

Prime Minister's article in the Telegraph: 15 June 2020

It was utterly absurd that a load of far-right thugs and boover boys yesterday converged on London with a mission to protect the statue of Winston Churchill. It was right that a good number should have been arrested. They were violent. They were aggressive towards the police. They were patently racist. There is nothing that can excuse their behaviour.

And yet it was also, frankly, absurd and deplorable that the statue of Winston Churchill should have been in any plausible danger of attack. It was outrageous that anyone could even have claimed that the statue needed protection. It was and is miserable to see his statue entombed in its protective sheath.

It is true that the monument has been covered up several times before, in anticipation of trouble, after consultation with the Mayor's office and English Heritage, because the police believe that is the safest and simplest thing to do. But many people will look at that image and feel a sense of bewilderment.

Why attack Churchill? What has the world come to when one of this country's greatest ever leaders – perhaps our greatest – has to be shielded from the wrath of the mob? We all understand the depth of feeling that has been exposed by the killing, in Minnesota, of George Floyd. No one who cares about this country can ignore the many thousands of people who have joined the Black Lives Movement to protest peacefully, as most of them have, in the last few days. It is no use just saying that we have made huge progress in tackling racism.

There is much more that we need to do; and we will. It is time for a cross-governmental commission to look at all aspects of inequality – in employment, in health outcomes, in academic and all other walks of life. We need to tackle the substance of the problem, not the symbols. We need to address the present, not attempt to re-write the past – and that means we cannot and must not get sucked into never-ending debate about which well-known historical figure is sufficiently pure or politically correct to remain in public view.

Where will it end? Are we supposed to haul down Cromwell who killed so many thousands of people in Ireland? What about Nelson and all the other innumerable reminders of this country's imperial past? Take the case of Ayuba Suleiman Diallo, whose portrait hangs in Room 15 of the National Portrait Gallery. He was a native of the Gambia who was known and admired in C18 London as a translator of Arab texts. He was also, originally, a slaver himself. Does that mean he should be purged from the Gallery?

My point is that our history is immensely complex, and modern Britain is a product of a vast conglomerate of ideas and beliefs – not all of which look good in the light of today. Yes, Churchill expressed all sorts of views over

his immense career – and bear in mind that he entered parliament under Queen Victoria and left it under Queen Elizabeth – which are totally unacceptable to modern ears.

As it happens, he generally changed with the times. He changed his view on India, and her capacity for independence; and whatever he may have said about Islam in the 1890s, he also built the Regent's Park Mosque in the 1940s. And above all – as so many have rightly pointed out – it is the height of lunacy to accuse him of racism, when he stood alone against a racist tyranny that without his resistance would have overwhelmed this country and the rest of Europe.

He was a hero, and I expect I am not alone in saying that I will resist with every breath in my body any attempt to remove that statue from Parliament Square, and the sooner his protective shielding comes off the better.

It is not just that is wrong to destroy public property by violence. I am also extremely dubious about the growing campaign to edit or photoshop the entire cultural landscape. If we start purging the record and removing the images of all but those whose attitudes conform to our own, we are engaged in a great lie, a distortion of our history – like some public figure furtively trying to make themselves look better by editing their own Wikipedia entry.

Would it not be better and more honest to ask our children to understand the context, to explain the mixture of good and bad in the career of Churchill and everyone else? And rather than tear some people down, we should build others up, and celebrate the people who we in this generation believe are worthy of memorial. We have brilliant sculptors and artists. Why should they not be commissioned to make fitting additions to the landscape and cityscape? Take the great courtyard in the Foreign and Commonwealth office, where stone statues of British explorers and imperialists look down from the niches. Many of the niches are for some reason unfilled.

Rather than tear down the past, why not add some of the men and women – most often BAME – who helped to make our modern Commonwealth and our modern world? Isn't that a more cheerful approach?

