

**IN THE HIGH COURT OF JUSTICE
THE BUSINESS AND PROPERTY COURTS OF ENGLAND AND WALES
CHANCERY DIVISION
BETWEEN:**

JOCKEY CLUB RACECOURSES LIMITED

Applicant

-and-

- (1) DANIEL FRANK PETER KIDBY**
- (2) PERSONS UNKNOWN INTENTIONALLY OBSTRUCTING THE 7 HORSE RACES ON 2 JUNE 2023 AND 8 HORSE RACES ON 3 JUNE 2023 AT THE LOCATION DESCRIBED BELOW AS THE "EPSOM RACECOURSE"**
- (3) PERSONS UNKNOWN ENTERING THE AREA DESCRIBED BELOW AS THE "RACE TRACK" EXCEPT AT SPECIFIC "CROSSING POINTS" AND WITH "AUTHORISATION", AS DESCRIBED BELOW**
- (4) PERSONS UNKNOWN ENTERING AND/OR REMAINING ON ANY "CROSSING POINTS" WITHOUT "AUTHORISATION", AS DESCRIBED BELOW**
- (5) [PERSONS UNKNOWN INTENTIONALLY CAUSING ANY OBJECT TO ENTER ONTO THE "RACE TRACK" WITHOUT "AUTHORISATION", AS DESCRIBED BELOW**
- (6) PERSONS UNKNOWN ENTERING THE AREA DESCRIBED BELOW AS THE "PARADE RING" WITHOUT "AUTHORISATION", AS DESCRIBED BELOW**
- (7) PERSONS UNKNOWN ENTERING AND/OR REMAINING ON ANY PART OF THE AREAS DESCRIBED BELOW AS THE "HORSES' ROUTE TO THE PARADE RING" AND/OR THE "HORSES' ROUTE TO THE RACE START", WITHOUT "AUTHORISATION", AS DESCRIBED BELOW**
- (8) PERSONS UNKNOWN INTENTIONALLY ENDANGERING ANY PERSON AT THE LOCATION DESCRIBED BELOW AS THE "EPSOM RACECOURSE"**

Respondents

WITNESS STATEMENT OF DICKON WHITE

I, **DICKON WHITE**, of Jockey Club Racecourses Limited, 75 High Holborn, London, WC1V 6LS **WILL SAY** as follows:

1. I am the Aintree and North-West Regional Director for the Applicant. I am currently based at Aintree Racecourse, Ormskirk Rd, Aintree, Liverpool L9 5AS (the "**Racecourse**"). I have worked for the Applicant for approximately 25 years and have been in my current role since September 2018.
2. I am responsible for the management and performance of the three racecourses owned by the Applicant in the North-West of England, namely the Racecourse, Haydock Park Racecourse (located in Newton-le-Willows), and Carlisle Racecourse (located in Cumbria). Between them, these three venues stage approximately 65 racing fixtures a year, including some of the Applicant's most prestigious races. One such race is the Grand National, which is a national hunt horse race held annually at the Racecourse (the "**Grand National**").
3. First run in 1839, the Grand National is one of the most watched sporting events on television in the United Kingdom, regularly attracting millions of viewers. In 2022, the Grand National attracted a peak audience of 7.9 million. It is broadcast in over 140 countries across the globe.
4. The Grand National is a handicap steeplechase that covers a distance of approximately 4 miles and 2.5 furlongs, with horses jumping 30 fences over two laps (the "**Racetrack**").
5. The Grand National is part of a three-day race meeting, with more than 150,000 people regularly in attendance over its duration (the "**Festival**").
6. At this year's Festival – which took place between Thursday 13 April and Saturday 15 April inclusive (the "**2023 Festival**") – certain incidents took place involving groups of protestors. It is my understanding that the protestors involved were affiliated with Animal Rising, an animal activist movement based in the United Kingdom ("**AR**"). It is also my understanding that AR is not a corporate entity and that it has no particular hierarchical structure. Rather, AR is a collection of members who all share a common purpose. I do not know the names of any of the protestors who engaged in the incidents I describe below but I am confident that those involved were associated with,

or are members of AR. As set out below, many of them were wearing AR t-shirts, and AR has widely publicised its involvement in disrupting the Grand National [pages 1 to 7 of DW1]. Therefore, from hereon I shall refer to them as the “**AR Protestors**”.

7. Within this witness statement, I wish to provide details of incidents that affected the 2023 Festival, and in particular the commencement of the Grand National, which took place on Saturday 15 April (the “**2023 Grand National**”).
8. Save where stated to the contrary, the facts and matters contained in this witness statement are within my own knowledge and are true. Where facts and matters are outside my knowledge, the source is stated, and I believe those facts to be true.
9. During the course of this statement, I will refer to certain documents, copies of which are exhibited in a paginated bundle marked 'DW1' which accompanies this statement.
10. I make this witness statement in support of the Applicant's claim for an interim injunction against the Respondents.

Background to the 2023 Festival

11. As part of my role, I have overall responsibility for the security and safe running of all events held at the Racecourse, including the Festival. In advance of racing fixtures, my team and I liaise closely with Merseyside Police, in order to co-ordinate our plans to ensure the safety of those in attendance. 'Safety' involves planning for the safe operation of the whole Festival with due consideration to the substantial number of racegoers attending and those who are part of the Festival itself – e.g., the Applicant's staff, suppliers, owners of horses, trainers and all of their support staff, as well as the horses themselves.
12. Ahead of a Festival, given the number of those expected to attend, planning and preparation is paramount. This year's event – the 2023 Festival – was no different.
13. For each Grand National Festival, the Applicant – on behalf of the Racecourse – enters into what is known as an Agreement for Special Police Services, which is a private contract that provides for the provision of special services by a police force – i.e., beyond that which the police would consider necessary to meet their public duty obligations (the “**ASPS**”). In or around February 2023, we began to hold fortnightly meetings with Merseyside Police to discuss:
 - 13.1 the Racecourse's security plans;
 - 13.2 what Merseyside Police was intending to provide by way of personnel at the 2023 Festival, per the terms of the SPSA and otherwise; and

- 13.3 how we would work together to ensure that those in attendance were safe.
14. As part of our security planning for the 2023 Festival, we recruited three, private security services providers to provide complementary services alongside the police services that we had contracted, per the ASPS. They were G4S, who are the Applicant's main provider of security services at its racecourses, Provide, and WH Security (together the "**Private Security Providers**").
15. On 1 April 2023, an article was published in the Mail on Sunday with the title '*Vegan mob plots to sabotage the Grand National: undercover investigation exposes plan by up to 100 Animal Rebellion activists to storm the event and glue themselves to the course*' (the "**Article**") [pages 8 to 17 of DW1]. The Article alleged that a journalist working for the Mail on Sunday had infiltrated AR¹ and had discovered that, *inter alia*:
- 15.1 its ringleaders had conducted two secret reconnaissance missions of the Racecourse to pinpoint security weaknesses;
- 15.2 a fleet of minibuses was being hired to ferry protesters and equipment to the Racecourse;
- 15.3 more than 100 activists had signed up to the plan, which was being organised via the encrypted mobile phone application 'Signal';
- 15.4 some activists planned to use ladders to scale the Racecourse's security fence, while others would be tasked with cutting holes in the fences using bolt cutters; and
- 15.5 once in the Racecourse itself, protesters planned to glue themselves together and sit down, forming a human barrier across the Racetrack.
16. The content of the Article, and the exposure of AR's intentions, caused us to significantly review our plans to take into account the threat of disruption. In response, alongside our Private Security Providers, we held an urgent meeting with Merseyside Police to discuss how to respond to AR's plans. We reviewed our policies and procedures and decided to increase the amount of daytime and overnight security we had on site from Monday 10 April onwards – i.e., four days in advance of the start of the 2023 Festival. We increased both the number of security personnel and the number of security dogs. The overall cost to the Applicant for this additional security – which continued throughout the 2023 Festival – was approximately £70,000 +VAT.
17. In the week preceding the 2023 Festival, I was advised by Merseyside Police that they had obtained intelligence that suggested protestors were intending to disrupt the

¹It is my understanding that AR and 'Animal Rebellion' (who are named in the Article) are one and the same organisation, and that following publication of the Article, Animal Rebellion simply changed its name to AR [pages 18 to 21 of DW1].

event, as had been alleged in the Article. While Merseyside Police could not provide me with any further information on what was planned, it was made clear to me that we, alongside our Private Security Providers, needed to be on high alert. Merseyside Police informed me that, whilst they would do everything they could to support the Racecourse, we had to be extremely vigilant, and that the threat of disruption was serious and credible.

