

STATE OF HATE 2023

RHETORIC, RACISM

AND RESENTMENT

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Nick Lowles

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EDITORIAL

WELCOME TO OUR **State of HATE 2023** report, the most comprehensive and analytical guide to the state of far-right extremism in Britain today.

This year's report comes at a febrile time in British politics. We have had three Prime Ministers in the past year and a cost of living crisis that is causing real pain and misery to so many people. Immigration, and more specifically the issue of people arriving in the country in small boats, is rising up the political agenda and increasingly dominating the focus of the far right.

After a few years in the political doldrums, where Brexit dominated the political discourse, the British far right is stirring once more and increasingly taking to the streets in our communities. Brexit no longer dominates our identity in the way it has done for several years, while the pandemic appears to be in our rearview mirror and – in the post-Boris Johnson world – there is growing anger on the right at the Government's failure to stem migrants arriving in small boats across the Channel. It seems like business as usual for the far right.

Anti-migrant protests and stunts outside migrant accommodation centres and hotels doubled last year. Meanwhile, there has been a spate of actions to disrupt or cancel Drag Queen Story Hour book events, as part of wider activities against trans rights and the LGBT+ community.

Our 2023 report focuses heavily on the growing symmetry between the traditional far right and the mainstream right, with both focusing on the same issues and increasingly using the same divisive rhetoric and narratives. As we have repeatedly stressed, words have consequences, and highly inflammatory language from Government ministers is echoed on the streets by far-right groups.

Whereas there was once a clear cordon sanitaire between the traditional far right and mainstream society, now the divide is blurred if not in some cases broken.

Last year 20 people were convicted of far-right terrorism-related offences, up from 18 in 2020. Of those convicted, nine were teenagers, the most

we have had in any one year and two were also involved in the conspiracy scene – again another first. In addition to those convicted, 66-year-old Andrew Leak killed himself after throwing three petrol bombs at an immigration centre in Dover.

However, despite the record number of convictions, the trend is downwards, as arrests and increased police action is dissuading wannabe terrorists from organising together.

As this **State of HATE** goes to press, the Government has finally released the long-awaited Prevent Review, by William Shawcross. Widely trailed, it calls for a refocus from the far right to Islamist extremism. As we set out in this report, this is both wrong politically and potentially dangerously counter-productive.

Worse still, the Prevent Review is part of a wider attempt by the neo-conservative movement, which views Islam as a threat to the West, to reshape Britain's broader counter-extremism and counter-terrorism policy.

I'd like to finish by thanking all those who have contributed to this report: from those who have written the content, helped put it together and others who will ensure it is spread widely. I'd also like to thank the thousands of people who donate every month to our **HOPE Action Fund** – it is because of your support that we can produce in-depth publications such as this.

If you are not yet a member of our fund, then please do sign up. For as little as the cost of a cup of coffee or a sandwich every month, you can help us continue vital work, positively affecting communities up and down the country.

As this report highlight, this is work that will be increasingly needed over the coming year. I admit that some of what is contained here can be difficult reading. But the more we understand those who seek to spread division and hate, the better equipped we are to contain and defeat them.

And I'm confident that, with your continued support, we will.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

THE FAR RIGHT

- The decline of Brexit tribalism, the passing of COVID-19, declining political trust and the cost of living crisis has given the far right opportunities to organise they have not had for several years
- Patriotic Alternative remains the UK's most active fascist group
- Stephen Lennon, AKA Tommy Robinson, remains the single most well-known far right activist even though his influence is in decline

MAINSTREAM HATE

- There is increasing symmetry between the traditional far right and the mainstream right, with both talking about the same issues and often using similar language
- 12% of HOPE not hate's 20,000 poll say they would "very likely" support a new Farage party, with a further 15% saying they are "quite likely"
- The fear of Nigel Farage forming a new anti-immigrant party is pulling the Tories to the right

ANTI-MIGRANT ACTIVITY

- Anti-migrant activity has emerged the British far right
- In 2022 alone, far-right activists visited accommodation housing migrants and asylum seekers at least 253 times, a 102% increase on 2021
- Hardline anti-migrant rhetoric from politicians and the media has encouraged far right activism

ANTI-LGBT+

- Anti-trans rhetoric is becoming increasingly vocal and aggressive amongst the far right
- A loose coalition of far-right activists and conspiracy theorists have led a vitriolic campaign against Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH), a series of storytelling sessions for children

FAR RIGHT TERRORISM

- 20 far-right sympathisers were convicted of terrorist offences in 2022, a record for one year, with another individual killing himself after attempting to carry out a terrorist attack
- Nine of the convicted were teenagers
- Two of the convicted had emerged from the conspiracy scene
- Social media platforms are a central factor in the spread of pro-violence ideas
- 49% of all terror arrests in the year to September 2022 were linked to suspected extreme right-wing terrorism

TECH & MEDIA

- Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter has been followed by the return of many far right extremists and conspiracy theorists who had previously been removed because of their hateful content
- The decline in Twitter's moderation under Musk has led to a predictable rise in hateful and sexist language on the platform
- Telegram continues to be home to huge quantities of extreme racist and terrorist content

ANDREW TATE

A HOPE not hate poll of 1,200 16-24 year olds found:

- 94% of young people had heard of Andrew Tate and 67% had watched, listened to or read something from him
- 28% had a positive view of Tate, but this rose to 47% of males
- The main reason people gave for liking Tate was because he "wants men to be real men"
- Amongst 16-17 year-old males, 52% had a positive image of Tate
- 61% of Muslim males had a positive view of Tate

CONSPIRACY THEORIES

- Three years on from the start of COVID-19, much of the energy of the conspiracy movement has dissipated, and the protest movement has contracted significantly as lockdown measures have eased and public anxiety has waned. However, those networks which remain are increasingly focusing on offline community building and some have become increasingly violent
- Telegram has become a central hub for the conspiracy scene
- Polling of 20,000 people by HOPE not hate shows belief in conspiracies remain high

DEMOCRACY

There is widespread pessimism about the state of democracy in the UK. In a poll of 20,000 people:

- 67% believe that the political system is broken, just 12% think it is not
- 67% also believe that politicians don't speak to people like them
- There is a strong authoritarian streak in society. A quarter of people, 27%, would choose "having a strong and decisive leader who does not have to bother with parliament or elections", while 57% choosing a liberal democracy with regular elections and a multi-party system
- Three quarters, 73%, think Britain is going in the wrong direction

SECTION 1 – OVERVIEW

Photo: Twitter



RHETORIC, RACISM AND REVOLT

The country is in a state of political flux, the far right is becoming increasingly active on the streets and – most worryingly – there is increasing symmetry in the narratives and actions between the traditional far right and the more mainstream right. JOE MULHALL and NICK LOWLES give an overview of the state of hate in the UK today.

AFTER THE MOST politically febrile year in recent memory, Britain has entered 2023 in a state of turmoil. With three prime ministers holding office in 2022 alone and the Home Secretary changing from Priti Patel to Suella Braverman, to Grant Shapps and then back to Braverman, it has felt at times like the UK is in a constant state of upheaval.

The continuing fallout from Brexit, the ramifications of the war in Ukraine, the calamitous 44-day administration of Liz Truss and rampant inflation have all collided to create a cost-of-living crisis. Many people are angry, scared, detached and disillusioned, as well as increasingly poor – a dangerous mix.

It is no surprise, then, to find that the British far right is more active than it has been for many years, working hard to exploit the situation, working hard to exploit opportunities not afforded for many years. The organised far right isn't necessarily *larger* (most groups are relatively small), but there is a committed core engaging in very regular activism across the whole country. The form that this takes is varied, with leafletting sessions, social events, conferences and banner drops among the many activities happening almost every single week.

After several years where the far right has struggled for space in a political landscape dominated by Brexit, it has seized its moment. The passing of time since the EU referendum and the widespread acknowledgment that Brexit is not working well for the UK, has meant that our attitudes towards leaving the EU no longer dominate our identity. This has provided the far right with an opening which they have gleefully seized.

However, it is the rise in street protests that is, at present, the biggest threat posed by the organised far right. As COVID-19 lockdown restrictions were lifted the movement has returned to the streets in a

concerted and meaningful way, focusing on a range of issues. A smaller but more concentrated conspiracy theory scene continued to regularly protest throughout the year, while Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) returned with a series of demonstrations in Telford against “Muslim grooming gangs”.

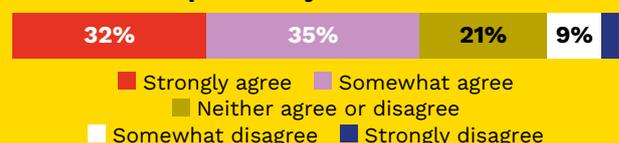
TWIN ISSUES ANIMATING THE FAR RIGHT

Two topics have animated the far right more than any other over the past year and resulted in a worrying amount of street-based activism. Across the UK, a loose coalition of far-right activists and conspiracy theorists led a vitriolic campaign against Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH), a series of storytelling sessions for children at public libraries.

The campaign against DQSH is the spearhead of a wider anti-LGBT+ backlash and an attempt by the far right to capitalise on wider societal prejudice, particularly against the trans community. LGBT+ individuals, and especially trans and non-binary people, are being smeared as immoral, deviant, subversive and/or mentally ill. The far right see trans rights as a fundamental challenge to their belief in traditional gender roles and family structures. Seeing this as a wedge issue where their opinions have

Our polling shows that there is widespread dissatisfaction with the political system

The political system is broken



THE NEW DISADVANTAGED

In the midst of a cost of living crisis and on the verge of a deep recession, Britain remains a hugely unequal society. Levels of poverty are surging, with the child poverty rate more than double that of the late 1970s.

It's no surprise then, that 30% of the 20,038 adults polled by Focaldata for HOPE not hate in December 2022/January 2023 said they considered themselves disadvantaged in society. While those who felt disadvantaged were more likely to be younger, from Black, Asian or mixed race backgrounds, households with the highest income were among those most likely to consider themselves disadvantaged in society. Forty-three percent (43%) of those from households earning over £100,000 a year said they considered themselves disadvantaged, compared with 36% whose household income was between £10-20,000 a year.

While most of those who feel disadvantaged are likely to say so because of genuine grievances, for others this feeling speaks to a more general sense of displacement, where they feel that their theoretical status in society is threatened by progressive norms.

Framing inequality rooted in entitlement and status has been core to the “culture war” debates of the last few years, and perceptions of disadvantage are increasingly a determinant for political views.

Our *Fear & HOPE 2022* report found that those who felt strongly about being disadvantaged in society were also more likely to hold reactionary views on identity. They were more likely to agree that feminism has gone too far and makes it harder for men to succeed (48% compared to 33% total),

mainstream appeal, we are sure to see continued high levels of anti-trans activism by the far right throughout 2023.

The issue that has most animated and united the movement over the past year is anti-migrant activism. In 2022 alone, far-right activists visited accommodation housing migrants and asylum seekers at least 253 times, a 102% increase on 2021. The forms of anti-migrant activism range from showing up at hotels to harass staff, security and occupants through to more organised and large-scale demonstrations.

As with all far-right activism today, the purpose is often more about creating shareable social media content than it is about the action itself. In addition, as with DQSH, anti-migrant activism is partly motivated by genuine anger but is also about seeking to exploit widespread societal enmity around the issue for their own aims and growth.

While the organised far right is the most committed and vocal when it comes to the issue of cross-Channel migration and asylum seeker accommodation, its positions and even its rhetoric has been dangerously mirrored by the mainstream. Whether it is directing prejudice towards Albanian nationals, continuing with plans to dispatch asylum seekers to Rwanda, claims that Britain is being “invaded” by migrants or direct



that British men are not as masculine as they used to be (65% compared to 39% total), that asylum seekers pose a security threat to British people (62% compared to 45% overall), and to feel more suspicious of Muslims as a result of terror attacks in the UK (60% compared to 43% overall).

The “anti-woke” agenda of the Right has weaponised terms like “white privilege” or “feminazi” in an attempt to undermine an equalities agenda. This has stirred anger and resentment among some in society, emboldening a view of strict social hierarchies based on identity.

While people have always held resentments towards others based on a sense of their own precarity in the social order, rapidly deepening inequalities twinned with increasingly reactive politics on the right poses a toxic mix that can be easily exploited by the far right

attacks against so-called “activist lawyers” these narratives are being advanced, not just by the far right but by mainstream government politicians and some newspapers.

The danger of this language was made clear when on 30 October, 66-year-old Andrew Leak threw several petrol bombs at a migrant-processing centre in Dover. HOPE not hate's research revealed that Leak had consumed extensive far-right material and was obsessed with a desire for violence against Muslims and migrants.

Shockingly, just days after the attack, Home Secretary Suella Braverman stood in the House of Commons and talked of an “invasion” by migrants. The irresponsibility of her comments was widely condemned, but celebrated by much of the far right.

The danger of this potent mixture of far-right agitation and local anger, fostered by irresponsible behaviour from mainstream politicians and some journalists, was again made plain in February 2023. Violence followed after a crowd of 400 people gathered outside a hotel housing asylum seekers in Knowsley, Merseyside. In clashes between protestors and police, missiles were thrown and a police van was smashed up and set on fire. While the protest was organised and primarily attended by local people, the far right had

been actively stoking up tensions around the hotel in the proceeding weeks and some had attended on the night.

This interplay between the far right and the mainstream is by no means restricted to the issue of migration and asylum seekers: everything from transphobia to COVID-19 conspiracy theories have (and are) been espoused by major political figures. The far right and the more mainstream right are not only increasingly talking about the same issues, but the language they use can sometimes be indistinguishable.

In September, in the immediate aftermath of street disturbances between Hindus and Muslims in Leicester, former UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage blamed mainstream politicians for the trouble.

“They decided to go down the road of diversity and multiculturalism,” Farage wrote in a tweet, alongside a video in which some men can be seen attacking others as the police try to control the situation. Chants of “Jai Shri Ram”, meaning victory to Hindu deity Ram, can be heard in the background.

When the 2021 census was released, conservative political commentator Douglas Murray tweeted out: “I see many commentators on the census results saying, ‘So what if people who identify as “white British” are a minority in London, Birmingham, Leicester, Manchester, etc?’ Just one answer to which is ‘Because we never voted for this. Quite the opposite in fact.’”

After a huge backlash, with many people pointing out that parties that opposed immigration had been on the ballot in many elections, Murray deleted his tweet.

These tweets, plus many comment pieces in outlets such as *The Daily Telegraph* and on *GB News*, carried very similar messaging to traditional far-right parties. Andrew Bridgen’s views on COVID vaccines, for example, echoed those of hardline conspiracy theorists who most people would view as being on the fringes of the political scale. We have also exposed a raft of racist Tory councillors in this report, as well as a catalogue of mainstream journalists who regularly flirt with far-right language.

The mainstream right’s obsession with a growing perceived disadvantage of their cultural identity (whiteness, male, straight, etc) has generated anger in other corners of society, principally among white men, which in turn potentially increases support for the traditional far right [see box on perceptions of disadvantage].

Furthermore, we are seeing a growing number of radical-right activists being platformed in mainstream spaces. On an average week former UKIP and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage, Reclaim Party leader Laurence Fox, former Brexit Party MEP and ex-Deputy Leader of Reclaim, Martin Daubney, plus Reclaim associate Calvin Robinson and ex-DUP leader Arlene Foster, can potentially all be on air.

Even the parties whose candidates have not yet been granted their own show can rely on regular publicity from channels such as *GB News*. UKIP leader Neil Hamilton appeared on *GB News* at least 18 times over the course of 2022, while Heritage Party leader David Kurten managed 13 appearances. In August

2022, the channel even interviewed the far-right extremist Peter Immanuelssen (aka Peter Sweden), but deleted social media clips after his history of Holocaust denial was brought up. It is no surprise that clips of these shows are circulated widely within the far right.

The cordon sanitaire that kept the far right “beyond the pale” is crumbling and the results are extremely dangerous as views and narratives between the traditional far right and the mainstream right become interchangeable.

THE STATE OF THE ORGANISED FAR RIGHT

While very active at the moment, the organised far right remains relatively small and fractured. Huge amounts of activism is being carried out by a comparatively small number of committed and organised individuals. The two major forces within the movement are Britain First (BF) and Patriotic Alternative (PA), both in their own way children of the British National Party (BNP).

Patriotic Alternative remains the UK’s most active fascist group, and achieved a new degree of publicity in 2022. Despite this, it failed to significantly grow its active membership, in part owing to continuing defections, ejections and bitter disputes. However, it has reached a prominence within the movement and thus exerts a gravitational pull on ideologically-aligned individuals around it. It is increasingly recognised as *the* British fascist organisation of note within the international far-right scene. Clearly frustrated by its stalled growth in 2022, it has consciously sought to shift towards local community politics and become increasingly open to collaboration with other far-right individuals and groups on issues of “popular” appeal, namely anti-migrant and anti-DQSH protests.

Britain First has also sought to put down roots in several local communities. While even smaller than PA, the group is very organised, very active and has spent much time and effort building internal structures that mimic those previously created by the BNP. Aware of its small activist base, it has decided to avoid spreading itself too thinly and instead has relentlessly targeted a few specific communities. Disastrous local election results last year show this strategy has yet to bear fruit, but the group has persevered nonetheless.

Outside of these two significant organisations, the most important far-right figure remains Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). While he is the best known far-right extremist in Britain, his influence has been in decline for years. Despite attempting a comeback in 2022, the events he organised only served to show how far he has fallen. He remains dogged by legal, health and personal problems and now splits his time between the UK and Tenerife.

However, Lennon has attempted to diversify his politics. Whereas once he was almost entirely focused on the threat of Islam, he has now adopted broader conspiracy theories around COVID-19 and “one world” governments, and has become an increasingly vocal opponent of migrants and asylum seekers.

Outside of these traditional far-right groupings there are dozens of tiny groupuscules and hundreds of prominent content creators, blogs, publications and



podcasts that make up the rest of the far right. The most important are profiled in this report. HOPE not hate has been conceptualising this form of “post-organisational” far-right activism since 2018 and it remains central to our understanding of how the contemporary far right operates.

While traditional far-right organisations like PA and BF remain fundamentally important, especially when it comes to in-person activism, such groups are surrounded by post-organisational networks. Thousands of individuals, all over the world, offer micro-donations of time and sometimes money to collaborate towards common political goals, completely outside traditional organisational structures.

While activists will generally be preoccupied with local or national issues, they invariably contextualise them continentally or even globally. All of this means that if we are to truly understand the threat posed by the contemporary far right, we must change our thinking. We can no longer just look at our street, our community or even our country – we must think beyond political parties, beyond formal organisations all together and increasingly beyond just the UK.

A good example of this sort of network is the conspiracy theory scene. While formalised groupings do exist, they are part of a global web of individuals, Telegram channels, chat groups and forums that coagulate around specific issues such as COVID-19, lockdown measures, vaccines, 5G internet and, increasingly in the UK, Drag Queen Story Hour, as well as traffic measures and the war in Ukraine. Three years on from the start of the pandemic, much of the energy that once held this loose coalition together has dissipated, and the protest movement has contracted significantly as lockdown measures have eased and public anxiety has waned, though belief in conspiracies remains strong [see box].

Those networks which remain are increasingly focusing on offline community building; some have also become increasingly violent. Matthew Henegan, for example, was imprisoned for 12 years in March 2022 after claiming Jewish people were behind COVID-19 news stories and “controlled the media”. Another COVID conspiracy theorist, Oliver Lewin, plotted to attack vital national infrastructure and was jailed for six-and-a-half years in January 2023.

These plots made up just a fraction of the terrorist threat over the past year. Twenty extreme far-right activists or sympathisers were convicted of terrorist offences in 2022, with another individual killing himself

after attempting to carry out an attack. Shockingly, of those convicted, nine were teenagers.

While the figures have gone up sharply in recent years, it must be remembered that this is partly down to the authorities taking the threat of far-right extremism more seriously, as well as an extension of terror legislation that has greatly increased the scope of offences now considered to be terrorist in nature. However, even when taking today’s wider remit into consideration, there has been a dangerous rise in the number of men, particularly younger men, drawn to violent far-right extremism.

Sadly, it is not merely explicit far-right extremism that is radicalising young men. The rise of toxic influencer Andrew Tate in 2022 has highlighted the dangers posed by adjacent forms of extremism, most notably misogyny. While misogyny has always been an acute societal problem with dangerous ramifications – the rape crisis in the Metropolitan police being just one example – Andrew Tate’s dramatic rise has highlighted the issue further and shown the role that prominent social media figures can play in spreading harmful and discriminatory politics.

From early April 2022 onwards, Tate’s online presence began to grow rapidly until he became one of the most famous online figures in the world. Due to his extreme misogyny and homophobia, he has posed a real danger to young people online, especially boys. Large numbers of young men are consuming his content and he is widely celebrated for having brought back “traditional masculinity”.

In the last year he broke out of the confines of fringe “manosphere” and anti-feminist communities and has been invited onto some of the largest podcasts in the world, many of which specifically target a young male audience. In August, HOPE not hate launched a successful campaign to reduce his harm online, calling on major social media platforms to remove him and his harmful content from their platforms. In a matter of days YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter all acted to remove accounts run by Tate.

In response, Tate began to use other alt-tech platforms popular with the far right, including Gettr and Rumble. In December, however, Tate and his brother Tristan (and two other women) were arrested in Romania on suspicion of human trafficking, rape, and forming an organised crime group. Despite still being detained, his social media accounts continue to pump out propaganda and many far-right and misogynist activists have leapt to his defence.

20,000 people were asked if they believed a number of common conspiratorial statements. The numbers who claimed to believe these statements were true was alarming

Jewish people have an unhealthy control over the world's banking system



Parts of many European cities are under the control of Sharia Law and are 'no-go' zones for non-Muslims



The official account of the Nazi Holocaust is a lie and the number of Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II has been exaggerated on purpose



Globalist elites are encouraging immigration into Europe as part of a plot to weaken European identity



Regardless of who is officially in charge of governments and other organisations, there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together



The threat of climate change is being exaggerated by Governments and the media in order to control our lives



■ Definitely true
 ■ Probably true
 ■ Neither true or false
 ■ Probably false
 ■ Definitely false
 ■ Don't know

Exclusive polling of young people commissioned by HOPE not hate found that 94% of 16-24 year-olds had heard of Tate and 67% had watched one of his videos. Over a quarter of young people, 28%, had a positive view of Tate, though among young men it was 44% and among 16-17 year-old males it was 52%.

By comparison, only 58% had heard of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and 32% Labour leader Keir Starmer.

Worryingly, following Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter, Tate returned to that platform in November and has amassed over 4.5 million followers so far. He is just one of a raft of far-right figures to have been allowed back onto the platform, an opportunity enthusiastically embraced by a range of British far-right figures. Their return, plus the fact that Twitter is in turmoil, has resulted in a predictable spike in hate speech and toxicity on Twitter.

The events there are another reminder that the time is well overdue for effective legislation to properly regulate social media. Unfortunately, though, with the British government also in turmoil, the much needed Online Safety Bill continues to crawl through Parliament at a dangerously slow speed.



WHAT TO EXPECT IN 2023?

Sadly, the coming year looks set to be a very difficult one. With the cost-of-living crisis becoming increasingly severe, mistrust in mainstream politics growing and an energetic, committed and sometimes violent far-right movement ready to exploit the situation, there is no time for complacency.

The Conservative Party's shift to the right on immigration and its adoption of populist-right narratives on certain cultural issues began with Boris Johnson, as he sought to win over Brexit Party voters ahead of the 2019 General Election. Yet despite Johnson's departure to the back benches, this shows little sign of abating. While Rishi Sunak is economically a Thatcherite, he has never shown any real interest in cultural war politics. However, that is beginning to shift, partly because he is too politically weak to rein in some of his own ministers and out of fear that Nigel Farage could return to the political fray.

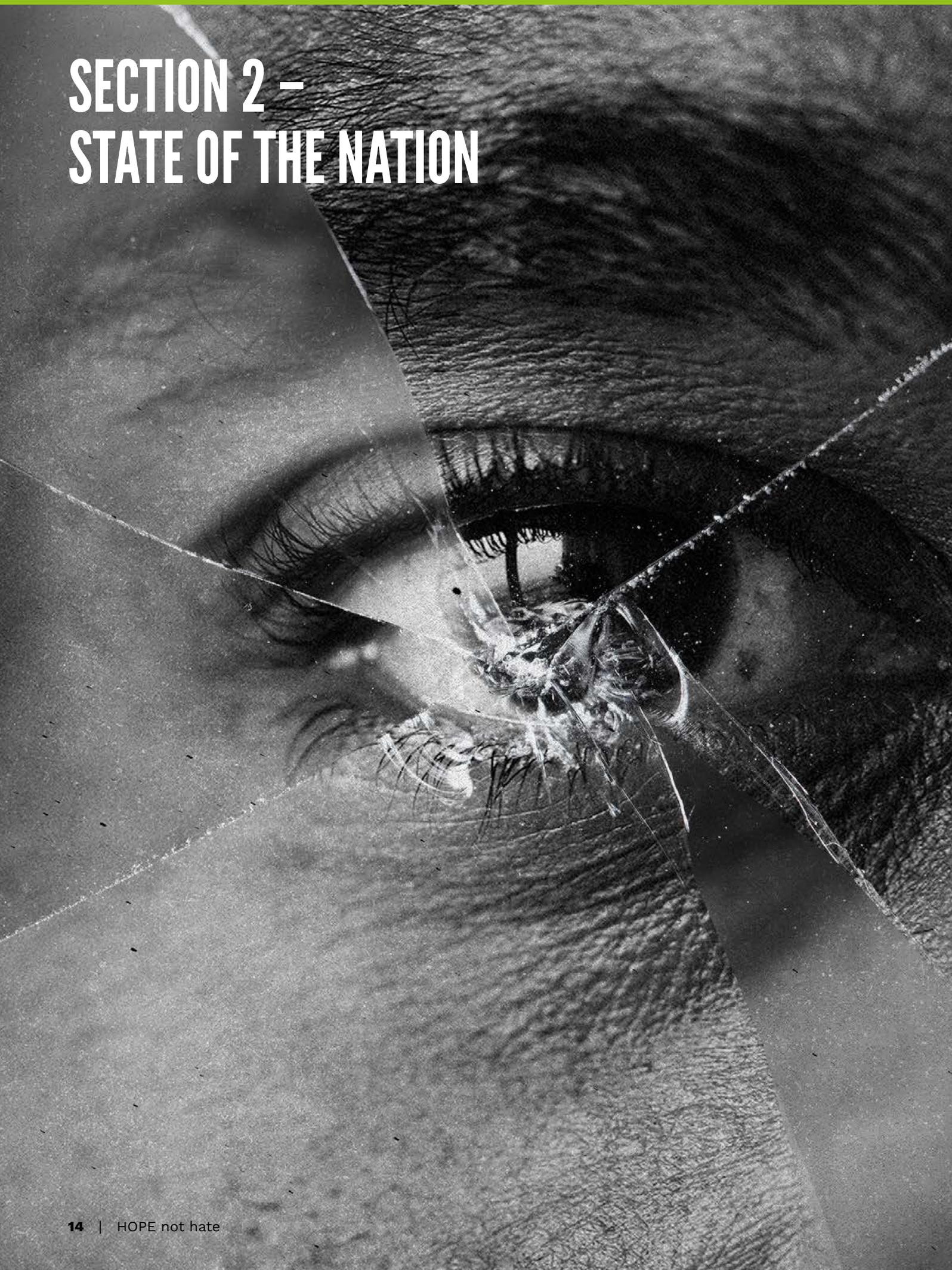
While it remains unlikely that Farage will launch a new party anytime soon, polling by HOPE not hate shows that 12% of people would be very likely support it and a further 17% quite likely. This highlights the danger for the Tories. The fear of Farage opening up a flank on the right, coupled with the increasing irritation of the Conservative right (and their friends in the media) over Sunak's supposed watering down of Brexit and the continued arrival of migrants from France, means that the political rhetoric will continue to be divisive and only give credibility and encouragement to the traditional far right.

The issue of cross-Channel migration and asylum seeker accommodation will continue to dominate the attention of the far right, too, and we can expect to see large amounts of hateful activism in communities right across the country. It also looks like the LGBT+ community, and trans people in particular, will continue to be a constant target of vitriol as well.

With its focus on migrants and LGBT+ people and the existence of groups like Patriotic Alternative and Britain First, the British far right looks very traditional at present. While the pandemic has highlighted an ubiquitous conspiracism across the movement, today's far right looks more like the networks of decades gone by.

And with so many people economically struggling at the moment, the potential for today's far right to capitalise on this anger and despair is probably higher than it has been for many years.

SECTION 2 – STATE OF THE NATION



FROM IDEOLOGY TO ISSUES: HOW BRITAIN IS CHANGING

By **ROSIE CARTER**

HOPE not hate has been tracking public attitudes for over a decade, to better understand the drivers of fear, to gain deep insights into the communities most vulnerable to hate, and to seek opportunities where we can build hope.

Our ground-breaking **Fear & HOPE** reports have explored these issues since 2011, looking at what pulls us apart, but at the same time what brings us together.

Since our first report we've seen huge shifts in public opinion – many of which have been good news for a politics of hope. Society has become more socially liberal on a range of issues. From gay marriage to immigration, social norms have been dramatically moved to a more open and tolerant place.

In part this has been an organic process, a result of our society becoming both more diverse and more educated over time. But it has also been spurred by exposure to this growing change: the diverse Britain that we see on our TV screens is a key part of building our cultural ecology, as are our changing neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces.

But this positive picture doesn't necessarily chime with what we've seen play out in politics or media. Scaremongering about asylum seekers arriving across The Channel, divisive public debate around race relations, trans rights and LGBT+ education in schools, as well as attacks on the “woke” world, have all been front and centre of British politics for the last year.

Of course, what we see in our politics is not necessarily a reflection of where the public sits across social issues. More often than not the messaging in politics and in media is used as a tactic to divide. Cultural conflicts are nothing new, but in the last few years symbolic issues and questions of identity have not just become louder, but more antagonistic in the so-called “culture wars”. It is not that there are specific “culture war issues”: it is that any issue can be politicised in such a way.

Moreover, culture wars shift over time, so that once consensus has been met on one issue, another may emerge. So we see figures such as former UKIP leader Nigel Farage shapeshifting his reactionary political tone across issues as diverse as immigration, fiscal policy and net zero climate targets.

And while our research reaffirms that culture wars are not reflected in deep polarisation in public attitudes, we do find that this strategy has had an impact in

reframing political debates. In turn, the culture wars strategy has cut through in shaping a more reactive identity politics that is drawing in a newer audience to these messages.

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From gay marriage to immigration, social norms have been dramatically moved to a more open and tolerant place

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A MOVE FROM IDEOLOGY TO ISSUES?

Our research looks at the interaction between social attitudes and an increasingly reactive political space, finding a significant shift around identity issues. Not all issues have become polarised in the same way, however.

As the politics of identity have played out over the last decade, certain attitudes, values or framings on key issues have become more dominant. And that is changing the political landscape dramatically. Our research found that many respondents hold multiple and varying views that do not align with the attitudes we might expect on other social questions.

For example, someone's views on crime and punishment might allow us to make a good prediction about their views on taxation. But repeatedly in our study, we found that this was not the case for the majority. What our survey thought about immigration was not correlated directly to how people responded on race relations. And what they thought about state spending was not correlated to their thinking on climate change.

What we saw in our research was a move away from attitudes structured on an ideological basis, towards a more complex picture, making it harder to predict attitudes across issues.

This complicating of public attitudes is, in part, the result of a political landscape where dominant framings on individual issues are attracting a wider base. There are a clear number of issues on which progressives have pulled consensus in their direction, such as LGBT+ rights, but for others reactionary framings have become dominant.

Growing social liberalism across society has been met with roadblocks. Those pushing for further progress have been shunned as “out of touch” or “going too far”.



As society has become more socially liberal, identity politics have increasingly been framed by the Right around a reaction to progressive values, cutting across multiple issues, from modern masculinity to structural racism and trans rights.

There is now public consensus around both the economic and cultural benefits of immigration, but on issues of asylum this falls short, with a large majority seeing asylum seekers as a security threat. The majority of people voice concern about levels of racism in Britain and acknowledge the everyday discrimination faced by Black and Asian people, but there is broad resistance among the public to challenge structural racism, and a majority reject notions of privilege based on identity. There is a broad consensus on gender equality, too, but at the same time a majority feel that feminists have gone too far and now jeopardise the rights of men.

Of course the majority of people do not attach enough weight to their views on one or two issues to compromise their views on others. But because it is harder to predict views on an ideological basis, we need to understand how identity issues *intersect*, and where new coalitions can potentially form.

A SHIFTING BASE FOR SUPPORT

The traditional far right's politics of racial nationalism and opposition to immigration tended to appeal to a shrinking base of older, white British, non-graduate, and predominantly male group of voters. But the new alignment of identity politics identified in our research presents a more complex landscape.

Rather than there being one group who share a similar set of views and values, attracted to an agenda rooted in racial prejudice, we find that a more diverse group, with a more mixed set of views and values, are drawn to an agenda shaped by a reaction to progressive values.

Demographic characteristics are less of an attitudinal predictor, and we have witnessed a growth in reactionary identity issues among young people – and

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What we saw in our research was a move away from attitudes structured on an ideological basis

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in particular young men – alongside an older, more traditionally conservative audience.

This would seem to contradict the vast majority of public attitude studies, where younger respondents generally hold more socially liberal views than older cohorts. Indeed, our research reaffirms that younger people are more likely to share more positive views of immigration, to embrace multiculturalism and support anti-racist initiatives, than older age groups.

In fact, we found that social attitudes among 16-24s are more likely to be progressive than they were 10 years ago. In 2011, just 41% said immigration had been a good thing for Britain compared to 61% today. Just over half saw multiculturalism as a core component of British culture in 2011, compared with 65% today.

But on certain issues, young people are more likely to hold some more regressive views.

They are more likely to think, for example, that political violence can be acceptable for something you strongly believe in, or that feminism holds men back, and are also the most likely of all age groups to believe that women can be to blame for sexual violence against themselves (25%).

And while more than twice as many people overall voiced a preference for democracy (54%) as authoritarian leadership (26%), just as many 18-24s would prefer a political system based on liberal democracy with regular elections and a multiparty system (42%) as would prefer having a strong and decisive leader who did not have to bother with parliament or elections (41%).

Young people's low trust in political institutions somewhat explains their openness to conspiracies about a “new world order” – where a group of elites controls events (a belief shared by 50% of 25-34s and 47% of 18-24s) – which opens a clear route to more extreme beliefs. Shockingly, more than a third of 18-24s agree that Jewish people have an unhealthy control over the world's banking system (34%).

Rather than a unified bloc of “far-right” voters, the new politics of identity offers us a warning: that a diverse collective of voters holding reactionary views on certain issues *might* be brought together by those peddling hate. Our research highlights the importance of understanding how to engage with these new audiences.

This collective of voters includes traditional social conservatives alongside young reactionaries. It also sweeps together those whose precarity and uncertainty finds articulation through “status deficit”, and others who are generally socially liberal but become reactive when they see things pushed “too far”.

Clearly, different approaches will be needed to engage with each group and to widen resistance among other groups. But there can no longer be complacency among progressives about how certain demographics will act.

SECTION 3 – INVESTIGATIONS



CORRIDORS OF POWER

EXPOSING THE SECRET ANTI-MUSLIM GROUP IN THE HEART OF WESTMINSTER



Photo: UK
Parliament
/ Flickr

A HOPE not hate investigation has exposed a secret anti-Muslim group at the heart of the British establishment.

IT WAS A crisp but bright spring evening and the Palace of Westminster was casting a shadow over Abingdon Street Gardens. HOPE not hate (HNH) was watching the area, one person in the park, others doing laps of the roads that circle Millbank House, an imposing red brick building that is home to offices used by members of the House of Lords. We were there to confirm the existence of a secretive anti-Muslim organisation that had supposedly been operating from the heart of the parliamentary estate for over a decade.

That day we received the confirmation we required. The meeting room display screen in the reception hall of Millbank House read: “18:00: New Issues Group: Archbishops Room.” Soon after a colleague saw Lord Pearson of Rannoch leaving the building and climbing into a taxi on Great College Street. Not long after Baroness Cox also excited. It was the confirmation we had been hoping for, the secret group we had heard about was actually real.

A huge cache of documents was subsequently acquired by HNH that show that members of the House of Lords have been meeting with well-known far-right extremists and representatives of prominent Christian organisations, with the objective of opposing Islam through legislation but also on the streets of the UK.

The documents even suggest that known far-right figures have written and edited questions to be asked in the House of Lords. There is also evidence of funding from US evangelicals being funnelled into the UK to support the group and to help push legislation through the British Parliament. Perhaps most concerning, however, is that Baroness Cox broke the Lords Code of Conduct by failing to declare that she is a Director of a company called Equal and Free which the documents suggest is closely linked this secretive organisation.

HNH was told that the importance of complete secrecy was impressed upon attendees, which explains why no details about its existence have ever come to light. The organisation operates under the name of the New Issues Group, or ‘NIG’ for short.

THE INVESTIGATION BEGINS

A few months earlier, in January 2022, Lord Pearson had made a mistake. He sent an email to 235 people but instead of BCC’ing the recipients, he sent it so that everyone receiving the email could see the entire list. The list was an extraordinary array of Conservative Party MPs, aristocrats, bishops, businessmen and journalists as well as individuals working at think tanks such as Civitas, the IEA and a range of Christian organisations.

Also copied into the email, however, were a number of high-profile far-right extremists, including Geert Wilders from the Netherlands, the infamous British-based Islamophobe Anne Marie Waters, Ezra Levant of the Canadian media operation Rebel News, Stephen Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson) and the American anti-

Lord Pearson of Rannoch
Photo: Roger Harris



Muslim activist Pamela Geller, who was banned from entering the UK in 2013. Other names included the office of Nigel Farage and prominent figures from UKIP and Reform UK (formerly the Brexit Party).

The email itself was unsurprising, considering Lord Pearson’s long history of anti-Muslim statements and fraternisation with far-right figures. It read:

Islam is a vast subject. But if we try to discuss it in public, we are accused of ‘Islamophobia’, which many of our Muslims want to be a criminal offence. Our MP’s are too frightened of the growing Muslim vote to discuss it honestly, if at all, and several of my fellow Peers jeer when I raise it in the Lords. I am the only Peer to do so.

Following Pearson’s mistake, HOPE not hate (HNH) was passed the email by one of the recipients and encouraged to investigate. The email list itself was nothing more than a collection of addresses that Lord Pearson had collated for the purpose of sending out his thoughts. There is no indication that the people on the list even signed up to receive the emails, with at least one person responding by asking to be removed from future correspondences. There is also no indication that those on the email list had any knowledge of the existence of the NIG.

However, the HNH investigation that ensued resulted in us hearing of a highly secretive anti-Muslim network operating from the heart of Westminster.

WHAT IS THE NEW ISSUES GROUP?

The NIG was founded in 2012, and has continued to meet in secret every few months since.

While many people have drifted in and out of the organisation, there are a few people at its core who have been active from the very beginning and remain involved to this day. Most important of these are Lord Pearson and Baroness Cox, two peers known for their strong stance against Islam. Also key is Alan Craig, a former leader of the Christian Peoples Alliance (CPA)

THE LEADERSHIP

The core of the NIG is Baroness Cox and Lord Pearson, both controversial members of the upper house who have a long history of collaborating with the far right.

BARONESS COX

Cox became a peer in 1983 and was Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords from 1985 to 2005.

She has dedicated much of her political career to what she sees as defending Christian values and opposing the influence of Islam on British society which she believes is “using the freedoms of democracy to destroy it.”

Her controversial views on Islam and Muslims, as well as her sympathies for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, resulted in her invitation to speak at an event in Ottawa being cancelled in the wake of the far-right terror attack on a Mosque in Christchurch in 2019.



LORD PEARSON

A Conservative peer who defected to UKIP in 2007, where he had a brief spell as party leader. He has a long history of anti-Muslim statements, once stating Britain is under threat because “the Muslims are breeding ten times faster than us.”

Both Cox and Pearson were widely criticised in 2010 after holding an event with the Dutch far-right MP Geert Wilders in the House of Lords. Roughly 200 members of the English Defence League marched in support of Wilders who had previously called the Koran a “fascist book” and used the press conference with Cox and Pearson to call for an end to immigration to Europe from Islamic countries.



ALAN CRAIG

A former leader of the Christian People’s Alliance, Craig switched allegiance to UKIP,

becoming the party’s Spokesperson for Families and Children. Craig, who once called equality campaigners the “Gaystapo”, also caused outrage in 2018 after branding Asian grooming gangs a “Holocaust of our daughters” and that the issue could be traced “back to Muhammad himself.”

From 2015 onwards, this core group was joined by ex-UKIP National Campaign manager and now leader of the far-right Hearts of Oak group, Peter McIlvenna and Tim Dieppe of the conservative evangelical Christian organisation, Christian Concern.



and later a UKIP member, who went on to launch the far-right organisation Hearts of Oak in 2020.

During the course of our investigation, we received dozens of internal NIG documents, emails and minutes of meetings. The earliest was dated November 2012 and included a section titled “NIG TO DO LIST”. This appeared to be a series of action points related to the growth of the infant organisation. The list included: “Approaching people and choose about a dozen members and particularly a good chairman” and then, “Ask a large number of Peers: even if they could not come to all meetings they would have a wide-range of expertise.”

The first formal NIG meeting appears to have been in the summer of 2013, held in Fielden House, Westminster. Subsequent meetings were later moved to the grand surroundings of the Archbishops Room at Millbank House, on the Parliamentary Estate.

At least 35 people have attended meetings of the NIG over the past decade. Some attended for short spells, some sporadically and others, such as the controversial journalist Douglas Murray, appear on a document titled ‘NIG Members List’, though the minutes we acquired only show him sending apologies for non-attendance at a meeting in November 2013.

The primary objective of the NIG is to raise awareness

around what its core supporters perceive to be the dangers of Islam and Muslims within the UK. To do this they use a range of tactics, targeting law makers but also using the media and both campaign and street protest groups.

The group has formulated questions to be asked and run a series of events in the House of Lords, introduced private members bills, lobbied ministers and senior members of the clergy and provided support and guidance to anti-Muslim organisations. Most worrying, however, is that the documents we’ve received appear to show that the NIG has set up a series of charities and had a hand in the creation of a number of anti-Muslim and far-right organisations.

The defence offered by many of those involved in the NIG is that they are against Islam but are not “anti-Muslim”. However, the findings of this investigation show that the key individuals within the group sometimes make no distinction between Islam and Muslims or between radical Islamists and the wider Muslim community. Thus the NIG may target issues that are ostensibly laudable, such as women’s rights in the Muslim community, but the other comments and histories of those involved (some of whom have freely associated with far-right extremists) reveals more worrying motivations.

'Hearts of Oak'
Launch in
London
Photo: YouTube



STREET PROTEST GROUPS

Perhaps the most troubling document acquired by HOPE not hate is a 2015 “Memorandum” created by NIG regular Magnus Nielsen (pictured), titled “Combatting Islam and the ‘Stealth-Jihad’”. The minutes of a meeting in September that year noted that Nielsen’s “memorandum was sent to all NIG members via email on 17 September. The document outlines a proposal to launch a street protest organisation, which would distribute literature to the public on the implications of Islamic teaching”.

At the time of his involvement Nielsen was a well-known anti-Muslim extremist. He had had close links to the English Defence League (EDL) and Mothers Against Radical Islam and Sharia (MARIAS).

While running as a UKIP candidate in 2014, Nielsen was widely criticised for saying “Islam is organised crime under religious camouflage” and that “Islam was created by a man called Muhammad who was a gang leader of criminals”. He claimed that mosques and imams should be licensed. He hit the headlines briefly again in 2015 when *The Mirror* newspaper published an exposé titled “Watch UKIP candidates spouting vile anti-Islamic hate messages at a far-right rally”.

In the second draft of the memorandum, dated 1 February 2016, Nielsen wrote:

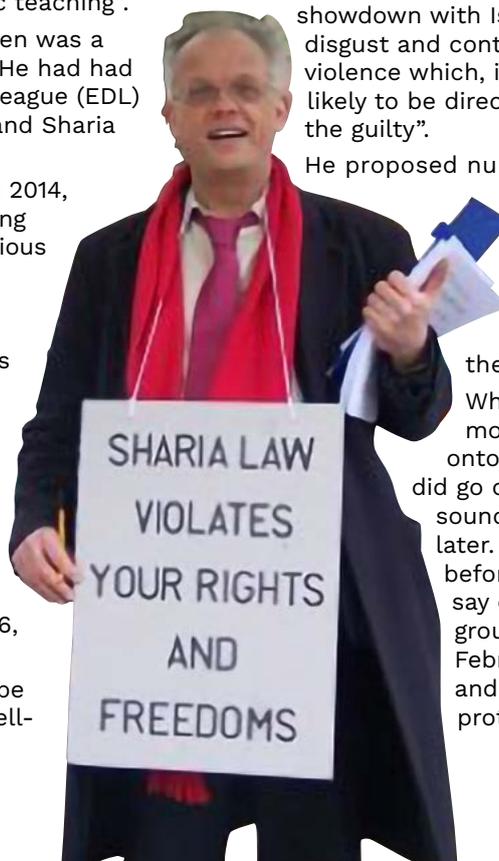
I wish to argue that the time is ripe for the formation of a group of well-

informed, socially responsible and law-abiding people, people with differing views on questions of religion and politics, who nevertheless understand the threat that Islam poses to civilised values, and who are ready to defend those values by means of peaceful protest and the public dissemination of information, aimed at correcting the lies and distortions about Muhammad and the ‘religion’ he created.