This new vogue for politically correct iconoclasm is not just dispiriting, and unfair, and often ahistorical. Worst of all, it is a total distraction from the matter in hand. It does nothing for BAME people to go around mutilating statues, or campaigning against this or that cultural relic. There are far greater and more important battles.

In the last ten years we have seen a big expansion in BAME students at our universities; more young black kids excelling in the most challenging subjects at school. The struggle now is to turn that into the universal narrative and the universal expectation – a story of success and not discrimination. That means taking seriously the serious points that are raised by the marchers. It means addressing racism and discrimination, and stamping it out.

But it does not mean wasting time in delectable academic disputation about

the life and opinions of every historical personality currently immortalised in bronze or stone.

Let's fight racism, but leave our heritage broadly in peace. If we really want to change it, there are democratic means available in this country – thanks, by the way, to Winston Churchill.

Chancellor visits one of thousands of shops set to open on Monday

News story

The Chancellor Rishi Sunak visited a Waterstones in London to see some of the measures they've put in place to ensure they are ready to welcome customers again.



- the Chancellor visited a Waterstones, one of the thousands of shops opening their doors again
- nearly 7,000 high streets will reawaken on Monday as non-essential retail can open as part of the government's plan to gradually and safely reopen the economy
- non-essential retail employs 1.3 million people and provides £46.6 billion to our economy every year

Together, the non-essential retail sector employs 1.3 million people in high streets up and down the country and provides £46.6 billion to our economy every year. They're able to reopen thanks to the ongoing efforts of people across the country to meet the Five Tests set out by the Prime Minister.

Waterstones is one of the many shops set to open their doors again from Monday provided they follow the COVID-19 secure guidelines, such as limiting the number of customers allowed inside and frequently cleaning objects and surfaces. Waterstones have installed sneeze guards and sanitiser stations, and browsed books will be removed and quarantined. Rishi Sunak, Chancellor of

the Exchequer said:

From Monday, shops selling books, clothes, and electronics are able to open for business for the first time in more than two months, as part of our plan to gradually and safely reopen the economy.

There are nearly 7,000 high streets across the country, each providing a valuable service to their community. They will be vital in helping kickstart the economy as we recover from the virus.

The retail sector employs more people than any other sector in the UK and more than 10 million people live within 200 metres of a high street.

Kate Skipper, Waterstones' Chief Operating Officer said:

We are delighted to be reopening on 15 June as we bring our shops safely out of hibernation. We can't wait to welcome booklovers back to their natural habitat as we return to serving our customers within their communities. Healthy local high streets are vital to communities at all times, providing much-needed services and employment to their neighbourhoods.

New measures will be in place to ensure the safety of our customers and our booksellers but our shops will still be bursting full of interesting books to read. We look forward to seeing you there.

Mike Cherry, Federation of Small Businesses' National Chair said:

As our high streets begin to reopen after this period of crisis, small businesses will be at the very heart of that economic recovery.

Making up 99 per cent of all businesses in the country, small firms are the backbone of the economy and at the heart of the economic recovery in their local communities in the weeks and months to come.

The general public and communities have been fantastic in supporting their local businesses through this difficult time. The reopening of shops is a landmark day, so please do support your local small businesses this week.

Further information

- Pictures from the Chancellor's visit to Waterstones can be found on our [Flickr page](#).
- Businesses should only reopen once they have completed a risk assessment, in consultation with trade union representatives or workers,

and are confident they are managing the risks. They must have taken the necessary steps to become COVID-19 secure in line with current Health and Safety legislation.

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[Emergency byelaw to protect Severn salmon stocks extended](#)

Following a request by the Environment Agency for an extension of the emergency byelaw to protect salmon in the River Severn and its estuary, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, Victoria Prentis, has extended the emergency byelaw for 6 months.

The emergency byelaw came into effect last June initially for 12 months. It was introduced after a review of data showed a significant reduction in salmon stock levels in the Severn.

Under the byelaw, draft net and putcher fishing in the Severn estuary is prohibited. Lave net fishing operates on a catch and release basis only. The emergency byelaw also means rod and line fishing is on a catch and release basis only on the whole of the Severn throughout the rod season, which lasts until 7 October.