18. In light of this, in the days before the start of the 2023 Festival, we worked extremely closely with Merseyside Police to ensure that the event could proceed as planned, and in the safest manner possible. There was a sense of collective responsibility to deliver the 2023 Festival.

Incidents at the 2023 Festival

19. As above, the 2023 Festival is a three-day event. The opening two days – Thursday 13 and Friday 14 April – proceeded as planned, and there were no significant security issues to report.
20. The 2023 Grand National took place on Saturday 15 April, with the race scheduled to commence at 5.15pm. That morning, at around 9:30am, AR began a demonstration at the front of the Racecourse. Every year, the Racecourse provides a space for peaceful demonstration. Indeed, peaceful protests on the day of the Grand National are relatively common. Over the years, many such protests have taken place on or around the Racecourse and neither I, nor the Racecourse, have any issues with such protests, so long as they are conducted in a lawful and peaceful manner.
21. In respect of AR's protest at that time, information was being relayed to me that approximately 20 to 30 AR Protestors were in attendance and that, on the whole, their protests were good natured.
22. As the morning progressed, and as spectators started to enter the Racecourse, the number of AR Protestors outside the Racecourse began to steadily increase. Around this time, I was told that several people had been apprehended by Merseyside Police off-site. It was my understanding that those individuals were also affiliated to AR and that it was their intention to travel to the Racecourse to disrupt the 2023 Grand National.
23. Alongside the protest at the front of the Racecourse, certain AR Protestors began to conduct a slow march around the Racecourse's perimeter. The Racecourse is surrounded by a metal fence that is approximately 10ft in height (the "**Perimeter Fence**"). Next to the Perimeter Fence are public footpaths, and it is possible to walk around the entire perimeter of the Racecourse along these pathways. The AR

Protestors had commenced a slow march next to the Perimeter Fence, and at certain points had staged various 'sit-downs' close to the Racecourse.

24. At or around 4:45pm, approximately 30 minutes before the start of the 2023 Grand National, I travelled to an area of the Racecourse called the 'side-on box' (the "**Box**"). The Box overlooks a large part of the Racecourse and is where the racing is managed. Alongside me in the Box was a representative of Merseyside Police. Upon my arrival at the Box, I was told that our CCTV cameras – which are located throughout the Racecourse – had identified a number of vehicles dropping-off protestors at the far side of Racecourse near to the Canal Turn, which is a notable area of the Racetrack. Upon exiting the vehicles, the AR Protestors were proceeding to climb the Perimeter Fence using ladders and rubber matting similar to that used in the footwells of cars. The AR Protestors placed the ladders against the Perimeter Fence and were throwing the rubber matting on the barbed wire that protects the top of the Perimeter Fence, to stop themselves from being cut by the sharp edges. It appeared that the AR Protestors had brought these items with them, with the intention of attempting to scale the Perimeter Fence and gain access to the Racecourse. I was subsequently told by Merseyside Police that, as well as being armed with ladders and rubber matting, many of the AR Protestors were carrying bottles of glue. It is my understanding that the purpose of the glue was to allow the AR Protestors to stick themselves to objects, such as the fences over which the horses jump.
25. In total, approximately 100 AR Protestors were attempting to gain access to the Racecourse by climbing over the Perimeter Fence. It was an incredibly tense period of time and the AR Protestors' actions became increasingly disruptive. Merseyside Police – alongside our Private Security Providers and several of the Racecourse's employees – were engaged in an ongoing battle to prevent the AR Protestors from accessing the Racecourse. Despite their efforts, several of the AR Protestors were successful in gaining access to the Racecourse and, once over the Perimeter Fence, were attempting to get onto the Racetrack (the "**First Unauthorised Access**").
26. In addition to the First Unauthorised Access, at approximately 5:05pm, I was informed that three other AR Protestors had gained access to the Racetrack via the Embankment Enclosure, which contains one of the main spectator stands. It is my understanding that these individuals had purchased valid tickets to enter the Racecourse, and that during the build-up to the start of the 2023 Grand National, they had mingled with the regular spectators. The three AR Protestors were dressed in normal, civilian clothing. These individuals then proceeded to access the Racetrack by running underneath the fencing that skirts its edge. It is my understanding that the three AP Protestors were attempting to reach the second fence, over which the horses would jump. Upon gaining access to the Racetrack, the three individuals removed

some of their clothing, revealing pink t-shirts with AR's name and logo emblazoned on them (the "**Second Unauthorised Access**").

27. Before they could reach the second fence, officers from Merseyside Police and the Private Security Providers managed to apprehend the three AR Protestors. It is my understanding that their intentions were to affix themselves to the second fence, as they were each carrying bottles of glue.

Consequences of the AR Protestors' Actions

28. Like any sporting event, there is a timed programme that we work to before a race. Normally, horses and their jockeys would have a reasonable period of time to prepare ahead of the Grand National. In the half hour leading up to the race this would normally see horses in the parade ring (approximately 15-20 minutes before the start of the race), jockeys then mounting (approximately 5-10 minutes before the start of the race) and exiting on to the Racecourse to head for the start line.
29. In light of the First and Second Unauthorised Accesses, however, we had no choice but to delay the start of the 2023 Grand National. The safety of the racehorses, jockeys, spectators, and the AR Protestors themselves was paramount. Until the AR Protestors had been cleared from the Racetrack, and it had been determined that there was no risk of other protesters accessing the Racecourse, the Grand National simply could not commence. As above, the police and our Private Security Providers were engaged in an ongoing battle to prevent the AR Protestors from accessing the Racecourse and potentially causing significant harm, or even death, to the horses, jockeys, and themselves. The threat of injury, or worse, is very real – at the Grand National, approximately 40 horses are moving at over 40mph. If something, or someone, gets in the way, it would be very difficult to stop the horses when they are in motion.
30. As a result of the delayed start to the 2023 Grand National, the horses waiting to race had to be held in the paddock, and they became agitated because of this. The horses had to alter their whole routine, effectively halting preparation. The horses were kept waiting for a substantial period of time.
31. The 2023 Grand National commenced at 5:30pm, after the AR Protestors involved in the First and Second Unauthorised Accesses had been removed from the Track. This was 15 minutes after the scheduled start time.

Impact of the AR Protestors' Actions

32. I have worked in horseracing since 1998 and the staging of the 2023 Grand National was, without question, the most challenging day of my career. The disruption caused by AR was significant. Not only did the AR Protestors' actions impact the start of the race, they also:
- 32.1 caused the horses waiting to run to become agitated, to which Mr. Sandy Thomson, the trainer of Hill-Sixteen, the horse that tragically died having fallen at the first fence, alluded to in his interviews following the 2023 Grand National [pages 22 to 24 of DW1];
 - 32.2 put the horses, jockeys and themselves in serious danger of harm;
 - 32.3 required the Applicant and Merseyside Police to expend an enormous amount of time and resource in dealing with the disruption that occurred on the day, and the fallout of the AP Protestors' actions. There is no doubt that the actions of the AP Protestors diverted the attention of Merseyside Police, along with our Private Security Providers and several of the Racecourse's employees, away from their regular, general safety duties; and
 - 32.4 required the Applicant to spend a considerable amount of money obtaining additional security for the event (see paragraph 16 above).