The document showed that Nielsen believed that “there is a real danger that, unless there is a showdown with Islam in the next few years, that disgust and contempt will spill over into anger and violence which, in the nature of things, is just as likely to be directed towards the innocent as well as the guilty”.

He proposed numerous names for his new street movement, including the Human Rights Defence League, Showdown With Sharia or the Lepanto League (after the 1571 Battle of Lepanto between a coalition of Catholic states and the Muslim Ottoman Empire).

While Nielsen’s planned street movement never got off the page and onto the ground, members of the NIG did go on to found a remarkably similar-sounding organisation just a few years later. Though our source left the NIG before 2020, meaning we are unable to say definitively whether the anti-Islam group had a hand in its creation, in February 2020 NIG stalwarts Alan Craig and Peter McIlvenna launched a far-right protest group called Hearts of Oak.





Tommy Robinson
outside parliament
alongside UKIP peer
Lord Pearson, and
leader of the party
Gerard Batten.
Photo: Instagram

THE ‘COUNTER-JIHAD’ MOVEMENT

Many of the key figures who have been active within the NIG over the past decade have been affiliated with the ‘counter-jihad’ movement (CJM). The CJM is a disparate and varied mix of people and organisations who believe that Western civilisation is under attack from Islam. Whilst the counter-jihadists have some differences between them, all agree that Islam is a supremacist religion and many see little difference between violent Jihadists and the ordinary Muslims who live their lives peacefully.

Most counter-jihadists believe that secular, liberal society is aiding Islam through mass immigration into Europe and policies of multiculturalism, which they believe squash any criticism of Islam. A mythical, usually Christian, Western culture and identity is said to be facing extinction at the hands of Islamic invasion.

The movement can trace its roots back to the 1980s, but crystallised in its modern form in the wake of the September 11 terrorist attacks, reaching its peak of influence roughly between 2005 and 2015.

Figures from this scene that have attended NIG meetings include Sam Solomon, a Christian convert who claims to be a former Muslim scholar and Islamic jurist. Solomon played an important role in the UK and European counter-jihad movement, and had links to both the far-right English Defence League (EDL) and Geert Wilders. NIG minutes show he attended at least five meetings in 2015 and 2016. Interestingly, when being introduced at public speaking engagements Solomon has been described as “a consultant to the British parliament for matters regarding Islam,” perhaps a reference to his association with the NIG.

Also attending NIG meetings during the same period was Toni Bugle, founder of Mothers against Radical Islam and Sharia (MARIAS), a short lived anti-Muslim group with close links to the EDL.

One of the most high profile NIG attendees is the infamous far-right leader Anne Waters, who has become one of the UK’s best known anti-Muslim activists. In 2014, Waters launched Sharia Watch UK before becoming central figure in PEGIDA UK, the British branch of the pan-European, anti-Muslim street movement first formed in Germany, which she

led alongside Stephen Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson). She later went on to unsuccessfully stand for the leadership of UKIP before forming her own far-right party, For Britain, in 2017. For Britain folded in 2022.

NIG was heavily involved in the development of Sharia Watch UK. A NIG meeting in July 2013, before the public launch of Sharia Watch UK, discussed how members of the NIG would meet “to take forward issues regarding twitter and the website.” Sharia Watch UK was subsequently launched on 24 April 2014 at an event organised by Baroness Cox and held in the House of Lords.

At a later NIG meeting, Waters asked “If anyone would like to write an article: please do”, and posts by fellow NIG attendees Sam Solomon and Alan Craig later appeared on the group’s website.

Waters invited Stephen Lennon to become her deputy at Sharia Watch UK, but while he declined because he was still on licence from prison, the two became close.

In August 2015 Waters announced her intention to stage a ‘Muhammad cartoons’ exhibition in London. This followed soon after an event in the US, hosted by Pam Gellar, which led to a violent attack by Jihadists. A HNH exposé at the time, based on inside information, reported on a meeting between Waters, EDL founder Stephen Lennon, high profile counter-jihadist, Alan Ayling, and Jim Dowson, the founder of the far-right party Britain First, a group best known for carrying out “mosque invasions”.

Just three weeks before the exhibition was announced, they secretly discussed using the event to spark wider conflict between communities. The event was subsequently cancelled after the police warned that it would be a “risk to public safety”.

During this period Waters regularly collaborated with Lennon, and while he does not appear in the documents, we have been told that Lennon met with numerous NIG figures around this period.

In October 2018, Lennon joined Lord Pearson, then-UKIP leader Gerard Batten and the Canadian far-right ‘journalist’ Ezra Levant, for a three-course lunch in the palatial Barry Room, under the Lords chamber in the House of Lords.

The public launch of the group was preceded by the incorporation of a number of companies. In October 2019, Alan Craig, Peter McIlvenna and Lord Pearson incorporated the Free Speech Movement Ltd. That same month they also created The Patriotic Alliance Ltd, then in November 2019 the Alternative Alliance Limited was registered with Companies House. Finally, in December that year they also registered Hearts of Oak Alliance LTD. Furthermore, McIlvenna is listed as a member of staff on Lord Pearson’s Register of Interests.

Hearts of Oak, which has striking similar objectives to the organisation proposed by Nielsen, launched with a protest on Parliament Square demanding the deportation of Muslim perpetrators of on-street grooming. Hearts of Oak described itself as a “populist, anti-establishment movement” that brought together a group including Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), various former UKIP figures and evangelical Christian activists. The group announced that it would campaign on immigration, political correctness and protecting children from the “LGBTQ agenda”. Disrupted soon after its launch by the COVID-19 pandemic, the group’s operations have moved online and it has since developed into an online platform.

McIlvenna now produces regular interviews for the group’s YouTube channel, covering an array of topics but with a focus on anti-Muslim content, opposing COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, and anti-LGBT+ content that is framed as opposition to the sexualisation of children.

In the past year, Hearts of Oak has produced videos with prominent US far-right figures including Brigitte Gabriel of the anti-Muslim organisation ACT! For America, with Trump’s former chief strategist Steve Bannon, the American anti-Muslim writer Robert Spencer and alt-right figure Jack Posobiec. It also regularly hosts UK-based COVID-sceptics and high-profile domestic far-right figures, including the so-called “migrant hunter” Steve Laws and Paul Golding of Britain First.

Peter McIlvenna, who is the central figure at Hearts of Oak, continued to attend NIG meetings throughout this period.

EVANGELICAL AND CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIANS

While the primary aim of the NIG is to advance anti-Muslim politics, the central driving motivation for much of the group’s core members is the defence of Christianity and Christian identity in the UK.

Baroness Cox herself is a high-profile figure within the conservative wing of the Church of England. A member of the Christian community, Cox has been able to open doors for the NIG members to engage with high-profile Christian figures. This may explain why Bishop Angaelos, the Coptic Orthodox Archbishop of London, attended at least one meeting of the NIG in 2014 and sent his apologies to others. However, his history of interfaith work with Muslims suggests he may not have been aligned with the goals of the NIG.

The meeting minutes also show that regular NIG attendees include Dr Sean Oliver-Dee who, according to his profile on the University of Oxford website, where he is a Tutor in the Faculty of Theology and

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HOPE not hate’s investigation has revealed that members of the House of Lords have been collaborating with known far-right and anti-Muslim extremists and opening doors to them in the corridors of power

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Religion, “was the Interreligious Advisor for the Church of England’s Diocese of Peterborough and was also worked for the Office of the Archbishop of Canterbury’s Representative to the European Union as the Researcher on Inter-Religious issues”.

His online bio states that he has co-authored parliamentary publications “concerning religious liberty and co-authored a strategic analysis report on religious futures for the British Ministry of Defence”. Oliver-Dee has attended NIG meetings from 2013 onwards and appears to still be involved.

Another regular NIG attendee is the American Christian evangelist Dr Jay Smith, who founded Pfander UK. The Pfander Centre for Apologetics launched in 2007 and produces critical and controversial online courses on Islam. The group’s website states that it seeks to:

Help people see Jesus through the whole Bible. Answer questions Muslims ask about the Trinity, the divinity of Jesus and the Bible. Understand Islamic mission, secular accommodation of it and their impact in the world. Research and present the latest historical critique of Islam’s history and its texts. Ultimately to provide a confident Biblical response to Islam.

One of Smith’s students at the Oxford Centre of Christian Apologetics was Hatun Tash, founder of DCCI (Defend Christ Critique Islam) Ministries. She accompanied Smith to Speakers Corner in London’s Hyde Park and soon became an infamous regular, brandishing a cartoon image of the Prophet Muhammad depicted as a crying baby, and drilling holes into a copy of the Qu’ran. In a video on the PfanderFilms YouTube channel, Smith takes credit for training Tash.

The co-founder of Pfander UK, Beth Grove, also attended NIG meetings from 2015 onwards.

CONCERNED ABOUT CHRISTIAN CONCERN

The most important Christian group represented within the NIG is Christian Concern, a prominent evangelical organisations in the UK.

Christian Concern includes three “specialist ministries”: The Christian Legal Centre which advances the group’s objectives through the courts and has represented Hatun Tash; the Wilberforce Academy, which provides residential training programmes; and Wilberforce Publications, which produces religious books.

A recent podcast by media outlet *Tortoise* claims that The International Federation For Therapeutic and Counseling Choice, which campaigns against a ban on “conversion therapy” for LGBT+ people and offers support to people who no longer wish to be gay, is also part of the family of Christian Concern organisations.

HOW IS THE NIG FUNDED?

As the NIG is a secret organisation, there is no non-profit company or charity registered in that name. However, throughout the documents we acquired there are numerous references to donations, travel expenses and various costs. The evidence suggests that it was likely funded in part via money donated to a company called Equal and Free Limited.

The minutes from an NIG meeting in September 2015 describes Equal and Free as “the company set up as a channel behind the Bill”, a reference to Baroness Cox’s Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill. The not-for-profit company, originally called One Nation One Law Limited, was established in July 2012, around the same time as the NIG itself. Alan Craig and Baroness Cox both became directors in August of that year, and were subsequently joined in June 2014 by NIG regulars Tim Dieppe from Christian Concern and Sean Oliver-Dee.

Despite still being listed as an active Director of the organisation, Equal and Free does not appear on Baroness Cox’s Register of Interests. This is a breach of the Lords ‘Rules of Conduct’ that state that you members must ‘register in the Register of Lords’ Interests all relevant interests, in order to make clear what are the interests that might reasonably be thought to influence their parliamentary actions’. After HNH contacted Baroness Cox for a comment she subsequently added Equal and Free to her Register of Interests.

In the earliest document seen by HNH there is a section titled ‘FUND RAISING’ with an instruction to “Write to Lord Kalms and Lord Vinson with TQ [unknown name abbreviation] sending 2nd reading debate and asking for more funding – to cover salary for ?? £25,000 mentioned to cover travel expenses.” Later, at a NIG meeting in November 2013, Baroness Cox reported that “we have potential funding of \$45,000 (US dollars) and 2 peers are very supportive: Lord Kalms and Lord Vinson.”

Sir Stanley Kalms is the former Chairman of the electrical retailer Currys, and a former treasurer and significant donor of the Conservative Party who was expelled from the party in 2009 after voting for UKIP. He was knighted in 1996 and received a life peerage in 2004, and has served as Chairman of the Strategy Committee of the think tank the Henry Jackson Society. The 2018 accounts (the earliest available) of The Stanley Kalms Foundation, does show a £5,000 donation to the company Equal and Free. Lord Kalms did not respond to our request for a comment.

Lord Nigel Vinson is a former director of Barclays Bank who became a Conservative life peer in 1985, and is known to have funded the climate science sceptic group the Global Warming Policy Foundation. He is also Life Vice President and former Chair of the Institute of Economic Affairs Board of Trustees.



The 2017 accounts of the Nigel Vinson Charitable Trust (the earliest available) also show a £3,000 donation to Equal and Free. When contacted for comment Lord Vinson stated he was “Not aware of NIG” but is “supportive of the many good works that Bns .Cox does.” He subsequently sent a follow up email supporting Lord Pearson despite our request for comment making no mention of Pearson’s involvement.

The document suggests that Kalms and Vinson money may have been used to fund the NIG, though it remains unclear how much and whether they were aware of the link between Equal and Free and the NIG.

Equally intriguing is a reference to a \$40,000 donation from a US-based group called Fieldstead & Company. At an NIG meeting in July 2014, Alan Craig “reported on the company which has been formed One Nation One Law; TD [Tim Dieppe] has opened a bank account; money has come in from the US mainly to pay for Muslim women coming to give evidence and Sam’s salary will be paid from it. \$40,000 from Fieldstead & Company; and £8,000 has been promised from another source(?)” One Nation One Law was the original name of Equal and Free Ltd. Fieldstead & Company, based in Irvine, California, is run by Howard and Roberta Ahmanson and has made philanthropic donations to a huge array of organisations, ranging from the National Gallery in London to universities and charities all over the world. In a 2005 *Time Magazine* list of the “most influential evangelicals in America”, Roberta and Howard were described as “The Financiers.” The article describes how

The couple have been accused over the years of having an extremist agenda, mostly because a onetime pet charity, the Chalcedon Foundation, advocates the Christian reconstructionist branch of theology that says gays and other biblical lawbreakers should be stoned.

The NIG minutes clearly suggest that money was sent from the US into a company that was set up with the express purpose of pushing Baroness Cox’s private members Bill through Parliament. We contacted Fieldstead & Company but received no response so it remains unclear whether they were aware of the NIG.

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The fact that a secretive organisation designed to push anti-Muslim politics has been operating out of the Parliamentary Estate for over a decade is genuinely shocking

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Donations to Christian Concern can be made directly but also via a charity called Faith, Truth and Hope, which “has generously (but not exclusively) supported aspects of Christian Concern’s work that are eligible for charitable funding”. The *Tortoise* investigation showed that Faith, Truth and Hope had made donations to Christian Concern amounting to £1.7 million over the last five years.

Together, these groups campaign around a series of issues including opposing Islam, abortion, adultery, premarital sex, pornography, homosexuality, polygamy and “other harmful sexual practices”.

HOPE not hate has been told that figures from Christian Concern are now fundamental to the running of the NIG. Tim Dieppe, who is now Head of Public Policy at Christian Concern, has been attending NIG meetings regularly since 2014 and is believed to be the current organiser of the meetings. A Facebook post by Christian Concern in April 2016 welcomed his appointment as the organisation’s new “Director of Islamic Affairs” and states that his interest in the topic developed following the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

Dieppe has written scores of articles about Muslims and Islam for the Christian Concern website, including on topics such as “Islamic rape gangs”, the supposed rise of an “Islamic monoculture in the UK”, bemoaned the Islamic call to prayer as “a sign of the increasing influence of Islam” and opposing Sharia courts, Sharia finance and halal food.

Another figure associated with Christian Concern that has attended at least one NIG meeting is the barrister Paul Diamond, who has served as Standing Counsel to the Christian Legal Centre for years. The recent *Tortoise* investigation claims that he received £8,000 a month for religious liberties advocacy. Diamond was involved in the “counter-jihad” scene and addressed “The Constitution or Sharia: Preserving Freedom” conference in Nashville, Tennessee in November 2011 and the “MassResistance Banquet” in Boxborough, Massachusetts on 18 September 2011, both high-profile counter-jihad gatherings. Minutes show that he attended at least one NIG meeting in 2016 and was discussed by the group at others.

INFLUENCE IN PARLIAMENT

The real danger presented by the New Issues Group stems from the fact that it has sought to exert its influence within Parliament, raising serious questions about the misuse of the Parliamentary estate and a lack of transparency within the House of Lords.

The most obvious means by which it has sought to influence Parliament is through collectively writing questions that either Lord Pearson or Baroness Cox will then ask within the House of Lords. Shockingly, the minutes of a meeting in November 2013 state that

the anti-Muslim extremist Anne Marie Waters “was asked if she would help draft a question for Caroline Cox to ask in the Lords”.

That same month, Waters resigned her role as co-spokesperson of the organisation One Law for All, prompting the group to release a statement reading: “What you don’t know is that her resignation followed more recent political disagreements on some key issues, including One Law for All’s refusal to collaborate with the members of racist and far-Right groups and our insistence on the need to distinguish between Muslims/immigrants and Islamists.”

Other examples of the NIG contributing to questions came in 2016, when Andrew Marsh of Christian Concern helped draft a question “seeking clarification on the governments [sic] definition of extremism”, and Baroness Cox’s Parliamentary researcher Sam Mason was asked “to draft parliamentary questions in view of ONS [Office for National Statistics] statistics” about the provisions for those communities “Where the Muslim population is expected to rise”.

Similarly, in March 2016, the minutes state that: “Following February’s NIG meeting, MP [Malcolm Pearson] tabled a number of Written Parliamentary Questions,” which were about Sharia financing, grooming in Rotherham and counter-extremism strategy. At the following meeting in May, it was noted that Pearson had “asked a series of parliamentary questions related to political Islam”.

In addition to asking questions in Parliament, the NIG has organised a series of meetings in the Lords designed to advance its goals. The NIG meeting minutes from October 2016 mention Cox coordinating “a series of meetings in the House of Lords on the subject of Sharia Law and “honour”- based abuse”.

According to the Metropolitan Police: “Honour-based abuse is a crime or incident committed to protect or defend the ‘honour’ of a family or community.” While domestic abuse is a problem across society, this form can have a cultural or religious motivation.

In November 2016, Detective Sergeant Pal Singh of the Metropolitan Police made headlines when he accused the Crown Prosecution Service of “apathy” when prosecuting cases of honour-based violence, claiming it was more concerned that: “A conviction could lead to unrest in the affected community”.

The story was picked up widely by the media and prompted a welcome discussion about whether the police were doing enough to protect the victims of these crimes. Unknown at the time, however, was the fact that Pal Singh was an attendee of NIG meetings when he blew the whistle, attending at least four such gatherings between 2013 and 2016.

Also present at some of these meetings attended by Singh were well known anti-Muslim extremists, including Anne Marie Waters and Toni Bugle. The fact that a serving police officer was attending alongside such high-profile Islamophobes is troubling enough. We received no response to our request for comment and there is no indication that Singh knew about the extremist views of some of the people at the meetings he attended.

However, Tim Dieppe of Christian Concern was also at three of the meetings attended by Singh. Dieppe

Toni Bugle
Photo: YouTube



Anne Marie Waters



quickly jumped on the story, releasing a statement at the time that read:

Islamic communities are held to a lower standard because the CPS are beholden to political correctness. This is the same ‘political correctness’ that failed to protect the victims of Islamic rape gangs. Women are suffering as a result.

Opposing the abuse of women in religious courts and raising awareness around honour-based abuse is unquestionably a positive thing. However, regarding the NIG – a group including individuals with histories of explicit Islamophobia and far-right activism – the motivation behind such campaigns has to be questioned.

PRIVATE MEMBERS BILL

In addition to asking questions and holding events, the NIG has thrown its weight behind Baroness Cox’s Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill. Cox first introduced this Private Members Bill in 2011, and has failed to pass it through the Lords numerous times over the past decade.

Ostensibly, the legislation was designed to challenge discrimination against Muslim women within Sharia courts (technically, these are voluntary Sharia councils, as Sharia “law” has no legal weight in and of itself). The Bill received support from a wide array of groups, ranging from the National Secular Society to British Arabs Supporting Universal Women’s Rights. While the primary aim of the legislation may have appeared laudable, it is unclear if the Bill’s many supporters were aware that NIG was operating behind the scenes. Minutes from an NIG meeting in March 2016 state that Cox was accompanied by NIG members Alan Craig and Sam Mason to “a very productive meeting” with then-Secretary of State for Justice, Michael Gove, to discuss the Bill. Interestingly, the Ministry of Justice’s transparency returns note a meeting between Cox and Caroline Dinenage, then-Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice, rather than with Gove.

However, the really worrying element to this story is that Cox was accompanied by the far-right activist Alan Craig, a founding member of the NIG as well as a former UKIP spokesperson. This is just one example

where Baroness Cox and Lord Pearson opened doors for far-right activists to lobby powerful people.

Also at the meeting was Sam Mason, the CEO of Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust, a charity founded by Baroness Cox. Similarly, in 2016, Cox took Mason with her to meet Adrian Hitchens from the Home Office Select Committee.

Michael Gove, Sam Mason and Alan Craig were all contacted for comment but we received no response.

WHY THE NIG MATTERS

The story of the NIG is deeply troubling. The fact that a secretive organisation designed to push anti-Muslim politics has been operating out of the Parliamentary Estate for over a decade is genuinely shocking.

HOPE not hate’s investigation has revealed that members of the House of Lords have been collaborating with known far-right and anti-Muslim extremists and opening doors to them in the corridors of power. It also reveals close collaboration between major Christian evangelical groups and the far right.

As a group, the NIG has operated in the shadows and secretly sought to push its agenda both within Parliament but also on the streets of the UK. The fact that it appears to have been funded by influential businessmen and peers, but also US money from the evangelical movement, is especially worrying.

The NIG still exists and met as recently as January this year.

This investigation asks serious questions about the lack of transparency within British politics and the House of Lords in particular, and is reminder that anti-Muslim prejudice can be found at the heart of the British establishment as well as in our own communities.

**All the people mentioned in this article were contacted for comment. Lord Pearson replied, stressing that his views were against Islam and not against Muslims more generally but made no mention of the NIG in his response. Baroness Cox also failed to address any of our questions about the NIG in her response but stated that “My only comment is that I would welcome publicity about my work with regard to the Arbitration and Mediation Services (Equality) Bill and related issues.”*

COUNCILS OF DESPAIR

THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY CONTINUES TO TOLERATE EXTREMISM

An investigation by HOPE not hate can reveal ANOTHER raft of extremists within the Conservative Party, reveals Gregory Davis, and a worrying lack of action over those that have previously been exposed.

OUR INVESTIGATIONS into the Conservative Party have revealed a worrying overlap between the right-wing of the party and extreme ideologies.

Most recently, in November 2022, we revealed that a Conservative councillor, Andy Weatherhead of Kent County Council, had previously served as the Policy Officer of the fascist New British Union (NBU) group, an attempted revival of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists.

Prior to that, in October 2021, our investigations uncovered that Conservative Party councillor Tim Wills, of Worthing Borough Council, had secretly applied to join the highly antisemitic, fascist group Patriotic Alternative (PA).

In both cases, the councillors were suspended by the Conservatives, and later resigned their seats. Responding to the latest case, the leader of the Conservative group on Kent County Council declared that “the abhorrent views and associations described in [HOPE not hate’s] article have no place in the Conservative Group at Kent County Council.”

While it is likely that their association with overtly fascist organisations will be a bar to Cllr Weatherhead and Wills from standing for the party again, there is reason to doubt that abhorrent views alone will prove an obstacle in the future.

Our investigation has found that the Conservative Party has a continuing problem with political extremism among its councillors that it seems unwilling to address, from anti-Muslim discrimination to the promotion of fringe conspiracy theories.

THE UKIP FACTOR

While Cllr Weatherhead likely concealed his affiliation with the New British Union, his connection to the populist, radical right UK Independence Party (UKIP) was widely known. He had stood for the party five times between 2015 and 2018, including an abortive bid for the leadership following the resignation of Nigel Farage in 2016.

While the rump of UKIP became increasingly extreme over the course of its dramatic decline following the Brexit referendum, it had long been home to a large number of racists and fringe conspiracy theorists. In 2004 David Cameron dismissed the party as “fruit



Long-time Kent councillor Trevor Shonk. Photo: Facebook

cakes, loonies and racists”, and even UKIP’s founder Dr Alan Sked declared the party to have been “infected by the far right” in the same year.

Despite UKIP’s long association with racism and crank ideologies, the Conservatives have been the biggest beneficiary of the party’s implosion, absorbing swathes of voters and candidates. The revolving door between the Conservatives, UKIP and other smaller right-wing rivals has been almost farcical at times, as illustrated for example by the career of Cllr Peter Harris, who currently serves as Conservative Chairman of Tendring District Council.

Harris first came to prominence as the Chairman of UKIP in Dagenham, east London, where he was best known for campaigning against the building of mosques. An article in the *New York Times* from November 2017, covering the acrimonious disputes over the building of mosques in east London, described Harris as having “made a career out of thwarting the opening of Muslim prayer facilities” and quoted him as saying that white British residents of the borough were “an endangered species” living on “the front line”.

In March 2017, he invited the anti-Muslim campaigner Anne Marie Waters, who had set up the short-lived Pegida UK group with former English Defence League (EDL) leader Stephen Yaxley-Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) the year before, to address his branch meeting in Dagenham. Having railed against Muslims and immigration, Waters concluded her speech by declaring that “...the problem is not that there is an extreme element in Islam. The problem is that Islam itself is extreme.” Later that evening, Harris tweeted: “Thank you @amdwaters for a great speech!”

Yet by February 2018, Harris had embarked on the first of his many defections and was warmly welcomed into the Dagenham Conservative Party, with the Chairman of nearby Barking Conservatives describing it as “great news”. A year later, Harris had defected again, campaigning for the newly formed Brexit Party in that year’s European Elections, while also winning his first council seat on behalf of the minuscule Foundation Party in Tendring, Essex, defeating the incumbent Conservative councillor. Later that year, Harris defected back to the Conservatives, where he remains at time of writing and now serves as the council’s Chairman.

CHEQUERED PASTS

Many other UKIP activists with chequered pasts have been waved into the party in recent years, such as the long-time Kent councillor Trevor Shonk. Cllr Shonk has represented Ramsgate Division for UKIP on Kent County Council since 2013, but after a brief dalliance with the Brexit Party he decided to run for the Conservatives in 2021.

Shonk faced widespread derision in 2014 for his claim that immigration was the cause of racism in the UK, saying “the two main parties have made the country racist because of the influx we have had”, but our investigation found that Shonk has also shared a number of disturbing anti-Muslim posts on Facebook, including one which claimed that the streets of the UK were being “taken over by hordes of barbarian Muslims



Cllr Rick Payne. Photo: Facebook

flexing their muscle”, and another which celebrated the supposed banning of Islam by countries around the world.

“FED UP: Christian countries now deporting violent Muslims. The first countries to ban Islam: See how the world is acting fast on the threat posed by Islam and its barbaric Sharia Law.”

From an article shared by Cllr Shonk on Facebook, 2016

While some in the party feel free to make their offensive posts on their public profiles, other officials choose to do so from the privacy of anonymous accounts. One of those is Cllr Rick Payne, who has represented Kingstanding ward on Birmingham City Council since May 2022. While maintaining a public Twitter account for his mainstream political activity, we have identified a secondary account, with the handle @OfPalmas, on which Cllr Payne expresses some alarming views about Muslims, including promotion of the “no go zones” conspiracy theory.

“It seems like an invasion where eventually we will have complete no go areas within all of the major towns and cities where there is a high population of Islamic immigrants / communities”

Tweeted by Cllr Payne, 07/08/2022



COVID AND CONSPIRACIES

While the Conservative Party’s long-standing problem with Islamophobia has been well documented, a more recent issue to emerge is extreme anti-vaccine and COVID-related conspiracy theories.

As the parties to the right of the Conservatives and certain sections of right-wing media coalesced around an anti-lockdown, anti-vaccine agenda, some officials in the party began to adopt a conspiratorial worldview that crossed a line into political extremism, with calls for the arrest and even violence against public health officials and those alleged to be aiding the conspiracy.

One such figure is Cllr Lisa Parker of Rugby Borough Council. Parker gained a reputation for making extreme comments during the Brexit debates, including condemning Tory remain-voters as “traitors”, which resulted in her temporary suspension in 2019 for “bringing the party into disrepute.”

However, she was then readmitted to the party and has devoted herself increasingly towards anti-vaccine and COVID conspiracies since 2020, even changing her Twitter handle to @NoMedApartheid in protest at the prospect of vaccine mandates. Parker’s tweets display even greater hostility than those she directed at pro-Remain MPs during the Brexit debates, calling for a wide range of public figures to be tried at the Hague, including current Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, Canadian leader Justin Trudeau and the UK’s chief medical officers Chris Whitty.



In Essex, Cllr Ian Ward was elected to Rochford District Council in 2019, and currently holds the portfolio for Strategic Planning. Ward has promoted some anti-vaccine and conspiracy theory content on his Twitter account, including claiming that the pandemic had ended in July 2020 and the existence of “a globalist cabal that have taken over the Country driving it to destruction.”

“I ask you, what is worse, taking the killer vaccine, or hoping the Taliban go after all the f—k—s who are behind it?”

Cllr Ian Ward in Tommy Robinson’s Telegram chat, 17/08/2021

Yet our investigation discovered that Cllr Ward reserves even more fringe content for an alternative account he uses on the Telegram messaging app, using the handle @Rabbi_Yitzak_Tzvi_ben_Emanuel. Posting in Telegram chats belonging to the anti-Muslim thug Tommy Robinson and others devoted to the “chemtrails” conspiracy theory, Ward has promoted a number of fringe theories, including that vaccines are part of a “depopulation agenda”, as well as posting videos from his back garden that he claims show “man-made clouds”.



BLEED TO FAR RIGHT

The traffic between the Tory hard right and more traditional far-right groups goes both ways, too.

Our investigation found that Britain First (BF), the aggressive anti-Muslim political party set up by former British National Party (BNP) official Paul Golding, can claim at least two former Tory councillors among its members.

Among the most active members of BF’s North West branch is Annabel Shipley, who served as a Conservative councillor on Rossendale Borough Council between 2011 and 2019, and briefly led the Conservative Group there. Since stepping down in 2019, Shipley has become a regular feature of BF activities, including joining the group’s anti-migrant protests outside hotels and on canvassing sessions for deputy leader Ashlea Simon’s unsuccessful runs in the 2022 local elections and Wakefield by-election.

Another member is Mike Taylor, an enthusiastic cheerleader of the party on its Telegram chat group. In a neat reversal of Cllr Weatherhead’s journey, Taylor served as the Conservative councillor on Kesteven District council for 16 years between 1999 and 2015, before defecting to UKIP, losing his seat and then moving even further right to join BF.

UNSUSPENDED

Most damning of all our findings is the Conservative party’s unwillingness to take meaningful action against extreme councillors, even after being presented with evidence.

As part of an investigation for our **State of HATE 2020** report, we submitted a dossier of 20 councillors and activists to the party who had made anti-Muslim comments. Responding to our submission, the party issued a statement announcing that all 20 had been suspended pending investigation, adding that “the swift action we take on not just anti-Muslim discrimination, but discrimination of any kind is testament to the seriousness with which we take such issues.”

Yet our investigation found that many suspended party members were later reinstated, and are now back in their respective Conservative council groups. In some cases they have even been promoted.

One such councillor is Karl Lewis, who sits on Powys County Council. We highlighted that Vickers had shared a video called “Sweden Raped To Death By Muslim Migrants” from the odious conspiracy channel InfoWars, as well as greeting the 2016 election of Donald Trump by declaring that “all the immigrants are shitting themselves”, which he said made it “another brilliant political night.”

It is unclear whether Cllr Lewis was ever suspended, but it clearly did not harm his prospects in the party. He was selected to stand again in the 2022 elections and won his seat. Nor does the experience appear to have moderated his social media usage: he has recently “liked” two tweets from the toxic misogynist Andrew Tate, including one which celebrated Kanye West in the aftermath of his antisemitic outbursts.



Another example is Steve Vickers, who served on Nottinghamshire County Council. We reported that he had made a deeply Islamophobic post following the 2016 terror attacks in Nice, France, in which he appeared to place blame on both the Mayor of London Sadiq Khan and a local Islamic school in Nottinghamshire, saying: “He [Khan] and his brethren are part of the problem.”

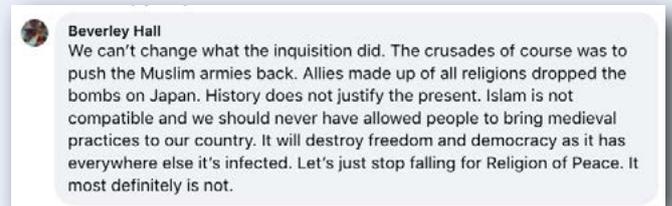
Vickers was suspended by the Conservative Party in March 2016, yet by June that year he had been welcomed back onto the Conservative group and even promoted to Chairman of the Health and Wellbeing Board – all while still under investigation by the national party. Then-leader of the Conservative grouping, Kay Cutts, said she had accepted Vickers’ apology – which was not made publicly – which she justified by saying that his comments had been made “in the heat of the moment” due to Vickers having “a number of French friends”.

Yet another Tory to have received swift promotion was Fraser McFarland, who was working as parliamentary caseworker for Brendan Clarke-Smith MP when we revealed that he had posted two Islamophobic articles to Facebook.

One was by the anti-Muslim activist Debbie Schlusell, who wrote that “the 9/11 attacks were the best public relations move ever by Muslims, who got America [...] to bend over backwards (and forward) for Islam, Muslims, their intolerance, and their regressive, backward ways”. Despite this, McFarland was then promoted to become the Chief of Staff to Clarke-Smith, even as the investigation into his conduct was ongoing.

Not only does the party appear to consider private apologies to other officials to be sufficient to allow for readmission, but in other cases councillors have been readmitted without offering any sign of contrition at all. Beverley Dunlop, of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council, was suspended in 2019 after *The Guardian* revealed a number of anti-Muslim comments on social media, including a suggestion that British Muslims should be made “scared” of the British government by threat of deportation and referring to migrants to the UK as “the barrel-scrapes”.

Cllr Dunlop angrily denied that her comments were offensive, claiming that they had been “written in jest”, “removed from the context” and later attacked those she said had “gleefully and publicly defamed me following a wrongful allegation of Islamophobia.” Yet our investigation found that anti-Muslim posts were still visible on her Facebook account, including declaring Islam would “destroy freedom and democracy” and complaining that Muslims had “swamped” parts of the country.



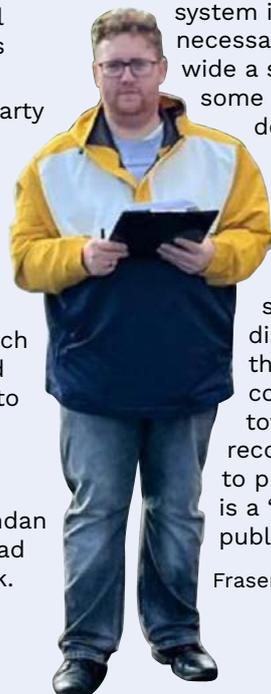
Despite failing to acknowledge the discriminatory nature of her comments, Cllr Dunlop was only briefly suspended by the national party.

A PARTY IN FLUX

It is a feature of the first-past-the-post electoral system in the UK that a governing party must necessarily represent a “broad church”, attracting as wide a spectrum of voters as possible while retaining some core values. Yet the Conservative Party must decide exactly how far to the right it wishes to represent, and which views are sufficiently toxic to make their adherents an unwelcome force within the party.

Time and again, the Conservative Party has proven that its “broad church” leaves space for elected officials with extreme and discriminatory views. The party cannot laud the diversity of its cabinet while tolerating councillors who hold discriminatory views towards their constituents. Nor can it defend its record on COVID-19 while allowing its councillors to promote the idea that the vaccine programme is a “depopulation plot” or call for the execution of public health officials.

Fraser McFarland. Photo: Facebook



IS THIS LENNON'S #METOO MOMENT?

Stephen Lennon, far right, on stage with Daniel Thomas and others during an anti-grooming demo in Telford



By NICK LOWLES

Within hours of Andrew Tate's arrest in Romania on suspicion of human trafficking and racketeering, former English Defence League (EDL) leader Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) leapt to his old friend's defence. Not only was Tate a victim of an establishment stitch-up – "The Matrix" as he has described the conspiracy – but the women making accusations against him were not to be believed.

"If they take their clothes off for money, just think what they would also say for money," Lennon claimed in one video he put out.

No other issue has caused such a backlash among Lennon's own supporters than his backing for Tate. So fierce has it been, that Lennon was forced to produce a video pleading for his supporters not to cancel their monthly donations.

Lennon's initial motivation was undoubtedly partly driven by money. While HOPE not hate considers

Lennon to be the highest profile far-right activist in the UK, his reach pales into insignificance when compared to Andrew Tate. For every person (mostly women) he upsets, Lennon is clearly hoping that there were many more men who would love what he's saying.

MISOGYNY INSIDE LENNON'S CAMP

But there is probably a secondary reason for Lennon's defence of Tate: namely that they share many of the same views and attitudes towards women.

Over the years Lennon has quite literally used and exploited women. Despite his much-vaunted claims to champion victims of "grooming", his social media feeds regularly denounce women as "slags", "whores" and "bitches". He mocks the appearance of women he doesn't like and time and again he has allowed his supporters to abuse women he has criticised.

His supporters bombarded personal trainer Bianca Jade as she promoted sessions for Muslim women.

“

For all the public pronouncements about defending white British girls ... here was proof of breathtaking hypocrisy

”

A sexual abuse charity aimed at ethnic minority communities in High Wycombe received “hundreds of abusive calls” after Lennon put up a poster for the charity and adding: “I guess it’s ok to rape white women then?” on Facebook.

“The centre received hundreds of abusive and harassing calls to support lines which are there for victims of very traumatic experiences,” a Rape Crisis spokeswoman said. “The calls undoubtedly had a disruptive and shocking impact on a service that’s there to help people.”

He avoided criticism from some of his supporters for inviting the Muslim YouTuber Ali Dawah to speak at the Day for Freedom event in May 2018, disingenuously pinning the blame on one of the event organisers, Lucy Brown. Lennon stood back and watched his supporters abuse, vilify and even threaten Brown – so much so that she was left suicidal.

He also literally slept his way through the movement. In February 2018, Lennon even plied a woman with cocaine, before sleeping with her, only 24 hours after she had been allegedly raped by one of his friends. When confronted with the rape allegation, Lennon said – quite publicly on a video – that the woman was making it up.

If Lennon’s behaviour to women has been bad, those of many of his close supporters have been worse.

Daniel Thomas’ (aka Danny Tommo) emerged as a key Lennon supporter in June 2018, organising a protest for the former EDL leader after he had been arrested and imprisoned for contempt of court, after filming outside Leeds Crown Court.

It was while organising this protest that Thomas met and later began a relationship with Lisa Reynolds of the Middle East Forum, an American anti-Islam organisation which put up \$30,000 to sponsor the Free Tommy demo. The affair was intense but relatively brief. It came to an end after Reynolds was left needing hospital treatment after being punched in the face by Thomas.

Thomas has always denied the assault, but photos of Reynolds’ battered and bruised face – which are in the possession of HOPE not hate – shows the severity of the assault.

In one fiery WhatsApp exchange, Thomas and Reynolds argued about the incident, with the American furious at his repeated denials of the assault.

“Danny I’ll tell you what I remember from that night,” Reynolds wrote to Thomas. “You were on top of me and me telling you to get off and telling you to stop and you not doing it. To the point you were punching me in the face and you chipped my tooth.

“I remember taking myself to the emergency room because you were too fucked up to help me.

“I remember being scared and alone in an emergency room in a foreign country for nine fucking hours.

“Nobody asked me details of what happened, they asked me if you did that to me. I said yes. Because you did and because everybody already knew you did. Nobody asked me how or why it happened or anything like that so don’t go play and shit around on me like I’m talking shit because I’m not.

“You have a demon or something in you that allows you to act like that toward people you supposedly care about.

“But you never cared about me or anyone else. It was always about you. It still is.”

DANNY TOMMO’S HISTORY OF VIOLENCE

Depressingly, Thomas has form for assaulting women. He has a long history of violence towards his long-term partner, once even grabbing her by the hair and throwing her down the stairs while she was pregnant.

In May 2016, Thomas punched her in the face, leaving her with bruises across her jaw, lip and eye. He then assaulted her on three separate occasions in December 2019, after which she threw him out of the family home.

Someone watching the drama unfold with increasing concern was the then-partner of Kev Carroll, Lennon’s cousin, who had been central to the formation of the EDL back in 2009 and ever-present by Lennon’s side over the next eight years. Carroll’s ex-partner told us:

“I asked her if she was alright. I engaged with her first. I felt that she was a young girl that needed help. I didn’t at the time realise how bad it were for her or how bad it had been for her in terms of the beatings she had endured. Him beating her up prior to her having their youngest kid. She was heavily pregnant when he threw her down stairs. It had gone on throughout the majority of the relationship.”

Equally horrified was the sister of Thomas’ partner. She did not like Thomas – and for good reason. She had witnessed the physical, emotional and psychological abuse against her sister over many years. Protective of her sibling, she trolled Thomas incessantly over social media, setting up several Twitter accounts to attack him and regularly leaving comments on his YouTube site.

Lennon’s team watched these events unfold with increasing concern, but Lennon himself appeared more concerned about limiting any fallout for himself than the safety and care of the young woman at the centre of this abuse by one of his closest lieutenants.

Carroll’s ex-partner decided it was unacceptable for Lennon and his team to sit this out. After making so much out of “Muslim groomers” and claiming to protect vulnerable girls and women, she felt it was disgustingly hypocritical for them to remain silent when it was one of their own doing such harm.

She confronted one of Lennon’s key confidants – Craig Fowler (known within the far right as “Jack Dawkins”) – and played the voice notes on her phone that she’d received from Thomas’ partner. She also showed him the photos of the woman’s badly battered face.

“You might want to have a fuckin’ look at what your boy Danny is capable of?!” she shouted.

Fowler was visibly shaken, if not a bit embarrassed, and he left promising to look into things.

Daniel Thomas getting angry with the media at a Free Tommy demo in 2018



“You have my word,” Fowler would later respond. “I’m not willing to let this go, despite my own circumstances. The ‘boy’ (not yet a man) is going to justify his actions to a jury of twelve.”

If she was hoping that this exchange would lead to Lennon and the wider Team Tommy camp breaking off links with Thomas, she was sadly mistaken: they actually rallied around him.

TROUBLE IN TELFORD

Over the past 18 months Lennon has focused much of his time in Telford, Shropshire, purportedly exposing Muslim grooming gangs.

The work in Telford was initially done by Daniel Thomas, until he had to step back after being unable to keep the promises he’d made to survivors’ families. He was also arrested for naming a young girl living in care during a livestream video.

Worse still, Thomas was actually sleeping with a Telford abuse survivor – a completely shocking state of affairs. Stephen Lennon would later deny this had happened, but Thomas admitted it in a phone call to me in June 2022. While admitting sleeping with the survivor, he claimed that she had “come onto him” after inviting herself down to his place on the south coast. He also denied knowing she was a survivor.

If putting the blame for what happened solely onto the young woman was not bad enough, Thomas was also not being truthful. The young woman’s parents insist that Thomas knew full well their daughter was a

survivor, given she worked on the front desk in the office where the local anti-grooming campaign was based.

According to the young woman’s mother, it was actually Thomas who initially bombarded her with text messages.

For all the public pronouncements about defending white British girls and women against the evil and predatory Muslims, here was proof of breathtaking hypocrisy. It was Lennon’s closest supporter and organiser of his anti-grooming demos, Daniel Thomas, who had been acting in such an incredibly exploitative and unprofessional manner.

And Lennon was not only warned, but actively helped cover it up.

Sadly, Thomas was not the only one of Lennon’s key supporters sleeping with survivors in Telford. One of the directors of the local anti-grooming campaign, NAGAH, was Hemel Hempstead-based Jonathan Miller, an admin on the Democratic Football Lads Alliance Facebook page.

Miller’s involvement in an anti-grooming campaign raised eyebrows. He had no training or qualifications in dealing with victims of child sexual exploitation or people with severe trauma. In fact, his background suggested a far more criminal nature: he had amassed three separate convictions for possessing drugs with intent to supply.

For the third offence, in 2009, Miller received a nine-year prison sentence. That a man with these

Jonathan Miller at Rape of Britain demo



convictions should be involved in helping and protecting vulnerable young people, many of whom had been plied with drugs by their abusers, is beyond comprehension.

Now in his 60s, the former doorman also only had one leg, a result of an injury caused by leaping out of a first floor window attempting to escape from the police.

Depressingly, like Daniel Thomas, Miller too had a relationship with a young survivor. It did not seem to bother him, or indeed others in NAGAH, that he was more than twice her age.

CONTROLLING AND ABUSIVE BEHAVIOUR

The relationship between Miller and this young woman soon soured. He was extremely controlling and became increasingly possessive the more he felt he was losing her. He gave her alcohol on a regular basis, despite knowing she was an alcoholic.

She claims that Miller was often violent towards her, reciting one incident where he pulled out a hammer from his back pocket after she told him their relationship was over.

“He grabbed me, pushed me to the wall and got the hammer handle and held it to my neck,” she said.

On another occasion, she claims she was pushed out of a slow-moving car.

Her experience of Miller was depressingly similar to other women who had been in his life. A friend of Miller’s former partner recalled her having to call the police because of his threats and even violence towards her. She had been traumatised by their relationship. The friend also said that the woman’s elderly mother suffered broken ribs after she once tried to intervene to stop Miller hitting her daughter. Even Miller’s own daughter reached out to the Telford survivor when reading one of her posts on Facebook, texting to say that she had nothing to do with her father because of his violent and aggressive behaviour.