The move to protect this salmon population came after last year's figures on the stock levels for the Severn, as well as the Wye and Usk, showed numbers were extremely low. Salmon from the Severn estuary migrate to the Wye and Usk.

Figures this year show salmon numbers remain low, so every fish returned safely could contribute to improving the spawning population this autumn.

Reducing the taking of salmon is only one part of the Environment Agency's larger national programme to protect salmon stocks. Actions taken by the Environment Agency and its partners that contribute to protecting salmon stocks include removing barriers, improving water quality, implementing better agricultural practices and addressing unsustainable water abstractions.

The Environment Agency is taking these actions because of the need to protect salmon stocks that have declined to unsustainable population levels in many of our rivers. The decline in the numbers of wild salmon, seen not just in English rivers but throughout the North Atlantic, is a major concern and the Environment Agency is determined to protect the future of this important species.

The provisional 2019 declared rod catches on the Rivers Severn, Usk and Wye are the worst on record despite good angling conditions and the removal of all nets operating in the Severn estuary.

David Hudson, Environment Manager for Gloucestershire, said:

We are concerned that the number of returning adult salmon continues to decline despite the current protection measures we have in place. We will closely monitor salmon stocks throughout this year, with a view to introducing more long term protection byelaws if required following consultation, in the hope of increasing the numbers of this iconic species.

Fishing is only one of a number of factors that have led to the fall in salmon stocks in the Severn; environmental factors at critical times in the salmon's life cycle, such as recent floods and warm winters, also play a part.

We understand the concerns of fishermen, but only by the use of immediate and robust action, with cooperation from others, can we prevent the collapse of salmon stocks in the Severn in the future. Flooding earlier in the year and the coronavirus pandemic has prevented the Environment Agency from carrying out much of its planned engagement with fishermen, but we will look to do that as soon as practical.

Note to editors

- The power to make an emergency byelaw to prohibit the taking of salmon is set out in Schedule 27 to the Water Resources Act 1991 (as inserted by s.225(2) of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009).
- Fines for breaking fisheries byelaws are unlimited.
- Current legislation requires all salmon caught before 16 June by rod and line to be returned.
- Legislation already exists to prohibit the sale of any salmon caught by rod and line.
- The average number of salmon caught in the Severn, taken over the last 10 years is 300 salmon caught by 300 fishermen; in 2018, 200 people fished the river, with only 156 fish caught.
- Other countries that have closed salmon net fisheries include, Republic of Ireland, Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland, and the Faroese fisheries.
- Salmon stocks in the Severn are now classed as "Probably at Risk"
- Reducing exploitation is one action of the 'Salmon Five Point Approach' which has been jointly developed and committed to by a wide range of partners including Government, Atlantic Salmon Trust, Angling Trust, River Trusts, Wild Trout Trust, Salmon and Trout Conservation Association and the Institute of Fisheries Management.
- Natural Resources Wales (NRW) has implemented mandatory catch and release byelaws and method restrictions for the 2020 fishing season on

all rivers in Wales including the cross border rivers (Dee and Wye). They also implemented an emergency salmon protection byelaw in October 2019 requiring 100% catch and release in the Welsh parts of the River Severn. This byelaw expires in October 2020.

- Putchers are conical baskets traditionally made from natural materials, but more recently from steel. They are fished in ranks, often containing many hundreds of baskets, arranged in up to 3 or 4 tiers and positioned out across the tidal flow. Fish are caught as they fall back on the ebb tide and are trapped, to be retrieved once the rank is exposed at low tide. Some ranks also catch fish on flood tides.
- Lave nets are large triangular hand-held nets that are used by fishermen to intercept and catch individual salmon. Lave net fishing is a rare and specialised form of salmon net fishing and is currently practiced in only two areas of England.
- Draft nets are conventional seine nets fished in a way to encircle and catch salmon by use of a boat and hauling the net into shore.

