence collected at other pilots in the programme, including the World Snooker Championships at the Sheffield Crucible and an outdoor gig at Sefton Park hosted by Festival Republic.

The evidence from these pilots will be used to inform government policy to bring about the phased return of fuller audiences to venues and events across England.

Geoff Taylor, Chief Executive BPI & BRIT Awards, said:

The BRIT Awards team are excited to confirm our plans to host a live audience at our ceremony on May 11th. There could be no better way to celebrate music's biggest night than with an audience present for the first live performances at The O2 in over a year. Most importantly, this is also a key moment in the return of live music, which we all want to see back at scale as quickly as possible.

We will be working closely with the Government, The O2 and all our partners to finalise details and ensure all safety measures and guidelines are adhered to. More exciting performance announcements will be made in the coming days.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

We continue to take steps to getting back to doing the things we love, whether that's meeting friends and loved ones, or attending live sport and music.

These planned pilots mean we can gather the necessary evidence to inform our plans for future events, ensuring mass events can take place safely.

I am enormously grateful for the hard work of scientists and clinicians from across the country, which will mean we can start to enjoy these events again safely.

Danielle Kennedy-Clark, Deputy General Manager of The O2 said:

We're proud that The O2 has been selected to host the largest indoor capacity pilot event with The BRITs. This scientific trial is an important step on the path to recovery for the live entertainment industry, and our operational teams are making the final preparations to be able to welcome people into The O2 again for the first time in more than a year".

The information gathered from events as part of the Events Research Programme will be crucial to understand how all venues – from major sport stadiums and theatres to wedding venues, conference centres and nightclubs – could operate safely this summer. The programme of pilots will explore how different approaches to social distancing, ventilation and testing protocols could ease opening and maximise participation.

PM warns world leaders not to 'throw away chance to preserve our planet'

- PM to address opening session of the US Climate Leaders Summit
- UK has announced a world-leading commitment to cut emissions by 78% by 2035
- PM will urge countries to match the UK's ambition and deliver net zero by the middle of the century to limit global warming

The world has to turn the tide on climate change this decade or risk being remembered as the generation that failed to protect our planet, the Prime Minister will tell the Climate Leaders Summit today.

He will address the opening session of the virtual summit, which is hosted by US President Joe Biden and aims to secure commitments on cutting greenhouse gas emissions, shifting to renewable energy and climate finance for developing countries.

The UK this week set into law the world's most ambitious climate change target, pledging to cut carbon emissions by 78 percent by 2035 compared to 1990 levels.

The Prime Minister is calling on global leaders and businesses meeting today to match that level of ambition ahead of COP26 if we are to limit global warming to 1.5°C.

Speaking at the Climate Leaders Summit, Prime Minister Boris Johnson is expected to say:

The UK has shown that it's possible to slash emissions while growing the economy, which makes question of reaching net zero not so much technical as political.

If we actually want to stop climate change, then this must be the year in which we get serious about doing so. Because the 2020s will be remembered either as the decade in which world leaders united to turn the tide, or as a failure.

So let's come to Kunming in October and Glasgow in November armed with ambitious targets and the plans required to reach them. And let the history books show that it was this generation of leaders that possessed the will to preserve our planet for generations to come.

The US-hosted Climate Leaders Summit is an important moment to build momentum

on the road to the COP Biodiversity Summit in Kunming in October and the COP26 summit in Glasgow in November.

As COP President this year, the UK is leading international efforts to secure ambitious 2030 emissions reductions targets in line with reaching net zero by the middle of the century, backed up by clear action plans and policy changes such as phasing out coal. The UK will set out its Net Zero Strategy with policies to hit its new targets ahead of COP26.

More than 120 countries have made net zero commitments to date, covering 65% of global carbon emissions – more than triple the 20% covered when the UK took over the COP Presidency in December 2019.

The UK Government has also committed £11.6 billion in international climate finance to support developing countries over the next five years.

Ahead of COP26, we are asking donor countries to deliver on their commitment to secure \$100 billion of public finance, as well as working with businesses to leverage private finance and expertise to ensure all countries can address climate change and deal with its impacts.