Jonathon Miller has had a close relationship to Lennon for several years. In fact, he ran Lennon’s merchandising operation for the last few years, printing t-shirts and hoodies and dispatching his book orders.

Lennon denies any link to Miller, but three people who have been closely linked to Miller tell of his association with the former EDL leader.

“

I feel that Tommy is toxic and is motivated by his hatred of Islam and not the stories of survivors

”

The Telford survivor remembers Miller having a t-shirt printing machine in his flat on which he produced Lennon merchandise, as well as t-shirts for the far-right group Hearts of Oak and the anti-COVID conspiracy group, the Freedom Alliance.

With Miller being on disability benefit and concerned that his business operation would be discovered, Lennon paid for a unit from which he could work.

Two years on from her relationship with Miller, his former partner is trying to rebuild her life. She has stopped drinking and is now in a frame of mind where she can reflect on what’s happened.

DOUBLE STANDARDS

In trying to expose what he calls “Muslim grooming gangs”, Stephen Lennon has all too often surrounded himself with people who have themselves seemed only too keen to sexually, emotionally and financially exploit abuse survivors. Worse still, he has either turned a blind eye or even tried to cover up these allegations.

Lennon’s focus is Muslim-only, ignoring other victims of grooming and those who’ve suffered child sexual exploitation in other environments (the majority abused by white men). While bringing down his righteous anger on communities in towns such as Telford, he has turned a blind eye both to abusers within his own ranks and also those taking advantage of the very same vulnerable women he’s claimed to champion.

Anthony Wood, the man who first brought Lennon to Telford, now says he regrets getting involved with him.

“I feel that Tommy is toxic and is motivated by his hatred of Islam and not the stories of survivors.”

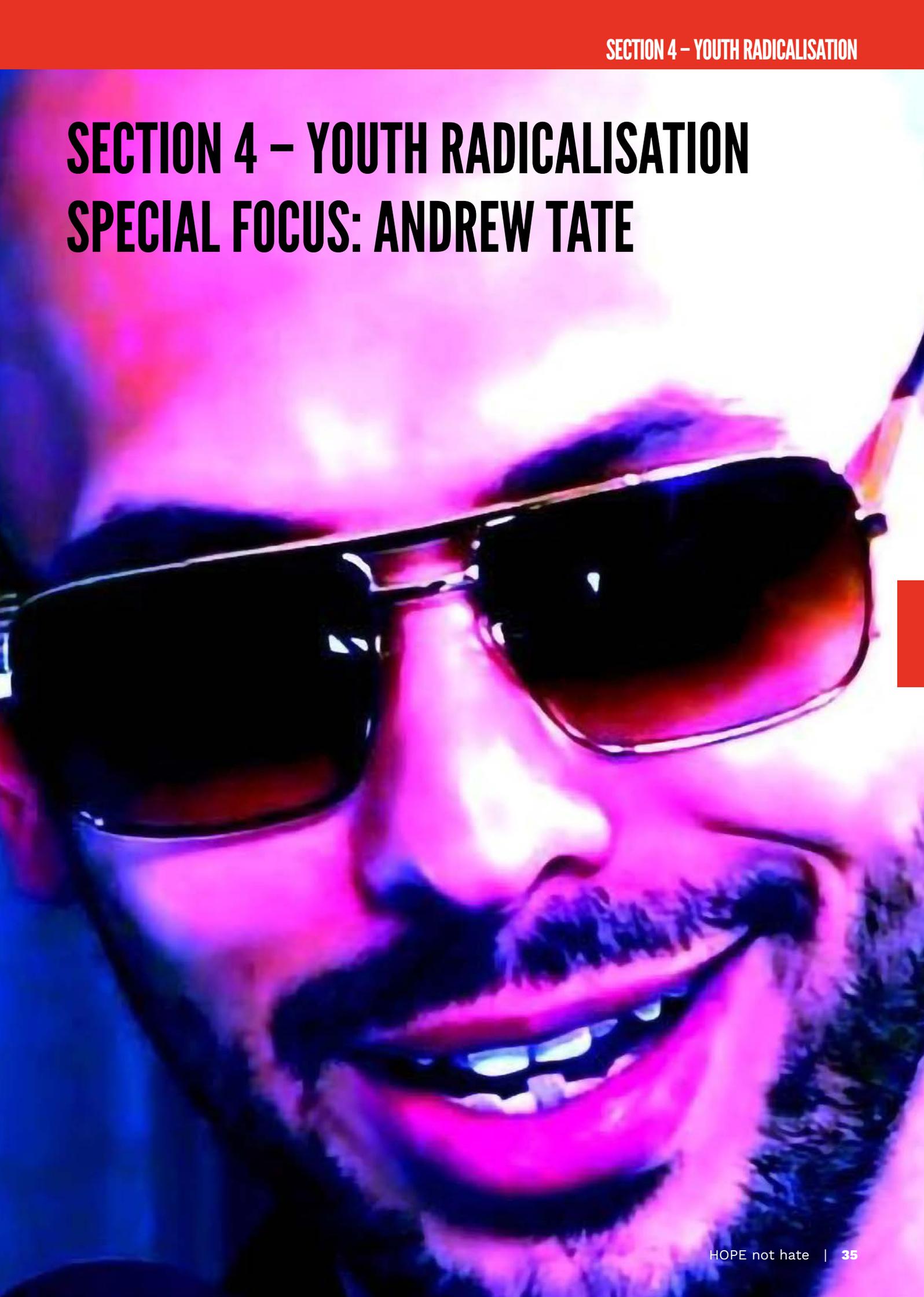
Yet Lennon believes that he, and he alone, is defending the white victims of “Muslim” crimes. In the process he has overlooked the appalling behaviour of some of his closest supporters and friends, including the likes of Daniel Thomas, Jonathan Miller and Andrew Tate. Even his close friend, Britain First leader Paul Golding, whom Lennon has relied on to vilify HOPE not hate, was secretly recorded admitting to beating up women.

By ignoring and then covering up such shocking behaviour – and then maliciously and deliberately smearing those who called him out – he is culpable in the exploitation of those self-same young women he is claiming to protect. At the same time he has brought in hundreds of thousands of pounds in donations through his work in Telford and achieved little, if anything, for the people who have been abused.

Given his own appalling track record of exploiting women and covering up the crimes of some of his closest supporters, it is hardly a surprise that Stephen Lennon has rushed to defend Andrew Tate – but in defending him, he risks shining a light on his own behaviour to women.

SECTION 4 – YOUTH RADICALISATION

SPECIAL FOCUS: ANDREW TATE



ANDREW TATE

ONE OF THE MOST FAMOUS MEN IN THE WORLD?

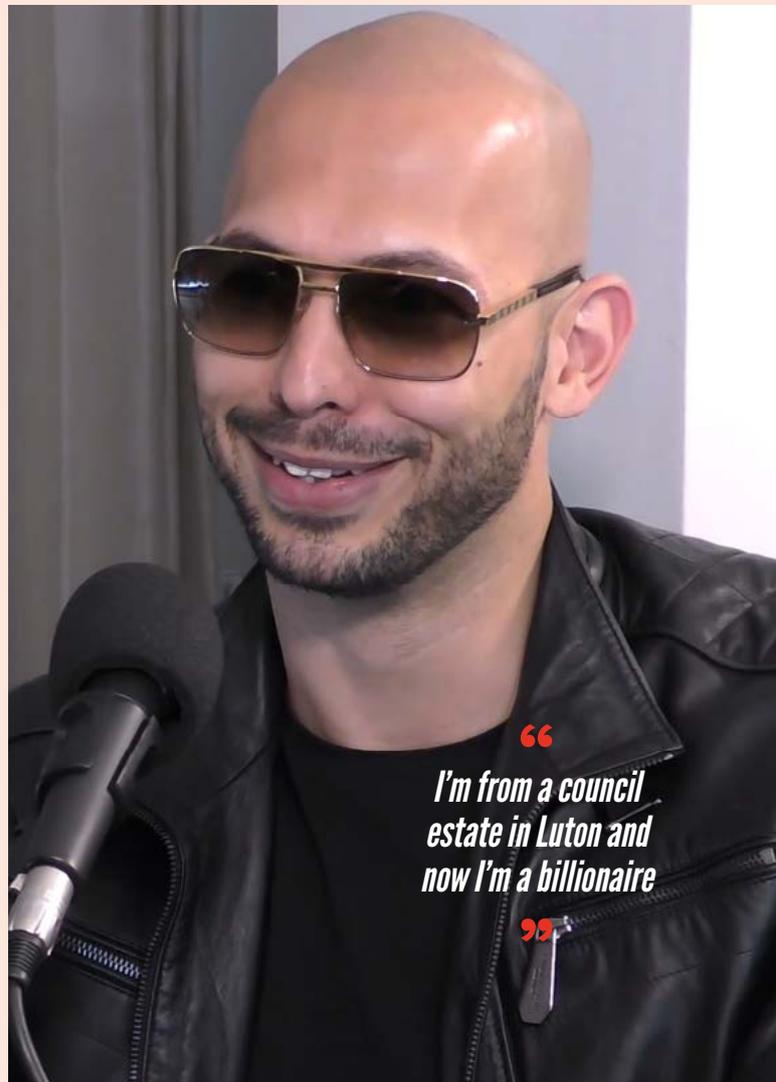
The toxic social media influencer is detained in Romania on suspicion of rape and human trafficking, but his danger remains.

IN THE SUMMER of 2022 the most googled human in the world was Andrew Tate. A former world champion kickboxer, Tate gained notoriety after appearing on the reality TV show *Big Brother* in 2016, before being thrown off after a video appeared of him allegedly beating his then-girlfriend. A dangerous conspiracy theorist and violent misogynist, Andrew Tate is arguably one of the most recognisable men in Britain and possibly, among young men at least, in the world too. His videos have notched up 11 billion views on TikTok alone.

Though born in Chicago, Tate was raised in Luton, the highly-diverse town north of London, where he became a close associate of the far-right extremist Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). He also has a long history of association with other far-right figures in the UK and USA. He has recently split his time between Romania and Dubai.

Tate made his money operating a pornographic webcam business, while also producing his own direct-to-camera content for YouTube where he demonstrated strong anti-feminism and misogynistic. He later set up his Hustler University, a subscription service that claimed to help its “students” become rich. Tate then encouraged these students to manipulate social media and post masses of his content online.

He now claims to be a billionaire (“trillionaire”), though many are deeply sceptical about the extent of his true wealth. While he does have numerous houses and a fleet of expensive sports cars, no-one seriously believes he has the money he boasts.



“
I'm from a council estate in Luton and now I'm a billionaire
”

From early April 2022 onwards, his online presence began to grow rapidly and he broke out of the confines of the fringe manosphere and anti-feminist communities. Soon he was being invited onto some of the largest podcasts in the world, many of which specifically targetted a young male audience. Platforming extreme misogyny, racism and homophobia across a huge digital span, Tate posed a real danger to young people online.

NOT ONLY THAT, BUT ...

Tate has also peddled numerous conspiracy theories, from COVID-19 and anti-lockdown conspiracies, to the belief that the climate change agenda is simply a new attempt to control our lives. Running through many of these narratives is the belief that there is a small cabal of people running the world against the interests of ordinary people.

By the autumn of 2022, Tate's presence on social media had begun to attract the attention of news outlets around the world, including high profile appearances on Fox News in America and Piers Morgan Uncensored on TalkTV in the UK. By February 2023 Tate's interview with Morgan had received nearly nine million views.

In August, HOPE not hate launched a campaign to reduce the impact of Andrew Tate's online harm, calling on major social media platforms to remove him and his harmful content from their platforms. We were not alone in speaking out against the dangers of Tate and wider societal misogyny, with organisations including Rape Crisis England and Wales, White Ribbon, Glitch and Women's Aid all bringing vital attention to this issue.

In a matter of days YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Facebook and Twitter all acted to remove accounts run by Tate. In response, he began to use other alt-tech platforms popular with the far right, including Gettr and Rumble. Following Elon Musk's purchase of Twitter, he returned to that platform in November and has amassed over 4.5 million followers so far.

In October, Tate announced that he had converted to Islam, describing it as "the last true religion in the world". A video of him praying in a mosque then went viral. The news was greeted with a mixed reaction by his supporters, a section of whom hold both far-right and Islamophobic viewpoints.

ARRESTS, DETENTION AND THE FUTURE

In December, Tate and his brother Tristan, plus two other women, were arrested in Romania on suspicion of human trafficking, rape, and forming an organised crime group. Prosecutors claim to have found six victims and the brothers were detained for 30 days. They denied all allegations.

On 10 January, a Romanian court upheld the 30-day arrest and at the time of writing, it remains to be seen whether police will charge the Tate brothers or find enough evidence to convince a judge to extend their detention while the investigation continues.

Despite being detained, Tate's social media accounts continue to pump out propaganda and many far-right and misogynist activists have leapt to his defence. The story has been covered extensively by major media outlets all over the world, bringing him a new level of fame. If he is released or found not guilty,

HOW THE INTERNATIONAL FAR RIGHT HAS RESPONDED TO TATE'S ARREST:



Photo: Michael Zimmermann

Alex Jones:
"I do not believe the story is true"



Photo: Gage Skidmore

Candice Owens:
"I do not believe Andrew Tate is a rapist"



Stephen Lennon [Tommy Robinson]:
"He's taking on the system and they're smashing him for it"



Photo: Gage Skidmore

Tim Pool:
"I think it's possible he treats women poorly, I don't know. What I do know is the media lies."



Paul Joseph Watson:
"He's said something mean about women, oh, that's the real outrage"

“

Tate posed a real danger to young people online

”

Tate will likely be catapulted to new heights, but if he is prosecuted and found guilty it will be a huge blow not only to him personally, but also his associates, apologists and fans.

In an interview with Piers Morgan shortly before his arrest, Tate said: "I'm from a council estate in Luton and now I'm a billionaire and it's because I actually tried my best. If I carry on the trajectory I'm on then they will put me in jail because I'm getting too influential and I'm too dangerous."

The idea that he's been imprisoned by the establishment – or "The Matrix" as Tate himself claims – has been enthusiastically taken up by his supporters across the world.

POLLING: ANDREW TATE'S APPEAL



Andrew Tate is staggeringly popular with young people, as brand new polling from HOPE not hate reveals. By ROSIE CARTER.

IN 2022 VIOLENT misogynist influencer Andrew Tate broke into the mainstream. As a champion professional kickboxer and contestant on reality TV show Big Brother, he had flirted with fame before. But suddenly his mix of violence and homophobia, combined with promotion of traditional gender roles and flaunting of his supposed wealth and “ultra-masculine, ultra-luxurious lifestyle”, took off.

Within a relatively short space of time Andrew Tate had become one of the world’s most famous influencers.

Despite being banned from most mainstream social media platforms, as well as his detention over accusations of sexual assault, rape and human trafficking allegations, he has managed to maintain a presence on social media. Most of his content is

repurposed and pushed out by thousands of other accounts. In fact, Tate has called on his fans to repost his content online, claiming: “I have my soldiers...this war has just begun...I ain’t going nowhere”.

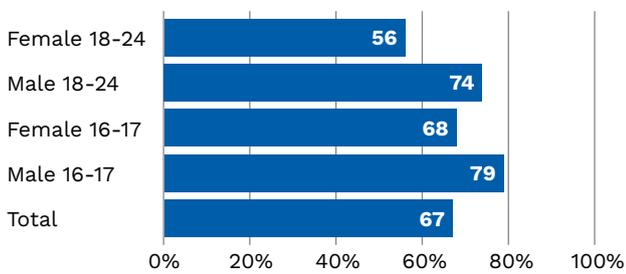
The target for this content has been young men and teenage boys, drawn to Tate’s provocative and offensive boundary pushing. Our polling showed that overall, 67% of young people and three-quarters of young men had consumed content from Tate (75%). To put this in context, male respondents aged 16-17 were 21% more likely to have consumed content from Andrew Tate (79%) than to say that they had heard of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak (58%), London Mayor Sadiq Khan (44%) or Labour leader Keir Starmer (32%).

Those consuming content from Tate spent more time on TikTok (33% compared to 26% who had not),

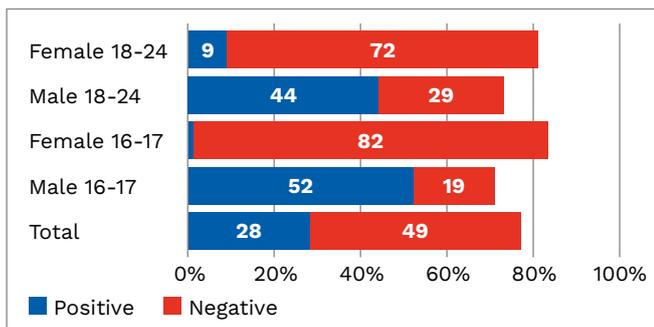


Photo: Twitter

I have watched, listened to or read something by Andrew Tate



Snapchat (21% compared to 18% who had not) and YouTube (14% compared to 10% who had not), but less time on Instagram (12% compared to 18% who had not) and WhatsApp (95% compared to 11% who had not).



And Tate is staggeringly popular with young people. Andrew Tate draws a positive response from almost a third (28%) of all 16-24s overall. When broken down by



MUSLIM SUPPORT FOR ANDREW TATE

OVER THE past six months HOPE not hate has heard numerous stories of growing and open support for Andrew Tate among Muslim schoolboys in the UK. This accelerated towards the end of 2022, after Tate publicly converted to Islam.

His conversion came shortly after Tate was removed from most mainstream social media platforms, although he had been talking positively about Islam for the past two or three years.

Now among the most famous Muslims in the English-speaking world, Tate has done several interviews with well-known Muslim podcasters and YouTubers, such as Birmingham Islamist Mohammed Hijab, in a YouTube discussion which was watched 2.3m times, further extending his reach into Muslim audiences.

Our polling of 16-24 year-olds has found that **61%** of Muslim males have a positive view of Tate, by far the biggest level of support among any sub-group in our poll. This compares to **28%** positivity among young people generally, **53%** among 16-17 year-old males and **44%** among 18-24 year-old males.

Support from Muslim men is probably due to several reasons. Tate is a world-famous figure who sometimes spoke positively about Islam, and then converted. Clearly some young Muslim men are excited by the prospect of such a high-profile and supposedly successful man “defending” Islam.

Some Muslim men may share Tate’s very traditional views of gender roles, as well as his aggressive opposition to the “LGBT+ agenda” and his very conservative perspective on women’s rights. Many of these attitudes chime with the orthodox positions in many Muslim communities.

According to our polling, of those young male Muslims who have a positive view of Tate, **40%** claim the reason for their support is that “he wants men to be real men”, **33%** say “he gives good advice”, **23%** say “he tells it as it is” and **21%** say it is because “he’s not afraid to push back against ‘woke’ ideology”.

Clearly Tate’s unapologetic defence of masculinity and strictly-defined gender roles in the home and in society may chime with some; his fast cars and get-rich lifestyle is also appealing simply to many young men.

| | Total (28% of full poll who hold a positive view) | Male (47% of full poll who hold a positive view) | Female (8% of full poll who hold a positive view) |
|--|---|--|---|
| He wants men to be real men | 30% | 35% | 9% |
| He gives good advice | 30% | 33% | 13% |
| He tells it how it is | 29% | 28% | 31% |
| He's not afraid to push back against 'woke' ideology | 23% | 23% | 19% |
| He is misunderstood | 22% | 22% | 21% |
| He speaks the truth about women and men | 21% | 22% | 15% |
| He's fighting the global elite | 15% | 16% | 10% |
| I find him funny | 13% | 13% | 17% |
| I admire his lifestyle | 13% | 14% | 8% |
| He pushes boundaries | 11% | 9% | 18% |
| He stands up for people like me | 10% | 11% | 4% |
| He's tough | 10% | 8% | 15% |
| None of these | 10% | 7% | 25% |



gender, the difference in how Tate is viewed is stark, highlighting the impact his misogynistic content is having on young women.

Half of young men polled (47%) said they had a positive view of Tate, while only 8% of young women said the same. Among 16-17 year-olds, only 1% of female respondents shared a positive view of Tate, while 82% had a negative view. But for male respondents, 52% shared a positive view with only 19% feeling negative.

When those who held a positive view of Andrew Tate were asked why felt that way, the most popular reasoning given by his fans was that Tate “wants men to be real men” (30% overall, and 35% of male fans), that he “gives good advice” (30% and 33% of male fans) and that he “tells it how it is” (29% and 28% of male fans).

Male fans were more likely to say they shared a positive view of Tate because he spoke the truth about men and women and that he was fighting the global elite. His female fans were more likely to claim they hold a positive view of him because they found him funny or because he pushed boundaries.

“
our polling shows quite how damaging Tate’s views are in shaping young men’s behaviour
 ”

Looking across the poll at the views of Tate fans, it is clear that Tate’s worldview has made a deep impression.

Those with a positive view of Tate (n=345) are twice as likely to agree that “Talk of a mental health crisis is exaggerated, some people need to toughen up” (49% compared with 26% overall). They are more likely to believe in traditional gender norms, as 65% agree that men and women are born to be different, and so it is only natural that they perform different roles in society (compared with 42% overall), and two-thirds (66%) say that British men are not as masculine as they used to be, compared with 45% overall.

Tate fans are most likely to actively reject feminism and push back against progressive movements which they see as undermining traditional values that maintain a social order where men are dominant. A large majority (70%) say that “feminism has gone too far and makes it harder for men to succeed”, compared with 40% of our overall poll. They are more likely to have a negative view of “far left” activists (54%) and than far right activists (46%). And Tate fans are most vocal in their rejection of trans rights activists, with 65% viewing them negatively.

Of course, given the content shared by Tate, not much of this is surprising. But our polling shows quite how damaging Tate’s views are in shaping young men’s behaviour. Over a third (35%) of Tate’s fans say it is not wrong at all to make a joke about someone’s religion, while 37% say it is not wrong at all to make a joke about someone’s race. Nearly a third (30%) believe

HOPE not hate asked young people their opinions of a number of other right wing figures and conspiracists

| |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
|---|---|---|---|---|--|---|---|---|
| | Andrew Tate | Tommy Robinson | Paul Joseph Watson | Nigel Farage | Katie Hopkins | Jordan Peterson | David Icke | Kate Shemirani |
| Have you watched, listened to or read anything by the following individuals | | | | | | | | |
| Yes | 67% | 21% | 10% | 39% | 43% | 25% | 13% | 11% |
| No | 27% | 67% | 76% | 51% | 46% | 63% | 76% | 75% |
| Don't know | 6% | 12% | 13% | 10% | 11% | 12% | 12% | 14% |
| Have you watched, listened to or read anything by the following individuals [MEN ONLY] | | | | | | | | |
| | 75% | 28% | 13% | 43% | 38% | 36% | 17% | 14% |
| Have you watched, listened to or read anything by the following individuals [WOMEN ONLY] | | | | | | | | |
| | 58% | 14% | 7% | 35% | 49% | 13% | 8% | 8% |
| Do you have a positive or negative view of each of the following individuals? | | | | | | | | |
| Positive | 28% | 9% | 7% | 11% | 12% | 17% | 9% | 9% |
| Negative | 49% | 21% | 11% | 33% | 36% | 11% | 11% | 9% |
| Neither | 17% | 19% | 18% | 23% | 22% | 19% | 17% | 18% |
| Never heard of them | 3% | 38% | 50% | 18% | 18% | 39% | 49% | 50% |
| Don't know | 3% | 13% | 14% | 14% | 12% | 13% | 14% | 14% |
| Do you have a positive or negative view of each of the following individuals? MEN ONLY | | | | | | | | |
| Positive | 47% | 13% | 10% | 17% | 15% | 26% | 12% | 12% |
| Negative | 26% | 22% | 13% | 26% | 27% | 11% | 9% | 9% |
| Neither | 21% | 25% | 22% | 28% | 25% | 24% | 23% | 24% |
| Never heard of them | 3% | 25% | 38% | 14% | 18% | 23% | 36% | 38% |
| Don't know | 4% | 15% | 16% | 15% | 15% | 15% | 16% | 16% |
| Do you have a positive or negative view of each of the following individuals? WOMEN ONLY | | | | | | | | |
| Positive | 8% | 5% | 4% | 6% | 9% | 8% | 6% | 5% |
| Negative | 73% | 20% | 9% | 39% | 45% | 10% | 9% | 9% |
| Neither | 12% | 13% | 13% | 19% | 19% | 14% | 11% | 11% |
| Never heard of them | 4% | 50% | 62% | 23% | 18% | 56% | 62% | 63% |
| Don't know | 3% | 5% | 12% | 13% | 9% | 8% | 12% | 12% |

that catcalling women on the street is not wrong at all, while the same proportion (30%) believe it isn't wrong at all to share intimate photos sent to you by a romantic partner with a friend.

While Tate is being held in prison, his extreme, harmful and dangerous ideas are being carried and enacted by a large group of young men. Among the 16-17 year-old young women in our poll, one in five (20%) said they

had witnessed or experienced sexual assault, while 39% said they have witnessed or experienced sexual harassment.

The normalisation of sexual violence from Tate has real world consequences. Far, far more is needed to challenge Tate's ideas, and to eradicate online content that glorifies toxic masculinity and enables violence towards women.

SCHOOLS: IT'S NOT JUST ANDREW TATE WE NEED TO WORRY ABOUT

OWEN JONES, HOPE not hate's Director of Education and Training, says we need a nationwide push to help train and upskill the education sector to deal with the rise of misogyny among boys and young men.

WHEN IT COMES to safeguarding, there is one name that dominates the headlines, and the subject of many emails we receive from schools – Andrew Tate.

HOPE not hate became particularly worried about toxic masculinity influencer Andrew Tate, currently detained by Romanian authorities on suspicion of human trafficking and rape, back in summer 2022 when Google searches of his name were trending higher than the Kardashians.

Our concern was that teachers would arrive back in classrooms in the autumn term and be faced with a wave of misogynistic rhetoric, for which they were ill-prepared. Our quick acting research team put together a comprehensive briefing around Tate that our education unit then disseminated around our network of schools. The aim was for teachers and schools to at least be aware of what might be lurking in classroom chat as pupils returned.

And, indeed, our fears came to light as the term progressed.

NOT A NEW PROBLEM

What started as lukewarm request from schools – asking us to provide more information and resources to counter Tate's narrative – became a huge influx of desperate teachers asking what could be done about his malign influence. Teachers were telling us that ever greater numbers of (mainly) boys were using Tate's misogynistic rhetoric against girls in their year group.

Sadly, this was nothing new for HOPE not hate.

Back in July 2020, I was asked to contribute to a report we produced, *Young People in the Time of Covid*. My article largely focused on the huge increase in extreme misogynistic behaviour our teaching staff had seen in classrooms just before the pandemic. This was one of the anecdotes I was told from an experience in Norfolk:

"I saw a small group of boys hound a teacher for 'hating men'. She had her back against the wall with five or six male Year 12s pointing in her face that she was 'sexist'... They explained to her that feminists hate men, want to oppress men

and it was appalling that the school would allow 'someone like her' to teach."

We have been delivering lessons in schools since 2016. Although I fully understand that sexism and misogyny are nothing new among young people, we had never seen something so brutal as this situation above. And this is far from an isolated incident, nor the worst I have witnessed.

My point being is that these issues existed long before Andrew Tate, and for several years our team has spoken extensively about misogyny being a route into extremism. In fact, Joe Mulhall, our Director of Research, has long-talked about the increasing ease of access to extreme ideas and the social costs of engaging with such material declining due to its prevalence on social media.

“

by focusing on Tate – alone – we miss the wider context of what is really happening within schools

”

I personally do not believe the initial appeal of Tate is his views towards women. By far the most common YouTuber to come up in my classes, especially along Key Stage 3 pupils, is MrBeast (the American YouTuber, entrepreneur and philanthropist). I also do not believe that they are particularly interested in seeing how long people can touch a car (you might need a 12-year-old to explain this reference!) – rather the extraordinary sums of money the 24-year-old is able to give away in his video stunts.

Across the country, a common theme of casual conversation I have with young teens is their infatuation with how to become very rich, very quickly. Look at most social media content they consume and it is often about ostentatious displays of wealth, from people only a few years older than themselves. Think KSI (the British YouTuber, rapper and boxer) rather than Steve Bartlett (the young, multi-millionaire investor on *Dragons' Den*).

MISOGYNY IS SPREADING

This is where I believe the entry point is for Andrew Tate. And it is then that young people are exposed to his other views, for example around the treatment of women. Tate may be one of the more extreme influencers peddling misogyny, but at a lower level we have videos from the Sidemen, one of the most popular

Andrew Tate
with Tommy
Robinson



“

hopefully [we can] create an environment where people switch off as soon as they hear Tate’s misogyny

”

group of YouTubers in the world, who often bring women into their content just to be the butt of sexist jokes.

My main concern here is that by focusing on Tate – alone – we miss the wider context of what is really happening within schools and to young people. I fear that once Tate is removed from social media some may feel “job done”, yet fail to address why so many young men are engaging with his ideas.

We have been arguing for years that these issues need a whole-school approach when it comes to tackling them. This means that every member of staff in the school is trained and confident about how to tackle prejudicial behaviour when they encounter it.

Schools can often overlook the fact that staff most likely to witness such behaviour work in the canteen or as site employees. Pupils tend to be less guarded in their reactions in front of these staff. Yet how many of

these employees are invited to twilight CPD sessions or INSET? How many schools even monitor sexist remarks in their safeguarding reports?

HOPE not hate delivers training to school staff on how to deal with these issues, and also what to look out for. But we can only do so much within our limited budget. We need a nationwide push from national governing bodies to help training and to upskill the education sector – otherwise the results we are seeing in this report many only get worse.

We also need more analysis into why are so many boys aggressively push back against women’s rights as an issue. We need to research better methods to help us show that creating more opportunities for girls and women does not remove opportunities from men. Right now, however, this space is being dominated and filled by Tate and his ilk online.

I am generally a hopeful person, and I really believe in the strengths of the UK’s teachers. If they can be given the right support then we can, hopefully, create an environment where people switch off as soon as they hear Tate’s misogyny. Rather than see him as a spokesperson for men, they will understand the harm his prejudices cause.

SECTION 5 – FAR RIGHT AND TECH



TWITTER WELCOMES BACK EXTREMISTS

An array of far-right figures were allowed back onto Twitter after Elon Musk purchased the platform, in a worrying sign of things to come says SAFYA KHAN-RUF.

Elon Musk, the billionaire best known for his Tesla cars and rocket company, rampaged into the free speech debate last year with disastrous consequences. His high-profile takeover of Twitter was followed by mass firings, the banning of some of those who criticised him and, most dangerously, the return of many extreme far-right activists back onto the platform.

One of the richest men in the world, Elon Musk has described himself as a “free speech absolutist”. After he acquired Twitter on 27 October 2022, far-right figures celebrated, excited by the prospect of getting their accounts back after years of being banned for a range of violations.

The list of accounts that have been restored is long and, shockingly, includes those belonging to some of the best known and most extreme far-right figures in the world.

EXTREMISTS BACK ON TWITTER

Across the Atlantic, **Tim Gionet** (aka **Baked Alaska**), a far-right influencer pushing white supremacist ideology who is currently imprisoned for participating in the 6 Jan insurrection, is back. So too is notorious figure **Andrew Anglin**, the virulent antisemite who founded the neo-Nazi Daily Stormer website. Joining them is **Ali Alexander**, a pro-Trump conspiracy theorist, along with **Patrick Howley**, a conspiracy theorist, and far-right influencer **Bronze Age Pervert**.

Alongside these figures, many QAnon conspiracy-peddling accounts were reactivated.

Here in Britain, far-right figures have also taken advantage of the Musk takeover, including the UK’s largest fascist group **Patriotic Alternative** (PA).

PA’s public output is carefully confected to conceal its underlying Nazi ideology and hardline antisemitism, but it seeps through the group from the very top. Leader **Mark Collett**, a former leading member of the British National Party (BNP), has a Twitter account once more. He has repeatedly recommended Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* to his

audience and in 2019 described Hitler as a “simple, humble painter”.

Similarly, **Sam Melia**, one of PA’s regional organisers and former member of the now-banned terror group National Action (NA), got his Twitter account back in November 2022. His wife, PA deputy leader Laura Towler, can also be found on the social media platform.

The suspension and reinstatement of accounts on Twitter has been erratic and has left users unsure of how the company is applying moderation. **Ye** – formerly known as **Kanye West** – for example, has praised Adolf Hitler and told conspiracy theorist Alex Jones on his podcast that he “loves Nazis” but it was only when he posted a swastika embedded within a Star of David that he was suspended once again from the platform.

Many far-right accounts were suspended not long after their reinstatement, proving their initial bans were for good reason. This included white nationalist and antisemite **Nick Fuentes**, who returned and was banned after a day, white nationalist leader **Patrick Casey**, who

DEFE
FRE
SPE



(left to right) Stephen Lennon, Mark Collett, David Vance, Sam Melia, Andrew Tate, Laura Towler, Danny Tommo and David Icke

attended the 6 January US insurrection, and British far-right extremist **Stephen Lennon** (aka **Tommy Robinson**), was also re-suspended after multiple reports – including HOPE not hate’s – flagged his raft of rule-breaking content posted to Twitter.

Key figures from **Britain First**, one of the most active far-right groups in the UK, also attempted to return to the platform. The group’s leader **Paul Golding** has spent time in jail for an anti-Muslim hate crime and was banned from Twitter in 2017 for his hate speech. Since then, the group has branched out into harassing asylum seekers at their hotel accommodation and posting videos of the harassment online. They did so again on Twitter within 24 hours of being back on the platform and, soon after, were banned again.

BLUE CHECK MARKS AND POLLS

The chaos of the Twitter takeover can be partly attributed to Musk firing half of the company’s workforce. For example, last November clips were once again shared on Twitter of the recorded livestream created by the white supremacist terrorist who murdered 51 Muslim worshippers in Christchurch, New Zealand in 2019. Twitter only removed the clips following the intervention of New Zealand’s government.

Another action that has empowered extremists was Musk deciding to start offering its “verified” blue check mark for sale. This has led to many extremists being allowed to “buy” legitimacy. After a disastrous roll out with all types of impersonators acquiring the blue “tick”, Musk decided to redesign the checkmark process.

DEPLATFORMING WORKS

Debates around deplatforming the far right from social media are, of course, complex. It would be wrong to reduce those who oppose it to being supporters of the far right, as many will have principled and well-reasoned arguments against the tactic. When it comes down to the philosophical debates regarding its effect on free speech, there will be no convincing absolutists and libertarians.

However, it is possible to value and uphold freedom of speech and expression while simultaneously calling for the removal of dangerous extremists from social media platforms. We must not confuse their right to say what they please (within the law) with their right to say it wherever they please: a right they do not have.

On the question of whether deplatforming works, it is harder and harder to oppose on empirical grounds. Arguments that “sunlight is the best disinfectant” and the idea that hate can be debated into submission increasingly sound at best idealistic, and at worst downright ignorant.

The last decade has seen far-right extremists use social media to amplify their voices and attract audiences unthinkable for most of the postwar period. The damage has been seen on our streets, at the ballot box, and in the rising death toll from far-right terrorists. Deplatforming is not straightforward, but it limits the reach of online hate, and social media companies have to do more and do more now.

The lack of moderation has also led to a predictable rise in hateful and sexist language on the platform. Despite Musk saying the company’s “strong commitment to content moderation remains absolutely unchanged”, the return of influencers with deplorable, yet in some circles, popular opinions on women, led to a spike in misogynistic content.

Social media influencer **Andrew Tate**, for example, was kicked off several social media platforms following a HOPE not hate campaign last year. His violent misogyny and racist statements have reached a wide – mainly young – male audience and he has served as a gateway to wider far-right politics. However, the man currently under investigation in Romania over allegations of rape and human trafficking had his Twitter account reinstated in November 2022. It continues to post content regularly despite his incarceration.

The jubilant return of extremist figures to Twitter has provided them a veneer of legitimacy and acceptableness, despite the hatred and disinformation they spit out. The moderation efforts of social media companies already left much to be improved, yet Twitter has pushed the bar to new lows and is facilitating real world radicalisation, violence and hate.

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ALT-TECH PLATFORMS USED BY THE FAR RIGHT

At HOPE not hate we split the social media space into three overlapping and fluid categories.

MAINSTREAM PLATFORMS – FACEBOOK/TWITTER/YOUTUBE

These platforms have long been key to the spread of far-right ideas and have been used by far-right individuals and organisations to organise, recruit and grow. However, on the whole, they no longer welcome far-right extremists and have increasingly taken steps to remove them. The exception now is Twitter, which under the ownership of Elon Musk has allowed a raft of extremists back onto the platform.

CO-OPTED PLATFORMS – TELEGRAM, DISCORD

These platforms are not created by the far right but are heavily used by them, often because of their looser moderation policies or because they are too small to have the required resources to deal with issues when they emerge. Far-right groups and individuals have essentially co-opted these platforms.

BESPOKE PLATFORMS – GETTER, GAB, BITCHUTE

These platforms have been created by the far right, for the far right and often have little or no moderation. They are part of a growing ecosystem of far-right online spaces designed to avoid the moderation of now appearing on other platforms.

THE PLATFORMS

BITCHUTE

OWNER: RAY VAHEY



The British video sharing platform BitChute was launched in 2017 as a “censorship-free” alternative to YouTube. It had a major boost in popularity over the course of 2020, going from 20 million visitors in April 2020 to 57 million by January 2021. However, it has struggled with competition from rivals Rumble and Odysee, and its monthly site visits fell back down to around 24 million per month towards the end of 2022. Despite claiming to have tightened its guidelines on incitement to hatred and suspending some of the more egregious accounts in 2021, BitChute continues to be a hub for extreme content, including a channel run by Daniel Harris, the Derbyshire teenager who was convicted of terror offences in January 2023.

RUMBLE

CEO: CHRIS PAVLOVSKI



The Canada-based video sharing platform sharply increased in popularity when prominent US Republicans began to advocate its use in 2020. It now has over 100 million visits per month. It has made efforts to broaden its appeal beyond right-wing American users by securing ostensibly left-wing influencers, such as Glenn Greenwald and Russell Brand, but its content is still dominated by both conspiracy theories and hyper-partisan political

content from channels like that of the American pro-Trump influencer, Dan Bongino.

GAB

OWNER: ANDREW TORBA



Gab is a US-based micro-blogging site touted as a rival to Twitter, and perhaps the most unmoderated and extreme platform of its size. The site’s founder Andrew Torba is overtly far right in his views, and revels in the site’s role as a hub for extremism. Gab has continued a slow decline over the course of 2022, falling from 18 million monthly users over the summer to just 10-12 million by the end of the year. Gab made headlines in the US in July last year after it was revealed that a Republican gubernatorial candidate for Pennsylvania had paid the site \$5,000 for “consulting”, before going on to lose the election in November.

PARLER

CEO: GEORGE FARMER



The right-wing-oriented US platform Parler also soared in popularity in 2020 as mainstream platforms cracked down on misinformation around COVID-19, QAnon and delegitimisation of the US presidential election. However, the removal of its app from the Apple and Google stores struck a huge blow to its viability, and it has since become moribund in the face of competition from rivals such as Gettr and Truth Social. It made

headlines in October 2022 with the announcement that rapper Kanye West had agreed a deal to buy the struggling platform, but that deal later fell through.

TELEGRAM

CEO: PAVEL DUROV



The Telegram messaging app is an example of a co-opted service: used for secure communication by an estimated 700 million users worldwide, it is nonetheless home to huge quantities of extreme racist and terrorist content. Notorious for its lack of content moderation, some content is nevertheless blocked for users who have downloaded the app via Apple or Google's app stores. Telegram gained wider publicity throughout 2022, becoming a major source of information about the Russian invasion of Ukraine, with footage uploaded to the platform from soldiers and observers on both sides of the conflict.

GETTR

CEO: JASON MILLER



The microblogging platform Gettr was founded in July 2021 by Jason Miller, a former aide to Donald Trump. Described as a Twitter clone, it has a degree of popularity in Brazil but along with the other right-wing Twitter clones it is likely to suffer hugely from Elon Musk's acquisition of Twitter. Many high-profile Gettr users, such as Stephen Lannon (aka Tommy Robinson), have jumped at the chance to return to using their recently reactivated Twitter accounts, showing that Gettr has not managed to successfully replicate its larger rival's benefits.

ODYSEE

CEO: JEREMY KAUFFMAN



Odysee is a video-hosting platform that was launched at the end of 2020 as a decentralised alternative to YouTube. Odysee creators also run LBRY, a blockchain-based file sharing network. Odysee's guidelines ostensibly ban pornography and the promotion of violence and terrorist content, but rule-breaking content can only be delisted from search and not removed from the platform altogether, due to the decentralised framework of the site. The site has maintained a steady 24 million monthly site visits over the course of 2022. Odysee's parent company, LBRY, has faced legal hurdles over the course of 2022 with an ongoing investigation into its use of crypto-tokens by financial authorities in the US.

DLIVE

CEO: CHARLES WAYN



DLive is an American decentralised livestreaming service which was founded in 2017. It was purchased by BitTorrent in 2019, and the site reported five million active users that year. The platform has become a popular alternative to YouTube and Twitch among white nationalists, conspiracy theorists, neo-nazis and other extremists due to lax enforcement of its guidelines. In January 2023, far-right streamer Anthime Gionet (aka Baked Alaska) was sentenced to 60 days in prison for livestreaming his role in the 6 January Capitol riots on his DLive channel.

TRUTH SOCIAL

CEO: DEVIN NUNES



Yet another Twitter clone, Truth Social was launched in February 2022 by Donald Trump as a platform on which he could hold court following the loss of his beloved Twitter account in January 2021. Despite an initial surge in popularity among his supporters, it has struggled to attract support among the wider conservative right (for whom Gettr remains the Twitter-alternative of choice). President Trump is reported to have signed a binding agreement that Truth Social will be his primary social media platform, which may explain why he has not returned to Twitter despite his account suspension being lifted by Elon Musk.



SECTION 6 – ANTI-LGBT+



Photo: Jenny Mealing / Flickr



**SODOMY
IS
SIN**

**HOMO
SEX
IS SIN**

**WE
DON'T HATE
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**REPEN
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DRAG QUEEN STORY HOUR AND

Transphobic narratives both sides of the Atlantic have been feeding into far-right agitation against drag queen story events, part of wider anti-LGBT+ sentiment rising on the right, warns David Lawrence.

OVER THE summer of 2022, across the UK, a loose coalition of far-right groups, conspiracy theorists and anti-LGBT+ activists led a vitriolic campaign against Drag Queen Story Hour (DQSH), a series of storytelling sessions for children at public libraries.

First launched in the US in 2015, the events have since spread internationally, aiming to “inspire a love of reading, while teaching deeper lessons on diversity”. However, DQSH has become fiercely politicised, with a range of reactionary, far-right and anti-LGBT+ groups seeking to capitalise on homophobia and transphobia in wider society, embroiling the children’s reading sessions in so-called “culture wars”.

After years of alarmist disinformation, the 2022 summer tour became a major flashpoint for adherents of the UK’s far right and conspiracy theorist scenes, which coalesced with a rare degree of unity against the DQSH events. Mirroring similar campaigns in the US, DQSH events were targeted with defamatory leaflets, letter-writing campaigns and disruptive protests, with performers and organisers harassed and threatened.

While protests were small and mostly low-key, in some cases anti-LGBT+ campaigners were able to access venues and abuse performers, and several events were postponed due to safety concerns. Fringe fascist groups such as Patriotic Alternative (PA) also attempted to use DQSH to cut through to the public and spread conspiratorial ideology. Indeed, the protests gained wide coverage in the local and national press, some of which failed to relay the extremism of the groups involved.

DQSH remains a point of fixation for both the reactionary press and the far right in the UK, drawing on a wider effort to demonise drag performers and LGBT+ people as “groomers” and paedophiles, and there is scope for further disruption.

THE CONTEXT

DQSH events sit at the nexus of several enduring far-right concerns. Anti-LGBT+ sentiment is deep-rooted in reactionary and far-right milieus, which tend to idealise traditional gender roles and family structures, obsess about societal decline, and scapegoat minoritised groups.

LGBT+ individuals, and especially trans and non-binary people, have therefore long been smeared as immoral, deviant, subversive and/or mentally ill. Far-right groups also have a long (but selective) history of exploiting fears about child abusers, both real and alleged, enabling them to portray themselves as “protectors” of innocents and to mobilise support

against target groups – be they Jews, Muslims or LGBT+ communities.

Such prejudices are often shaded with conspiratorial thinking. For example, the longstanding “Cultural Marxism” theory and its offshoots allege that a sinister plot is underway to corrupt society through progressive causes. This notion also ties into the “White Genocide” conspiracy, which claims that (usually) Jewish conspirators are subversively attempting to destroy white populations, in part by lowering white birth rates.

Gender diversity and LGBT+ rights are understood as weapons to “feminise” society or to “weaken” the West by sexualising children and normalising paedophilia. Such conspiracy theories can also bleed into longstanding notions about mass child abuse at the hands of a secret, elite Satanic cabal, tropes that were revitalised via QAnon during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Through this febrile worldview, DQSH is interpreted as a guise for the deliberate sexualisation and grooming of children, or even a tool of a Jewish conspiracy, threatening the white race from within. While patently ludicrous, many far-right groups are practised at downplaying their most outlandish beliefs in order to find a wider reach.