[Loneliness Minister: Write letters to people isolating at home](#)

People should consider writing letters and cards to those still isolating as lockdown measures ease to ensure they don't feel forgotten, the Loneliness Minister urged today (15 June).

Baroness Barran is encouraging the public to reach out to friends, family and neighbours who are elderly or otherwise clinically vulnerable. This includes those who are pregnant, aged 70 or older or with an underlying health condition.

This builds on the Prime Minister's announcement last week that single adult households – those living alone or single parents with children under 18 – can now form a "support bubble" with one other household, meaning they can visit and stay overnight. This move will particularly support those who live by themselves, who are lonely and struggling with being unable to see friends and family.

As part of the #Let'sTalkLoneliness campaign, which launched a year ago today, the Government is offering helpful advice to tackle loneliness, such as ways to reach out to someone who might be feeling lonely, how to volunteer safely, joining an online group, and signposting to sources of support.

A government partnership with the Post Office and Royal Mail will see a "Let's Talk Loneliness" postmark stamped on most letters delivered during Loneliness Awareness Week (15-19 June), to raise awareness of loneliness and help tackle the stigma.

To mark the week, the Loneliness Minister will also be writing letters to check in on friends and family, and is encouraging the public to do the same and make connections. This follows new research from the Royal Mail which shows that nearly three quarters of people (74%) feel that writing letters has positive mental health benefits.

Today, the Government has also announced the organisations who will receive a share of £5 million to reduce loneliness, which was pledged as part of the Chancellor's £750 million support package for charities. The successful organisations are providing vital support for a wide range of vulnerable people at risk of loneliness at this time, including the elderly, veterans, and people with disabilities.

Minister for Loneliness, Baroness Barran, said:

The last few months have brought loneliness to the forefront of our minds. We all have a role in being kind and looking out for each other, and as some of us begin to regain some normality we cannot forget those who may need to stay at home for longer and could be at risk of feeling lonely.

Writing letters might be a slightly forgotten art but it's more important than ever to connect with people, and putting pen to paper is an excellent way of making sure our friends, family and neighbours know we're thinking about them.

The beneficiaries of the £5 million loneliness fund are:

- **The English Football League Trust** will receive £810,000 to make onward grants to its Football Club Community Organisations in 32 deprived locations across England, with the aim of connecting more older people at risk of loneliness. Activities include befriending phone calls, online social groups, a pen-pal scheme, social action from young people taking part in the National Citizen Service and socially distanced 'garden gate' conversations.
- **The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen And Families Association – Forces Help (SSAFA)** will use £500,000 to support veterans experiencing loneliness and their families across the UK. The funding will support a new socially-distanced visiting service, expansion of telephone helpline, a one-to-one mentoring service and targeted activities for groups more at risk of loneliness.
- **Sense** will receive £500,000 to support children and families and adults with complex disabilities. The funding will enable them to expand and scale up their 'Connect 4 Service' which helps disabled people form

social connections and includes buddying services, online activities for young carers, specialist virtual childcare and family sessions and activities sent through the post.

- £500,000 will go to the **Alzheimer's Society** who will continue to support people with dementia and their carers through welfare and companion calls to support their wellbeing and provide informal chats and weekly 'singing for the brain' sessions – vocal exercises that help improve brain activity and well-being.
- **The British Red Cross** will receive £610,000 to support young people, BAME communities, refugees, the digitally excluded and people more at risk of loneliness because of their health issues. It will enable them to expand their connecting communities work, with a focus on virtual group activities and 1:1 support to digitally excluded people, helping to get them online. People living in Durham, Barking and Dagenham, Stockport and Plymouth will be among the first to benefit.
- £500,000 for **Home-Start UK** will help them provide onward grants to local Home Starts to support new mums at risk of loneliness. Their service will include regular telephone calls, online groups to connect families with each other and working with local partners to support crisis response.
- **The Royal National Institute of Blind People** has received £500,000 to further support blind and partially sighted people through adapting and expanding telephone groups, online resources and piloting socially-distanced face to face support.
- £500,000 will be allocated to **Mind** who will make onward grants to local groups to provide mental health support for older people, new parents, those who are disabled, digitally excluded and young people. This will include listening, befriending and wellbeing support services targeting these groups.
- **The Carers Trust** will receive £500,000 to make onward grants to local charities in their network.