The Applicant's Claim

33. It is my understanding that AR have been vocal in their desire to stop the forthcoming Derby race at Epsom Downs, another of the Applicant's racecourses (the "**2023 Derby**"). Indeed, the landing page of AR's website states: *'Join us on the tracks of the Epsom Derby! We'll be disrupting the Epsom Derby to continue the conversation we started at the Grand National'* [page 25 of DW1]. Further, as is set out in Ms. Amy Starkey's statement, during recent meetings between AR and the Applicant's representatives, including Ms. Starkey, it is AR's intention to prevent the 2023 Derby from taking place.
34. It appears clear, therefore, that those who caused such significant disruption at the 2023 Grand National are seeking to do exactly the same at the 2023 Derby. It is with this in mind, given that I have had first-hand experience of the impact of the AR Protestors' actions, I fully support the Applicant's claim for an interim injunction against the Respondents.

Statement of Truth

35. I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true. I understand that proceedings for contempt of court may be brought against anyone who makes, or

causes to be made, a false statement in a document verified by a statement of truth without an honest belief in its truth.

Signed 

DICKON WHITE

Dated: 22 | 5 | 23

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Opinion

🕒 This article is more than **1 month old**

Why did we protest at the Grand National? To finally make Britain talk about our treatment of animals

Alex Lockwood



Society is wedded to a belief that it is OK to control animals for profit. We hoped halting the race would make people stop and think

Sun 16 Apr 2023 14.45 BST



As a country of people who love animals, it shocks and saddens many of us that watching a horse break their neck on national TV is still considered entertainment. That's why 300 people from Animal Rising went to Aintree on Saturday to **stop the Grand National**.

We did not fully succeed, and - like last year - more horses died. Hill Sixteen fell at the first fence and died of its injuries. Hill Sixteen's death followed those of two others at **Aintree** last week. We mourn the loss of these animals.

These deaths are par for this course, and for racing events overall. The horse racing authorities and betting industry defend slow incremental "welfare" improvements, and yet horses continue to die with awful regularity: **50 so far on the tracks in 2023**. On average, a horse dies every other day on the tracks, over jumps and on the flat, with many more dying in training and the paddock. The dangerous institution of the Grand National should have been retired long ago.

The Mail

ON SUNDAY

APRIL 16, 2023

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TERMS APPLY

After being alerted by our undercover team's investigation, police make 118 arrests and foil vegan mob trying to ruin People's Race

MoS SAVES THE GRAND NATIONAL!



BAD NEWS: Veteran broadcaster Sophie Raworth

EXCLUSIVE

Redundancy letters shock for BBC's top presenters

SEE PAGE 7

By **Mark Hookham, Sabrina Miller** and **Richard Marsden**

The Mail COMMENT

ON SUNDAY

A **PILOT** to wreck the world's favourite horse race was sensationally foiled by police yesterday thanks to an undercover exposé by The Mail on Sunday.

Dozens of animal rights campaigners attempted to storm security fences at Aintree before the start of the Grand National, but were repelled by police and security guards who were on standby after being warned by this newspaper.

Nine protesters managed to get on to the track, including two who attempted to glue themselves to one of the jumps.

However, all were rapidly dragged away and arrested.

Police were aided by spectators who

UNDOUBTEDLY it was only because The Mail on Sunday infiltrated an animal activist group planning to sabotage the Grand National that the authorities were prepared and able to allow 'the People's

Race' to go ahead. Let's hope yesterday's success is the first victory in society's war against all those virtue-signalling anarchists who are wreaking chaos on the lives of millions of law-abiding people.

joined officers in forcing back activists from the perimeter fence.

Amazingly, the race was delayed by just 14 minutes, with police arresting 118 activists.

The dramatic thwarting of the conspiracy

meant 70,000 spectators – and a global TV audience of up to 600 million – enjoyed a thrilling race that was won after a superb finish by Corach Rambler. A jubilant

Turn to Page 2 >>

📷 The Mail on Sunday's front page today. Photograph: Henry Nolan/Mail on Sunday

Where we did succeed is in showing that this is a much bigger problem than just one race. We protested because everywhere we look we see a broken relationship with animals and the natural world.

This broken relationship is at the heart of our climate and nature crisis. We devour nature through animal farming and fishing, killing our rivers with slurry from industrial chicken and pig farms, and watching our beloved wildlife disappear in front of our eyes. All because we are stuck in a pattern of outdated beliefs that it is OK to control animals, using them for profit. The **Grand National** is emblematic of this uncomfortable and one-sided dominance - that's why we tried to stop it.

There is a solution: repairing this broken relationship, beginning where most harm is done, in our food system. A food system without animals is already known to be safer, more secure and more sovereign, providing all the calories and nutrients we need and, in fact, using less land. This freed-up land could be rewilded for nature to recover, and we could see wildlife - including wild horses - return and flourish.

It shouldn't take a committed bunch of caring individuals to put this solution at the centre of national debate. But it has. Up and down the country, everyone is talking about our treatment of animals. This national conversation is essential to challenge the fast decline into climate inaction.

Some prefer to focus on the protests rather than the issues. So let's talk about them. Animal Rising is a peaceful movement; our actions are focused on stopping harm, particularly in the food system, where we **breed and kill more than 1.2bn animals** in the UK every year. All of our planned actions on Saturday were nonviolent. That's different from being disruptive, of course, but the two have long been compatible: just look at Gandhi or Martin Luther King.



📷 'On average, a horse dies every other day on the tracks, over jumps and on the flat.' The water DW1 at the Grand National. Photograph: Paul Greenwood/Shutterstock

We are a movement for all life and that includes animals exploited elsewhere such as in sports and animal testing. The aim was to stop the race before it began. But sadly it was deemed more important for people to have a bit of fun and a flutter than to stop animals from dying.

For those few claiming that our actions affected the horses and outcome, we point to the fact we were not taking action for the other 2,601 deaths since 2007. Direct action has been part of a healthy democracy for as long as there has been democracy, especially when it is obvious that “business as usual” does not represent the values of most of us. In the UK, according to research by the University of York, more than **80% of people under 40 do not want to attend horse racing events** because they know it is unethical.

Returning to the bigger picture, has anyone yet taken any action that is proportionate to the coming social and economic collapse that is likely to result from the climate crisis? Have we persuaded our climate-insane government to take proportionate action? Not yet - if we had, it would have already ended animal farming and fishing and supported farmers into safer, more sustainable practices.

That's why we'll be taking more action this year, along with all those acting to challenge the existential threat. We're not against those who attended Aintree, or the trainers or jockeys. But we accept Saturday was the biggest challenge to horse racing in this country for more than a decade.

Let's hope that we've begun the process of having this crucial conversation about our treatment of animals and the natural world, and that others - our government, and all those who say they love animals - stand with us to tackle the mounting crises we face.

This article was amended on 18 April 2023 to clarify that Hill Sixteen was not put down or euthanised, but died of its injuries.

Alex Lockwood is an Animal Rising spokesperson and volunteer

Do you have an opinion on the issues raised in this article? If you would like to submit a response of up to 300 words by email to be considered for publication in our **letters** section, please **click here**.

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EXCLUSIVE: Vegan mob plots to sabotage the Grand National: Undercover investigation exposes plan by up to 100 Animal Rebellion activists to storm the event and glue themselves to the course

- More than 100 eco-activists secretly plan to sabotage the Grand National
- Militant vegans and animal rights campaigners want to disrupt races at Aintree

By [SABRINA MILLER](#)

PUBLISHED: 22:00, 1 April 2023 | UPDATED: 23:55, 1 April 2023

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A secret plot by more than 100 eco-activists to sabotage the **Grand National** has been exposed by an undercover Mail on Sunday investigation.