PREJUDICE AT PLAY

While UK polling suggests that public attitudes towards LGBT+ people have broadly improved over recent decades, entrenched prejudice remains among sections of society, especially in relation to trans and non-binary people.

One particular area of public uncertainty is LGBT+ education in schools. Polling from Ipsos in 2020 found that while 55% of Britons support the teaching of LGBT+ sex and relationships in secondary schools, 20% oppose an LGBT+-inclusive curriculum. Regarding primary education, 50% support the teaching of LGBT+ relationships, whereas 24% are opposed.

Increasingly, far-right elements are seeking to exploit these wells of prejudice. Attacks on LGBT+ people as “groomers” have intensified significantly in recent years, resembling a moral panic. For example, research by the Narratives Project found that tweets containing variations on “groom” increased from roughly 10,000 per day in January 2022 to nearly 200,000 that April. Smearing LGBT+ people as “groomers” is particularly common in the US, where the slur used to justify discriminatory legislation, including Florida’s “Don’t Say Gay” law, which effectively bars schools from discussing LGBT+ people.

THE ANTI-LGBT+ BACKLASH



Photo: City of West Hollywood / Jonathan Moore

These highly emotive slanders have the potential to inspire violence, evidenced by the firebombing of a venue that hosted a drag show in Oklahoma last October, and a shooting in a LGBT+ nightclub in Colorado that left five dead in November, among other attacks. In the UK, the reality of anti-LGBT+ prejudice is starkly illustrated by government hate crime statistics. In the year ending March 2022, there were 26,152 recorded hate crimes relating to “sexual orientation” and 4,355 relating to “transgender identity”, an appalling increase of 41% and 56% respectively from the previous year.

Galop, the UK LGBT+ anti-violence charity, responded:

“Transphobic narratives in the media, and at a senior political level, have been allowed to grow unregulated, unchecked, and unchallenged [...] there is a direct line between words and violent acts against our community, and always has been.”

THE BACKLASH BUILDS

DQSH UK was launched in 2017 by Sebastian Samuel, who performs as Aida H Dee. However, it was American events that first attracted the attention of the British right, with coverage in the *Mail Online* in May that same year.

Shortly thereafter, Mark Collett, who is now the leader

of Patriotic Alternative, tweeted: “This degenerate filth is ‘drag queen story hour’ & is aimed at young children. Those behind this madness need sectioning.” The same month Paul Joseph Watson, an influential British far-right conspiracy theorist and pundit for Alex Jones’ InfoWars, ran a segment on DQSH on his YouTube show, labelling it “absolutely revolting” and later portraying the events as a prelude to an oncoming woke dystopia.

For the next two years, DQSH faced sporadic attacks from the UK far right, as well as from the right-wing mainstream media. Criticism often painted drag as exclusively a form of “adult entertainment”, implying that performers were (inexplicably) incapable of tailoring content to their audiences, while also ignoring the fact that drag performers have long worked as family-friendly entertainers, including pantomime dames.

It seems likely that such disproportionate media attention has been partly responsible for pushing DQSH up the far-right agenda. As with debates around gender neutral bathrooms and trans athletes, far-right social media influencers regularly repost mainstream articles about DQSH in order to rile up their supporters, rolling such stories into their wider narrative of societal decline.

Alarmist misinformation found a wider spread in 2019. Online anxiety soon spilled into offline action

Drag Queen Story Hour targeted by protesters at Cardiff Central Library. Photo: YouTube, Urban Pictures UK



and violent threats in the UK. In February 2020, a handful of activists, including a Britain First member, visited the venue of a scheduled DQSH in Newham, east London. A June 2020 event was cancelled by Leeds City Council after what Samuel described as a “massive toxic soup of hate”, including an email campaign by users of the UK parent’s forum Mumsnet. Samuel reported daily death threats in August that year, and was forced to move house after the leaking of his address online.

Anxieties continued to build, with claims circulating among the far right that “transvestite degenerates” and “closet paedos” were implementing what they called “LGBT Brainwashing”. In October 2021, a man interrupted an event in Barry, Wales, attempting to video Samuel and the children.

THE SUMMER TOUR OF 2022

It was not until May 2022, with the announcement of 70 UK DQSH sessions from late July until the start of September, that organised opposition truly gained momentum online and on the streets, erupting into an outpouring of anger, abuse and threats.

A small Christian anti-vaccine group, Outreach Worldwide, circulated the listing on Telegram, alongside what it called an “URGENT CALL TO ACTION” to contact libraries “to stop the sexualisation of children”. The call gathered pace among conspiracy-oriented, COVID-sceptic groups, many of which had broadened their focus as pandemic anxiety abated. Activists were encouraged to block-book tickets and spam online vendors with negative reviews.

PA announced a public campaign later that month, spearheaded by Jeff Marsh (aka Joe Butler), a fascist hooligan who holds several convictions for violence (including one for throwing a woman down a flight of stairs). From mid-June, the group targeted areas scheduled to host DQSH with hundreds of leaflets, conflating the public library storytelling sessions with sex education in schools, and warned of a “concerted effort from the Marxist establishment” to “sexualise children”.

In Collett’s eyes, the PA campaign was a means to introduce “concerned individuals” to PA and its

core “ethnonationalist” politics. Other far-right and conspiracist groups followed suit, including the Independent Nationalist Network (INN), a marginal PA splinter that produced its own homophobic leaflet and letter writing campaign.

The anti-Muslim party Britain First launched a screaming petition to “STOP DRAG QUEEN PERVERTS TARGETING OUR CHILDREN!” A key fear-monger was the conspiracist Michael Chaves (aka Mad Mix), who previously helped organise protests at vaccine centres. Chaves is an admin of a Telegram channel which was established to incite aggressive protests and the “citizens’ arrest” of DQSH performers.

The backlash also found uptake among a melange of religious, feminist, anti-trans and anti-“woke” groups, including the Family Education Trust, which produced a template letter dubbing the events “highly inappropriate given that the images of men dressed as women are highly sexualised”, and “a form of child abuse”.

In September, the so-called Free Speech Union, founded by *The Spectator* associate editor Toby Young, called on then-PM Liz Truss to introduce “an enforcement mechanism to ensure children aren’t politically indoctrinated at school”. In August, Argyll and Bute Scottish Feminists slammed the events, claiming: “Drag is not for children, it is often a highly sexualised caricature of women with misogynistic undertones”.

Direct threats against Sebastian Samuel heightened after his home address was leaked in July, telling *PinkNews* that month that he received daily hate messages:

“They are threatening me. They said that they need to use ‘every weapon in their arsenal’. It is scary. It takes [...] one of them to do something that could damage me [or] my body. Throw acid. Stab me. Trash my house. Throw a brick. Push me, and I fall over and hit my head against the curb.”

This was before the tour had even begun.

ON THE STREETS

After weeks of escalating rhetoric, the tour – and the protests – commenced. While the opening event in Reading saw just 25 protestors, two managed to

access the event and hurl abuse at Samuel, receiving widespread press coverage. Dozens of subsequent events also saw small groups of protestors gather, bearing signs reading “Welcome groomers” and other slurs.

The loose coalition of far-right activists and COVID-conspiracists had been years in the making, the former establishing links with the conspiracy protest movement during the pandemic. Similar to the so-called “Freedom” marches, groups like PA and INN gathered outside DQSH venues alongside the likes of Piers Corbyn, the face of the UK’s anti-vaccine movement, and militant conspiracists such as Alpha Team Assemble (ATA).

Bitter enemies such as Nick Griffin and Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) also endorsed the campaign, the latter telling his followers: “Every time a ‘drag queen story hour’ is arranged in your area. Protest it. Highlight the groomers and the grooming of children. Because it has to stop.”

Samuel and other performers persevered in the face of mounting threats. This included an aggressive confrontation by ATA members against Samuel in Brighton, and the publication of Joseph Ballard’s (aka Auntie Titania) address, eventually forcing him to move home. In some cases, councils and venues were intimidated into postponing events, including three in Rochdale. Prior to the Rochdale events, a message was posted on Telegram that read:

“We have to scare these bastards into stopping the blatant grooming of children, otherwise this will escalate into even worse deviancy [...] The police are our enemies and if they try to stop us then we should take the fight to them.”

However, rifts soon opened among the protesters. Early in August, ATA and other conspiracists disavowed a planned protest in Leeds, fearing that the presence of PA risked the tarnishing of the whole movement. INN soon followed suit, explaining that PA was “turning the protests into a pantomime complete with villains for the press to lap up.” PA declared the Leeds protest, which was a few dozen strong, to be an unalloyed success, but the Leeds sessions successfully went ahead and, as usual, protesters were vastly outweighed by counter-protesters.

Despite the noise generated by the anti-DQSH campaign, it was driven by fringe activists intent on exaggerating their numbers. As reported by *BerkshireLive*, a recent FOI request has revealed that, despite months of campaigning and calls to flood the inboxes of venues, Reading libraries received only 23 complaints ahead of the tour’s opening dates.

UNABATED HATE

The campaign to cancel the summer tour was ultimately a failure. Despite a blizzard of lies, threats and abuse, the large majority of events proceeded and were well attended. DQSH continues to hold sessions around the country. As Samuel told *The i* in December: “All of this hate is just fuel for me to be able to keep going. These people are the reason I do what I do.”

However, there is scant sign that the far right, or the reactionary press, is losing interest. Right-wing tabloids continue to churn out stories that are reliably shared by far-right and conspiratorial activists

KELLIE-JAY KEEN-MINSHULL

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR



2022 SUMMARY

Kellie-Jay Keen-Minshull is a British anti-trans activist best known for her t-shirts and stickers with the slogan “adult human female”. Keen is a leading voice in the anti-trans movement in the UK, and has been praised by the far right. She has increasingly found support from and an overlap in views with the far right, which has also increasingly focused on trans people.

In January she was praised by an activist of Anne Marie Water’s now-defunct For Britain party and in September, a rally hosted by Keen in Brighton was livestreamed by Hearts of Oak. Members of the Independent Nationalist Network and Alpha Team Assemble also attended.

Keen has also received international recognition. In March, she appeared on Tucker Carlson Tonight, a conservative American talk show, to discuss her views on trans women in sports.

2023 PROSPECTS

In January 2023, at a demonstration in Newcastle, Lisa Morgan, a speaker at a rally organised by Keen referenced Adolf Hitler’s term “the big lie” and drew a parallel to those supporting trans rights today. Hitler’s use of the term helped spur on antisemitism in Germany.

As the theme of transgender people’s rights will likely continue to be a salient topic in the mainstream media as well as among the far right, Keen is likely to have continued success and grow her platform.

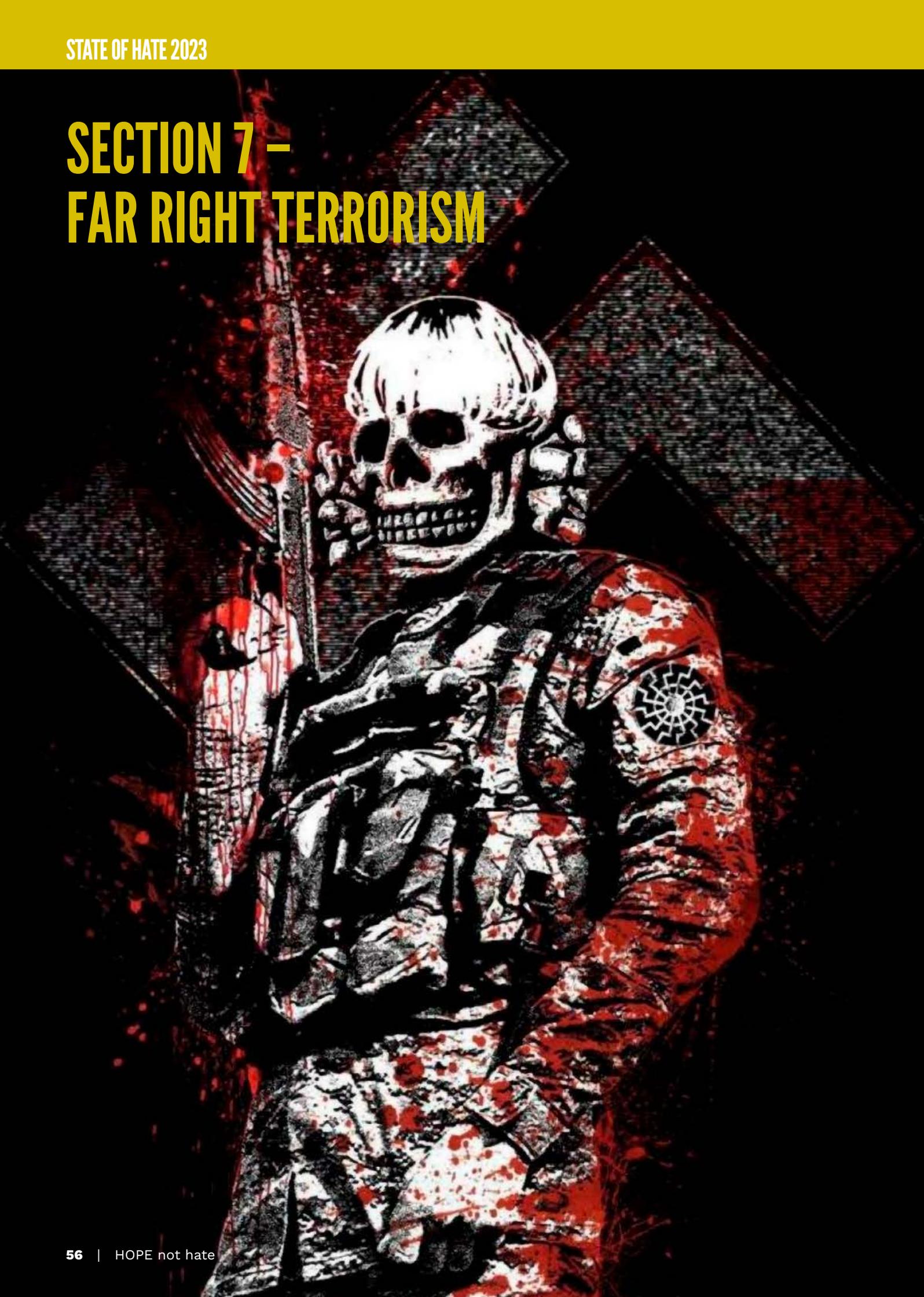
to agitate their audiences. Campaigners appear emboldened by their successes, and leading fascists clearly believe they have a winning formula, with Collett telling PA’s national conference that it was the group’s “single most important campaign of 2022”, making “important inroads with new people”.

Unsurprisingly, the threats continue. In December, a scheduled DQSH in Dundee was cancelled after the performer was subjected to “abusive and threatening messages”.

The campaign against DQSH sits at the sharp end of a wider anti-LGBT+ backlash. In the US, the temperature is frighteningly high, with armed far-right groups, Hitler-saluting Nazis and violent thugs making a regular presence at DQSH events, against a backdrop of discriminatory legislation and brutal, sometimes fatal, attacks on LGBT+ communities. This is as hate crimes against LGBT+ people spike in the UK.

There is much needed to ensure that LGBT+ communities are protected and treated equally, in the UK as elsewhere, and we share a responsibility to rally in support.

SECTION 7 – FAR RIGHT TERRORISM



FAR RIGHT TERRORISM ON THE RISE

A record number of extreme right-wing activists and sympathisers were convicted under terrorism legislation last year, both young and old, adding to the growing threat of violent far-right extremism. By NICK LOWLES.

Twenty extreme far-right activists or sympathisers were convicted of terrorist offences in 2022, with another individual killing himself after attempting to carry out a terrorist attack.

Of those convicted, nine were teenagers.

Not only is this up from 18 convictions in 2021, it is a greater number in a single year than in any five-year period before 2017.

The most serious of these incidents involved Andrew Leak, a 66-year-old from High Wycombe, who committed suicide in October shortly after throwing three incendiary devices into an immigration processing centre in Dover, Kent.

Also of note was 19-year-old Daniel Harris, whose terrorist videos helped influence a mass killer in America. Harris was sentenced to 11-and-a-half years in January 2023, after being found guilty of terrorism offences following a trial last year. His videos were shared by Payton Gendron, who killed 10 people in Buffalo, New York, and were viewed by Anderson Lee Aldrich, who is accused of killing five people and wounding 17 others in a mass shooting at a gay nightclub in the US last November.

The judge in Harris' trial said of the two US killers: "What they did was truly appalling, but what they did was no more than what you intended others to do by publishing this material online."

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media platforms are a central factor in the spread of pro-violence ideas. The last year has seen a number of convictions that are directly tied to the consumption of violent fascist propaganda online.

The messaging app Telegram remains the primary platform for the spread of terror propaganda and radicalisation. A number of new groups and channels have popped up over the last year, but we can see a decline from a peak around two years ago.

Telegram has become quicker in banning groups and users that express the most extreme ideas. However, the bar for the removal of content is high. Propaganda promoting extreme ideologies still appears welcome on the platform. Increased law enforcement attention has most likely also contributed to a slight decline in open advocacy for violence.

Activists have adapted their tactics to this reality and

“

Over the last 25 years there have been numerous examples of older men convicted of terrorist offences

”

organise more frequently in small closed groups and mainly recruit individuals to whom they have existing connections. In some cases, they avoid having an outwards facing profile and instead turn to primarily offline organising, although this is rare. Recruitment, at least in initial stages, continues to take place on Telegram. Smaller, closed, groups also help foster closely knit networks which can contribute to the willingness to take violent action.

The risk of violence does not solely come from groups that directly advocate terror and propaganda on platforms like Telegram. The case of Andy Leak is the most recent example of a far-right supporter taking violent action despite showing no signs of consuming that form of content. HOPE not hate's analysis of research of Leak's online behaviour shows that he had an extensive history of far-right engagement, but the material he consumed was coming almost mainly from the radical right. He followed and engaged with anti-migrant "citizen journalists" and anti-Muslim activists such as Steven Lennon (AKA Tommy Robinson), as well as Turning Point UK. His preoccupation was dangers to children which he imagined coming from Muslims as well as LGBT+ people. These are also the campaigns that have received mainstream attention, highlighting how increasingly dehumanising rhetoric, even if it does not explicitly call for violence, poses a serious danger.

Rhetoric in the most extreme elements of the movement remains similar. It is based on a belief that societal change requires violent action. The targets of this violence gradually shift in accordance with broader societal debates, and currently LGBT+ people are an increasing focus as well as migrants. Existing focus on other minorities such as Jews, Muslims and Black people and political opponents also remain rife.

OLDER TERRORISTS

In the immediate aftermath of Andrew Leak's attack on an immigration centre in Dover, there were numerous media articles about a new wave of older wannabe terrorists.

"We need to talk about boomer radicalisation," wrote John Oxley in *The Spectator*. He wrote:

"The radicalisation of children and young people is perhaps easy to understand. Young people are impulsive and naïve. They often look for a purpose and an influence beyond their family circle, and are susceptible to the roguish charisma and simplicity preached by those at the extremes. Their families may be neglectful

Andrew Leak



or distant, and they spend a lot of time on the internet, where hate and grooming fester. Those who fall into terror groups are not absolved of culpability, but their journeys are recognisable. The radicalisation of the old is a bit less intuitive. It is, however, happening.”

Oxley, was one of several commentators who thought that Leak was a departure from the norm, even a new form of self-radicalising older wannabe terrorists. However, that is not the case.

Over the last 25 years there have been numerous examples of older men convicted of terrorist offences. One only has to remember Thomas Mair, the 53-year-old unemployed gardener who killed Jo Cox MP in 2016, or Robert Cottage, the 49-year-old BNP council candidate who was found to be stockpiling weapons and explosives and was jailed in 2007.

In 2021, 53-year-old Nicholas Brock was jailed for four years after being found guilty of three counts of possessing materials which could be of use in preparing terrorist acts, while in 2022, there were eight



Thomas Mair

| | Number of far right supporters convicted | Average age | Number of teenagers |
|-----------|--|-------------|---------------------|
| 1997-2001 | 8 | 34 | 0 |
| 2002-2006 | 11 | 38 | 2 |
| 2007-2011 | 18 | 34 | 2 |
| 2012-2016 | 15 | 31 | 2 |
| 2017-2021 | 76 | 28 | 12 |
| 2022 | 22 | 29 | 9 |

extreme far-right supporters in their 30s and two in their 40s convicted of terrorism.

MORE DEADLY

If far-right terrorism from older activists is not a new phenomenon, it is undoubtedly also true that older men are more likely to carry out terrorist attacks to completion. In addition to Leak and Thomas Mair, 48-year-old Darren Osborne carried out an attack with his van in Finsbury Park in 2017, leaving one man dead and injuring several others, while Vincent Fuller, 50, was convicted of attempted murder after stabbing an 18-year-old Bulgarian man in 2019 – a day after the mass murder of 51 Muslims by a neo-nazi terrorist in New Zealand.

By contrast, younger extreme right-wing sympathisers are more likely to be convicted for plotting attacks, sharing terrorist material and belonging to proscribed terrorist organisations.

Many of these older men drawn to terrorism have self-radicalised online and are not part of movements, where they would be more likely to attract the attention of the police and security forces. Several also have mental health issues. Meanwhile, younger people are not only far more likely to be part of far-right networks, but their online behaviour is far more likely to attract the attention of the authorities.

A new development in 2022 was the conviction of two men who appear to have been radicalised in the COVID-19 conspiracy movement. Matthew Henegan, 37, was imprisoned for 12 years in March 2022 after claiming Jewish people were behind COVID-19 news stories and “controlled the media” – the judge described him as “potentially a very dangerous man”. Then there was Oliver Lewin, 38, another COVID conspiracy theorist, who plotted to attack vital national infrastructure, including communications masts, and was jailed for six-and-a-half years in January 2023.

YOUNG PEOPLE

The growing numbers of extreme far-right activists and sympathisers convicted of terrorist offences has been mirrored by the growing number of young people with far-right views being reported to the police’s counter-extremist programmes.

New figures, just released by the government, show that 49% of terrorism arrests in the year to September 2022 were linked to suspected extreme right-wing terrorism. The official figures also showed that the

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49% of terrorism arrests in the year to September 2022 were linked to suspected extreme right-wing terrorism

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largest increase in terrorism related arrests were those aged between 18 and 20.

In addition, there was an increase young people with far-right views being reported to the Channel programme, part of the government’s counter-extremism strategy, which seeks to identify and support individuals at risk of being drawn into terrorism.

In the year to March 2022 there was a 9% rise in extreme right-wing radicalisation cases, with 42% of the 804 Channel cases concerning extreme right-wing radicalisation, compared to 19% linked to Islamist radicalisation.

In total, 32% of people discussed at a Channel panel were aged under 15.

Analysis by HOPE not hate shows a steady rise in the number of far-right activists and sympathisers being convicted of terrorist offences. Just eight far-right activists were convicted between 1997 and 2001, with an average age of 34. In the five years between 2017 and 2022, 76 far-right activists were convicted, with the average age being 29.

Of the convictions between 1997 and 2001, not one was a teenager. Between 2017 and 2022 there were 12 teenagers.

By comparison, there were nine teenagers convicted of terrorist offences in 2022 alone.

A RISING THREAT?

While the figures have gone up sharply in recent years, it must be remembered that this is partly down to the authorities taking the threat of far-right extremism more seriously, as well as an extension of terror legislation that has greatly increased the scope of offences now considered to be terrorist in nature.

By contrast, in 1996 the violent nazi group Combat 18 produced *The Black Mag*, a 100-page glossy magazine filled with bomb designs, hitlists and openly advocating for the murder of named people. The two authors of this magazine were both given six months imprisonment under race relations legislation.

However, even when taking today’s wider remit of offences into consideration, there has been a dangerous rise in the number of men, particularly younger men, drawn to violent far-right extremism. While police action has shut down groups like National Action and the Feuerkrieg Division, smaller, looser networks continue to operate in the UK and internationally.

With young people having been adversely affected by the pandemic, coupled with the sharp rise in COVID conspiracy theories and anti-lockdown narratives, and now facing the brunt of the cost of living crisis, we fear that more young people will be drawn into violent far-right extremism of the next few years.

FAR RIGHT TERRORISTS

A total of 20 far right sympathisers were convicted of terror-related offences in 2022

14-YEAR-OLD A Darlington schoolboy became the youngest person in the UK to be convicted of terror offences, after he admitted three counts of possessing information useful to a terrorist. The boy was arrested in July last year, when he was 13, as part of an investigation into extreme right-wing terrorism.

CONNOR BURKE Connor Burke, 19, from south London, was jailed for three-and-a-half years after he sent a bomb manual disguised as a Minecraft video game guide to fellow extremists on a Telegram chat group. Burke had books on nazis and Hitler's Third Reich in his bedroom, as well as an SS dagger, racist and antisemitic propaganda on his computer, and hate-filled material including a video about the Christchurch massacre in New Zealand.



CONRAD HOWARTH Conrad Howarth, 42, of Nelson, Lancashire, was jailed for four-and-a-half years after pleading guilty to an offence under section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000. He possessed a "terrorist handbook" and had "obsession" with far-right ideologies. He also pleaded guilty to possessing extreme pornography relating to an image found on a laptop seized from his home.



MATTHEW HENEGAN A coronavirus conspiracist who distributed antisemitic hoax theories, 37-year-old Matthew Henegan was jailed for more than 12 years after he was found guilty of possessing, distributing and publishing documents to stir up racial hatred. Police said that Henegan, from St Neots in Cambridgeshire, was "potentially a very dangerous man". In leaflets and online posts, Henegan claimed that Jewish people were behind COVID-19 news stories and "controlled the media".



16-YEAR-OLD A 16-year-old boy from Leeds pleaded guilty to terrorism offences after a member of the public reported his extreme right-wing posts on social media. The 16-year-old was arrested in May 2021 and was later charged with disseminating a terrorist publication and possessing terrorist material. He was given a 12-month referral order for each offence, which will run concurrently.

SAMUEL WHIBLEY, DANIEL WRIGHT, LIAM HALL, STACEY SALMON

Four people who advocated racist violence and the manufacture and possession of weapons were given combined prison sentences of more than 30 years. Daniel Wright, 30, Liam Hall, 32, Stacey Salmon, 30, and Samuel Whibley, 30, were found guilty of a combined total of 18 offences. The four came together in a private online chat group to share extreme right-wing views and propaganda, influence and indoctrinate others and endorse the use of violence to further their cause. Police found a partially constructed 3D printed firearm at the home of Hall and Salmon in Keighley.



THOMAS LEECH A neo-nazi who encouraged far-right terrorism against Jews and Muslims was sentenced to two years in a young offenders institution. Thomas Leech, 19, posted a "call to arms" and glorified far-right killers online. On being arrested, he told police: "I am a Nazi." The court was told Leech believed conspiracy theories that Jewish people were planning the "Great Replacement" of the white race through extinction and the "Islamisation" of Europe.



16-YEAR-OLD A 16-year-old boy who downloaded manuals for explosives and tweeted that he was a "domestic terror threat", who would "bomb a synagogue", was spared a custodial sentence after a judge said that detaining the boy might undo his rehabilitation. The 16-year-old was arrested in Bootle, Merseyside, in 2021 after authorities in the US were alerted to his post. Liverpool Youth Court heard he had also been pictured doing a Nazi salute and a "white power" symbol.

DAVID MUSINS A 36-year-old man from north London was given a three-year jail sentence after admitting belonging to National Action, a proscribed organisation. The court heard that over from around March 2016 to September 2017, Musins was active in National Action, attending the London branch as well as events held in Derbyshire, Darlington and Swindon. He was also involved in a promotional video for the group, which changed its name to NS131 after becoming a proscribed organisation in December 2016.





MASON YATES 19-year-old Mason Yates was jailed for 30 months after police found a large number of extreme right wing images and electronic documents on several of his devices. Yates was subsequently charged with two counts of collecting or making a record of information of a kind likely to be

useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism. Yates had also previously pleaded guilty to one count of possession of an extreme pornographic image, contrary to section 63 of the Criminal Justice and Immigration Act 2003.

ALEX DAVIES The co-founder of National Action, Alex Davies, 27, was sentenced to eight-and-a-half years imprisonment after being found guilty of the now banned group. The court heard how Davies set up the group with Ben Raymond in 2013, with the aim of creating a National Socialist youth movement in the UK. Despite National Action being banned in December 2016, Davies continued to be involved, before setting up a splinter group – NS 131 – in the spring of 2017. This too was eventually banned.



ANTHONY BARRACLOUGH Anthony Barraclough, 40, was jailed for six years for terrorism and public order offences after being found guilty for sharing “appalling” far-right racist material online, including speeches promoting white

supremacy and advocating terrorist violence.

SCOTT MASON Scott Mason, 36, from Rainhill, Merseyside, was jailed under terrorist legislation after being found with a document relating to a copy of the *Anarchist Cookbook*. He was also found in possession of racist and antisemitic documents, as well as extreme pornographic images. He was jailed for three years.



LUCA BENINCASA A teenager from Cardiff pleaded guilty to being a member of a banned fascist group.

Luca Benincasa, 19, admitted belonging to the Feuerkrieg Division (FKD) after it was outlawed in July 2020. A Nazi dagger and Schutzstaffel (SS) officer’s hat were among the items found when police raided his bedroom in February earlier this year. Benincasa also admitted four counts of collecting information likely to be useful to a terrorist. In January 2023, he was sentenced to nine years and three months in prison.



OLIVER RILEY Oliver Riley, 18, of Oxfordshire was arrested in October 2021, after uploading several videos of a “neo-Nazi racist nature” to the internet. He pleaded guilty to three counts of possession of a document or record containing information of a kind likely to be useful to a person committing or preparing an act of terrorism under Section 58 of the Terrorism Act 2000. Sentence unknown.

DANIEL HARRIS Daniel Harris, 19, was found guilty of five counts of encouraging terrorism, contrary to Section 1 of the Terrorism Act 2006, relating to his creation and uploading of material to the internet between February 2021 and March 2022. Some of his videos were shared by Payton Gendron, who killed 10 people in Buffalo, New York.



In January 2023, Harris was sentenced to 11-and-a-half-years in prison.



OLIVER LEWIN Oliver Lewin, 38, was found guilty of preparing acts of terrorism after being convicted of planning a terrorist attack by performing reconnaissance, purchasing equipment and tools and seeking to recruit like-minded individuals to help him, with vital national infrastructure, including communications masts, being the main targets of his planned attacks. He was sentenced to six and a half years in prison.



ANDREW LEAK Andrew Leak, 66, committed suicide shortly after throwing three incendiary devices at an immigration processing centre in Dover, Kent. HOPE not hate revealed that Leak, from High Wycombe, was a far-right sympathiser and his online presence was riddled with racism. He posted theories about migrant boats being made by the UN, while an hour before the attack he tweeted “we will obliterate them Muslim children”.

DRAINING THE SWAMP

The anti-Islam, neoconservative Right has taken over the Government's counter-extremism and counter-terrorism strategy with potentially dangerous consequences. NICK LOWLES reports.

THE LONG-AWAITED (and much-delayed) review into the UK's Prevent counter-extremism safeguarding programme was finally published in early February. While its launch was overshadowed by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy's visit to London, its core findings had been so thoroughly leaked over many months it hardly seemed to matter.

The Review said that not only does Prevent focus too much on far-right extremism and not enough on Islamist extremism, but the definition of what constitutes far-right extremism is too broad and Islamist extremism too narrow.

The Review had been established four years ago, by former Prime Minister Theresa May, in a bid to detoxify the bitterly-contested government programme established in 2007 as a response to the 7/7 terrorist attack two years earlier, to stop people becoming terrorists or supporting terrorism in the UK and overseas.

What we got instead in February 2023 was a report written by William Shawcross, former journalist, ex-head of the Charity Commission and previously director of the Henry Jackson Society, which was high on political rhetoric and low on factual analysis. Rather than trying to build a consensus that could take the programme forward, it doubled-down on one side of the argument, ensuring that Prevent will likely be even more rejected in the future.

In accepting all 34 recommendations for the programme, Home Secretary Suella Braverman said: "The review is unflinching. Prevent needs major reform."

"Prevent has shown cultural timidity and an institutional hesitancy to tackle Islamism for fear of the charge of Islamophobia. Prevent's focus must be solely on security, not political correctness."

Receiving less attention, but no less important, was the recommendation for Prevent to shift its emphasis away from identifying and addressing vulnerabilities to protecting the public from those inclined to pose a security threat.

"Prevent is a security service, not a social service," commented the Home Secretary.

CROCODILES AND SWAMP

Prevent has been dogged by controversy from its inception. Many have accused it of targeting and demonising Muslims.

HOPE not hate has always taken the view that a Prevent-style safeguarding system is needed to steer or coerce people away from violent and hateful extremism, but this needs to be evidence-led. It should not be dictated by a particular ideological viewpoint and – most importantly – has to have buy-in from communities. Prevent, as it currently existed, had failed to do that.

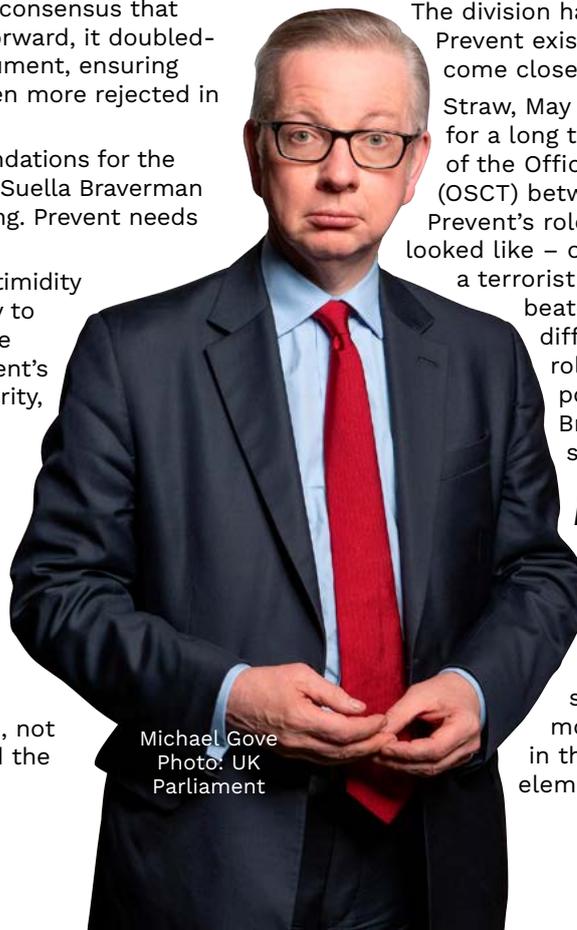
There has also been fierce debate within the corridors of power and within both main political parties about the remit and direction of Prevent. Even within the Labour administration which created Prevent in 2007, there were bitterly opposing views over the remit and scope of the programme between then-Foreign Secretary Jack Straw and Communities Minister Hazel Blears.

Under David Cameron's ensuing premiership, there were sharp differences of opinion between Home Secretary Theresa May and then-Justice Minister Michael Gove.

The division has largely been about whether Prevent exists to "beat back the crocodiles that come close to the boat" or "draining the swamp". Straw, May and the counter-extremist hierarchy, for a long time led by Charles Farr, the Director of the Office for Security and Counter-Terrorism (OSCT) between 2007 and 2015, believed that Prevent's role was to target extremism that looked like – or indeed was developing – into a terrorist threat. They were the "crocodile beaters". Blears, Blair and Gove took a differing view, believing that Prevent's role was to wage an ideological and political war against radical Islam in Britain, hence the notion that the swamp had to be drained.

A PRAGMATIC VS COMBATIVE APPROACH

For many years the pragmatic approach was dominant. Not only was non-violent Islamism largely ignored, but the police, security services and even the probation service enlisted elements of the moderate (or non-violent) Islamists in their fight against more extreme elements.



Michael Gove
Photo: UK
Parliament

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The Shawcross Review is an ideological assault on current counter-extremism policy, designed to dramatically shift the focus and scope of its remit

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In some cases, some people with Islamist (but non-violent) views were utilised and even funded to help steer particular young people away from the various iterations of Al-Muhajiroun and other extremist groups and hate preachers. This strategy was pragmatic. The individuals supported and even funded by the security services could engage with young people in a way that the authorities could not. And it was a strategy that appeared to work, too, with many young people drawn away from more radical groups and potentially violent paths.

Prime Minister David Cameron signalled an end to this approach with his “muscular liberalism” speech at the Munich Security Conference in February 2011, but the practice continued as the security services sought to stem those travelling to Syria and Iraq to join the Islamic State.

Not only were individuals identified as being vulnerable to violent Islamist extremism referred to mentors and projects run by non-violent Islamists, but HOPE not hate has learnt of at least one operation that created a safe route for British Islamic State (IS) volunteers wanting to leave Syria via Turkey. In return for not being prosecuted, these people provided the security services with invaluable intelligence on IS operations and networks.

The supporters of the Shawcross Review were quick to highlight shortcomings in the current system and drew attention to cases that clearly should not have been referred or investigated in the first place as evidence of the need for an overhaul.

While there have undoubtedly been cases that should not have been referred to Prevent, these shortcomings could have been addressed by clearer guidelines, better training and more resources – but addressing these shortcomings never appeared to be the real purpose of the Review nor the limit of its intended change.

The Shawcross Review is an ideological assault on current counter-extremism policy, designed to dramatically shift the focus and scope of its remit.

LESS THAN INDEPENDENT

The Shawcross Review has been titled an “Independent Review of Prevent”, but of course it was independent only as in as much as it was conducted by someone other than a politician or civil servant. William Shawcross had pre-existing ideas about what was needed and he came in to make the changes that he – and those around him – had long argued for.

William Shawcross has a long history of strident views attacking Islam and Islamists. In one article, written in 2006 he railed against a fifth column of Islamists seeking to destroy British society. In another, published shortly before the 2010 General Election, Shawcross criticised what he saw as Labour’s



William Shawcross
Photo:
YouTube

appeasement of Islamism, claiming that the party’s immigration policy was designed to dilute Britishness and empathised with those who felt no choice but to support the British National Party (BNP).

In 2012, as a director of the neoconservative think tank, the Henry Jackson Society, he said: “Europe and Islam is one of the greatest, most terrifying problems of our future. I think all European countries have vastly, very quickly growing Islamic populations.”

These strident views alone should have prevented him from undertaking a review into Britain’s counter-extremism policy.

THE NEOCONSERVATIVE RIGHT

The Shawcross Review is only one front in a wider effort by the neoconservative Right to change the Government’s counter-extremism and counter-terrorism strategy.

In April 2021, Robin Simcox was appointed Britain’s new Commissioner for Countering Extremism (CCE), replacing Sara Khan. Simcox is another alumni of the Henry Jackson Society and like Shawcross has been outspoken in his criticism of Islam. He has repeatedly dismissed the use of the word “Islamophobia” and argued that the Government needs to push back strongly against the phrase because, he claims, it is used as a tactic to shut down criticism of, and debate about, Islam.

In 2016 he also criticised the use of the phrase “violent extremism”, claiming it was “dreamed up as a way to avoid saying ‘Islamic’ or ‘Islamist’ extremism”. In 2019, he said the UK’s official definition of hate crime, as offences motivated by hostility based on perceived race, religion, sexual orientation or disability, were “far too broad.”

Conversely, he has publicly stated that anti-fascist and environmental movements should be monitored by the authorities.

With such strident views on what constitutes extremism, it is deeply worrying that Simcox was appointed to a position where he is now advising the Government on all forms of extremism. Worryingly, his remit and powers are likely to be extended as

a consequence of the Shawcross Review, which recommends giving him increased responsibilities for shaping responses to extremism across the public sector.

Simcox's political outlook is clearly evident from the annual report of his first year in office and the list of organisations he has met, with no meetings arranged with any mainstream Muslim organisation.

Michael Gove, Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, also shares much of Shawcross and Simcox's worldview. Under his tenureship, the department has effectively wound up the Anti-Muslim Hatred Working Group, established under David Cameron, to address anti-Muslim hatred in society and improve policies across government. He has also, with the support of Boris Johnson while he was Prime Minister, ensured that the inquiry into an official Islamophobia definition, set up by Theresa May in her final fortnight in office, never got to work.

THE DEATH OF THE ISLAMOPHOBIA STRATEGY

The final nail in the coffin of the Islamophobia inquiry was the removal of moderate Leeds imam Qari Asim as a government advisor last year, after he allegedly backed calls for a film about Prophet Muhammad's daughter to be banned.

Qari Asim has been central to governmental engagement with Muslim communities for more than a decade and had fronted up numerous government initiatives, plus led interfaith dialogue between Jews and Muslims and been strident in his condemnation of all forms of extremism over the years.

He admits that the wording in his Facebook post about the recent controversial film was not the best, but anyone who knows him, including civil servants and numerous government ministers who have worked with him over the years, knows that he is not an extremist or an intolerant Islamist as Government briefings tried to suggest.

That he found out about his sacking through a letter posted up on social media was even more reprehensible.

Michael Gove has been at the forefront of pushing for a more combative approach to tackling Islamism for two decades. In the aftermath of the 7/7 terrorist attacks, Gove wrote *Celsius 7/7*, a book which called for a frontal assault on the ideology behind the terrorist attacks and a condemnation of liberal society that he accused of allowing this extremism to flourish.

As reported previously by HOPE not hate, while a member of the David Cameron's Task Force on violent extremism, he proposed forcing all mosques into signing a charter of non-violence and creating an extra layer of screening for any Muslims taking jobs in the civil service. Fortunately, these suggestions were rejected by Cameron and the police.

One fierce critic of Gove is Baroness Warsi, a former deputy chair of the Conservative Party and former minister under David Cameron.

"Politically I find his views and what I saw in Government deeply, deeply worrying," she said in 2017.

"I'm just pleased the Conservative Party didn't feel he was fit to be Conservative leader. If Michael had been

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The use of Prevent for these cases massively broadens the programme's remit, making conservative Muslim theology the target rather than groups or actions that could directly led to terrorism

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left to run this [anti-extremism] policy in the way he would run it, we would be seeing the kind of things that we're now seeing in the White House."

The "Gove-esque view of the world" is "very much in line" with the anti-Muslim policies of Donald Trump and his "crazy people", she added.

"The only difference is in Britain there are too many other rationals among the politicians to say: we're not going down that route."

SIDELINED

While Qari Asim was removed as an advisor several other Muslims involved directly or indirectly in the Prevent and other counter-extremism programmes have told HOPE not hate that they have left their jobs in the past year after effectively being frozen out or sidelined.

The fact that moderate Muslims, many of them progressive Muslim women, have felt forced to leave their jobs, not only reflects badly on where our counter-extremism strategy is going but should act as a warning sign that if they can no longer stomach the direction of travel then there is almost no chance of wider community involvement.

There has also been a fierce reaction to the Shawcross Review from within the police and security services. Neil Basu, the former head of counter-terrorism, said parts of the government-backed review of Prevent appear to be driven by a rightwing ideology and are "insulting" to professionals fighting to stop attacks on Britain's streets.

"It's insulting to any counter-terrorism professional to suggest they'd put any particular ideology over another," he said. "It's about how they risk-assess the initial intelligence of the potential for violence and how it is then dealt with afterwards."

Basu said Prevent's work tackling mental health and other vulnerabilities was essential to stem the flow of terrorists, not a diversion from that mission as Shawcross claimed.

Sir Peter Fahy, the former Police lead for Prevent, said that it was "quite dangerous to play off one ideology against another."

Layla Aitlhadj, the director and case study lead at Prevent Watch, claimed that Shawcross had based his entire report on sitting in on just six Channel assessments (the Government programme for more intense engagement with young people vulnerable to extremism) out of 1,500 carried out between April 2021 and March 2022.

WHERE NOW FOR PREVENT

The Shawcross Report listed 34 recommendations, all of which have been adopted by the Government. While

FAR RIGHT TERROR STATS

- **49% of terrorism arrests in the year to September 2022 were linked to suspected extreme right-wing terrorism.**
- **Since March 2017, counter-terrorism police and the intelligence services have stopped 32 plots they assess as aiming to cause mass casualties on British soil. Of these they assess 18 were Islamist related, and 12 were triggered by extreme rightwing terrorist ideology**
- **Since 2017, 98 far right sympathisers have been convicted of terror-related offences**



David Cameron visited Leeds' Makkah Mosque where he met Iman, Qari Asim (centre). Photo: Number 10 / flickr

some could probably be enacted quite easily, others require considerably more thought and preparation. Several of the recommendations were also very broad and even aspirational and cannot be implemented without a lot more work.

There are also recommendations where it is unclear how they will be put into practice. One is the suggestion that Prevent should encompass challenging Islamists who threaten blasphemy laws.

One Shawcross cheerleader is Dr Paul Stott, the Head of Security and Extremism at Policy Exchange and formerly of the Henry Jackson Society. Writing on the Conservative Home website, he has called for Prevent practitioners to be used to intervene in cases like Batley Grammar school – where a small group of Islamists targeted a teacher who innocently distributed a picture of Mohammed in an RE lesson – or last year's Lady of Heaven cinema protests, and the murder of Glasgow shopkeeper Asad Shah, an Ahmadiyya Muslim, in 2016 by a Sunni Muslim in a religiously motivated attack.