David Gold, Director of Public Affairs and Policy, Royal Mail, said:

Handwritten correspondence is a very powerful way of connecting and showing someone close that you care; particularly during these difficult and sometimes isolating times. Keeping the nation connected is of vital importance to us, so we're delighted to partner with the Government on this initiative.

Nick Read, Chief Executive of the Post Office, said:

Loneliness can have serious impacts on a person's health and wellbeing. As a business, we are all about keeping people connected and there are so many ways to keep in touch with friends and family today. Letters can add a real personal touch and make someone's day. We are stronger together and community has never been as important as it is now.

The Tackling Loneliness Network, a group of high-profile charities, businesses, organisations and public figures, will have their inaugural meeting this week to explore initiatives to connect groups at risk of loneliness and isolation, encourage individuals and organisations to take practical actions, and consider how to sustain the good community nature from the coronavirus outbreak. The group was convened by the Government in collaboration with the Connection Coalition, organised by the Jo Cox Foundation.

ENDS

Notes to Editors

Three tangible actions for anyone feeling lonely and three actions for people wanting to help

If you are lonely you can:

- Keep in touch with friends, family and neighbours
- Ask for help if you need shopping, medicine or are feeling lonely
- Set a routine with online activities, regular tasks or by volunteering

If you are worried about someone who is lonely:

- Phone a friend or send a letter to a family member you think may be lonely
- Smile, wave or chat from a safe distance with a neighbour
- Help out through volunteering by picking up food, medicine or by offering regular conversation to someone living alone

For further information see [LetsTalkLoneliness.co.uk](https://lets-talk-loneliness.co.uk)

Over the last two years, the UK Government has been leading the way on tackling loneliness:

- It created the world's first Minister for Loneliness and published the world's first Government loneliness strategy in October 2018, containing 60 commitments from nine Government departments. Implementation of the strategy is ongoing and the Government published a first annual report in January 2020 setting out our progress;
- It launched the first Government fund dedicated to reducing loneliness worth £11.5 million, which is supporting 126 projects to transform the lives of thousands of lonely people across England;
- It launched the inaugural #LetsTalkLoneliness campaign in June 2019 to help raise awareness and tackle stigma.

Members of the Tackling Loneliness Network include: BBC, Premier League, Facebook, ITV, British Red Cross, Jo Cox Foundation, Vodafone, Zurich, Nationwide Building Society, Campaign to End Loneliness, BT, Post Office, Royal Mail, Ukie, Aviva, Sports and Recreation Alliance, English Football League, JC Decaux UK, Samaritans, Age UK, Arts Council England, Co-op Foundation, The Cares Family, University College London, Libraries Connected, Sense, Manchester Museum, Nesta Challenges and Seema Kennedy, former Co-Chair of the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness.

Royal Mail cannot guarantee that specific items of mail posted during the period 15 – 19 June 2020 will include the #Let'sTalkLoneliness postmark.

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size for national statistics was 2,082 adults. Fieldwork was undertaken between 7th – 8th May 2020. The survey was carried out online. The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults (aged 18+).

[Culture Secretary and the Duke of Cambridge join sports stars to talk mental health across UK sport](#)

The Culture Secretary and The Duke of Cambridge have joined some of Britain's biggest sport stars to discuss the issue of mental health across UK sport, as elite athletes and many of the wider population return to work following an easing of lockdown restrictions.

The virtual roundtable saw Oliver Dowden and The Duke joined by British sporting greats who together have accumulated more than 400 caps for their country, 17 gold medals at Olympic or Paralympic Games, seven grand slams, and won a Davis Cup and Rugby World Cup.