Militant vegans and animal rights campaigners plan to use ladders and bolt cutters to storm security fences before the race at Aintree, then glue themselves together as a human barricade and sit across the course.

The conspiracy – revealed just two weeks before the race meeting – was uncovered by an MoS reporter posing as a member of the Animal Rebellion campaign group.

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Our journalist secretly filmed as the activists, who include a former top financial journalist and a nurse, simulated charging at security guards and boasting they would 'ruin' this year's event – which has a TV audience of up to 600 million across more than 140 countries as well as tens of thousands of spectators at the course.

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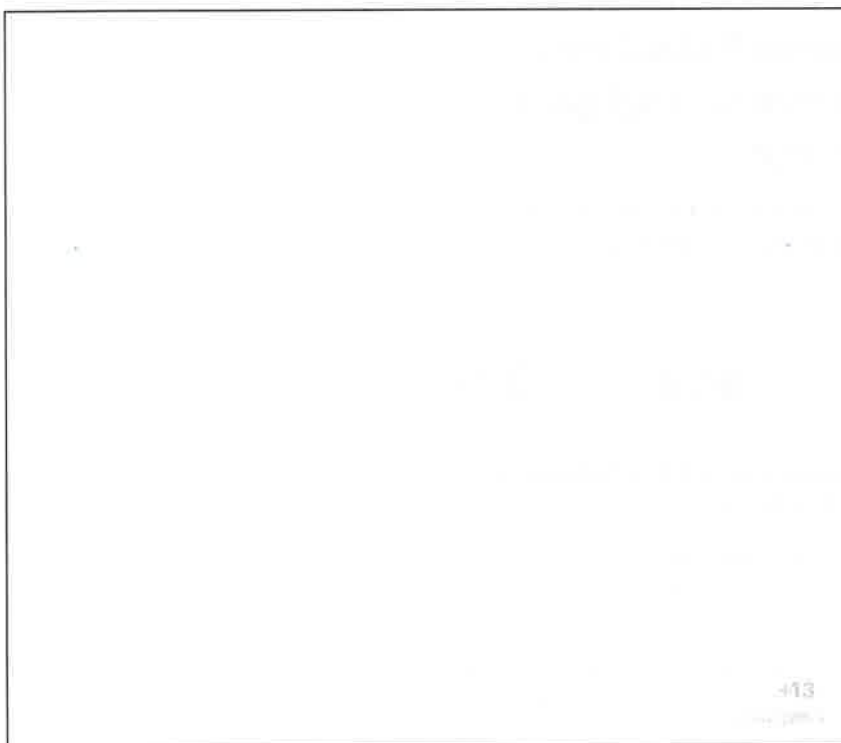


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This Animal Rebellion member is award-winning business journalist Jim Edwards, the former founding editor of the UK edition of financial news website Business Insider

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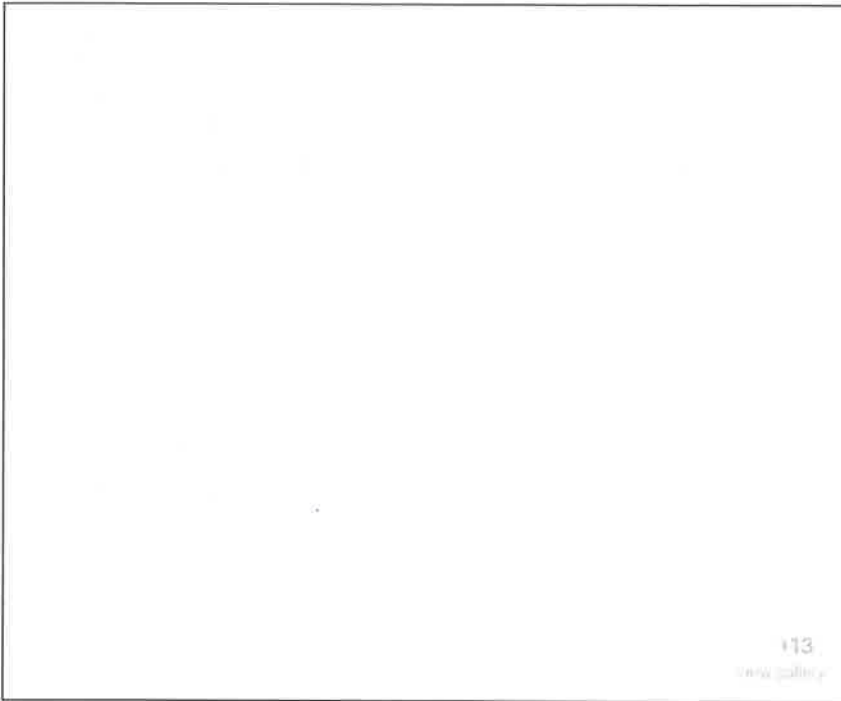
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One of the plot ringleaders, Rose Patterson, 33, (pictured) boasted that the Grand National stunt would have worldwide impact



A secret plot by more than 100 eco-activists to sabotage the Grand National has been exposed by an undercover Mail on Sunday investigation

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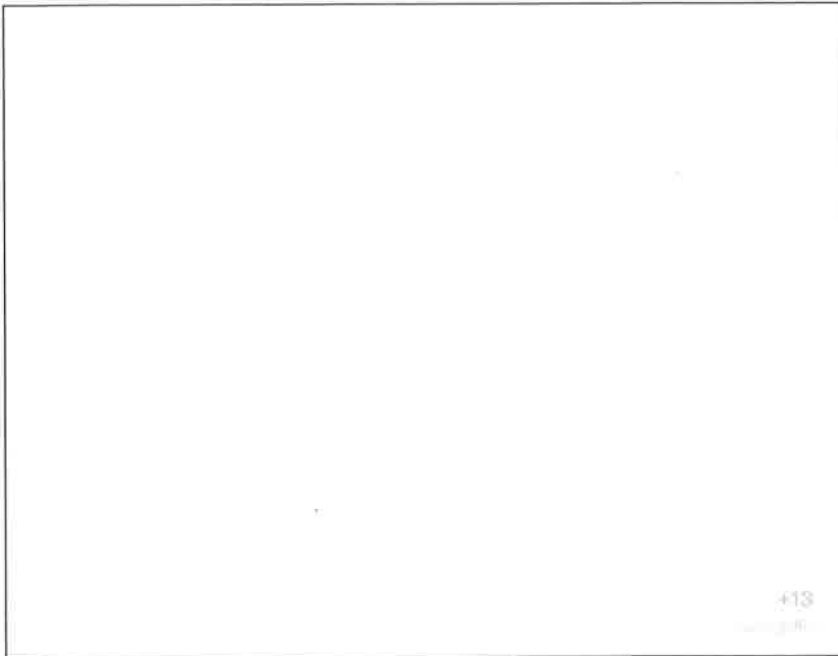
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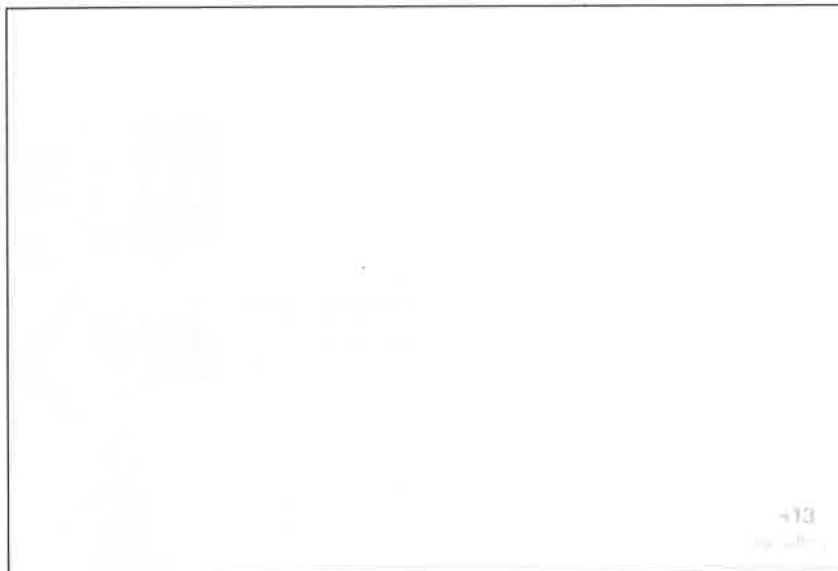
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The conspiracy - revealed just two weeks before the race meeting - was uncovered by an MoS reporter posing as a member of the Animal Rebellion campaign group