“We cannot have a de facto blasphemy law whenever a mob gathers to threaten violence. We need a robust ministerial strategy for the next panic over blasphemy, freedom of speech or incitement to violence, coupled with Prevent practitioners and the police primed to resist support for unlawful actions at the local and national levels and instructed to deal effectively with any law-breaking. Delivery is essential for our social cohesion.”

The use of Prevent for these cases massively broadens the programme's remit, making conservative Muslim theology the target rather than groups or actions that could directly led to terrorism.

This is a dangerous departure and comes with huge potential consequences. It risks politicising the police and security services, forcing them to police conservative religious belief and potentially pitting them against large sections of Muslim communities

who will view that their – and only their – religion and freedom of speech is being targeted.

Right now, the Government clearly appears uninterested or even opposed to genuine engagement with mainstream Muslim community organisations. This could have severe consequences for community engagement and cohesion.

Imposing cohesion and integration on communities will never work – especially when one entire community is at best viewed with suspicion and at worst viewed as a threat which will never properly integrate in British society.

A policy of non-engagement with Muslim community organisations will also mean that it will be harder for the Government to bring communities together in the face of terrorist attacks or threats and so prevent an escalation of violence. The difference between how the Cameron Government struggled to build inter-community resilience in the immediate aftermath of the Lee Rigby murder in 2013 and a much more successful strategy in 2017, after a wave of terrorist incidents, is testament to the importance of having an engagement strategy.

Just as importantly, reducing a focus on far-right extremism, and indeed other forms of extremism, in the pursuit of increasing the focus on Islamist extremism, risks ignoring potential terrorist threats in the future, which will be a serious and potentially deadly dereliction of duty.

Prevent should not have a focus based on ideology – it needs to be based in hard evidence and statistics about the threat that violent extremists pose to us.

In claiming to improve Britain's counter-extremism policy, the Shawcross Review – and the neoconservatives driving it forward – could have exactly the opposite effect. It is a policy that is as reactionary as it is dangerous and we could all be paying the cost.

PROFILING THE BRITISH FAR RIGHT

Over the next 60 pages we profile the British far right. We have grouped these individuals and organisations together in a number of categories, from Populist/Radical Right to the Conspiratorial Right, Anti-Migrant and anti-Muslim activists to outright Nazis and Fascists.

Each group is distinct, though all form part of what we define as the far right.

To help explain what we mean by 'far right' we have drawn up the following definition:



The 'far right' is an umbrella term that encompasses those individuals and organisations whose political outlook is more extreme or hardline than those of the centre right of the mainstream political spectrum. However, it is important to recognise that the 'far right' is distinct from more traditional 'Conservatism', and often aggressively opposed to it.

Though 'far right' is a useful term, and the term used in this report, the 'far right' of the political spectrum is certainly not a monolith, and thus its breadth makes it necessary to split it further into its constituent parts, namely the radical right and the extreme right.

The radical right accepts the fundamentals of democracy but rejects certain values of liberal democracy, such as minority rights, and pluralism. Many radical right movements and parties are also populist, meaning that they divide society into the 'pure people' and the 'corrupt elite'. The extreme right, which includes nazis and fascists, fundamentally rejects democracy, popular sovereignty and majority rule and may also advocate violence and even terrorism.

Some of the far right is electorally focused, whilst other elements prioritise ideological and cultural issues. The broad spectrum of the 'far-right' is generally united by a common set of core beliefs. In practice, this usually means a belief in chauvinistic nationalism (exceptionalism) of either a race or country rather than mere patriotism. This can be a belief that the nation (either geographic or racial) is in decay or crisis and radical action is required to halt or reverse it, but at the same time this

nationalism can be steeped in a sense of superiority and a desire for expansionism.

The 'nation', however defined, usually includes an in-group that perceives themselves to be under threat and an outgroup/enemy. Historically, the enemy was identified as Jews and/or non-white immigration, though over the last 20 years we have seen the increasing targeting of Muslims and Islam more generally.

The far right taps into economic pessimism, inequalities and real or perceived grievances, offering simplistic solutions, scapegoating, and demonising, and deliberately undermining trust in the political process. Far-right extremism has common features with other forms of political and religious 'extremisms' and can share prejudices such as misogyny and homophobia, but it also has some quite specific and unique elements which mark it out as distinct. Far-right extremism propagates and utilises conspiracy theories to spread their ideology and sometimes this too can overlap with other forms of extremism.

Far-right extremism can be violent or non-violent and it can be parliamentary and extra-parliamentary in nature. However, its narrative, propaganda and actions can incite fear in its targets and encourage violence and hatred amongst its followers. Whilst far right activists, parties and movements can differ enormously, and are increasingly adopting a more amorphous, looser, and post-organisational form, most will include some form of authoritarian outlook and provide a clear political, legal, and cultural challenge to liberal democracy and its institutions, to human rights, and to cohesive communities.

POPULIST / RADICAL RIGHT

CAMEO, FORTUNE AND FREEDOM: WHERE NOW FOR FARAGE?

Nigel Farage is living life as a pundit, making money from video and media appearances, but could he return to the political fray? GREGORY DAVIES and ROSIE CARTER analyse

For a man widely tipped to be plotting a return to frontline politics, some of former UK Independence Party (UKIP) leader Nigel Farage's activities during his extended gap year do not appear aimed at bolstering his credibility with voters.

The day after he announced his retirement from frontline politics in March 2021, he signed up to the Cameo website, which allows members of the public to pay "celebs" for personalised video messages. This platform, which he shares with politicians Ian Paisley

Jr and (satirical political candidate) "Count Binface", has no doubt proved lucrative: Farage initially charged £100, and later £75, for his brief videos. It has not been without embarrassing moments, however, with users occasionally tricking him into parroting pro-IRA slogans and drug references.

Another money-spinner has been his relationship with the investment advice e-newsletter *Fortune & Freedom*, which launched in October 2020. It's since been much-derided for its use of clickbait language and efforts to paint advice as part of Farage's broader campaign against the "elites". The project was further undermined by a damning analysis from the financial news outlet *Bloomberg*, which found that the investments touted by Farage via *Fortune & Freedom* had significantly underperformed the FTSE 100 and and FTSE All-Share Indices.

Nigel Farage
Photo: Gage
Skidmore

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*Stirring up concern about immigration
is more likely to play into Farage's
hands in the long term*
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GB NEWS

A more logical move for a politician seeking a comeback was his decision to take a primetime show on new channel GB News, which was announced in June 2021 and runs Monday-Thursday. This has provided Farage a pulpit from which to promote topics close to his heart – for example, railing against environmentalism, “wokeism” and the Labour Party, while also launching more carefully selected attacks on the Conservative government.

Farage’s show has been a success for GB News, consistently bringing in around 80,000 viewers to a channel that has otherwise struggled to challenge the ratings of BBC News and Sky News. But the extensive exposure that it has brought Farage has not necessarily been an unmitigated benefit: Farage’s role as a host allows him to frame the issues, but also puts him in the position of a comfortable media critic rather than as the “outsider” and “campaigner” that he has long defined himself.

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It is hard to imagine Farage being content to play second fiddle to the unimpressive Tice

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It may also be that fellow presenters like Neil Oliver and (recently departed) Mark Steyn have radicalised his viewers to a point somewhat beyond his comfort zone. Though Farage is no opponent of conspiracy theories – as his repeat appearances on InfoWars and use of terms like “cultural Marxism” attest – he has been on the back foot when it comes to the swirl of interlinked conspiracies that emerged from the COVID-19 pandemic. Having initially endorsed both lockdown and the use of face masks and condemning the new Conservative government for not mandating both sooner, Farage only began to embrace lockdown-scepticism later on in 2020.

He opposed the idea of vaccine mandates and since late 2022 has begun to interview anti-vaccine figures such as Dr Robert Malone and former Brexit Party MEP James Wells. However, he appears far less enthused by the topic than fellow GB News presenters Steyn and Oliver.

REFORM UK

In January 2022, Farage said: “For now, I am the party’s president in a non-executive role, but I intend to increase the help that I’m giving to Richard Tice.” It was a vague statement that left open the possibility of his return to a formal political role in Reform UK (the successor to the Brexit Party). It is hard to imagine Farage being content to play second fiddle to the unimpressive Tice, but also unclear whether Tice views himself as merely warming the leadership seat for Farage’s eventual return.

After making little impression on the polls since it relaunched as Reform UK in January 2021, and negligible results in local and by-elections, Reform UK has benefitted from a slight bump in the polls after the implosion of the Conservative Party’s support over 2022. From hovering around 2-3% to a high of 9% in some polls in November, the party fell back to 6-7% in the weeks that followed. However, this polling increase represents a tiny fraction of the vote-share lost by the Conservatives since 2019, now down at around 25% from 42.4% in GE2019.

Some right-wing commentators have suggested that the fall in the Conservative Party’s polling is primarily a result of voters alienated by the lack of “true Conservative values”. Some of these supporters on the right of the party are pushing for the Conservatives to drive a “small boats election”, whipping up enmity towards asylum seekers in an attempt to claw back support from an audience more aligned to Reform UK. But this ignores the evidence that far more disaffected Conservative voters are moving towards Labour than seeking right-wing alternatives.

POLLING PREDICTIONS

HOPE not hate-commissioned Focaldata polling of 20,037 Britons, carried out by between 11 December 2022 - 12 January 2023 found that 62% of those who voted Conservative in 2019 say that they are likely to vote Conservative again, compared to 20% who say they would not. In addition, 21% say they are now likely to vote Labour, while 13% are likely to vote Lib Dem. Meanwhile, 18% say they would be likely to vote for Reform UK.

Stirring up concern about immigration is more likely to play into Farage’s hands in the long term. Our poll found that more than a quarter of respondents overall (27%) said they would be likely to support a new political party led by Nigel Farage, if it said it would dramatically cut all immigration, cut taxes and reduce public spending. These respondents were generally driven by anti-immigrant politics, as well as their support for Brexit. But of this 27%, only 42% said they would be likely to vote for Reform UK.

Farage’s role in flirting on the sidelines of Reform UK may well be part of a longer term strategy. It could intentionally push the Conservatives to the right in an attempt to fracture the ruling party, creating a political space for Farage after 2024. Our polling suggests that there is still a healthy dose of support for Farage. But as the cost of living crisis and economic decline takes hold, this long-game could easily be undercut as people need real answers and not just cheap political shots against migrants.

THE FARAGE SUPPORTER



Immigration

Those who said they would support a party led by Farage were generally driven by anti-immigrant politics

££££££

57% of household earners over £100,001 said they'd consider supporting such a party



Those who voted Leave in the 2016 EU referendum were just as likely to say they'd oppose (38%) as support (38%) a party led by Farage

40%

Of those likely to vote Conservative, 40% of those who say they would likely vote Conservative would also consider voting for a party led by Farage

GBNI

Farage supporters are twice as likely to get their news from GB News (15%) as the national average (7%)

63%

say that men and women are born to be different, and so it is only natural that they perform different roles in society

Farage supporters are far more likely to believe in a number of conspiracy theories.

Disadvantaged

43% of people who say they'd support a party led by Farage say they feel disadvantaged in society, despite being more likely to be white, male and high earners

Three-quarters

78% say they think discrimination against white people has become as big a problem as discrimination against non-white people

46% of people who say they'd support a Farage-led party see Islam as a threat to the British way of life

HOPE not hate polling of 20,037 Britons carried out by Focaldata between the 11th Dec 2022 - 12th Jan 2023. (People likely to support a new political party led by Nigel Farage (n=5403))

In HOPE not hate's huge 20,000 person poll, we asked people how likely or unlikely they were to support a new political party led by Farage which promised to reduce immigration, cut taxes and reduce public spending. 12% of people said they were very likely to support such a party. This is what these people think:

Photo: Gage Skidmore

POPULIST / RADICAL RIGHT

BREITBART LONDON

CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET

EDITOR: OLIVER LANE



2022 SUMMARY

Breitbart’s influence on the radical right in UK has continued to dwindle this year, with falling or stagnant engagement for its anti-migrant and “anti-woke” content over the course of 2022.

Breitbart has notably refrained from fear-mongering over the COVID-19 vaccine, a topic which has dominated the coverage of many comparable outlets during the past year. It has, however, embraced wider conspiracies involving the “Great Reset” and shadowy “globalist” elites.

2023 PROSPECTS

Aside from editor Oliver Lane (pictured right), Breitbart UK appears to have just one regular correspondent based in the UK, following the January 2022 departure of its possibly most prominent contributor, James Delingpole. It is unlikely to break new ground with such limited resources.



Oliver Lane



PAUL JOSEPH WATSON/SUMMIT NEWS

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

The impact of far-right conspiracy peddler Paul Joseph Watson has been in slow decline for years. Despite this, Watson still retains a sizeable presence in the

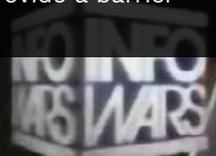
global conspiracy theory scene. His YouTube channel garnered 34 million views this year, a worryingly large figure but a far cry from the 100+ million views it received in 2017. His Summit News site meanwhile stayed steady at around 500,000 views per month.

In May, media outlet *Byline Times* released a secretly-recorded audio clip of Watson launching a slur-ridden racist and homophobic tirade, including him saying: “I don’t give a shit about Israel and Palestine. I care about white people. Not sand n****r Jew P**i f***** c**ns.”

Watson was also exposed by the media blitz surrounding the Sandy Hook defamation case (against InfoWars boss Alex Jones in the USA), when his private messages to his longtime boss Jones were read out in court. Watson was revealed to have taken an exasperated tone at some of Jones’ more outrageous COVID-19 disinformation, calling it “Sandy Hooks all over again”.

2023 PROSPECTS

Watson will continue to promote his lucrative line in populist conspiracy theories, but his connection to InfoWars and the leaked audio might provide a barrier to more mainstream traction.



KATIE HOPKINS**CATEGORY: INFLUENCER /
CONTENT CREATOR****2022 SUMMARY**

Katie Hopkins has continued to use her sizeable social media presence to push toxic content and anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, and is still able to fill theatres for her live shows.

In May 2022, she joined Alex Belfield for “Two Gobshites”, a three-night live show in Blackpool, just three months before Belfield was sentenced to five years in prison for stalking four people. In January 2023, Hopkins also joined an array of hard-right and conspiracy influencers for a live event that was billed as a “comedy podcast weekend”.

2023 PROSPECTS

Katie Hopkins suffered a significant blow to her relevance with the suspension of her Twitter account in June 2020, but might regain it if her account is reinstated this year.



Photo: RoyalForce451/
wikimedia.org

POLITICALITE**CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET****EDITOR: JORDAN JAMES****2022 SUMMARY**

In April 2022, Politicalite had an early boost to the year with the restoration of its Twitter account, which had been suspended in February 2021. The outlet credited this to Elon Musk’s pro-free speech policies, although the platform had not formally accepted Musk’s buyout offer at that point (and the sale did not go through until September).

The platform was widely cited for its unconfirmed reporting that a GB News host had been disciplined for sexual harassment, apparently based on reports from unnamed sources at the station.

2023 PROSPECTS

Despite the highly questionable nature of its reporting, Politicalite’s “scoops” have started to be cited by mainstream media sources and it may continue to grow in relevance this year.

Jordan James
Photo: Twitter



Carl Benjamin (aka
Sargon of Akkad).
Photo: Rebel
Wisdom

**LOTUS EATER MEDIA / SARGON OF AKKAD****CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET****2022 SUMMARY**

The Lotus Eaters is a multimedia project launched in 2021 by misogynistic libertarian and former UKIP candidate Carl Benjamin (aka Sargon of Akkad). The outlet has continued to produce a considerable quantity of podcasts and articles, with some freely available and others placed behind a paywall for subscribers.

2023 PROSPECTS

Carl Benjamin and The Lotus Eaters project is likely to benefit from the reinstatement of the former’s Twitter account in November 2022, and will continue to occupy a sizeable space in the “anti-woke” and libertarian sphere.

LEAVE.EU**CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET****2022 SUMMARY**

The hard-right Leave.EU campaign group finally went into liquidation in September 2022, having been dormant on all platforms since September of 2021. Co-founder Arron Banks had written off loans of over £7 million to the organisation in April, and records showed the group had not paid off its £52,000 in fines owed to the Information Commissioner’s Office (ICO) for breaches of data law during the 2016 EU referendum campaign.

2023 PROSPECTS

Leave.EU will not reappear, though Arron Banks may choose to bankroll a new operation.

POPULIST / RADICAL RIGHT

REFORM UK

CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY

LEADER: RICHARD TICE



2022 SUMMARY

Reform UK is the rebranded Brexit Party, changing name and leadership in early 2021 following the departure of leader Nigel Farage in favour of his deputy Richard Tice. While the party campaigns on hot-button topics like cross-Channel migration and culture war issues, Tice appears more comfortable fleshing out mundane aspects of policy and does not share Farage's attention-grabbing style.

After failing to make any gains in the few areas it put up candidates at the 2022 local elections, the party began to creep up the polls in the face of upheaval and widespread dissatisfaction with the Conservatives later in the year, reaching 9% in some polls in December.

However, Reform UK still seems unready to replicate the political earthquake of the Brexit Party's 2019 European election victory. It has not produced any evidence to support its claim to have selected 600 candidates for the next general election, and the small amount of local campaigning that takes place appears to be carried out by a few enthusiastic activists with little funding or support from party headquarters.

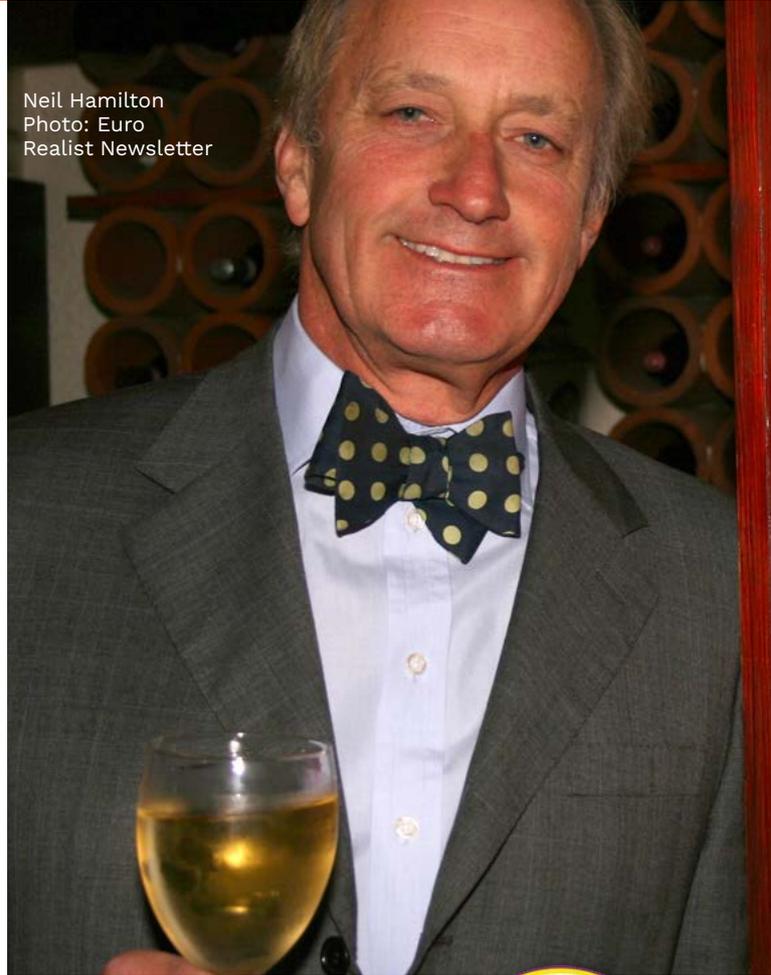
2023 PROSPECTS

Reform UK's prospects depend on a number of factors. If the Conservative Party's polling woes continue, it is possible that Reform UK will benefit from the defection of elected officials as well as activists and support. However, its lack of grassroots infrastructure and a clear identity will hamper its ability to translate that into electoral success.

Richard Tice



Neil Hamilton
Photo: Euro
Realist Newsletter



UKIP

CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY

LEADER: NEIL HAMILTON



2022 SUMMARY

Neil Hamilton led the hard-right UKIP through another dismal year in 2022, fielding just seven candidates in May's local elections and achieving a derisory 0.6% vote share in December's City of Chester by-election.

The party started the year by selecting the far-right anti-migrant activist Steve Laws for the Southend West by-election, following the murder of Sir David Amess MP. Laws got just 2.7% of the vote in a ballot that was uncontested by most mainstream opposition parties. In October, Hamilton delivered a speech at a conference for Germany's far-right Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party.

Also in October, the party appointed former Big Brother contestant Rebecca Jane as deputy leader. She immediately launched a campaign to persuade the leaders of other minor right-wing parties to form an alliance with UKIP, lambasting Reform UK for refusing to enter into talks on the idea.

2023 PROSPECTS

The party's appointment of the energetic Rebecca Jane as deputy has given new blood to an otherwise stagnant movement, but it is unclear whether her efforts to unite parties will bear any fruit without the involvement of Reform UK, which has rejected offers of talks.

Photo: Twitter

REFORM UK



In HOPE not hate's huge 20,000 person poll, 6% of people said that they were "very likely" to vote for the Reform Party. This is what these people think:

Almost twice as many Reform Party supporters think Islam to a threat to the British way of life than those who think it is compatible.



58%

think violence is sometimes necessary to defend something you feel strongly about

48%

support Scottish Independence, while

29%

oppose it



The ratio say that men and women are born to be different, and so it is only natural that they perform different roles in society, is four to one



19% of household earners over £100,001 said they were "very likely" to support a Farage party



43%

of those saying they are now "very likely" to vote Reform Party voted Conservative Party in 2019

Four in Five

79% think white people as just as likely to face discrimination than non-white people. Just 8% think the opposite

1,257 of 20,038 people polled said that they were "very likely" to vote Reform Party if an election was held today

Two-thirds

Almost two thirds of Reform Party supporters say immigration has changed their local community for the worse

Two-thirds

think that there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together, while 36% believe that official account of the Nazi Holocaust is a lie

POPULIST / RADICAL RIGHT



HERITAGE PARTY

CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY

LEADER: DAVID KURTEN

2022 SUMMARY

The Heritage Party, led by former UKIP official and anti-vaccine activist David Kurten (pictured), also limped through 2022. All 15 of the candidates it stood in the local elections came in last place and accounts from 2021 show the party took less than £30,000 in income for that year.

2023 PROSPECTS

Despite occasional publicity from Kurten’s guest appearances on GB News, the Heritage Party has made no impact and will struggle to keep the lights on this year.



TURNING POINT UK

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION / NETWORK



2022 SUMMARY

Turning Point UK (TPUK) is the UK offshoot of the pro-Trump youth organisation in America, Turning Point. It remains active on social media, but has made no headway on replicating the work of its American parent group by setting up chapters on university campuses. The group’s website has remained largely empty since its launch in 2019, with holding messages stating that the list of university chapters is “presently being finalised and will be updated here soon”. Its news site posted just a dozen articles over the course of 2022.

In November 2022, the backbench Conservative MP Marco Longhi took on the role of TPUK’s Honorary President, and its 39-year-old leader, Nick Tenconi, visited university campuses to conduct “surveys” and photograph students holding the group’s signs.

2023 PROSPECTS

TPUK appears to have become more active with the involvement of the misogynistic influencer Nick Tenconi as Chief Operating Officer, though there is no evidence yet of any grassroots organising from the younger generation that might give the group greater influence in 2023.

RECLAIM PARTY & LAURENCE FOX

CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY

2022 SUMMARY

Set up as a “UKIP for the culture wars” by actor Laurence Fox, Reclaim had a very quiet year in 2022.

The party stood no candidates in the local elections or in any by-elections and it is unclear the extent to which it exists as a political party. It has complained about difficulties in opening a bank account, and that the terms of its existing account mean that it can only receive income from donations by its multimillionaire backer Jeremy Hosking.

The party has nonetheless set up various subsidiaries, including its ReclaimTheMedia outlet for interviews and the Bad Law Project, which challenges cases of supposed censorship and police overreach, usually in relation to gender policy.

Fox has continued to make headlines for his increasingly provocative use of social media, such as describing abortion as being morally equivalent to rape, sharing a depiction of LGBT+



Laurence Fox
Photo: Reclaim Party



Pride flags rearranged in the shape of a swastika, or his accusations of paedophilia against random people (for which he faces ongoing legal action).

2023 PROSPECTS

It is unclear whether Reclaim will become a functioning political party or if its talks with UKIP will lead to any kind of merger or alliance. Fox will likely continue to be a toxic figure for as long as he is so generously supported by Hosking.

REBEL NEWS

CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET

**2022 SUMMARY**

The far-right Canadian news site Rebel Media, best known in the UK for its relationships with anti-Muslim activists Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) and Katie Hopkins, has launched an aspiring UK operation with little-known YouTuber Lewis Brackpool as its sole correspondent.

Following Brackpool's departure in October 2022, all UK-related content is now produced by Callum Smiles and Malaysia-based Ian Miles Cheong.

**2023 PROSPECTS**

Despite soliciting donations throughout 2022 for the creation of a London bureau, there is little sign yet that Rebel News UK is more than a Twitter account.

GB NEWS

CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET

**2022 SUMMARY**

Launched in June 2021, right-wing news channel GB News had a rocky start but settled down somewhat over the course of 2022, settling on a mix of gossipy panel shows, hyper-partisan political commentary and some fairly extreme conspiracy theory content.

Despite improving audience figures over the course of the year, the channel has faced some difficulties in persuading advertisers to buy space on the channel, and it is believed that media regulator Ofcom has at least two open investigations into the anti-vaccine commentary on Mark Steyn's primetime show.

PROSPECTS FOR 2023

It was reported in January 2023 that the channel was attempting to create a more "disciplined" operation that would stay on the right side of the law and regulators, and attract more mainstream advertisers. However, it might be difficult to do so without attracting the ire of its more extreme viewers.

THE MALLARD

CATEGORY: MAGAZINE

2022 SUMMARY

The Mallard is a small right-wing blog set up in 2016 that has published a printed magazine since April 2021. Describing its content as "passionate conservative commentary" for the "politically homeless", the site's content ranges from High Tory conservatism to more explicitly far-right content.

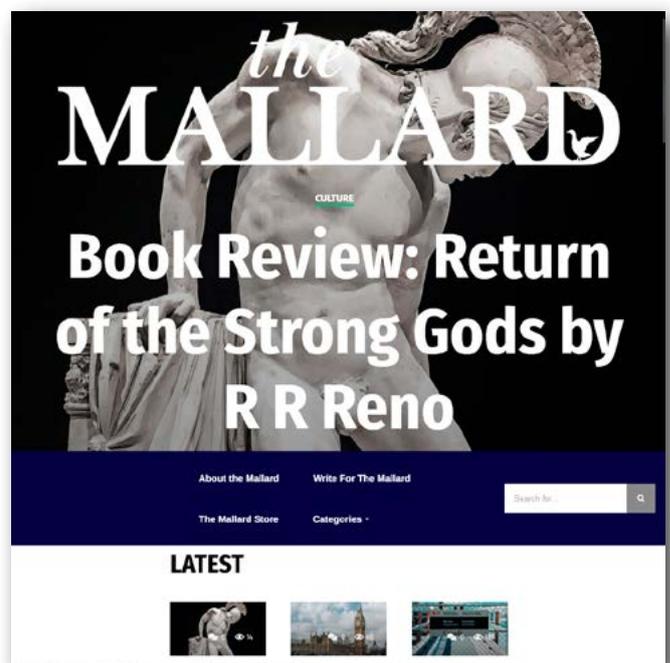
In November 2022, it published an extreme guest column by the regular Lotus Eaters contributor BB Dade, which called for the deportation of "millions of foreigners and their dependents" and the banning of all "seditious" media outlets and NGOs. In the same month regular contributor Ilja Dokmanovic wrote an article titled "When Treason Is Necessary", urging then-President Bolsonaro of Brazil to overturn his country's election result by force.

In February 2022, *The Mallard* began publishing a monthly "Dispatch from DC" column by former UKIP activist and former Breitbart London editor Raheem Kassam, who also guest-edited a US edition of the magazine along with far-right MAGA influencer Jack Posobiec.

2023 PROSPECTS

The Mallard will remain a fringe outlet that caters to a particular breed of young conservatives with far-right sympathies, but is unlikely to appeal to a wider audience.

Raheem Kassam
Photo: Gage Skidmore



POPULIST /
RADICAL
RIGHT

*"The
Constitution
is the
Solution"*



The Full English



ENGLISH CONSTITUTION PARTY

CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY

LEADER: GRAHAM MOORE

2022 SUMMARY

The tiny English Constitution Party continues to push its unpopular campaign for English Independence, along with a hefty dose of conspiracy theories and reliance on “sovereign citizen”-type ideas about the supposed supremacy of English common law.

The party did not stand any candidates in the May local elections, perhaps a wise decision given the woeful results that leader Graham Moore achieved in the Southend West by-election in February, in which he came seventh out of eight candidates, achieving a measly 0.6% of the votes.

In September, the party submitted a written statement to the Supreme Court in support of the Scottish Government’s case arguing for the right to hold an independence referendum without the consent of the Westminster Parliament.

2023 PROSPECTS

Few voters will believe that English independence is a priority for the year ahead, and Moore’s arcane legal theories about “common law” are unlikely to move the dial on that.

PROUD BOYS BRITANNIA

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

Proud Boys Britannia (PBB) is the UK offshoot of the US-founded “western chauvinist” far-right movement, the Proud Boys. The group has just a handful of activists and operates mostly as a social club.

While remaining tiny, in 2022 the group created a branch structure with separate email addresses and Telegram channels for Scotland, Wales, England North/Midlands and England South. Despite this, PBB has little influence within the wider UK far right and is widely regarded as something of an embarrassment, owing to its Fred Perry uniforms, rituals, language and adolescent humour.

The UK group regularly crossposts content from other Proud Boys branches around the world, encouraging supporters to join Proud Boys Ireland and, in September, received a visit from activists from Proud Boys Deutschland.



2023 PROSPECTS

PBB clearly has plans to formalise its structures and grow in the coming year, but it remains a tiny group and it seems unlikely that it will achieve much more than the odd social gathering and sticker session in 2023.

GB NEWS: CHANNELING NEGATIVITY

A home to hard-right views and guests, GB News has captured a distinct audience, far more socially conservative and politically reactive than the general population, according to exclusive HOPE not hate polling. ROSIE CARTER and GREGORY DAVIS report:

WHEN GB NEWS launched in June 2021, its star hire Andrew Neil assured the nation that it was not intended to be a British version of Fox News: “It won’t be “shouty, angry telly,” Neil told the *Evening Standard* prior to its launch. “I don’t think there’s a market for that kind of hard-right stuff in this country.”

While the overall tone of GB News might not be “shouty”, its trajectory since then has been distinctly hard right. Already boasting three former Brexit Party candidates among its inaugural lineup, the channel has become a hub for minor right-wing politicians as both hosts and guests.

On an average week, former UKIP and Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage presents his weekly show on Mondays to Thursdays, except for those weeks when Reclaim Party leader Laurence Fox stands in for him. Former Brexit Party MEP and ex-Deputy Leader of Reclaim Martin Daubney regularly co-anchors shows on the channel, as does Reclaim associate Fr Calvin Robinson and ex-Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) leader Arlene Foster.

Even the parties whose candidates have not yet been granted their own show can rely on regular publicity from the channel. UKIP leader Neil Hamilton appeared on GB News at least 18 times over the course of 2022, while Heritage Party leader David Kurten managed 13 appearances.

The channel has invited a number of far-right hosts and guests to appear. The former British National Party (BNP) activist and now self-proclaimed “counter-extremism researcher” Jack Buckby has been invited on twice to share his thoughts on how right-wing extremism is largely an understandable reaction to



63%

say that they would be likely to support a new political party led by Nigel Farage

“wokeness”. Last August, the channel was eventually forced to delete all references to its interview with Peter Immanuelssen (aka Peter Sweden), after his history of Holocaust denial was brought up – a history that could have been found if researchers had simply Googled his name.

DARK VIEWS

Most worrying, however, is the pernicious presence of hosts like Neil Oliver, Calvin Robinson and, until recently, Mark Steyn. Oliver hosts a two-hour show on Saturday nights that is best known for his monologues, in which he lays out his dark world view in a somewhat sinister monotone delivered straight to camera. In one representative example from August 2022, Oliver described a global conspiracy in which climate science, modern medicine and rising energy bills were all part of a global conspiracy designed to starve and impoverish the population.

Mark Steyn’s show is similarly dark, with an abiding focus on scaremongering over vaccines – for which he’s now being investigated on two accounts by broadcasting regulator Ofcom – and also on-street grooming. Steyn was for years best known as a leading light in the so-called “counter-jihad” scene, once writing of the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia in 1995 that: “The Serbs figured that out as other Continentals will in the years ahead: if you can’t outbreed the enemy, cull ‘em.”

Both men are held in high regard on the far right. Clips of their shows are shared widely among the increasingly conspiratorial far-right. Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) uploads Neil Oliver’s monologue every week onto his Telegram channel, while other far-right groups including Britain First, the Traditional Britain Group and the hooligan group Pie n Mash Squad share clips of both shows on a regular basis.

Britain First was particularly pleased when Steyn condemned West Yorkshire police for detaining leader Paul Golding during the Wakefield by-election, seemingly unperturbed by his euphemistic description of the group as being “strong meat” and “a bit rough around the edges”. In fact, the group frequently praises GB News, once saying:

“The likes of Farage, Mark Steyn and Neil Oliver are shifting the Overton window in politics. From now on it is Britain First’s responsibility to make sure that the electorate are provided with a nationalist alternative at the ballot box come every single election”

55%

think multiculturalism has undermined British culture

66%

say that the arrival of immigrants has changed their local community for the worse



GB NEWS VIEWERS AND VIEWS

While its launch was marred by technical difficulties and plummeting viewing figures through its first month (viewing dropped to a tenth of the channel's opening night), viewer numbers have climbed over the last year.

The channel made bold claims at the end of 2022 that it was the “fastest growing” news channel in the UK, beating Sky News in prime time viewings. GB News managed an average 57,107 viewers in the evenings versus 52,230 for Sky News.

We decided to test this claim, commissioning Focaldata polling of 20,038 adults aged 18+ from across Great Britain between 11 December 2022 to 12 January 2023. Overall, when asked to list the two outlets where they watched their news, just seven percent (7%) of respondents said GB News, compared to 56% who said BBC news, 38% ITV News, 28% Sky News, 14% Channel 4 News, and 12% who said a local news programme.

Nonetheless, 7% is a still a substantial figure given the hard-right nature of the channel's coverage.

According to our poll, GB News viewers are more likely to be male and white, though there is no notable difference in consumption of GB News by age group. The channel has a greater appeal to higher income households (16% of households earning £100,000 and over compared with 6% of all households earning under £30,000).

One in 10 who voted Conservative (10%) and more than one in five (21%) who voted for the Brexit Party in the 2019 General Election said they were most likely to get their news from GB News.

Looking at the views of these respondents, it is apparent that the channel has captured a distinct audience, whose views are far more socially conservative and politically reactive than the general population.



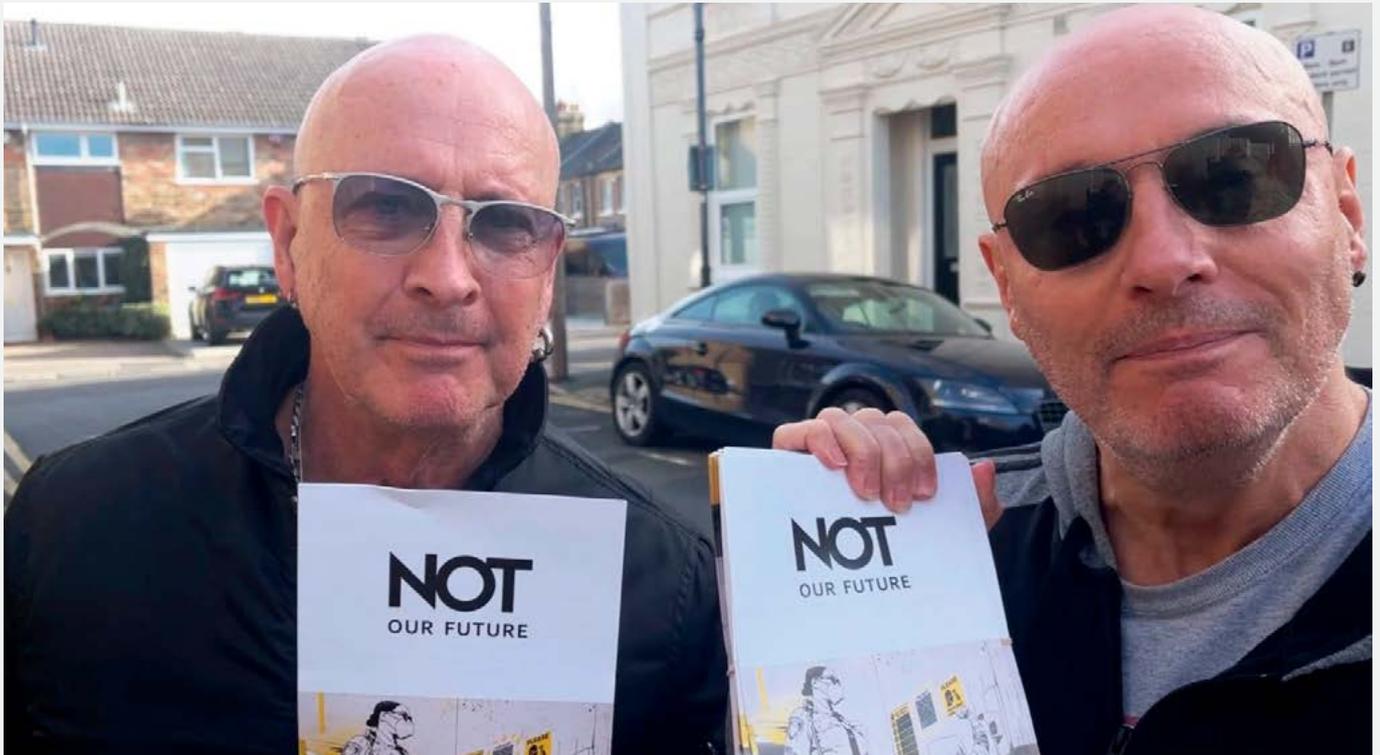
GB NEWS VIEWERS (N=1290)

- 69% of GB News viewers maintain that Brexit has been good for Britain, setting them apart from the 38% of respondents overall who feel the same.
- People most likely to get their news from GB News were far more likely to have voted Conservative at the 2019 General Election (52%), but many have become disillusioned with the party. Only half (46%) say they are still likely to vote for the Conservatives now, while 34% say they are unlikely. But more than half (52%) say they would be likely to vote for Reform UK, with only a quarter saying they would not (25%).
- 63% of GB News viewers say that they would be likely to support a new political party led by Nigel Farage, which says it would dramatically cut all immigration, cut taxes and reduce public spending, while only 16% say they would not.
- Immigration and asylum are, unsurprisingly, key issues for GB News viewers.
- Reflecting the higher incomes of GB News viewers, the cost of living is seen as one of the most pressing issues by just over half (52%) compared with 70% overall.
- GB News viewers are more likely to say that they feel disadvantaged in society (37% compared with 30% overall), speaking to GB News's “war on woke” and how it plays on a reactionary identity politics.
- GB News viewers are also more likely to feel a sense of decline. Half (50%) say they think the neighbourhood in which they live has declined in recent years – just 23% disagree. This speaks more broadly to their resistance to social change.
- 55% think multiculturalism has undermined British culture. And 66% feel that the arrival of immigrants has changed their local community for the worse – 20% higher than the overall poll response.
- GB News viewers are far more likely to support traditional gender roles than the general population: 60% agree that men and women are born to be different, and so it is only natural that they perform different roles in society, compared to 41% overall.

CONSPIRACY



THE SHIFTING SANDS OF THE UK'S CONSPIRACY THEORY SCENE



Pop group-turned-conspiracists Right Said Fred protest with Not Our Future in Oxford

Rather than disappear as the pandemic fades, the UK's conspiracy theory scene will continue to adapt and move in new and harmful directions, says DAVID LAWRENCE.

CONSPIRACY THEORIES can be dangerous. At worst, they can be used to scapegoat target groups and feed pre-existing violent ideologies. Understanding developments in the conspiracy theory landscape is therefore vital.

Since early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic has dominated all other issues, giving rise to a prolific, conspiracy theory-driven protest movement that has held hundreds of demonstrations across the country. At its height, this loose movement rallied as many as 10,000 protestors in London, with people gathered from across traditional political divides to push the message that the disease was a smokescreen for the rollout of totalitarian controls and harmful vaccines. Three years on, much of energy that once held this loose coalition together has dissipated, and the protest movement has contracted significantly as lockdown measures have eased and public anxiety has waned. However, many activists have not readily relinquished their worldview, instead broadening their focus and adapting tactically to the changing landscape – and thus posing new risks for the rest of society.

TACTICAL SHIFT

For these activists, the realisation that years of energetic protest has made no tangible impact on policy has sapped enthusiasm for public demonstrations. For example this January, the Truth Pills channel on messaging app Telegram announced that it was ceasing activity for “the foreseeable future”. The channel was a key organiser and promoter of offline action. Its message explained: “we are disheartened with many campaigns we have run where people don't get involved or turn up!”

Electoral politics is also widely regarded as a non-starter. Anti-vaccine candidates, standing for platforms such as David Kurten's Heritage Party and the Freedom Alliance, have been repeatedly battered at the ballot box over the past two years. This has exacerbated an existing distrust in the electoral system and a wider loss of faith in traditional channels of participation.

There is also a growing dissatisfaction with online activism. Bans on many mainstream social media platforms have forced conspiracy theorists to migrate

to more laxly moderated alternatives, in particular Telegram, which has become a central hub for the scene. However, some now view using Telegram as counterproductive.

The January 2023 edition of *The Light* newspaper claimed that social media “has become an echo chamber, designed to pacify you with endless dopamine rewards and a continuous flow of new stories to digest, so that we never take focused action on anything.” In the words of the Truth Pills channel: “Until everyone puts down the phones we will not see change. Telegram is an echo chamber and has succeeded in herding us into a corner”.

One outcome of this malaise has been an emphasis on offline community building over public outreach, in the hope of forming a cohesive society away from the mainstream. For example, HOPE Sussex Community Hub was founded by Matt and Sadie Single, once leading figures in the British National Party (BNP), to cater for their “community of freedom-loving people”.

In July, the group held an alternative “Freedom Music Festival”. More worryingly, it has also encouraged parents to remove children from mainstream schools in favour of learning an alternative, conspiratorial curriculum at the HOPE Sussex site in Netherfield, East Sussex. According to report in *The Times* newspaper, “obstructive” staff members blocked Ofsted from inspecting the site.

The conspiratorial scene is fractious, however, and such community building efforts are fragile. In September, the radical anti-vaccine group Alpha Team Assemble (ATA), which had helped raise funds and construct school buildings for HOPE Sussex, announced that it would have “nothing further to do” with the project.

ATA explained: “Serious safety and security issues we have raised and have been ignored, and we have had insults thrown back at us for trying to address these issues.” Nonetheless, ATA has since attempted to rally volunteers for “a large-scale refurbishment that will be turned into a community law court, a home education hub, an activities centre, a cafe, residential space and a grow space”.

While such projects are likely doomed to failure, the fact that conspiratorial communities are making concerted efforts to detach themselves from mainstream society could pave the way for further polarisation.

BROADENING FOCUS

Over 2022, the UK’s loose COVID-denial movement increasingly drew energy from other issues that could be absorbed into its overarching narrative: a narrative about an elite cabal or “New World Order” (NWO) pulling the strings of world events.

Conspiracy theories tend to revolve around global events and upheavals, and so it was unsurprising that the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February last year attracted much attention. Conspiracy theorists believe the war is a diversion from a larger, more sinister global plot and/or the trigger for an intentional, global economic crisis. Conspiratorial thinking is rooted in an instinctive distrust of mainstream narratives, and so the broad condemnation of Putin’s actions has engendered some pro-Russian sympathies, with the

Ukrainian establishment regarded as stooges of a “globalist” plot.

Another focus is climate change denial, a longstanding tradition that has received renewed attention as governmental and transnational counter-measures have been introduced. Many of those who view COVID-19 as a tool for global control also view climate change in similar terms, predicting the use of “climate lockdowns” or other extreme solutions as a guise to usher in global communism, a depopulation programme and other nefarious outcomes. The government’s target of net zero carbon emissions has been interpreted as a mechanism to impoverish the masses, and particular horror swirls around the notion that the public will be forced to eat insect protein.

In recent months, traffic regulation plans have sparked a flurry of activity among activists, in particular a proposed plan in Oxford seen as a step towards confining the public in their homes or in “zones”, similar to *The Hunger Games*. The plan attracted the ire of the Not Our Future (NOF) campaign, which warned that “the draconian and destructive response to COVID-19” and the “NetZero energy crisis” are “deliberate steps” towards “a new Dark Age”.