Many of those who attended spoke about their own personal experiences and how maintaining good mental health helped them be better athletes. Drawing upon their careers and work in sport, broadcasting and charities, the discussion was an opportunity to share perspectives on the barriers that have previously prevented some sportspeople from identifying and accessing the support they need, and how there is a generational shift on attitudes to this issue which is helping our future stars.

They also discussed how elite sport could lead the way in supporting the mental and physical health of the wider population, as coronavirus lockdown restrictions are eased and those who cannot work from home return to their workplaces where it is safe to do so.

Those who attended included former Arsenal and Lionesses footballer Alex Scott, England's 2003 Rugby World Cup-winning fly half Jonny Wilkinson, and the most successful female Paralympians and Winter Olympians of all time, Dame Sarah Storey and Lizzy Yarnold.

Seven-time grand slam doubles winner and Davis Cup champion Jamie Murray, multi-medal winning Paralympic swimmer Ellie Simmonds, former Tottenham Hotspur captain and England international Ledley King, and Team GB and England international hockey player and Olympic gold medallist Maddie Hinch also joined the video call alongside representatives from UK Sport, Sport England and mental health charity Mind.

The roundtable was convened to inform a review of the Government's Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan as well as the continuing work on the return of competitive elite sport and opportunities being explored to use sport in promoting messages around mental health.

Oliver Dowden, Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, said:

Looking after our mental health is as important as our physical health, particularly through the pandemic which has brought about additional stress and change.

The resumption of sport behind closed doors coincides with many people returning to work too, so it's a good time to make sure everyone knows support is available.

It was great to be joined by HRH the Duke of Cambridge, mental health organisations and some of the biggest names in British sport to talk about mental health. Sport is leading the way in this important conversation, and I pay tribute to football and the Duke for leading a generational shift to attitudes on mental health.

During the call, The Duke of Cambridge said:

Through the Heads Up campaign, the football community has come together to do its part in driving lasting change by encouraging people to open up about their mental wellbeing, at the same time as embedding a mentally healthy culture across the sport.

I believe that there is more we can do collectively to ensure this is replicated across all of sport. And that is why I am so happy to be here with you all to discuss how we can make that a reality. We have a unique opportunity to use the tragedy of the pandemic to bring about positive change. As the sporting world begins to return it is vital that we talk about the mental wellbeing of our sportspeople and fans.

The Duke reiterated on the call the importance of embedding a mentally healthy culture within sport, explaining that in due course, the football family will be coming together around a joint commitment to making football a mentally healthy environment for all, as a legacy of the Heads Up campaign.

Paul Farmer CBE, Chief Executive of Mind, said:

We've all come to understand the importance of looking after our mental health during difficult times. Mind's support of the Heads Up campaign, our work with the EFL, and with organisations across the sports sector, shows that attitudes around mental health are beginning to change.

This is a vital moment to work with all elite sports bodies and sports professionals themselves to ensure that the support available for their mental health is on a par with physical health. We are also keen to see the necessary investment and resources to achieve this prioritised accordingly.

The importance of the mental health of elite athletes was highlighted in government guidance supporting both the return to training for elite and professional athletes and the return to competitive top level sport behind closed doors on June 1, announced by the Culture Secretary.

The Government's Mental Health and Elite Sport Action Plan, published in October 2018, was also informed by athletes, sports and mental health organisations. It has improved mental health education and training across elite sport, and is ensuring parity with physical health is promoted. Access to confidential sources of support and training delivered by mental health ambassadors is now commonplace across the sector.

Spearheaded by The Duke of Cambridge, the 'Heads Up' campaign, launched by the Football Association (FA) and Heads Together, is using the popularity of football to change the conversation on mental health and signpost support for

those in need. On Friday the FA announced that this season's FA Cup Final, provisionally scheduled to take place on Saturday 1 August 2020, will be renamed the 'Heads Up FA Cup Final.'