[Claudia Arney appointed as Lead Non-Executive Board Member to DCMS](#)

News story

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden CBE MP has appointed Claudia Arney as the Lead Non-Executive Board Member for a term of three years



Claudia is currently the Chair of Deliveroo PLC, and Remuneration Committee Chair of Kingfisher PLC and Derwent London PLC. She also serves as a member of the Panel on Takeovers and Mergers.

Claudia began her executive career at McKinsey & Company, before holding roles at Pearson, the Financial Times, Goldman Sachs, and HM Treasury. She was CEO of Thestreet.co.uk, and Group Managing Director at EMAP.

Claudia's previous non-executive experience includes; Remuneration Committee Chair of Halfords PLC, Senior Independent Director of Telecity Group plc, Governance Committee Chair of Aviva plc, Non-Executive Director of Ocado Group plc and Non-Executive Director and Interim Chair of The Premier League.

Claudia read English Literature at Oxford University and holds an MBA from Insead.

Published 22 April 2021

[Implementing Colombia's historic peace agreement](#)

Thank you Mr President, and may I also give thanks to the Special Representative for his briefing. And may I also welcome back Minister Blum to the Council.

Mr President, as the SRSG has just outlined there were some encouraging developments during this last reporting period. The United Kingdom welcomes the productive meeting last month – facilitated by the Special Representative – between President Duque and Rodrigo Londoño. As we approach the milestone fifth anniversary of the peace agreement later this year, it is positive that both parties committed to efforts to enhance its comprehensive implementation, and to strengthen reintegration and security guarantees for former combatants.

As we have highlighted many times before in this Council, the continued insecurity in conflict-affected communities is an ongoing threat to building peace. The UK remains deeply concerned that social leaders, human rights defenders and former combatants continue to face deadly violence from armed groups and criminal organisations.

In this respect, we note the progress made by the National Protection Unit towards filling its vacancies and clearing the backlog of over one thousand protection requests. We also commend the Special Investigations Unit for its improving track record of investigations and convictions. And we are encouraged that the Ministry of Interior is strengthening its capacity to respond to the early warnings issued by the Ombudsman's Office. It is vital that these measures continue to be enhanced, in order to stem the violence against Colombians working to build a future away from conflict.

Mr President, we have long called in this Council for a realistic long-term plan to dismantle armed groups and criminal organisations and bring state services, security and justice to all citizens. Expanding and improving state presence and security is a crucial step in stabilising conflict-affected areas. Now that the Government has presented the guidelines of this dismantling policy, we look forward to its swift implementation.

The United Kingdom also remains extremely concerned by the continued recruitment of minors by illegal armed groups in Colombia. We call on all armed groups immediately to release all minors from their ranks. We also note with concern the tragic deaths of minors during Government operations against armed groups in Guaviare last month, and welcome the Government's investigation into these deaths.

Mr President, turning to the reintegration process, we are encouraged by the further advances during the reporting period, including the first session of the National Reintegration Council, and progress in land purchases for a number of Territorial Areas for Training and Reintegration (TATRs). We urge the Government to ensure coordinated action in support of all former combatants, including those outside the former TATRs.

Mr President, the transitional justice system is a cornerstone of the Peace Agreement, and the JEP's first indictment on 26 January represented an important milestone. We welcome the constructive response to their indictment by six of the former FARC-EP leaders, asking victims for forgiveness and committing to answering their questions during the hearing of the case. Acknowledging responsibility for crimes and injustices will pave the way for reconciliation and sustainable peace.

Minister Blum, this Council has been working to respond to Colombia's request – which the United Kingdom very much welcomed – for the Verification Mission to support the JEP in verifying compliance with its sentences. And while conversations are still ongoing, I hope, from the UK perspective, that we will soon be able to take action formally to add this task to the Mission's mandate.

Let me conclude, Mr President, by saying that the United Kingdom recognises the important progress achieved so far in implementing Colombia's historic Peace Agreement, as well as the significant challenges which remain. We urge the parties to remain seized of these, and to intensify their efforts during this crucial year. The United Kingdom remains fully committed to supporting Colombia to achieve a lasting peace.

Thank you, Mr President.