This evening the Mail on Sunday handed over our dossier of evidence to Merseyside Police. Pictured: Horses race away from the start during the Grand National Steeple Chase on the final day of the Grand National Festival horse race meeting at Aintree Racecourse in Liverpool, north west England on April 9, 2022

Our investigation reveals how:

- Ringleaders have already conducted two secret reconnaissance missions of the racecourse to pinpoint security weaknesses
- A network of safehouses is being arranged to accommodate protesters before the race
- A fleet of minibuses is being hired to ferry protesters and equipment to the racecourse in Merseyside

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- **More than 100 activists have signed up to the plot, which is being organised via the encrypted app Signal**
- **Some activists plan to use ladders to scale Aintree's security fence, while others will be tasked with cutting holes in it using bolt cutters**
- **Once on the racecourse, protesters plan to glue themselves together and sit down, forming a human barrier across the course**

Any delay or cancellation of this year's Grand National would provoke an international outcry and cost the horse racing and betting industries millions of pounds.

The plot echoes the so-called 'Race that Never Was' in 1993, when 15 animal rights protesters stormed the course near the first fence and delayed the start by eight minutes. It was then declared void after two false starts. Four years later, the race was postponed for two days after an IRA bomb threat led to the course being evacuated.

Alarming, those behind the latest plot claim it will 'kick-start' further protests at prestigious horse races this summer - raising the prospect that the first Royal Ascot of King Charles's reign could be targeted in June.

Animal Rebellion - an offshoot of the militant environmental protest group Extinction Rebellion - was founded in 2019 and wants all animal farming and fishing banned. It also wants to end horse racing, branding it 'animal abuse'.

The group came to prominence last year after activists dumped cartons of milk on the floors of top stores and supermarkets including Harrods and Fortnum & Mason.

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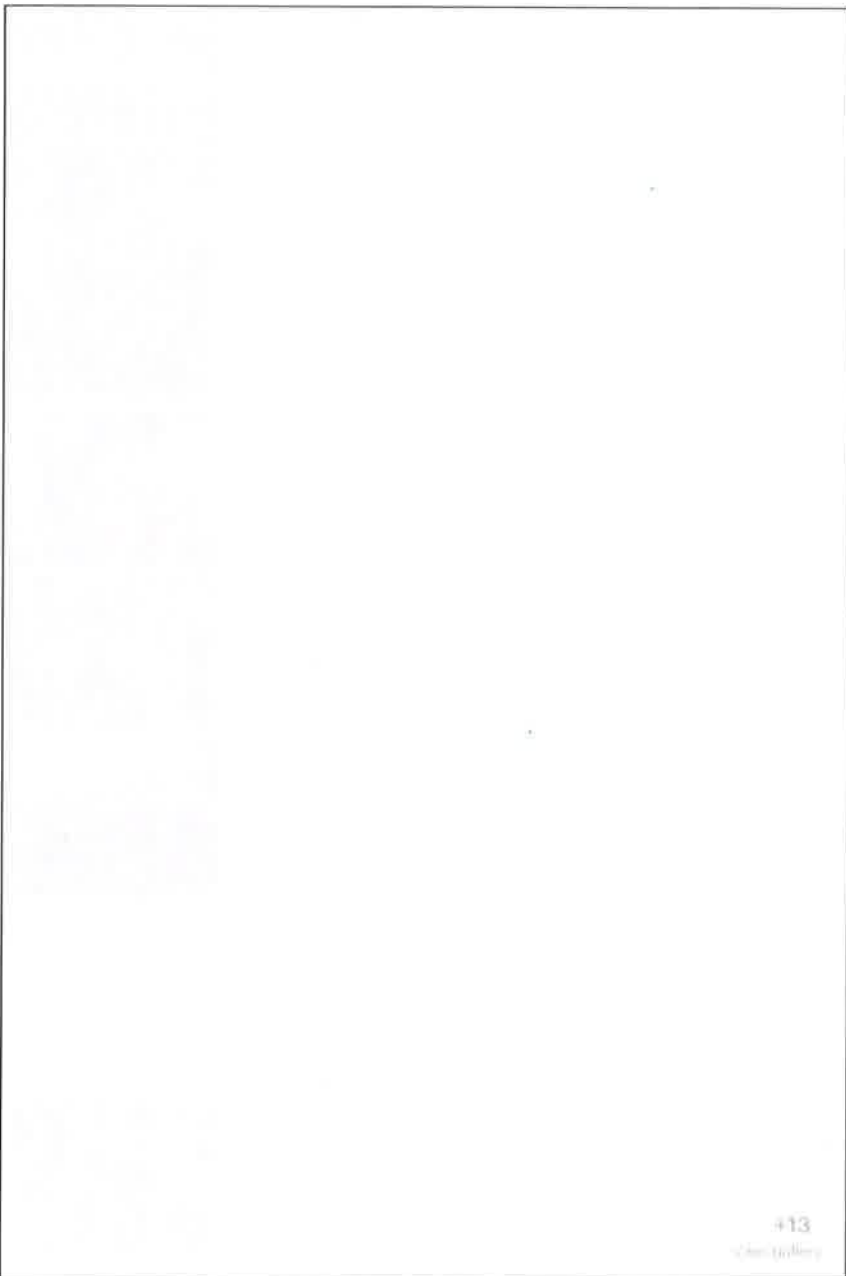