In January this year, NOF rallied dozens of activists to leaflet Oxford, and the town also endured the regular visits of Piers Corbyn, a central figure in the UK’s anti-vaccine protest movement. Local politicians have reported a deluge of abuse, including death threats.

Reflecting trends in the US, there has also been a noticeable uptick of anti-LGBT+, and in particular anti-trans, prejudice among the conspiratorial milieu. The so-called “trans agenda” is perceived as a means for brainwashing populations and encouraging “unnatural” treatments, but also for the “grooming” of children, echoing persistent homophobic and transphobic tropes.

In the UK, longstanding conspiracy theories revolve around the alleged mass abuse of children at the hands of a secret, elite Satanic cabal, tropes that have been revitalised via the spread of QAnon. Such notions bleed into far-right conspiracy theories alleging a plot to corrupt society through progressive causes, in part by “sexualising” children and supposedly normalising paedophilia.

This shift was most visible in the vitriolic campaign against Drag Queen Story Hour. This campaign has been a major point of focus for UK conspiracy theorists.

Over 2022, links continued to tighten between a number of conspiracist outfits and the organised far right. For example, ATA leader Danny Glass attended meetings of the fascist Independent Nationalist Network, and David Clews of Unity News Network addressed the Scottish conference of Patriotic Alternative, a group run by one of the UK’s best-known neo-nazis. There are many other examples of such crossover.

The UK’s conspiracy theory scene is amorphous and volatile, and therefore difficult to predict. However, it seems clear that it will not simply disappear as pandemic lockdowns fade into memory, but will continue to adapt and develop in new and potentially more harmful directions.

CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

David Icke
Photo: Elekes Andor



DAVID ICKE

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

David Icke is arguably the UK's most famous conspiracy theorist and antisemite. He remains a highly significant figure in the international conspiratorial milieu, having garnered a new prominence in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

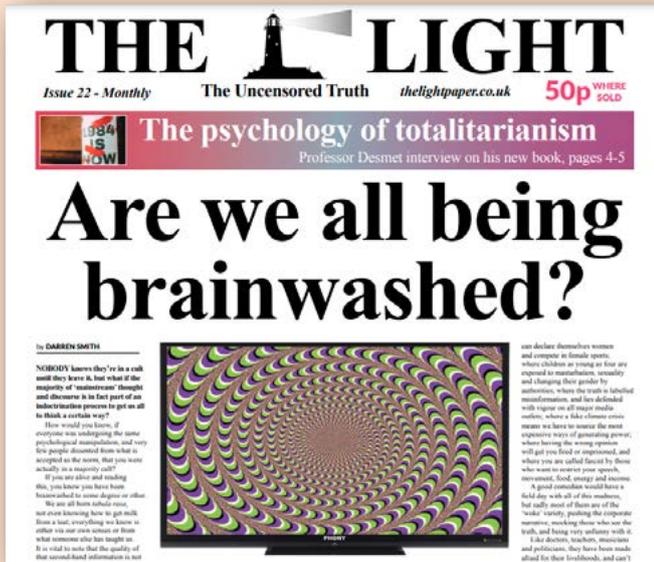
Icke's online reach has been hindered by bans from several mainstream social media platforms, but during 2022 he continued to promote his work through Instagram, where he has over 300,000 followers, and the messaging app Telegram. The size of his audience is concerning given his promotion of conspiratorial antisemitism, which continued unabated last year.

Icke's son, Gareth, also remained a prominent figure in the UK's conspiracy theory scene, hosting a show on his father's website and streaming service, "Ickonic". Last year, David Icke released yet another book and a two-part film titled *Albion*, drawing on New Age beliefs.

In November, Icke was barred by Dutch officials from entering the Netherlands. He had been due to address a protest in Amsterdam, but was barred on the basis that his presence could disrupt public order. The two-year ban appears to extend to the entire Schengen visa-free zone of Europe (26 countries in total).

2023 PROSPECTS

Icke will continue to spread COVID conspiracy theories and a barrage of other mistruths to his large audience. He was given a boost in January this year when his Twitter account was reinstated, having been banned in 2020 for COVID-19 disinformation. Now ageing, he will increasingly seek to delegate duties to his son Gareth.



THE LIGHT

CATEGORY: MAGAZINE

2022 SUMMARY

The Light is a monthly “truthpaper” launched during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. It remains a significant voice in the UK’s conspiracy theorist alternative media.

A January 2022 post in an internal chat claimed a huge 250,000 print run of the most recent issue, which was distributed by volunteers organised on Facebook and Telegram. However, editor Darren Nesbitt (aka Darren Smith) later claimed to have lost “hundreds of subscribers” in the first quarter of 2022, which he blamed on the economic crisis. However, it seems likely that interest in *The Light* has waned as public anxiety about the pandemic has lessened. Nonetheless, *The Light* continues to find a wide reach across the UK, with the paper often left alongside mainstream publications in newsagents, to be taken free of charge.

During the past year, *The Light* increasingly broadened its focus from pandemic theories to a wider “culture war” outlook, taking aim for example at an “insane woke collectivist ideology” and incorporating strong anti-trans prejudice into its output. It increasingly includes content on climate change denial.

Throughout 2022, *The Light* also continued to promote antisemites, including highly antisemitic books by the Holocaust denier John Hamer and the white supremacist Eustace Mullins in its “Recommended Reading” feature. In addition, it published a cartoon comparing vaccination efforts to Nazi death camp Auschwitz-Birkenau. The publication continued to carry articles by far-right figures, too, including the anti-Muslim activist Anne Marie Waters, who suggested that Islam is motivating gang rapes across Europe.

The Light remains a significant producer and promoter of conspiratorial content online. During 2022, its 20,000+ subscriber Telegram channel promoted content from the Holocaust denier Mark Collett, leader of the fascist group Patriotic Alternative, including a post railing against “replacement migration”.

The Uncensored Truth

2023 PROSPECTS

As with the wider conspiratorial milieu, *The Light* will likely continue to broaden its focus away from COVID-19. This may well mean veering into more overtly bigoted territory, a concerning prospect given its large circulation.

UNITY NEWS NETWORK

CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET



2022 SUMMARY

Unity News Network (UNN) is a conspiracy theory website headed by David Clews, a former Conservative and Labour councillor in Renfrewshire, Scotland.

Founded in 2018 by Clews and Carl Pearson, who was then UKIP’s Scottish youth leader, UNN gained a sizeable audience spreading conspiracy theories about the pandemic during its height. At the time of writing, it has over 100,000 followers on Facebook, 36,000 on Twitter and almost 23,000 on Telegram, although it remains banned on YouTube.

UNN remains plugged into the conspiracy theory-driven protest movement, with Clews speaking at a “freedom” rally in Glasgow and hosting David Icke, Piers Corbyn and similar figures on his show during 2022. However, UNN has also adopted an increasingly extreme far-right outlook, focusing for example on a supposed “anti-white agenda”, describing the West as being in the grips of “cultural Marxist degeneracy”, and referencing the “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory.

In addition, Clews has established links to the organised far right, most notably speaking at the Scottish conference of the fascist Patriotic Alternative (PA) in October. PA later claimed that “his world view and ours overlap on many issues”. He also appeared on PA-related streams, and UNN hosted PA leaders, as well as figures from the PA-splinter group the Independent Nationalist Network (INN), on its own broadcast.

It is therefore unsurprising to find that the UNN chat on Telegram is swamped with open antisemitism, other forms of racism and far-right content more broadly.

2023 PROSPECTS

UNN appears to be on a trajectory towards ever more extreme positions.



CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

MICHAEL CHAVES (AKA MAD MIX)

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Conspiracy theorist and anti-vaccine campaigner Michael Chaves took an increasingly active role in the opposition to vaccines towards the end of 2021, leading protests outside the homes of celebrities such as Jeremy Vine and Dr Hilary Jones for their role in promoting the vaccine programme.

He diversified his campaigns in 2022, taking a lead role in the disruptive protests outside Drag Queen Story Hour events at libraries and even attempting to enter to conduct a “citizen’s arrest” of the performers. In September, he recorded himself visiting hotels to investigate what he believed were “army units disguised as refugees” staying within.

2023 PROSPECTS

As with some of his peers, Chaves appears to be casting around for a new campaign that would justify his desire for aggressive protests and energise his supporters, but it remains to be seen whether he will find one this year.



JAMES DELINGPOLE

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

James Delingpole, the former editor of Breitbart London and ex-*Telegraph* columnist, has become an increasingly important figure in the conspiracy theory scene via his podcast, the Delingpod. He describes himself as having “woken up” to a wide range of extreme conspiratorial beliefs via the COVID-19 pandemic.

Delingpole’s guests in 2022 included a wide range of toxic figures from the world of politics and the conspiracy theory scene, including Holocaust denier Ole Dammegard, misogynist influencer Andrew Tate and the MAGA influencer Jack Posobiec. In December 2022, Delingpole hosted Conservative MP Andrew Bridgen, who expounded conspiracy theories around the COVID-19 vaccine and was later suspended by his party for comparing the rollout of the vaccine to the Holocaust.

2023 PROSPECTS

Delingpole’s embrace of increasingly antisemitic conspiracy theories will not alienate his core fanbase, but might eventually affect his work for *The Spectator* and association with other less extreme conspiracy peddlers.

RICHIE ALLEN**CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR****2022 SUMMARY**

Throughout 2022, the conspiracy theorist Richie Allen continued daily broadcasts of his longstanding online show, which functions as a platform for a variety of conspiracy theorists, including prominent Holocaust deniers and antisemites.

Allen continued to exploit the pandemic, hosting figures associated with the UK's anti-vaccine movement, such as Michael Chaves (aka Mad Mix). Other guests on Allen's show included the former leader of the Brexit Party, Catherine Blaiklock, as well as David Kurten, leader of the Heritage Party, the antisemite Max Igan, and Mark Collett, a well-known neo-Nazi and Holocaust denier who currently leads Patriotic Alternative. Allen also hosted the Islamist hate preacher Anjem Choudary on two occasions.

Allen is now banned on many mainstream social media platforms, although in November his Twitter account was reinstated, having been removed in July 2021.

2023 PROSPECTS

Allen will continue to provide one of the biggest online platforms for conspiracy theorists and conspiratorial antisemites in the UK.



Richie Allen
Photo:
Facebook

**PIERS CORBYN****CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST****2022 SUMMARY**

Piers Corbyn, the conspiracy theorist and older brother of former Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, gained national notoriety as a key organiser of the UK's anti-vaccine protest movement shortly after pandemic-related lockdowns began in 2020. He remained active in 2022, but increasingly broadened his focus away from COVID-19 and onto other issues, reflecting a wider shift in the conspiracy theory-oriented protest movement.

Corbyn continued to head protests across the country, generating press coverage in the process. Notably, in February he addressed a rally near the Houses of Parliament, after which members of the crowd abused the Labour leader Keir Starmer, who had to be bundled into a police car.

In May, Corbyn contested the Faraday ward in Southwark, London, in the local elections but received just 3% (200) of the votes, coming ninth of 12 candidates. The handful of other candidates for his party, Let London Live, received similarly paltry results.

Prior to the pandemic, Corbyn was best known for his denial of human-caused climate change and he increasingly returned to climate-related issues throughout 2022. This included regularly travelling to Oxford to protest a traffic regulation scheme, which he described as "tyrannical". Corbyn was also involved in the protests against "Drag Queen Story Hour" (detailed elsewhere in this report).

He continued to find himself in legal difficulties, receiving fines for breaching COVID-19 regulations at rallies during lockdown.

2023 PROSPECTS

Despite his age, Corbyn shows few signs of slowing and he is likely to continue to travel around the country in the hope of spreading news about a supposed "New World Order". However, enthusiasm for his campaigns among the broader conspiratorial milieu has dissipated since the height of the pandemic.

CONSPIRACY THEORISTS

UK COLUMN

CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET



2022 SUMMARY

UK Column is a longstanding and significant voice in the UK’s conspiracy theorist alternative media, producing video content, including livestreams, as well as articles and offline meetings.

The site received a considerable boost during the COVID-19 pandemic and has significant areas of overlap with the far right. For example, Drag Queen Story Hour became a regular feature of its output, in step with a broader far right backlash against the events, which UK Column presented as a deliberate plot to “brainwash” children. UK Column also produced content promoting various far-right conspiracy ideologies, such as the “Cultural Marxism” theory, and even the “Kalgigi Plan”, a variant of the “White Genocide” conspiracy theory that alleges that a sinister plot is underway to wipe out white Europeans.

In September, commissioning editor Alex Thomson returned to Patriotic Weekly Review, Patriotic Alternative (PA) leader Mark Collett’s show. He also gave an interview to the Independent Nationalists Network, a marginal PA splinter, and appeared on the show of Jason Köhne (aka No White Guilt), an American white nationalist.

In addition, alongside founder Brian Gerrish and editorial team member David Scott, Thomson again appeared on the show of British white nationalist Colin Robertson (aka Millennial Woes) in December.

2023 PROSPECTS

The site will likely remain popular among conspiracy theorists and the far right alike.



JACK'D

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

JACK'D is a fringe, conspiracy theory-oriented project run by Nick Cotton (aka Unwashed), an antisemite and former associate of Patriotic Alternative (PA).

JACK'D is a rebrand of Scum Media, a project Cotton launched with Lucy Brown, a former aide to Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). JACK'D has continued to focus on the COVID-19 conspiracy protest movement, regularly advertising street protests and events, while maintaining links to the organised far right, in particular the Independent Nationalist Network, a fringe PA splinter.

Cotton also continues to spend much of his time feuding with other far-right figures, in particular his former PA comrades.

2023 PROSPECTS

JACK'D will continue to be an irrelevance.



Nick Cotton (AKA Unwashed)



ALPHA TEAM ASSEMBLE

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION / NETWORK

2022 SUMMARY

Alpha Team Assemble (ATA), previously known as Alpha Men Assemble, is a radical anti-vaccine group that emphasises confrontational direct action.

Founded by activists who had grown disillusioned with the UK's street protest movement, ATA received much media coverage early in 2022 for holding combat training sessions and issuing worrying statements of intent, including promising a “global war against governments”.

Figures associated with the group were present when an aggressive mob hurled abuse at Keir Starmer at a protest near Parliament in February, causing the Labour leader to be bundled into a police car.

Danny Glass, a leading ATA figure and former Royal Fusilier, maintained his links to the Independent Nationalist Network (INN), a marginal fascist splinter of Patriotic Alternative, including attending INN meetings. Like INN, ATA activists also jumped upon the campaign against Drag Queen Story Hour, promoting and attending protests.

The group was further involved in the HOPE Sussex Community Hub, an attempt to establish a “community of freedom-loving people”, promoting home education, survivalism and holding its own music festival, a project in which Matt and Sadie Single (both previously members of the British National Party) were leading figures. However, in September ATA announced that it would have “nothing further to do with HOPE Sussex”, claiming that “serious safety and security issues we have raised and have been ignored, and we have had insults thrown back at us for trying to address these issues”.

2023 PROSPECTS

The energy that drove ATA at the beginning of 2022 has somewhat dissipated, and the group lacks a sense of direction. Glass recently made a call for volunteers to work on “a large-scale refurbishment that will be turned into a community law court, a home education hub, an activities centre, a cafe, residential space and a grow space” for their “community”. Whether this turns out to be yet another pipe dream remains to be seen.

Richard Lumby (left) and Danny Glass (right)

KEEP TALKING

CATEGORY: DISCUSSION GROUP

2022 SUMMARY

Keep Talking is a small conspiracy theory discussion group that holds monthly meetings in London, headed by the conspiracist Ian

Fantom and Holocaust denier, Nick Kollerstrom.

Finding a new regular venue in Vauxhall, the group hosted a variety of conspiracy theorists, including David Shayler, a former MI5 agent-turned-9/11 “truther” who has declared himself the Messiah.

The group suffered a setback in December when a planned meeting set to host Alison Chabloz, the musician and convicted antisemite, was cancelled after a public outcry, with the venue subsequently labelling her a “repugnant human being”.

2023 PROSPECTS

Keep Talking will continue to hold small meetings for conspiracy theorists and Holocaust deniers, although adverse attention means it cannot operate as freely as it once did.

Nick Kollerstrom
Photo:
YouTube



CONSERVATIVE WOMAN

CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET

EDITOR: KATHY GINGELL

2022 SUMMARY

The misleadingly-titled Conservative Woman is an online conspiracy theory-oriented website with predominantly male contributors. It attracts around one million monthly views of its anti-immigration, anti-vaccine and general conspiracy theory content.

Among the lowlights of its content in 2022 was an article from commentator James Delingpole claiming that AIDS and HIV were a “scam effectively concocted by Big Pharma [...] to push unnecessary, expensive and dangerous medical treatments”, and another describing Drag Queen Story Hour events as having a “Sinister Marxist agenda” and applauding disruptive protests at the events.

2023 PROSPECTS

Conservative Woman will remain an important hub for reactionary conspiracy theorists.



FALLING DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

Exclusive polling commissioned by HOPE not hate reveals apparent disturbing levels of conspiratorial beliefs among the young and other sectors of society, writes NICK LOWLES.

A FRIGHTENINGLY HIGH number of people appear to believe in extreme conspiracy theories, according to polling commissioned by HOPE not hate.

Results from a massive 20,000 person poll, conducted by FocalData for HOPE not hate, found that 34% of people claim to definitely or probably believe that “there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together”, while 30% – or almost one in three of us – said they believed that “parts of European cities are under the control of Sharia Law and are no go zones for non-Muslims”.

Alarming, 12% also claim to definitely or probably agreed with the statement that “the official account of the Nazi Holocaust is a lie and the number of Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II has been exaggerated on purpose.”

If these figures are not bad enough, the political and demographic breakdown of views is even more stark. Younger people, those with more extreme political views, minorities and those who consider themselves disadvantaged in society are all more likely to believe in conspiracy theories than others in society.

Polling views on conspiracy theories is always difficult, as some people may be encountering the conspiracy for the first time on the questionnaire, and it is impossible to discern how seriously all respondents are considering the questions. However, the size of the poll – at over 20,000 people – adds a robustness to the results. The differences in results between the different questions also suggest that respondents are considering each one separately.

With those who are more distrustful of authority and the mainstream media being more likely to claim to believe in conspiracy theories, it would seem important to remember that these people have a general openness to challenge orthodox opinion rather than viewing their support for conspiracy theories in isolation.

CONSPIRACY BELIEFS

Self-perceptions of disadvantage, which is now increasingly aligned to belief in cultural (anti-woke) rather than economic disadvantage, is emerging as the new faultline in society.

Almost two in five people (38%) who strongly feel that they are disadvantaged in society also claim to believe the official account of the Nazi Holocaust is a lie, while 62% believe that “there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together.” Half of these voters believe “Globalist elites are encouraging immigration into Europe as part



RABBIT HOLE



“

If anything, the support for some conspiracies has actually increased

”

Jewish people have an unhealthy control over the world's banking system



Parts of many European cities are under the control of Sharia Law and are 'no-go' zones for non-Muslims



The official account of the Nazi Holocaust is a lie and the number of Jews killed by the Nazis during World War II has been exaggerated on purpose



Globalist elites are encouraging immigration into Europe as part of a plot to weaken European identity



Regardless of who is officially in charge of governments and other organisations, there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together



The threat of climate change is being exaggerated by Governments and the media in order to control our lives



■ Definitely true
 ■ Probably true
 ■ Neither true or false
■ Probably false
 ■ Definitely false
 ■ Don't know

of a plot to weaken European identity” with just 21% believing this to be untrue.

Opinions are even worse among the 6% of people who say that they are “very likely” to vote for the Brexit Party successor, the Reform Party. Almost two-thirds (63%) definitely or probably “there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together” and 64% similarly believe “Globalist elites are encouraging immigration into Europe as part of a plot to weaken European identity.”

Over a third of “very likely” Reform Party voters (36%) claim that the official account of the Nazi Holocaust is definitely or probably is a lie.

ANTISEMITISM AND CONSPIRACIES

Depressingly, there is a strong belief in antisemitic conspiracies among Muslims. Two in five of Muslims (42%) in our poll claim to believe that “Jewish people have an unhealthy control over the world's banking system” and 29% definitely or probably believe that the official account of the Holocaust is a lie.

It should be pointed out that according to our poll, Muslims have an above average propensity to believe in conspiracy theories generally. Over half (53%) believe that “there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together” and 37% think that the threat of climate change is being exaggerated by governments and media in order to control our lives.

Other minority groups are also more predisposed to believe in some conspiracy theories. Half of the 621 Black or Black British people polled believe the notion that “there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together”, while 23% believe the official account of the Holocaust to be a lie.

Age is also a determinate in belief in conspiracy theories: young people are much more likely to believe in conspiracies than older people. While 22% of 18-24 year olds thought it was “definitely” or “probably true” that the official account of the Holocaust was a lie, only 3% of those aged over 65 thought the same. And of these, only 1% thought it was definitely the case.

Even if it is difficult to gauge whether all of those who agreed with the Holocaust statement genuinely believe it, the results indicate a worrying disregard for the severity of the issue.

Likewise, while 42% of young people claim to believe that “there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together”, only 24% of over-65s thought the same.

OVERLAPPING CONSPIRATORIAL VIEWS

The one conspiratorial statement we tested where there was no difference in opinion between young and old was the idea that “parts of European cities are under the control of Sharia Law and are no go zones for non-Muslims”. This is clearly reflective of the unease many older people have towards Muslims in Britain. Over two-fifths (43%) of over-65s think Islam is incompatible with the British way of life, compared to just 17% among 18-24 year olds and 29% amongst the population as a whole.

There is also a clear overlap between support for conspiratorial views and an authoritarian mindset. Of the 27% of people in our poll who preferred “having a strong and decisive leader who does not have to bother with Parliament or elections”, compared to a system of liberal democracy with elections and a multi-party system, 29% believed that Jewish people had a unhealthy control over the world’s banking system, 42% definitely or probably believed that some parts of European cities were under “Sharia Law” and were no-go areas for non-Muslims, while 24% thought the official view of the Holocaust was a lie.

Twice as many believed “there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together” than did not believe it, and more of these people believed that the threat of climate change was being exaggerated by governments and media in order to control our lives than disbelieved it.

THE PANDEMIC

We witnessed an increase in the support for conspiracy theories during the COVID-19 pandemic, but any hope that this would decline as the world moves on has not been borne out with our polling. If anything, the support for some conspiracies has actually increased.

It is easy to dismiss such beliefs as daft and inconsequential, but a conspiratorial mindset encourages distrust in authority, in science and in mainstream media, and can undermine a cohesive society. Beliefs in such conspiracies can easily act



as a gateway to extremism and in turn feed violent ideologies.

Another issue evident in our polling is that many current conspiracies transcend ideologies, so you can see people who have very progressive views on many issues agreeing with certain conspiracies that are supported by people with vastly different political views.

A third of people, 34%, who say that they are “very likely” to vote Conservative if there was an election today, believe that “there is a single group of people who secretly control events and rule the world together”. A similar number, 37%, of “very likely” Labour voters, think the same. Two thirds of “very likely” Reform Party voters think the same, as do half of “very like” Green voters.

Likewise, 35% of “very likely” Green Party voters claim believe that the official account of the Nazi Holocaust is definitely or probably a lie, a view shared by 25% of people who would very likely support a new anti-immigrant political party led by Nigel Farage.

However, there are differences as well. Only 1% of people “very unlikely” to support a new political party led by Farage agree that the official account of the Nazi Holocaust is a lie, with a further 2% thinking it is “probably true”. Conversely, 86% think the claim is false.

Worryingly, the adoption of some conspiratorial views by seemingly more mainstream commentators and social media influencers, such as Kanye West and Andrew Tate, has introduced many – especially the young – to ideas that were previously only found on the extreme fringes of society.

While very few of those who follow such social media influencers will go on to become political extremists, many go on to become more tolerant, or even more susceptible, to ever-more extreme conspiracies. And that is a threat to us all.

20,038 people were surveyed by FocalData between 11 December 2022 and 12 January 2023. Nationally representative weights applied to age, sex, region, ethnicity and education

ANTI-MIGRANT ACTIVISM



Photo: Twitter /
@wilkieleaks

FAR-RIGHT HARASSMENT OF MIGRANT ACCOMMODATION DOUBLES IN 2022

By **SAFYA KHAN-RUF**

IN THE LAST year alone, anti-migrant activists have visited accommodation housing migrants and asylum seekers 253 times, a 102% increase on 2021.

Four migrants drowned in the English Channel just before Christmas. The news made headlines in the British press for a day or two, but these were not the first desperate people to lose their life while trying to get to British shores last year, and are unlikely to be the last. The shortest distance across the English Channel is only 32 km. The crossings are dangerous, with strong tides and unpredictable weather.

While this route has been used to smuggle people across the channel for centuries, the scale has increased in recent years as British and French authorities have clamped down on ferry, road and rail routes. More than 45,000 people crossed the English Channel in small boats in 2022. This is a 60% increase from the year before and the highest number since these figures began to be collected in

2018.¹ Government figures are released daily showing updated statistics of cross channel migration but for a small group of people, this data is untrustworthy and they have decided to take matters in their own hands.

The number of asylum seekers arriving in the UK is a fraction of those who seek sanctuary elsewhere in Europe, and asylum seekers remain a very small proportion of all migration to the UK. Nonetheless, migration has been a central issue for the British far right and activists have obsessed over the issue for decades, and an increased focus on asylum from the political mainstream and media in recent years has seen them adopt new methods, utilising technology to create content designed to incite hatred and stir up resentment.

Throughout the last tumultuous political year, with three prime ministers in 2022 alone, fear and anger about asylum has consistently been whipped up. The Home Secretary post changed hands from Priti Patel, who sought to enact the plan to export asylum seekers to Rwanda, to Suella Braverman who said her



'dream' was a front-page Telegraph story about asylum seekers being sent to Rwanda, to Grant Shapps who's six-day tenure made him the shortest serving home secretary in British political history and back to Suella Braverman who then said asylum-seekers were staging an "invasion" of the South Coast of England. The rhetoric emanating from the government has been irresponsible and only fan the flames of anti-migrant sentiment.

All the while, the Home Office have failed to address a rapidly growing backlog of asylum cases or address the shortage of housing for asylum seekers, meaning that growing numbers of asylum seekers have been offered "contingency accommodation" which includes hotels or B&Bs. This has attracted widespread, and often irresponsible, coverage by the mainstream media over the past year. While campaigners have continuously highlighted the dire conditions and inappropriateness of using such accommodation, the sums of money to house asylum seekers in hotels has resulted in endless headlines. This rhetoric has been gleefully seized upon by the far right, whose own framing of these events is largely dissimilar from that of the government and large parts of the media. And within this broader anti-migrant climate, we have seen a growing threat from committed far-right activists and people radicalized by their extreme propaganda.

ANTI-MIGRANT ACTIVISM

Anti-migrant activists and groups have spent the last few years 'patrolling' the South coast in the hunt for migrants or to film the RNLI ships bringing in rescued migrants. Chris Johnson, one of the most determined anti-migrant activists monitoring the channel crossings, posts near daily videos of arriving migrants rescued by the RNLI on his Facebook page. His videos are widely shared across a broad range of anti-migrant channels and profiles.

Dover has attracted more mainstream anti-immigration campaigners such as Nigel Farage as well as a coterie of less known far-right activists armed with their phones. There have also been several demonstrations in Dover protesting the influx of migrants, a recent one being on 4 June 2022 which was attended by the neo-Nazi group Patriotic Alternative, as well as anti-migrant activists Steve Laws, Nigel Marcham and members of Britain First. While the scale remains relatively small, the online footage of the event had a wider impact. Anti-migrant activists also regularly film and protest at the accommodation and nearby processing centres housing newly arrived migrants. While we can track the production of these videos back to 2016, there has been a sharp upsurge in the last year as far-right actors have ridden on a wave of fear-mongering about asylum in the mainstream.

HARASSMENT AT HOTELS

In the last year alone, anti-migrant activists have visited accommodation housing people seeking asylum 253 times, a 102% increase on 2021. These activists show up to hotels, harass staff, security and any presumed 'foreign' person around the hotel while toting their camera and then post the videos online. The visits are widely shared on anti-migrant groups from Facebook to Telegram to Twitter.

"Look at this beautiful hotel closed to the public, housing illegal migrants, when our homeless veterans are on the streets and there is a cost of living crisis going on in this country."

This justification is a constant refrain in anti-migrant activist videos over the past year. The influencers attempt to generate outrage by comparing the accommodation provided to "foreigners" with the situation of homeless British people, especially military veterans or speak about the cost of living crisis.

By far, the biggest perpetrator of this harassment in 2022 was Amanda Smith (aka Yorkshire Rose) who visited migrant accommodation 124 times last year, a 143% increase from the year before. Posing as a concerned local reporter, she tries to coax migrants into giving her more details about their crossing into the country or how long they've been here. While she attempts to keep a veneer of civility, her visits have at times ended in her screaming "traitor" and verbally abusing staff and security.

Different individuals employ varying strategies when approaching migrant accommodation. Alan Leggett (AKA Active Patriot) is routinely belligerent and rude to the staff. On one occasion, he managed to enter and harass asylum seekers in the canteen, repeatedly calling them "fighting age men". In another he accosted a child in the hotel, asking him details of his travels. He's visited contingency accommodation sites at least 38 times in 2022, also an increase on the previous year.

Paul Golding, leader of Britain First, on the other hand is soft-spoken when he attempts to interview asylum seekers. He asks if they are "being taken care of properly" and pretends to empathise with the residents. Seeking to gain political capital from the issue, Britain First have carried out 81 visits in 2022, a 53% increase from the year before. Similarly, the far-right 'journalists' of Voice of Wales visited 15 sites across Wales in 2022, producing online content at each one.

Meanwhile, members of the neo-Nazi group Patriotic Alternative rarely interact with asylum seekers or staff in hotels and having only made 14 visits in 2022. Instead, they drop banners with messages such as "White girls are not Fair Game" in front of the hotel, and leaflet the local area, to intimidate residents and in an attempt to stir up local opposition with messages like "we are full".

Despite the different methods, all the activists and groups have one thing in common: the videos and images taken are posted on their social media feeds and are used to portray themselves as defenders of British citizens. It is not surprising the number of visits have increased over the last year, as social media numbers show the videos are often the most popular content these individuals have posted, especially if they manage to drag the accommodation staff into an argument.

THE DOVER TERROR ATTACK

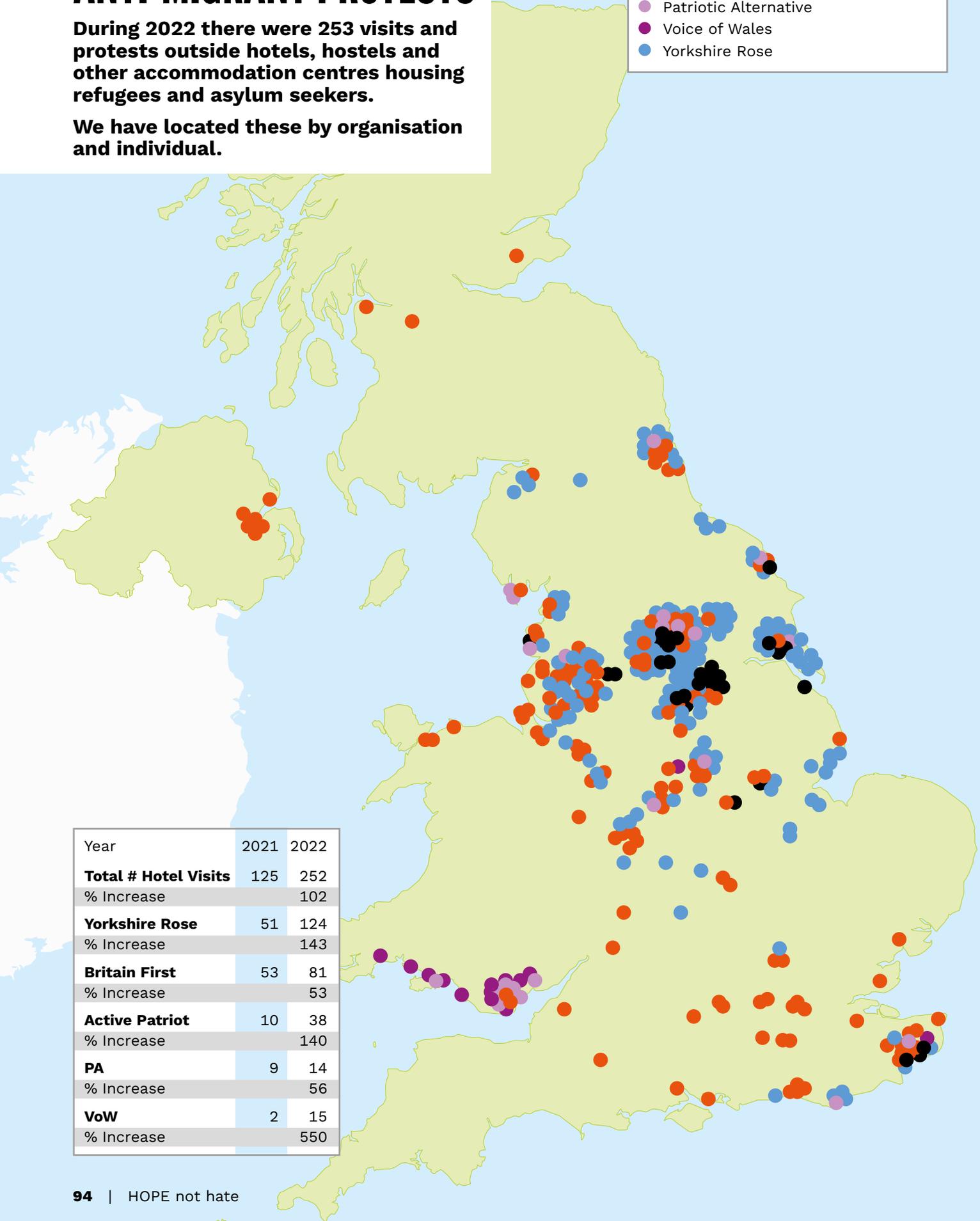
The anti-migrant content and rhetoric found online does not exist in a vacuum as the terrorist attack in Dover sadly proved. On 30 October 2022, a man named Andrew Leak drove to Dover and threw petrol bombs at the migrant-processing centre. HOPE not hate's

ANTI-MIGRANT PROTESTS

During 2022 there were 253 visits and protests outside hotels, hostels and other accommodation centres housing refugees and asylum seekers.

We have located these by organisation and individual.

- Active Patriot
- Britain First
- Patriotic Alternative
- Voice of Wales
- Yorkshire Rose



| Year | 2021 | 2022 |
|-----------------------------|------|------|
| Total # Hotel Visits | 125 | 252 |
| % Increase | | 102 |
| Yorkshire Rose | 51 | 124 |
| % Increase | | 143 |
| Britain First | 53 | 81 |
| % Increase | | 53 |
| Active Patriot | 10 | 38 |
| % Increase | | 140 |
| PA | 9 | 14 |
| % Increase | | 56 |
| VoW | 2 | 15 |
| % Increase | | 550 |



Doncaster migrant hotel banner drop. Photo: Yorkshire Rose / YouTube

archive of Andrew Leak’s now deleted Twitter account revealed a man who extensively consumed far-right material and was obsessed with a desire for violence against Muslims and migrants.

Andrew Leak may have acted alone but he had a long history of consuming far-right content and interacting with other extremists. On the morning of the attack, he tweeted, “Your children will feel the pain we will obliterate them Muslim children are now our target And there disgusting women will be targeted mothers and sisters is burn alive”. [sic]

Leak was an ardent follower of many anti-migrant “citizen journalists”. He replied to Alan Leggett (AKA Active Patriot) at least 73 times and mentioned him a total of 100 times. Other citizen journalists he engaged with online were Jeremy Davis (AKA Little Boats) and Amanda Smith (AKA Yorkshire Rose), whom he replied to 29 and 18 times respectively.

Importantly, his attack came at a time when demonisation and scapegoating of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees by the far right, government and elements within the media, is contributing to a toxic and dangerous climate. This rhetoric shapes hostile public opinion and encourages the far right at a time when violent extremism is at a high.

A TOXIC MIX

The combination of hotel harassment, mainstream hostile language, and inconsistent – and often

impractical – government policies on immigration have created a toxic mix online, encouraging extreme action and rhetoric. This is unlikely to improve in the coming year, especially with the ever-increasing anti-migrant content coming from the mainstream.

The rhetoric of the far right and the mainstream around migration are increasingly similar. Directing hate at Albanian nationals, branded as ‘criminals’, tropes about people claiming asylum as ‘freeloaders’, claims of Britain ‘swamped’ by an ‘invasion’ of migrants, and direct attacks on so called ‘activist lawyers’ have all come from the heart of power, are amplified by the press, and swiftly become focal points of far right activity. The increasing number of direct attacks from anti-migrant activists we have monitored over the last year is inseparable from how migration is being weaponized by more mainstream political actors and the press.

In a hostile climate, where people who are migrants and refugees have faced daily harassment from organised far-right political groups, we need to see far greater safeguarding and action to address the backlogs trapping people in unsuitable accommodation where they become targets for hate. Politicians and the media need to take real responsibility and drop their line of inflammatory language that incubates the far right.

NOTES

1. <https://www.bbc.com/news/explainers-53734793>

ANTI-MIGRANT AND ANTI-MUSLIM

BRITAIN FIRST

CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY

LEADER: PAUL GOLDING



2022 SUMMARY

Britain First is the best known and most active far-right political party in Britain. Throughout 2022, it undertook near weekly activities, including recruitment drives, harassment of asylum seekers in their accommodation and other stunts, while also being a home to criminals, racists and those with violent pasts.

The group demands much of its activists and as a result has a very rapid turnover. However, those who remain are often highly motivated and willing to travel for actions most weekends, meaning that while the group continues to be small in terms of active members, it has an outsized ability to negatively impact its target communities.

2022 was a mixed year for Britain First. While the group carried out numerous actions and moved into a new headquarters in Manchester, Paul Golding will no doubt be disappointed with its slow growth and mostly terrible electoral results. He also remains mired in an ongoing and bitter legal dispute with former deputy leader, Jayda Fransen.

Since successfully re-registering as a political party in 2021, Britain First has sought to use local elections to build capacity at a local and regional level. The first big test came at the May elections, in which it stood just three candidates, all of whom were exposed by HOPE not hate for antisemitism, conspiracy theorising and past membership of fascist groups.

The group's key focus was Salford (Walkden North ward), where chief of staff, Ashlea Simon, came second with 508 votes (21.6%), losing out to Labour's 51% showing. Simon once stated that "English people can't be black, English blood is white" and is a core figure in the anti-Muslim party. She was accompanied to the vote count by Andy Frain, a notorious football hooligan with a conviction for slashing the throat of an off-duty police officer. Her failure to capture the seat was hardly the "narrow" defeat that Britain First claimed, a fact that will be especially disappointing given the months of effort and resource channelled into the ward.

In Greenwich (Eltham Page ward), Nick Scanlon came sixth of seven, with 255 votes. Scanlon is an extremist who has cycled through a number of far-right groups, including the fascist BNP and the racial separatist group Generation Identity. He was also exposed in the local press for his vile racism during the campaign.

In Rhondda Cynon Taf (Brynna And Llanharan ward), Carl Burgess was beaten

handily by all of the other seven candidates, coming last. Clearly disappointed with the results, Britain First offered entertainingly conflicting narratives for its defeat: the failure in Eltham Page was due to the ward being “around 40% ethnic/immigrant populated”, while the problem with Brynna and Llanharan was that “it is 100% Welsh, no immigration, no crime, no problems or issues.”

In June, Britain First mounted a substantial election campaign for the Wakefield by-election. Despite frequent campaigning, Ashley Simon managed a poultry 1.1% of the vote, a huge embarrassment to her and the party. During the campaign, Golding was arrested and the “Battle Bus” was seized for a period. All charges were later dropped.

Outside of elections, Britain First’s most animating issue continues to be cross-Channel migration and asylum seeker accommodation. In 2022, it visited 81 locations housing migrants and asylum seekers, a 53% increase on 2021. It also leafleted areas near migrant accommodation, most notably in Linton-on-Ouse, Yorkshire, where the group ran a campaign designed to play on local concerns. Replicating its previous “mosque invasions”, Britain First filmed outside hotels and even entered accommodation on numerous occasions.

Its messaging throughout the year focused on painting asylum-seekers as potential terrorists or sexual predators. The group weaves this with Islamophobic narratives about a “Muslim takeover of Europe” and regularly refers to the “Great Replacement” – the racist conspiracy theory claiming that ethnic white populations are being demographically and culturally replaced with non-white populations via mass migration.

2023 PROSPECTS

Britain First is the best known and one of the most active far-right groups in the UK, a fact unlikely to change in 2023.

Despite poor results at last year’s local elections, it is already ramping up for the May 2023 elections and has stated it will stand up to 50 candidates. If it reaches anything close to this number, most will be paper candidates. The group has, however, already started campaigning in its key areas of Salford, Greater Manchester and Dartford, south London. While Britain First is very unlikely to win any seats, it is working to a longer term strategy, putting down roots in key areas and building its supporter base, which can and will cause harm in the communities it targets.

However, Britain First’s unrealistic expectations of its activists mean that it is unlikely to see rapid growth over the next year.



ANTI-MIGRANT AND ANTI-MUSLIM

**STEPHEN LENNON
(AKA TOMMY ROBINSON)****CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR****2022 SUMMARY**

Stephen Lennon remains the best known far-right extremist in Britain. However, his influence has been in decline for years and despite attempting a comeback in 2022, the events he organised only served to show how far he has fallen. He remains dogged by legal, health and personal problems and now splits his time between the UK and Tenerife.

Lennon continues to have a significant following across social media, with over 150,000 subscribers on Telegram, 231,000 followers on Gettr, plus has already amassed over 65,000 followers on Twitter since he was allowed back onto the platform in October. However, he is widely disliked and regarded as a grifter by much of the wider UK far right, so often targets his content to an international, primarily US-based, audience.

In April, Lennon joined the anti-Muslim For Britain party and called on his sizeable email list to join and “build a political force”. However, his promise to tour the country to drum up support never materialised, and the move proved controversial among sections of its membership. As such, Lennon remained an independent activist for the rest of the year.

The primary focus for Lennon in 2022 was what he calls “Muslim grooming” in Telford, Shropshire. Over the year he released four documentaries about the issue via his media outlet Urban Scoop. He also staged three demonstrations in the town centre, screening his films in January, May and September.

Lennon will be bitterly disappointed with the performance of the documentaries, which resulted in almost no traction beyond the confines of the far right. The series of demonstrations he held were also woefully attended, with the May and September events attracting just 3-400 people. This failed campaign highlights Lennon’s decline from the days when he could attract thousands to the streets, and demonstrates the damage that his deplatforming from mainstream social media platforms has had on his reach and impact.

SHIFT TOWARDS CONSPIRACY THEORIES, ANTISEMITISM AND TRANSPHOBIA

Lennon also continued to spread medical misinformation, anti-vaccine and COVID-19 conspiracy theories throughout 2022, and become an important peddler of transphobic content, vocally supporting the protests opposing Drag Queen Story Hour events across the UK.

Towards the end of 2022, Lennon made a notable ideological change when he adopted antisemitism more overtly than he had ever done before. In reaction to the Kanye West antisemitism scandal, Lennon



published an article on the Urban Scoop website titled *Tommy's Statement: The Jewish Question*, which was full of conspiratorial antisemitism about supposed Jewish influence. The main part of the article was dedicated to proving why West's comments about Jewish control of the media and Hollywood were essentially true.

"[W]hy is there such an appetite to label or hate ALL Jews? It's a fair question. My take is this...

There are powerful Jewish people, claiming to be Zionists, who have their fingers on buttons of power in the entertainment industry, in big tech, in mainstream media, in the music industry, in Hollywood and in governments."

There was another section titled "Do Jews control the media?" where again he wrote: "There are many, many Jews in positions of high power and influence all over the world, especially in the USA, it's no secret. But why are they in positions of power?"

His answer was "that Jews (generally speaking, at least the white European Jews) have an average IQ of 110, so inevitably those Jews will rise to the top of corporations, of big business, of big tech, of news networks, in Hollywood, in government etc etc." The evidence for this assertion came from a racist pseudoscience website called "I.Q and Human Intelligence".

While Lennon has always been racist, he has overwhelmingly focused on Islamophobia and sought to avoid explicit and overt racism. This began to change a few years ago, when he started to openly rant against Black Lives Matter, a move that lost him friends and supporters, prompting him to quickly row back his comments. He has also always framed himself as a friend of the Jewish people and an ally in their supposed struggle with Islam and Muslims. However, after a decade of claiming he is not racist or antisemitic, Lennon has now openly embraced racial pseudoscience and conspiratorial antisemitism.

ONGOING LEGAL ISSUES

On 3 March 2021, Lennon declared himself bankrupt and said he was unable to pay his debts. He went on to lose a libel case brought against him by Jamal Hijazi, a young Syrian refugee who Lennon publicly smeared in 2018, wrongly portraying him as a violent thug. Although a High Court judge ordered Lennon to pay Hijazi £100,000 in damages as well as his legal costs, nothing has been paid over. On 20 January 2022, HOPE not hate announced that it was financially supporting creditors seeking to investigate Lennon's alleged bankruptcy claim, and would be providing evidence to support the investigation into his bankruptcy.

In the months that followed, a HOPE not hate investigation identified assets totalling as much as £3 million in property and businesses linked to Lennon,



including an enormous house in Bedfordshire. On 10 February, we then delivered a 200-page dossier to the Insolvency Practitioner looking into Lennon's bankruptcy, setting out the evidence that we believe showed Lennon's claim of bankruptcy was a fraud, designed simply to avoid paying Jamal Hijazi the damages and legal fees that were awarded against him last year.

Our research and the funding we provided to continue the investigation resulted in a series of additional costly court appearances for Lennon, including embarrassing appearances on the stand and further legal costs across 2022. Lennon spent much of the year distracted as he focused on dealing with his legal woes and attacking HOPE not hate. The investigation by the independent insolvency expert into his finances, using our research, is ongoing.

The research produced for the investigation formed some of the core arguments in (HOPE not hate CEO) Nick Lowles' book *Tommy: Politics, Drugs, Sex, Money* which was released in November. The book covered the whole of Lennon's political career and unearthed a series of damaging revelations, including his past life as a drug dealer, the multi-million pound business and property empire and the exploitation and abuse of women by Lennon and several of his key aides.

2023 PROSPECTS

Lennon is a severely diminished figure and his attempted comeback in 2022 was a categorical failure. He is a shadow of his former self and his influence and importance have continued to dwindle, despite his attempts to find new audiences within the conspiracy theory scene.

He will continue to publish documentaries via Urban Scoop in 2023, and is likely to focus more heavily on the issue of cross-Channel migration, after failing to get the reaction he had hoped for with his series about grooming.

However, despite his continued decline, it is important not to underestimate Lennon. He remains a big name within the international far right, is well resourced and has a large following across social media. He may not be able to attract large numbers to the streets as he once did, but he still has the ability to spread hate online and cause major issues within the communities he targets.

TEAM TOMMY

Stephen Lennon has a support group around him who do his research, run his social media platforms, conduct surveillance for him and attack his opponents. Here are the 12 most important of his supporters:

1. ADAM GREARY Known as 'Nem' within the movement, Greary has been with Lennon since his EDL days and runs his operation behind the scenes.

2. CRAIG FOWLER Better known as 'Jack Dawkins', Fowler is a hardline racist and very pro-Putin and co-runs Lennon's social media accounts

3. DANIEL THOMAS Known as 'Danny Tommo', Thomas has been lying low for the last nine months after being exposed as a woman beater, but remains a key part of Team Tommy

4. HEL GOWER For many years acted as Lennon's PA, foul-mouthed Gower is central to the operation to attack and smear his opponents within the movement

5. TONI COLLINS Better known as 'Ginger Toni', Collins is also involved in the attack operation against Lennon's opponents

6. SCOTT TOMLIN Operates under the name 'Danny Roscoe', Tomlin produces content for Lennon's Urban Scoop platform

7. ANDREW ROSS A bare knuckle fighter, Ross has acted as Lennon's personal bodyguard for the past two years

8. RICHARD INGRAM Former head of Veterans Against Terrorism, Ingram has been actively involved in Lennon's campaign against alleged groomers in Telford

9. PETER KEELEY A former MI5 operative inside the IRA, Keeley provides surveillance for Lennon

10. HEATHER SMITH Heather Smith is one of the Administrators of Lennon's Telegram channel

11. JONATHAN MILLER Miller has run Lennon's merchandising operation for the last four years, printing T-shirts as well as posting out Lennon's books

12. NICK PLEDGER Operates under the name Patriotic Crusader, Pledger amplifies Lennon's content online as well as attacking his opponents



HEARTS OF OAK**CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET****LEADER: PETER MCILVENNA****2022 SUMMARY**

Founded in February 2020, Hearts of Oak was originally presented as an alliance between far-right and libertarian activists, including Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), Carl Benjamin (aka Sargon of Akkad) and a number of former UKIP activists, including ex-leader Gerard Batten.

It is run by Peter McIlvenna, who does regular interviews for the group's YouTube channel, covering an array of topics but with a focus on anti-Muslim content, as well as opposing COVID-19 lockdown restrictions. He also pushes anti-LGBT+ content framed as opposition to the sexualisation of children.

In the past year, Hearts of Oak has produced videos with prominent US far-right figures including Brigitte Gabriel of the anti-Muslim organisation ACT! For America, Steve Bannon, Robert Spencer and Jack Posobiec. It also regularly hosts UK-based COVID-sceptics and high-profile domestic far-right figures, including Steve Laws and Paul Golding of Britain First.

McIlvenna remains closely associated with Stephen Lennon, who appeared on his show twice in 2022. He also attended Lennon's "Rape of Britain" demonstrations in Telford and his contempt of court hearing at the Royal Courts of Justice in London in May.

2023 PROSPECTS

While Hearts of Oak remains a tiny enterprise which has little impact on wider society, it has become an increasingly important network within the far right and brings together high profile figures from both sides of the Atlantic. Its brief attempt at organising public demonstrations seems over, but it will continue to produce regular content and is likely to grow its audience in 2023 due to its high profile guests.



Peter McIlvenna
Photo: YouTube

FOR BRITAIN**CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY****LEADER: ANNE MARIE WATERS****2022 SUMMARY**

On 13 July 2022, less than five years after its launch, the anti-Muslim party For Britain officially folded.

Leader Anne Marie Waters' unilateral decision to "cease operations" – against the wishes of much of the membership – came on the back of yet another round of dismal election results, a dwindling membership and internal rifts.

In April, the party was endorsed by Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), who exhorted his sizeable email list to join For Britain and "build a political force". However, Lennon's promise to tour the country to drum up support never materialised, and was controversial among sections of the membership.

In the May elections, For Britain targeted just 14 seats, less than a quarter of its 2021 candidates. Despite channelling its resources, it still failed to exceed just 50 votes in half of these areas. Waters hitched her hopes on her home ward of De Bruce, Hartlepool, where For Britain had won a council seat in 2019. However, she placed third with 203 votes (14.5%), a crushing blow after years spent attempting to ingratiate herself to the electorate. For Britain was also rejected in Epping Forest, where the party had also won a seat in 2019, with Eddy Butler, the party's elections strategist, gaining a derisory 11 votes.

Waters blamed such results on "the death of our democracy", but it was evident that her party was widely (and accurately) regarded as both racist and incompetent. Since its launch, HOPE not hate repeatedly exposed For Britain as being rife with extremists, including entire branches dominated by former British National Party (BNP) figures and fielding neo-nazis in elections. Exhausted and lacking a clear vision forward, Waters claims she will return to electoral politics "when the country is ready".

For now, she says she will "revisit" Sharia Watch, a tiny organisation she ran prior to For Britain, and will launch "a support service for victims of rape and sexual assault". However, aside from sporadic online content, there has been scant sign of her since her party's collapse.

So far the main beneficiary of For Britain's demise on the far right has been the British Democrats, which has scooped up many prominent former members, including Julian Leppert, who was For Britain's sole sitting councillor. Others have reformed as the North West Patriots, led by Gary Bergin, a former BNP candidate based in Birkenhead, although the group has achieved little meaningful activity thus far.

2023 PROSPECTS

None.

Anne Marie Waters



ANTI-MIGRANT AND ANTI-MUSLIM



Alan Ayling

4 FREEDOMSLIBRARY

CATEGORY: FORUM

2022 SUMMARY

4 Freedoms is a tiny online anti-Muslim discussion forum run by Alan Ayling (aka Alan Lake). The forum now has just a handful of regular posters, Ayling among them. Most chat rooms have fewer than 20 members. The forum underwent no developments of note in 2022, with membership still closed to new members.

2023 PROSPECTS

This tiny forum is now only used by a handful of people. As it is not accepting new members, there are unlikely to be any significant developments in 2022. It will continue to act more as an archive of anti-Muslim content and as a place for a long-term group of activists to keep in touch; it may well fall dormant.

GAVIN BOBY

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Gavin Bobby is a planning lawyer and self-styled “mosque buster” who founded The Law and Freedom Foundation to prevent planning applications for mosques. His website



currently claims that he has won 53 out of the 84 cases he has taken on. His involvement usually amounts to advising locals on tactics to oppose planning permission or change of use of a building into a place of worship.

In 2022 he claimed to have been involved in seven cases, contributing to the stopping of mosques in Bedford, Hillingdon and Brent, and failing to stop mosques in Pendle, Reigate, Harrogate and Cardiff.

Bobby also runs a small YouTube channel where he updates supporters on the progress of his campaigns as well as discussing a range of issues such as cross-Channel migration, grooming gangs and the demographic changes within the UK.

2023 PROSPECTS

While he is not as high profile as he once was, his activism has a tangible negative effect on Muslim communities in the UK and this will continue in 2023.



VOICE OF WALES

CATEGORY: MEDIA OUTLET

2022 SUMMARY

Voice of Wales is a far-right media outlet run by Dan Morgan and Stan Robinson. Mimicking the “journalistic” style of Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson), Voice of Wales creates a range of content including articles, videos, livestreams and posts on social media.

Since being permanently banned from YouTube in 2021, it now releases content via its own website and on minor platforms such as Gettr, where it has over 16,000 followers and Telegram, where it has a little over 4,500 subscribers. The group has become an increasingly significant threat in 2022, garnering a growing following within the far right. It also remains closely aligned with UKIP and attended Lennon’s “Rape of Britain” demonstrations in Telford.

In January, Morgan and Robinson were arrested for aggravated trespass while covering a small anti-vaccine protest at a vaccine centre. The case was taken to court in August, but was thrown out.

Over the past year, this small but dedicated group of activists has focused heavily on the issue of accommodation in Wales being used to house asylum seekers and migrants, publishing at least 15 videos taken at hotels across Wales.

Another regularly covered topic is climate change denial and opposition to the net zero target. Voice of Wales published a series of videos, outreach events and online seminars with Paul Burgess, the former “Spokesperson for the Environment” for the now defunct far-right party For Britain.

Voice of Wales has also increasingly focused on anti-LGBT+ content over the past year, and has thrown its weight behind the wider far-right opposition to Drag Queen Story Hour events around the country. The group also covered and supported the Public Child Protection Wales campaign against the Welsh government’s new relationship and sexuality education (RSE) curriculum, which Voice of Wales claimed is designed to sexualise children and promote homosexuality.

2023 PROSPECTS

Voice of Wales is becoming an increasingly prominent platform within the UK far right and looks set to grow further in 2023. Morgan and Robinson met with Jason Miller, CEO of the alt-tech social media platform Gettr, in November last year to discuss plans for collaboration. With the support of Miller and Gettr, the audience of Voice of Wales is likely to grow in the next 12 months, especially if Miller opens the door to high profile US figures.



STUDENTS AGAINST TYRANNY

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION / NETWORK

2022 SUMMARY

Students Against Tyranny (SAT) is run by James Harvey, a regular contributor to Voice of Wales. The group, which is essentially the student-focused arm of Voice

of Wales, was created following a crowdfunder that raised over £10,000 in 2021.

The group remains very small but is part of a network of local SAT Telegram channels across the UK.

In 2022, it organised a series of events/demonstrations on university campuses across the UK, covering a range of topics such as climate change denial, the dangers of a cashless society and for the supposed victims of vaccination.

In November, SAT held a small protest in London to call for justice for 12-year-old Lola Daviet, murdered by an Algerian immigrant in France, and seven-year-old Emily Jones, killed by an Albanian woman in Greater Manchester.

2023 PROSPECTS

Students Against Tyranny remains a tiny organisation but it is very active and has the backing of Voice of Wales. We are likely to see a large number of small events organised by SAT throughout the coming year, which will make it a more prominent name within the British far right.

ALAN LEGGETT (AKA ACTIVE PATRIOT)

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

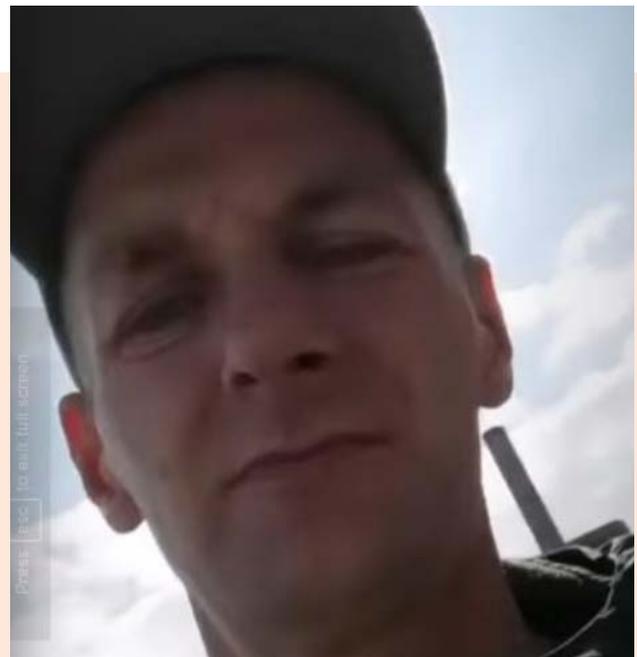
2022 SUMMARY

Alan Leggett (aka Active Patriot) continues to be a prominent anti-migrant activist. He has turned to a variety of activities over the years, from filming newly-arrived migrants in Dover to travelling abroad in an attempt to film migrants being “pushed back”.

The man from Grimsby has been to court numerous times. The most recent incident saw him banned from West Yorkshire towards the end of 2022. Leggett also made a “solemn promise” not to intimidate new arrivals and was banned from entering the Eastern and Western Docks in Dover in November 2021, during a Canterbury Crown Court hearing after the Port of Dover sought an injunction against his behaviour.

In December 2021 he released a documentary about “Muslim grooming gangs”, playing it on a portable screen at seven towns in the north of England, often in front of police stations. Audiences were tiny, but Leggett focused on filming his actions and his screen. This allowed him to generate a lot of content for his Telegram channel, which has subsequently been widely shared in far-right circles during 2022. Last year he also filmed himself at several demonstrations, including an anti-migrant and a “Start Rwanda Deportations” event.

In the past 12 months, he increasingly worked with Amanda Smith (aka Yorkshire Rose) to harass asylum seekers in hotels, repeatedly verbally abusing staff. Leggett has no qualms misrepresenting himself to harass migrants. In one instance, he pretended to be “checking for



fire doors” to get into migrant accommodation. He visited hotels at least 38 times in 2022, an increase on 2021.

Online, Leggett’s Facebook account is nearly inactive. However, he posts frequently on to his 8,000+ subscribers on YouTube, usually about hotels. His most popular video has nearly 60,000 views, showing him filming a council meeting in Skegness where locals are worried about the migrant influx. He is most prolific on Twitter, where he has nearly 60,000 followers, a number which has been steadily growing.

2023 PROSPECTS

This year Leggett is likely to focus on growing his YouTube and Twitter audience, in particular by promoting migrant harassment videos.

ANTI-MIGRANT AND ANTI-MUSLIM

STEVE LAWS

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Steve Laws is one of the most prominent figures in creating and distributing anti-migrant content online in the UK.

Unlike the other main anti-migrant activists, Laws does not spend his time filming migrant accommodation and asylum seekers, but remains close to Dover, filming arriving boats and bemoaning the state of Britain. Despite this, he has asked his followers to name places housing migrants in order to make a documentary about them in the future.

His YouTube channel has 8,500 thousand subscribers, with his most popular video showing a verbal confrontation with the police in front of Napier Barracks (a site housing asylum seekers). He is most prolific on Telegram, where he currently has nearly 6,000 followers. His current Telegram channel was created last November, and he has now deleted his previous channel where he had been regularly posting for years. He has also been interviewed on several podcasts, including that run by Paul Joseph Watson.

Laws has complimented the methods of Patriotic Alternative, and spoke at the fascist group's national conference in autumn 2022. He also supports Nigel Farage for being "the stepping stone towards our views going more mainstream". He has repeatedly used dehumanising language such as "invaders" and "swarm" to describe migrants and supports the "Great Replacement" conspiracy theory. He also believes there are "too many Albanians" in the country and that the government is refusing to reveal the true numbers of asylum-seekers arriving in the UK through the Channel Tunnel.

Laws has repeatedly described himself as a journalist and portrayed himself as a concerned citizen. In 2021, he was a guest on TalkRadio, where he was erroneously described as a "social commentator" and was subsequently quoted in several mainstream newspapers. Despite this, Laws has several ties to the far right, including being a former member of the anti-Islam For Britain party and appearing on a podcast with leader Anne Marie Waters. He was in fact a For Britain organiser in 2020, despite claiming he was not politically affiliated and only beginning to be concerned by migrant arrivals that year. More recently in 2022, he ran and lost as a UKIP candidate in Southend West.

He participated in several demonstrations across the past year, including an anti-migrant protest in Dover in June and a "Start Rwanda Deportations" event in September. A painter and decorator by profession, Laws has admitted having trouble finding a job once

prospective clients have gone online and seen his political views. He funds some of his activities by taking donations, which he solicits both on his social media feeds and his website.

Laws has been in court several times over charges related to his actions, including being found guilty of taking a dinghy without the owner's consent. He appealed this decision in late 2021 (the court discontinued the case in March 2022). In 2021 Dover Harbour Board also filed an injunction against Laws, as well as against Alan Leggett (aka Active Patriot), Nigel Marcham (aka Little Veteran), Tracey Wiseman (aka XxTWxX) and an unknown person, for filming without permission at the docks. Unlike some of the other defendants, he refused to sign an undertaking to stay away from the docks and opted for a further court hearing.

2023 PROSPECTS

Laws was banned from Twitter and despite the Elon Musk take over, has not been reinstated. He blames HOPE not hate for this deplatforming and is still attempting to get his account back. Politically, he would like to dismantle charities helping asylum seekers and tear up international laws that prevent barring asylum seekers from the country. He is likely to continue his activities on the coast and potentially begin anti-migrant harassment at hotels.



Amanda Smith aka Yorkshire Rose with Tommy Robinson

AMANDA SMITH (AKA YORKSHIRE ROSE)

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Amanda Smith was by far the UK's most prolific hotel harasser of 2022. She went from filming outside migrant accommodation 51 times in 2021 to 124 times in 2022, more than doubling her actions.

An anti-migrant activist from Castleford, she posts frequent videos on YouTube to her nearly 11,000 subscribers, showing herself and her "security" – a man known as "The Bulldog" – going to known migrant accommodation and often harassing staff and security. She regularly switches tactics, from feigning confusion ("I was told this hotel was for homeless") to faking kindness towards asylum seekers or else shouting at staff. Her channel has been viewed 1.8 million times, her most watched video being a visit to a hotel in Nottingham where she accosted a group of asylum seekers. She has also recently started a Telegram channel with "The Bulldog" where she shares her videos as well as anti-migrant content.

In January 2021, she and Alan Leggett were arrested for causing alarm and distress, and she claims they were banned from North Yorkshire as part of their bail conditions. She has also harassed staff at COVID-19 test centres, claiming COVID-19 was fake. On her accounts she has posted 5G and New World Order conspiracy theories and content from the fascist group Patriotic Alternative, as well as using disparaging language to talk about Muslims and migrants.

Smith has organised for the far right several times in the past, including the English Defence League and Britain First, and is a supporter of Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). She has posted Islamophobic and racist language online, including describing asylum seekers as "filthy animals".

2023 PROSPECTS

Her pattern of filming hotels and attempting to parachute into local communities to stir up tensions is likely to be repeated in the coming year. Over the past year Smith has involved herself in other campaigns, such as protesting Drag Queen Story Hour, so is likely ready to jump on any unrelated controversies that develop in 2023.

CHRIS JOHNSON

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Chris Johnson is one of the UK's most dedicated anti-migrant activists, respected within far-right and anti-migrant circles online for the sheer quantity of his content. His videos are posted nearly every day or even several times a day – he took an exceptional three days off for Christmas last year – and he is a reliable content-producer.

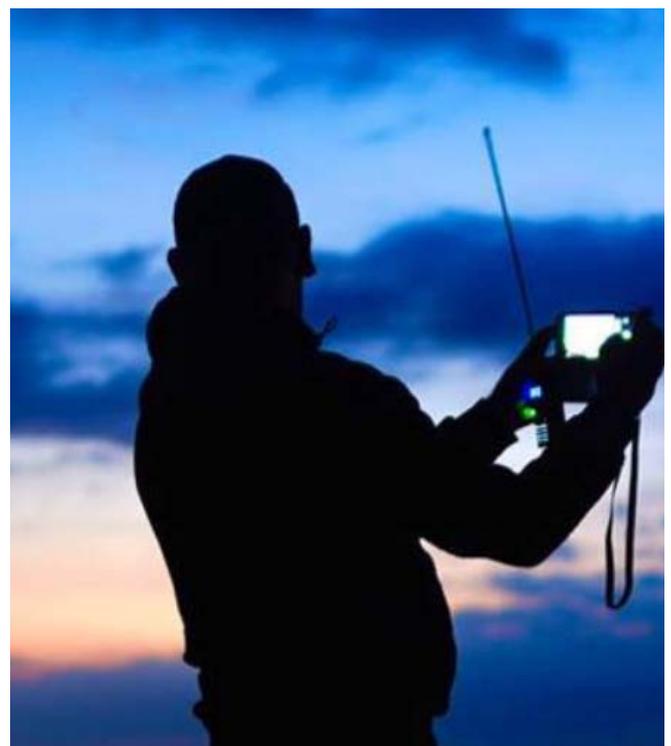
Unlike other anti-migrant activists, he shies away from showing himself in his videos, usually posting photos of the sea or footage of rescued migrants at Dover accompanied by negative comments about immigration.

He does not descend into vitriol but the comments under his posts are usually much more explicitly racist and angry. In September 2022, he posted: "The first thing Liz Truss should do is build more prisons because the levels of violence and sexual assaults in the country is unbelievable. Bang them all up. We have a right to feel safe."

He has 1,000 followers on Facebook and 1,500 thousand on YouTube, but his videos are also widely shared on other social media platforms such as Telegram. He has worked closely with Nigel Farage in the past.

2023 PROSPECTS

Based on the last few years, Johnson is unlikely to change his methods in 2023. He will continue to produce large quantities of footage for his Facebook account, showing ships and migrants arriving on the Dover coast, which will be shared widely across anti-migrant channels.



ANTI-MIGRANT AND ANTI-MUSLIM

LITTLE BOATS

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

Little Boats is an anti-migrant vigilante group established in August 2020, led by Jeremy Davis, a wedding DJ. The group was launched during a rise in mainstream focus on migrants, with the aim of filming and confronting migrants crossing The Channel.

The group is aligned with Steve Laws and sometimes refers to itself as a “flotilla”. It has bragged in the past about having conducted boat patrols at night in The Channel. Little Boats remained very active on Twitter, Facebook and Telegram during 2022, with its supporters regularly posting against the supposed “invasion” of Britain. However, the group does not produce much original content and usually recycles posts from other migrant hunters like Alan Leggett or Steve Laws.

2023 PROSPECTS

Little Boats is likely to continue posting anti-migrant content, but also jump on other topics such as anti-vaccine conspiracy theories, as well as general anti-lockdown posts. The group’s profile description links to a map with alleged hotels being used by asylum seekers and is likely to continue posting locations of the accommodations in the coming year.



Jeremy Davis
Photo: YouTube



HUGH THORNE (AKA BASED WELSHMAN)

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Hugh Thorne is an anti-lockdown and anti-migrant far-right activist. Although he has shot videos about migrants, he focused on a range of issues in 2022, including Trump, the Black Lives Matter movement and COVID-19 on his YouTube channel. Despite this, Thorne did not grow his audience during 2022, having peaked with nearly 10,000 followers in 2021 and barely increasing it since.

2023 PROSPECTS

Thorne is likely to continue to latch onto the most salient topics in the far right for his Twitter and YouTube channels, and will continue to amplify anti-migrant content such as hotel harassment videos produced by Amanda Smith.

BRITISH STREET COMMANDOS / FOOTBALL FIRMS UNITED

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

Having promised much at the beginning of the year, and offered very little (other than to attack a Hull student) the group which was dominated by former English Defence League (EDL) and Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA) types fell into an abyss of West Ham and Millwall hooligans threatening each other over WhatsApp after HOPE not hate intercepted their communications.

2023 PROSPECTS

Little expected from this group

PATRIOTS OF BRITAIN

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

Patriots of Britain was set up ahead of a small anti-immigration demonstration on 24 September 2022 in London. The target group was football supporters and the aim was to unite supporters from across supporter clubs. The group mostly posts anti-migrant content while occasionally posting on American politics or climate change.

2023 PROSPECTS

Patriots of Britain has retained an active Telegram group since the protest, with nearly 200 subscribers. It is likely to continue posting anti-migrant content and attending demonstrations in 2023. The admin, Chris Bateman (pictured), was an active member of Basildon BNP in 2020 and is now a member of the British Democrats. The channel amplifies the reach of certain activists such as Alan Leggett, Voice of Wales and Paul Joseph Watson.



JUSTICE FOR WOMEN & CHILDREN

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

LEADER: SHARON BINKS

2022 SUMMARY

Born of genuine frustration and anger, Justice for Women & Children was part of the “DIY” and “Yellow Vest” milieu. As such, it was susceptible to wider conspiracy theories and the objectives of the conspiracy scene.

Having been championed by much of the far right – including Stephen Lennon and the Democratic Football Lads Alliance (DFLA), among others – some activists felt the association with Sunderland’s Billy Charlton, who was subsequently convicted of having indecent images on his phone, was detrimental beyond repair.

After Charlton’s arrest, the group succumbed to squabbling and unrest with others in the movement. There has been nothing posted on its Facebook page since February 2021.

The prime mover behind the outfit, Sharon Binks, has been sporadically spotted on anti-vaccine and COVID-denial demonstrations around the country, but otherwise more or less disappeared. Binks’ main outlet is a link to the Manchester-based Children Matter Youtube channel.

2023 PROSPECTS

None.

Sharon Binks
Photo: YouTube



Sharon Binks with
Tommy Robinson



ANTI-MIGRANT AND ANTI-MUSLIM



Tommy Robinson and Billy Charlton



Photo: Gavin Lynn / Flickr

NORTH EAST INFIDELS (NEI)

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

The jailing of Billy Charlton last year bought to an end almost 10 years of internecine violence between Charlton's Sunderland Defence League and the rival North East Infidels, led by convicted drug dealer and football hooligan Warren Faulkner.

Once a formidable presence both at home in Sunderland and on demonstrations across the country, the NEI has fizzled out. Some members have moved into peripheral activities around COVID conspiracy and anti-lockdown activity.

2023 PROSPECTS

The NEI could well resurface at some stage, as Faulkner remains committed to returning to activism.



DEMOCRATIC FOOTBALL LADS ALLIANCE (DFLA)

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION



2022 SUMMARY

The Democratic Football Lads Alliance has been largely dormant for a couple of years now, a consequence of COVID-19, no clear purpose and infighting. Several of the prominent DFLA organisers in the London and Home Counties area appear to have diverted their attention to anti-lockdown and anti-Islam groups, such as the UK Freedom Alliance and Hearts of Oak. More recently, some have got involved in the anti-climate change group, Not Our Future.

2023 PROSPECTS

While the DFLA is currently in hibernation, with a network through the football hooligan scene and almost 10,000 followers on Facebook, there is a the possibility that an external event might spark it into action again.

HOLOCAUST DENIAL

ALISON CHABLOZ

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Alison Chabloz is a musician, blogger and Holocaust denier from Glossop in Derbyshire.

2022 was another bad year for Chabloz, as she was convicted, in April, for “grossly offensive” antisemitism, relating to a video posted online in April 2020. She was sentenced to 22 weeks in prison, half of which was to be served at HMP Bronzefield and the rest on licence. She published a message to her supporters in late September, stating that she was bound by standard licence until September 2023, unless successful on appeal.

In December, Chabloz was due to appear at a meeting of the conspiracy theory group Keep Talking, at The Tea House Theatre in Vauxhall, south London. However, after her rabid antisemitism was brought to the attention of the venue owner, she was told she was not welcome and the whole event was subsequently cancelled.

She continues to maintain an active website to promote her work and update her supporters.

2023 PROSPECTS

Chabloz is a high profile figure in the Holocaust denial scene, and despite ongoing internal disputes with other key figures, she will remain so in 2023. Recent and continuing legal problems will hamper her influence, but she will likely continue to pop up regularly at the far right, conspiracy theory and Holocaust denial events at which she is still welcome.

Alison Chabloz
Photo: YouTube



Lady Renouf
in Berlin



MICHÈLE RENOUF

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Michèle Renouf is an Australian-born former model and a leading international Holocaust denier.

Renouf started the year by attending a Yorkshire Forum event in February, commemorating a series of high-profile fascists who had recently died, including John Bean and Richard Edmonds.

A long-established and high profile figure in the international Holocaust denial scene, Renouf engaged with a younger audience in 2022 when she spoke at the spring conference of Patriotic Alternative (PA) in March. She was welcomed to the stage by PA's leader Mark Collett, who introduced her as a “personal friend” and she gave a speech loaded with far-right rhetoric and antisemitic language.

In late March and early April, Renouf attended the trial of the German Holocaust denier Ursula Haverbeck (nicknamed the “Nazi Grandma” because of her age) at the Berlin Regional Court. Haverbeck was handed a one-year prison sentence for Holocaust denial and Renouf reported on the events for *Heritage and Destiny* magazine.

In 2022 Renouf also co-founded the Four Virtues Club with veteran antisemite James Thring. The group held several meetings in 2022, bringing together veteran fascists and Holocaust deniers, including David Irving who addressed a meeting in London.

Renouf maintained her dated website and Holocaust denial film distribution business throughout the year.

2023 PROSPECTS

Though ageing, Renouf will continue to be a central figure within the traditional far right and Holocaust denial scenes in the UK and internationally. Her increased collaboration with the fascist group Patriotic Alternative has introduced her to new audiences, and we can expect to see her turn up at far-right conferences and events throughout 2023.

HOLOCAUST DENIAL



VINCENT REYNOUARD

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Reynouard is a high profile French Holocaust denier. He was convicted under anti-Nazi laws in France and was given a four-month jail term in November 2020, and a further six months in January 2021, but went on the run to avoid prison.

In November 2022, he was arrested in Fife, having hidden in Scotland and worked as a private tutor under a false name. He appeared in court in December and refused to consent to extradition to France.

2023 PROSPECTS

He will face an extradition hearing in early 2023, which will decide whether he will return to France and face imprisonment. Whatever happens, he will remain a high-profile figure within the international Holocaust denial scene.

DAVID IRVING

CATEGORY: PUBLISHER / INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

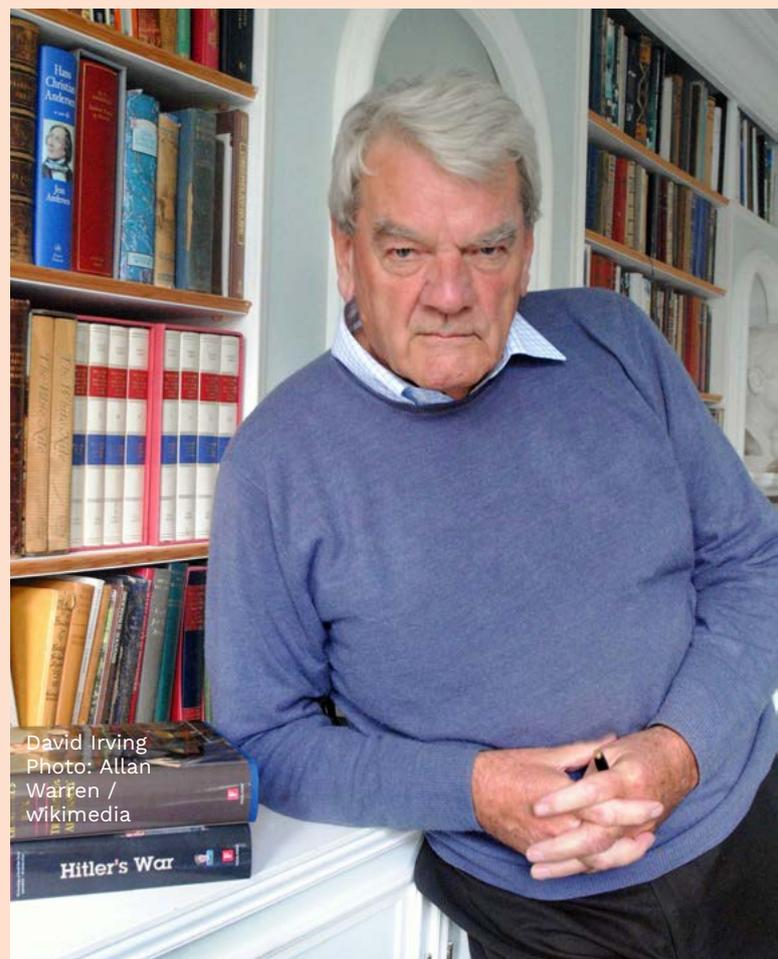
David Irving remains Britain's most infamous Holocaust denier, although he is an ageing figure and increasingly inactive. While he once enjoyed some mainstream recognition for his publications on Nazi Germany, he was discredited after he began minimising Hitler's and the Nazi regime's responsibility for the Holocaust. He is now best known for his unsuccessful libel case against the historian Deborah Lipstadt in 1996.

Irving made an increasingly rare public appearance when he spoke at the launch meeting of Michèle Renouf and James Thring's Four Virtues Club in London in May, to a crowd of veteran fascists and Holocaust deniers.

He continues to update his archaic website but almost solely only to add links to news articles from other sites. He also maintains the Focal Point Publications website, where a dwindling audience of fans can still buy his expensive books.

2023 PROSPECTS

While he remains an internationally recognised name in the Holocaust denial world, Irving is now an elderly man and rarely appears in public. His website is still taking bookings for his sporadic 10-day, "Real History tour of SS sites in Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland", but it is unclear if there are any actual plans to do another tour in 2023. Old clips of his talks are still widely accessible and he may do the odd speaking engagement in the coming year, but he is a shadow of his former self and too frail to do much else now.



David Irving
Photo: Allan
Warren /
wikimedia

CASTLE HILL PUBLISHERS / COMMITTEE FOR OPEN DEBATE ON THE HOLOCAUST

CATEGORY: PUBLISHER. CEO: MICHAEL SANTOMAURO

2022 SUMMARY

Castle Hill Publishers (CHP) is a publisher of Holocaust denial literature, set up in 1998 by the convicted German Holocaust denier, Germar Rudolf. Based in Hastings, East Sussex, it publishes a large catalogue of denial literature. In 2014, it merged with the American Holocaust denial organisation, CODOH (Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust), and is now part of the CODOH website.

2022 was a tumultuous year for Castle Hill. The company that did its printing, distribution and order fulfilment cancelled its contract. Castle Hill claimed this resulted in a 50% drop in its US and 100% of overseas turnover, as it lacked printing, warehouse and order-fulfilment capabilities in the UK or Australia. Although it found a new supplier and its books once again became available, it claimed that Barclays Bank shut down its UK account soon after these events.

As a result of these blows, coupled with the difficulty of exporting to EU countries post-Brexit, Castle Hill shut down its UK operation and was sold to CODOH in April, setting up a single-member company called Castlehill Publishing LLC.

Another blow followed when founder Germar Rudolf stepped back from both CODOH and Castle Hill in the summer. A peculiar message on the Castle Hill website stated that he had “disappeared from the face of the earth in early fall. His whereabouts are currently unknown.” The website cryptically suggested that Rudolf’s decision was motivated by “them” (aka Jews) but made no mention of whether his 2020 conviction for exposing his genitals in a children’s playground, while holding a bottle of baby oil, had anything to do with his decision to step back from running the Holocaust denial enterprise.

The new CEO is Michael Santomauro, and its address is now given as a house in South Carolina, USA.

Despite this tumultuous year, Castle Hill still published 13 new books, including works by well known Holocaust deniers such as Carlo Mattogno and Ernst Zündel.

2023 PROSPECTS

Despite a very poor year for the publisher, it has so far survived and remains an important provider of Holocaust denial literature.



CASTLE HILL
PUBLISHERS

HISTORICAL REVIEW PRESS

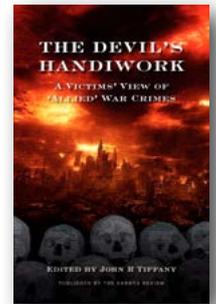
CATEGORY: PUBLISHER

2022 SUMMARY

Despite the death of founder Anthony Hancock in 2012, Historical Review Press (HRP) continues to exist. Today, however, it is merely a website that sells a variety of fascist, far right and Holocaust denial literature, much of it produced by other publishers. Though it says it is open to new submissions, it has not published an original book for some time.

2023 PROSPECTS

There is no indication that anything will change for the HRP. It will continue to sell a range of far-right and Holocaust denial literature, but is unlikely to produce any new titles itself.



Nick Kollerstrom

NICK KOLLERSTROM

CATEGORY: INDEPENDENT ACTIVIST

2022 SUMMARY

Nick Kollerstrom is a former honorary research fellow at University College London (UCL), dropped by the university in 2008 after he was exposed for engaging in Holocaust denial. In 2014, he released a book, *Breaking the Spell: The Holocaust: Myth and Reality*, published by Germar Rudolf’s Holocaust denial publishing house, Castle Hill Publishers, and has since produced works on numerous fringe conspiracy theories.

2022 was a quiet year for Kollerstrom, although he continued to be active in Keep Talking, the London-based conspiracy theory discussion group. He also released a new book titled *Ukraine: The Just War: How the West was Lost* via his own New Alchemy Press in July and appeared on a few fringe podcasts to promote it.

2023 PROSPECTS

Kollerstrom is willing to turn his conspiratorial eye to any major world event, and will likely continue to focus on the war in Ukraine in the coming year. He will remain a fringe figure only known within the conspiracy theory scene.

IDENTITARIAN



IDENTITY ENGLAND

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

LEADER: CHARLIE FOX



2022 SUMMARY

Identity England (IE) is a tiny identitarian organisation made up of the few remaining activists from the defunct UK branch of Generation Identity, and its now-defunct successor, the Identitarian Movement.

The group had a very quiet 2022, with its (few) public actions centred on putting up stickers and posters in towns and cities such as Dover, Maidstone, Stockton-On-Tees and Lincoln. In March, IE placed “Decolonise England” signs over Bengali language signs at Whitechapel station in east London, and in October held a tiny demonstration with just nine people outside the French embassy in London, alongside members of the French Reconquête movement.

Leader Charlie Fox also attended an anti-migration demonstration in September and appeared in a Britain First video alongside Britain First leader Paul Golding in October. In addition, he campaigned for his friend and former Identity England activist Nick Scanlon, who had stood in south London on behalf of Britain First at the May local elections.

IE continues to run an active Telegram channel with a little over 2,800 subscribers, and maintains a website that is sporadically updated.

2023 PROSPECTS

IE shows no signs of growth and will almost certainly remain an irrelevance within the UK far right, as well as being one of the least notable groups on the international identitarian scene.

LOCAL MATTERS

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

Local Matters is an identitarian front group set up in 2020 by former members of the UK branch of Generation Identity.

The group continued to post on social media until the summer of 2022, and has since fallen silent. Its website is still online, but it has not published any new content since March.

2023 PROSPECTS

The group was irrelevant and is now dormant. It will likely disappear this year.



GREATER IDENTITARIAN LEGION

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

Greater Identitarian Legion (GIL) emerged in June 2021 and began promoting its stickering actions on Telegram.

The group did not organise any major events or actions, but continued to sporadically distribute stickers across the London area during 2022.

As its name suggests, GIL is an identitarian group inspired by Generation Identity. However, GIL is virulently anti-LGBT+ and more explicit in its racism than GI. Its leader has written his own self-published book based on the “Great Replacement” conspiracy theory.

2023 PROSPECTS

GIL will continue to put up stickers and, if it manages to organise its members, will aim to do banner drop actions inspired by Generation Identity.



NAZI AND FASCIST

PATRIOTIC ALTERNATIVE

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

LEADER: MARK COLLETT



2022 SUMMARY

Patriotic Alternative (PA) remains the UK's most active fascist group, and achieved a new degree of publicity in 2022. It remains fringe, however, and continued to suffer setbacks, embarrassments and increased scrutiny from the authorities over the last year.

PA continues to hold regional activities, such as leafleting sessions and community building events, at a frequency unmatched among the UK far right. Its largest national events were conferences near Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, in March and near Clitheroe, Lancashire, in October. Both drew roughly 150 attendees, a drop from over 200 its 2021 conference.

Meanwhile, its national camp in July brought up to 175 activists to Derbyshire, while its between 200-240 supporters took part in banner drops and art projects on annual day of action in August, coinciding with Indigenous Peoples Day (IPD). This was an increase from roughly 160 activists taking part in 2021, suggesting that PA has become more adept at rallying supporters for collective action. The IPD stunts included hoisting a large banner on the wall of Clifford Tower in York, site of one of the UK's worst antisemitic pogroms.

Failing yet again to register as a political party, PA attempted to inject its talking points into the May election debates with a major propaganda drive, dubbed the “Demographic Replacement Month of April” (DRAMA). The group claims to have distributed over 138,000 leaflets, 65,000 of which were in the Eastern and North West regions, and gained wide local press coverage, much of which failed to relay PA's true degree of extremism.

In May, a Dispatches exposé aired on Channel 4 that featured undercover footage of PA meetings. This included members using racial slurs, and the programme also showed the group to have designed and disseminated misleading leaflets, made to appear as Labour and Conservative party literature, ahead of parliamentary by-elections. The documentary also mentioned some of the group's links to the now-banned nazi terror outfit, National Action (NA).

Despite considerable publicity, PA failed to meaningfully grow its active membership over 2022, in part owing to continuing defections, ejections and bitter disputes. In 2021, we warned of a more radical breakaway from PA's Scottish branch, a prediction that manifested last October when a cluster of former activists and associates formed the openly neo-nazi Highland Division, some of whom swiftly received visits from law enforcement.

In the hopes of growing its brand, PA attempted to establish links to the wider far right, but with mixed results. For example, the group has successfully courted Steve Laws, a well-known British “migrant



Photo: Twitter

NAZI AND FASCIST

hunter” who spoke at PA’s autumn conference. Notably, the group also strengthened its alliance with the Nordic Resistance Movement (NRM), a pan-Nordic, militant nazi organisation that is banned in Finland. This included welcoming key NRM propagandist Andreas Johansson (aka Andreas Holmvall), to speak at PA’s autumn conference. In his own words, Johansson went on to deliver a speech “about National Socialism, about Hitler and about Jews” to a receptive audience.

However, thanks to its extremism and Mark Collett’s own personal reputation, PA is widely regarded as toxic. This was illustrated in May with the forcible ejection of PA activists from a Telford street protest headed by Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson). According to Collett, PA’s “single most important campaign of 2022” was its attempt to take ownership of the “Stop Drag Queen Story Hour” movement (detailed elsewhere in this report), in part because it enabled the group to “build links”. However, PA was soon denounced by many other groups involved in the campaign for fear of being tarnished by association.

PA intends to shift towards local community politics, hoping to emulate the successes of the past movements such as the British National Party (BNP). Mimicking the wider UK far right, it has also sought to exploit cross-Channel migration and target hotels and other accommodation centres housing refugees and asylum seekers. In particular, the group sought to inflame tensions in Linton-on-Ouse, a Yorkshire village close to a site earmarked to temporarily house asylum seekers. PA and other far-right activists attempted to hijack the concerns of residents, distributing leaflets and holding small protests in the village and claiming credit when the plans were eventually scrapped.

Internally, there is mounting anxiety about the possibility of proscription by the Home Office, in large part due to the increasingly obvious links between PA and the now-defunct terror group National Action. For example, in July HOPE not hate revealed that Alex Davies, NA co-founder and co-leader, had been active in PA’s Welsh branch for over two years. The following month we revealed that Sam Melia, PA’s Yorkshire Regional Organiser and husband to Deputy Leader Laura Towler, had admitted to having joined the now-banned group. In October, we exposed James Mac (aka James Costello), a key PA activist in the North West, for having attended NA events, including posing with a NA banner and delivering the opening speech at an NA rally in 2015.

The identities and extremism of PA’s rank-and-file members also continue to be exposed by anti-fascists, journalists and PA’s enemies on the far right. In April we revealed that the group’s West Midlands media officer, “Anglo Josh” (aka Skelly), had repeatedly abused black users on video chat sites, making taunting references to slavery, lynching and the Holocaust while waving a noose and dressed



PA activists leafleting in Gateshead

in Nazi apparel and black face. In July, we exposed Kenneth McCourt, a member of PA’s Scottish branch, revealing him as an employee of the Royal Navy (he was subsequently fired). In August, the anti-fascist group Red Flare outed the nazi YouTuber and PA member “The Ayatollah” as James Owens, from Hixon, Staffordshire.

A number of activists and associates are currently awaiting trial for various offences, including Kris Kearney (aka Charlie Big Potatoes), PA’s former Fitness Officer, who was extradited from Spain last year on charges of disseminating terrorist material.

2023 PROSPECTS

PA remains highly active, but desperate for relevancy outside of the political fringes. The group believes a key cut-through to the public is the anti-Drag Queen Story Hour campaign, which it will seek to resume in 2023.