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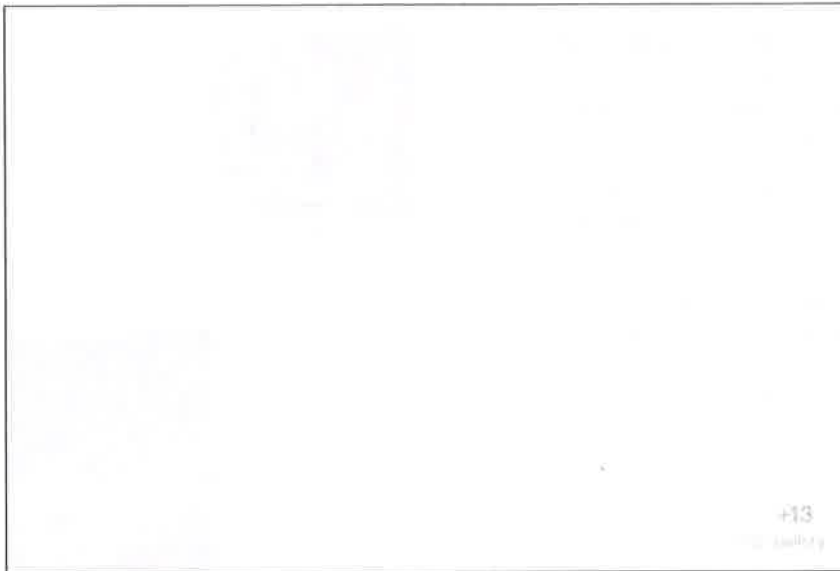
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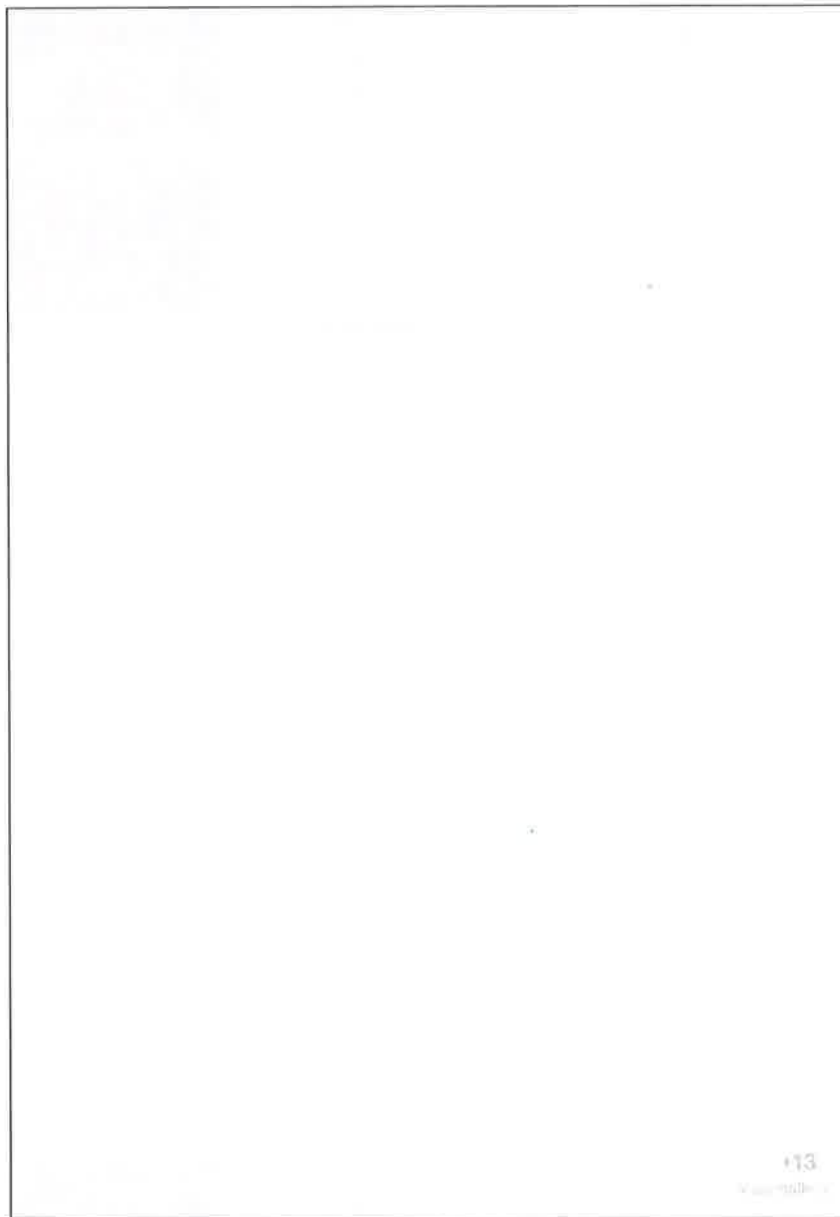
'Every parent's worst nightmare': Scottish trans butcher admits



In 2018 Jim Edwards was pictured alongside London Mayor Sadiq Khan at a reception



He now advises Animal Rebellion on its media strategy. Outlining the conspiracy, he said: '...The thing we're recruiting for is to get as many people as possible to Liverpool on April 15... We will be booking a bunch of houses so all the activists can stay together'



Last week our reporter joined ten others at a training day in an office in Dalston, a trendy enclave of East London, to prepare for the protest

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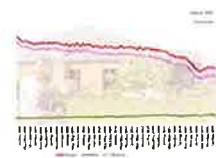
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Its fanatical members have also conducted a campaign of sit-ins at high-end restaurants. Former James Bond star Pierce Brosnan and his wife were caught up in a protest last month after Animal Rebellion targeted seafood restaurant Scott's in Mayfair, London.

The MoS first infiltrated the group in November last year.

It quickly became apparent to our reporter that a major plot was brewing and that the restaurant protests were simply the precursor to a more dramatic action.

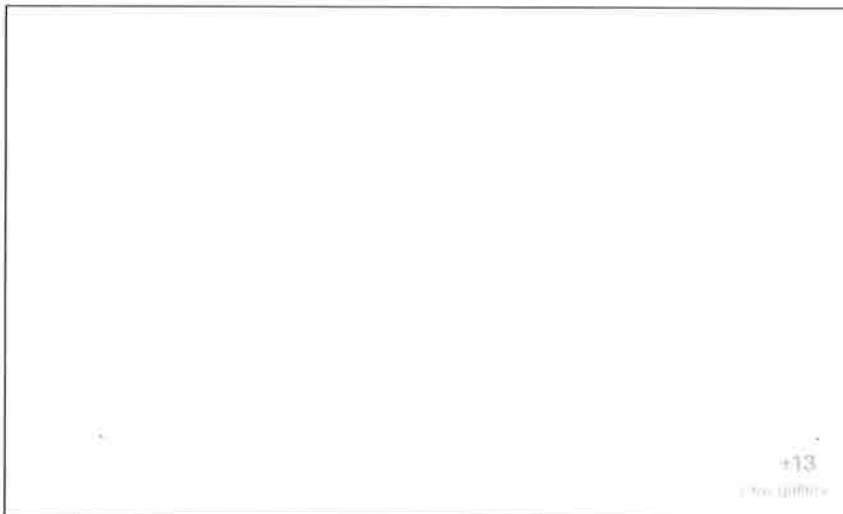
For weeks Animal Rebellion's leaders have been careful to keep the conspiracy under wraps, but earlier this month an activist who called himself 'Jim' phoned our reporter with a startling announcement.

Describing a forthcoming protest as 'our biggest spectacular one to date', he asked: 'Have you heard of the Grand National?'

'That will not be happening this year,' he added. 'We're hoping to gather 300 activists to occupy that course and stop it.' The MoS can today reveal that 'Jim' is in fact award-winning business journalist Jim Edwards, the former founding editor of the UK edition of financial news website Business Insider.

In 2018 he was pictured alongside London Mayor Sadiq Khan at a reception organised by the website. He quit last year and now advises Animal Rebellion on its media strategy.

Outlining the conspiracy, he said: '...The thing we're recruiting for is to get as many people as possible to Liverpool on April 15... We will be booking a bunch of houses so all the activists can stay together.'



Noble Yeats ridden by jockey Sam Waley-Cohen (no.28) clear a fence on their way to winning the Randox Grand National Handicap Chase on Grand National Day of the Randox Health Grand National Festival 2022 at Aintree Racecourse, Liverpool

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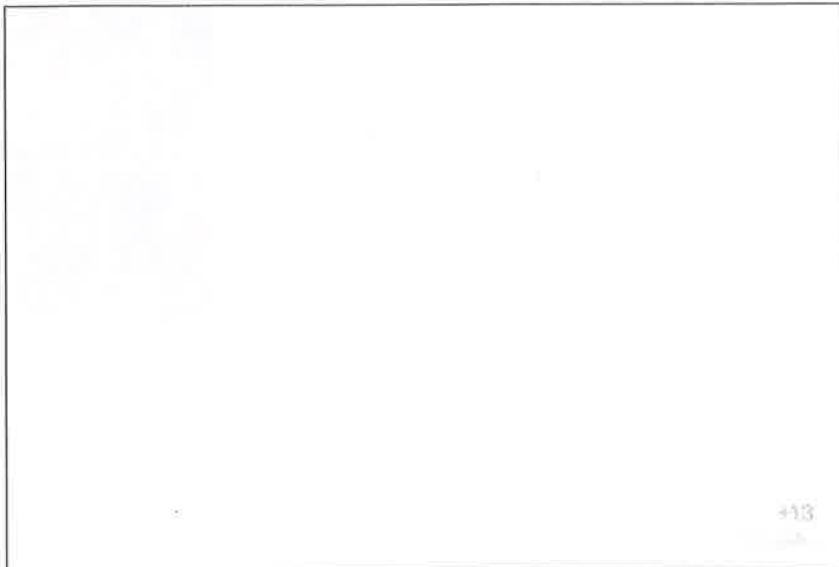
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Racegoers watch a race on the second day, 'Ladies Day', of the Grand National Festival horse race meeting, at Aintree Racecourse on April 8, 2022

Last week our reporter joined ten others at a training day in an office in Dalston, a trendy enclave of East London, to prepare for the protest.

One of the plot ringleaders, Rose Patterson, boasted that the Grand National stunt would have worldwide impact.

The 33-year-old was arrested in February after she and four others blocked Westminster Bridge. She was also one of several activists carried out of Scott's last month.

Stressing the information was 'secret', she said: 'Basically the kick-off action for this whole campaign is going to be at the Grand National. The biggest horse race in the world... We have 600 million people viewing this horse race worldwide, we've got £300 million of bets on the horse race and we're just going to ruin it.'

After clearing away the office chairs, the group were instructed to sit on the wooden floor with their eyes closed and link arms. Ms Patterson then began reading from a script in an exercise designed to prepare the protesters for the intensity of holding a hugely disruptive protest in front of a hostile crowd.

As she described how the Aintree protest would unfold, a soundtrack of rowdy spectators was played in the background.

'You feel the nerves in your stomach and feel butterflies and anxious and sick as the minibus is driving to the final location,' Ms Patterson said. 'After about an hour ... it's time to get out of the bus. You put on your pink animal-rising T-shirt and all your fellow [protesters] get out of the truck.'

She then revealed how some of the demonstrators would use ladders to scale Aintree's perimeter fence, while others would use bolt cutters to cut a hole in the fence to crawl through. 'There are like 100 of you now at the fence. You get the ladders out. Put them against the fence and you're the first one over,' she said. 'You start climbing that fence and you see security on the other side. You don't care. You know you're doing the right thing. And others cutting through the fence and climbing through.'

The activists were told that once on the course they would glue their hands together before sitting down to form a human barrier.

As Ms Patterson continued her description, loud jeering and booing erupted on the crowd noise recording.

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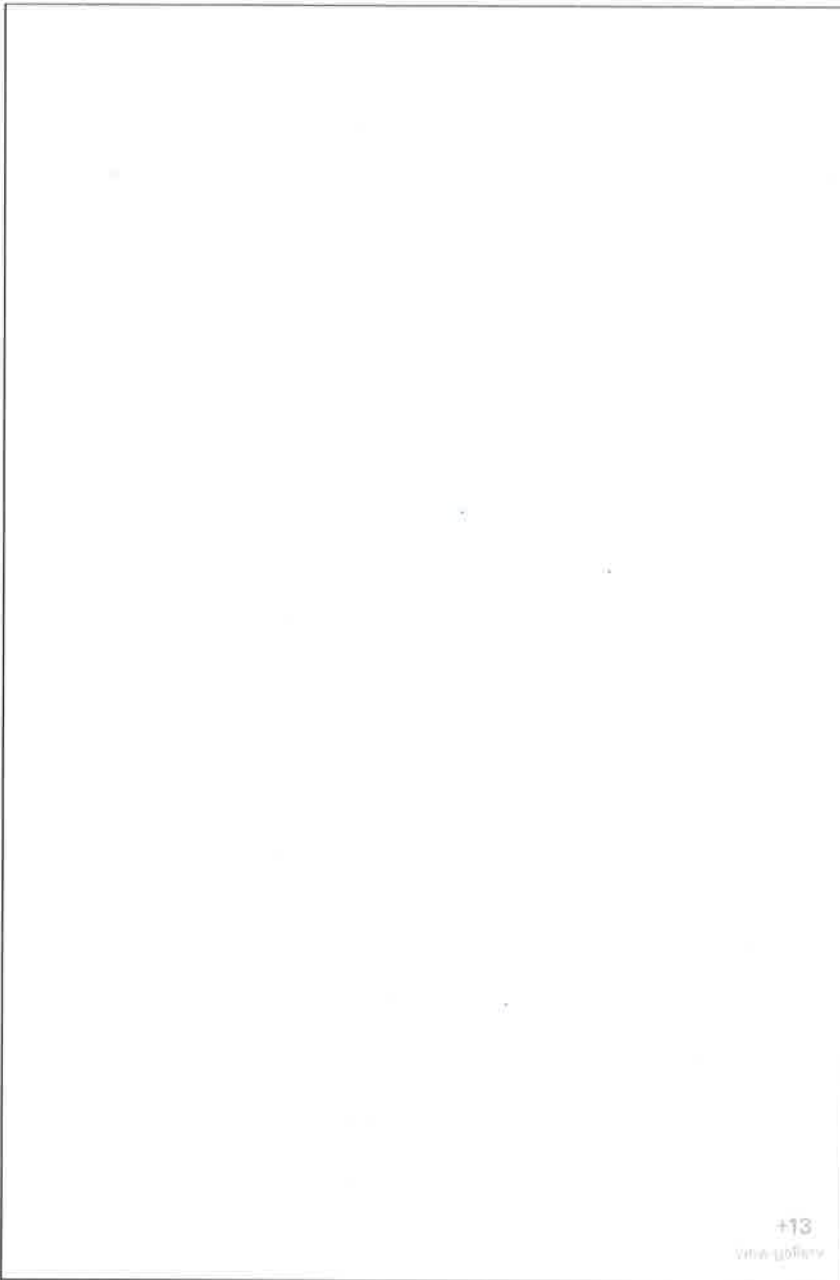
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Winning jockey Sam Waley-Cohen celebrates with the Grand National Trophy after riding Noble Yeats to victory in the Grand National Steeple Chase at Aintree Racecourse on April 9, 2022

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Minella Times and jockey Rachael Blackmore during the Randox Grand National Handicap Chase during Grand National Day of the Randox Health Grand National Festival 2022 at Aintree Racecourse

'You're all on to the track now and you start... gluing your hands to each other and walking towards the crowd and you can see 50,000 people screaming and shouting at you and they're getting quite mad and security [are] running towards you,' she added. 'You keep walking and you feel fearless and powerful and then you sit down and you're all in line together. You feel so excited and proud to stand alongside individuals making history.'

Ms Patterson revealed how Animal Rebellion's leaders had previously planned to sneak on to the course the night before the race and dig up the turf. That plan, however, was ditched because it was decided it would be 'way more powerful' for hundreds of people to storm on to the course.

Ms Patterson also disclosed that the plot ringleaders have already visited Aintree twice to identify weak spots, adding: 'We walked round the perimeter and on the track as well.' She added that some stretches of the fence are only 5ft 5in high.

'The track is huge, so security focus on where the spectators are but we are not going to go over there - it'll be further down.'

The group will do a final reconnaissance mission once the three-day race meeting has started to identify exactly where security guards and police officers have been positioned.

Activists involved in the protest will be split into small teams known as 'pods' and managed by one team leader, known as 'the stem', who will be issued with a so-called 'burner phone' - a mobile phone bought for a specific use that can be discarded.

One of the activists, who has taken part in a string of Animal Rebellion stunts, said that the protesters should remain on the course until they are either arrested or dragged away.

'The aim is to stop the event from happening and so we wouldn't want to give them the visual of us standing up and walking away at any point,' she said.

Those who wanted to take part in the action were asked to join a group on the encrypted app Signal entitled 'The Race'. Last night it had 120 members.

The final exercise of the training day involved the activists simulating trying to force their way through a line of security guards. 'This is private property, call the police,' shouted one of the ringleaders as he pretended to be a security guard.

Some of those at the training voiced their reservations about breaking the law, with one activist named Liam saying he was 'not thrilled about getting arrested'.