The group will also make renewed efforts to inflame tensions around temporary migrant and asylum seeker accommodation, including infiltrating community Facebook groups and disseminating locally-specific leaflets. For example, in January 2023 PA attempted to attach itself to a local campaign against the potential housing of asylum seekers in Cottingham, near Hull, Yorkshire. It then held a demonstration in Hull City centre after the plans fell through, hoping to claim credit. This marks another departure for PA, which had previously disavowed pre-announced protests.

However, while it attempts to obscure its extremism from the public, PA’s brand of politics remains repellent to the overwhelming majority and the repeated exposure of activists, and fears of proscription, have scared away potential members. It is possible the group has already reached a ceiling for growth, and further splinters are on the horizon.

INDEPENDENT NATIONALIST NETWORK

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION



2022 SUMMARY

The Independent Nationalist Network (INN) is a tiny fascist group that splintered from Patriotic Alternative in the summer of 2021.

Claiming to be a “leaderless” collective, the group has in practice been headed by Joe Strutt (aka Anglo Joe) and the former BNP organiser Richard Lumby. Another well-known activist is Chris Mitchell, formerly PA’s East of England Regional Organiser, who was welcomed back into INN last year after a period in exile.

INN’s small membership continued to squander much of its energy on online squabbles. The group’s most notable activity revolved around the “Stop Drag Queen Story Hour” campaign, producing a defamatory leaflet and letter-writing campaign and engaging in small protests, resulting in some press coverage and a degree of recognition among the UK’s conspiratorial milieu.

INN also reaffirmed its desire to stand “shoulder to shoulder” with the radical anti-vaccine group Alpha Team Assemble (ATA), whose leader attended INN meetings over 2022. In August, the group launched a podcast, hosting Jim Lewthwaite of the British Democrats on its inaugural episode, although it received poor viewing figures and INN has yet to release another.

In October, one of INN’s key driving figures, Richard Lumby, “retired” from activism, prompting an impassioned rant from Strutt, who declared it would be “nearly impossible” to establish a functioning movement due to the “lazy”, “cowardly” and quarrelsome nature of its base. Lumby since appears to have returned to the fold, however.

2023 PROSPECTS

INN has reaffirmed its intention to continue campaigning against Drag Queen Story Hour, but otherwise has signalled a desire to shift towards local community politics rather than national campaigns. At present, though, the group appears to be going nowhere fast, and is unlikely to achieve any kind of breakthrough in 2023.



Joe Strutt,
Richard Lumby
and Chris Mitchell

THE HIGHLAND DIVISION

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

The Highland Division is a marginal, “leaderless” and openly Nazi groupuscule that splintered from the Scottish branch of Patriotic Alternative in October. Activists include Tony Girling, PA’s former Mid Scotland and Fife organiser.

The group originally launched under the name White Wolves Social Club, but changed its name to avoid association with the White Wolves, a group that claimed responsibility for the 1999 London nail bombings.

The brazenly Nazi outfit has undertaken a number of small banner drops and canvassing sessions in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Stirling, including distributing leaflets promoting the neo-Nazi documentary *Europa*:

The Last Battle. These low-key activities resulted in alarmist coverage in the Scottish press, to the delight of its activists.

The group also received attention after an activist, who was previously a PA member, was chased away by the children he was attempting to recruit outside a Lanarkshire secondary school, while wearing a Nazi t-shirt. Another activist has photographed himself throwing a Hitler salute and rapping in front of a swastika flag.

Unsurprisingly, several of the group’s activists quickly suffered raids and arrests from law enforcement.

2023 PROSPECTS

For now, the Highland Division persists, with a handful of activists distributing leaflets at a conspiracy theory-oriented “freedom” rally in Glasgow in January. However, given the attention of the authorities, it is unclear whether it will survive 2023, at least in its current form.

NAZI AND FASCIST

CLAYMORE BOOKS

CATEGORY: PUBLISHER

KEY FIGURE: KENNY SMITH



2022 SUMMARY

Launched in March 2022, Claymore Books is a far-right publisher run by Kenny Smith, a former organiser for the British National Party and current National Admin Officer of Patriotic Alternative. It is one of several small businesses that orbit PA.

Claymore’s first release was *Hammer of the Patriot: A Handbook on Rhetorical Counter-Terrorism*, a manual to winning ideological debates written by “Charles Chapel”, a pseudonym of the Canadian nazi Gabriel Sohler Chaput, also known as Zeiger. Chaput was a moderator of Iron March, the influential, now-defunct nazi forum that spawned the terrorist Atomwaffen Division, a group now banned in the UK and for which Chaput was a key propagandist.

Claymore also reprinted *How It Was Done: The Rise of the Burnley BNP*, written by Steven Smith, the BNP’s former Burnley organiser, to encourage PA activists to learn from the party’s example.

2023 PROSPECTS

Claymore will continue to sporadically print books in the hope of educating the PA rank and file, providing a means to release the work of PA members and associates. It is a side project for Smith, however, and is of no great wider consequence to anyone outside of PA.



Kenny Smith



KATIE FANNING/ WHITE INDIGENOUS RIGHTS ALLIANCE

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

The White Indigenous Rights Alliance (WIRA) is a “social enterprise” headed by Katie Fanning (aka Bubba Paris) with the aim of building “strong and supportive White communities” in the face of a supposed “globo-Marxist White eradicationist agenda”.

Fanning is a former UKIP official and Conservative Party member who has veered sharply into open antisemitism, and has become something of a celebrity among UK white nationalists for suing a university for supposed discrimination against white students.

WIRA is yet to formally launch, despite incorporating back in February 2021. Since then, three directors have been appointed and resigned: the neo-nazi Christian Bell (aka Based British), the Britain First-turned-Patriotic Alternative activist Aaron Oates, and PA Yorkshire activist Alek Yerbury, who lasted just three months. In August, Fanning released a video presentation outlining the lofty aims of the organisation.

During 2022, Fanning was another who worked closely with PA. In March, she was among a group of PA activists who attended a BAMEed (Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Educators) event in London, and a clip of her ranting about supposed white disadvantage at the event got hundreds of thousands of views. She also joined PA’s Yorkshire branch in hoisting a large “White Lives Matter” banner on the wall of Clifford Tower in York, site of one of the UK’s worst antisemitic pogroms. The relationship may be fraying, however, with Fanning stating after the autumn PA conference that she had “never left a conference feeling so blackpilled [disheartened]”.

Fanning appeared on various domestic and international far-right streams during 2022, including the Swedish white supremacist media outlet Red Ice, and Australian nazi Thomas Sewell’s show.

2023 PROSPECTS

Whether Fanning succeeds in launching WIRA in 2023 remains to be seen, but in any case the convoluted project seems unlikely to catch on. Regardless, she appears to have settled into her role as a white nationalist commentator.



Michèle Renouf, James Thring and David Irving

FOUR VIRTUES CLUB

CATEGORY: DISCUSSION GROUP

LEADERS: MICHÈLE RENOUF AND JAMES THRING

2022 SUMMARY

Four Virtues Club is a far-right conspiracy theory lecture group organised by the infamous Holocaust denier Michèle Renouf and James Thring.

It had its inaugural meeting in May, with David Irving speaking to an audience that included people from the London Forum milieu, such as Stead Steadman and Peter Rushton. Members of Patriotic Alternative were also present. Conspiracy theorist Chris Coverdale was the speaker at a following event and made an argument for tax avoidance.

2023 PROSPECTS

Four Virtues had several relatively successful meetings last year, despite attempting to maintain a low profile. The group fills a space left by the London Forum, providing offline events after many months of less frequent in-person meetups. It is likely that the club will continue to attract an audience of longstanding members of the London conspiracy theorist and fascist scenes, as well as some with less experience.

VANGUARD BRITANNICA

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION



2022 SUMMARY

Vanguard Britannica is a fascist group that engages in stickering and graffiti.

Its first stickers were put up in Leicestershire in August 2022, but it has since expanded to most parts of the country, but with a focus on the Midlands, the north of England and the south east. Towards the end of the year, the group also began organising meetups with members, posing for propaganda photos during a camping trip in November and activities around Remembrance Sunday.

WHITE STAG

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION



2022 SUMMARY

The White Stag Athletic Club was a fascist survival, fitness and martial arts group that publicly surfaced in 2021 and started recruiting through the social media app, Telegram. The group organised hikes to weed out physically unfit members, who eventually had to fight one another.

While most of those who have followed White Stag are also connected to Patriotic Alternative, and the group made use of PA's Telegram channels to promote itself, White Stag was not formally part of PA. This was something made explicit by both organisations. In fact, White Stag was critical of PA's desire to gain influence through electoral politics, and instead modelled itself after far-right fighting clubs abroad, such as the US-based Rise Above Movement.

White Stag began the year with multiple activities, including a long hike for its members, alongside frequent posts on Telegram. However it ceased its activities in May after its leader was arrested. He is currently awaiting trial.



2023 PROSPECTS

White Stag is likely to remain inactive after its leader's arrest.



2023 PROSPECTS

Vanguard Britannica ended 2022 with a small but engaged following online and is actively recruiting new members. It is likely to continue to grow in 2023, provided it can keep up its momentum. The group's advantage is that stickering allows individual activists to contribute and feel active without putting themselves at serious risk of exposure. This year, it is likely to continue to try to build a closer knit activist group through offline meetups and will attempt to collaborate with other similar groups.

NAZI AND FASCIST



WHITE LIVES MATTER ENGLAND

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

2022 SUMMARY

White Lives Matter England (WLME) is an offshoot of the US propaganda campaign that became active in August 2022, and has promoted its activities on an irregular basis since.

The group uses tactics similar to the now-defunct Hundred Handers, with its activists printing out stickers from a centralised archive and placing them in public spaces, photos of which are then posted on WLME social media channels.

Because the name of the group is a now common far-right slogan, the stickers have been reused by a range of activists not directly engaged with WLME, as well as newly-formed groups lacking original material. This includes the PA offshoot, the Highland Division.

2023 PROSPECTS

WLME is likely to put more effort into organising in 2023 and attempting to move beyond stickering, forming collaborations with other groups. However, its main impact will still come from stickering and from loosely-affiliated activists reusing its sticker templates.



Shane Calvert

NORTH WEST INFIDELS (NWI)

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

LEADER: SHANE CALVERT

2022 SUMMARY

The criminals behind the gang that is the NWI have reinvented themselves as “community activists” and “street chefs” in Blackburn where a friendly local journalist regularly lauds the work of the recidivist criminal and neo-nazi fanatic Shane “Diddyman” Calvert.

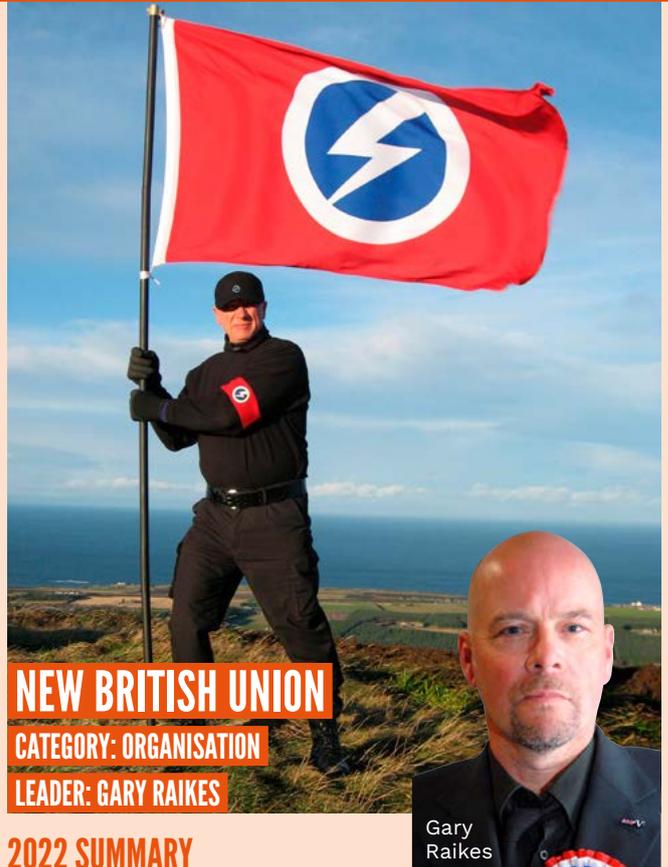
Calvert has never renounced his nazi past and he continues to have considerable influence in the far right.

Late last year, three members of the gang, Daniel Lewis, Daniel Holding and Matthew Lowe, were all jailed for their parts in a series of armed robberies.

NWI activists have occasionally appeared on far-right protests across the north of England.

2023 PROSPECTS

While there is likely to be a continued presence at events organised by other far-right groups, there is nothing to currently suggest that Calvert is preparing any real activity anytime soon.



NEW BRITISH UNION

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

LEADER: GARY RAIKES

2022 SUMMARY

The New British Union (NBU) is an attempted revival of Oswald Mosley’s British Union of Fascists. It followed a familiar pattern of activities in 2022.

Its most notable event of the year was a small meetup in Yorkshire to celebrate the 10th anniversary of its founding. The organisation launched multiple local “cells”, namely Twitter accounts run by individual activists. Most of these fell dormant by the end of the year. Four new regional officers were appointed after others left the organisation, but posts still remain open months after others departed.

HOPE not hate identified that a Conservative councillor in Hythe, Andy Weatherhead, had been a previous key member of the group. Weatherhead was Policy Officer and Business Officer and wrote an antisemitic blog attacking the “Jewish-controlled media”. The revelation led to his resignation.

Another member of the group who garnered media attention was Clive Jones. Jones turned out to be one of the UK’s most prolific sperm donors, with 129 born babies. He was photographed in NBU uniform.

Leader Gary Raikes published 10 issues of the organisation’s magazine, *The Blackshirt*, in 2022. Increasingly, however, these contain reprinted material as well as promotions for other groups, mainly Patriotic Alternative. Part of the reason for the lack of activities could be attributed to Raikes’ health issues, which have become worse during the year.

2023 PROSPECTS

After being banned from Twitter in January 2023, the NBU’s main social media outlet is gone and it has struggled to build a following on Telegram. With Raikes’ declining health and inability to retain officers, the NBU is slowly declining but will continue to publish irregular newsletters and content to its small social media following.

Gary Raikes

BRITISH DEMOCRATIC PARTY

CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY

LEADER: JIM LEWTHWAITE



2022 SUMMARY

The British Democratic Party (BDP), a fascist splinter of the British National Party (BNP), has spent much of the last decade gathering dust. However, the group received an injection of new members during 2022, including a sitting councillor and other experienced activists.

The party stood just four candidates in May's local elections, with former BNP councillor Lawrence Rustem gaining its highest vote share in Maidstone with 14% (117 votes). Party leader Jim Lewthwaite, himself a former BNP councillor, received 7% (214 votes) in Bradford, improving on the previous year by a single vote. Lewthwaite again received aid from Patriotic Alternative activists in his campaign.

Over 2022, the BDP increasingly drew in former BNP figures, particularly in London, Essex and Kent, and received a significant boost following the demise of the anti-Muslim party For Britain, with a number of politically-homeless activists flocking to the party. This included Cllr Julian Leppert in Epping Forest, who is now the group's sole elected official above the parish level. Lewthwaite described this shift as "unprecedented growth".

The BDP also won two parish-level victories, with Rustem elected unopposed in Maidstone, Kent and former BNP and For Britain candidate Christopher Bateman winning in Basildon, Essex.

Lewthwaite and other BDP figures remain active in the UK's traditional fascist milieu. In February Lewthwaite

relaunched the Yorkshire Forum, a far-right discussion group, and in September spoke at a conference in Preston organised by the fascist publication *Heritage & Destiny*. A BDP contingent also attended the Traditional Britain Group conference in October.

2023 PROSPECTS

The party will look to stand a stronger slate of candidates in the May elections, at which it will also be defending its sole councillor, Leppert in Epping Forest (Waltham Abbey Paternoster ward). However, despite Lewthwaite's belief that 2022 was a "turning point" for his group, it remains antiquated and is unlikely to become a serious political force in the year ahead.



Jim Lewthwaite

TRADITIONAL BRITAIN GROUP

CATEGORY: DISCUSSION GROUP

VICE PRESIDENT: GREGORY LAUDER-FROST

2022 SUMMARY

The Traditional Britain Group (TBG) is a London-based far-right discussion group that hosts gatherings, dinners and conferences. The events remain a key meeting point for the "intellectual" end of the British far right.

In May, the group held its annual dinner in London, hosting Jaak Madison MEP, Deputy Chairman of the Conservative People's Party of Estonia.

The TBG annual conference took place in London in October, attended by approximately 150 people. The conference heard speeches from Stefan Korte and Christine Anderson MEP of the German anti-Muslim party, Alternative for Germany. Returning British speakers were the "Russian expert" John Laughland, TBG Vice President Sam Swerling and Edward Dutton, a YouTuber and proponent of pseudoscientific "race science". The British YouTuber Neema Parvini (aka Academic Agent) also gave an address, as did the Danes Helmuth Nyborg and Emil Kirkegaard.



Gregory Lauder-Frost

The group also held a Christmas social in a Westminster pub, hearing a speech from Simon Webb (aka History Debunked).

In September, the group suffered the death of TBG President Lord Sudely, although as his position was largely ceremonial, the loss has not impeded the functioning of the group. The TBG remained a significant British far-right presence on social media, posting regularly across Facebook, Twitter and Telegram.

2023 PROSPECTS

The TBG is a mainstay of the far-right elitist scene in the UK and will likely continue to be so in 2023.

NAZI AND FASCIST

MORGOTH'S REVIEW

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Originally serving as something of an intellectual figurehead of the British alt-right, since 2020 the anonymous blogger Morgoth has become more focused on COVID-19 fuelled paranoia around a “technocratic dictatorship” than the vicious antisemitism and racism that dominated his earlier output.

While still producing occasional videos for his 56,600 YouTube subscribers, much of Morgoth's content is now only available for paid subscribers on Substack, which might allay his longstanding grievance over the lack of paid income from his work, but also significantly limits its reach.

2023 PROSPECTS

Morgoth will continue to serve as a respected thought-leader for the overtly racist end of the British far right, but his philosophical and conspiratorial musings may not appeal to those initially attracted to his more extreme racial politics.



NATIONAL HOUSING PARTY UK

CATEGORY: POLITICAL PARTY

LEADER: JOHN LAWRENCE



2022 SUMMARY

The National Housing Party UK (NHPUK) is a minor far-right political party launched in 2021 by the Oldham-based former Britain First activist John Lawrence and Pat McGinnis, a London-based former BNP activist.

NHPUK's two key policies are “a complete halt to permanent settlement immigration and to leave the 1951 UN Refugee Convention”.

Registering as a party in March, NHPUK has since spent much of its time humiliating itself in local elections. This includes a November by-election in Oldham (Hollinwood ward), where Lawrence gained 59 votes (less than 4%) after weeks of campaigning, and McGinnis received a single vote in the Camden Council by-election (Hampstead Town ward) in July.

Alongside producing online content for a tiny audience, the group was also involved in small protests and held a number of regional meetings, including a London gathering in July attended by Jody Swingler (aka Jody Kay), an antisemitic activist and member of Patriotic Alternative.

2023 PROSPECTS

NHPUK will continue to be a source of derision among the UK far right, and an irrelevance beyond the fringes.

COLIN ROBERTSON (AKA MILLENNIAL WOES)

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Following the suspension of his YouTube account in 2021 and accusations of sexual misconduct, the white nationalist vlogger Colin Robertson (aka Millennial Woes) remained a diminished figure on the British far right in 2022.

Aside from a weekly video on the Odysee video platform and a rare public appearance in October, with an invite to speak at a fringe far-right conference, his only major burst of activity came in December with the annual Millennyule series of livestreams, which saw him interviewing 60 far-right influencers from across the English-speaking world. One notable omission from this year's line up was Mark Collett, leader of Patriotic Alternative, whose awkward 2021 appearance does not seem to have resolved the tensions between the two.

2023 PROSPECTS

Robertson is unlikely to salvage his much tarnished reputation and diminished audience in 2023.



EDWARD DUTTON (AKA THE JOLLY HERETIC)

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Edward Dutton (aka The Jolly Heretic) is an English YouTuber and proponent of pseudo-scientific “race science”.

Dutton continued to produce regular video and written content throughout 2022. Unlike many of his contemporaries, he has so far avoided a YouTube ban and has racked up over five million views on the platform to date. Dutton’s ego took a knock, however, with the deletion of his Wikipedia page in May.

British guests on his show this year include Mark Collett, leader of Patriotic Alternative, and Neil Hamilton, the disgraced former Tory MP turned UKIP leader. He hosted and interviewed a variety of international extremists, including former Ku Klux Klan leader David Duke, the alt-right troll Tim Gionet (aka Baked Alaska), and the white supremacist Nick Fuentes.

In October, Dutton spoke at the Traditional Britain Group annual conference, a key meeting point for far-right elitists. He also continued to pen articles for a variety of far-right websites, including VDare, the racist US website.

2023 PROSPECTS

Dutton will continue producing racist content for his small but international audience.

WAY OF THE WORLD

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Way of the World is a small far-right video producer now active on the Odysee platform. He has significantly reduced his output of original content since the loss of his YouTube channel in 2021, instead serving as a low-effort aggregator of videos from other sources.

2023 PROSPECTS

Way of the World will likely continue to aggregate content from elsewhere.



SARAH LOVELL (AKA DAUGHTER OF ALBION)

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Durham-based YouTuber “Daughter of Albion”, who HOPE not hate identified as Sarah Lovell in November 2021, had a quiet year in 2022. She produced just three videos for her channel and otherwise limited herself to sporadic appearances on livestreams with longtime collaborator Neema Parvini (aka Academic Agent).



2023 PROSPECTS

Lovell appears to have taken a step back from active content creation and will likely remain on the periphery.

THE REALITY REPORT

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

The Reality Report (TRR) is a small and aggressive team of self-proclaimed “citizen journalists” led by Vincent Burke (aka Vinnie Sullivan).

2022 was another year of relentless feuding for the manic TRR team. Aside from videos about closed pubs and occasional attendance at demonstrations, Burke spent much of his energy attacking fellow far-right activists from equally fringe online groups, though appears to put his hostility to Patriotic Alternative to one side for the time being.

2023 PROSPECTS

Burke and his cohort will continue to hamper the wider movement by pursuing toxic feuds and no clear goals.



Alexander Sangmoore (left) and Vincent Burke (right) of The Reality Report

NAZI AND FASCIST

RAW EGG NATIONALIST

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER/CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Part of the wider fascist fitness world, the Raw Egg Nationalist is an anonymous Dorset-based bodybuilder best known for promoting the supposed health benefits of eating dozens of raw eggs per day.

He experienced a remarkable boost to his profile in 2022 after his inclusion in a documentary by far-right Fox News host Tucker Carlson, *The End of Men*, which highlighted a supposed war on masculinity and the ways in which some toxic men's rights activists were fighting back.

Alongside his popular Twitter account, he publishes a monthly magazine called *Man's World* which prints guest contributions from other far-right bodybuilders, most notably Bronze Age Pervert.

2023 PROSPECTS

The Raw Egg Nationalist will enjoy a greater international profile this year, but with it the higher risk of losing his anonymity.



THE JUDGEMENT ZONE

CATEGORY: NETWORK

2022 SUMMARY

The Judgement Zone was a fascist chat group focused on fitness and health. The group combined advice on physical exercise with fascist imagery and ideology. Photos of bare torsos were usually anonymised with stickers of Hitler's face over each poster's face.

The group's purpose was ideological, to physically strengthen far-right activists and ultimately the British nation. Messages such as "training to stop a bus loaded with Soros paid protesters" and "when you lift alone, you lift with Hitler" were common in the group.

The chat was connected to Patriotic Alternative, with Kris Kearney (aka Charlie Big Potatoes) being one of its moderators, but the Judgement Zone had a large number of international followers and active members and administrators that were not part of PA. In August 2022, the group ceased its activities following Kearney's arrest on terror-related charges.

2023 PROSPECTS

The Judgement Zone has ceased its activities but its format will continue to inspire similar groups.



NEEMA PARVINI (AKA ACADEMIC AGENT)

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Parvini is a prominent YouTuber and academic, having held positions at Richmond American University and the University of Surrey, specialising in Shakespeare. He was let go from the University of Surrey after he argued that black people in the US were "conquered" and "don't deserve to survive" following the murder of George Floyd.

Parvini has monetised his commentary on current far-right topics and sells premium subscriptions with additional content. While his degrees and academic work are all in the area of literature, he sells online courses to his followers in the area of economics and politics, as well as writing.

Parvini spoke at a range of conferences organised in 2022. These included the Traditional Britain Group, Nomos in London alongside Colin Robertson (aka Millennial Woes), and Scyldings alongside Carl Benjamin (aka Sargon of Akkad) and Curtis Yarvin.

2023 PROSPECTS

Parvini will continue to produce video content and speak at conferences.

THOMAS HAMPSON (AKA CODCOMEDYTJ)

CATEGORY: INFLUENCER / CONTENT CREATOR

2022 SUMMARY

Thomas Hampson (aka CodComedyTJ) is a livestreamer who uses video chat app Omegle to record offensive videos. The format was popularised by American and Australian fascist livestreamers and involves filming oneself while using Omegle, which randomly pairs users for one-on-one video chats, and then being grossly offensive or abusive to the other user.

Hampson gained notoriety for wearing black face and ridiculing LGBT+ people and the killing of George Floyd in 2020. Since then a virulent racist community has sprung up around Hampson on Telegram and other platforms where recordings of his streams are shared alongside other, often violent, videos.

Hampson was arrested by Manchester police in May 2021 and was largely absent until late 2022 when he announced his return and began livestreaming again after a crowdfunding campaign. While Hampson was



absent, his community of approximately 2,000 users in his open Telegram group remained active, drawing on an existing large library of his content. The chat group also remained a way for fascist organisations to recruit.

2023 PROSPECTS

Hampson will most likely only aim his new streams at his direct community in order to avoid issues with the law. He might also have to tone himself down somewhat for the same reason but this will not be appreciated by his supporters.

HERITAGE AND DESTINY

CATEGORY: MAGAZINE

EDITOR: MARK COTTERILL

2022 SUMMARY

Heritage and Destiny (H&D) remains the most important print publication produced by the traditional British fascist scene, producing its usual six bi-monthly editions last year.

The publication retains a readership among the old guard of the British far right, and regularly carries obituaries for veteran fascists as this section of the movement dies out. It has, however, made efforts to expand its readership in recent years, including establishing a presence on social media.

After a long hiatus, last September *H&D* held a memorial meeting in Preston, Lancashire, attended by roughly 70 activists. Chaired by fascist relic Keith Axon, the event heard from a speaker panel that included Jim Lewthwaite of the British Democrats, *H&D* assistant editor Peter Rushton, Mark Bullman (aka Benny) of the Nazi band Whitelaw, John Kersey of the Traditional Britain Group, Stephen Frost of the British Movement and former BNP candidate Mike Whitby.

Also addressing the conference was Laura Towler, Deputy Leader of Patriotic Alternative, who brought with her a cohort from PA, plus the Spanish Nazi Isabel Peralta who is also *H&D*'s "European correspondent". *H&D* claims Peralta was detained at Manchester Airport for "more than six hours" under the Terrorism Act on entry into the UK.

2023 PROSPECTS

H&D has voiced its intention to hold another conference in 2023. Otherwise, the magazine will continue to circulate among the British fascist fringe, to no great consequence.



CANDOUR

CATEGORY: MAGAZINE

EDITOR: COLIN TODD

2022 SUMMARY

Edited by Colin Todd, *Candour* magazine is Britain's longest-running fascist publication, although it has long been in decline and is now an irrelevance on the modern far-right scene.

Todd produced four editions of the magazine in 2022, with much of the content focusing on the history of British fascism. He also publishes semi-regular blogs on the *Candour* website. Like many other ageing fascists, Todd is engaged in activism for the British Democrats, a political party that splintered from the BNP.

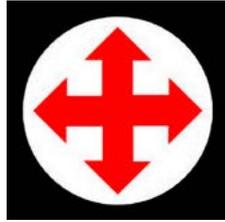
2023 PROSPECTS

Candour will likely struggle on through 2022. However, it is nothing more than a legacy project and will continue to have no impact on the British far-right scene.



Colin Todd

NAZI AND FASCIST



STEVEN BOOKS / LEAGUE OF ST GEORGE

CATEGORY: PUBLISHER / MAGAZINE

2022 SUMMARY

League Enterprises / Steven Books is the commercial arm of the long-standing League of St George, which was formed in 1974 by former members of Oswald Mosley's Union Movement.

The League of St George sporadically releases a magazine, *League Sentinel*, while Steven Books continues to publish extremely low-quality reprints of obscure fascist pamphlets, as well as selling far-right books by other publishers.

The organisation continues to distribute printed material related to racism, Holocaust denial and fascist books and pamphlets in the UK. It also hosts a series of Oswald Mosley speeches on SoundCloud and links to Mosley's speeches on YouTube. The League's website is updated very infrequently, usually with obituaries.

2023 PROSPECTS

Each year that the League of St George continues to exist is a surprise. It will almost certainly die out along with its last activist.

BLACKHOUSE PUBLISHING / SANCTUARY PRESS

CATEGORY: PUBLISHER

DIRECTOR: JANET SLATTER



2022 SUMMARY

In 2011, Janet Slatter launched Black House Publishing, named after the headquarters of the British Union of Fascists, the "Black House". It published reissued versions and reprints of fascist, nazi, Third Position and right-wing literature from authors including Oswald Mosley, Oswald Spengler, and Australian far-right author Kerry Bolton.

However, in March 2019 Slatter launched Sanctuary Press alongside Black House and moved much of the explicitly fascist and all the Oswald Mosley books to the new concern.

The Blackhouse website also has a blog with articles by a range of writers, including Kerry Bolton.

2023 PROSPECTS

Both concerns remain very small, but they are important for making the work of Mosley accessible to new generations of British fascists.



ARKTOS MEDIA

CATEGORY: PUBLISHER

PRESIDENT: DANIEL FRIBERG

HEAD OF ARKTOS UK: GREGORY LAUDER-FROST

2022 SUMMARY

Launched in 2010 by Daniel Friberg, Arktos Media remains one of the most important purveyors of European New Right and alt-right literature in the world. The publisher is registered in the UK, though much of its operation is based in other countries and it publishes a combination of new texts, translations and reissues.

Books published in 2022 included a new German translation of the Russian fascist Aleksandr Dugin's book *The Fourth Political Theory*, as well as a book by the French far-right philosopher Alain de Benoist.

Arktos has accounts across a number of social media platforms, including Telegram, Gab, Odysee, Minds and Bitchute. It also has a semi-regular podcast, with high-profile guests last year including the American racist Jared Taylor and the antisemite Kevin MacDonald.

2023 PROSPECTS

Arktos will continue to be one of the leading far-right publishers in the world, producing high quality products by well-known racist, fascist and far-right writers.



Daniel Friberg

GOYIM DEFENSE LEAGUE**CATEGORY: ORGANISATION/NETWORK****LEADER: JON MINDANELO
(AKA HANDSOME TRUTH)**Richard
Hesketh**2022 SUMMARY**

The Goyim Defense League (GDL) is an extreme antisemitic group founded in the US, which operates as a network of content creators and trolls who harass Jewish people, vandalise property and perform publicity stunts such as banner drops.

In December 2021, the Manchester-based content creator Richard Hesketh, who was aligned to the group and posted his videos to its video platform *GoyimTV*, was convicted of seven counts of inciting racial hatred and sentenced to four years in prison.

Since then, there have been reports of printed GDL material being distributed in Dudley and Brighton, suggesting that some more UK activists may be aligning themselves with the group.

2023 PROSPECTS

In January 2023, the group's leader Jon Minadeo (aka Handsome Truth) appeared on a livestream with PA leader Mark Collett, which may boost the group's profile among UK fascists in 2023.

BRITISH NATIONAL PARTY**CATEGORY: ORGANISATION****LEADER: ADAM WALKER****2022 SUMMARY**

For much of 2022, the British National Party struggled with website issues. As its only outlet to a disinterested world, this had a profound – almost finale-like – effect on the near-dormant party.

Legal wrangling at the behest of a small group of former members and employees appears to have failed to unseat Clive Jefferson and Adam Walker from an unassailable position as party owners and benefactors.

2023 PROSPECTS

Will continue to exist as a party organisation but little activity expected.

Clive Jefferson (left)
and Adam Walker**NATIONAL FRONT****CATEGORY: ORGANISATION****LEADER: TONY MARTIN****2022 SUMMARY**

The death of Richard Edmonds at the end of 2020 had a profound political and financial effect on the already-moribund National Front.

The NF's Chair, Tony Martin, spent more time on the internet and engaging in petty stunts than re-organising and re-building a once-boisterous political movement.

This lack of activism led leading member, Kevin Bryan, to issue a long rant about the state of the party and its lack of activism. He stopped short of calling for Tony Martin to stand down.

There was also growing anger among the party's remaining few dozen members that the leadership had failed to root out one senior activist who was passing information to HOPE not hate before he died.

Less than 20 supporters attended the NF's annual Remembrance Sunday march.

2023 PROSPECTS

Without a change of leader, the party will continue to stagnate and probably decline further.

BRITISH FREEDOM PARTY**CATEGORY: ORGANISATION****LEADER: JAYDA FRANSEN**Jayda
Fransen**2022 SUMMARY**

Jayda Fransen was accused by Stephen Lennon (aka Tommy Robinson) and Paul Golding (Britain First) of being a HOPE not hate agent – because she once appeared on the same documentary as one of our employees.

These accusations came as Fransen had significant legal victories and subsequent (though unresolved) legal failures in her protracted court battle with senior figures in Britain First.

Supposedly tutored by Nick Griffin and Jim Dowson, Fransen also opened up a front against Mark Collett and Patriotic Alternative.

Fransen stood in two parliamentary by-elections last year, securing 229 votes (2%) in Southend West and just 23 votes (0.1%) in Wakefield.

2023 PROSPECTS

The party will rumble on, but is almost certainly to remain largely inactive and irrelevant.



NAZI AND FASCIST

BRITISH MOVEMENT (BM)

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

LEADER: STEVE FROST



2022 SUMMARY

The British Movement continued its tentative growth and influence. A mooted merger with, or “takeover” of, the National Front was shelved and the BM continues to enjoy a modicum of respect from the rest of the far right for diligently doing its own thing and its seemingly non-sectarian approach.

The group continues to blog, make podcasts and write zines prolifically, though it is not gifted with either intelligent content or writing. The BM recently declared its admiration for the controversial former Smiths front man, Morrissey.

The arrests of senior figures in the Blood & Honour music network last year was a gift to the BM’s “Rock Against Communism” music network and its senior organiser Benny Bullman (of the band Whitelaw) is now the most influential Blood & Honour figure still currently active.

In October Bullman’s profile rose significantly when he was banned from entering Greece, supposedly at the request of the German government. Since his move to Bolton, there has been increased BM activity in Manchester city centre.

In the north of England, BM activists have attended several Patriotic Alternative protests, while Tim Ryan remains an influential figure in the south.

2023 PROSPECTS

The BM will continue to exist, mopping up older, politically homeless, far-right activists, though its inability to attract younger activists will always limit its growth and activism.



Steve Frost

COMBAT 18

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION

LEADER: WILL BROWNING



2022 SUMMARY

Last year saw the virtual collapse of Combat 18, after most of its remaining few activists either dropped out or simply continued to meet socially.

The group now counts less than 10 supporters across the UK, with its dwindling support base not helped by the failure to hold three gigs in the second half of last year. The first, which was due to be held in Dagenham, was cancelled due to poor ticket sales, while two more gigs, set to be held in Essex, were abandoned after HOPE not hate identified the venue and lobbied for the gigs to be cancelled.

Will Browning still leads the group, but given he splits his time between Jersey (his registered home) and the Netherlands (where his partner lives), he never appears to be around enough to stem the organisation’s decline.

2023 PROSPECTS

Unless the group can fill some of the void left by Blood & Honour’s decline and hosts some gigs in London and the south east, which could potentially draw in some new and old supporters, C18 would well disappear in 2023.

BLOOD & HONOUR (B&H)

CATEGORY: ORGANISATION



2022 SUMMARY

Last year was absolutely disastrous for Blood & Honour, the main organisation for the white power music scene. HOPE not hate managed to get five nazi gigs stopped, the leader of the movement, Robert Talland, was charged with terrorist offences and British nazi musicians were repeatedly stopped from performing at gigs across Europe.

The consequence of all this is that the B&H movement hardly exists anymore. Few people are willing to publicly lead the group, for fear of police attention and arrest, and promoters are increasingly trying to present their events as non-political Oi! gigs.

There was no Ian Stuart Donaldson memorial gig last year, usually the biggest event of the British white power calendar, and there were no B&H gigs in the south of England at all.

The year ended with deep paranoia among the higher echelons of the Blood & Honour scene, after it became apparent that there was one or more HOPE not hate moles among them.

2023 PROSPECTS

While the white power music scene will limp on, not least because there remains a core group of 5-700 British nazi skinheads still around, gigs are likely to become smaller and more secretive in an attempt to evade HOPE not hate and anti-fascist attention.

SECTION 9 – NORTHERN IRELAND



Peace Wall in Belfast,
Northern Ireland

TROUBLING TIMES AHEAD

The death of the Queen caused mixed reactions in Northern Ireland, but also came off the back of threats of renewed violence in the troubled province, writes MATTHEW COLLINS.

A DAY AFTER the death of Queen Elizabeth II, veteran BBC foreign correspondent John Simpson relayed over social media how an Irish friend told him that while drinking in an “Irish Republican Socialist pub” in Dublin: “To a man & a woman everyone raised a glass to a woman who loved Ireland & did so much to bring about peace on our islands.”

Of the hundreds of replies to Simpson the most common was “no such pub exists”, and even if such a thing had even happened, it would have been impossible to imagine Irish Republican Socialists reacting to the news in such a way.

There was however unprecedented preparation in Ireland for the news. Sinn Féin, the political party

most linked with anti-royalist sentiment, also held the position of First Minister designate of Northern Ireland – where some of the Queen’s most loyal and fervent subjects reside.

A name forever linked with the Irish Republican Army (IRA), since the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998, Sinn Féin has transformed itself from a political instrument of its armed wing to become the largest political party in all Ireland. Part of the process was the shaking of hands between The Queen and Martin McGuinness (the former leader of the IRA) in Dublin in 2012.

In an email, Sinn Féin asked members to be respectful and use “appropriate language” avoiding “any form of

Royal tribute, Belfast. Originally erected to mark the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II, this mural at the corner of the Shankill Road and Crimea Street in Belfast has now become a focal point for those paying respect to the late monarch.

Photo: © Rossographer (cc-by-sa/2.0)



personal abuse” once news of the British monarch’s passing was made official.

More worrisome, perhaps, was that the party’s Vice President, Michelle O’Neill – Northern Ireland’s First Minister (designate) – was expected to receive the new British Monarch, King Charles III, to stamp his and Britain’s continued authority on the six counties of Ireland that are the province Northern Ireland.

The romanticism of Simpson’s improbable tale aside, in a pub on Dublin’s North Side where sport dominates plasma TV screens dotted around the bar, a sharp volley of words were exchanged between drinkers when the Queen’s death was confirmed.

Celebration was met with equally disapproving grunts. Upon query, a terse and weathered landlord bellowed across the boozier “it’s about respect”.

The same night, on Dublin’s Southside, Ireland’s most successful soccer club, Shamrock Rovers, played a Europa Conference League fixture against Swedish club Djurgården.

Before kick-off, Rovers players joined arms and bowed their heads for a minute’s silence. As well as some whistles from around the ground, a section of the Rovers’ supporter base chanted a song throughout the match celebrating the Queen’s death.

It was widely misreported that the minute’s silence was in mourning or appreciation for the Queen as well. It was, in fact, in memoriam for an Irish traveler child who had died.

That aside, the singing of “Lizzie’s in a box” was viral before half-time. The chant would even be used to fool one Irish newspaper that it was passengers celebrating on a Ryanair flight.

An online poll the next day found 61% of respondents approved the flying of the Irish tricolour at half-mast on government buildings out of respect to the dead monarch.

UNIONISM AND LOYALISM REACT

Born four years after the partition of Ireland in 1921, Princess – later Queen – Elizabeth was almost as old as the new state. She was sworn to defend its Protestant faith. Her likeness, in portraits and murals, was a constant reminder of the love and loyalty held for her in homes and on walls in schools and offices across the province of Northern Ireland.

In Derry/Londonderry in Northern Ireland, in nationalist areas the news of Queen Elizabeth’s death was met with street celebrations, flag-waving and the sound of car horns. In the smaller Unionist and Loyalist areas of the city, a community that often depicts itself as being under a constant and historical siege, there was a sense of real and historical despair, best summed up by the *Irish Times* as an “earthquake for Northern Irish Unionists”.

In fact, news of her death provoked an almost North Korean-esque outpouring of grief and marching, with carefully coordinated marches and bouquets of flowers laid at the many thousands of murals dedicated to her across the province.

The death of their monarch of 70 years capped a year of pain for Northern Ireland’s Unionists: never had they felt so distant, with such indifference from, Britain. It

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In the smaller Unionist and Loyalist areas of the city ... there was a sense of real and historical despair

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also capped off a dampened year-long celebration of Northern Ireland’s centenary.

In 2022, the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) increasingly targeted drug gangs and criminals linked to Loyalist paramilitaries. Almost the entire leadership of the massive East Belfast Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was arrested and remanded for a series of acts of intimidation against its own community.

Although this was welcomed in Unionist (and Loyalist) communities, the seizure of firearms and cash greatly reduced paramilitaries’ ability to resist both the Northern Ireland protocol and Republican violence.

Early in the year the UVF had hijacked a car and launched a hoax bomb threat against Irish foreign minister Simon Coveney during his visit to Belfast. An embarrassment to both the Irish and British governments, the UVF claimed it would continue to target Irish politicians visiting the North.

Secondarily, much of East Belfast UVF fell under the instruction of the “mainstream” UVF led from West Belfast’s Shankill Road. Although much of this “mainstream” UVF complies with the ceasefire and GFA, and indeed meets regularly with the PSNI and representatives of the British and Irish governments (who fund their “community workers”), it was from this body that the hoax bomb threat against the Irish foreign minister came.

A RETURN TO VIOLENCE?

While Loyalist paramilitaries gave off-the-record briefings of their military capabilities, the Unionist political machinery charged with protecting their interests lurched from one incoherent political strategy and disaster to another.

In May’s Stormont elections, squabbling and a seeming indifference to electoral protocols left Sinn Fein the largest party in the Northern Irish Assembly. Since then, Unionists have refused to take their own seats, leaving Stormont once again paralysed.

In an unpublished series of interviews HOPE not hate carried out in May 2022 with people linked to Loyalist paramilitaries, a key point made (in one particular interview) was that Loyalist support for peace was ailing and Loyalists remained confident they had the capabilities and “the determination”, if necessary, to thwart what in the words of Sinn Fein themselves could be the possibility of a United Ireland in as little as 10 years.

“Their [the Irish establishment’s] desire to keep Sinn Fein out of power in Dublin is as strong as ours is to keep them out of power in Belfast.

“They [the Irish coalition government] can make all the right noises for their electorate and we can, by the same respect, keep reminding them what awaits them this side of the border.”

An indication of the Irish establishment’s fear of Sinn

Photo: Albert.white
at English Wikipedia



“

Both the UVF and the UDA ... were also angered by talk of joint authority between Dublin and London and warned of 'dire consequences' if it went ahead

”

Fein taking power is the solidly centralist coalition between Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael (and the Greens), a coalition of main parties diametrically and historically opposed to one other.

To solidify this anti-Sinn Fein coalition, Micheál Martin, the serving Fianna Fáil leader and Taoiseach (until December 2022) spoke at the commemorations on the anniversary of the death of former IRA revolutionary Michael Collins in August. Historically, Collins has been regarded as having acted politically against the interests of Ireland by Fianna Fáil and as an out-and-out traitor by the IRA and Sinn Fein.

These actions by the Taoiseach were not lost on the “Shinners” in Dublin and in the North of Ireland, who were also drawn to some rare but stifled platitudes in acknowledging the centenary of Collins’ death.

In July, the BBC dealt a significant cultural dent to Unionism when “after careful consideration” it decided to no longer live-broadcast their 12th July parades.

During October, The Loyalist Communities Council (which is a civilian-sounding front for paramilitary thinking) sent a letter to the leaders of all the main Unionist parties, indicating support was waning for the political and peace processes in light of the lack of progress in dealing with the Northern Ireland Protocol (the treaty set up to prevent a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic after Brexit).

Both the UVF and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) reiterated in the letter their leaderships (the UDA has at least six different leaders) were also angered by talk of joint authority between Dublin and London and warned of “dire consequences” if it went ahead.

That plan, mooted by Sinn Fein, The Alliance Party and the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), came after attempts to resurrect the Stormont Assembly failed to meet that month’s deadline.

Sources inside the UVF claim that until guarantees were made, there would no consideration given to joint authority and both they and the UDA (which operates under the name the Ulster Freedom Fighters – UFF) had instructed their volunteers to carry out attacks in the Republic of Ireland if joint authority was imposed.

Although there is no way of substantiating either the claim or the capabilities of either group to any longer carry out substantial cross-border attacks, it’s depressingly obvious there will have been no shortage of volunteers.



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