Last night Tory MP Damian Green, acting chairman of the Commons Culture Select Committee, condemned the 'appalling' plot.

He said: 'I'm glad this has been exposed by The Mail on Sunday. Millions of people love the Grand National and love horses as well. I can't think of a worse way of advertising your campaign, if you claim to love horses.'

Tory MP Alicia Kearns said: 'Using these sorts of tactics to impose their militant opposition to meat-eating will only backfire. At least hopefully less police time will be wasted thanks to the Mail on Sunday's investigation.'


Merseyside Police said it has 'a robust policing plan in place for Aintree', adding: 'We respect the right to peaceful protest and expression of views, but public order or criminal offences will not be tolerated and will be dealt with robustly.'

The Jockey Club, which owns Aintree racecourse, declined to comment last night.

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Animal Rebellion Moves Away From Extinction Rebellion With New Rebrand

Animal Rebellion will now be known as Animal Rising

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Animal Rising will focus more on animal rights - Media Credit: William Barton / Alamy Stock Photo

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Animal Rebellion has officially relaunched with a new name in a “firm” step away from the Extinction Rebellion umbrella.

The group is now known as Animal Rising. It has described its rebrand as a “new era of action for animals,” and comes just days before their [planned disruption of the Grand National horse race](#) in Aintree, Liverpool, on Saturday, April 15.

While [Animal Rebellion](#) traditionally focused more on the environmental impact of animal farming, Animal Rising will put animal rights front and center.



Animal Rebellion has rebranded

Animal Rising

The group will lead what it says will be “the biggest campaign of animal-focussed actions the UK has seen in decades” this summer. This will be made up, organizers say, of open rescues and high-profile public-facing actions.

Animal Rising prioritizes animal rights

“Over the past four years Animal Rebellion has made untold difference to the environmental movement and raised the issue of animal farming and fishing into the public consciousness,” Animal Rising spokesperson Nathan McCgovern told *Plant Based News*. “However 2023 will see a shift in our actions and message in order to spotlight animals more than ever.”

Last year, Animal Rebellion made headlines after rescuing 18 beagles puppies from a ~~DWI~~ animal testing breeding facility in Cambridgeshire in the UK. This, the group says, is the sort of action Animal Rising will prioritize in the coming months.



Animal Rising

Animal Rising activists put up posters on betting shops ahead of the Grand National

“Our action this year will be firmly centred around animals in a way they perhaps haven’t been previously,” McGovern said. “We’ll be rescuing them from factory farms whilst also occupying these facilities too. We’ll also be disrupting events that use animals for ‘sport’ to put our bodies between them and harm.”

Over the bank holiday weekend, supporters of Animal Rising spray painted the group’s logo (A) across a number of locations in London and Manchester. They also put up posters advertising their Grand National action on betting shop windows.

TAGGED Activism, Animal Rebellion, Animal Rights, Animal Rising, Extinction Rebellion

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Sandy Thomson adamant protests contributed to fatal fall of Hill Sixteen

'People can turn round and say that's a load of rubbish, but it's not a load of rubbish'.

Sunday 16 April News



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Sandy Thomson has reiterated his stance against animal rights activists who disrupted the 175th running of the Grand National on Saturday, and urged the authorities to take "a much firmer stance".

Hill Sixteen, trained by the Berwickshire handler, suffered a fatal injury after falling at the first fence in a race that was delayed by almost 15 minutes after protestors got on to the Aintree course and attempted to secure themselves to railings and fences.

The 10-year-old had never fallen in his 26-race career and Thomson felt the delays and the rushed preparation caused by the protestors were a major reason for the race's total of three fallers, along with five unseated jockeys, over the first two fences.

"I read somewhere that it has been nine years since the fences have been modified and there had been an average of two fallers at the first two fences in those nine years, and yesterday there were eight," said Thomson.

"I think horses got very wound up and, oddly, not having a parade didn't help the situation. The jockeys get on the horse and then they have got to parade before going on to the course, to settle them down.

"It is nobody's fault, everyone was desperate to get the race off and the jockeys were just told to line up and then told not to line up."

Hill Sixteen had previously raced over the National fences twice, finishing second in the 2021 and seventh in this season's running of the same race.

Having been walked in the parade ring with a red hood, along with others, he was taken to the pre-parade ring as the authorities attempted to quell the protests.

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"We took Hill Sixteen back to the stable and took his saddle off, because we had no idea what was going to happen," added Thomson.

"We put some water on him to rehydrate him a bit, because it was a warm day. Then suddenly it was all a bit of a rush.

"Ted Walsh was beside us and his horse (Any Second Now) had top weight, so he'd taken the saddle off. He said, 'Listen, they're not going to go without us'.

"Everybody was quite hyper and it doesn't help the horse at all. People can turn round and say that's a load of rubbish, but it's not a load of rubbish.

"That's why we have red hoods, blinkers and cheekpieces and things, just to help keep them in the best frame of mind possible."

In the aftermath of the fatal fall, Thomson was adamant that much of the blame lay with the protestors, and his view has not changed.

He added: "I stand by what I say, they are totally ignorant about anything to do with horses.

"We are getting fed up in this country and somebody's got to start doing something about these people.

"Most people are going about their lawful business and you get them (protestors) lying on roads and things. We've got to take a much firmer stance.

"Unfortunately, with social media and things, it is far too easy for somebody to start a thread up and all these people jump on the bandwagon.

"The other thing, and this is what the MPs have got to work out - you keep hearing that half their mailbag is to do with animal welfare.

"Well, if they really want to deal with animal welfare, they need to sort out where there is real cruelty and the RSPCA will tell you where it is, but they don't want to hear it - they don't want to be educated.

"Peaceful protest is fine, nobody has a problem with that, but you should not be able to go out and ruin other people's entertainment. They have no welfare of horses at heart.

"The BHA are in a very difficult situation and I do believe that we in racing, or field sports, or whatever, have to be pro-active.

"I know it is very difficult, because the people who know don't want to get involved. The best, but it is a desperately difficult thing to get across, all the welfare checks that are done.

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"We have vetting stages, the horses have to be trotted up twice by our vet and the video is sent in, records of any medication all have to be recorded. It doesn't make headlines and that goes to the complete issue of the thing - education."

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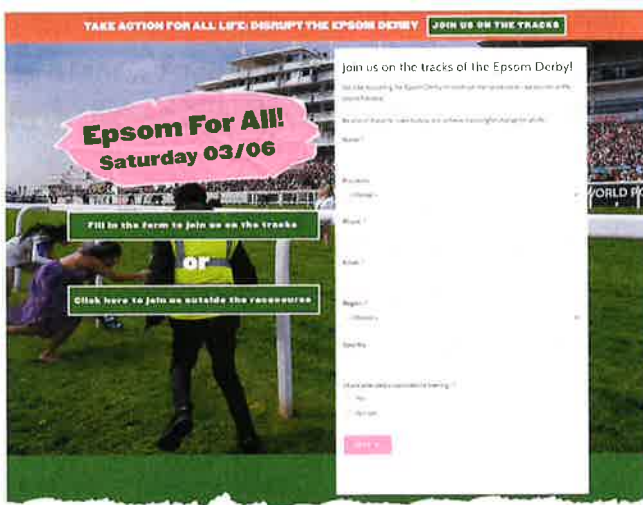


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The Challenge

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The science is clear: more than 70% of farmland can be freed up and rewilded to allow nature to recover, whilst still providing enough nutritious food for our growing population. It makes our rivers and seas cleaner, our air safer to breathe. Wild animals, bees and butterflies will return and flourish as animal farming and fishing comes to an end.

Act on what your heart is telling you. Together we can heal our relationship with other beings and create a safer, better future for all life.

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We're asking people to donate 1 hour's wage every month to support our work for animals, allowing us to rescue more animals, take high profile actions, and create a national conversation in the media.

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